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**I join the volunteer army**

In the last days of December 1918, an order of the day of the Commander in Chief of the so-called Volunteer Army came, and it said that all the officers belonging to the First Cavalry Division of the Imperial Guard might now reconstitute their regiments. Of course, all of us young men of those Guard regiments were great patriots. Our average age was between 20 and 25, with a few Colonels close to 40. We were politically very naive, not to say childish, and the reconstitution of those regiments was just a childish day-dream of people who did not have the slightest notion of what was going on in Russia and the whole world. About one hundred of us officers in those four regiments gathered on the Crimea. Then we entrained to go north of the Crimea to the steppes lying between the Crimea and the city of Alexandrovsk on the Dnepr River. There we took over the estate of a very wealthy German descendant of the colonists that were brought into that no-man's-land in the days of Catherine the Great.

The estate was really very big and very, very fine in every respect. My first look was at the stables, of course, and my eyes popped because they looked like a palace if compared to our stables at Kodyma. Also, the big house would hold all of us <sup>p299</sup> officers, roughly 100 in number. Every officer was very partial to his own regiment and everyone was wearing the colors of his regiment. Actually, this number corresponded to about two squads of a peacetime regiment. At the head of us was Colonel Danilov, who was a great gentleman if there ever was one. He was personally extremely brave under fire but he was also very careful and never rushed into situations from which he eventually would not be able to escape. He was very wise and tactful. Huge in size, he looked like a bear and had the character of a lamb. We all adored him. He was the real classic type of regiment commander. In the old days he would have been called Father Commander by all the soldiers of his regiment. He belonged to a regiment of the Second Brigade, and about 50 percent of the officers present had belonged to his regiment before the war of 1914 started. My regiment of the Horse Guards was in the minority. It was represented only by one junior lieutenant, and that was I. The reason for this was that many officers of the Horse Guards were at that time fighting in the Caucasus under the command of General Wrangel, commanding units of Caucasian Moslem mountaineers who were very strongly anti-Bolshevik but who did not have enough men trained and educated to be officers.

The first assignment of the officers here, our first job, was to expand, to find volunteers willing to serve as privates. So every officer representing one of these four <sup>p300</sup> regiments had a cart with two horses, one cart per regiment, because we did not have more horses than that. The whole future First Division of the Imperial Guard had at that time sixteen horses! And so, we drove around the country to look for volunteers. It was January-February, 1919, and in that region the cold was bitter but there was no snow. The roads were covered with a layer of thick dust and our officers' coats, lined with sheepskin, were full of dust. That was worse than if there had been a lot of snow around. To the amazement of all the other officers, my activity in getting volunteers was 100 percent successful because I knew German even better than I now know English, and I drove around the so-called colonies of German settlers.

These Germans had been there since the days of Catherine the Great, more than a century, yet



they were still Germans. Their villages were typical German villages. Most of them were Protestants and the pastor of the Protestant Church was their leader. I addressed them in perfect German and the fact that a Russian officer could speak just as they could, made a great impression on them. They were very wealthy landowners; they had perfect cattle and excellent horses that we requisitioned according to Army Regulations of the past. For the requisition of the horses and the cattle they got a slip of paper, signed by me and stamped. They realized, of course, at the bottoms of their hearts, that those receipts were not worth very much. In the old <sup>p301</sup> days, they could have presented those receipts to the Russian authorities of Imperial Russia and they would have been paid. Now, who would pay for those receipts? That was a very problematic question. But, as I said, they were very much against the Bolsheviks, and the Bolsheviks in those days were just gangs like the famous Maruska gang. They lived off the country and they looted the very wealthy colonies of the Germans.

But not all the country was just German colonies. Next to the German colonies there 'were big villages of Russian peasants. They were the Germans' neighbors, and I was amazed that there was a kind of iron curtain between those two groups living next door to each other. The Russian villages were mostly primitive, not to say dirty. Their cattle were skinny and there was good reason for this: the Russian peasants were not individually full owners of their land. Back in the days of Tsar Alexander II, when he abolished by decree serfdom (1861), some of the lands of the local nobility were taken over by the administration and paid for at a token price with bonds issued by the government to compensate for the land that was to become the peasants' land. Now it belonged to the villages and it was distributed to the heads of families for the duration of seven years. After seven years the families of the village were recounted. Sometimes there were fewer, but sometimes there were more, and the land which belonged to <sup>p302</sup> the village as a whole was redistributed again among the villagers. So any villager knew he had his plot of land for only seven years and naturally he was not interested in making any improvements, like digging ditches or putting manure into the land. He just tried to get out of the land as much as he could with the least possible effort, because any improvements he might make would just be passed on to somebody else. Sometimes, of course, the plots were many kilometers away from his house in the village, and to get to his plot to work would take a half-day's driving. Sometimes he had to build a makeshift dwelling on his plot to protect himself from a cloudburst, rain, or wind. Therefore, agriculture was stagnating. Actually, those Russian villages were communes. It could be said that it was Communism under the rule of a distant Tsar somewhere – in Petersburg or Moscow – whom the peasants never saw. Therefore, these Russian peasants were not anti-Bolshevik. On the contrary, these peasants were being promised by the Bolsheviks a final redistribution of the land belonging to the colonists and to the gentry, and they were told that this land would be their own. This had been their dream for many, many centuries, and therefore the propaganda of Bolshevism had a powerful effect on them. Some of the Russian peasants had noticed the success of the Germans and they imitated them as well as they could. They saved money, they bought land from those of the gentry who were <sup>p303</sup> eager to sell the land in order to take up some job in the government and live in the city. These peasants who did imitate the Germans, rapidly became just as prosperous as the German colonists, and extremely anti-Bolshevik, and their sons were eager to join the regiments which were being formed to fight Bolshevism. They also joined my volunteers. So starting with myself and a volunteer that another regiment had "loaned" to me, my squadron grew faster than the others, to the amazement of everyone. My squadron soon numbered about twenty, and we marched and exercised, and this Russian Volunteer Squadron of the White Army was marching and singing battle songs in German.

Besides me, there was another officer of the Horse Guards with us, named Prince Obolensky. He had been the last Adjutant of my regiment before the collapse of 1917. He was an



excellent Adjutant; he did all the paper work very well and he was very tactful, greatly beloved by all the officers, and his role had not been easy at all. So Colonel Danilov took Prince Obolensky as his Adjutant because otherwise the headquarters of our Volunteer Regiment would have been staffed only by officers of Danilov's regiment and that would have produced some friction and envy. But that left me alone to represent the Horse Guards.

Then a group of our officers made a raid on Ascania Nova, the great estate of a German descendant. From that estate they requisitioned 100 horses. There was a big <sup>p304</sup> stud on that farm. These horses were about four years old and were used to grazing on the steppes. In winter, they were lodged in a big barn where they were free to move around. They were not tied. Immediately we called them mustangs, and they were driven into a big enclosure made up of a mixture of old hay or straw and manure. It formed a wall around the enclosure high enough so that no horse in the world could have jumped over it. These horses were driven into that enclosure and then they had to be distributed among us.

Of course every officer wanted the best horse, his choice. We were all sitting around that enclosure on the high wall and there came Colonel Danilov, who said, "Gentlemen Officers, the glorious regiment of the Horse Guards is here represented by one officer only, and this officer is the lowest rank of a Junior Lieutenant." Then he turned to me in a fatherly way and said, "Dear Ivan, you have the first choice. Go and choose any horse you want." That was typically Colonel Danilov, a grand gentleman. But imagine my situation in front of all those officers, eager to watch, thinking, "Now let us see what that junior officer of the Horse Guards can do!" But, as I have said, I had a soldier "loaned" to me from one of the other regiments. He had been put into the uniform of the Horse Guards. Like many of that period he was the rascal of all rascals and had not the slightest idea of discipline, but he was a go-getter and he was very proud at that time to be <sup>p305</sup> the only soldier of the Horse Guards. So the two of us moved into the enclosure. I took a bridle in my hand with two long cords attached to it. We moved inside the enclosure and spotted a fine horse, black of course, as all horses had to be in my regiment, and we maneuvered that horse little by little until we got it into one of the corners of the enclosure. The horse was backing away from us and when he got into the corner his tail was tight up against the wall. We were approaching the horse and at that moment the horse counter-attacked us. It just charged against us, as any animal will do that is cornered and gets a kind of feeling of despair. At the moment that the horse charged, my soldier challenged him and like a monkey the next moment he was hanging with hands and feet around the neck of the horse, from below. Of course that compelled the horse to lower its head and in that instant I put the bridle on him. The horse reared, but we had both ends of the cords of the bridle, and we led out that rearing horse to the thunderous applause of all the other officers. Well, the Horse Guards were still Horse Guards!

Then the other officers went to get their horses. The horses had to be tamed, saddled, and trained, but that was not too difficult and about a week or so later we had the horses under control, more or less. During that time more volunteers arrived and soon there was not enough room for everybody, so we moved to a village, a colony of German settlers, Eichenfeld. That colony had roughly 100 houses <sup>p306</sup> and a big school that could be used for the headquarters of the regiment. There, the training of the horses continued. Still more officers came to join us, more volunteers. Officers of my regiment were detached from their assignment in the Wrangel army and came over to join me. They were all in senior rank except one who had just come from Yalta, a mere boy of nineteen. Obolensky took over the command of the growing squadron, which now had about 100 volunteers and seven officers.

### **My squadron encounters the Bolshevik sailors from the Baltic Sea Fleet**

In February 1919, we were told by the German colonists that a rather numerous Bolshevik



gang was in the vicinity, looting, burning, raping. Our first battle assignment was to get hold of and liquidate that gang. We were very eager, of course, to go into battle, but part of our volunteers were not ready. As Colonel Danilov joked, they had no idea whether a bridle should be put on the head of a horse or on its tail. The trained group consisted of 20 men or so and the squad of men still in training had to be left behind – they could not be taken into battle not knowing how to use weapons or how to ride. Someone had to stay with them. The question arose: which of the officers would be left behind? Of course, all seven of us wanted to go. Obolensky gathered us all together in a quite unofficial manner and said, <sup>p307</sup> “Dear friends, being the senior among you I took over the command of the squadron. Naturally, I am not going to be the one to stay behind. We cannot leave behind the youngest of all the officers because he is not trained enough himself to be training others, besides that would be unfair toward the youngest. So we will pick someone from the middle.” Then he turned to me and said in an official manner, “Lieutenant Count Ivan Stenbok-Fermor, you take over the training unit. You stay behind.” Naturally I was furious but I could not talk back under regulations of discipline, so that was it. And out they went, together with the other squadrons.

I was training my squad late one afternoon when I saw that squadron coming back. An officer rode up to me with tears in his eyes and said, “Stenbock, I must report to you that your squadron has suffered a terrible disaster.” When they had come in touch with that gang, the officer told me, they did not realize that this was not just a local gang of peasants. That gang consisted of the Baltic Sea Fleet Bolshevik sailors, the most Bolshevik, the most dedicated Communists ever. They had among them some peasants, but they were in command of the group and they were soldiers, very well trained for battle, and very enthusiastic Communists. They were occupying a village surrounded by open country. At a rather large distance from the village, a colonel of one of our regiments found nothing wiser to do <sup>p308</sup> than to order the men to charge, like in the old days of Napoleon. And, of course, they charged, crossing open country under fire, and when they came in contact their horses were almost exhausted. The Bolsheviks, in spite of being sailors, abandoned their positions and started to run, leaving behind one of their machine guns. But then, turning around, they saw that our side had suffered losses and were not as numerous as their first impression had been, so they promptly came back to their machine gun and started shooting. Their rifles were stuck on fences so they could really choose their marks, and they chose to shoot at short distances at the officers leading the squadron. In all this fighting, Prince Obolensky’s horse was killed. It fell and he found himself under the horse. Before he could release himself from that position, the sailors were on top of him and he was sabred to death. Four other officers of our regiment were killed in that skirmish; one came back, leading the remnants of our squadron. This one, a friend, is still living in New York. He then became the senior officer of the remnants of the squadron.

The village where the skirmish took place was called Blagodatnoe (“full of grace”) – it sounded like a tragic joke. We were still able to joke because we were so young, and it was whispered around that the remaining officer was wounded by a stray bullet which hit his forehead, and that the <sup>p309</sup> bullet which hit him was flattened by the impact but that nothing had happened to Captain T’s forehead. This was partly true: it was a bullet coming from a great distance and it had no penetrating power. It just scratched his forehead, but at a closer distance he would have been dead. He became, for the rest of the year 1919 and 1920, the commander of our squadron. He had joined the regiment in the spring of 1914 as a private, just for the sake of his military service. He never had planned any kind of military career. He was promoted to officer’s rank and remained in the regiment because of the war.

There were at that time other officers that belonged to the regiment but they were too old for battle duty. It is worthwhile remembering and noting down a few memories of my good friend and officer, Colonel Count Benningsen of the Horse Guards. During the civil war for a period



of time, he was commanding my regiment. He describes a cavalry attack at the end of 1919; and before that, he mentions a soldier that was attached personally to him to take care of the colonel's horse. He was a volunteer, recently from senior high school, a lad, enthusiastic to fight communism. Well, this young lad did not know, according to Benningsen, whether the halter should be put on the horse's head or on its tail. Anyhow, the horses of the squadron at the end of 1919 were mostly unshod. Nowadays, the horse and buggy age has passed into history, and <sup>p310</sup> probably many people of the younger generation do not realize the difference between a horse that is shod and one that is unshod. Horses hoofs have to have metal, so to say, shoes. Then those shoes have short nails that grip into the ground, especially if the ground is iced and slippery, and the horse does not fall. Those horses have to be carefully shod by blacksmiths, and a blacksmith can take care of so many horses a day, because he has to proceed very carefully so as not to hurt the sensitive part of the horse's hooves, or the horse will go lame for a long time. The squadron was never in one place for a long enough time to take care of the horses; and this squadron was mounted, as I mentioned, on horses that were not shod. The ground was frozen and icy. The horses were slipping, and therefore they could not move fast. A classical cavalry charge has to go full speed together against the enemy. This time, the squadron was deployed, and the pace was a slow walking pace against the enemy – a most unusual charge. But all along the line, the voice of “Hurrah” was thunderous, in spite of the horses walking at a slow pace. And the Red units against us preferred to retreat. So the result of that charge was good, and there were no losses. It was very typical of that period of the so-called civil war.

Most of the officers of the Volunteer Squadron of the Horse Guards were very young men, not to say boys like me, who had joined the regiment during the First World War. <sup>p311</sup> The middle generation of the officers of the Horse Guards had suffered great losses during the First World War. Many of them who were of Baltic origin were in northern Russia and very few of them were in southern Russia. This all explains the reason for the great disparity in age of our officers.

The sailors of the Baltic Fleet who were responsible for that disaster were the most dedicated of Communists and they had come from the north to give support to the amateur gangs of Bolsheviks in southern Russia and to transform those gangs from plain looters into fighting units. This was one of the first occasions where they proved that they had done a good job, and a disastrous one for us.

There were funeral services for the dead officers and the coffins had to be taken to their burial place in the city of Yalta because their families were living there. I was assigned the sad task of accompanying the bodies of these officers and of representing the regiment at the funeral services in Yalta. Besides that, I was ordered to find some way to reach from there the city of Odessa. In the city and region of Odessa, formation of White units was in progress and at the head of this formation was General Biskupski, who had begun his career in the regiment of the Horse Guards.

### **I have orders to reach Odessa**

At that time Odessa was full of all sorts of military <sup>p312</sup> supplies and had great depots of arms and whatever was necessary for soldiers. Because I was a young officer of the Horse Guards, it was believed that Biskupski would meet me as a fellow officer and give us the necessary supplies which could then be shipped to the Crimea. But Biskupski, in the rank of Army General when I reported to him, met me very coldly and I remember his words for they startled me very much. He said, “Go back to the Crimea. Tell all of them there to move over to Odessa under my command and then you will have all the supplies available. But I am not going to give anything to that Crimean group.” That was very typical of him, very nasty. He





wanted to be the boss. Being an Army General, he did not want to give supplies to some colonels attempting formations north of the Crimea. Jealousy, rivalry among Army Generals did a lot of harm all through the First World War. This unfortunate rivalry among high-ranking generals was typical not only in the Russian Imperial Army but in the German army also, and during the Second World War also in Hitler's army and in the French army. Every general wanted to be the big boss in spite of disastrous consequences for the war he was fighting.

So I was stuck in Odessa. French troops had landed there in December, after the Armistice. The Austrians were gone. Small groups of Russian officers were there attempting formation of anti-Bolshevik units, but all the <sup>p313</sup> rabble of Odessa was very strongly pro-Bolshevik and sporadic fighting occurred every day. The French troops came from a French army that had landed earlier in the city of Salonika, in Greece. The French had come to Salonika to reinforce the Greek armies who were on the side of the Allies against the Bulgarians who were supported by the Germans. Of course, the French High Command did not send to Salonika the best divisions that France had – this was natural. The divisions sent to Salonika, and this was no secret to anybody in France, were the most unreliable and the worst France had as far as fighting spirit and morale were concerned, and the French commander in Salonika chose to send to Odessa the worst and most undisciplined division he had, and was glad to get rid of it.

They disembarked at Odessa with their heavy artillery dragged by huge mules. They deployed outside the city some twenty kilometers distant, in the steppe or prairies surrounding Odessa. They deployed against nobody and they started digging trenches as if they were trying to construct a new fortified city of Verdun. (That was a fortress that the Germans tried to take, and after terrible losses on both sides they never succeeded.) Well, the French soldiers deploying and digging in the empty steppe had interpreters, Russian officers. One of these interpreters was a Russian Air Force officer – there were a few Russian planes – and he was over-flying those French trenches and taking notes. <sup>p314</sup> He came back to French Headquarters and there he met the French colonel who was reporting to the French Commander-in-Chief that the positions of his trenches were untenable. The French had seen somewhere on the horizon of these prairies some riders. These were of course a few Bolshevik scouts. Now the French colonel was reporting to the high command in Odessa that his positions in the trenches were untenable against the pressure of the enemy. The Russian Air Force officer got mad when he heard it. He could speak French very, very well, and he interrupted the colonel and said to the Commander-in-Chief of the French troops, "If the French abandon those trenches and retreat, I with my ground crew of the Air Force will occupy and hold the trenches." Well, the general took the words of the Russian officer as an insult to the honor of the French armies and yelled back at him and there was a great quarrel, one of the first between the Russians and the French in Odessa.

My present-day brother-in-law, who can speak French perfectly, was attached to headquarters of the French armies in Odessa, so he knew very well everything that was going on. One of my other friends, an officer of the Guard Cavalry Division, happened to be in Odessa and instead of joining the group north of the Crimea, he stayed in Odessa and became an interpreter for the French battalion occupying those trenches, manned by French soldiers with artillery and machine guns and facing the emptiness of the steppes. <sup>p315</sup> Finally some groups of Bolsheviks really did attempt to attack those trenches. The French immediately retreated in great disorder. They had to cross a small bridge over a river. They were not retreating soldiers, they were a mob trying to get over that bridge, everyone for himself. My friend, the Russian Guard officer, got mad. I must say that he was a huge man, like a bear on his hind legs. He told me himself the story, that he got so mad that he did not give a damn about anything. He had a good Cossack whip in his hands and he closed his eyes and started



whipping the French right and left, whether enlisted men or officers, he just did not give a damn. Some order was restored, and the French battalion regrouped and continued to retreat in better order. My Russian friend was convinced that he would be seized, taken to French headquarters, court-martialled, and shot. Well, he was actually invited to French head quarters and the French commanding general pinned the decoration of the *Legion d'Honneur*, the French Legion of Honor, to his chest for having stopped a retreating unit.

Years later, that same friend of mine was a taxi driver in Paris, as were many Russian officers at that time. And when he was wearing his driver's uniform he always had the decoration of the *Legion d'Honneur* on his taxi-driver's coat. He told me that this decoration on his coat in Paris produced bigger, more generous tips. - 316 -

### **I am to be court-martialled**

After we had requisitioned the one hundred horses from the estate of Ascania Nova, in May 1919, the owner of that estate made out against me an accusation that I had looted his estate. That accusation went through many channels, reached the headquarters of General Denikin, and I was court-martialled. That is, I was to be court-martialled but nothing ever happened because military and political events overtook all the red tape involved. Two days after driving those horses back to the Crimea to our reserve squadron, we got orders to entrain. We had quite a difficult time with those wild horses but we managed. By train we went north to the vicinity of the city of Poltava.

Poltava was a very historical place because of the battle many years earlier (1709) between the Russians and the Swedes where the Swedes were destroyed. For the first time, Russia had drawn attention from all the Western countries as being a great military power. Besides, that region of black, very fertile earth was famous for being the richest part of all Russia. When we were there most of the riches had been looted by the retreating Reds, but by the time of our arrival the first British supplies were beginning to come in very small quantities. We were expecting to get arms, cartridges, and shells as the British had promised; instead we got chocolate and powdered milk, and that powdered milk I will never forget. Maybe we did not know how to use it <sup>p317</sup> in the proper proportion, but having tea with that powdered milk was awful.

From Poltava we moved north to a great junction called Sinelnikovo. This was a great railroad junction and also a big village. While we stayed in that village I was again detached to go back to the city of Odessa. Why, of all officers, it was I again had its reason in the fact that I was no stranger in Odessa. I had relatives there where I could live. My assignment there was to try to get supplies from the huge army depots in Odessa. Besides, I was interested in crossing to the right bank of the River Dnepr to the city of Ekaterinoslav. This city was founded in the days of Catherine the Great, and the name means "Glory to Catherine". I was eager to reach that city because I knew that Dina's family had a great house there and I hoped that the family might be there.

This city had been occupied by White cavalry just a few days earlier and the cavalry had moved a little to the north, maybe ten miles. Holding such a large industrial city, where many factory workers were very much pro-Communist, was difficult for only a few regiments of cavalry. The railroad bridge crossing the River Dnepr had been blown up but I saw a fisherman with a small boat and I suggested that he take me across. He did not want to but finally he agreed, seeing money in my left hand and a pistol in my right. Actually, I did not realize the danger I was risking. This fellow had an assistant with <sup>p318</sup> him, and the two of them together could have easily thrown me overboard right into the river. Then there would be no writing of memoirs now. But probably they were afraid to risk their own hides and they landed me on the outskirts of Ekaterinoslav.



It was late in the afternoon. I walked into the city and to Dina's family's great house and I started banging at the gates leading into the yard. After long banging I saw a man, an old figure, cautiously crossing the yard and coming up to the gate. He opened the gate and I recognized in him the family footman. I remembered him so well in all his gala uniform, sitting next to the coachman on the box. He stared at me as if I were a ghost. He let me in and then he said that two days earlier the family had left. He did not know, or did not want to say, he was so scared, where they had gone. He told me that they had not been living in this house, it was much too dangerous, but for the last few months they had lived on the out skirts of the city with a family of an officer's widow. It was quite late and getting dark, so he let me into the big house and arranged a bed for me and I spent the night there all by myself. In the morning he managed to bring me a cup of tea and even a slice of bread with some lard, and he gave me the address of the widow on the outskirts of the city. He also asked me to leave the house because he was much too scared.

So I went and found that widow, who was a very, very nice lady, and she explained to me that Dina's family had <sup>p319</sup> left a few days ago for the south, not actually knowing where they were going. The general in charge of the troops occupying the city had told them that the city probably could not be held against the eventual attack by the Reds and that his cavalry would have to leave the city. He managed to put at the family's disposal a truck, and with that truck they had left. She saw that I was almost exhausted, physically and otherwise, and she suggested that I stay in her home and have a rest. I was very happy to accept. She was right, for the next day I had a very high fever and was knocked out by an attack of malaria. I stayed with her, recuperating for almost three weeks before I was strong enough to go to Odessa.

### **Recruiting volunteers in Odessa**

As I have said, while in Odessa, my assignment was to get some supplies and to get also more volunteers. Among my friends in Odessa I discovered a young artist. He was a painter of pictures and I gave him an idea for making a huge propaganda poster for the White armies. He did his best and his poster was huge, more than life-size. It represented a horrible red dragon crawling along the bushes, and above the dragon was a rearing stallion, of course a white stallion, and astride the stallion was an officer in full dress uniform of the Horse Guards. It was a very impressive poster, inspired by an ancient icon of St. George and the dragon, the red dragon. This poster was put into <sup>p320</sup> one of the big windows on the main street of Odessa, asking volunteers to join, and I gave my address at my aunt's, where they could be conscripted into my squadron.

My aunt had been a great idealist since her youth, and idealistically leaning to the left. It was murmured in the family that once upon a time she had been in love with a student who had been caught in some kind of a socialist conspiracy and deported to Siberia. Therefore her nickname among us was "The Red Aunt" because of her convictions. Besides, she was employed by the City of Odessa and most of the employees of Odessa City Hall were left-leaning liberals and socialists. They saw my dragon in the window on the main street of Odessa, and when my aunt came to the city hall, they all rushed up to her, asking if she had gone mad. Why did that reactionary poster of St. George and the dragon in the window give her address? My aunt knew nothing about this picture and she was quite flabbergasted, and when she came home she told me what she thought of me. Anyhow, it was impossible to have a quarrel with that dear aunt. Volunteers started pouring in and I changed the address in order to be closer to the center of the city. I gathered about 20 or 30 volunteers.

But getting supplies was another task. As usual, the supply officers demanded a formal requisition slip and proper forms, and those forms had to be signed and countersigned by headquarters and other headquarters and third headquarters, <sup>p321</sup> and so on. One of my





volunteers happened to be a very smart and very good-looking fellow around 20, and it was common knowledge that the young wife of the elderly senior officer had a very tender heart, especially toward boys not over 20. My volunteer, in the exercise of his first military duties, won the heart of that lady, and not only the heart. He also managed to win the keys to the supply dumps. Thanks to this, that night we entered the supply dumps, bribing the sentinels with vodka and money. We got cloth, badly needed to put our volunteers into uniforms, and as a bonus we even managed to get from that supply dump two heavy machine guns and a large amount of ammunition. This was all loaded at the main railroad station in Odessa, officially, and with two cars of volunteers and those supplies we were hooked onto a train which took us to the city of Kiev. I could not get those cars to my reserve squadron immediately because the bridges across the river Dnepr were all blown up, and Kiev was on the right shore while my reserve squadron was on the left shore.

After arriving in Kiev, I continued to call for volunteers. About ten or twenty young men volunteered. Most of those volunteers were just out of high school; they were very enthusiastic young boys, very anti-Communist, some of them belonging to very prominent families of the Russian nobility, but they were by no stretch of the imagination trained soldiers. I had to rejoin my regiment, to bring them those <sup>p322</sup> volunteers and the supplies. Mother remained in Kiev, occupied by very small, numerically weak units of the White Army. What happened to Mother later will be in a later chapter. But when I rejoined the reserve squadron, we had to dress up all the volunteers. We had the cloth and other stuff to make them shirts.

The worst problem was boots. But the place where we were then located was a small provincial town, and it was very famous for the profession of tailors. Ninety percent of that town was inhabited by a minority – I mean Jews – and most of them were professional tailors. One night we made a search of that small town, and we arrested every Jew who was a tailor – this was a procedure of civil war, of course, it was not foreseen by any regulation of the Imperial Army. Of course, the Jews were panicky, and expected to be executed. But we told them, “We are not members of the Red Tcheka. All we want from you is your skill as tailors. Here is the stuff.” We had them rounded up and locked up in a school, and we told them, “You are going to stay here to make uniforms from the cloth that we give you, and you are going to stay here until our squadron is fully dressed. And your wives, sisters or daughters can every day bring you your kosher food, because we are not going to feed you.” Sentinels were posted around that school, and the tailors were told, “Do not ever try to run away, or it will be your fault if a bullet reaches you.” <sup>p323</sup> After such drastic measures with the tailors, ten days later we were all in new uniforms which replaced the old tattered ones and also the tattered civilian clothes. We really looked like a military unit. The volunteer boys were trained for only two weeks, and then a squadron was formed to join the squadron north of us that was in the fighting lines.

After I returned from Odessa with the supplies and volunteers, the officers of the first squadron went on leave. My second squadron joined the first one and a group of officers replaced those who were on leave. We proceeded northward without encountering any real resistance from the Reds. Of course, we realized that ten miles to the east or ten miles to the west of the road we followed, there was nobody. Eventually, there were some small communist gangs that avoided our advance, that were left there for the purpose of attacking our rear, destroying our communication lines or attacking small units going back south. Everybody who went on leave south could not risk going alone, but only in a small armed group. And we went northwards through wooded country, very sandy roads, some marshes, the worst possible terrain for cavalry units. Proceeding northward we reached the city of Gluchov. This was a very ancient Russian city. It used to be a fortified city back in the days of



Tsar Ivan the Terrible and even before. It was intended as a trading post, and it had the <sup>p324</sup> buildings – they were stone buildings – that represented a quadrangle. There was a well in the middle of that quadrangle. And that quadrangle was known by the name Kreml. This word Kreml is well known to all tourists who now visit Moscow. But the word is a very ancient Russian word which used to mean in the very old days just plain “fortress.” It could resist the onslaught of the Tatar hordes. To me, it used to remind me of some decorations, some setups I used to see in the theater when operas were given. The famous opera Boris Godunov had in the back ground a picture of just this kind of an ancient fortification.

Of course, the city of Gluchov had grown and had surrounded that ancient fortification. We had nice living quarters. Personally we lived in a requisitioned school, and we made friends with some teachers, lady teachers. One of the elderly lady teachers offered us tea in the evening and discussed the present military and political situation. And she told us, “For the population, and for me personally, what is the difference between the Red armies and the White armies? Of course, there is a great political, moral, and psychological difference. But,” she said, “practically, there is only one difference” that she could see. She said “You Whites, you hang your opposition. And the Reds, they shoot.” Of course, the words of this elderly school teacher were a great shock to us. If that was the only <sup>p325</sup> difference, then what was this all about, all our fighting?

### **Once again in Odessa in search of supplies**

In spring of 1919 I was again detached from my unit on the Crimea to the city of Odessa for the purpose of getting supplies. At that time Odessa was occupied by French troops. I was living in the home of my Aunt Nadya Somov and the house was full of refugees. Among them were two brothers who were planning to go back to their estates to fetch their families and to try to escape to Rumania. Therefore, in Odessa, they managed to have quite a large amount of Rumanian money. The banks could not exchange money legally, but in Odessa anything could be obtained in a roundabout way. Then the two brothers, for reasons I do not know, changed their minds and decided to go back to their families and to try to somehow survive in the chaos of that region of south Russia and so they did not need those Rumanian liras any more. I was dead set on leaving Odessa because I knew that the French would be leaving very soon and that the only way out would be through Rumania, I still had a sizeable amount of money from the last income from Kodyma, so I made an exchange with those two gentlemen and I took their Rumanian liras and gave them all the money I had from that last income. There was Soviet money and old Tsarist money and they would be able to have the use of it where they were going. Incidentally, when they left to go to their families they never arrived; on their way they <sup>p326</sup> were murdered by some gangs and years later their families managed to escape and I will talk later about their escape.

So I had the Rumanian money. I was actually a stranger in Odessa because I had never lived there until after the Revolution. But my cousin Serge Stenbock-Fermor lived in Odessa. He had finished school there and after that he had finished at the artillery academy in Odessa and he knew the city inside out and had great friends in all social groups of the city. One day he rushed into Aunt Nadya’s home in great excitement, telling me that the last French troops were evacuating and leaving Odessa the next day. Part of them were being shipped back on French military ships, transport ships, but there were not enough ships and part of the French troops were marching to the Rumanian border about a ten days’ march from Odessa. He said that we had to leave Odessa to join those French troops.

Besides the French troops in Odessa, there was a so-called Russian Volunteer Brigade mostly composed of officers. I doubt very much that this brigade had more than two thousand men in it. Junior officers were just plain infantry men, squads were commanded by colonels. They



were armed only with rifles and small arms and only a few machine guns, and of course, they were in no shape to hold the great city of Odessa even against that rabble. The Communist rabble, the underground of any such big city, was only waiting for the French to leave so they could grab <sup>p327</sup> Odessa. Besides, they would of course be joined from the outside from the north by stronger Communist forces. So that small brigade of General Timanovsky had to leave Odessa with the French. Timanovsky was a typical person for those times. He had graduated from high school in Odessa in 1912 and had joined the Russian Army as a volunteer private in the fall of 1914. Now in the early days of 1919 he was a general, I could almost say, a general of his own making and promotion. He was a hero in the early days of the volunteer army. He participated in the so-called cold, windy, ice movement of the small Russian White units that had to leave Rostov and go into the steppes [i.e. the “Ice Marc”]. Of course, Timanovsky was a hero, an idealist, and in manners he was a young Russian bear. He had a convoy that consisted of about one hundred men. He knew my cousin Serge very well because he had gone to high school with Serge’s older sister, Olga, who also planned to leave Odessa with us as a nurse with the Red Cross. So we joined the body guard of Timanovsky but for us cavalrymen marching away on foot was a nightmare.

When Serge burst into the room telling that the French were leaving, he also said in great excitement that at this very moment a race course and the stables of the race horses, that were not far away from where we lived, were being looted by soldiers of a Polish Legion. This Polish Legion was a fighting unit composed of officers and enlisted <sup>p328</sup> men of Polish origin. They had re-grouped and their idea was to fight their way back to Poland and to help Poland become an independent, sovereign country. This Polish Legion was composed of real fighting men; they were commanded by Polish officers, very many of whom had served before that in the Russian Imperial Army. They had discipline among them and they had a call to regain and to reconstruct their beloved Poland. Now they were taking away all the thoroughbred horses from the race tracks of Odessa. So Serge and I rushed to those race tracks and to the stables. I entered one of the stables, my big British colt revolver in my hand, and I put my colt right under the nose of one of the Polish legionaries who was attempting to enter the same stable and the legionary “evaporated”, vanished, probably due to the influence of my colt. That stable had in it a horse and a saddle. Saddling a horse was no problem for me and I led the horse out and I was on horseback. The same thing happened to my cousin Serge and when we joined the Timanovsky group of bodyguards we felt much better. Other soldiers of the Timanovsky bodyguard got horses by just grabbing in the middle of the streets local coachmen that one could hire and taking the horses, unharnessing them from the carriages, and driving the coachman away and getting astride of those horses – saddles were available. And this particular group of the bodyguard of General Timanovsky had just two ways of moving, either to walk or <sup>p329</sup> gallop full speed because there were those carriage horses and our racing horses. I felt that I was astride a really good horse.

### **Move toward Rumanian border**

So we left Odessa, toward the Rumanian border and with an endless column of soldiers and officers, belonging to no unit whatsoever, carts with refugees, and some carts with Red Cross nurses, including my cousin Olga. While we were moving toward the border, a well-dressed elderly gentleman approached me while I was waiting for my turn to cross a bridge and addressed me very politely and said, “Sir Officer, may I please ask you a question?” I said, “Of course, go ahead.” He said to me, “Sir Officer, do you happen to know what horse you are riding?” I said, “I have not the faintest idea. As you probably know, I took it under certain circumstances when the Polish Legion was looting the stables.” The well-dressed gentleman said, “Allow me to present myself to you. I am the manager of the racing studs of Mr. Lazarev.” Now the name of Lazarev was that of the greatest, most famous Russian racing



studs. And he said, "Sir Officer, you are astride of a five year old mare, Fantasia. And that mare has won the Russian Imperial Derby and a prize just before the Revolution, a prize of two hundred thousand gold rubles. It was the greatest prize in all of Russia." Well, I had felt I was astride a good horse because I knew something about <sup>p330</sup> horses. I immediately fell in love with my horse and started taking great care of it. Fodder was very scarce but somehow I managed to ride to the encampment of the French supply units which were very poorly guarded by French black troops, most undisciplined, and I got hold of a sack of oats to feed my Fantasia. And then grass was growing along the roads but that new, fresh grass is not good fodder. Anyhow, I was in possession of Fantasia for about a week.

And then we came up to a sandbank of Burgaz. This sandbank was the border between Russian territory and Rumanian territory and crossing the river there was a railroad bridge. We expected the Rumanians, who had been allies of Russia in the First World War, to receive us, to give us an opportunity to re-arm and re-form and fight back against the Bolsheviki. Rumanians were practically under the command of the French troops who were in Rumania, also our old allies, but their mentality had become very different from what we had expected. They did not want to get into any trouble with Soviet Communist Russia and therefore they refused to let us pass through the Rumanian border. We were on the sandbank without fodder for the horses, without food for ourselves and the refugees. Nevertheless we attempted to cross that railroad bridge. There were railroad tracks but the wood-ties under the tracks had been mostly taken away by the Rumanians. So we <sup>p331</sup> dismounted and led our horses and my Fantasia stepped gingerly from one tie across empty space to another tie, never losing her footing. At that moment the Rumanians sent a railroad engine to meet us and that railroad engine was of course managed by an engineer, a Rumanian. He stepped full speed on the throttle and jumped off the engine, and the engine rushed against us as we tried to bring our horses across. Well, some of those who were in front of me had the presence of mind to throw some hand grenades at the engine and the engine fell off the side of the bridge and into the river. But part of the bridge was also destroyed because of those hand grenades, so we just had to lead our horses back.

Then came orders from the French commander (besides the French troops he was in charge of us and the Polish Legion, in fact everyone who was in the group) saying that French landing boats would take us aboard the next day, but that we would have to leave all of our guns, heavy armaments, and all the thoroughbred horses must be surrendered to the French command. All the rest of the horses would be taken by the Polish Legion. Of course we had some private luggage and suitcases in the carts. My cousin Olga, in her Red Cross dress, penetrated during the evening into the encampment of the French supply units. She was carrying a bottle of vodka and she managed to trade that bottle of vodka with the black French troops for a very strong mule, a pack <sup>p332</sup> animal, with all his pack equipment. She led the animal back to our encampment and that big, strong mule was immediately called by all of us, "Anselm", which was the last name of the French Commander. We wanted to honor him. The mule came in very handy. Then the Polish Legion contacted us (as I said, many of the officers were ex- Russian officers) and they said to us, "Listen, fellow officers, if you surrender your thoroughbred horses to the French, they will take them to France and you will never see them again. Give those thoroughbred horses to us Poles. We will take them to Poland and then when all this chaos is over they will be safe and they will be surrendered back to the non-communist Russian forces, because Poland and Russia are neighbors." Well, that sounded very nice and I was put in charge by General Timanovsky, because of my knowledge of French, of going to the French Headquarters of General Anselm and reporting to him that his orders were not going to be followed, a rather nasty thing to have to report. I was confronted by General Anselm in person and I said to him in my excellent French, "Mon General... and





so forth and so on.” He was jumping mad and he yelled at me that he was going to immediately give orders that I be hanged and my General Timanovsky along with me. Well, I saluted and left and another order of General Anselm was never implemented because I am still here. The next day my Fantasia was taken over by the Poles. I parted with her <sup>p333</sup> with tears in my eyes and I do not know whatever happened to her later.

The French landing ships did come but they could not approach the sandbank because the water was much too shallow, so we were taken to the ships in rowboats. The rowboats were very low, the rails of the ships were very high, and only cord ladders were hanging down the sides of the ships to the small boats. Everyone who wanted to get aboard had to climb those ladders. I started climbing like a monkey, holding to the ladder with my right hand, and in my left hand I had my suitcase with all my belongings, It was rather heavy and my strength started leaving me. As I mounted and mounted I was confronted for a few seconds with the question: should I let go of that suitcase with all my belongings and get aboard? If I did not let go of it I probably would not be able to get aboard. But I was almost up, and very fortunately somebody’s hand grabbed me by my collar like a puppy and pulled me aboard and I had not let go of my suitcase, so I and my suitcase were aboard. Of course, those ships were overcrowded with refugees and Russian volunteers and on the ship General Timanovsky had his headquarters. I was suddenly in the role of private in spite of my officer’s rank, for as I have said before, squads were commanded by colonels and I was only a junior Lieutenant.

That day, before the ships left for Rumania, my turn <sup>p334</sup> came to be on duty guarding headquarters and the big money box. How much money was in that box I do not know – I doubt there was much – but the money box always played a great role in all regiments. Next to the money box, even in peace time, there stood the banner of the regiment and a guard went on duty every four hours and was supposed to stand at attention, guarding that box. I was rather tired and I was not sure of being relieved four hours later, so after about three hours of standing there I just put my rifle on the top of the box and sat next to it. There came around a senior officer, an officer of some obscure line regiment, and when he saw me sitting on that official box he almost fainted and then there was a big row. What liberties those junior lieutenants of the Imperial Horse Guards were taking! Well, what can you expect from the officers of the Imperial Guards? Of course, from his point of view it was a scandal, almost worse than the Revolution itself. To make things worse, I kept my cool and I told that excited colonel that if I sat on the box I would be able to guard it all night, but if I had to stand at attention according to all the regulations, I would have to be relieved every four hours. So he insulted me and called me a partisan – a partisan was a not-very-regular officer. Well, that scandal finally blew over.

## **We enter Rumania**

The French landing ships moved and they took us up an <sup>p335</sup> estuary of the Danube River which separated Rumania from Bulgaria. We came to the little provincial city of Tulcha, in which the inhabitants did not really know who they were, Rumanians or Bulgarians. At that moment they were Rumanians and the place was occupied and supervised by the French High Command and by French African black troops. There was a problem with lodging for the refugees and the Russian military units and this problem was in the hands of a Rumanian colonel, the commandant of the city of Tulcha. Those diplomatic relations, conversations with Rumanian or French authorities, had to be handled by someone who knew foreign languages. In all that so-called brigade there were only four of us: myself, my cousin Serge, my friend Rodzevich, who was a graduate from St. Petersburg Law School, and a professor candidate Zimmerman, a candidate of international law. So Zimmerman headed the little group of the four of us and jokingly we were called the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Professor Zimmerman





was a very, very handsome man and he really imagined himself to be a kind of Minister of Foreign Affairs which was reflected in his tone and in his speeches with the local authorities. I was assigned to the Rumanian Commandant Colonel of the city of Tulcha.

The refugees were standing in the streets waiting to get some kind of lodgings and when I came to his office late in the afternoon, the Rumanian Colonel Commandant was in no <sup>p336</sup> hurry. That made me very mad. Our conversation was in French and I was so mad that I yelled at that Colonel that if measures were not taken immediately to find lodgings for all those waiting people and they had to spend the night in the open street, I would immediately call some of them off the streets and into his office and have them grab him and his helpers and dump them into the Danube. Well, he could have shot me or he could have reported me to the French High Command but he gave in, seeing that I was so mad and using such strong language. The result was that all the troops and refugees were lodged in barracks and houses that very same evening. That was the only way to talk to Rumanians .

Supplies were given to us by the French. We were given cans of French corned beef that came from Madagascar, an island then under French command. Our soldiers and many Russians were convinced that it was not beef, that it was some kind of monkey or orang-utan meat and they called it “*du cinge*” - cinge means monkey in French. So there were those cans and I cannot quite remember how much, but I think there was a can for two persons per day. And then they gave us chocolate and that was all. Fortunately I still had those Rumanian liras with me so I could go into the city market in Tulcha and there, for a very token price in Rumanian liras, I could buy ground corn and ground millet, so I became the cook for our Ministry of Foreign Affairs. <sup>p337</sup> A Rumanian villa had been requisitioned for us and there we lived. I cooked millet or ground corn and then I dumped into that porridge the contents of that can of so-called monkey meat and then I stirred it. It was very nourishing. For dessert I boiled a new portion of ground millet and I stuck into that boiling millet or corn the chocolate that the French had given us. And that was our ration every day all day. We did not go hungry and it was very nourishing but it was very tedious.

Of course, very good coffee could be bought in Rumanian taverns, cups of excellent coffee that we had missed for so long and we indulged in that coffee to such an extent that despite the average age of 20 to 25 years we noticed that we were drinking too much strong coffee. Of course, the French also gave us some wine, because no Frenchman can live a day without wine. The French saying is that a day without wine is like a day without sunshine. I agree with this.

The French High Command decided to have a party and to invite General Timanovsky, his staff officers, and us so-to-say diplomats. Well, I conveyed that invitation to General Timanovsky and his response was, “I am not disposed to go to them this coming Wednesday. Tell them that I will come on Thursday.” That was poor diplomacy and poor manners and, of course, the relationship between the French High Command and Timanovsky and persons on his staff was a great problem for us. <sup>p338</sup> Going back and forth between the French High Command and the Rumanians, I was the first one to get the news, the very welcome news, that the Russian White Armies were having success and that they were sending Russian troop ships, escorted by a Russian cruiser (one of the few still left on the Black Sea in good shape) and that we would be able to leave Tulcha, where we were something between prisoners and unwelcome guests. We were to be shipped back to Russia to join the Russian White Armies.

At that time in Tulcha on one of the shady streets there were shops, a kind of stock exchange, and those shops were all in Jewish hands. They paid Ukrainian money at a low liras-rate. We had a large amount of Rumanian money and I knew that Ukrainian money, once we arrived in Russia, could be exchanged ruble for ruble for the money that was worth something in south



Russia. So I went into one of those Jewish shops in my officer's uniform with liras in my hand and I asked to buy that Ukrainian money. That old Jewish man gasped and stared at me but he could not refuse, and I bought some of that Ukrainian money for the very low exchange rate then existing in the city of Tulcha. From there I went next door and I did the same. That whole business lasted maybe ten minutes. When I went to the third shop I was told that the stock exchange for today in Tulcha was closed. They were dumbfounded by the fact that an officer in uniform was giving away those Rumanian liras for <sup>p339</sup> the purpose of buying the almost worthless Ukrainian money. Of course, through the back door a boy had rushed from shop to shop and said in Jewish jargon that something was wrong, something unusual was going on, that there was an officer buying that worthless money and giving up liras for it. There was a panic in Tulcha on the Jewish stock exchange, a panic created by me. I was very happy and had a good laugh with my good friends. And that was the only time I succeeded in creating a panic on a stock exchange anywhere in the world.

Across the Black Sea – back to Russia and the war goes on A few days later the Russian warship arrived. It was flying a Russian national flag, white blue and red, and was escorted by a cruiser decorated with the Russian Navy battle flag. That was quite a sight! We all cheered and we noticed that the Rumanians changed their attitude toward us, apparently feeling that, well, Russia is still alive. We boarded those ships, very happy to get away from Tulcha, and those ships took us from west to east, across the entire Black Sea. We could not enter the ports of the Crimea because they were then occupied by the Red armies. Aboard those ships I questioned the Russian Navy officers about what had been going on in general, because while we were in Tulcha we knew absolutely nothing of what was happening outside. From them I learned that my unit was now on the Crimea. They had retreated back into the Crimea and then <sup>p340</sup> eastward toward the city of Kerch, which was separated from Crimea proper by a very narrow strip of land maybe twenty kilometers wide. On one side of that land was the Black Sea, on the other side was an inland sea, called the Azov Sea, which was very shallow. On that narrow piece of land the Russian White volunteers dug in and resisted the Red advance, defending the city of Kerch. It was a sort of stalemate because the defendants of that narrow strip were supported by British warships; destroyers that could go into the shallow water stood in the Azov Sea and heavy British warships stood in the Black Sea, and when on both sides they opened fire, there was a kind of fire curtain. That curtain was so strong that the Bolsheviks did not dare move and attack the trenches which the men of my unit were occupying.

I landed in the city of Novorossisk and in the couple of days that I spent in Novorossisk I rushed around the city meeting lots of friends and trying to find out from them if they knew the whereabouts of Dina and her parents. Well, nobody knew anything about them. I met there my ex-secretary of the sporting club, Irina Tolstoy, and her friends, but not Dina. Finally I joined the reserve units of the regiment located east of Kerch across a narrow strip of water, and for some time I was in that reserve unit that was training volunteers and preparing an offensive while the fighting unit was in the trenches defending the city of Kerch. - 341 –

The city of Kerch had a very unusual feature. It was a very ancient city founded centuries ago by Greek merchants. All of the houses were built of stone and that stone had been dug out of the earth, forming great caverns under and very near to the city. They were very deep and had corridors. It was like an underground city and it was full of Communists and Bolsheviks. There were many entrances, some in orchards, some in houses. But who could know what houses or what orchards? The Reds came out at night and stabbed our sentinels and there was a danger of their coming out in numbers and attacking our trenches from the rear, and no fire of the British fleet could help us in such a case. So the British sent help in a different form: British specialists in gas arrived. Wherever a hole was found that might be an entrance to



those caves, that hole was closed with stone and cement, and into those holes that remained open they put gas under pressure. The heavy gas went into the caverns and all those who were in them had the choice of being suffocated or fighting their way out. The moment they appeared, half conscious, they were bayoneted or clubbed because our soldiers were so incensed at having lost so many of their friends to those rascals.

Well, my friend Captain Jojo was in command of gassing one of those holes. He was an excellent officer and a very kind man and he was shocked at what our soldiers were doing. He prevented them as best he could but it was a difficult task to manage those enraged soldiers. One fellow <sup>p342</sup> appeared out of a hole, very dizzy, barely standing on his feet, and the moment he appeared Captain Jojo grasped him in his arms and thus prevented him from being bayoneted or clubbed and when this fellow, now breathing fresh air, came to his senses, my Captain Jojo immediately ordered him to become a volunteer of our unit. He was enlisted then and there as a volunteer. It turned out that he had been a work man in a St. Petersburg armaments factory and he was a specialist, a mechanic, a genius of a mechanic. He had been a specialist in keeping all kinds of arms, the smallest, most complicated arms, in good shape. He joined us for good in thankfulness that his life had been saved and he became a treasure of a man in our squadron. Finally, when the White movement was over (he was in the bodyguard of General Wrangel) he became an emigrant, and of course as an excellent mechanic he got a very good job long before we officers could dream of getting any kind of work at all.

Finally the advance of the Russian Whites started in what must have been early June 1919, and from the reserve unit I had to cross the channel by ferry to get into Kerch. My unit consisted of four four-wheel carriages with four horses each, and each carriage had a heavy machine gun. Those machine guns on four-wheel carriages were the ancestors of the tanks of the future. The problem was how to have the greatest and fastest mobility combined with the greatest fire power. I had to join the group in Akmanai and when I got there I heard <sup>p343</sup> that that group had already advanced, fighting and penetrating back into the Crimea. And they had moved just twenty-four hours before my arrival in Kerch. So I moved to follow them, intending to catch up with them.

### **Chinese fight on the Reds' side**

In midsummer of 1919 the White Army units were approaching a very important railroad junction, the junction of Bachmach and a small provincial town of the same name. Apparently the Reds had plans to defend it stubbornly and they did not destroy the railroad lines. This gave our armored trains an opportunity to move and occupy the main railroad station. The Reds panicked and fled but then ordered that the station be re-captured and our armored trains destroyed regardless of losses. Hordes of drunk and drugged Chinese attacked our armored trains blindly. In spite of our point-blank fire they crawled on the trains, on the roofs of the cars, attempting to blow holes with hand grenades or to penetrate into the cars through the car windows. Those Chinese climbed over layers of bodies of other Chinese, like ants. It was an unimaginable, nightmarish fight. When our cavalry reached the station of Bachmach, no Chinese were alive. The trains were as if painted red. Pieces of human flesh were sticking to the walls of the cars and the windows were covered with human brains and pieces of skulls.

Why Chinese in the Communist Red Army? Well, in 1915 as a result of general mobilization a lack of unskilled <sup>p344</sup> labor force occurred, especially for maintenance of the rail roads. For this reason many working battalions were imported from over-populated China. They were excellent and cheap labor. In the summer of 1917, under the government of Kerensky, havoc spread all over Russia like a rapid brushfire. The Chinese "Labor Battalions" were forgotten, unfed, unhoused and they went wild serving the hand that fed them. In 1918 they became cannon fodder for units of the Communist Red Army, not having any notion what they were



fighting for, with whom and against whom.

One of my fellow officers picked up on the side of the road a Chinese young fellow, dying of hunger. My friend picked him up, fed him, took him to his estate and entrusted him with the care of the horses. Shortly after this estate was looted as all others. My friend was absent. But the Chinese boy was murdered by peasants while he was defending the horses of his master. Chinese loyalty to the hand that feeds them.

### **General Shkuro and his “Brigade”**

While the main forces of the White Armies had been moving northward along the Sevastopol'-Moscow-St. Petersburg railroad and had advanced as far as Kursk, other units were moving in the same direction along the banks of the Dnepr. But to the west the region between Ekaterinoslav, Odessa, and Nikolaev was still in the hands of the Reds. If one looks at the map <sup>p345</sup> one realizes that all that region on the right bank of the Dnepr, a region equal in square miles to more than half of France, was being cut off from the north by the White Armies; inside that region there was only the brigade of Shkuro, 2,000 men, to fight the Reds and keep law and order. Of course this was an absolutely impossible task. The stretch of land that Shkuro and his men controlled could be at the utmost 20 to 30 km wide, and right and left of it reigned total chaos. Small and large bands of Reds were living there off the population, terrorizing it, and disrupting all the supply lines of the White Armies.

Some of the Reds, to avoid being encircled in Nikolaev, left the city in panic and disorder and moved northward along the railroad lines connecting Nikolaev with Poltava, which was already in the hands of the Whites. They went as far as the station of Novy-Bug, about 100 km north of Nikolaev. Shkuro's brigade was moving southward along that same rail road line. General Shkuro's train got stuck some 40 miles north of Novy-Bug. There was a stalemate along the railway lines because the Reds coming from Nikolaev were extremely well armed. They even had heavy guns mounted on railroad flat-cars. On the other hand, General Shkuro and his men could not attack trenches that were defended by machine guns and even heavy artillery. So what did Shkuro do? Shkuro himself, with his hundred-men personal bodyguard and a brass band mounted on horses, rode for about 50 km around fortified <sup>p346</sup> Novy-Bug through the emptiness of the steppes, and at the break of dawn he galloped into the city of Nikolaev at the head of his personal bodyguard, his brass band playing the Russian national anthem, and the Russian national flag flying from the lance of one of his men.

No matter how well armed a unit is, if it is panicky it is not a fighting unit any more. The appearance of Shkuro made such an impression on the Reds still in Nikolaev that they fled north to Novy-Bug as fast as they could and when the Reds heard what had happened they, too, abandoned their entrenched lines and all their heavy guns and fled on foot or in carts, thus leaving the whole railroad line free for the Whites. The Reds fled to the west and the north to get out of a presumed encirclement by Shkuro, an encirclement that in fact did not exist. It was only the dashing maneuver of Shkuro, riding on horseback through the city with his brass band, that did it.

The whole brigade of Shkuro moved now into the city of Nikolaev. There was a great parade. The clergy of the city in all their glistening robes met Shkuro on the main square. A church service of thanksgiving for the liberation of Nikolaev from the Red terror was held, and when Shkuro rode through the crowd, many women tried to reach his horse and to kiss his boot or his stirrup. It was something quite medieval.

Just to finish the life story of this dashing General Shkuro: he emigrated after the collapse of the White Armies. He lived in France and from there he continued to send messages, <sup>p347</sup> secret messages of course, into Russia and to his native region of Kuban. Kuban was a vast





and rich region. It bears the name of the river flowing through it. Some of his messengers were caught by the Reds and the Reds protested officially to the government of France that an émigré, living in Paris was attempting to make anti-Soviet propaganda. In those days, the 1930s, France was trying to make friends with the emerging power of Soviet Russia, so the French officials were very much annoyed and Shkuro was expelled from France. He left for Germany and then for Yugoslavia. In Yugoslavia, a large French engineering company was building dams on the Danube to prevent the river from overflowing its banks in early spring and also for the purpose of turning the marshes into productive land. Shkuro organized a workers' union of Cossacks who did this building work. I met Shkuro (In 1933 in July, General Shkuro was at my wedding in Beograd, Yugoslavia, as a guest of honor) in those days in Yugoslavia and he was commanding those workers just as if he were a Division Commander. He said to me, "I know very well my so-and-so Cossacks. The moment they get paid they go to some local pub (in Serbian: *Kafana*), and there they spend most of their earnings. When winter comes and there is no work, they have nothing left and they are hungry. So when they are paid through me, I deduct 50% of their pay and I keep it for them so that in winter they shall have something.

Once a great party was organized for the inauguration of <sup>p348</sup> one of those dams. All the French engineers came to that party as well as all the Cossacks who had worked on it, and of course there was a band. Somehow, Shkuro managed to get instruments out of nowhere. It was a big Cossack brass band. They had learned to play the French national anthem and many Cossack songs. Shkuro was a man of foresight and psychology. He had set apart a group of Cossacks who were forbidden to drink a drop of vodka, ordered to be sober at the end of the party, and to have stretchers ready. The stretchers came in very handy because when the party was over those sober Cossacks carried away the French engineers on those stretchers. When World War II broke out, all those Cossacks, in spite of being advanced in age, were still good fighting men and they wanted to fight the Communists. They were ready to be the allies of the devil himself, or Hitler, or anyone who would fight the Communists. They became fighting units on the German side, fighting Stalin's Reds. They were excellent fighters and they gave great trouble to Stalin's troops.

But when Germany collapsed there was the infamous agreement in Yalta, made between Stalin, Roosevelt, and Churchill, that all Cossack troops in Germany be rounded up by United States and British troops and delivered to Stalin as traitors to their country. By some kind of subterfuge and lies by the British authorities, Shkuro was one of the generals that the British military authorities in Germany delivered (like on a platter) to the Red Army. Shkuro was then taken to <sup>p349</sup> Moscow with some other Cossack generals. There was a sham trial and he was sentenced to death by hanging and he was hung in the central prison of Moscow, but he was not hung by a rope. He was hung by butcher hooks that were stuck into his ribs and he was left hanging there by his ribs. He lived for more than twenty-four hours, suffering the death of a martyr. In those days President Roosevelt was dead and the new President, Truman, was speaking of Stalin in terms of "our good Uncle Joe." However, it is officially known that on June 1, 1945, in a small town in Austria called Enns, near Linz, 37 Cossack generals, 2,605 officers, and 29,000 other ranks were treacherously delivered to Stalin by the British military authorities. ("Keelhaul operation", all documents about it are at the Hoover Institute at Stanford University, Stanford, California).

When Shkuro's armored train had got stuck north of Novy-Bug I got off because this was the station closest to Kodyma. Only one soldier went with me. I found a peasant cart and we travelled 30 km through a kind of no-man's-land. Of course at that time I had no idea of the overall military situation and I did not realize that the station of Novy-Bug, only ten kilometers to the west of Kodyma, was the center of the resistance line of the Reds. Then I





went on to Nikolaev with some carts from Kodyma and from there I went to Odessa. When I finally reached Odessa it was just a few days after the city had been occupied by White Armies. Other units of the <sup>p350</sup> White Armies were north of Odessa and the Reds occupying Odessa had been scared of having their roads of retreat to the north cut, so they left the city and small units of officers came out of hiding in Odessa, but altogether their number would barely represent one regiment in peacetime. It was a very small unit to try to keep some semblance of order in such a big city as Odessa.

Again I lived with my Aunt Somov. I managed to hire a carriage to take me from the railroad to her home on the outskirts. Any other forms of commuting, such as electric trams, were not functioning. When I drove up to the house (it was about July, 1919) in an open window of the house, I saw my cousin Mary sitting on the window sill. When she saw the carriage, which was quite an unusual sight, and when she saw me in the carriage, she just jumped out of the window into the garden and ran to come and greet me.

### **My last visit to Kodyma**

All through the year of 1919 during the Civil War, the war was waged mostly along railroad lines. Scouts went right and left of the railroad lines, sometimes twenty kilometers, sometimes more, for food and fodder, but otherwise all that huge region between the city of Ekaterinoslav and the city of Odessa – looking at the map and realizing the square kilometers of that region and comparing it with a map of France, that region was bigger than half of France. Between the city of Ekaterinoslav and Odessa, there was a <sup>p351</sup> cavalry brigade of roughly two thousand Cossacks. How much of the territory was really occupied or ruled by them would be hard to say. It was only a little strip of land that we went through. Right and left of that strip there was no-man's land of thousands and thousands of square miles infested with irregular small or large bands of looters. And armored trains played a great role on the railroad lines.

An armored train was some kind of a makeshift contraption built of materials that happened to be on hand. Usually there was a railroad steam engine. In front of that engine there was a flatcar and on that flatcar a gun of the field artillery protected by bags of sand. Then came the engine, then came the car full of coal to keep the engine running, then came a passenger car for the personnel of that train and it was protected with plates of metal to somehow hold off the fire of the enemy. The engine was also protected, especially the boiler room of the engine. That was the most vulnerable part of the so-called armored trains. If the boiler got shot at, the water ran out and the train was out of commission. In the back of the train there were flatcars with rails and tools to repair rails that were sometimes broken some miles in front of the train or behind it. These trains were highly vulnerable of course. The passenger cars were armed with machine guns and the effect of such a train was felt as far as the machine guns and the artillery gun could shoot. But if shot at, it was a sitting duck. Once the train was immobilized, it was almost defenseless.

The Red side had such trains; the White side <sup>p352</sup> had such trains. Once our side was very bothered by a Red train that was shelling our positions and preventing our cavalry to deploy an attack. Our field artillery came to help us, led by one of my artillery officer friends who was a born genius of artillery. Just as there are great artists of the past and their pictures are in the museum because they had a kind of super talent by the grace of God, this artillery officer was an artillery officer by the grace of God. He could judge a distance and point the guns and when he opened fire after the first shot of the guns, the second shot landed right into the chimney of the Red armored train. And of course that had such an effect on our troops that they started really worshipping that artillery officer. Besides when we advanced, dismounted and advanced as infantry, his artillery guns were right in our lines, shooting point blank at the



enemy.

Sometimes when we retreated, he remained with his guns and covered our retreat, his guns not being protected by anybody. When we were leaving, during the general retreat that started in late fall of 1919, we were leaving the city of Gluchov under no pressure from the Reds. Then after leaving the city there were a few skirmishes and a few Red soldiers were taken prisoner and we asked them then, "Why did you let us go, leave that city without any pressure? We were completely outnumbered by you?" And then they said, "Well, we knew that on the main road north of Gluchov stood a battery of artillery guns under the command of Colonel Logodovsky and he was famous, not among you <sup>p353</sup> Whites, he was famous among us Reds. And we knew that the guns of Colonel Logodovsky could shoot in all four directions at the same time!" Well, later, fortunately that Colonel escaped to France and had a great garage of taxi cars that he had organized. He died not so long ago; he was one of the greatest heroes of the White Army.

When I was sick with malaria in July, 1919, in the city of Ekaterinoslav, I spent there about three weeks and then I had to proceed onward to Odessa because my orders were to go to Odessa to try and get some supplies for our squadron. In peacetime travelling by passenger train to the city of Odessa from Ekaterinoslav took about twenty-four hours. But in 1919 that was quite a different story. There were no trains moving. And I fortunately saw an armored train that had orders to go to Odessa. This armored train belonged to a cavalry brigade and had been supporting the brigade with its heavy guns. The cavalry brigade consisted of Cossacks and Moslem mountaineers of the Caucasus. They were savage fighters, especially on horseback. And wherever they appeared, the Red troops fled. And they were now moving in the direction of Odessa from the northeast. The Reds in Odessa and the vicinity, same as in the vicinity of Nikolaev, were very unhappy and afraid of having their roads of retreat to the north cut from the north and the whole region of Nikolaev-Odessa would be as if in a bag. So they started hastily to retreat; they left Odessa.

In Odessa, 354 - small units of local officers appeared. There were many different units. Some officers were politically minded as socialists, some were monarchists, some did not know themselves what actually politically they were. But anyway, they were militarily weak, ill-led and could not hold such a huge city as Odessa when there was so much underground rabble, very Bolshevik-minded, and a local uprising could erupt any moment. But units of the White Army from the Crimea came by ship to Odessa and landed. The small local Odessa units joined them and Odessa and the vicinity of the city about twenty miles inland was in the hands of the White Army once again and the Reds were fleeing north.

Now my armored train, on which I was a guest, was moving to Odessa from the north, so there was bound to be a clash with the Reds heading northward and the Whites coming from the northeast southward. Looking at a map you will see the railroad line Nikolaev, Poltava and north of it, Herkov [Kharkov?]. That was the railroad line that we travelled twice a year in peacetime and in my infancy. I knew and I think I still know by heart the railroad stations along that line. My armored train where I was a guest, as I said, went slowly, stopping at many stations because the cavalry regiments that the train was supporting were also moving cautiously and slowly. I was slightly bored having nothing to do on that train, but I will never forget the moment when being in one of the compartments of that train I felt something tickling my hand. When I had a close look, I discovered lice. The whole country, everything <sup>p355</sup> was infested with lice that later produced typhoid fever and typhoid fever took a greater toll of Whites and Reds than the real fighting. And there was no medicine, or scarcely any to combat that epidemic. So I knew that sooner or later I would have typhus, because I had lice. And the train rolled southward and stopped finally at a station that was only thirty kilometers



from my estate of Kodyma. On that train I was not alone; I had a volunteer private who had joined me in the city of Ekaterinoslav. There were two of us. He was about the same age as I was. And I could not resist the temptation of leaving this armored train to get a cart and to drive the thirty kilometers to Kodyma.

Well, I persuaded a driver, a local peasant, to drive me in his cart. The methods of persuasion in those days were only two: money in one hand and a revolver in the other. The peasant agreed to drive me. And of course I did not realize the crazy danger that I was putting myself in, because that country was no-man's land, infested with all kinds of bands and what was in Kodyma, who was in Kodyma? I had not the faintest idea. Anyhow, I drove right in to the astonishment of the whole staff that was still there. I entered the house that had been thoroughly looted. And the looters always imagined that those who had cash money hid it in books. And therefore wherever there was a library, their first gesture was to ransack the library, to tear up all the books, looking for money and usually finding none. So when I entered the study <sup>p356</sup> of my late father, I saw all the books lying in a heap on the floor, the bookshelves, the book cupboards smashed to pieces, his desk also. But on the desk there stood a miniature picture made by some artist in the mid-nineteenth century representing my Grandfather in the uniform of the Horse Guards and on the other half in that way was my Grandmother dressed in mid-Victorian style, a very, very thin waist and a very ample skirt. Of course, I knew my Grandmother and she looked very different from the days when I knew her. And for some reason I did not take that miniature picture with me. I was of course very excited about the whole situation and I still am sorry that I did not take it, though probably I would have lost it any how. Much later, in Paris, I found a photograph of that miniature picture and I still have it.

And standing next to that heap of torn books, I suddenly noticed lying right at my feet a thin metal needle. And it was one of the gadgets that you could look for for days and days and never find it, and here it was right at my feet. It suddenly dawned on me that this needle was used by my father to open the very intricate locks of the safe that was standing on the wall. Next to me was the manager and he had witnessed all the looting while it was going on and he told me that the looters tried with all kinds of gadgets to break open that safe but could not. The safe was still standing there. I remembered the combination of numbers and letters that had to be turned around and when that was done there appeared a very, very small <sup>p357</sup> hole. That needle had to be introduced into the hole and pressed. And then it opened up. So that is what I did. It was very good that I remembered all the combination of numbers and letters. Just for amusement I opened, as a child and a young man, that safe many, many times. It contained nothing particularly valuable – lots of medals and prizes for cattle shown in big shows and also I discovered there a box with about twenty or thirty gold coins, German marks from peacetime and Austrian crowns. Well, gold is gold no matter what. So this was the only really valuable thing I found in that safe and of course it came in very handy, So I immediately put the gold into a small bag and put it into my pocket. So I decided to leave Kodyma the next morning, I went and had again a hot bath, which was a great luxury after many months.

Early next morning the cook re-appeared. He had fled during that looting and had actually participated in the looting. He explained in front of me on his knees – I immediately grabbed him and made him stand up – the old man was crazy with fear. And he said to me that he was not a looter but that he had attempted to save the cellar and all the wine that was in the cellar. Therefore he loaded it onto his cart and the cart of a friend and drove it into the village and put it in his home. Well I pretended to believe him. “And now” he said, “the two carts are just outside where I have brought all that wine back again.” He was afraid of having <sup>p358</sup> that wine with some of his neighbors in the village knowing that it was wine, so he washed all the labels



off the bottles so nobody could know what was contained in them. Of course we could not take those two carts along with us, but we could take at least a dozen or more. My volunteer and I, both aged twenty- two, decided that the only way to proceed was to open all the bottles and to taste what was in them. And we started opening the bottles just as they stood and tasting whatever was in them. Sometimes we recognized the bottles of vodka by their peculiar shape, and we knew it was vodka but we just did not taste it – we took just a few with us later. It was mostly red and white wine. Then there was just one bottle that had a very peculiar shape. It was uncorked and my volunteer tasted and the liquor in it was rather thick and I said to him, “What do you think it is?” He reported to me, “Sir, I believe it must be kerosene.” “Well, it is only one bottle anyhow and if you think it is kerosene, then I prefer not to taste it.” So we corked it up and took the bottle with us along with a dozen or more of the other bottles. And finally, after travelling two or three days with some volunteers from Odessa, I reached the city of Kiev, where I found my mother. I will later speak about my Mother living in Kiev and going through all the horrors of the occupation of Kiev by the Reds. Now Kiev was liberated by the White Armies, but they were very weak numerically. They stood twenty or thirty kilometers to the north of Kiev. But if the Reds would have exercised some pressure, there were too few <sup>p359</sup> of them to resist and keep Kiev in the hands of the White Armies. Well, the Red army did take Kiev but that happened two or three months later.

### **My mother lives through the terror of the Red occupation of Kiev**

When in Kiev, I found my mother. She had lived through the occupation of Kiev by Ukrainians. Later, for a short time, the Ukrainians were thrown out by regular Reds, Communists coming from Moscow, and during that time there were horrors and arrests through the city day and night. In mid-summer of the year 1919, the White Armies were rapidly advancing from the north and we surrounded the great city of Kiev, still occupied by the Reds. The only escape for the Reds was up the River Dnepr on barges. I did not participate in the battles around Kiev because I was on the other sector.

Mother had lived in Kiev throughout the occupation of the city by the Reds, and she knew of and saw all the Red terror. She lived in the apartment house of a Russian lady and an English lady who was with her because she could not return to England. Not far from her apartment house was the governor’s mansion of the region of Kiev, and the latest governor of that region had been Mother’s cousin. So in other times Mother had visited that house very often and she knew that house as if it were her own. During the Red <sup>p360</sup> occupation that house was occupied by the Red organization of the Red secret police. There were cellars, and those cellars were used for the purpose of executing the enemies of Communism. And some of those terrorists, or if I can say, employees, lived in Mother’s apartment. They went to “work” in the evening and late in the morning came back somewhat drunk or under the influence of some drugs and they immediately stretched out and went to sleep, so they did not represent any danger at that moment. In the evening they vanished again.

When the city of Kiev was surrounded they had to escape at the last moment; they were panicky and they grabbed anything close at hand and threw it into bundles, things of value or not, they threw it all into curtain bundles and took them to the barges to escape. One of them grabbed a coffee pot. Now that coffee pot was the favorite pot of Anna, who had been lady’s maid to my mother since before my birth, and this Anna was quite a character. When he grabbed the coffee pot Anna threw herself at that terrorist and put her hands around his neck and said, “If you want to take me, okay, but I will not let you take my coffee pot!” Well, the coffee pot remained in the kitchen, and so did Anna!

When they were gone and the Whites were beginning to <sup>p361</sup> enter the city in very small numbers, my mother decided to take a walk and she went to the governor’s mansion and



descended into the cellar. Later she told me she could not remember how she got out of the cellar into the street because she was so stunned and shocked, and those expressions were much too mild to describe what my mother saw in that cellar. The floor of the cellar was strewn with corpses and it was obvious that the victims had been tortured; the walls and the floor of that cellar were splattered with blood and human brains and bones.

The cellar had been used almost every night by members of the Tcheka for executions for almost a year for all those who were allegedly siding with the Whites and eventual enemies of the Red rulers. "Tcheka" stands, in English translation, for Extraordinary Commission Against Speculation and Counterrevolution. This unit had the right to suspect anyone, to spy, to intrude, to search, to arrest, to judge, to condemn, and to execute - all in one. Most of those Tcheka fellows were sadists. They were clad in leather coats and leather pants, and if some one was seen dressed up like that, all the population knew immediately what he was. <sup>p362</sup> Well, I came to the house and of course Mother and Anna were delighted to see me. Anna prepared one of the luxurious rooms with a luxurious bed and covers so that little Vanya, as she called me in spite of my rank as captain, should have a good rest. When I went to bed I could not fall asleep, so in the middle of the night I got up and got my collapsible bed (it was called a caterpillar) and a very thin mattress was stretched on it, and there I immediately fell asleep and had a very good night's rest. About eleven in the morning Anna came into the room to wake me up and found the empty bed and me sleeping on that caterpillar, and poor Anna almost fainted!

We gathered some food and invited a few friends still living in Kiev. My volunteers and I brought in wine boxes that I had found at Kodyma and we had some good red and white wine. We also uncorked a bottle of vodka. And then I produced one bottle that tasted like kerosene, but obviously kerosene would never have been poured into such an elaborate bottle and such a bottle would not have been kept in our wine cellar. Mother started laughing and she said that years and years ago, when I was but a child, they had had a housekeeper who gathered roses in the garden, where there was a long, long alley full of wild roses. With the petals of those roses that housekeeper, who had died years ago, had made liqueur of roses. It was thick and it smelled of roses, <sup>p363</sup> of perfume. That same kind of liqueur was also made in Odessa in my wife's family; they were of Greek origin and it was a Greek recipe. When the French were occupying Odessa my mother-in-law offered some of that liqueur to a French officer. He tasted it and then very politely said, "Madame, this is not drink, it is cosmetic." Well, toward the end of the dinner old Anna produced some real coffee that she had kept for an unusual occasion because coffee, of course, was absolutely unobtainable, not even for its weight in gold. And with that good coffee, that bottle of liqueur became empty that very same day.

### **Mother has to leave Kiev**

I stayed in Kiev for only a few days because I had to return to my unit. Mother stayed on in Kiev because there was a lot of wishful thinking about the rapid success of the White Army. I do not think they actually realized how few we were. Because of the significance of Kiev, it being a big city and a railroad junction, the Reds decided to take it back. They concentrated their troops and Kiev was attacked and the Whites could not hold it so they had to abandon the city rapidly. When it was first known that Kiev was being abandoned by the Whites, trains of refugees from Kiev began to move southeast toward the region of the Don River and Mother decided not to stay.

Anna decided that she wanted to go back to St. Petersburg, which had not yet been disgraced by the name of Leningrad. <sup>p364</sup> Anna had a sister there and the sister had two children, and all of Anna's personal, private life had been an effort to assist her sister and to bring up those two girls. Of course Anna had no idea what was going on in St. Petersburg. We never saw her





again, and probably if she ever reached St. Petersburg she probably died of hunger there as thousands of others did.

With the help of friends in Kiev, my mother managed to board one of the refugee trains and it took her to Novocherkassk, which was the biggest city in the Don Region. It was populated by Cossacks and it was the moral center, the soul of the resistance against the Reds. But when she got there, taking all that she could carry at her age and scarcely any money, by good fortune she met a good friend with whom she had been friends from time immemorial, the inspector of a girls' school of St. Petersburg. That school had been very famous since the days of Catherine the Great, and it was located in a once-upon-a-time monastery, and this monastery for very good reasons was called Smolny. When the revolution started in St. Petersburg the Red battalions and all the rabble just broke into that school and chased away all the girls and established their headquarters there. It was an ancient building, very large, and actually was like a fortified castle where any attack could be resisted. Later the school had been re-established in Novocherkassk. Because of the influence of that lady inspector, my mother was able to live with her in the school and my mother became an <sup>p365</sup> English teacher at that school.

The Reds were attacking and it was known that the city must be vacated and surrendered, but some schools were left and the school, where my mother was, remained in use. A lot of fighting noise was going on around and then all of a sudden the noise stopped and there was silence and everybody knew the battle was over. The Whites had gone, the Reds were in the city. What was going to happen now to the school and the sixty girls? Of course the old inspector was very upset and she imagined that Communist troops would burst into that school and murder her and my mother and the other teachers and rape all the girls. In the big hall in the school was a big outside double door, and they all sat there and prayed for their fates. Then on the threshold there appeared Communist authorities in Red attire and with ammunition around their necks and hand grenades on their belts. They stopped in the doorway and at that moment all the girls stood up like one person and without saying a word made a deep curtsy. That was the way in the old days of greeting the arrival of the Russian empress, and when the empress entered, the girls would all say in one voice, "I have the pleasure to greet your Imperial Majesty!" That had been done for almost two centuries. And here were those fellows with hand grenades on their belts and they retreated immediately, closing the door as fast as they could. They had decided they must have burst into a lunatic asylum, and the girls were saved. - 366 -

Then Mother and the inspector were ordered to do something else, they were ordered to make fuel. All day long Mother had to make little bricks which consisted of glue and coal dust. They had to make a certain quota of bricks and in relationship to that quota they got tickets for food. If you do not make enough bricks, you do not get any food. Also, Mother had to walk around the city with a big placard in her hand with some kinds of sentences to the glory of Lenin. Such demonstrations and strikes and counter-strikes were well organized by the Reds. And there were elections, just to show the United States and Europe that the Soviet Union was a decent country. In those elections there was only one candidate to be elected, and before the electoral votes were counted the winner was declared. Well, while making those bricks, Mother hurt her finger and this finger became infected and she was in danger of having blood poisoning, so she was put into the hospital. That was in the month of December, and inside the hospital the water in the glass was frozen, for there was no heat. Fortunately, the hospital was run by a real doctor, a surgeon, and he was a good surgeon and he also knew who my mother was, so he operated on that finger and she had to stay in that hospital for quite a time.



There were nurses in the hospital, though most of the nurses were in the White army. These nurses were jokingly called consolation nurses. Their job was to sit on the bed of the wounded who were recuperating and to console them and to keep them happy, and they behaved in any way that you can imagine. So you can guess what went on, especially *p367* at night time, and even in the middle of the day. Mother had managed to keep with her a little book of the Holy Scriptures. These nurses, the girlfriends of the Communists, asked her, “What are you reading?” Mother told them and the girls replied, “Oh, do you still believe in all those fairytales and that nonsense?” And Mother said, “I do, and nobody can be made to believe or not to believe!” So she had quite a relationship with those girls and they said, “Granny, when you die we are not going to leave you on the surface.” That meant that burying was a problem, especially when the ground was so hard-frozen. Well, they did not have to keep their promise.

### **Mother is being moved to Moscow**

Then with the help of that real doctor she got a place in a railroad car, and that railroad car had a special assignment to take insane persons to Moscow, where there were better hospitals. The time to Moscow by train was ordinarily 36 hours, but that particular journey lasted two weeks. On the third day of the journey she started to realize that most of the people on that car were just as “insane” as she was herself. It was a trick of the kind doctor to get them to Moscow.

### **My uncle Leo, the Commissar of Sanitation**

Finally they arrived in Moscow, and there it was a different story. There, the head Commissar of Sanitation, a *p368* professor of biology and a very grand Commissar, was my uncle! In the days when he was a student in Odessa and studying biology he had to travel to a lot of places and he came to my grand mother’s estate, Kemenka. He spent the summer there and lived in the house and Father’s sister, my aunt, fell in love with that young student and they got married, and it was a very happy marriage. That young student was very involved in politics and he was in danger of being arrested by the Imperial police and being deported to Siberia. Well, Father and his brothers intervened and the deportation was modified into an exile to Paris. This was some difference, not Siberia, but Paris! In Paris, where he was exiled for many years, he was the right-hand of the famous Professor Pasteur. As soon as the Revolution occurred in March, 1917, and there was not yet Communism or Bolshevism, my Uncle Leo came back to Moscow University. He was appointed Head Commissar of Sanitation of all the Soviet Union, and he was given somebody’s estate where he had to keep all kinds of animals. Of course he also had the responsibility of hiring people to keep that estate in shape, and by doing so, he saved and helped very many people. When my mother arrived they immediately embraced and she lived with him quite a while.

There was a meeting of all the Commissars in Moscow and Uncle Leo declared that the great mortality in Russia in those years was due not only to the anti-sanitary conditions because of the war and the Civil War, but also because of the *p369* moral depression of the population. Those words “moral depression”, caused him to be sentenced to prison for one year because it was considered an attack against Communism. After a year he was released and came back as head Commissar of Sanitation. Why? Because Uncle Leo was a famous professor, and when scientists came to Moscow he was the only one who could talk science with them, so the Communists wanted to show off that they had science at the same level as any other country.

Many years had passed after the war and we were refugees in Paris, we read in the paper that there had been a convention of scientists and the Soviet Union had been represented by Uncle Leo. A few days later we got a postcard that said, “Dear Masha,” which was my mother, Mary, “please do not make any attempt to see me. I perfectly well know that I have two



shadows. Your loving Leo.” And we understood what he meant. Somehow we got in touch with a taxi driver who would be on such and such a corner, at such and such an hour, and Uncle Leo was passing by and he hailed that particular taxi. The taxi driver was the husband of his niece, and this Russian ex-White officer drove around and around Paris for hours, and there they could talk, He told them of the way of life in Moscow in those days, not propaganda but the real thing. Then again we read in the paper a few days later that at a gathering of scientists in Western Germany, in Dresden, this great Russian professor committed suicide by jumping out of the <sup>p370</sup> window of his hotel from the fifth floor. And Mother said, “I have known Leo all my life, and he was not a man to jump out of a window like some kind of teenager who was desperately in love with a girl who did not want him!” He was 70, or close to 80 at that time. “And he would not jump out of a window, he was pushed out!” Somehow they must have found out that he had talked too much. But on the other hand, it was possible that he did jump because he saw how things were in Dresden in those days, and in comparing life and the attitudes of the people he was completely disillusioned. Probably he was reminded of his young days and probably he was sorry for his activity, which had been geared to the overthrow of the existing order in Russia, and overthrown it was, and when he saw and realized the results of that overthrow, he did not want to live any longer. And that was the end of one of my most favorite uncles.

### **Battle on the outskirts of Rostov**

In the late fall of 1918, many officers of different units had managed to escape from north Russia, from the region of Kiev, and even from Odessa, all to the city of Rostov, lying in the estuary of the Don River.

Now, somebody interested in the situation must have a look at the map of Russia, finding the main railroad connecting the north, St. Petersburg, Moscow, and then way south to Sebastopol' on the Black Sea. This railroad was, so-to-say, the backbone of European Russia. The fighting of the White <sup>p371</sup> units moved northward mainly along this line. That was the center of the advance of the so-called White front. To the east of this line there was the Don River region, of the Cossacks who were mostly cavalry. When they fought the Reds, they fought like lions, as long as they were liberating their Don region from the Communists. But when they reached the border of their own region, the border with Russia proper, the region that used to be called Moscovia ages ago, those Cossacks felt that they were in enemy territory. Therefore, they acted accordingly. The local population suffered from this quite a lot. West of the Cossack region lay this main railroad line, and the crack regiments of the White army. There were three of them, that had names of officers who actually gave birth to those regiments when the front against Germany was disintegrating. Those officers then were fleeing from all over Russia, chased by Communists.

Rostov was a big industrial city and the region just beyond that city was the region of the Don Cossacks. The Don Cossacks were very anti-communist. Those officers in the city of Rostov formed units and regiments to fight Communism and to restore national Russia. That group of heroes and enthusiasts had no money, no supplies, nothing but burning patriotism and enthusiasm. Politically they were not more developed than junior Boy Scouts since politics was completely out of any army life in Imperial Russia. Even the best generals were just plain naive children when it concerned <sup>p372</sup> politics such as running the civilian administration part of the country and even more so, when it came to foreign politics, of which they had no idea. And all those regiments that were not numerically larger than peacetime battalions were named after the generals who led them. The commander of all the regiments was General Kornilov. Another regiment was named Markov, and a third Drozdovsky. At the outbreak of the Revolution Drozdovsky was only a captain in an artillery unit that was then on the front at



the border of Rumania. Most of Rumania was overrun by German troops. In that part of Rumania where there were Rumanian troops and Russian troops to support them, there was much friction between the Rumanians and the Russians and eventually Drozdovsky made an appeal to all those who wanted to follow him from the Rumanian front all the way across south Russia to the Don region. He got about a battalion-sized unit and they marched, fighting Communist gangs all across south Russia, to join those in Rostov.

There was a day when those units in Rostov were fighting against superior forces of the Red Army to the north of the city and they were retreating, outnumbered and outgunned by the Reds. The situation was very difficult and quite desperate. Right on the border of the Don region, in the Ukraine, there stood a German cavalry regiment of real regimental size. They looked on through binoculars at the then losing battle of the Whites and they offered their <sup>p373</sup> support to the Whites against the Communists. But the Commander-in-Chief of the White Army, then General Denikin, had a short-sighted, foolish, and naive policy that he must be absolutely loyal to the far-away allies, the French and British, and to consider the Germans as enemies and not to have any kind of contact with them, let alone accepting their help. So the help of the German regiment was declined. The retreating White units all of a sudden noticed that the Reds, who were obviously gaining success, also started to retreat and retreated very rapidly, almost in panic. The White side could not figure out any reason for the Reds' retreat when they were obviously winning, but anyhow they were happy for this event and they too retreated, carrying their wounded and some of their dead with them. When they were passing very close to the German cavalry unit, a German mounted brass band was standing in front of the regiment playing the Russian national anthem, and in front of the band was the commander of the regiment with his sword drawn. Many German officers were great gentlemen and followed the ancient traditions of the medieval knights.

I am reminded of a similar event that occurred much later. One of my regimental comrades was a Russian German from the Baltic provinces, as they were called. This young man left Soviet Russia for Germany, became a German citizen, and then was mobilized into the reserve of the German Army. And the reserves of the German Army had to go on maneuvers. <sup>p374</sup> This was a year or two before Hitler took over in Germany. While they were on maneuvers, my ex-Horse Guard officer, who was in German uniform as a junior officer, was somewhere in the rear of the column of his regiment. All of a sudden a rider came up to him and by order of the commanding general of the regiment he was told to bypass the whole regiment at a gallop and to join right next to the regiment commander. My friend was very scared – he thought he had done something wrong. But he did as he had been ordered, put his horse to a gallop, and rode up alongside of the General. The General said to him, “Ride next to me. I have a little surprise for you.” This unit was going back to barracks through the city of Berlin, and when they reached the Triumphal Arch in the center of the city, the regimental band started playing the Russian national anthem in honor of the ex-Horse Guard officer in their ranks. Again, another example of rare German chivalry.

Now I have to go back to that battle on the outskirts of Rostov. When the winning side, the Reds, retreated all of a sudden, the Whites had no idea why they did it but later they found out the reason. It was the Drozdovsky unit who, having marched all through south Russia, had gained the vicinity of the city of Rostov and found them selves on the rear of the Reds who were attacking Rostov. Their coming was quite unexpected and the Reds, discovering quite a large fighting unit of the White Army in their rear, <sup>p375</sup> panicked and retreated.

But the city of Rostov was a very big city, populated by many factory workers who were very much pro-Bolshevik. This small group realized that they could not hold such a big city so they had to leave it, mostly on foot. There were few carts, few supplies, and they went out into the



steppes without knowing exactly where they were going. But General Kornilov was leading that group of Martyrs. It was late fall, and in the steppes they were overtaken by snow storms and severe frost. When they reached a village occupied by Red Army soldiers they had a choice: either storm that village and get into some warm houses or perish in the snow of cold and hunger. So they stormed. They stormed through small rivers of water up to their necks. When they got out, they went on storming again, and the water froze and their uniforms became as hard as steel. Of course they had losses, but as I said, they had no choice. This was called the "Ice Campaign." All of the participants were heroes and martyrs and they succeeded in waking up many people to the idea of saving Russia from the Reds, from the international gang now in power in Moscow.

Later these regiments grew in numbers, and now they were on that railroad line after having chased the Reds out of south Russia. They were on the borderline of the region called Moscovia years ago. But those regiments were larger in numbers, but very, very different in spirit, because the <sup>p376</sup> heroes and martyrs, most of them, were dead. Some still living were wounded. Very few of them were still in the ranks of those regiments. The bulk of the regiments consisted of mobilized south Russian people, mobilized men of military age but not of the same spirit. Besides, headquarters of the regiment commanders made the mistake of relying on numbers and not on battle quality. For the sake of numbers, war prisoners taken by their advance from surrounded Red army units were a few days later put into the ranks of their own regiments. So, a fellow who was two weeks ago or less a soldier in the Red army, now found himself to be a soldier in the White crack regiments. And those POWs, some of them, a very few, were quite sincere, and at the bottom of their hearts they were against the Reds. There were others that vacillated. Depending on the success of a skirmish of battle in process, they again changed sides. When the White regiments were in a difficult situation, the mobilized Reds, abandoning arms or even taking their arms with them, they would again rejoin the Reds. In so doing, for good measure, they would shoot the White officers who were in command of a whole company. The whole company consisted of recent ex-Reds led by a few officers of the White army. So, that is why the momentum of the movement of the White armies was gone. There was a kind of stalemate. And the last city along that railroad line that the White armies occupied was the city of Kursk and north of it for a very short period <sup>p377</sup> the city of Orel.

Now, my dear reader, imagine that you are standing in Kursk, looking northward towards a few cities, and beyond that, some 200 miles to the north, Moscow. But the drive of the White armies was blunted, and winter was coming. Conditions of fighting in the winter were of course much harder, and the spirit of the advancing White armies was almost exhausted. Their supplies rarely reached them, because in the south, communist gangs became more and more numerous, grabbing the roads and grabbing the supplies. Now, looking north, my unit was far more west. We were then in the city of Gluchov, and there was also a stalemate. North of Gluchov was a village, a very large village, Berezovka. That name means willow, and there were very many willow trees in that region. It was an enormous village, occupied on and off by Red units, on and off by our reconnaissance units. It changed hands many times. We attacked Berezovka and then the Reds fled, dropping their arms, jumping out of their trenches, even taking off their boots to run faster. In one of those attacks, my squadron managed to take two machine guns abandoned by the Reds. And then, back we went to Gluchov and just stayed there waiting for something to happen.

The city of Gluchov had outposts for security's sake. I was in command of one of those outposts. Among my soldiers, I had three very unusual fellows. One was a <sup>p378</sup> Moslem from the Caucasus, another one was a German colonist, and the third one was a high school boy. They were the ones who went out to search for fodder and supplies. That Moslem came up to





me and said to me, "Captain, we are bored, doing nothing. So, let us go as scouts into Berezovka, and we will get some supplies." I said, "All right, but be careful, because we do not know. Red forces may be occupying Berezovka." That afternoon, that trio left. Late in the evening they came back, bringing some supplies. We had a nice supper, and I asked them whether they saw the Reds. They said, "Oh yes, while we were there we saw about two squadrons of Red cavalry approaching Berezovka." So I asked them, "What did you do?" They said, "We deployed our forces (there were three of them) and we counterattacked the two Red squadrons." And, what happened? "Well, the two Red squadrons retreated, and so, here we are." After that, I thanked them for bravery, we had a good supper as I mentioned, and then, without undressing of course, I lay down on the couch and fell into a kind of slumber. Then, through my slumber I heard a terrible noise outside the house I was in. I woke up, and in came the commanding colonel of our regiment with two squadrons of cavalry and horse-drawn artillery. And he started yelling at me that I am not watching, I am lying here sleeping. Reports came to headquarters that Red cavalry was attacking Berezovka. Two squadrons from another regiment were sent out, and then they retreated under attack by Red cavalry. <sup>p379</sup> I kept my cool, and the Colonel changed his tone. Then I asked, "Sir, may I ask when was the exact time that those two squadrons retreated under attack?" Well, he told me, and it was the exact time when my scouts were there. So I told about the report of my Moslem scout, that the three of them deployed and attacked the two squadrons that were our squadrons from a different regiment. The Colonel beamed. He was delighted, and immediately ordered me to follow him to the headquarters of the division. Headquarters of the division were lit up all night. Staff officers were studying maps on the wall, and we barged in, and also the commander of the other regiment. Then it was established what exactly had happened, to the great confusion of the commander of the other regiment who had retreated when attacked by my three scouts. That incident looks like a joke, like an anecdote, but the meaning of it was much deeper. It shows the spirit of some White units. There were two squadrons deploying to enter the city of Berezovka. They saw three riders that they took for Red cavalry, and that was enough for them to retreat. That was the poor spirit of many exhausted White units.

Once again we were ordered to attack Berezovka. Infantry entrenched in front of Berezovka. Snow had fallen, rather deep snow. And at a later date I will tell of this last attack in which I just barely missed being killed, due to some kind of a miracle, probably the prayers of my mother <sup>p380</sup> somewhere in Kiev.

### **Vladimir Rudin**

In the month of August 1919, during the Civil War, the Whites were successfully advancing in the general direction of Moscow, but they were still quite far from attaining the city, in fact we never attained it. But during August we occupied a fairly calm sector of the front. A river separated our lines from the Red lines. Our field artillery exchanged rather lazy fire with the Red field artillery on the other side and then that was over and calm reigned. I had my quarters in a peasant house. I was having some tea when an artillery officer, a cousin of mine, came in. I offered him some tea and he said that he had something to tell me. My cousin reported to me that one of my non-com officers had come strolling into his positions and started making some observations about their fire. I listened, knowing very well that my cousin was not a genius in artillery matters, and that probably his firing was missing the target. "Anyhow", said my cousin, "it is against discipline for a cavalry non-com officer to come strolling into our positions and making remarks about our shooting." We had tea together and shortly afterward my cousin left.

The next morning I called my non-com officer, by the name of Vladimir Rudin. I told him about the strolling into that artillery position and about his act of poor discipline in making



remarks about the <sup>p381</sup> shooting. Then I made him sit down, offered him some tea, and told him quite frankly that he was not just a cavalry volunteer but a man trained in artillery as well. Rudin said, “Yes, Sir. I have been a captain of field artillery since the beginning of the war in 1914,” (and we were in the year 1919.) So in great astonishment I asked him what he, as a captain, was doing in my squadron, serving as a non-com officer. I knew that he was an excellent squad commander but that was not his real profession. Then Rudin said to me, “Sir, will you please look at my rifle?” I gave him my consent and he brought the rifle saying, “Sir, look at the rifle butt.” I looked at the rifle butt and saw scratches, many rather deep scratches. And Rudin said to me, “As an officer I could not do what I am doing on my own free time. Each scratch means a shot Jew.” Hearing this, I jumped to my feet and said to Rudin, “You do not look like a crazy man, but what you are doing is something most unusual, to put it mildly.” Then Rudin said to me, “Sir, I like you very much. You are younger as an officer but I have great sympathy with you and I would like to tell you what happened in my life.” I replied, “Well, if you want to, go ahead. I am not going to tell it to anybody and I am very touched that you have so much confidence in me. Obviously you want to unburden something that weighs heavily on your mind.” Rudin said, “Yes, it does, Sir. As a young artillery officer, back in 1917, I came home on leave. My father had a modest estate in <sup>p382</sup> the vicinity of St. Petersburg. We belonged to the Russian nobility but not to the very wealthy top-notch aristocracy of Russia. We are of an impoverished but very ancient and noble family. My father served all his life in the army and was a retired general, too old to participate in the war of 1914. He lived in that home of ours with my mother, my sister, and my fiancée, who was visiting them when I came on leave. And then, out of the blue, came the Revolution. I know that you were somewhere out in the provinces with the regiment. You were not in Petersburg and the horrors of the Revolution reached you gradually. But to us who were there it came as a big blow out of nowhere. A few trucks full of drunk sailors, led by several Jewish youths of St. Petersburg, seized my father and shot him outright. They tied me to a tree with ropes so that I could not move at all. They put a gag in my mouth and then in front of me that gang raped my sister and fiancée and then they shot them both, as well as my mother. They looted and smashed everything in the house but for some reason that I do not understand, they forgot all about me. Finally that gang drove off, probably to do the same thing to our neighbors. Terrorized local people and servants came out of their hiding and they untied me. Of course I was as much as crazy. They made me swallow a large amount of vodka and then they forcibly stuck me in a tub of cold water to bring me to my senses. Well, as you can see, Sir, I revived. The memory of that day is with me day and <sup>p383</sup> night and my only purpose in life is to take my revenge on the Jews . “

Some time after this massacre Rudin went back to the front lines. As I was saying, the front lines had disintegrated and he had nowhere to go, but by a bit of luck he was able to join my squadron as a volunteer. As a soldier and officer Rudin was an exemplary man. In every battle, in every skirmish, and in every hand-to-hand fighting he was always right in the thick of it, and it was quite obvious that he was seeking death. In cavalry charges and attacks he was always way in front of the rest, having a very good horse. As I said, he was seeking death, and throughout more than three years of Civil War he never had a scratch.

Well, in 1920, a few months before the end of the Civil War, my squadron was ordered by General Wrangel, who had started his career as an officer of our regiment, to be his personal bodyguard. Rudin declared that he did not want to serve as a bodyguard in the rear, he wanted to go on fighting as long as the fighting lasted, so he was detached to another unit. At that time the agony of the White Army cannot be described. Outnumbered and outgunned about twenty to one, the army could not fight any longer, so General Wrangel ordered an evacuation of the Crimea and he ordered all of the White troops that remained to retreat to the ports of the



Crimea. So Rudin retreated with them. All those who wanted to be shipped were shipped and eventually Vladimir Rudin came *p384* to Constantinople as an émigré.

From Constantinople he went to Yugoslavia, to the city of Beograd, as a civilian. During those early days many soldiers who had been demobilized found jobs in Yugoslavia and some of them went to other countries. I was in Yugoslavia then for about a year and a half, but there were about fifty of our soldiers that were unemployed. Rudin became a cabinet maker. He was remarkably skilful with his hands and as a cabinet maker he made a sizeable amount of money, actually more money than those officers of my squadron who were employed in banks as clerks. Finally Rudin took over command of the remaining unemployed fifty. He started finding all sorts of employment for them, digging ditches and so forth. He found somewhere on the outskirts of the city discarded tram cars. He got permission from the city fathers to occupy those tram cars. He restored them with materials that he got, God knows where, and made them liveable, and he put in some heat. In the mornings, before he started his work as a cabinet maker, he went to the cattle market where the butchers slaughtered the cattle, and where the remainder of the cattle, the lungs and other unusable remnants could be had for free. He took this food to his cars, where he had constructed some kind of an oven, and he boiled it with some vegetables and this became the Russian soldiers' soup. And with this soup he fed his unemployed comrades.

Some time later a chapel, a copy of a very venerated – 385 - chapel in Moscow, was built in the graveyard where many Russians were buried. Next to it there was also a house built for a guardian, and Rudin became the guardian. He cleaned the chapel after services and he dug graves for those who could not afford to pay grave diggers. One of our very aged officers and his wife also lived in the city. They had lost their only son in the war and now they lived on a small pension that the government of Yugoslavia was giving to aged officers of the ex-Imperial Russian Army. The old couple lived on the second or third floor of a house. The colonel was an invalid and his wife had a serious heart condition, and every other day Rudin visited that couple and brought firewood up to their apartment. And every day Rudin polished the boots of the old colonel until they shone like a mirror. He actually became the colonel's volunteer servant. In short, Rudin acted like a saint.

Besides all his self-imposed duties, Rudin managed to have an official letterhead printed. The heading was "Volunteer Squadron of the Horse Guard Regiment." And on this paper he wrote letters to embassies and governments in France and many other countries, asking for visas and pass ports for his men. He signed those letters "Non-Com Officer of the Horse Guards, Rudin." And these official papers worked magic but they upset very much our ambassador in Beograd, who was still recognized as the Russian Ambassador. Rudin went right over his head to obtain passports for his *p386* men. A most unusual situation for the Ambassador!

I lost sight of Rudin when I left Yugoslavia and many years after the Second World War, when Yugoslavia was occupied by Soviet troops, many Russian émigrés left there because they did not want to remain under the rule of the Communists. As an émigré and a displaced person, Rudin finally came to southern France. By that time he was in an enfeebled condition, aged and sick. He had tuberculosis and other very nasty and incurable ailments. He lived in a home for the elderly and penniless refugees in Nice. A friend of mine who was one of the assistants of the director of that place had great sympathy for that old warrior, but she realized that physically and mentally he was a complete ruin. Sometimes when he had a few francs in his pocket he spent them on red wine, but in his state of health the red wine was not good for him. However, it was his last pleasure and when he had had a glass or two he became excited and talked about the most extraordinary events he had been through during the days of the Civil War.



Then came a letter from that friend of mine in Nice, addressed to me at Stanford, where I was teaching. And the letter said that Rudin was dead. I think that it was a blessing for him, because living as an invalid probably was very painful and distressing to him. A big envelope, found in his room, was sent over to me, too. I thought at first that there might be some interesting memoirs, but as I opened the envelope I saw that <sup>p387</sup> it contained letters from people, mostly thanking him for what he had done for them, and then there were some old receipts for utilities from the time when he was living on his own in Beograd, a whole bunch of them. I do not know why he kept all those receipts in such perfect order, as I never knew him to be an accountant. But apparently it was fairly typical for him to keep every little scrap of official paper. I heard later that he had been buried in a Russian cemetery in Nice, called "Caucade." And so, the life of Vladimir Rudin came to an end. He became a martyr due to the events, he was a great soldier, a terrorist, and a saint, all in one. It is strange how a war and even more so a civil war, produces quite often good or bad qualities of mind and a character.

### **War atrocities**

Our Twentieth Century has seen two world wars, and revolution, and by now every child all over the world knows that war is something very, very horrible. And the more sophisticated it gets, the more horrible it is. But nothing can be compared with the horrors of civil war, where many people become wild beasts or worse. For history's sake, I wish to mention two horrible events which occurred during the civil war in Russia in the years 1918 and 1920.

Horrors were committed by both sides. I was fighting on the White side, the enemies were the Reds, the Communists. - 387a - Acts of bravery were performed on both sides, and I have great respect for bravery, no matter who performs the act of bravery. By no means do I wish to imply that all those adversaries of ours on the Red side were one hundred percent devils and murderers. Among them there were just some very brave Russian fellows. The same, exactly the same, applies to my side, the White side. There were acts of great bravery and there were also acts of horror. So, I will mention two incidents, one caused by the White side, and the other one by the Reds, so that the scales of history can stand even. And I am mentioning it only for history's sake, and not for the sake of making out of it a horror film that can be seen now almost every day on any television program, unfortunately.

Well, the first incident happened when the Russian armies disintegrated south of the Caucasus mountain chain. Again, my reader must absolutely have a map to find that the Caucasus chain stretches from the Black Sea eastward to the Caspian Sea, and south of the range lies the city of Tiflis. South of the city, battle lines were drawn between Russians and Turks in 1917. When the Russian armies disintegrated, the Turks were too weak to pursue and advance. But the Russian mob of soldiers that had once been an army had now an urge to return to their homeland in Russia proper, as fast as possible, because the Red propaganda was telling them that they have to hurry to grab land from the wealthy, rich, grand land proprietors, the aristocracy, and to become owners of - 387b - the big plants, and so forth and so on. The half-literate soldiers believed them. And this armed mob rushed northward. They had to cover a very, very long distance, living on the country, plundering and sacking villages.

The villages were inhabited by wealthy Russian peasants, so-called Cossacks. Cossack regiments were still mostly on the European front facing Germany and Austria. They were also disintegrating, but they were not yet back home. So those villages had only older men and women, and they were defenseless against the hordes of deserters that were passing through. It was mostly wine country. Every village had its own reserves of wine, and the passing deserters got drunk. Once drunk, they molested all the female population, from really young girls to quite elderly women. The older Cossacks, to avoid being murdered, fled and hid in the marshes and the reeds of the river. One night, when the deserters were very tired





from drinking and molesting all the women, and they were fast asleep, the old Cossacks with some very young Cossack boys rushed into the village, slaughtering every Russian soldier they saw, in their sleep. Some woke up in time to flee, and about 200 were taken prisoners alive. Then the old elected head of the Cossacks of that village ordered those 200 prisoners to be tied against the fence in the main square of the village. They were tied with their backs to the fence and stripped naked. Then the village chief let it be known to the women to come and inspect those prisoners, and to bring with them - 387c - very, very sharp knives. And if the women recognized one of the deserters who had molested them, they were ordered to use the very sharp knives and to cut away from the tied man, you-know-what. That is what happened to those 200 prisoners, every single one of them. Some of them fainted right away. Some of them did not, and they could look on as dogs, hungry village dogs, gobbled up what was cut away from them. Of course, a few hours later, all of those tied to the fence were dead from bleeding to death. It was, of course, atrocious.

On another occasion, the Reds had stormed into a village occupied by a small detachment of Whites. Some of the Whites were wounded and could not get away, and some were captured. The wounded and the captured were all driven into an enclosure, and they were made to dig foxholes. A foxhole is a very narrow dugout, just wide enough for a normal grown up person to hide in it; and those foxholes were very useful during battle situations to save yourself from splinters of shrapnel or some enemy fire. In this case, those foxholes were dug, the White officers – prisoners of the Reds – were tied with their hands behind their backs, and each one of them was then thrust into his own foxhole. Then, the fox holes were filled with earth, stamped down, and the living man was buried, but just so deep that his head stuck out of that foxhole. Then a bunch of very hungry pigs was driven into that enclosure. All that those unfortunate martyrs - 387d - could do was to yell, but that yelling did not drive away the pigs. And when, a few days later, that village was re-captured by the Whites, they could only have a priest say a funeral mass for those that were little by little beheaded by the pigs who ate them away while they were stuck alive in the foxholes. Again, an unimaginable atrocity.

Of course, such events were the cause for revenge, and revenge calls for revenge, and therefore civil war is so atrocious that it is hard to describe and uncanny to remember, even decades later. But it happened, and believe it or not, but it did happen; therefore, I wanted to put it on paper for future generations that I hope will never be so inhuman as what was my fate to witness.

### **An incident in the city of Rostov**

In the late fall of 1919, the city of Rostov on the estuary of the Don River was full of stray soldiers in great turmoil because of the retreat of the White Armies. A friend of mine, a young officer in those days, was crossing one of the squares of the city when he saw a very old man being heckled and pursued and molested by a gang of young, uniformed Cossacks that had become quite undisciplined. My friend was not a Cossack officer, but he was just angry that an old man was being heckled by a gang of youngsters, so he took out his revolver and yelled at those young Cossack soldiers in *p388* such a manner that they fled, leaving the old man alone. The old man came up to him, profusely thanking him in the most poetical, elaborate words for having helped him. And my friend just said to the oldster, “I do not want all those thanks of yours, just scram, get away from here, because I am going my way and those youngsters might return and molest you worse.” But the old man said to the officer, “Young gentle man officer, I see that you are very, very young and that you are a great gentleman, so please take this little slip of paper as thanks for what you have done for me. And he rapidly wrote something on a small slip of paper and thrust it into the hands of my friend. Mechanically, automatically, my friend stuffed that little piece of paper into his military





overcoat and went his way.

Two years later, this friend of mine was a refugee, an émigré, in Yugoslavia. He had no job. He lived by selling his last belongings on the flea market but by now they were all sold, and the only thing he found at the bottom of his suitcase was the old military overcoat. So he thought, why not take this coat to the flea market? Maybe I will get a pound or two of bread in exchange. And mechanically he searched the pockets of his overcoat and there at the bottom he found a slip of paper with some writing on it that he could not decipher. And he wondered, where did that paper come from, and what might the scribbled message be? And then it dawned on him, that it might be Jewish Hebrew script. Oh yes, he <sup>p389</sup> remembered that incident of two years ago when he met an old Jew that was being persecuted by a gang of youngsters. That must be it. And having nothing to do, he took that paper and went to the local synagogue in the city of Novy-Sad on the borders of the Danube River. It was a very wealthy city, a commercial center, and almost ninety percent of that city was Jewish. He came to the synagogue and showed somebody that slip of paper. The fellow who looked at the paper said, "Sir, will you please come again tomorrow at such-and-such an hour?"

My friend shrugged his shoulders and said, "All right. I have nothing to do anyhow." The next day he came to the synagogue and there was a gathering of elderly Jewish people. They asked him very ceremoniously to sit down and then they explained to him that the heads of the Jewish synagogue in Novy-Sad had made a decision that he would receive a pension of two thousand dinars per month and that a room in a nice hotel would be at his disposal for life. My friend was so astonished that he could not believe he heard correctly, and they had to repeat what they had just said. A pension of two-thousand dinars was in those days equal to about three hundred dollars. He could live very well on that, a single man especially, considering that his room would be paid for life. He then asked those Jewish synagogue men, "Why? What is this all about?" And they told him, "Sir, this little slip that you gave us yesterday tells us that you saved the life of the chief rabbi of Russia." - 390 -

### **I re-join the squadron**

After I left Odessa and re-joined the squadron, we had to dress all the volunteers. We had the cloth and other stuff to make them shirts but the worst problem was boots. The place where we were then located was a small provincial town and it was very famous for its tailors; ninety percent of that town was inhabited by a minority – I mean Jews – and most of them were professional tailors. One night we made a search of that small town and we arrested every Jew who was a tailor – this was a procedure of Civil War, of course, it was not foreseen by any regulation of the Imperial Army. Of course the Jews were panicky and expected to be executed, but we told them, "We are not members of the Red Tcheka, all we want from you is your skill as tailors. Here is the stuff." We locked them up in a school and we told them, "You are going to stay here to make uniforms from the cloth that we give you and you are going to stay here until our squadron is fully dressed. And your wives, sisters or daughters can every day bring you your kosher food, because we are not going to feed you." Sentinels were posted around that school and the tailors were told, "Do not ever try to run away or it will be your fault if a bullet reaches you." After such drastic measures with the tailors, in ten days we were all in new uniforms which replaced the old tattered ones and also the tattered civilian clothes. We really looked like a military unit. The volunteer boys were trained for <sup>p391</sup> only two weeks, and then a squadron was formed to join the squadron north of us that was in the fighting lines.

The officers of the first squadron went on leave. My second squadron joined the first one and a group of officers replaced those who were on leave. We proceeded northward without encountering any real resistance from the Reds. Of course we realized that ten miles to the east or ten miles to the west of the road we followed there was nobody. Eventually there were



some small Communist gangs that avoided our advance. They had been left there for the purpose of attacking our rear, destroying our communication lines, or attacking small units going back south; one who went on leave south could not risk going alone, but only in a small armed group. We went northwards through wooded country, very sandy roads, some marshes, the worst possible terrain for cavalry units. Proceeding northward we reached the city of Glukhov [Ukr = Hlukhiv].

Now somebody interested in the situation must have another look at the map of Russia. He must find the main rail road connecting the north, St. Petersburg, Moscow, and then way south to Sebastopol' on the Black Sea. This railroad was, so to say, the backbone of European Russia. The fighting of the White units moved northward mainly along this line. That was the center of the advance of the so-called White Front. To the east of this line there was the Don River region of the Cossacks, who were mostly cavalry. West of the Cossack region lay this main railroad line, and the crack regiments - 392. - of the White Army.

The main movement of these White forces was along the rail road line Sevastopol'-Moscow-St. Petersburg. The goal of the Whites was to move as far as Moscow, to chase away the Communists, and to take power. This was a naive dream. No matter how brave, how dedicated, how ready to be martyrs to their cause, the Whites were outnumbered by the Reds by twenty to one. The Reds had their hands on that part of Russia where all the military depots were concentrated; they had plenty of ammunition and through threat and terror they could mobilize the population. The unfortunate officers of the Imperial Army could not get out of the territory occupied by the Reds because the Reds had their families under arrest, and those families were hostages. They were threatened by execution and torture if the officers did not join and even lead the Red units. Some army officers were bachelors and had nobody to care for or to leave in the hands of the Reds: they crossed over to the Whites on many occasions. But others of them could not do it because their families were under threat by the Reds, but they did what they could.

I remember an incident in which I participated. We were then dismounted for lack of horses, and for a cavalry man to be on foot is not only a disgrace, it also gives a most uncomfortable feeling. Besides, we were under attack by Red cavalry. For a cavalryman on foot to be attacked by enemy cavalry – that sounds simply awful. The Red cavalry was still off at a <sup>p393</sup> certain distance. We had, just a few days before, been supplied with new British rifles because our shortage of rifles had been simply disastrous. Well, the British rifles could shoot eleven times without being reloaded and this was something new to us. If we were going to use those British rifles, our men had to be re-trained and even ourselves, and we had just one night to do so before going into battle.

When we opened fire at a long distance against the approaching Red cavalry, the British rifles would not work. They were stuck. That was a really nasty situation. The British rifles had been intended by the British to be sent to India and therefore they were greased with a very thick grease and that grease got thicker and thicker because of the low temperature in the late autumn in Russia. So there we were. The Red cavalry was advancing toward us and we formed a so-called quadrangle to receive the Reds with our bayonets, the only weapons that we had. Then we saw a real miracle happening. Probably the Red artillery had the task of supporting the Red attack and softening our quadrangle by shelling us before the Red cavalry charged, but instead of shelling us they shelled their own cavalry. And instead of attacking us the Red cavalry scattered in all directions and disappeared under shell fire of their own artillery. We were, of course, very happy about that event, and I still suspect that that Red artillery might have been under the command of an old artillery officer of the Imperial Army. An artillery <sup>p394</sup> officer can always misjudge a distance and fire too close or too far but I still



believe that this time the Red artillery shelled their own cavalry on purpose. And the artillery officer probably got away with it because he could always make a mistake.

The three infantry regiments of Markov, Kornilov, and Drozdovsky were moving northward along the main railroad line. Looking north along the line, to the right of this main thrust was the Don region and the Don Cossacks. They were tradition ally excellent fighters and fought like lions as long as they were liberating their Don region from Communists. But when it was liberated and they were in Russia, these Don Cossacks did not want to go on fighting. They wanted to go home and protect their own region. Because they were not interested in going further northward they became quite unreliable on the right flank of the main column in the thrust toward Moscow. My units were on the left flank of this main thrust, and we moved into the city of Glukhov. Still more west of us there were very weak infantry units of the White Armies and many small and large bands of Communists, local people that were more interested in looting than in fighting.

Speaking about the main thrust of the White regiments, I must say that those regiments now were more numerous, because during the thrust northward, they mobilized local people of military age. They also put into their ranks POW's from the Red army, taken prisoners just a few days earlier. Few of <sup>p395</sup> those heroes that had started the White movement were still in the fighting line. Many of those martyrs were dead or heavy invalids. Only a few of them were still in the ranks of the regiments, making the thrust toward Moscow. Those regiments had their historical names of Markov, Kornilov, Drozdovsky, but the spirit of those troops was not the same. They were more numerous, but far less reliable for obvious reasons. The POW s of the Red army, drafted into those elite regiments of the White army, were unreliable of course. If we were advancing and having success, they came along. If the situation became difficult, or the Red fire too heavy, they just broke and ran. That, of course, also obliged the rest to retreat, sometimes even in great disorder.

Worse things happened. There were companies in those elite regiments which consisted exclusively of mobilized, or recent Red POW's, taken by us with just a few officers leading them. Those officers were shot by their own men. And the whole company of those elite regiments went over, crossed back to the Reds. Besides, the winter was coming on, a very severe, early, and unexpectedly cold winter. The White armies were ill-prepared, ill-equipped for fighting a winter campaign. And the resistance of the Reds grew from day to day, because they were really scared that the Whites would succeed to thrust as far as Moscow. So they threw into battle against the Whites everything they had. Old officers of the Russian Imperial army, that had been all through the <sup>p396</sup> First World War, were telling me that they had never experienced during that war such heavy artillery barrages as the Reds were then firing against the Whites. And the Whites had only few heavy guns, and scarcely any shells to reply in kind. So the Whites retreated.

This retreat forced us, occupying Glukhov, also to retreat, and we retreated to the city of Ryl'sk. On the march from Glukhov to Ryl'sk we faced no resistance from the Reds, but we faced a snowstorm. Snow icicles were blowing right in our faces. We made very slow progress, the cavalry in deep snow. But before the retreat to Ryl'sk, there was a last attempt to move forward; and from Glukhov we attacked a village, lying about ten kilometers north. The ground was covered with snow. I was at the head of my squadron, and the cavalry group, including my squadron was charging that village. Coming quite close, I noticed a machine gun mounted on a peasant sleigh, and I pointed out to my men that machine gun. At the same instant, I found myself sitting on the snow, my horse somewhere deep under me. My first idea was that my horse had been killed. But my horse was still trying hard to get out of that snowdrift; and being a very good, strong horse, requisitioned by me a year ago in Ascania



Nova, the horse took me out forward, and I realized that there was a deep ditch in front of that village. The ditch had been completely covered with snow, and most of my squadron was in that snow, fighting, trying to get out of <sup>p397</sup> the ditch on the other side. Only the strongest horses managed to do so. So, on the other side of the ditch there was no longer any squadron, there were maybe fifteen or twenty riders, including me. When the Red infantry saw the situation, they turned around from their attempt to run, came back and started shooting almost point-blank at us.

I will remember all my life a very tall young fellow, with a big blond moustache, in a gray civilian coat with a so-called Finnish cap on his head, and a rifle in his hands, who was pointing the rifle right at me at a distance of probably less than fifty feet. I was on horseback. I took out my German revolver and started aiming at him, but the revolver was stuck. I was so mad that I cursed my revolver and threw it at the man. Of course, the revolver never reached him. But for some reason, I saw him move his rifle slightly, and shoot and kill one of the men of my squadron that was right next to me, instead of me. It all lasted a minute or two. And then my soldiers were there, and they struck that man with their lances. He fell to the ground, and was probably trampled by the horses and killed. But that figure in the gray coat, aiming his rifle right at me, remains an unforgettable vision for all my life.

Well, our attack was a flop, but the Reds also retreated. We came back to the city of Glukhov for a few more days, and then we were ordered to retreat southward; because the main troops of the thrust in the direction of Moscow, were retreating <sup>p398</sup> south, so as not to be encircled. Our group also had to retreat, without any pressure from the Reds.

Moving through that horrible snowstorm, we reached the city of Ryl'sk, which reminded me of the theatrical set piece that I saw as a boy when I went to the Imperial theater to see the opera Boris Godunov. Ryl'sk was a very ancient Russian city, a trading point. Stone buildings two stories high were built as a quadrangle, inside which there was a well. Those buildings were like a medieval fortress. They had heavy, thick wooden gates, reinforced with iron, and those gates most certainly had repulsed many invasions of Tatars in the days of Ivan the Terrible and before him. That was the center, or – I want to use the modern expression “downtown” of the city of Ryl'sk. Around that fortified city – it was called Kreml, just as the Kreml in Moscow – because the word Kreml in Russian means fortress.

We were lodged in Ryl'sk in a school. We met two school teachers, an elderly woman and a young one. They greeted us almost in tears, saying: “How wonderful, how miraculous to see humans again. You are humans. Those who were here before you were just wild beasts.” That schoolhouse was very well built. There was a rest room inside the house, a very rare thing. But going to the outhouse in a snowstorm was not fun. And this particular place was the warmest place in the house, because the pipes from the stoves and from the open fireplace ran through the walls of this place. I spent in there more time <sup>p399</sup> than was strictly necessary, just because it was the warmest place in the house. But most unfortunately, our stay in Ryl'sk did not last. Our security units patrolling outside of Ryl'sk reported numerous Red troops gathering, and we were under orders to retreat southward without battle or resistance against the numerous advancing Reds.

### **Many suffer frostbite**

Again, we had to move through mountains of snow and bitter cold. Most of us, me included, had received British army boots. The boots were laced, they were not Russian boots, which covered the legs up to the knees with one piece of leather. The lacing looked very fine, but the snow got inside it, thawed because of body heat, and then froze again. The boots became icicles on our feet. Besides, on the bottom of the boots were big pieces of metal, probably for British soldiers walking somewhere in the mountains of India. Because of that iron in the



boots, they were no protection against frost. So, if I was on horseback, my legs would freeze. If I dismounted, I had to fight my way through a snowstorm and through heaps of snow, sometimes up to my waist. In the column where I was, I dismounted from my horse. I took the tail of the horse in my hand and the horse pulled me through snowdrifts, and I was moving my legs as fast as I could to get warm. Actually, I was dragged by my horse, holding the horse's tail in my hand. This was never foreseen by any cavalry regulations. - 400 –

After marching all night, we reached a hamlet and in that hamlet we were billeted, if I may use that word in such a case, in one hut that had to hold about a hundred and fifty men. Horses remained outside. Normally that hut would hold about 20 men. So the men took turns staying half an hour in the hut and then they had to go outside into the cold to make a place for others. When my turn came, I took off my boots, and inside my boots there was a layer of ice and my right leg inside was slightly frostbitten. Because of this, rumors had reached Moscow where I had many relatives. It is hard to believe even on this day, when I am talking here in Palo Alto, that during the time of the Civil War there were no communications whatsoever. Try to imagine no newspapers, no telegrams, of course no telephones. In short, there were only rumors which somehow crossed the fighting lines. The rumors in Moscow were that both my legs were amputated.

Fortunately for my mother, she knew that this was not true. When my mother came to Moscow, as described by me in another chapter, of course, she met all her close relatives. Mother was very surprised that they spoke with her about everything except me – her only son. They were afraid of mentioning me because of the rumor that had reached them. Finally Mother asked them bluntly, “Why don't you mention Vanya?” Then they were very happy that the rumor about my legs was greatly exaggerated. *p401* I was one of the luckier ones because more than half of our men were very heavily frostbitten, and they were not battle-fit. They had to be transported as invalids even though they were not wounded, but frostbite is a terrible thing. If it is very severe and not treated in time, then it turns into gangrene, and gangrene produces blood poisoning and rapid death.

Then our retreat continued south-eastward until we finally hit the main railroad line connecting the south of Russia, Sevastopol' on the Black Sea, St. Petersburg on the north, passing through Moscow. That railroad line was occupied by trains standing one after the other. (Nowadays, comparing it with traffic in the United States, I want to say that the trains were bumper to bumper) .

In those days, of course, steam engines moved the trains. The steam engine was to be continually supplied with coal and water. If the coal is lacking and the water freezes, then the engine is out of commission because the boilers burst. And if there is no water to replenish the contents of the boilers, the engine is worse than useless. There was a scramble for engines that would still work. Every unit that had a train and a working engine had to protect that engine and have armed guards around the engine or a flat-car in front of the engine and sacks of sand on the flat-car and behind those sacks a machine gun to protect our engine from being stolen or sabotaged by somebody. *p402* The cars of those train columns have to be explained to those who have never seen or heard about them. They were just wooden boxes used for transporting goods or cattle, and in wartime – troops. Every such car could officially hold forty soldiers or eight horses. It was written on every car - 40 men, 8 horses. There was an army joke that when recruits complained that the car was too small to hold all forty of them, some old master sergeant pointed out to those who had complained, “You see, eight horses have to come in besides you people.” Well, of course, that was a joke.

Now in some of those cars, usually in the center of the car (the car opened on both sides by a big sliding door) there stood a cast-iron belly stove. (Such stoves can be found now even in





Palo Alto in antique shops). They could burn any thing – bits of wood or whatever the soldiers could pick up along the railroad lines, or you could steal some coal from the engine. This warm car was called in Russian “*Teplushka*,” because the word, “teplo,” is the word for warmth, and “teplushka” was to say the source of warmth. Some translator translating the works in the novel of Dr. Zhivago describing this kind of a warm car, describes it as being a Pullman, a luxury Pullman car. Well, there is a very big difference between this and what that fellow understood, not knowing what he was talking about.

### **A painful injury**

The car I was riding in, or the “teplushka”, was being <sup>p403</sup> heated and the stove was usually red-hot. The chimney stuck out direct through the roof of the car. When we reached our train that had such warm cars, I came to that car on some kind of business and I stood, my back turned to this oven and at that minute the train started with a jerk. Quite instinctively I made a gesture with my hand and put my hand flat on the red-hot iron stove. Well, I still feel the pain of it and the surprise of it. There was no oil at hand whatsoever, so I just had to bite my lips. But it happened to be a blessing in disguise. Another painful blessing because, of course, after the first pain subsided, some ice and snow was put on my hand. That was one of the worst things to do. I had a huge blister on the entire surface of my palm and I could not wear a glove. Because I could not wear a glove, I could not be on horseback. Holding the reins in this wounded hand without a glove in that freezing weather was out of the question. So I was relieved of the command of my squadron by another officer and I mounted into a vehicle, something between a cart and a carriage.

And here again, I will describe this vehicle which played such a huge role in the Civil War. It was a “tachanka.” Imagine a four-wheel, high carriage (I think in English they could be considered a hunting carriage). It had no roof at all and it was rather wide – three men could be seated in the back seat, two men in the front seat, and three men on the box. It was drawn by two very strong horses or mostly by <sup>p404</sup> four horses in a row. Sometimes two other horses were in front of the four – one of them was saddled and had a very young, light rider. And on those carts – let us call them carts – there was a machine gun. Those carts were the ancestors of nowadays modern tanks. The idea of today’s tanks and those carts carrying machine guns was the same – fire power and rapidity of movement. Rapidity of maneuvering and opening fire from the most unexpected places. Of course, all this contraption of this cart and the men on it, managing the machine gun with four horses, if not six, they were extremely vulnerable. It sufficed for one of the horses to be heavily wounded or killed and the whole thing stopped and the killed horse had to be unharnessed and dragged away and replaced or to just go on with less horses. But this was a very, very potent weapon in those days in flat country, and also used for transporting sick or wounded.

I was one of the injured. I was neither wounded nor sick, but I was injured with that hand, and that huge blister grew and grew. As we moved southward, the weather changed and the conditions of the roads changed. From where we were, northward in the vicinity of Gluchov there was snow on the ground and our supplies moved on sleighs or on a cart. If we could move ten kilometers per day, that was considered a good achievement. The roads were so bad and so bumpy that once, driving through a small little city on that mud road, the cart that I was in, with another wounded fellow officer, <sup>p405</sup> overturned and was lying on its side. We were thrown out of it into the mud. While travelling in that cart, which was in very bad shape and in need of repair, there was some kind of a rusty nail sticking out somewhere and that rusty nail tore open the palm of my hand and broke my blister. Of course that did not help the condition of my hand and I had to stay on that Red Cross train, which I was put on and which moved very slowly southward.



The whole railroad line for miles and miles and miles was nothing but trains moving slowly. Sometimes there was a station that had several tracks and useless engines were pushed away from the side of the track to allow other trains to move on. But every day at daybreak or when the sun went down, Red riders came up to those railroad lines and from a rather big distance, they opened fire from their rifles, galloping alongside the tracks. Of course, they aimed at no body in particular, they just aimed at those cars and trains. Sometimes a bullet would wound an already sick or wounded White soldier or a nurse or a doctor working on that train. Those riders could not stop us but they were a great nuisance. Those who had rifles on the trains, they shot back from the open windows of the cars. Most of the windows of those cars were smashed and open since they had no glass anyhow. Some times our sharpshooters were lucky to hit one of those riders and his empty saddled horse galloped away. That was a kind of a revenge. I think both sides looked at it as some <sup>p406</sup> kind of sport and even considered it fun in the dull, slow movement of trains. Well, it was a fun of sorts.

Finally the train that had our supplies for my unit for some reason switched to the line that took our supply train back to the Crimea. By that time my hand had healed, and I had rejoined my fighting unit. The fighting unit had orders to move more eastward in the direction of the city of Rostov. The idea was that the city of Rostov and the River Don could be a basis for a new line of resistance. A line of resistance against the Reds could be established and was established, but did not hold very long.

### **I contract typhus and barely survive**

When we were just outside the city of Rostov, orders came from headquarters of the so-called division for a consultation. When we looked around, the senior officer of the then united cavalry guards – the ex-four regiments that had dwindled, were united into one squadron – and all the officers were sick with typhoid, and I found myself to be the senior officer. So I went to the headquarters of the division, where some generals and elderly colonels were gathered. The general who was then in charge of all the cavalry units looked up at me and growled, “Couldn’t you find among you a younger one?” Well, after that general’s joke I took my orders and rode back to my unit. And while riding, I felt very queasy and I had to make an effort to remain in the saddle. When I got as far as my squadron, I called an assistant communications <sup>p407</sup> officer and said to him, “Take my temperature.” I had a very high temperature and I understood then that it was typhus, that it was my turn to be sick, and that I would be unconscious maybe in a few minutes. I gave the strictest order that whatever happened to me, I must never be sent to the Red Cross unit or to a hospital, but must be kept in the ranks of the fighting squadron on a cart or a stretcher, as I did not want to be away from my fighting squadron. And after that I passed out.

As I have, said, I realized that I had typhus, for typhus was raging on both sides, White and Red. Red Cross units were subject to raids by the Red cavalry and the hospitals were just plain hell. The large hospital that had been built before the war of 1914 was overcrowded with wounded and sick people; they were lying in the corridors and all over the place. You could not move without stepping across a sick man or a man already dead who had not been noticed for a day or two. When the White Armies left Rostov, the Reds stormed that huge hospital and the sick and wounded White officers and volunteers were bayoneted or shot point-blank in their beds. And those who were killed outright, were the lucky ones because then the whole hospital was poured over with gasoline and set afire. All those who had not died before, perished in the fire and the hospital was burned down to its foundations. Doctors, nurses, wounded and sick were all burned to death. That was one of the many <sup>p408</sup> nightmares of the Civil War.

When I fell sick we were still north of Rostov and the Whites were attempting to establish a



new line of resistance. The sick and wounded had to be evacuated southward toward the region of Kuban. There many wealthy Cossacks lived in their “stanitsa”, which in the local language means a village and each “stanitsa” had an elder. A column of carts with sick and wounded and an open four-wheeled carriage with me in it and my fellow regiment officer, Captain Tapytkov, who was also sick with typhus, crossed the wide Don River.

The only bridge, a railroad bridge, was hopeless because the bridge and all its approaches were clogged by trains full of wounded and sick people and many engines were out of order because the boilers had frozen and burst. Some of the engines had been sabotaged and some had been unhooked from their cars and used on other cars. The engines had to be protected by the military. Next to us was a train that had, fortunately, a very powerful engine that had been used to run express trains in peacetime from Sevastopol’ to St. Petersburg. This powerful engine pushed a row of cars in front of it and behind the engine there were many other cars, so that column of cars finally got across the bridge. But our column of carts had no chance whatsoever. Finally the colonel who was leading that column decided to cross the river on the ice. It was very late fall. The question was whether the ice was thick enough to carry a column of carts or whether it would <sup>p409</sup> break under such a load and we would all drown. But we just had to take that chance. Drowning in the river was less terrible than falling into the hands of the advancing Reds.

In spite of my being sick with typhus and having attacks of very high fever and unconsciousness, I was at other moments conscious of what was going on around me. I can still see that frozen river and our column of carts crossing it, and our carriage somewhere in the middle of that river of ice. Would the ice break or not? Well, the ice held. I remember very well that the driver of our carriage was a volunteer from the German colonies who had joined us more than a year ago. The other driver was my orderly who had been taken prisoner by us from a Red unit. Maybe at the bottom of his heart he was a Bolshevik, but at that time he stuck it out with us and was very helpful and took good care of us sick officers. If he had wanted to, he could have thrown us out of that carriage at any time but he just did not. Finally our column reached the other side of the Don river and entered the “stanitsa.”

We were supposed to be given quarters in that Cossack village but the elder of the village and some of his assistants got the idea of treating us like war prisoners. They decided to exchange us all as soon as the Red cavalry had gained the “stanitsa.” It was clear to every body that this might happen in a week, maybe two. Those Cossacks had participated in fighting the Reds on our side; now they wanted to make a great gift of so many sick officers <sup>p410</sup> to the Reds in order to gain pardon for having fought against them.

We were all too weak to defend ourselves but one of the officers accompanying the column was in good health and he was quite a bright man. I cannot remember his name, but he went to the post office of that “stanitsa” and sent a telegram to the headquarters of General Denikin about our hopeless, defenseless situation. When his telegram reached headquarters, and probably it never reached General Denikin in person, someone at headquarters had the very bright idea of sending back a telegram to the elder of the “stanitsa” which read, “Immediately supply the column of sick White officers with everything that is necessary, and after having given them a good rest and care, let them proceed on their way. If you do not obey my orders, I will move toward your “stanitsa” with a detachment of my Cossacks for reprisals against you.” The telegram was signed, General Shkuro. Now many years later I knew this General Shkuro personally when he was an émigré in Paris. He was a very unusual person, a typical product of those years. He was a Cossack himself and had been a junior officer at the beginning of the war of 1914. He was a born leader and his Cossacks believed in him as a miracle worker and followed him anywhere he led them, and his name was feared by



everybody. If at any moment General Shkuro's whereabouts was unknown, you could be sure that he was fighting back the Reds somewhere. He knew nothing of the telegram and he knew nothing of our being stuck <sup>p411</sup> in that village, but just his name was enough to make the Cossacks change their minds.

It was already getting dark, and while we were waiting, an elderly Cossack came up to the carriage. Tapytkov was unconscious and I was only half-conscious. The Cossack told the driver to follow him. He walked ahead and brought us to his house and I immediately realized that he was a very wealthy man. Our driver and his helper carried the unconscious Tapytkov into a room and I followed them on my own, barely able to stand on my feet. Our host said to me, "Mr. Officer, follow me, I want to show you something." I followed him because I wanted to be polite to that old man. He led me through one room of his house, then through another, and finally he opened a large door and I saw a beautiful room with a huge glass cupboard in it. In that cupboard I saw a dress uniform of the Cossack bodyguard of the Tsar which they used to wear before 1914. Then the old Cossack broke out into tears and said, "This is the uniform of my late grandfather, this is my father's uniform, and it was my uniform too. Three generations of us have served in the personal bodyguard of four Russian Tsars." Well, it was our luck to be in the house of such a man.

After a few days in that house, Tapytkov was getting worse and worse. He was delirious. We were in a room that was in the second story of the house. Tapytkov's face was red and pink and blue, and he stammered something in his delirium. Outside the house <sup>p412</sup> was deep snow and frost. All of a sudden Tapytkov jumped up from the couch, tore off his pyjamas, and completely nude he rushed to the window and opened it. His orderly and our driver were also in that room but they were struck with sudden surprise and terror, and just for a few seconds did not dare to grab their nude, sick senior officer. And those few seconds were enough for Tapytkov to jump out of the window right into a deep snowdrift. Before we realized what was happening, many minutes passed. I could not do anything because I was much too weak. I yelled at the two men, "Go and fetch him! Bring him back. Get him out of the snowdrift." At last they obeyed and carried him back to the room. Meanwhile a doctor had been called and when the doctor had had a look at my friend he said, "There is nothing more that I can do. Hurry and send for a priest." Well, my friend Tapytkov later lived on the outskirts of New York and he passed away in 1977 in New York.

Some time after the above described incident a doctor explained that probably the shock of jumping into the snowdrift had reacted against Tapytkov's high fever, but of course he must have had a remarkably strong heart. Only three years ago he lost his wife and remarried. Tapytkov was one of my greatest friends and to the time of his death we corresponded with each other. As I said, he lived near New York for many years and he was a grandfather.

We left that "stanitsa" and moved toward the city of <sup>p413</sup> Ekaterinoslav and headquarters of the dwindling White Army. I was still very weak and Tapytkov could move just a little. Of course the city was absolutely overcrowded and we decided to attempt to reach the port of Novorossisk because it was clear that the Reds would soon overrun all of the country that we still occupied. There were high mountains between Novorossisk and us but a railroad connection still existed, so we decided to reach Novorossisk by train. Trains were running on that line as we would say now of American cars, bumper to bumper, day and night. Sometimes they were stuck, not moving at all, and the average speed was about ten miles per hour or less.

We were joined in our attempt by Doctor Rousseau, who had been a veterinary surgeon in our regiment before the 1914 war. He was older than we and he was beloved by everybody in the regiment. We mounted a freight car at the railway station and, for some reason that I will



never understand, that freight car was empty. There was some straw in that car, probably used for bedding. All the other cars were overcrowded but this car, standing on the side tracks, was empty. It had an iron stove in the middle with a chimney sticking through the roof, but no fuel whatsoever. It was bitterly cold and in order to be able to light a fire in the stove, we had to move as well as we could around the tracks, picking up scarce sticks of wood and whatever else we could find that would burn. Taptykov was too weak and he just lay on the straw. Dr. Rousseau and I started to light a fire in <sup>p414</sup> the stove just in time, because the train had begun to move. But we had very little fuel and realized that we would never keep the stove going and that we were in danger of freezing to death inside that car.

Suddenly the car stopped, and opening the door, we looked around. We noticed a telegraph pole was lying next to the place where our car was standing. So we, the two of us, got out of the car and we managed somehow (because despair gives a terrific strength to a person for a few moments) to lift that telegraph pole and to put one end of it into the car and shove it, little by little, inside the car. The tip of that pole we shoved into the stove since we had nothing with which to break it into pieces. Little by little we succeeded in shoving the pole into the stove and the other end was sticking out of the door. Anyhow, that glowing iron stove took away most of the frost inside the car which otherwise would have certainly killed us.

Thus we finally arrived at Novorossisk and there we reported to the local authorities. The city was overcrowded and there was no place available anywhere in any house, but we accidentally met an elderly gentleman, Colonel Count Bennigsen, who at one time had been an officer of the Horse Guards, and he told us that he had a requisitioned room and that he would take us in. It was the living room of a local small merchant. I do not remember the family of the merchant; they must have been in the house somewhere. But we had one <sup>p415</sup> room, the living room. And when I say “we” I must explain that I mean “many”. We shared that room with the Colonel and his wife, their three teenaged children, and the unmarried sister of his wife. Then came Taptykov, Dr. Rousseau, and myself. When it was necessary, it was impossible to move from one door to the other without stepping across several people in that room. I do not really remember how we were fed and what we did eat in those days. Probably Countess Bennigsen, who was not sick and who was a woman of great energy, managed to get somewhere some kind of food and to cook it for us. When I got somewhat stronger, I ventured out into the city. I was still wearing the British army boots and under those boots were nails to consolidate those boots, and because of those nails I was mostly skating instead of walking on those icy streets. Besides, I was wearing a cape, very popular among the Cossacks, which enveloped all of my figure from my neck down to my boots and kept me warm, and I wore that cape day and night. As there was no question of changing linen or undressing in the room which we were occupying with the Bennigsen family, lice were all over us.

The city of Novorossisk was surrounded by high mountains, There was a pass in those mountains and down the mountains and through the pass there comes a wind. Sometimes that wind in Novorossisk became a storm or something that is now called a hurricane. It upset people and carts and one day I <sup>p416</sup> was seized by the wind because of my cape and I could not stop, all I could do was to stay upright. And besides the storm, a heavy snow was falling, so I could not see what was ahead of me, but suddenly I saw some kind of a shape and I just embraced that shape. It was a solid shape, standing sturdily on its feet, and while embracing it and having a very close look, I realized that it was a British officer. At that time the British had a mission in Novorossisk and they were helping with supplies and foodstuffs. Realizing that it was not a lantern post that I was embracing but a British officer, I held him tight and spoke to him in English. He had, of course, not the faintest idea who I was, but he was delighted to hear me speaking English. And then with me still embracing him in the middle of





the street, he invited me to come and have supper with him. He said that obviously I needed to get stronger.

He took me to a nightclub, the one and only nightclub still functioning in the city of Novorossisk. This night club, as I well remember, was called “Slon”, which in English means “elephant”. The restaurant occupied not too big a room, maybe ten tables or so, but it was the only place where the best possible food was abundant. How the owner of the restaurant managed it will always remain unknown to me, but the prices were astronomic. But what did the British officer care? Pounds were standing sky-high in exchange for Russian money and printed paper by the authorities of the White Army <sup>p417</sup> was getting worthless by the day, even by the hour. Every one was trying to get British pounds or French francs or some kind of foreign exchange that would be very useful if ever they succeeded in getting out of Russia. I had a glance at the bill which the British officer paid in huge amounts of that worthless paper money, and I realized that the cost of our elaborate supper, plus vodka and wine, was roughly half a million rubles in local paper money. That was really a fantastic rate of exchange.

Speaking of exchange and worthless paper money, in those days the paper money of the Communists was just as worthless as any other money. I remember hearing how, two years later, when Mother was still stuck in St. Petersburg, she went to buy some firewood for her stove. She paid for that fire wood in Soviet money of those days two million rubles and, at the age of sixty-five, she picked up the wood and carried it home. So how much wood did she get for her two million rubles?

To come back to those days in Novorossisk, the situation politically and militarily was very tense. The army had lost trust and confidence in the High Command and in General Denikin himself, who had earlier been considered by many as a hero. A hero he was as concerns his personal bravery under any circumstances, he never cared for his life, but when it came to problems of international relations or civilian rule of a country, he was like a baby, he knew nothing about it. <sup>p418</sup> He had very stubborn ideas of his own; he stuck to the idea of remaining faithful to the allies of the First World War, the French and British, and he was hoping against hope, and even convinced, that they would come with great numbers of fighting men, supplies, and what not. That was his dream and his wishful thinking. A small trickle of supplies did come and a small unit did land in the city of Odessa but then left again.

### **Disagreement between Denikin and Wrangel**

The ways of Denikin were very severely criticized by General Wrangel. General Wrangel, at the beginning of the war of 1914, was the best captain in the Horse Guards. He led a very brilliant attack and took a German artillery unit. He was a born leader of men and he was a leader by the grace of God. His tall figure, his good looks, his waist (envied by many ladies), and his Cossack dress, his dagger and his decoration of the Cross of St. George for bravery under fire, made the picture of a hero, and men followed him through thick and thin anywhere he led them. He was a cavalryman to the bone and with his units he succeeded, during the Civil War, in occupying a large industrial city, which was a miracle in itself. The name of Wrangel was on the lips of every body and he was everybody’s hope to produce some kind of miracle and to stop the Reds.

He made a report to his direct superior, Denikin, which was very critical of Denikin in the strongest possible terms. Somehow this report leaked into <sup>p419</sup> the ranks of the army and of course General Denikin was offended and wanted to court-martial Wrangel for lack of discipline. Anyhow, Denikin relieved General Wrangel of all of his command duties and suggested (not to say ordered) that he leave the territory. A Russian boat, a destroyer, was in the port of Novorossisk, and this destroyer was to take Wrangel to Constantinople and remove him completely. Now, on this destroyer Wrangel still had his personal bodyguard, fanatic ally



dedicated to him. The situation was so tense that Wrangel expected that at any moment a detachment under Denikin's command would come and arrest him. If so, it was quite clear that Wrangel's bodyguard would resist his arrest and that there would be shooting between two units of Whites. Well, Denikin was clever enough not to attempt an arrest of Wrangel because that would have meant a rebellion of all of what remained of Denikin's army. Probably some units would have arrested, if not shot, Denikin himself.

### **Leaving Novorossisk for the Crimea**

It was a custom among us officers of the Horse Guards that whenever we were somewhere in the presence of a senior officer of our regiment (and in this case that would have been General Wrangel) we would report to him our presence. In other words, in civilian language, we would pay him a visit and pay him our respects.

Taptykov was strong enough to walk, and of course we went walking (there was no other way) <sup>p420</sup> through the city to the port. We went aboard the destroyer and Wrangel received us with open arms and asked, "Where is your fighting unit now? You two in Novorossisk are, so to say, up in the air. Where is your fighting unit?" Nobody had any idea then where any fighting unit was. Some fighting units had retreated to the mountains, to the Caucasus, and there was a last battle which I will describe later.

But Wrangel told us that our reserve unit was now in the Crimea and if we stayed aboard the destroyer, he would land us in the city of Kerch in the Crimea, and there we could join our reserve unit and have a rest before leaving for somewhere else. It seemed that he did not know himself what was going to happen. Well, for us that was an unusual bit of luck because we left Novorossisk some six weeks before the disastrous catastrophe of the evacuation of that city started. This evacuation of Novorossisk has been described by many historians and witnesses who participated in it, so I shall leave it out, as I am speaking in my memoirs only about what happened to me personally. I was very fortunate to be in the Crimea, avoiding that disaster and avoiding the last cavalry battle of four thousand White cavalymen against twelve thousand cavalymen of the Red Army. After that battle very few men from the White cavalry were left alive to get out of Russia over the Caucasus Mountains or to the Crimea or as refugees to Constantinople. I was in Kerch when some ships came from Novorossisk bringing more troops to the Crimea. The evacuation <sup>p421</sup> of Novorossisk was completely disorganized, not foreseen by the High Command of General Denikin, and no measures whatsoever were taken to organize this evacuation or to use force of arms if needed to get everybody aboard the ships and to take them towards the Crimea.

Now I want to tell a story about one of my volunteers who now lives in Santa Barbara, California. When I knew him, he was a young boy and he was in a hospital just barely recuperating from typhus. He realized that if he remained in that hospital and if the Reds took over the city, he would be killed, so he decided to leave the hospital. While nobody watched, he crawled out of the hospital, half crawling and half walking. When he was out of the hospital, he had the feeling that he was walking on sand or frozen snow, because under his feet he heard the sound of crush, crush, crush. Looking down he saw that the earth beneath him was moving with a layer of lice, and that his crushing of the lice produced the sound of crush, crush, crush. Such a thing may seem incredible, but it was no exaggeration.

Finally, on all fours, he came as far as a cordon of British soldiers in the port of Novorossisk. There also stood a British Red Cross ship evacuating a British military mission and also units of a British flying Air Force squadron, and my young friend (he was then barely eighteen) crawled up and was lying at the feet of a British soldier from that cordon. The instructions of the British cordon were, of course, not to let pass anyone <sup>p422</sup> aboard their ship. Well, this young boy could speak English and that saved him. He just begged the soldier to let him pass



and the soldier took pity on that young boy and said, "Go ahead, I am looking the other way." So my friend crawled further, reached the planks of the ship, and while he crawled along the planks he was picked up by Red Cross personnel. Maybe they even took him for an Englishman. The boy was taken by that ship to Egypt, where he recuperated, and he is now living in Santa Barbara as a retired gardener.

When the ships from Novorossisk arrived in Kerch on the Crimea, they were carrying tattered soldiers and part of our fighting squadron. These fighting men came on shore and then joined our reserve squadron, which was reorganizing and recuperating. The Crimean Peninsula was connected to the mainland by a narrow strip of land, maybe twenty miles wide, called "Perekop", which means "dig through" in English, because all across that strip of land there was a very deep and very wide ditch dug centuries ago when the Crimea was still in the hands of Tatars and under the rule of the Turkish Sultan. This ditch in those days was used as fortification against the advancing Russians from the north, while the Crimean Tatars periodically raided south Russia, and only in the days of Catherine the Great were the Tatars finally subdued.

Now this narrow space was occupied by a White Army unit, a rather weak unit. But fortunately the Red High Command somewhere in Moscow, then headed by Trotsky, was so eager to <sup>p423</sup> push the White Armies into the sea at Novorossisk and to destroy the main forces of the armies under Denikin that they completely overlooked that small unit defending the Crimea. There was a moment when they could have rushed in and occupied all of the Crimea with very few losses on their side, but they missed that opportunity. Whatever remained of Denikin's army on the Crimea was concentrated little by little in that narrow place. East of "Perekop" there was a wide space of swamps and saltwater marshes, and east of that was a narrow piece of land and railroad tracks connecting the Crimea with the rest of Russia to the north, tracks that carried famous trains, express trains, and the Tsar's trains from the Crimea to the mainland; that was the only link the Crimea had with the mainland. It was not so difficult to fortify those spots against the Reds, so for the time being at least the Crimea was safe. Denikin sent his family (he had married very late in his life a girl that could have been his daughter) away to Constantinople, which had a very demoralizing effect on the troops, and he came with the remnants of his army to the Crimea. He was aware that he had lost all respect and all faith in him and had to abandon his High Command, but to whom? The tradition of the Russian Imperial Army did not permit any kind of elections. A group of colonels and generals could not elect a Commander-in-Chief because that would be against tradition. If an elected new commander could be voted for in parliamentary <sup>p424</sup> fashion, he could just as well be voted out, and discipline would be destroyed by this voting system.

Finally, Denikin was talked into the only thing that he could do, to give up his command to General Wrangel, who was in Constantinople. That was a very bitter thing for Denikin to have to do, for he hated even the name of Wrangel and Wrangel responded in kind. But finally Denikin made the decision and issued an army order stating that because of his ill health and a nervous breakdown he was ordering, ordering General Wrangel to take over command of the army. But Wrangel was not there, he was in Constantinople as a private person. There was no wireless connection, so that order of Denikin's was brought to Constantinople by a British destroyer and handed over to the British Admiral in command of the British Navy in the Black Sea. This admiral went to see Wrangel and gave him Denikin's order (not that the British Admiral could order Wrangel to do anything; he could only hand the order to Wrangel) and Wrangel said, "I refuse to take over command because I know, as a military man, that the situation on the Crimea with those tattered units, without arms and without artillery, is completely hopeless." Then the Admiral replied, "General Wrangel, Sir, you are completely right, and it is worse than hopeless because to my great sorrow and to my great



shame, His Majesty's government in London has made the decision to stop all supplies to the White units on the Crimea." And Wrangel stood up and said, <sup>p425</sup> "In such a case, I take over command." Wrangel was at heart a knight such as there used to be in the Middle Ages and he said again, "All I can do is to save people that are still on the Crimea, and save the honor of the Russian Army."

So Wrangel departed from Constantinople and landed in the port of Sevastopol'. There were crowds of people, not many units, but many scattered officers and soldiers, and all this numerous crowd greeted him enthusiastically with cheers. He was the Miracle Worker who had come to save them. And Wrangel did perform a miracle. He addressed all units with his first order of the day: he warned them that he was not a miracle worker and not to expect that, but everybody should do what he could and he expected every soldier, every officer, every civilian on the Crimea to do his duty as a Russian patriot. The mood of the population changed from one day to the next. The formerly undisciplined units of the army from Novorossisk became perfect military units, disciplined and well-dressed. They went to the north and they reinforced the position at "Perekop", and the spirits of the units was resurrected just by the appearance of General Wrangel.

Then the fighting (it was in April of 1920 that Wrangel took over the command) went very successfully and even the Reds north of "Perekop" were attacked. The purpose of this attack was to enlarge the territory, to get food from those fresh regions, and eventually more men. But that was wishful thinking of that group of forty thousand fighting men, no matter how <sup>p426</sup> enthusiastic. Lacking supplies and artillery, they could not be victorious over the Red Army that had an unlimited supply of everything: manpower, artillery, food, and had as their hinterland all of Russia, while the Whites only had the small Crimean Peninsula that could barely feed its local population, and no reinforcements of manpower. So the situation remained desperate all the time and everyone realized it. But in spite of everything, Wrangel attacked (I was in the attack) the territory that was about twice as large as the Crimean Peninsula, by November of 1920. The Red High Command under Trotsky was absolutely flabbergasted at the spirit of the Whites, for they believed that spirit had been lost in Novorossisk but it suddenly rose again with their victorious advance. Then, at the end of 1920, the Red side concentrated immense forces against us and the resistance could only fight back as much as we could, and then retreat fighting. The last three months of that fighting, autumn through early winter of 1920, ended with the complete evacuation from all the ports of the Crimea.

I want to say, and I will explain in detail later, that Wrangel immediately realized that the last move would be a total evacuation of the Crimea. So realizing that, he took wide measures in advance that this evacuation should proceed in perfect order and not look like the catastrophe that had occurred in Novorossisk. And all through that period I was in the fighting units and later, in the last month or so, in <sup>p427</sup> the personal bodyguard of General Wrangel, so I can truly speak for what happened during that period, and personally to me.

### **Retreat towards Crimea**

Let me go back to early June of 1920 and describe how this re-born White Army broke out from the Crimea, northward and gained the shores of the Dnepr River. It was a very large river and our side, the left side of the river was low and swampy and covered with bushes and trees. The other side was elevated and from there the Red Army could observe any movement on our bank. There were lots of Red artillery, including heavy guns on railroad flatcars that were on the right bank. We had scarcely any artillery; we had some heavy guns brought in by the British. We had some shells, and we had some French artillery guns with French shells. And we also had a few Russian guns with Russian shells. And, of course, those shells only fit





those guns they were made for. So having the proper shells for the proper guns was sometimes quite a problem and sometimes left us with un-useable artillery because we had the wrong shells and they would not fit our guns. And along the Dnepr there was a kind of stalemate. Artillery fire was exchanged and we moved up to the very shores of the Dnepr River and we were entrenched in those marshes, in the weeds and the bushes and the Reds began to cross the river from a ridge just across from us. There was no bridge but they made rafts and got some, they had lots of boats, and they opened what used to be called <sup>p428</sup> “drum fire” – that means non-stop fire with all their artillery, But they aimed above our heads; they wanted to cover the open ground so that the troops that were entrenched along the water line could not get any supplies, reinforcements or buckets of water. That was in July 1920.

Drinking water was the worst shortage. Buckets of water drawn by horses were supposed to come from the rear, but they had to cross that artillery fire. There were some direct hits, some buckets just turned around and we did not have water. But we had the polluted marshes right under our feet. The water was green, infested with frogs, mosquitoes, all kinds of vermin. And that was the water we started drinking. I started drinking the water myself. It was quite clear to us that drinking it would mean immediate typhus. By some kind of a miracle that I cannot explain, although the events I am talking about happened sixty years ago, we did not have one single man sick in the squadron because of drinking that stagnating water.

Well, under that fire, the command at headquarters ordered all units on the left bank of the Dnepr River to retreat towards the Crimea. We felt pretty safe on that waterfront because all those heavy shells thundered through the air over our heads and we had no losses whatsoever. And just behind us there lay an old big cemetery. Probably the Reds were of the opinion that we were entrenched somewhere in the cemetery, where the old grave stones would give us some shelter. And that was a mistake the Reds made. <sup>p429</sup> They fired at that cemetery with their guns; they actually ploughed up that cemetery with direct hits. Just looking over our shoulders, backwards at the cemetery, we saw graves split open and pieces of the boards flying through the air as well as whole skeletons. That was a ghastly sight, of course. But we felt safe and I must say that each man realized that in a minute or an hour he could become a skeleton himself. And nobody gave a damn, excuse my expression.

And the Reds attempted to cross the river supposing that the left bank was empty. We saw them coming on rafts and many, many boats. They were expecting to land not finding any resistance. When they came quite close, we opened point blank fire from all the rifles and machine guns we had. That was a great surprise for the Reds. Panic broke out on the boats and the rafts. Most of them were upset and the occupants of the boats drowned in the Dnepr River and some of them – very few – reached the bank they came from. Then they opened heavy artillery fire, but again, mistakenly, they fired over our heads. So we were quite happy, if the word “happy” suits that situation. Then we realized that to the right of us, up the river and to the left of us, down the river, all units of Whites had retreated under orders from headquarters. But we had no orders to retreat, so we stayed where we were. And when we realized that we were alone, roughly one hundred and fifty men, and the Reds now knew we were there, that we also had to retreat. The Reds would <sup>p430</sup> surround us and take us prisoners. They could land up stream and downstream from where we were. So we had to retreat.

This retreat was one of the nastiest hours of my life because we had to cross that open space and the Red artillery saw our small unit retreating, walking, for about an hour to get outside of the range of those heavy guns. And there were direct hits and one of my fellow officers, a boy younger than I was, was walking about one hundred to one hundred and fifty feet ahead, and I saw the earth rising up in the very spot where he was. And I thought, “Oh dear, oh dear, my dear friend Dima has been blown up to pieces.” But when that earth fell down again, I saw





Dima walking quietly on. I had the uncanny feeling of seeing the ghost of Dima; he could not have survived a direct hit. I felt quite queer and I questioned myself whether I was alright in the head. Well, finally when we walked out of the range of the heavy guns, we were back in a proper formation and there came the division commander on horseback with officers of headquarters and he rode up to our unit and he said in a loud voice, "All those so-and-so Horse Guards ... I have sent seven times an order for them to retreat, but probably the commanding officer of the Horse Guards did not have a dictionary in his pocket and the Horse Guards do not know what the word 'retreat' means, even in Russian." So, of course, we felt very proud.

That spirit and tradition of the Horse Guards throughout <sup>p431</sup> two hundred years of course were very important for us, but at that time the situation was that all those seven orders of the commander to retreat were sent to us by riders because there was no other way to get to us. And the riders had to cross that open space under heavy fire. Some riders were killed, some just turned away and galloped back and no orders ever reached us. Had an order reached us, of course, we would have retreated long before. But to retreat on our own, well that was not our way.

When we had had a rest in the shade of an old haystack, there was my friend Dima and he had not a scratch. He was a bit shaken up but not more than that. And later we questioned artillery men: how could that be? And they explained to us that if a big shell hits a certain spot, the explosion goes upward in all directions, but from the very spot of the hit there is a co-called dead space. And Dima, a man as tall as me, happened to be in that space on the spot. If he had been a few feet to the left or right of that spot, he would have been blown to pieces by the debris of the shell. Of course he was under shock of the air that such a shell produces when it explodes, and that was noticed a few days later when we were moving already on horseback far away from the fire zone at a slow walking pace and young Dima, who was a very good rider, all of a sudden slipped off his horse and fell to the ground. And he was unconscious. That was the effect of the air shock that he experienced.

Well, he was picked up and sent for recuperation on the Crimea, to <sup>p432</sup> Yalta, of course. And shell shock is sometimes worse than an actual wound. All his system, all his nerves were shaken up and it took a long time for him to recuperate. His recuperation in Yalta was being helped by a charming young widow. And it came to the point where Dima wanted to marry her. But that charming young lady who also fell in love with Dima, who was a very, very handsome man, said, "My dear, I cannot marry you, I do not know if I am a widow or not." A year before, her husband had been reported missing in action and nobody knew what had happened to him. He could be a POW with the Reds, he could have fallen sick with typhus and recuperated. He could have been somewhere. There were many, many cases in those days where young women did not know whether they were a widow or not. So Dima had to wait and wait and they waited for a whole year and then there was a basic law of the church of Russia that if the husband was missing and it was impossible to find out his whereabouts, he was supposed to be dead and his wife was supposed to be a widow and she could re-marry. So that is what happened to this young lady and Dima and they did get married and they spent a very, very nice life, had children, and Dima had a sporting lodge in Canada. And maybe only two years ago I learned that he forgot that he was not that young anymore, and he climbed on the roof of his home because there was too much snow on the roof and he started removing that snow and his foot slipped and he fell. He had a brain concussion and <sup>p433</sup> a few days later, he died. He was one of my best, closest friends. He had a German-sounding name, and as I said, he was a very handsome man, and when we were stationed in the German colonies, his German-sounding name, and his German title of Duke of Leuchtenberg impressed the old German wives of the colonists. They had special respect for him. And one of the wives, the



wife of an old colonist was saying one evening, "Isn't that terrible, terrible! Those young officers in the evening after supper and some drinks, they start singing. And sometimes they sing terrible songs. Terrible songs! And my, oh my, that young handsome Duke, he sings with them."

The second part of August of 1920 saw our squadron mounted but there were not enough horses for all men, so only half the squadron was on horseback and half were foot soldiers. We were in reserve somewhere behind the actual fighting lines, some thirty kilometers behind, stationed in a rustic little village and everybody was bored to death. We had learned the lesson that having more than two officers in a squadron at any time, was more than enough and an undersized squadron of men with six or seven officers was much too much to command them and it only exposed officers to being killed uselessly. So at the moment I am speaking of, the officers were on leave in Yalta, and with the squadron there was my cousin Andrei and myself. I was about six months older in age, but Andrei was four months my senior, having graduated from military <sup>p434</sup> school before me. So he was the senior in command.

And when headquarters sent us orders to join the fighting units thirty kilometers north of us, I was very happy. And not being bored anymore, I was ready to start northward with half the mounted squadron that was under my command, to join the bulk of the regiment. And I saw Andrei writing to head quarters a report that he was taking over the mounted squadron and I was to remain in that village with the other soldiers that had no horses yet. Of course I got mad at him and as two cousins, we had a verbal fight. But he had four months of seniority as an officer. So he wrote a report to headquarters that he was taking over the mounted squadron and I was being ordered to remain there with the men on foot. There was nothing that I could do. I could tell my cousin all the nasty words I knew, but I could not change anything officially. The next morning, disgusted and furious, I stayed in that little village and my cousin Andrei went north to join the regiment.

Less than a week later, rumors reached me that my cousin Andrei' was killed point blank during a charge of our mounted regiment against Red infantry. Well, fate is fate. His body was brought back, placed in a metal, sealed coffin, and it had to be taken back for burial in Yalta, where there was the burial ground for officers of our units. And I was ordered to accompany the cart with his coffin on horseback. It was a very sad journey. We reached the Crimea junction from which we had to proceed to Yalta by horse-drawn <sup>p435</sup> cart. And at that junction station, there stood the train of the Commander in Chief, General Wrangel. And by tradition wherever there was a senior officer of the Horse Guards, the younger ones had to report to him and pay him their respects. So I went to that train of the Commander in Chief and I was introduced into the car where Wrangel was and I found him all by himself. And he embraced me and said how sorry he was about the death of my cousin. And then he took off his table a blank of the Commander in Chief of the White Armies and in his own hand he wrote on that blank that Captain Ivan – that was me – was under orders to accompany the coffin of his cousin to Yalta and to remain in the city of Yalta as long as he would not receive other orders from the Commander in Chief. Then he called his Chief of Staff and said, "Countersign my signature." The seals of the Commander in Chief were put on that blank. It was a unique document written in longhand by the Commander in Chief himself, Then I proceeded to Yalta; there was the burial of my cousin.

So, I had to stay in Yalta according to orders. But there was a problem of where to live in Yalta. Yalta was overcrowded. Yalta was full of refugees and officers. There was a huge hotel called Hotel Russia; it was overflowing with refugees. There were no rooms. One of our older officers, too old to be in a fighting unit, had requisitioned the bath room. And being senior



colonel, he slept in the bathtub and the officers who shared the bathroom slept on the floor and <sup>p436</sup> they were lucky if they could get hold of a mattress. Well, I stayed in Yalta and I visited everyday the family of Prince and Princess Scherbatov and their many children; and the mother-in-law of Prince Paul was Princess Bariatinsky and her maiden name was Stenbock-Fermor . She was a cousin of my father. So I felt quite at home in that place. And the eldest granddaughter was named Nadejda also and she had just graduated from high school at the age of seventeen. That was in 1920. When we immigrated to Constantinople in 1921, the two of us were married.

Well, while I was staying in Yalta, I had a meeting with the commandant of Yalta who had the duty of checking officers on leave and checking whether their papers were still valid and to find officers that had to rejoin their units and ask them why they were still in Yalta with documents that were not valid anymore, that were in fact overdue. So he called me into his office and asked in a rather rough tone, “Captain, will you please explain your prolonged presence in Yalta?” I took out that Wrangel document and I said, “Sir, kindly read that document.” Well, he became red in his face, then white and green, handed me that document back almost with a bow in spite of being higher in rank. And I decided that some orders probably did not reach me. And I left Yalta on my own and I got as far as the junction station where Wrangel had given me that document two months before, and I found the commandant of that station and I reported to him. “I am here to rejoin my unit. Has <sup>p437</sup> there been some communication where that unit is now?” And he said to me, “I have not the faintest idea where any unit is anymore because just north of the Crimea there is total chaos and the last agony of the White cavalry. They are outnumbered twenty to one by the Reds. The Reds are just chasing the White units out of the north.” So they were all, what is left of them, on the Crimea. He looked at Wrangel’s orders and ordered me to go back to Yalta and stay there until I got the proper orders. So that is what I did.

### **Selbilar, the home of Nadejda’s family**

I have to talk somewhat about geography. The Crimean Peninsula is cut from west to east by a range of high mountains; sometimes, once in ten years maybe, the tips of those mountains are even covered with snow. Those mountains protect a strip going from east to west on the shore of the Black Sea from the icy winds and snowstorms that cover all the rest of Russia in winter. Actually, this strip – not more than twelve or fifteen miles deep and sixty or seventy miles long – is climatically not at all part of Russia. Climatically, it reminds one very much of the famous strip in France, Monte Carlo with its gambling casinos, the city of Nice, and other cities which have become so popular with British, and later American tourists. But this strip of the Crimea and the port of Yalta were inaccessible before a railroad was built - the railroad that linked St. Petersburg, the capital of Russia, <sup>p438</sup> with Moscow to the south and farther south with Sebastopol’, which became a fortified port and the base of the Russian Black Sea Fleet. When that railroad was finally built, one had access by rail as far as Sebastopol’ or a junction city north of Sebastopol’, a big city that used to be the capital of the Crimea when the Crimea was a semi-independent Tatar state, centuries ago [Bakhchisaray]. From either Sebastopol’ or that other city, Yalta could be reached only by horse-drawn carriage. As I remember, one had to stop for the night half-way through, have a rest, feed the horses, and then one could proceed onward to Yalta. From those days on, Yalta began to be very popular, especially after Emperor Alexander III had a palace constructed just outside the city. The Imperial Family spent much time in that new palace and many of the Russian nobility and many wealthy merchants of St. Petersburg and Moscow came to Yalta and constructed their own houses and palaces all along the coast.

One such estate on the very outskirts of Yalta was called Selbilar, probably a Tatar name.



This Selbilar belonged to Princess Bariatinsky. Her maiden name was Stenbock-Fermor and she was the daughter of Alexander Stenbock-Fermor, the elder brother of my grandfather. So Nadejda Princess Bariatinsky was a cousin of my father and her children were all my second cousins. The eldest girl of the three of them married Prince Scherbatov and in 1921 he became my father-in-law and his wife, Anna, my second cousin, was my mother-in-law. <sup>p439</sup> Prince Scherbatov was a one-hundred percent gentleman if there ever was one. He was a carbon copy of his ancestors, who many centuries earlier had been the ruling Princes of part of Russia and had descended from the legendary Scandinavian Prince and founder of the Russian dynasty.

Prince Scherbatov in his youth was an officer of the Hussar Guard regiment. He was very broad-shouldered and very strongly built. His eyes were absolutely remarkable. There is a saying that the human eyes are the mirrors of the soul; the eyes of Prince Paul reflected unlimited, boundless kindness. He was always in good humor, in spite of difficult times. He was a very brave man. During the days of the first Revolution of 1905, there was a mutiny in a fortress lying just outside St. Petersburg. This fortress was at the base of the Baltic Sea. Part of the garrison of that fortress remained true to the Tsar but the greater part was in mutiny. Orders had to be given to quell that mutiny and there was no other way of sending those orders except by hand. Prince Paul was instructed by Grand Duke Nicholas, Commander-in-Chief of all the Guard troops, to take those orders personally to that fortress in mutiny. To reach the fortress he had to be disguised and go in by rowboat from the shores of Finland. That is what he did, risking his life in the exercise of his duty.

In 1917, when the family decided to leave St. Petersburg and to go south to Yalta, for some reason they did not want to take with them the jewels that his mother-in-law, Princess <sup>p440</sup> Bariatinsky, and also the Scherbatov Family, had. The jewels were really priceless, equal almost to the personal jewels of the Tsar's family. So in order to leave the jewels safely, and a bank would not have been safe for there they could be requisitioned or stolen, Prince Paul personally made a hole in one of the thick walls of his mother-in-law's home and put the jewels in that hole and plastered it over. Probably some of the servants knew what he was doing but they were very faithful people. No one else knew that the jewels were in that wall. Then later, in the year 1918, they wanted to get the jewels out because the income from the estates that they had all over Russia had become zero, and the jewels would be very helpful in feeding that very numerous family of eight children. Prince Paul travelled in disguise as a proletarian factory worker north to St. Petersburg. He was not the only one to make such a trip in disguise and in those days some gentlemen disguised as proletarian factory workers were caught because of their hands. Their hands were much too clean, uncalloused, had no broken fingernails; they were not proletarian hands, they were hands of an aristocrat. In order to change the hands of an aristocrat into the hands of a proletarian worker, it takes time and technique. The technique consists of holding your hands in the warm ashes of the fireplace, not too hot, just warm enough to change the pigment of your skin. Then you have to artificially do some thing to get your hands calloused. And you never wash your hands. Thus he reached St. Petersburg and came back carrying <sup>p441</sup> on his person all the jewels. It was really the feat of a hero.

There was a family legend that when Prince Paul was engaged to be married and his fiancée and her mother were visiting one of the Scherbatov estates in central Russia, he wanted to show off his strength. When a carriage with a troika – three horses – was standing at the door and his fiancée with her mother was already in it, Prince Paul seized the wheel of the carriage with both hands and kept it from turning, so that the troika could not start. Well, that was of course a good exercise. But his brother-in-law, Count Apraksin, sarcastically said after hearing that story many times over that the old faithful coachman of the Scherbatov estates



got a very handsome tip for not having urged his horses forward too much. Prince Paul got very angry at such sarcasm. Sometimes he could get angry even about nothing. He could flare up like a pot of milk, but that never lasted. As soon as he had cooled down he was sorry. Then, to make up, he would permit something he had been dead-set not to permit half an hour earlier. As I have said, kindness was a very basic trait of his personality.

When my father was very young and just a student at the Imperial Lycée at St. Petersburg, he spent much time during vacations, which were too short to go all the way south to his mother, visiting his cousin Princess Bariatinsky. That became quite a tradition and when I was about fifteen, Father took <sup>p442</sup> me with him. I loved to accompany Father on such visits. The grandchildren of Princess Bariatinsky were in those years in the nursery. Her oldest grandchild, Nadejda, was then twelve or thirteen years old, and I rarely met her – maybe once or twice – and of course it did not dawn on anybody that years later, in 1921, she would become my wife. Maybe grandmother Bariatinsky did have such an idea somewhere in the back of her mind; anyway, she would have been and later was very happy that her oldest granddaughter would carry the same name that she had had before she married Bariatinsky.

Now this estate in Yalta, Selbilar, was not just a summer cottage. It was a huge house with many buildings surrounding it and I do not remember how much acreage of vineyards and orchards. All those vineyards and orchards were leased to local Tatars who paid in money or in kind. They said, “Please tell all your grandchildren not to climb in the peach trees. We will bring to you all the best peaches we have. But children taking down the peaches on their own will break branches and destroy the peach trees.” Well, eating peaches was fine but taking them down from the trees, of course, was great fun. So, just on the sly, we did take some peaches ourselves.

When my father married in 1881, his cousin Princess Bariatinsky acted as Father’s mother, who could not come all the way from south Russia on account of ill health. So the relationship between us and Princess Bariatinsky, with all <sup>p443</sup> her daughters and their children, was really very close. During the Civil War when I came to Yalta, I went to Selbilar to present my respects to the old Princess Nadejda Bariatinsky. When I got there, she was living on the ground floor of that big house and the upper rooms were crowded with all the Scherbatov family. In other buildings was the Apraksin family with many children, the eldest girl about thirteen and promising to become an outstanding beauty – she kept her promise later. The other children were just small kids and they had a nurse.

At the time I first came to Selbilar, three families, the families of all the three daughters of Princess Bariatinsky, were living on that estate. Counting the three daughters, their husbands, and their numerous children, I come up with around twenty persons. Of course the big house and surrounding buildings were full of servants from the old days and the servants just could not leave, did not want to leave, and had no place to go to anyhow. There must have been at least fifteen or twenty of them, and their families. So Selbilar, with all its inhabitants, could be considered just as one big family, not to say tribe.

### **I begin to court Nadejda**

Of course I came to Selbilar each time I was in Yalta. I felt very much at home there; I “belonged” to that family. The eldest granddaughter had just graduated from the Gymnasium, <sup>p444</sup> (equivalent of a senior High School in the USA) and she began some courses at the local hospital to become a Red Cross nurse. There is an old French saying that I will try to render in English: that cousinship (cousinage) may develop into a dangerous neighborhood. Young Nadejda Scherbatov was the oldest of many, many children, but she was not quite eighteen. Red Cross regulations demanded that such a person be at least eighteen years old but in her case this was overlooked. After she had completed those Red Cross courses, she had the right





to wear the Red Cross nurses' uniform with a big red cross, a red cross on a white dress. That inspired me to go to a flower shop in Yalta – Yalta was, of course, overfilled with flowers at all seasons – and I bought up bunches and bunches of lilies of the valley, which are white, and I bought an amount of red roses. I had a large box and it was stuffed with lilies of the valley, and in between were stuck red roses, making a red cross. I came to Selbilar, carrying that box, and I presented it to young Nadejda. At that moment I noticed that her parents, uncles and aunts looked at each other and winked. They got suddenly a feeling that the cousinship was becoming rather dangerous.

All during the last part of the Civil War, in 1920, each time I came to Yalta I visited Selbilar. It was, so to say, a last little splinter of Holy Russia as I had known it through all my childhood - family life, dedicated servants. Selbilar lived its own life as if the Revolution had never <sup>p445</sup> occurred, and I loved the atmosphere of all that place, which I considered almost as home. All the people living there considered me as a member of the family long before I actually fell in love with young Nadejda. One of my fellow officers that I had known since my childhood teased me, saying, “You are not in love with a girl. You are in love with all the atmosphere of the whole family.” For the time being, at least in the beginning, he might have been right.

### **Recuperating in Yalta**

Anyhow, when I came from the northern part of the Crimea, where I had been recuperating from my second attack of typhus, I was sent for further recuperation to Yalta. For many officers who could occasionally obtain leave from the front lines, Yalta was the place to go. But that was also not always a great blessing, because while we were on the front lines the army supplied us with food and lodging. Sometimes the lodging was just a haystack, some place in the middle of nowhere. But when we came to Yalta we had to have lodgings which were requisitioned for officers on leave. The greatest hotel in Yalta was the Hotel Russia. It was a brand new building, a huge modern hotel, but it was crammed full of people who were there by requisition or who still had some means to rent rooms. And when I arrived there were no rooms available. We junior officers slept on the floor of a bathroom. Those were our living quarters. Sleeping bags as they are known today did not exist, so we just wrapped ourselves in blankets, <sup>p446</sup> or maybe we got hold of a mattress. To get around in that bathroom we had to step over one another.

The colonel, who lived with us, managed to have a little table and on that table was a gadget, called a primus, a burner of sorts. The bottom of the burner was filled with kerosene and a little cup on the top of the burner had to be filled with alcohol. This burning alcohol developed a high temperature and then the gas of the kerosene rose up and burned. It was not the kerosene burning, it was the emanation of the kerosene burning in that burner. It was very, very popular in those days. It could be carried around anywhere and fit on the smallest table and it served for cooking, because going to any local restaurant in Yalta was impossible, beyond the means of the officers on leave, who had scarcely any money at all. But they managed to buy something at the market and then cook a meal on that gadget in the bathroom.

### **Evacuation of the Crimea**

Very soon after the collapse of Germany and Turkey, the straits of Constantinople were open, and the British and the French fleet sailed into the Black Sea. The British government sent a man-of-war to anchor off Yalta. The Admiral conveyed an invitation to the Dowager Empress, the widow of Tsar Alexander III, and members of the Romanov family to board that British man-of-war that would take them to safety in England. The Dowager Empress said that she was very, very touched, but that she would not leave Yalta unless some of <sup>p447</sup> her friends could be taken out also. So the government of Great Britain gave permission to the



Admiral to take all people according to a list that he would receive from the Dowager Empress. It was a very good opportunity for many families to seek safety abroad, because otherwise they would never have gotten out. They had no means to pay their passage on ships. Anyhow, there were no passenger ships. Very many families that I knew in Yalta left on the ship with the Dowager Empress.

So, when I arrived in Yalta, I found Yalta, so to say, empty. Of course, Yalta was overcrowded, but when I say empty, I mean Yalta was empty of families I used to know in my teenage period in St. Petersburg. The only friends that I knew since then were my relatives, living in Selbilar, who had decided to remain there. A year later, when the Crimea was evacuated by order of General Wrangel, everybody left, except one of the daughters of Princess Bariatinsky, who remained. This daughter and her husband and old Princess Bariatinsky were murdered. I will describe that tragic event later.

Let me refer back now to the time when I returned to overcrowded Yalta. At that time my visiting Selbilar became a daily occurrence and I always remained there for dinner. That was served in a big entrance hall because the main dining room had been turned into a bedroom for some of the inhabitants. How my future mother-in-law, Princess Scherbatov, managed all that household – she had to feed roughly forty <sup>p448</sup> persons every day - was to me a miracle. Of course, through some of the servants there were connections with the Tatars renting the orchards and vineyards, and occasionally they brought from the mountains where they were living some meat, vegetables when available, and fruit, a huge amount of grapes in season. Grapes and peaches were not just delicacies, like dessert, but were food. The worst and most difficult was the question of bread. The Tatars had their water mills in the mountains; they brought a sack or two of flour and bread was made at home. Somehow, all this great family, or as I said, tribe, managed not to go hungry. The Tatars in the mountains had a lot of sheep which produced cheese in season, and this sheep's cheese is very popular in the south. It is very rich and it is a food locally produced, so there is plenty of it on the market. That was the main staple of the officers on leave.

There was a restaurant in Yalta, run by a very famous cook by the name of Korniloff, allegedly one of the cooks of the Imperial Family. Later, when he managed to emigrate, he had a luxury restaurant in Paris. Now, when I came from the northern part of the Crimea I brought a bucket of butter, slightly salted. I brought some hams and eggs, because there was plenty of all of that in the so-called German colonies, villages of Germans that had come down there in the days of Catherine the Great. They became extremely wealthy farmers and they had no outlet for their produce because of the lack <sup>p449</sup> of any transportation. So we had all those luxury items: chickens, geese, ducks, ham, eggs, milk, and so on. And it was delicious because usually there was no variety.

I remember an incident: Once I was walking in the streets of Yalta, probably in the company of my friends, officers, and my future fiancée. I was telling about my life in the reserve squadron in a rather loud voice, and I mentioned that I was sick and tired of eating ham and eggs, butter, lard, and fowl. Suddenly I was stopped by an elderly gentleman, and very politely lifting his hat, he said to me, "Sir, officer, may I ask you a question?" I said, "Go ahead." He asked, "Will you please tell me where you come from?" It sounded to him like paradise. Well, I explained the situation. Now, when I brought all the goodies from there, I brought them all, of course, to Selbilar, and my future mother-in-law was delighted. I was happy because I could reciprocate for all the frequent dinners that I had enjoyed there. And I also brought several sacks of sugar and two cases of vodka. I gave one sack of sugar to my future mother-in-law but I never mentioned to her a word about having two cases of vodka. I brought that stuff down to the restaurant of Kornilov and I said to him, "Listen, to estimate the



money value of this stuff today is quite impossible because money does not have any value at all, it is worth less and less every day. But I offer the following arrangement: You take over that stuff and you give me tickets for so and so many dinners at your place. So when I come to <sup>p450</sup> have dinner at your place, alone or with a friend, I can pay with these tickets.” He was delighted.

A few days later I was having dinner in that restaurant with my officer friends, my future fiancée, and two or three of her girl friends at a rather large table. All of a sudden I saw a very scared look on the face of my yet unofficial fiancée. I said to her, “What is the matter, what is wrong?” She said, “Oh, in that corner over there, sitting at that little table, is Uncle Peter Apraksin.” It is hard to understand nowadays, but for a girl of eighteen to have supper at that restaurant with a group of young officers, unescorted by her mother or a governess, was not at all in the Selbilar tradition. My future fiancée was scared that her Uncle Peter would report it to her parents and she would be scolded very thoroughly. But Uncle Peter was at that table with a lady, and that lady was not his wife. All of a sudden, Uncle Peter came sheepishly up to our table, and addressing his niece, he said, “Dearest Nadejda, I have not seen you this evening and you have not seen me.” After that, the authority of Uncle Peter became zero.

Count Peter Apraksin – as the children called him, Uncle Peter – sported a typical Russian beard and he had been the personal secretary to Empress Alexandra, the wife of Tsar Nicholas. When the Tsar abdicated and lived under house arrest, and later was deported to Siberia and murdered with all his family, when those tragic days started, Uncle <sup>p451</sup> Peter reported sick. That was a sort of diplomatic sickness and plain cowardice. He did not want to risk his precious hide and be deported or eventually shot. That was very much held against him by very many Russians, including his two brothers-in-law.

Besides that restaurant, there was also a night spot, the only one in Yalta. Of course I visited that night spot once or twice. There was a very characteristic figure there, and as I heard he came every evening. He was the military commandant of the city of Yalta, a retired Hussar general by the name of Zykov. He was in his general’s uniform, a very stout man, completely bald, sporting a beautiful white moustache. He sat in that night spot at a table with champagne bottles and a chorus girl on each of his knees. Everybody knew where they could always find General Zykov if they had some official business with him as Commandant of Yalta. He would never be found in his office. The office was run very thoroughly by some well-trained military clerks and he had full confidence in them. Occasionally he came to the office to sign some papers, never reading them. He was a figure of the distant past. What happened to him later I do not know. I hope, for his sake, that he passed away before the Crimea was overrun by the Reds.

### **We requisition food supplies**

Now I must explain how I managed to have those sacks of sugar and those cases of vodka. I have to go back to the <sup>p452</sup> fall of 1919, when the White armies were rapidly retreating. We were in a large village south of the city of Harkov [Kharkov?] and there was a sugar factory there. The sugar factory belonged to the family of a young boy who was a volunteer in my squadron, but he was then somewhere in the rear in training. This sugar factory produced sugar and it also distilled vodka. I ordered my men to requisition, by force if necessary, as many carts as they could find and I believe they got some thirty horse-drawn carts. The owners, local peasants, drove the horses, in the hope of someday managing to come back to their homes. Some of those carts were loaded with sacks of sugar. The manager of the factory was there, and he just asked me to sign a paper that I had requisitioned so and so many sacks of sugar. He wanted to be covered, not accused eventually of having himself robbed the factory for which he was responsible. That was quite a normal demand, so I signed away.



Then we went down to the basement of that huge establishment. It was a cellar, but a huge cellar that could hold maybe two or three modern swimming pools. Many soldiers from all kinds of units were carrying out vodka and at the same time drinking it, getting drunk, falling into that cellar that was maybe three feet deep in vodka, and they drowned in that vodka. The corpses of the drowned were swimming around the whole cellar. Other soldiers were standing on all fours, lapping up vodka and pushing away the corpses of those who were already drowned. That was a ghastly sight. *p453* My men were carrying out cases of vodka and they were also drinking.

I realized that if we stayed there ten or fifteen minutes more, my men would not be able to leave, they would be just as drunk as all the mob that was already drunk and drowning in that pool. So I said to my master sergeant, who was an old soldier and a very disciplined man, "Stop, that is enough! We are going to start out right away." He talked back to me and said, "Sir Captain, there is still some room on those carts." He himself was not very steady on his feet. Then I took out my Colt revolver and I held it right under the nose of my own master sergeant and I said, "Out we go!" in such a tone that he got sober. He ordered his men, who fortunately were not too drunk, and we left, having many cases of vodka on our carts. After we were maybe three or four kilometers away from that plant the whole big plant went up in flames. Some one of those drunks had thrown a match into that swimming pool of vodka and all of the drunks and the dead and the half-drunks were burned in the flames of that big plant. That fire was followed by two very strong explosions .

That is how I got hold of so much sugar and so much vodka. Then I was accused of having looted the place. A report of my actions got as far as the headquarters of General Denikin and he ordered me to stand before a court martial for looting. Well, that court martial never took place because events overtook it. But that was very typical *p454* of those headquarters. They did not realize that if I had not taken as much sugar and vodka as I could, two days later when the whole region fell into the hands of the Reds they would have taken whatever they wanted. Headquarters followed the regulations of yesteryear. To draw a line between lawful requisitioning and plain looting was very, very difficult. But my loot, so to say, helped us very much. When we were retreating, we exchanged some vodka with the local peasants for fodder for our horses. During that retreat we made an average of fifty miles a day on horseback, every day. Of course the horses were exhausted and there was little fodder, but we sprinkled a little sugar on what we had and they ate it very well and the sugar gave them a lot of energy. And we exchanged vodka for our food.

During the whole campaign of the White armies, the front-line soldiers and officers never got any pay and never got any food supplies. They had to live on what they could find among the local people and requisitioning it, and requisitioning sometimes degenerated into plain looting. But that could not be otherwise. Therefore, it was considered quite normal that an officer going on leave and not having received any pay for a whole year would consider two or three cases of vodka and two or three sacks of sugar as compensation for the wages he would have gotten in normal times. That is the explanation of how I managed to get as far as Yalta with that vodka and that sugar. *p455*

But getting from that German village, that colony in the northern part of the Crimea, to Yalta was a problem. There was no railroad connection from Sebastopol' or any other place to Yalta in those days and Yalta could be reached only by horse-drawn carriages or carts, as I have already mentioned. But there was a group of Tatars who had formed a kind of union of teamsters; they had no trucks but they had very large carts and very, very strong, large horses that I envied and admired because those Tatar horses were stronger and looked much better than the horses that we had before the Revolution at our estate in Kodyma. I managed to talk



one of those Tatars into giving me a lift. I sat on those boxes of vodka and the sugar was covered with a tarpaulin. We drove slowly, crossing the mountain ridge to get to Yalta. At the half-way point, having already crossed the mountain ridge and at the shore of the Black Sea, we stopped at a little village.

It was rather late in the evening. There was an inn full of people. I was in the uniform of an officer. My intention was to stay with my cart there at that inn overnight. My Tatar coach man, in broken Russian, explained to me, “Sir Officer, that inn is full of all kinds of people, maybe many deserters, maybe some Communists among them. They are all drinking heavily. When they see you, the only officer in uniform among them, you might get into real trouble. I advise you to walk two or three miles ahead and I know of a little inn there that is practically empty. When I drive by at the break of dawn <sup>p456</sup> I will pick you up again.” That was very decent of him and I realized that maybe he had saved my life. So I walked and I found that inn, which was a very small place, and practically empty. I even managed to have a nap, not undressing, and of course having my Colt right next to me on the ready. In the morning, at the break of dawn, that Tatar and his cart really drove up to me and stopped and picked me up again. We reached Yalta, where I could get hold of a carriage for hire and unload my stuff and bring it – part of it – to Selbilar and part of it to that little Russian restaurant. I felt as if I were the king of all Yalta, having all those goodies for my friends.

Nowadays it is hard to realize all those unusual situations of sixty years ago in the Civil War in Russia.

### **Nadejda and I become engaged**

On September the seventeenth – that was a very unusual day in Russia – it was the name day for four girls’ names: the name of my unofficial fiancée, Nadejda, which means hope and the other name was Vera, which in Russian means faith, and the other girl’s name was love in Russian. And they were saints of the Russian church for centuries. The mother of those three girls, martyrs of the early Christian era, was wisdom, Sophia. Very popular names for girls and all four had their name day on that very particular day, September seventeenth. And that was the day that the parents of Nadejda <sup>p457</sup> finally allowed us to be officially engaged. Our betrothal took place and the priest of the family came to celebrate a *Te Deum*, a short church service to the health of the two of us. It very closely resembled almost a wedding. But it was not. We were still officially fiancées. And on that very same day I got a wire order from Sebastopol’ from the headquarters of General Wrangel to report to him in Sevastopol’. So the very day of the betrothal, I left.

When we were still on the Crimea in Yalta, Nadejda was so to say the only girl of her kind, which means we belonged to the same society in St. Petersburg and had the same back ground and we were cousins besides. So, Nadejda or no Nadejda, I had a home in Selbilar. She had in Yalta four girlfriends. Two of them were sisters. They were daughters of a very renowned general of a Russian Guard regiment. He was a division commander and a great and very kind gentleman. Some how it never occurred to me to court those two girls, for a reason that I do not know to this day.

Another girlfriend of hers was the daughter of the mayor of the city of Yalta. He was of Greek origin. The girl was very nice, she was even good-looking, always in good spirits, but her father was simply horrible. He was horrible even to all his family. They were living half hungry while he was spending money in the nightclub in Yalta. On his rare visits to Selbilar he also came to pay his respects to Princess Bariatinsky or Nadejda’s mother. On these occasions he was so obsequious <sup>p458</sup> and it was so evident that he felt so flattered to be received at Selbilar that his attitude was very sickening. I was very, very sorry for his older daughter, whose nick name was “Baby” even though she was in her late teens. She had also





some brothers, four young boys who were promising to be as disgusting as the father. So all this means that in those days Nadejda in Yalta had practically no competition. In 1920, everybody's hero was Commander-in-Chief, General Wrangel. I was one of the officers of his bodyguard. Some waves of hero worship could also be reflected on my modest person as a junior officer. Also, what eighteen year old girl would not be somehow flattered by an obvious courtship by an officer five years older? Nadejda accepted courtship slightly ironically, as any girl her age would. When rumors reached Yalta that a Stenbock was killed in battle on the front lines – three of us were on the front fighting line – nobody knew which of the three Stenbock cousins was killed. When I arrived in Yalta with the coffin of my cousin Andrei, Nadejda suddenly told me of her feeling of relief that it was not me who was killed. That was all she mentioned, but I immediately concluded that she cared for me, that she was in love with me. For a boy of twenty-three, it is such a nice conclusion that a girl is in love with him. But on my part this was wishful thinking, and such wishful thinking of mine went on and on for almost ten years before and after our marriage in 1921.

Nadejda never hid her feelings, and <sup>p459</sup> it was obvious to all that she was not in love as a fiancée nor as my wife. As I said before, I was a member of the family anyhow. The fact of my name, the same as her grandmother's, had a lot of meaning for her and her late grandmother and brothers and sisters. They are all my cousins and good friends, in spite of our divorce and separation, up to this day, being close relatives as we are, having the same background and childhood, later being kind and deeply sorry for us when we were penniless immigrants – as hundreds of thousands of others – and later when I was working at a barely subsistence salary. But this was certainly a rickety basis for a marriage.

As I said, all through those unhappy years of my life I got a nickname from my friends, when we were living in Beograd, Yugoslavia, and later in Budapest. They gave me the nickname, the “Yellow Martyr” – that was me. I was blind, I was stubborn and would not admit that our marriage was on the rocks, to use a modern expression. And on the rocks it stayed and lasted as long as it did only because fate put us in a golden cage. I mean the estate of Count Louis Karolyi. We were like in a railroad car that was put on some distant side track of a big railroad junction. There was no contact with life that was going on in big centers like Berlin or Paris, where thousands and thousands of Russian immigrants were. And there was no comparison. Physically, we had every thing we needed, even more so. Life in Hungary was like a <sup>p460</sup> fairytale from this point of view. We were isolated from reality. Such isolation could be understood by reading my chapter, “Life in Hungary.”

Our very young age and forces of nature made us parents of two boys. The years of isolation and latent unhappiness for both of us were worth my suffering through, because now, divorced long ago and having had stormy years, both of us are happy and proud, thanks to the two boys and our five grandchildren.

### **I have to return to my unit**

As mentioned before, on the day of our betrothal, I had to leave Nadejda to report back to my unit. Getting to Sebastopol' was a great problem. Sebastopol' was connected by a road from Yalta, but that road was very dangerous. In the mountains through which that road went, there were small pockets of Reds, and especially at night they were likely to attack small groups and of course a single officer.

But just by chance a British destroyer was standing in the port. I had friends among the British officers where in the evenings I had supper with them in Yalta. And I walked up to one of the officers and asked him, “When are you leaving for Sevastopol'?” And he said, “Oh, we are leaving in half an hour.” “Will you take me back to Sebastopol'? I have orders to report to the Commander- in-Chief .” And of course the captain said, “Of course, come



aboard.” That was a great coincidence. I barely had time to telephone to my fiancée that I was leaving. *p461*

And the sea in autumn sometimes is very, very rough and I was always a very poor sailor. So, when the destroyer went out to sea, the waves were very, very huge and they came right over the sides of the destroyer. I became quite sea sick and I suppose I was standing on that deck as they say “feeding the fish” in the Black Sea and there came a minute where I did not quite realize where I was. I was up to my waist in water. I did not realize whether it was waves coming over the edge of the destroyer or whether I had been washed overboard. At that instant I felt a very strong hand on the back of my neck and a sturdy British sailor was holding me up in the air like a newborn puppy, and putting me back on my feet on deck. And then he pushed and dragged me below to the cabins of the destroyer. Well, finally we did reach Sebastopol’. The captain said to me, “You are in no condition to report to the Commander-in-Chief right away. But you will undergo a cure.” This cure of his consisted of I do not know how many drinks of whiskey. After having digested the captain’s cure, I reported to our Commander-in-Chief. And I found that our squadron was called back from the front lines to join the Commander-in-Chief’s personal bodyguard. Some of them were in the city of Sebastopol’, not in the fighting units anymore. And we were one of the units in the personal bodyguard of General Wrangel. And that lasted about two months. When the general, total evacuation of the Crimea was ordered by General Wrangel, we realized *p462* the situation was untenable. Whole remnants of the Whites and the population had to be saved from the bloodbath and leave the last little spot of Russian territory to the advancing Reds. About that evacuation I will speak later.

### **My squadron joins the personal bodyguard of General Wrangel**

So, on September 17, 1920, I was back in Sebastopol’, coming from Yalta on a British destroyer, and I had a reunion with my fellow officers, with our fighting squadron that were just ordered back to Sebastopol’ from the front lines to join the personal bodyguard of General Wrangel. It was a happy reunion. Of course, everyone of us, including most of the enlisted men, at the bottom of their hearts, realized that the situation of the Whites on the Crimea was hopeless. It was the beginning of the end. And it was a great relief for everyone to be back in Sebastopol’ and not anymore on the fighting lines north of the Crimea, where the situation was hopeless and everybody understood it, but nobody ever spoke of it or even mentioned it.

But being back in the city of Sebastopol’ had also its shady, uncomfortable results. Being in a city, there was still some semblance of social life, and that demanded cash in every officer’s pocket. And that was just not there. The official wages that we received could cover maybe one outing, a very little one, at one of the restaurants that still existed in Sebastopol’. We realized rapidly that officers, as long as they were still on the front fighting lines, were *p463* heroes. We, back at the rear, were penniless, undesirable paupers. The situation was really tragic, even more so because back in the rear there were men, in civilian clothes – God knows who they were, they were obviously of the age to be drafted – and those fellows had any amount of money in their pockets, and could give parties, entertain many girls; and we were occasionally invited to such parties as, so-to-say, very poor relatives. And poor relatives are always distant relatives.

Now, our squadron was located in barracks outside the outskirts of the city of Sebastopol’. For the first time, our unit was being sent on duty to guard the Governor’s Palace, occupied by the commander-in-chief, General Wrangel. I was assigned to be the first one to lead that unit to the Palace and take over the guard duties for twenty-four hours.

General Wrangel invited to his lunch table the officer of the guard every day. This time, it happened to be me. I sat at the far end of the table, presided over by General Wrangel. The



commander of all his bodyguard, composed mostly of Cossack units, was Colonel Upornikov. Upornikov had just reported our safe arrival to Sebastopol', our location in those barracks, and in the words of the report from Upornikov to General Wrangel, everything was fine, completely in order and nothing but roses and high spirit. And at the table during lunch, Wrangel addressed me across the table in a rather fatherly way – because he was a senior <sup>p464</sup> officer of the Horse Guards years ago – and he said to me, “Well, now, how are you, and how do you feel in Sebastopol’?” And I started with the words, “Your Excellency, the beds in the barracks have no mattresses, not even straw. The soldiers are sitting or lying on naked boards. The windows, most of them, have no glass in them, and the wind whistles through our barracks.”

Colonel Drisen, attached to Wrangel - and he knew me since my childhood – was looking with terrible eyes at me. Upornikov was shaking his beard, not knowing where to look. At that moment, Wrangel stood up, hit the table with his fist, and yelled, “Bring up a car, bring up my car! I will investigate the situation in person right now.” That was typical of General Wrangel. And he did; and he came, unexpected, to the barracks, and he found out that what I was saying in my young ignorance of policies and diplomacy, that I was right. That very same evening, all men had mattresses; and glass was found somewhere, and everything was put in order. But, of course, Upornikov hated me with all his might.

Wrangel had a bodyguard of Cossacks since the days he was commanding the cavalry army on the Volga that consisted mostly of Cossacks and units of the Caucasus Moslem mountaineers. They were always envious about any units of the Imperial Guard regiments. But they decided to be diplomatic, and they arranged a bang party – officers only – and invited all of us officers to that party. One of my fellow officers, <sup>p465</sup> nicknamed Jojo, was once ago attached to those Moslem mountaineer units, and they had the habit, when the party progressed and much vodka was consumed, to enliven the party by drawing their pistols and starting to shoot into the ceiling. That replaced music for them. Of course, this could eventually be a disaster, somebody shooting not in the ceiling but hitting one of his fellow officers. It had happened before, and it was strictly forbidden by General Wrangel – and when he forbid something, he really meant it.

I knew the habit of my good friend Jojo, to imitate those Moslem mountaineers. And in the progress of the party, I noticed that Jojo was already in the mood of imitating the Moslem mountaineers. That would be a scandal, a disaster. It would get reported to Wrangel, and Wrangel might even demote him from his officer's rank, if not worse. So, I stood up, and I wiggled back to the chair of my friend Jojo, who had his heavy Colt in his scabbard. From the Colt there was a leather string to the belt, so that all officers could not drop eventually during hand to hand fighting their revolver and loose it. So I took a sharp knife and I cut that leather, and very gingerly I removed the Colt from the scabbard of Jojo, and hid it in an adjacent room. Minutes later, Jojo was completely in the mood and grabbed his Colt to start shooting at the ceiling, and the Colt was not there. He was furious. Who had dared be a saboteur and remove the pistol from an officer's scabbard? But it was gone, and that was that. <sup>p466</sup>

Then, the party continued, and the spirits became very, very high. I was then a few days ago declared officially as being fiancé of Nadejda Scherbatov who lived in Yalta with her parents, and I was in the mood of being a very good boy. So, I did not want to continue that rough party, and I slipped away to one of the adjacent rooms, where officers' cots stood and where all officers of my squadron slept. I lay down without undressing on my cot, and I almost fell asleep. But my absence was suddenly noticed in the big dining room where the party became more and more loud. Everybody was indignant that I left the party, and they went in search of me. They found me on my cot, and they demanded that I immediately re join the party. I did



not want to. They insisted, and then I got mad, as I rarely, rarely do. Just over my cot, there was my Cossack whip. I grabbed my Cossack whip, I pretended to be completely drunk, not knowing what I was doing, I closed my eyes, and I started hitting with my Cossack whip, right and left, regardless of who I was hitting. All the officers of the Wrangel bodyguard fled from me and left me alone.

Now, as in all armies, every day there is a new password, and a counter-password that is given to those who are supposed to enter the Palace occupied by the commander-in-chief of the headquarters. I was the officer on duty one day when one of my men came up to me and reported that outside at the gates of the Palace in the street there is a figure dressed up as <sup>p467</sup> a general in the Cossack uniform. He does not know the pass word, and our sentinels will not let him pass, and he is there in the street swearing and completely furious. What should be done? So I went to the gates, and I recognized in that person General Artifeksoff, head quartermaster of Wrangel's general staff. I knew him personally, so of course I recognized who he was. So I ordered my sentinels to let him pass. According to regulations, a sentinel could accept orders only from the commanding officer on duty – that was me – or from General Wrangel in person. No other officer, or general, had the right to give orders to a sentinel. So, this general passed. And at lunch, where I was also present, he complained to Wrangel about that sentinel not letting him pass. Wrangel had a good laugh, and said to his general, who was a personal friend of his, "Serves you right. Who has to know that password, if it is not the General of the headquarters? That sentinel and young Captain Stenbock were completely right. You got what you deserve." So, I was very happy to hear that.

We were getting some supplies, food and ammunition, from the French, not any more from the British. And it became known that a French Navy squadron would be visiting Sebastopol'. It so happened that that day when that squadron was expected, I was again on duty. It was signalled that a squadron was close and approaching. A Navy squadron, according to international tradition, salutes a squadron of another nation by so-and-so <sup>p468</sup> many shots, blanks, of its cannons. A squadron salutes a fortress, if it visits a fortress of another nation; and it salutes the Head-of-State – in the old days, the Tsar – with 101 shots from a cannon. Now the squadron was out at sea, we could see it on the horizon. It was led by a French heavy dreadnaught of the French Admiral, the Admiral's flag was waving, and approaching, and then the salute started. It was very typical of Wrangel to want to see the squadron as soon as possible, so he did not stay on the balcony of his head quarters, but he climbed up on the roof of the palace. And he stood there next to the chimney, and I stood right next to him. The squadron started, boom, boom, the salute one after the other; and Wrangel was counting the salutes. Would there be the salute to the Russian Navy, to the fortress of Sebastopol', or would there be a salute to the Head-of-State? This was very, very important. It was not just for the ego of General Wrangel. If there were the 101 salute for the Head-of-State, that meant that France was recognizing him, and all of us on the Crimea, as a sovereign state, and there fore supplies would flow, and all questions of finances and so on would be handled accordingly. Wrangel was counting the salutes; and when he heard the one-hundred-and-first, and last, salute, he beamed – not because he was so proud of himself, but because that meant so much for all of us on the Crimea.

That French squadron, led by that heavy French cruiser, <sup>p469</sup> called also dreadnaught, was under the command of the French Admiral Dumesnil. He was married to a much younger woman, and her maiden name was Fermor. She was a distant relative of the Stenbock-Fermor family, and when the Admiral descended in Sevastopol' from the ship, to pay his official visit to Wrangel, his wife, Vera, wanted to know whether a cousin of hers with the name of Fermor was there. There was such a cousin among the officers of the White Army. And of course, Wrangel immediately ordered some research to find where that officer was, and some officers





mixed up the names, Fermor and Stenbock-Fermor, and I was found out and was told that the French Admiral of the fleet wants to see me. I was mighty astonished, and I could not guess what it was all about. Well, later I found out that there was a mix-up of the names. In Russia, there was a family of the Count Stenbock. Then, there was a family of the Count Stenbock-Fermor. And in addition to this there was the name of Fermor only. Of course, there was a distant relationship between all those families, and some of the members did not even know each other. But once, while Rostov, the city, was still in the White Army's hands, it happened that there was a lunch in one of the restaurants of Rostov, and at that lunch there were present: one Stenbock, two Stenbock-Fermor, and one Fermor. That was quite an historical event, with all those names being re presented at the same table.

As I mentioned, being in the bodyguard of Wrangel in *p470* Sebastopol' was a blessing, because we realized that we were completely safe, for the moment at least; but it was a mixed blessing, because city life was going on, more or less, and we had no finances to participate in that city life. Everybody realized that that would not last very long. Winter was upon us, and it so happened that winter came very early, and with a big bang of icy winds and severe frost. Clothing supplied to us by France, and before that also by England, was intended for use by the French colonial troops in Africa or the British in India. It was quite unsuitable for fighting in the severe Russian winter.

The fighting line defending the Crimea ran along a narrow strip of land. Then, to the east of that land, about twenty miles long, there were marshes or swamps; and east of those marshes there was a dam, the railroad tracks, and then a very shallow Sea of Azov. Those marshes were supposed to be impassable, but that was evidently not quite so. After a very dry summer, the water in those marshes was low. There were sandbanks, with a few bushes on them. Local people knew very well the situation of the sandbanks, and it was possible to wade, zig-zagging through those marshes from one sandbank to another, eventually sometimes in water up to your shoulders; but actually, they were passable for very small units. The local people led Red scouting units, sometimes armed even with machine guns that they were carrying in water-tight bags, and they appeared unexpectedly on the Crimea and created a lot *p471* of trouble. That was the situation of those marshes in the late fall of 1920. And when the sudden frost hit, that low water in the marshes froze very rapidly, sometimes right to the bottom of the marshes. The marshes became passable, not only for infantry, but also for cavalry and even light artillery. And so, the defense line of the Crimea, instead of being twenty miles, became four or five times longer. It was, so-to-say, fortified. I saw those fortifications. They were very impressive along that little strip of land. But otherwise, along the south border of those marshes, they were rickety posts. There was barbed wire strung on those posts. In places, the posts were simply lying on the ground. Anybody could step over that barbed wire. By no stretch of the imagination could that be called a fortified line of resistance. Cossack cavalry units were patrolling the border of those marshes, and they were rather negligent. By early November, Red Army units were concentrated along our front lines, outnumbering us by more than twenty to one. They had the support of all they could find to mobilize and bring down against the Crimea; and they had the back supply possibilities all over the Soviet Union. They could mobilize any amount of man power and .have any amount of reserve units. We had no reserve units whatsoever. Our fighting men numbered roughly 40,000. That would be in peacetime one infantry division.

So, it was realized by Wrangel – actually it was realized long before, already in April when he took over the command from General Denikin, and he mentioned already then *p472* that there was no chance for victory, but he could only promise to save the honor of the Russian national flag and all those who fled into the Crimea, help them escape from Red terror. And long ahead of time, his plans were made. All boats of the Russian Navy, and merchant boats,





were ordered and had a code to come immediately to all the ports of the Crimea where that coded order would be given, so that the troops could be embarked, and every civilian person who wanted to leave with the troops could also be embarked. And from the moment of the embarkation, Wrangel put in his order, "I promise you absolutely nothing. We have no money, and we go out to sea. We do not know which country, which port, will accept us to land, and where that will be. We are leaving into emptiness, just for the sake of saving lives of the last White fighting units and of the population."

At Wrangel's headquarters in Sebastopol', there were regular meetings of the High Command, Wrangel's assistant generals, staff officers, and so on; and that happened about once a week or even more often. I happened to be again officer on duty that day at the palace with my men of the Horse Guard squadron, and I knew that there had to be a meeting at Wrangel's headquarters, as so often happened before. Then, to my great astonishment, I saw the two Archbishops living in Sebastopol' were invited to that meeting, and they arrived. My sentinels saluted with their swords according to the regulations of the Russian Imperial Army, that generals and <sup>p473</sup> high ranking people, including the clergy, had to be saluted. But in my mind I had a thought. It was most unusual to invite to a military council Archbishops, so the fact that both Archbishops were invited meant something. I realized that this was the beginning of the end. Archbishops had also to have some instructions about evacuating themselves and all the church believers, and maybe even some valuable church belongings.

That was the last meeting at general headquarters of Wrangel. The order of evacuation was being written down and had to be published the next day. When I was relieved of duty by another officer, I immediately went to the central telephone-telegraph station of Sebastopol'. Of course, I was excited. I was surpassing my authority, but the situation was such that I did not care. I came to the telephone station, and bursting inside I said to the astonished people there that I was an officer of Wrangel's personal bodyguard. And of course, they were scared. They sensed that some thing very unusual was going to happen in the city. I demanded that I be immediately given the direct telephone lines to Yalta, and I got them. It was completely against all regulations. And having the direct telephone lines of Yalta, I demanded the telephone of the Scherbatov house, Selbilar. I got it. On the other end of the telephone line, there was my future father-in-law, Prince Paul Scherbatov. Of course, I could not tell him directly, "Tomorrow all the Crimea will <sup>p474</sup> be evacuated." The official order was not yet published. But I hinted at it very broadly. And, as was typical of him, he did not want to understand what I was telling him. He refused to grasp the tragedy of the moment. Fortunately, his eldest daughter, my fiancée, understood perfectly well what I was talking about.

At the time of this conversation, the commandant of Yalta was Colonel Kolotinsky. Many years later, I met this colonel in New York, where we were both émigrés, and we reminisced about the days in Yalta; and he confessed to me that he was listening in to all the telephone conversations between Sebastopol' and Yalta. Well, that might have been in the line of duty. And when he heard me, he knew who I was.

He knew I was in the bodyguard of Wrangel, he knew Paul Scherbatov very well; and from my conversation with Selbilar with my fiancée, he gathered that the Crimea was to be evacuated. And he immediately started taking appropriate measures for the evacuation. The official order of evacuation from headquarters came to him only 48 hours later, but measures were being taken on the basis of my conversation with my fiancée.

The troops had orders to retreat, fighting back as much as possible to delay the advance of the Reds. Some regiments were ordered to Sebastopol' to be shipped out; other units were ordered to other ports. About two days later, the troops were in Sebastopol'. Of course, I could not go



to Yalta to help to evacuate the Scherbatov family. I was on duty those days almost <sup>p475</sup> around the clock, with everybody else. When the units in Sebastopol' started boarding ships for evacuation, the French Navy squadron under Admiral Dumesnil opened fire with all the heavy guns of the French fleet anchored just outside Sebastopol', and it was a sort of fire curtain protecting our evacuation. White troops boarding ships ceased to be fighting units, and the powerful fire of the French Navy made a kind of a screen to prevent the Red hoards from rushing into Sevastopol', so-to-say, right on our heels. So, that was a great help.

### **Tragedy at Selbilar**

Serge Maltzov, second son-in-law of Princess Bariatinsky, was a retired navy officer, the most handsome gentleman that I ever met, and the nicest person ever. Unfortunately, he was a hen-pecked husband and he could not talk back to his wife. This fact produced a great drama when Yalta was being evacuated. His wife had once been evacuated to Malta but she did not like it there. She was abroad all right, but her means were very restricted and maybe some British authorities did not handle her as she was accustomed to, so the family came back to the Crimea. When Yalta was being evacuated, she decided to stay, not realizing the danger. She was very idealistic and she said, "Well, the Communists and Bolsheviks are also Russians. They would not harm us and our children." At the moment of the evacuation, all the Scherbatov family left, the Apraksin family left, but the Maltzov family stayed. Therefore, the grandmother, my father's cousin, said "If one <sup>p476</sup> of my daughters stays, I will also stay." And because she stayed, all the jewels belonging to her also remained with her. When Yalta was overrun by the Reds, Maltzov and his wife and old Princess Bariatinsky were shot point blank on the balcony of their big home at Selbilar. Old Princess Nadejda Bariatinsky was in a wheel chair, and she was blessing – that is, making the sign of the cross – in the direction of her executioners. They decided that she had lost her mind and was just senile. That was just plain murder.

The house was looted, all the jewels seized, mostly by the local prostitutes that accompanied the Communists. They strutted around the streets of Yalta. The nurse that I mentioned, stayed also and saved the three older Maltzov children by hiding them and pretending that they were the children of local servants, and then she managed to get them out of Soviet Russia. I met her later and she told me that it made her sick to see those prostitutes strutting around the streets of Yalta wearing all those priceless jewels, not even realizing the value of what they were wearing. But probably somebody did realize, and those jewels vanished forever.

One of the granddaughters of Princess Bariatinsky, Helen, married many years later a very wealthy sugar industrialist in Belgium. They travelled to many places and they also went to Yalta. She asked to visit a house that used to be called Selbilar. The agent of Intourist asked why she <sup>p477</sup> was interested in this particular house, which is now a home for minor children. She said, "Because that house used to belong to my grandmother and I grew up there." She got the permission and she had a nice reception by the young doctor and the nurses. They were all very much interested in the past of this house. Stepping out on the balcony, Helen said, "Here my grandmother, my uncle, and his wife were shot." The doctor exclaimed, "What a tragedy! We heard about it. Who shot them, the Whites or the Reds?" Helen's husband was attempting to pull her skirt to hint that she should not be too talkative for it might endanger them, but Helen was never a girl to be stopped. She said, "Doctor, I am surprised at your poor knowledge of the history of the Soviet Union." Naturally, the doctor jumped at such an accusation. He said, "What do you mean?" To that, Helen said, "You should have known that in the year 1921 there were no more Whites in all of the Crimea." The doctor understood and changed the topic of their conversation.

There was in Yalta a beautiful cathedral. The cathedral was open and church services went on



as before the Revolution, in spite of the official anti-religion propaganda. Helen went to this church, told the young priest who she was, and asked if there could be a memorial service for her grand mother and her aunt and uncle. The priest said, "Of course. After the liturgy tomorrow there will be a memorial service as you ask." There was a service, and during that service <sup>p478</sup> the deacon of the church proclaimed in a thunderous voice, "Let us pray for the peace of the souls of the assassinated martyrs, Princess Nadejda and her relatives." That was the official text used during a memorial service, but that it was used in a cathedral in Yalta, now in the Soviet Union, was rather unusual and remarkable, definitely an anti-party line. Nothing happened to that priest.

## **We leave Russia**

There was in the port of Sebastopol' a Greek large merchant ship, under a Greek flag; and the purpose of that ship was to load barley for a Greek merchant, because the Crimea had a great surplus of barley and the Reds would take it anyhow. So, that merchant bought that barley for a song, and wanted to put it on his ship. And he refused bluntly to take any soldiers, refugees, that wanted to be evacuated, because he realized that coming into Constantinople with refugees aboard, he would have to go into quarantine. Under quarantine, the ships have yellow flags, and nobody can leave the ships for reasons of health security. That would take a long time, and that Greek merchant would be losing money. Wrangel very politely invited that Greek merchant to lunch, with his wife. Aboard that Greek ship were also the children of that Greek merchant. And after lunch, Wrangel said to the Greek merchant, "You are now under arrest, in my headquarters." The fellow tried to wave his Greek flag, and tried to have consideration taken that he was a foreigner under a sovereign <sup>p479</sup> flag of Greece. Wrangel said, "I do not care about any flag now, I care only about the evacuation of the remnants of my army and all the refugees. You are going to stay here with your wife – and your children are aboard – and you will not return until all Russian refugees and army men are taken aboard your ship. You will be the last man to return to your Greek ship." That was typically Wrangel. For being such a leader, and such a father to everybody, in spite of the evacuation, he was greeted by cheering crowds, cheering soldiers, wherever he appeared. He went aboard the one and only Russian cruiser that remained from the large Russian Black Sea fleet, and he went from port to port. There were five ports of evacuation, Sebastopol', Yalta, and three others; and every single unit knew the ship it had to board. It was a great difference from the chaotic and traumatic evacuation of Novorossisk.

At the time of the evacuation, part of Wrangel's body guard was mounted and detached to chase big units of deserters and to chase Red army units that were in the mountains of the Crimea. And so, at the moment of the evacuation, Wrangel's bodyguard had only just our Horse Guard squadron. As I said, Wrangel was aboard the cruiser, and he was cruising from port to port to supervise the evacuation. In one of the ports, there was some confusion. Some units got panicky and unruly and attempted to board the ships out of turn. It was a dangerous situation, and it reminded many of the tragedy of <sup>p480</sup> the evacuation of Novorossisk. But the cruiser entered the port and Wrangel was standing in all his height, in his Cossack uniform, at the prow of the ship with a bull-horn. He addressed the crowd in the port. Probably very few in the crowd could hear him or understand his words. But just his appearance there quieted everybody down, and order was restored.

Half of our squadron was with General Wrangel on that cruiser. The other half was still in the palace under my command. I was the last one to leave the palace. The day before, I was in the palace at night. Of course, I was all dressed for any eventual happening. Quiet reigned in the palace. Then I heard upstairs some terrible crashing and terrible noise. So, I rushed upstairs. The noise came from the once-upon-a-time ballroom of the palace. I wondered, what could be



happening now, at night, in the ballroom? Well, all the floor of the ballroom was covered by a relief map of the Crimea which had been made by some engineers in the Wrangel units. On all that floor was just that relief map, with lines of resistance, where the units were located, and so forth. And what did I see? The ballroom was empty except for one person, and that person was Wrangel. He was walking on the relief map, and with his feet trampling that map to pieces. So, that was the noise; and again, a very typical gesture from such a personality as Wrangel.

Next day, I left the palace with about sixty men and three <sup>p481</sup> officers. Our orders were to go to the port and to board a transport ship that was waiting, not just for us, but for a mass of other units. On my way to the port, I was marching along the street along a supply depot that was being abandoned, and looting of the supply depot had already started by city rabble of Sebastopol'. Well, anyhow, we could not take that depot with us; but somehow, the fact of the looting angered me. And I stopped there with my men and drove away the looters. It was a supply of mostly cigarettes. And of course, all my men, having driven the looters away, stuffed as many cigarettes in their pockets as they could. That lasted for at least a half-hour, or a whole hour – I do not remember – and when we came to the port, all ships were gone, including the one that we had to board. There was not a single ship in the port left, and the Red Army was moving into the city of Sebastopol'. So, we were in a rather uncomfortable situation. We had to leave, to go to sea. So, revolver in hand, we requisitioned six fisherman boats that could hold about fifteen men each. With us we had two heavy machine guns. And we went out to sea in those row-boats. We heard rumors that to the east of Sebastopol', at a little seaside resort, called Balaklava, some ships were still anchored. I became seasick. And I vaguely saw a British destroyer going full speed out to sea; and I thought, "Well, if the British destroyers are leaving full- speed, probably we will find the shores of Balaklava empty." But, when we finally reached that place, I saw a British <sup>p482</sup> destroyer still anchored at the shores of Balaklava; and with our requisitioned rowboats we rowed up to that destroyer.

