



Red Princess: A Revolutionary Life

Sofka Zinovieff

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From a privileged childhood in Tsarist St Petersburg to dedicated member of the British Communist Party, the life of Sofka Dolgorouky resembles a seismograph of the great upheavals of the 20th century. In this deeply personal biography, Zinovieff explores the turbulent, often scandalous life of her grandmother.

Red Princess: A Revolutionary Life Details

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Margaret says

Incredible true story told by her granddaughter. Her curiosity from finding her grandmother's diaries. led her to search her past life.

A very unusual woman who seemed to be before her time regarding her attitude to life.

Ann says

I enjoyed this book because I think this time period in history (especially Europe) is so interesting. The Princess (as many monarchy families (?) I found to be spoiled and self serving - she was a horrible parent and wife. But she did try to help the Jews while imprisoned by the Germans at Vittel and she led an interesting life with all her travels. You got the feeling though that the author (granddaughter & whom she was named after) tried her best to put a positive spin on her life. As I mentioned, the history of the time period was worth the read.

Kenghis Khan says

It starts out with an intriguing enough idea - a Russian aristocratic exile who becomes a mucky muck in British high society, survives Nazi occupied France in a prison designated for "enemy nationals" and comes to embrace the Bolshevik revolution and became your stereotypical British socialist grandmother. But despite this incredibly compelling subject, I felt the book was a bit too self-indulgent and in the end failed to adequately deal with the complex political realities that shaped the people of the time. It's an interesting story to be sure and I'd recommend it, but there was something a bit self-righteous and too eager to embrace the excessively conventional historical analysis of the USSR about the attempt to personalize the story that ended up alienating me more than I thought.

Evi Routoula says

Η συγγραφέας Σόφκα Ζινβιέφ μας διηγείται την πολυτράχη ζωή της γιαγιάς της, πριγκίπισσας Σόφκα Ντολγκουρόκι, η οποία γεννήθηκε στην Αγία Πετρούπολη το 1907. Η πριγκίπισσα Ντολγκουρόκι ζήτησε την Οκτωβριανή επανάσταση, φυγάδεύτηκε μαζί με την γιαγιά της στην Γαλλία, στην Αγγλία και στην Ιταλία, μαζί με την βασιλομήτορα του τσάρου Νικολάου του Β, εργάστηκε ως προσωπική γραμματέας του ηθοποιού Λάρενς Ολβιέ, παντρεύτηκε έναν Ρώσο ευγενή και κατέπινε έναν γύλο κίμης, φυλακίστηκε από τους ναζί σε ένα στρατόπεδο στο Βιτλ της Γαλλίας ως Βρετανή υπήκοος, βοήθησε τους Εβραίους να φuggουν στην Λατινική Αμερική, έγινε κουμουνίστρια, αγάπησε την λογοτεχνία και το θέατρο και ζήτησε ως τα 86 της χρόνια ως μια πολιτισμική μπούμ.

Η Σόφκα Ζινβιέφ μας μεταφέρει σε όλη την Ευρώπη του 20ου αιώνα από την κρύως ενδιαφέρουσα, αληθινή ζωή της γιαγιάς της. Είναι ένα από τα βιβλία που σε σημαδεύουν.

Mary Kay says

Very interesting overview of the Russian revolution and the place royalty played in it. The book focuses on the diary of the author's grandmother who was a Russian princess and became a communist.

Lindsey Gingerich says

The backstory on Pre-Revolution Russia and Sofka's imprisonment at Vittel makes it worth the read for just that. Obviously the writing was biased, it was written by her granddaughter who was very close to her, but she does do her best to be impartial. I found Sofka to be an interesting woman and this was very well researched. 4.5 stars.

Lorraine says

A fascinating life story! Written by the granddaughter of a Russian princess, it encapsulates much of the history of the 20th century. I couldn't help thinking about my own grandmother who was born a few years before Princess Sofka and how different their lives were!

Miriam says

I'm about halfway through and am enjoying this book very much. The author does a good job of tempering the aristocratic aspect of her ancestors and focussing on the daily events of people who were caught up in turmoil. It also leads me to think about what else was going on all over the world at the same time.

Sue Jellum says

Interesting read, but I'm not sure the woman was really so extraordinary she deserved a book. Very selfish woman glorified by her granddaughter - look how progressive she was, she had affairs and ignored her children before that became popular!

Wealththeow says

Princess Sophy Dolgorouky (called Sofka) was born in 1907 into an ancient family of nobility. She grew up in an atmosphere of incredible privilege and cossetting, raised by her stiff grandmother and, intermittently, her rebellious surgeon mother and dilettante father. Her family fled to Europe during the Bolshevik revolution, and lived nomadic lives while their prestige and money slowly dribbled away. Sofka, strong-willed, intellectual, sensual, charismatic, and with a fire for social justice, shocked her family throughout her

life. She divorced her suitable first husband, spent little time or energy on her children, and by her thirties was a card-carrying member of the Communist Party. Despite desperate situations (she nearly starved several different times, lost the love of her life after only a few years of marriage, was interned in a Nazi camp, her mother committed suicide while she was in the house, etc), Sofka refused to do anything less than what she wanted and felt was needed. From a jeweled upbringing to a homey little cottage in Cornwall, Sofka's journey is a riveting one.

Corey says

The fascinating true story of a woman who was born in pre-Revolutionary St. Petersburg, and her life wandering across Europe. Filled with history, adventure, and romance.

emily says

The story was great. This woman had an amazing life, which she herself wrote about. It seemed like everyone mentioned had written an autobiography. It makes me want to read all of them to see what they left out and what their great grand daughter dug up later.

Nick says

Sofka Dolgorouky, the author's grandmother, led one of those remarkable lives that only the cataclysms of the twentieth century could offer. She began life as Russian nobility and ended it in the Cornish countryside with a labor activist. Along the way, Anna Akhmatova recited poetry in her house and she worked for Laurence Olivier. She began life in a palace in St. Petersburg with a vacation home in the Crimea, but also lived in a tent, spent much of the war imprisoned by the Nazis (where she managed to save enough Jews--although, painfully, not her lover--to be honored by the Israelis), and finished her working life arranging tourist jaunts to the Soviet Union for Western leftists. The author is helped in making her grandmother come to life by her many vivid letters and a memoir (as well as one by her Dolgorouky's own mother of a harrowing trip across Europe to save her husband from the early Soviets). But the author is also an intrepid yet congenial investigator, traveling to the long-confiscated family estate, unearthing documents, tracking down surviving friends and documenting the details (down to her grandmother's methods of avoiding conception with her many lovers). But all that vividness had a cost: three children largely abandoned; one husband divorced, the other lost on a bombing mission for the RAF; a lover sent to his death in a concentration camp, another victim of a lobotomy. The author shrewdly uses the material to illuminate some of the twentieth century's agonies, and along the way renders an affectionate and lively portrait of an irresponsible, often endearing, and in the end irrepressible woman of her time.
