

AMHERST CENTER FOR RUSSIAN CULTURE

Lana Peters (Svetlana Alliluyeva) Papers

(1989)

Summary: The Lana Peters Papers contain correspondence belonging to Lana Peters (Svetlana Alliluyeva) (1926-2011), daughter of Soviet premier Josef Stalin, émigré, and writer; they are primarily focused on the exchanges between Peters, Thomas Whitney, and Helen Brann (Peters' literary agent) concerning the potential publication of the two final volumes of Peters' memoirs.

Quantity: 1 linear foot

Containers: 1 record storage box

Processed: November – December 2011

By: Cathrina Altimari-Brown, Center Assistant

Listed:

By:

Finding Aid: December 2011

Prepared by: Cathrina Altimari-Brown, Russian Center Assistant

Edited by: Stanley Rabinowitz, Director, Center for Russian Culture

Access: There is no restriction on access to the Lana Peters Papers for research use. Particularly fragile items may be restricted for preservation purposes.

Copyright: Requests for permission to publish material from the Lana Peters Papers should be directed to the Director of the Amherst Center for Russian Culture. It is the responsibility of the researcher to identify and satisfy the holders of all copyrights.

INTRODUCTION

Historical Note

Svetlana Iosifovna Stalina, later known as Svetlana Alliluyeva and Lana Peters, was born in Moscow on February 28th, 1926; she was the youngest child of Soviet Premier Josef Stalin and his second wife Nadezhda Alliluyeva.

Nadezhda Alliluyeva's death on November 9, 1932, when Svetlana was six, was officially said to have been caused by peritonitis but was rumored to have either been suicide or murder ordered by the Kremlin and even, possibly, by Stalin himself. As a child Svetlana was famous throughout the USSR, and Stalin reportedly treated her with tenderness, at least until her teenage years.

When she was sixteen, Svetlana fell in love with Jewish Soviet filmmaker and actor Aleksei Kapler, whom Stalin consequently exiled to the Arctic Circle in 1942. During the war years she attended Moscow University, where she hoped to pursue literature but was made to study history instead.

At seventeen, and with Stalin's grudging consent, she married fellow student Grigory Morozov, with whom she had one son, Iosif, born in 1945. They divorced in 1947, and in 1949 she went through with a Kremlin-arranged marriage to former Chairman of the Supreme Soviet Andrei Zhdanov's son Yuri Zhdanov. Their daughter Yekaterina was born in 1950, shortly after which Svetlana and Zhdanov divorced.

Stalin's death in 1953 led Svetlana to change her father's last name for her mother's, and was accompanied by a loss of her former privileges; Alliluyeva then worked as a literature and language teacher and translator in Moscow. After falling in love with Indian Communist Brajesh Singh in 1963 during his visit to Moscow, she tried and failed to obtain official permission to marry him. When he died in 1967 she was allowed to personally take his ashes back to India; during the visit she appealed to the local US Embassy and subsequently defected to America by way of Italy and Switzerland, leaving her two children behind in the USSR. Despite the US government's attempts at a quiet transfer, the move became a major news story, with Alliluyeva denouncing both the Soviet regime and her father in press conferences and

interviews. Later the same year her memoir *Twenty Letters to a Friend* was published, and followed in 1969 by *Only One Year*.

In 1970 Svetlana married William Wesley Peters, an architect and protégé of Frank Lloyd Wright, with whom she lived in his Arizona compound. She divorced him and left with their young daughter Olga in 1973. In 1978 she became an American citizen, and in 1982 moved to England to enroll Olga in school there. In the early 1980s Svetlana started speaking more favorably of her father to the press, and began communicating with her two grown children in the USSR. In November 1984, she returned to the Soviet Union with Olga and requested Soviet citizenship; while there she wrote her third book, *The Faraway Music*. Her relationship with her Russian children soon worsened, however, and after a move to Tbilisi, Georgia, Svetlana finally took Olga back to the United States in 1986. She retracted the anti-American statements she had made before and during her time in the Soviet Union.

Svetlana moved around the US and Britain constantly over the following years, and reported being in serious debt. The details of her life during the two decades after her return to the West are uncertain; she is said to have been living, variously, in a London center for patients with severe emotional issues, a convent in Switzerland, and in rural Wisconsin. The last two volumes of her life story, with which this archive is primarily concerned, went unpublished. She died of colon cancer on November 22nd, 2011, in Richland County, Wisconsin.

History of the Papers and Their Organization

In 1991, the Lana Peters (Svetlana Alliluyeva) Papers were donated to the Amherst Center for Russian Culture by Thomas Whitney (AC class of 1937).

Organization and Arrangement

The Lana Peters (Svetlana Alliluyeva) Papers are organized into five series:

1. Correspondence to/from Lana Peters

Sub-series 1: Correspondence From Thomas Whitney to Lana Peters

Sub-series 2: Correspondence From Lana Peters to Thomas Whitney

Sub-series 3: Correspondence From Helen Brann to Lana Peters

Sub-series 4: Correspondence From Lana Peters to Helen Brann

Sub-series 5: Professional Correspondence From Lana Peters

2. Correspondence From Helen Brann to Various

3. Correspondence From Various to Thomas Whitney

4. Articles

5. Manuscripts

Series 1 Subseries 1—CORRESPONDENCE FROM THOMAS WHITNEY TO LANA PETERS
 (March 1989 – Nov. 1989).

Box No.	Folder No.	Dates	Description
1	1	3/30/1989	Xerox copy, draft of 3/31 letter with Whitney's edits
1	2	3/31/1989	Xerox copy
1	3	4/1/1989	Xerox copy
1	4	4/11/1989	Response to Peters' letter 4/8/89, Xerox copy
1	5	4/22/1989	Xerox copy
1	6	6/2/1989	Response to Peters' letters 5/18/89 and 5/21/89, Xerox copy
1	7	8/2/1989	Card
1	8	10/9/1989	Response to Peters' letter 8/9/89, plus TW's translation of Natalya Krandievskaya's poem "Epitaph" into English as requested by Peters. Xerox copy
1	9	11/11/1989	Xerox Copy

Series 1 Subseries 2— CORRESPONDENCE FROM LANA PETERS TO THOMAS WHITNEY
(March 1989 – Nov. 1989)

Box No.	Folder No.	Dates	Description
1	10	3/22/1989	Original, and a copy with 3/30/89 note from Whitney to 'MCW,' possibly Marguerite Whitney.
1	11	4/4/1989	
1	12	4/8/1989	Response to Peters' letter 4/1/89
1	13	4/16/1989	Includes envelope
1	14	5/4/1989	Includes undated, unsigned list, likely of notes on an LP manuscript, that was originally clipped to it.
1	15	5/12/1989	Note, change of address, stamped 5/12/89
1	16	5/18/1989	Includes cut-out Yakov Smirnoff ad.
1	17	5/21/1989	
1	18	6/17/1989	Response to Whitney's 8/2/89 card, and envelope.
1	19	8/9/1989	
1	20	10/14/1989	Includes envelope
1	21	11/16/1989	Response to Whitney's 11/11/89 letter, plus return of articles sent by Whitney on 11/11.

Series 1 Subseries 3— CORRESPONDENCE FROM HELEN BRANN TO LANA PETERS
 (June 1989 – Nov. 1989).

Box No.	Folder No.	Dates	Description
1	22	6/21/1989	Bcc to Whitney.
1	23	6/26/1989	Response to Peters' letter 6/22/89, bcc to Whitney.
1	24	9/14/1989	Bcc to Whitney, originally grouped with copy of Vaughan's 9/5/89 letter (see Series 2, Subseries 1) to Helen Brann sent to Whitney by Brann
1	25	10/11/1989	Bcc to Whitney
1	26	10/31/1989	Bcc to Whitney
1	27	11/6/1989	Bcc to Whitney
1	28	11/9/1989	Response to Peters' letter 11/5/89, which was written in response to Brann's letter 10/31/89. Bcc to Whitney

Series 1 Subseries 4— CORRESPONDENCE FROM LANA PETERS TO HELEN BRANN
(June 1989 – Nov. 1989).

Box No.	Folder No.	Dates	Description
1	29	6/22/1989	Response to Brann's letter 6/21/89. Includes 6/26/89 note from Rob Stein (Helen Brann's associate) to Whitney
1	30	10/16/1989	Response to Brann's letter 10/11/89
1	31	10/27/1989	
1	32	11/2/1989	Includes estate planning balance statement and letter from Peters' lawyer regarding her payment on a house
1	33	11/5/1989	Response to Brann's letter 10/31/89, original and bcc to Whitney from Brann, including 11/7/89 note.

Series 1 Subseries 5— PROFESSIONAL CORRESPONDENCE FROM LANA PETERS (Oct. 1989)

Box No.	Folder No.	Dates	Description
1	34	10/14/1989	Letter to Novoe Russkoe Slova
1	35	10/14/1989	Letter to Noviy Zhurnal

Series 2— CORRESPONDENCE FROM HELEN BRANN TO VARIOUS (June 1989 – Nov. 1989).

Box No.	Folder No.	Dates	Description
1	36	6/26/1989	
1	37	8/23/1989	Note, including letter from W.W. Norton to Brann
1	38	9/14/1989	Note, including letter from Random House to Brann
1	39	10/26/1989	Copy of a response to Peters' letter 10/16/89
1	40	10/30/1989	Original of 10/30 letter to Robert Ober, Kent School, and bcc
		11/7/1989	Note (See Series 1, Subseries 4, 11/5/89)
1	41	11/9/1989	Response to Peters' letter to Brann 11/5/89

Series 3— CORRESPONDENCE FROM VARIOUS TO THOMAS WHITNEY.

Box No.	Folder No.	Dates	Description
1	42	11/1/1989	Letter from Justinia Djaparidze, and envelope.
1	43	8/3/1989	Note from Phillip Roth thanking Whitney for lending a book

Series 4— ARTICLES

Box No.	Folder No.	Dates	Description
1	44	2/25/1989	"Nasha Strana" newspaper. Contains review of "The Faraway Music"

Series 5 – MANUSCRIPTS

Box No.	Folder No.	Dates	Description
1			Manuscript of "The Faraway Music," 1983, in English, typescript with handwritten notes/corrections.
1			Manuscript of "A Book For Granddaughters," in Russian, Xeroxed with handwritten notes/corrections.
1			Manuscript of "The Faraway Music," 1983, in English, with handwritten notes/corrections.
1			Bound copy of "Dalekaya Muzyka", 1988, in Russian.

