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Recollections of Pre-revolutionary Russia, the Russian Revolution and Civil War, the Balkans in the 1930's and service in the Vlasov Army in World War Two.

(A dictated memoir.)

^{p78} ... This hetman era, the period in which the Ukraine was under the hetman, was something like the eye of a hurricane. We had just gone through a terrific storm and upheaval, which I have described, and then suddenly we reached calm the eye of the hurricane, in which everything became quite and calm with Germans everywhere – they didn't interfere with the life of Russians very much, they were very occupied with fighting the communists underground, which of course we were glad to see, and strangely enough they established some sort of *modus vivendi*, some sort of *detente*, you could say, with the Soviets which enabled many Russians in the parts of the country occupied or held by the communists to claim Ukrainian origin and move to the Ukraine. In that way my uncle, General Gerasimov, and his wife, my aunt (Tetia) Lika, escaped from Bolshevik territory. They managed to cross the border without being searched too thoroughly and to bring with them a little bag of jewelry which the Red soldiers didn't notice, and that helped them live quite a while in relative financial security. Among a few items which my Aunt Lika passed on to me are a gold cigarette case which belonged to my uncle, a gold watch, and a beautiful ring that belonged to my mother, all of this they brought out at that time. They came to Kiev and then later on they joined us in Odessa and we all came back to Odessa.

That summer while we were in Kiev we suddenly learned that the Tsar and his entire family had been brutally murdered by the Bolsheviks in the city of Ekaterinburg in the Urals (17 July 1918). That news spread like wildfire and created a tremendous emotional outburst of compassion for the murdered ^{p79} family, because not only the Tsar was executed but the whole family, the Tsar, Tsarina, four daughters and the boy who was heir to the throne. Soon afterward, in another town not far from Ekaterinburg, called Alapaevsk, most of the grand dukes and grand duchesses were killed. Altogether in the span of two or three days nineteen members of the Romanov family were killed.

It was a terrific shock for all of us and I remember the solemn funeral service which was held in the most ancient Russian church in Kiev, St. Sophia. This was the most famous church in Russia because it was the first Christian church, built in the 10th century. I went to that funeral service, and there was such a terrific crowd that I thought I would be trampled to death, because the passages in that old church were narrow and the pressure of the crowd was tremendous. It was a very solemn funeral liturgy. When we emerged from the church I wore, as did many other Russian patriots, the emperor's initials on a black ribbon. Outside the church some people attacked us for this; they started fist fights, but German troops appeared immediately and stopped the commotion. Later we learned that the Bolsheviks when murdering the Tsar didn't rely on the Russians but invited German POW's because it was found that somebody scribbled on the wall of the place where they were killed a little excerpt from Heinrich Heine:

Welt Tsar was in selbiger Nacht vom seinem Knechte umgebracht.

We returned to Odessa and toward the end of the summer – it was 1918 – the situation gradually started to deteriorate. The Germans were having reverses on the western front and the Soviets started to put pressure on the Ukraine. There were some mutinies among the German troops; things were not looking so well; at the same time life in Odessa continued to go full blast. Our apartment was crowded because the Gerasimovs joined us and also my other cousin Constantine (Kostia) and my grandmother – my father's mother. So we ^{p80} really lived

in crowded conditions, but we were happy because it was all one family. Also the family of the Ulozovskii's, that is, Colonel Ulozovskii and his wife and their children Galina and Andrew; they moved to Odessa but they rented an apartment in another part of town. They left Chernigov because conditions there were already becoming unsettled. So that was how events developed,

We used that time of respite, that quiet, to do lots of things. I went to the theater and opera, I continued my fencing, I played the piano, and my father played the piano; we had some nice parties together; everything was all right but by the end of the summer the situation became more and more tense. There was a tremendous black market in Odessa. People who escaped Soviet occupied territories were most of them without any cash but they brought many valuable things, as the Gerasimovs did, jewelry etc. There were two famous cafes, the Franconi and Robinat in which these deals were done, in which jewelry was sold, foreign currency was bought, etc. People were gradually thinking of leaving Odessa and going somewhere else. Some people even tried to get to the United States at that time.

Everything continued that way until the fall, when the changeover occurred. On November 11, 1918, an armistice was signed on the Western front and that was the end of the German empire and the beginning of the collapse of the German army. Immediately rioting started everywhere in the Ukraine and the communists rushed into the vacuum. By that time the Russian White army in the areas of the Kuban and Don Cossacks had strengthened because many officers had managed to get there through the Ukraine. I was seriously considering leaving for the army but my parents persuaded me to stay for just one more week and finish at the gymnasium and get my diploma. However I had volunteered for an anti-communist military organization in Odessa and was ready for any assignment in the city. That time had come when the Germans ^{p81} suddenly withdrew and the allied troops had not come. They came a little later – French, Greeks, and some British. Well, for that few days probably a week or so, there was again no order in the city, and then our paramilitary organization was called upon to seize the most important points in the city.

I was called to get into a guard unit to guard the city telephone exchange so I spent about three days on guard duty there, where I learned quite well the mastery of the rifle, etc. Because I didn't have a uniform, I just had a belt over my coat. With my high school cap, I was already a soldier. Then a French battleship came, French troops entered Odessa, and a new era started. Instead of German occupation it was a benevolent French occupation and the grace period within the eye of the hurricane was extended for another few months.

With the French occupation and arrival of some Greek troops with help of White army detachments we managed to defend Odessa from the communist troops rushing everywhere from the north. However, the French didn't have much desire to fight for the protection of Russia since they considered that since the war on the western front was already over they were victorious, so why lose lives in faraway Russia? So they were mostly supplying us, the Whites, with munitions, rifles, etc. They brought some little mini-tanks to Odessa and when the tanks were sent to the front and were attacked by Red troops the French just abandoned the tanks and retreated, and for the first time the Soviets managed to get French tanks. It was very discouraging but life in Odessa continued to be on a feverish scale; there was a continuous carnival.

There were some mysteries, for instance, a very well known film star Vera Kholodnaia was suddenly found poisoned in her apartment and there were rumors that she was spying against the French. I don't know the whole story, but it created a great sensation.

There was an abundance of newspapers at that time; we were pleased by ^{p82} that and the winter wasn't too harsh. During that winter my mother started to work on a committee for reception of former Russian POWs who were coming from Germany. We invited some of the released officer POWs into our house and it was pathetic to look at these people and see how they enjoyed the warmth and hospitality of a family life after the dreadful time spent in German captivity.

Everything worked alright, however. The Gerasimovs were determined that if the situation deteriorated further they would leave Russia, and my uncle decided that he would go to Germany, because he didn't care much for the French because they had betrayed Russia in time of peril and he had good connections with the Germans from long before World War I. [He] had a very high German decoration received during the visit of Wilhelm II to Russia when he was attached by the Tsar to a guard for Wilhelm.

At the same time the Bolshevik troops were approaching the city, there was some rioting on the French battleships. On one, the *Waldeck Rousseau*, one beautiful day, a red flag appeared, an indication that there was a mutiny there, and suddenly we began to hear bombardment close by with artillery. I wanted to go to the front, to the White army and start fighting the Reds, but I still had one more year of school. In order to graduate I had to stay through the winter of 1919. The Gerasimovs left by ship. There were thunder clouds on the horizon and I heard the thunder claps in the distance mixed with artillery gunfire. When I realized that in a day or two the Bolsheviks would be in Odessa again and I cried. I had not cried for a long time, but that day I cried bitterly because I had managed neither to get to the White army or to escape from communism, and I felt in my bones that this time the communists would bring something very bad to our family. Well, that was true.

On 6 April 1919 the eye of the hurricane passed and the Bolsheviks returned to Odessa. I will never forget that terrible day. At once there ^{p83} started a terrible era all over again, only now they came much better organized. Their first act was to establish the dreaded CheKa which was later known to the western world as the NKVD, GPU, MVD etc. At that time it was the CheKa which stands for Chrezvychnaia kommissiia po borbe s kontrevoliutsiei, sabotazhem, i spekulatsiei (Extraordinary Commission for the Suppression of Counter Revolution, Sabotage and Speculation). This CheKa occupied two buildings on the main square in Odessa called Ekaterininskii Plashchad' (Catherine's Square). They seized for that purpose two buildings of two rich merchants, Levashov and Zhdanov. These two buildings faced each other across the square. In the middle of it stood the proud monument of Catherine the Great. That monument was immediately boarded up and surmounted with a red star. I counted the days until my schooling would be completed. I had to finish school, but finally the day came when the course was shortened and instead of June the classes were dismissed at the beginning of May. Of course there was no graduation in the old style; there were no fancy diplomas such as another generation of students had received from the gymnasium. Instead we received only a little certificate stating that we had completed prescribed courses of instruction in the gymnasium and that we were permitted to continue our education at the university. That was all. There was no gathering or any ceremony; each student merely went to the office to pick up his certificate.

At this junction of my story the scenario has to be changed. It will be scenario 4 in which my active fight against the Bolshevism started. Since before the Revolution I had belonged to a clandestine anti-communist and anti-Bolshevik organization called a popular state council. This organization provided help to the White army. Cadres of the White army were coming out of that organization, and that organization was active in preparing some printed ^{p84}

materials which I and my friends – two are still alive, one in Paris and one in New York – were distributing, workers, sometimes at the risk of being beaten up or even killed. This publication was called Nabat. (Alarm).

There were quite a few numbers of this publication in the form of a newspaper still in our house, so with the arrival of the Bolsheviks I hastened to bury them under the wood and coal in our wood cellar in our house. I believe if somebody ever digs in the earth there he will probably find some of these publications. Our neighbors had to give half of their apartment to a Red commander. Anyhow we all felt that something was going to happen at any time.

There were arrests of many people and what was particularly ominous they started to arrest all judges. As I said, it was a fortunate thing that my father was only attached to the local Odessa court; his original court was in Poland so the people from the Cheka didn't quite know about him. However quite a few of my father's friends were arrested and disappeared behind the walls of the Cheka. More and more rumors began to spread about the executions. One has to remember that in the spring of 1919 the White armies solidified the front against the Bolsheviks and started a victorious march against the Bolsheviks in the general direction of Moscow. After capture of the city of Kharkov by White armies the Red Terror was proclaimed by Lenin and Trotsky. Violence and mass murders started immediately in the territories under Bolshevik control. Red terror meant only one thing, that there was no court procedure of any kind, that the members certain Bolsheviks class considered hostile to the Bolsheviks were physically annihilated, destroyed or shot, just in pursuance of that Red Terror, without any trial, in order to instil terror into the population.

Gradually this information started to appear daily in the Bolshevik newspapers which were posted from the first days that they were in power in Odessa on the walls of buildings at the intersection of the main streets, so everyday we ^{p85} we were going to the places where the newspapers were posted and read . with the usual preamble "Last night in the name of the Red terror the following people were executed..." and then followed the list of people who had been shot, and more and more familiar names appeared on that terrible list.

And then one day the Bolsheviks announced the collection of surplus goods from the bourgeoisie. Columns of trucks were driven through the best areas of the city occupied by the bourgeoisie. They stopped in front of the buildings, and Red soldiers came and went through all the properties of the people, They were looking for such things as shirts, bed sheets, suits, etc. so that if somebody had five or six shirts they would take four and leave two. It was just pillaging of goods, and since it was unexpected they came across many military uniforms and immediately search[ing] for the officer members of the family started and it usually ended in the arrest and probably execution of the family where military uniforms and any kind of equipment was found.

Again in spite of the fact that it was summer there was a shortage of food, because everything was taken by the Bolshevik commissars, or bosses, in the Red Army. I started to work as a ditch digger near the area where we lived. It was an interesting crowd of diggers, because already warm weather had settled down in Odessa and we were digging a long ditch leading from somewhere to nowhere I don't know who invented that idea. It was a good place because we were getting some money for our efforts. It was tiring work and I know that among the ditch diggers there were many people hiding in that capacity of simple workers. There were many officers and people like me who didn't want to be seen too much around the town.

And then something inevitable happened to our family. The whole thing started with this. Even before the Bolshevik coming my uncle, Colonel Ulozovskii, who left the newly built house in Chernigov, came to Odessa. *p86*

They settled down, and he managed, in company with some other people, to open a little restaurant. Actually it was a kind of teahouse, where some food could be procured, and that little place on Pushkin street became a place where we could get together. Our family was visiting there every day because there was a chance to eat a little better, and many friends were dropping in. We were oblivious to the danger that this gathering could invoke. One day my sister and I walked a long distance – the streetcars were not running – to the center of the city to the library to change books. Coming back from the library we decided to drop into that restaurant, which was a few steps down from the street level, and when we arrived it was already too late. I saw there was a man sitting in the darkness of the entrance, quite unfamiliar, and I saw that he had a pistol on his belt, and when I stopped and tried to turn back he shouted “No, you come in, right in!” So my sister and I walked in and there we saw quite a few people already were there, and there were Cheka members with rifles and hand-grenades and pistols all around and just calling us in and asking me to empty all my pockets, etc.

Stupidly enough I carried with me a little badge of that clandestine organization. I don't know why – probably because I was too young and inexperienced. I realized that if they saw that I was finished, so while they were still asking other people to empty their pockets of everything into envelopes and sealing those envelopes and writing the names I told one of the guards there that I had to go to the bathroom. He said all right and he came with me to the door, I wrapped the badge in paper and flushed it down. Fortunately it was a small one and went through, so at least I got rid of the most incriminating thing I had in my possession.

That was about noon time and so more and more people who usually were coming in were immediately arrested on the spot and we all had to remain in *p87* that little restaurant. Around about 4 o'clock my father and mother came in because they were anxious to find out what had happened to me and my sister because we had not come home, so they decided to drop in to the usual place where all members of the family used to come and they were arrested too. And then the whole family of the Ulozovskiis were arrested. Even the man who delivered some melons or something came in, bringing the produce to this restaurant and he was arrested.

Around 7 o'clock in the evening – it was still bright as it was in mid summer, finally the whole crowd was brought out and marched to the building of the Cheka. Altogether we were about 40 men women and youths like me and my sister. We were marched through the middle of the street, surrounded by the Cheka guards with rifles and drawn pistols. People stopped and looked, and I saw some familiar faces with terror in their eyes. Finally we came to one of the buildings of the Cheka, the former mansion of Zhdanov. We entered that and were immediately brought to the lower floor of the building and packed into a room, which was apparently some kind of music room because there was a piano, but there was no other furniture. So each of us sat on the floor, somebody came to the window. There were three doors and a window looked into the inner courtyard. There we saw many people with pistols and rifles. At that moment we saw two soldiers with rifles bring into the courtyard from another side of the building a man and a woman, both wearing military coats. Then they – their hands were tied behind them – put them against the wall and they were shot before our eyes, of all of us looking through the window at that scene. That was terrible, people dying before our eyes. It is hard to believe that you are seeing something like that. It was already getting late and gradually one by one the people from that room were called out and taken somewhere by the guard upstairs. My father's name was called and he disappeared, then my

sister, my ^{p88} mother and by around 3 o'clock in the morning half of the people had gone somewhere upstairs to an unknown destiny.

At last my name was called. A man with a rifle accompanied me and we went two flights upstairs and entered a room; there was a little anteroom with a larger room. In that first little room there was a bed on which a sailor, all wrapped up with machine gun belts around his body, and with rifle and hand grenades, was resting. I was pushed with the butt of the rifle into the room. It hurt and I almost fell flat on my face, but I entered. At the table there sat five people. You should have seen their faces – animal hatred was in them. They looked at me and I knew that we were enemies. It was going to be a struggle of life and death. They opened the envelope with my name. As I said, I had managed to get rid of the badge, but I wasn't sure what was in my billfold. Then they started cross examining me. The first question was 'You are a military cadet, of military cadet school.'

I said 'No, if you know who I am you wouldn't ask that silly question; I just graduated a month and a half ago from the 3rd gymnasium in Odessa.'

'Oh no, we know,' they said, 'and by the way, you also belong to the People's State Council.'

I felt that my heart stopped for a second; I only hoped that I didn't turn pale. I said with a firm voice 'Certainly not; I don't belong to any organization.'

'Ah,' he said, 'so you want to tell us that you are not a member of that organization, you know, you are on the list of all the members, so why do you deny that? We have the list and your name is on it.'

After the question whether I was a member of the clandestine organization, which shook me and I answered no, the interrogation ended abruptly, with some threats and they said 'You will see what we know about you,' and they with that ^{p89} final threat they called the guard who took me one flight upstairs. There I came into a large room. Everything was strange and unreal, like a bad dream. Imagine being brought into a room, which apparently had been a large ballroom or living room of that home. The beautiful furniture, soft chairs and couches and everything were all covered with slip covers, and heavy drapes covered the large windows. I was told to sit in a chair. There was no-one else in that big room. The guard who brought me took a chair and sat near the door that led somewhere, not the one he had brought me through. The door opened into a smaller room in which I found that there was a desk, and apparently that was another interrogation room. I was tired, my back hurt after that blow by the butt of the rifle, and I sat with heavy heart in that soft chair looking in bewilderment on the heavy carpet and trying to figure out how it all happened.

Then I heard voices in the next room behind the closed door. And I could hear that an interrogation was going on, I strained my ears and then I realized that it was my father who was being interrogated. Apparently he was being questioned by only one man because I heard only the voice of that man and the responses of my father. I could distinguish practically every word that he was saying. He was being questioned persistently about his serving as a district attorney in the past and a presiding judge in criminal court, that he was involved in court procedure for political crimes, etc. I was immensely relieved to hear that he was denying all that, for he knew very well that his personal dossier which would provide the Cheka people with his background information had never reached Odessa. He was denying everything, saying only that he was always involved in civil matters in the court. I was hoping that he would be brought in the room where I was, but then the interrogation ended and he apparently was taken away. ^{p90}

I was completely exhausted from physical and mental strain and I apparently fell asleep. And then something happened that is hard to describe in our present day rational world. It went

something beyond any of my experiences before or after. I suddenly felt some kind of indescribable fear; I was afraid of something I couldn't explain; but the feeling of fear was immense and intense, and I finally opened my eyes and almost touching my nose with his nose there was a man who was peering into my eyes. I have never had any experience so dreadful as looking into the dark intense eyes of that strange man who was so intensely looking into me. He may have been a hypnotist. It was fear which goes beyond a regular physical experience, it was rather mystical, something not of this world. I didn't know what to do. The man then stood up, turned around and walked out. I was shaken completely by this terrifying experience, I could not fall asleep again.

Then I heard a voice in the room next door and there was shouting and cries and I heard that a human being was being beaten and the door opened and I saw a terrible scene. A man all covered with blood was chased through the room in which I was sitting by a Cheka man who was beating him over the head with his pistol, so hard that I thought he would crack his skull, and shouting obscenities, and going through that room passed the guard into another place. That was another shock of that strange and unreal night in the Cheka. After a short while there was again questioning behind that door and again with lots of noise three armed soldiers brought in two girls in long military coats and with shaven heads. I didn't know what to think of it. The soldiers were very rough with these girls, they threw them onto a couch and then ordered them to sit there quietly. They had also been beaten over the head and they were trying to keep the blood from running down their faces. I looked at them and they looked at me; of course we couldn't say a word because when the guard saw that ^{p91} I wanted to approach them he raised his rifle and said 'you sit down or I'll kill you.' So I sat down in the soft comfortable chair just looking at those two unhappy girls. Who were they? Apparently they were masquerading as men, perhaps trying to escape from the Bolsheviks and were captured – I don't know. So we were sitting there, and daylight was seen coming through behind the heavy curtains, and then a new thing, suddenly one of the curtains moved and from the window sill behind a young fellow with a rifle came up – maybe he had been sleeping there – and came out into the room and pulled apart the curtains and through the window I saw the red star attached to the covered statue of Catherine the Great. That was the morning of the first day in the Cheka.

The girls were taken away in a short while and then a man – one of the five who had interrogated me – came, a slip of paper in his hand, and told me 'Get ready, we will go.' Where, I didn't dare to ask. He had an automatic pistol in his hand and was prodding me with this to move faster. So I went with him downstairs and we came to the entrance of the building. He showed a slip of paper to the guard at the entrance and then took me across the big square to the other building of the Cheka, the Levashov building. That building was transformed into a jail, and I was brought to the second floor into a room which was already equipped with all of the trimmings of a jail. There were heavy locks on the door and a guard standing in front of the door. Again this man showed the slip of paper to the guard in front of the door, opened the door and they pushed me inside. There were 10 or 15 people in that room, all of them were much older than I. I didn't recognize any of the people who were there. There was no furniture, only one big can, which was used for daily toilet routine and smelled terrible. That was all there was in that room. The others were afraid to ask me questions because they probably ^{p92} didn't know whether somebody in the room was a Cheka plant, there to listen to any conversation. They only asked me 'When were you arrested?' I replied, 'Yesterday', and when I asked some question about food and washing and toilet they said 'The toilet is here, in this can.' Twice a day they brought us some kind of terrible smelling soup and a piece of bread and tea in a can, which was actually hot water, and that was all.

I stayed in that cell for three days and then the same man who had interrogated me came in and called me out into the hallway, then brought me out into the square and told me 'We are letting you go, but we are continuing our investigation because we think that all your family were involved in a military plot to overthrow the communist power.' He said 'a Belorussian plot'; I had heard that there were some anti-communist forces organized by people of that nationality. To me it didn't mean anything as I didn't know anything about that then, so I went home and was immensely relieved to find that my mother and sister were also home already, but not father. Father remained there. And interestingly enough, on comparing notes with my mother I discovered that she had also had the same terrifying experience with that mysterious man who also was looking into her eyes and she said that she had experienced nothing more terrible in her long life. I don't know what it was, but I am convinced that there was a supernatural force within that evil man who looked at me and my mother.

The red terror continued in ever increasing violent form. The lists of people being executed grew larger and larger every day, and now the most terrible thing was that we were very much concerned for father. It was impossible to ask anyone in the Cheka about him; they wouldn't even let you come close to the Cheka building. The only thing that we learned was that he was incarcerated in the same building where I had spent three days. *p93*

Then we learned that it was permitted to bring food to those who were incarcerated because the Cheka didn't provide enough for their existence. So every day, with whatever was possible, we were trying to get something to father, a couple of apples, or bread if we could get any, an a bottle of ersatz coffee and some milk, and we put everything in a kerchief or something a piece of cloth – put father's name on a piece of paper attached to it, and would take that to the Cheka building where all the people were sitting.

There was a cordon of guards standing in front of the building who would check all of these things which were brought the prisoners. And it happened several times – I remember the first time; I was ready to kill the man who did that to us. It was so difficult to get any food to send to father but we brought what we could, and the guard said 'Open your bag to show what is there.' So we showed him there was an apple, a piece of bread and a bottle of coffee with milk, and he then rejected the bag with such force that everything fell down. The bottle was broken, the apple rolled on the street, and he stepped on the bread. You can imagine how I felt at that moment. At that time I swore that if I lived through that the day would come when I would see to it that the Bolsheviks would pay for what they had done to us and to my father.

Every morning at six o'clock the newspapers were posted at the intersection and every morning my mother and Tanya and I were going out to read the list of people executed the previous night. One man who was released from the Cheka prison came to visit us, and we learned from him with whom father was sitting; he had been in the same room with him. There were Nedzvetsky a Warsaw judge, a very good friend of our family, Demianovich, another judge, a couple of people from the region near Odessa, the famous Falz-Feen who had a great estate, some kind of zoo in the open area, which still exists even now under *p94* the Bolsheviks, and Remich, Fatz, people of German descent who had big estates in the Odessa region, a couple of mil [sic] men etc., so we knew the list of people who were in the cell with father, etc. And one day we came across the name of Nedzvetskii that dear friend of ours. I looked at mother and knew how she felt, because he was from the same cell in which father was incarcerated. Then a few days later another man who was with father was mentioned, Emenovich, another judge, so again we were terrified, but still my father's name didn't appear.

We tried everything possible to save my father's life. I have told of the priest, an American citizen who came from the United States and was the priest of our church, and had some

influence among the workers in Odessa he was working hard to save father's life. And then there was a strange man, a navy officer, who was friendly to our family and at the same time obviously had some connections with the Cheka; he also promised to try to save him. Then we managed to find a lawyer of the court, who knew father, who was a revolutionary and I am sure was also a high ranking Bolshevik of that time. He kind of esteemed my father, and we approached him; we were trying everything.

There is an interesting footnote to these people who were with my father in the Cheka prison. During our trip to Europe in 1970, among other places we visited was the duchy of Liechtenstein, and in the capital city Vaduz, the representative of the Duke of Liechtenstein who was meeting all the tourists there, was announced as a Falz-Fein. I asked our guide to ask him whether his father was ever in Odessa and in Cheka prison. The man came rushing to me in the bus and embraced me and said 'Yes, how do you know about that?' And I said 'My father was with your father in the same cell.' He was so excited and so pleased so he gave me a book in which he describes that estate of his family, which was called Askania Nova, of which the greatest attraction was an outdoor zoo.

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Chapter 18 Scenario 4

Thus in the summer of 1919, our family was taken by the Cheka; my mother, sister and I released, but father still remained there, where we were every day afraid for his life. And it took a very strange, dramatic event to save him. As I mentioned before, I was working during the day as a ditch digger in order to get bread. Also I continued wherever possible my fencing academy activities and got my fencing masters degree that summer.

I was tired every night, and one night – it was a very hot night – I pulled my bed out in the middle of the huge living room where there was more breeze. I opened all the windows, and fell asleep. I was awakened by a bright light shining into my face, and realized that someone had switched on the large chandelier under which I was sleeping. I jumped up, and opened my eyes and I saw several men in the living room and heard voices in the other rooms. A big man in sailors uniform with a rifle was looking at me. He said 'Oh! I see that you are well tanned apparently you work out of doors. That's good.' I realized that we had been invaded by the Cheka people for some reason. In charge of the party that came into our house, accompanied by the janitor of our house, there was a man who fit very well the idea of a bad man in western movies that I saw in the United States many years later. He was dressed all in black and had a black hat. People addressed him as Comrade Abash, and he was in command of that operation in our house. He ordered everyone to get dressed and come into the living room, so my mother, my sister and grandmother came in. And this comrade Abash addressed us saying 'You are accused by the Cheka by us of signalling to the British and French warships that are on the Black Sea in front of Odessa. My mother said, 'How could you be so stupid as to dream up such a stupid accusation? how could we signal?'

He said, 'Lady, you had better watch your tongue. You know who you *p96* are talking to. I represent the Cheka.'

She said, 'I don't care; when I hear someone talking nonsense I cannot keep quiet.'

He said, 'Lady, why all this excitement; there are probably only a few hours left in your life, so why get excited?' It was a threat.

When I heard that we were accused of signalling British and French vessels in the Black Sea I suddenly shuddered when I realized that here in the living room on one of the tables was lying a book that I brought with me from Yalta when I was a junior member of the yacht club,

called the Sailors' Manual. I loved everything about sailing, sail boats, yachts, etc. I remembered that somewhere in that book there was an international signal chart for maritime vessels. 'My God,' I thought, 'if they ever open that book and see that chart, we are finished.' But they never paid any attention to the book; they were looking for weapons and for some evidence that we were signalling. As evidence they triumphantly brought in a little red lantern which my father and I used for developing photographs, the light of which probably couldn't be seen more than ten feet away it was so weak. They also found a so-called ultra-violet bulb in a device that my father had used to treat his sciatica. The brightness of this light was absolutely minimal; it too couldn't be seen more than a few feet away. As a third piece of evidence they took our telephone apparatus. So with these three pieces of "evidence" they said 'Well, we have all the evidence that we need.' Then my mother again started to talk indignantly to Comrade Abash 'There is no end to your stupidity,' she said, 'you cannot signal with this light to the house across the street.'

He said, 'Lady, you have talked too much already and as I said, don't waste your time, there isn't much time for you to live.' They led my mother ^{p97} downstairs, put her in a carriage and departed for the CheKa.

We, my sister, grandmother and myself were appalled; we didn't know what to do, what to say. As soon as daylight broke out I rushed to see that strange man who apparently had some connection with the Cheka, that former navy officer with some sort of double connections. And I told him, 'Listen what happened...'

'Oh', he said, 'that's too bad; this is serious, but I'll see what can be done.'

So we were waiting in despair to hear something. I went to the Cheka building but they wouldn't even let me approach that building; it was all cordoned by guards. When we went on a recent trip to the Soviet Union I had my picture taken in front of that building. Instead of the monument to Catherine the Great there is now a monument to the sailors of the battleship *Potemkin* and I had a picture taken of me projected against that dreadful building of the Cheka.

So we didn't know what to do. And then, around noontime the doorbell rang we opened the door and what a joy, both mother and father walked in. 'What happened?' we asked.

Then mother told the whole story. She was brought into the Cheka, she was kept in a room where she was interrogated continuously about many things, about her brother, the colonel, but never was asked about her husband, my father. She was also interrogated about signalling the naval vessels in the Black Sea. Again she gave it to them, she told them it was the greatest stupidity, and apparently she irritated the interrogator so much that finally they told her 'You know what, we are going to take you to the president of the Cheka. You are too violent and we cannot permit that from members of the bourgeoisie.'

So shortly before noontime they took her upstairs to the office of ^{p98} that terrible man Sadzhaev, president of the Cheka in Odessa, responsible for thousands upon thousands of lives. When she entered his office he looked at her; he didn't offer her to sit down so she saw a chair and sat down. He then kind of laughed and said 'Oh, I forgot that in your bourgeois society a chair should be offered to a lady'.

'Yes,' she said, 'it should be.'

He said, 'Watch your tongue, lady.'

She said, 'I have had enough of everything, so I don't care what happens to me. I am surprised at the incredible stupidity of your agent who burst into our apartment with such a silly accusation that we were signalling the ships of Great Britain and France from the

balcony of our apartment from which you can barely see a little bit of the Black Sea. And they took the red developing light which we used for photography and the ultra-violet light used for treatment of sciatica. Is that a serious matter? It is laughable stupidity!' He said 'That's enough lady, you can go, you are free.'

Then in this moment of excitement and despair she told him 'No, I am not going to leave this place without my husband who has been sitting already for over two months without trial. I don't want to leave without him.'

'What's his name?' he asked.

'His name is Paul Albov.'

'Who is he? Is he a general?'

'No, he is a judge.'

And he said 'All right, lady, I have had enough of you. Here, take your husband.' And he pulled out a slip of paper and wrote on it "Release Citizen Paul Albov and Citizeness Olga Albov.'

She couldn't believe her ears, she dashed out, but the guard said, 'No that is not so simple; certain formalities must be worked out.' So they ^{p99} went to an office, some kind of special document was prepared for the release of my father, and they walked out free from that dreaded Cheka and came home.

Father told me many stories about his incarceration by the Cheka, but I was shocked by his appearance. He had been a life-loving man, with lots of energy and a ready smile, he was a sportsman, he played tennis, and he loved rowing. Now when I looked at him I realized that something had happened to him that completely changed him. Instead of the sparkle of life, his eyes were dull, with some sort of sadness that never left his expression, he looked as if someone had switched a light off inside of him; he was awfully thin and awfully sick. He said he had a bad case of hernia because he said 'They took us to the railroad station one day where we had to unload heavy sacks of potatoes.' That was too much for him and he developed that hernia.

Well, at that time unfortunately we couldn't even celebrate that most wonderful occasion because there was not much food, so we just had our usual little something to eat.

And then another thing happened. Around four or five o'clock in the afternoon that strange character, that former navy officer came, saying 'Well, I heard that you are free from the Cheka, but I came with a warning; you must leave this house immediately and go into hiding, but it is impossible to arrange everything immediately, so I will take you to my apartment where you will be relatively safe, until I can arrange for a carriage which will take you to one of the villages near Odessa. That village is called Lutzdorf. It is a former German colony, of Germans who came to Russia in the time of Catherine the Great. I will arrange for you to stay there as long as necessary.'

p100

Chapter 19 Scenario 4

Just as we were warned by that mysterious navy man, at 2 o'clock after midnight, on the night of father's departure to the German village of Lutzdorf in the suburbs of Odessa there was a knock at our door and again a group of Cheka men appeared and asked about my father. 'He is not here,' we said.

'How is he not here? He was just released from Cheka yesterday.'

‘Yes’, we said, ‘he took a train and went to Kiev.’

‘With whom is he going to stay?’

‘We don’t know; he promised to let us know.’

They were very annoyed, but didn’t do anything to us, and left. So father was safe, for the time being. In the meantime the secret anti-Bolshevist organization started its activity. Rumors of impending landing of White troops in the Odessa region were increasing. There was nervousness and semi-panic among the Bolsheviks which was obvious to all of us.

Through a courier, I was called to attend a secret meeting of our organization. This time was the first that I met the head of the organization, Colonel Sablin. We met in a private apartment on Marozlievskaja Street facing Aleksandrovsk Park. At that meeting Colonel Sablin told us that the landing of the White troops was inevitable and would take place in about a week, around the 7th or 8th of August, and we must be prepared to start an uprising, or if we didn’t have enough armed people we must at least see to it that just before the landing starts we would try to capture the murderous members of the Cheka.

We were particularly interested in capturing the executioners and of course the President of the Cheka, Sadzhaev, and a sinister figure about whom we had heard from some people who managed to escape the Cheka, the Cheka girl, Dora. She was obviously a psychopathic type of woman, constantly under the ^{p101} influence of cocaine and other drugs and her pleasure was to kill people in a very strange manner. She would sit on a chair and then her collaborators would force a man to crawl under the chair in which she was sitting, holding a pistol and smoking a cigarette. And the moment the head of the man crawling under the chair would appear in front of her she would shoot him in the back of his head and then extinguish her cigarette in the blood of the wound. We were very much interested in capturing this monster.

Speaking of weapons, some people said that they had rifles and pistols. I had a Browning pistol which I got at the beginning of the revolution and it was stored secretly in the attic of our house. I had enough ammunition, so I said ‘I have a pistol.’

Around the 7th of August, by the old calendar, about the 20th, with the new, we heard artillery fire and we knew that the landing operations had started. We gathered again at the command of Col. Sablin in that apartment on Marozlievskaja Street and then we came out, not dressed in uniform but with our weapons and were stopping the cars in which the Bolsheviks were fleeing the city. We captured quite a number of them and were bringing them to the apartment and putting them in the cellar. Finally the glorious day of liberation came and the White army troops marched into the town practically without any firing. All the resistance was made in the outskirts but in town there was no resistance. Jubilantly we greeted our liberators, Colonel Sablin immediately joined and reported on what we had done in arresting the members of the Cheka.

The landing force was very small, about 3,000 men. We were told to spread the rumors everywhere that it was 30,000 and apparently that made an effect on the Soviets, who had fled.

Women and girls were bringing flowers and throwing them at the coming ^{p102} White army soldiers, kissing them, crying, in all the churches thanksgiving services started. All Soviet propaganda, posters and placards were torn down. Emotions started riding very high

In a day or so we had had jubilation in our house, since Father returned from Lutzdorf, which was the first place liberated by the White army. We were so pleased to see him safe and alive. However, as I said before, the sadness never left his eyes, which he had had ever since being in mortal danger every night in the Cheka.

The White army immediately established a counter-intelligence outfit which was placed in the buildings formerly occupied by the Cheka, and since I was familiar with those buildings I was called upon to serve as a guard with the counter intelligence. This started my regular military career in the White army, and therefore I will call the period from that time on a new scenario of my life.

Scenario 5

I didn't have a uniform; instead I attached an insignia, a cockade, to my university cap which I had bought after completing my studies in the gymnasium, since I was supposed to go to university later, and then on the sleeve of my shirt which I wore with a belt – a Russian type shirt – my mother sewed the White army insignia, that is, ribbons with the national colors, white, blue and red, a triangle on the left and side sleeves.

Armed with my Browning automatic pistol I reported for duties with the counter-intelligence outfit. First of all I must describe my impressions of the building in which my family was incarcerated and what was left there by the communists. It is hard to describe the horror of that building. When we entered the courtyard there was a pile of bloody garments, of people who ^{p103} were apparently killed and their garments taken off before placing them in mass graves. It was a stinking pile because of the blood. Then we went carefully to the cellar of that building where we knew that the executions had taken place. The stench was unbearable. The cellar had been used for the storage of coal and wood. They had cleared all this out and loosened the next to the last step leading to the cellar floor. When the victim was descending into the dark cellar accompanied by the Cheka men he would step on that unsafe step, which would yield, and start falling, and at that moment the Cheka people would shoot him in the back and he would fall bleeding to the ground. Usually there was a second shot to make sure that the man was killed, and then he was left there dying and bleeding until the time came to drag the bodies from that cellar, pile them into a truck and take them out of town for the mass burial trenches. Then in that building there was a semicircular concrete garage on the level of the courtyard which was made to facilitate washing cars. They were shooting people in that garage and when we entered it the wall was pockmarked with bullet holes, splattered with blood, dried brain matter and some hair which showed that people were just put against those walls and shot there. Then the drainage for water used in washing the cars was full of dried blood, it was also stinking to high heaven in that garage. I was shaken up; I knew of the evil and bestiality of the Bolshevik regime but had not realized all the gruesome details.

We went to all the rooms of several apartments in this house. One apartment was filled almost to the walls with the property taken from the houses of the people who had been executed by the Cheka. It was an incredible sight; there was everything – there were cameras, a large number of officer uniforms, some of them parade uniforms – there was everything, it was loot which filled up an eight-room apartment all the way to the ceiling. Then we ^{p104} came across a kitchen which had apparently served as a torture chamber. It was the most terrible thing I had seen; there were several so-called human gloves. We had heard rumors of this but we had not imagined it was true. But it was. There was dried up skin from the hands of victims. Later were told by witnesses of this torture. People were brought there and forced to put their hands in boiling water, then when the skin was completely boiled the hands were skinned and it was called communist gloves. We saw a couple of dried up gloves like that and it made me sick at my stomach. This kind of thing that I saw with my eyes that I lived through made me more than ever an enemy of that regime which permitted bestiality of such caliber in my country, Russia.

The daily regime was very rigorous. With the arrival of the White army it immediately swelled with a tremendous number of volunteers from Odessa who decided that they had better join the White army than to again be victims of the Reds. The White army thereupon managed to spread out around Odessa and link up with troops occupying the southern part of Russia, and that immediately relieved the food situation. We started to get fowl, chickens, etc., and it was so good to see how Father particularly, after that semi-starvation diet in the Cheka was gradually gaining strength by eating wholesome food. We all started eating better – eggs, vegetables and fish. I was very busy; I practically never spent any day or night at home because I was working feverishly for the counter intelligence outfit. One of my duties was to be present at the interrogation of the Cheka people and I will never forget one particular case. The interrogator was a young cavalry captain, called in Russian *rotmistr*, very pale, with very fine features, of his face and hands. His name was Istomin. He interrogated lots of Cheka people who were brought to him from across the street, actually across Catherine the Great Square to ^{p105} his chamber. He was particularly interested in one man. The evidence piled up more and more, that that mysterious man was one of the very top men in the Cheka who not only ordered the execution and torture of people and was probably one of the cruelest men of the bunch.

Incidentally, although we managed to capture some members of the Cheka, Sadzhaev and Dora managed to escape.

Well, the interrogation continued late into the night and by the time, by about 2 o'clock in the morning, after the last person he interrogated was dismissed, Istomin tiredly looked at me and said 'Volunteer, I know that you were held by the Cheka, I know that your father was here and suffered a lot, now you heard all the evidence about one particular man, that man goes under several names. I would like for you to bring me that man about whom we have heard so much. You go across the street to the place where you and your father were once incarcerated, go into room number so and so, and call these names: Zhmurashvili. Probably no one will answer that name, but that is one of the code names of the man we are interested in. If nobody answers that name, call the name Liadov. I believe by that time somebody has to respond so go ahead and bring that man safely to me but remember, he is dangerous. He is a strong and powerful man and you are almost a little boy. I trust that you will bring him here without any trouble.'

I saluted the captain and walked through the dark night to the building across the square where the Cheka members were sitting in the chambers where they had put their opponents – us – so they were already getting what they had given to others. There was no problem with the guard after he saw the note from Captain Istomin and I came to the door and I remembered how the Cheka people were entering the cells at night, so I quietly opened the bolt and then with a big bang with my foot hit the door which opened with a big noise and everybody in that cell jumped up. ^{p106}

The guard was behind me with his rifle pointing the prisoners. I stood with my pistol ready, and called with a loud voice 'Zhemurashvili'; No one answered. Then I remembered the second name and called 'Liadov!'

A big man pushed forward and said, 'I am afraid there is some kind of mistake.'

'No mistake! You are the man I was looking for,' I said, 'follow me!'

Chapter 20 Scenario 5

He came out of the room and with the guard still standing next to me I told him, 'I am going to take you across the Catherine the Great Square to another building which is familiar to you because you were working there as a Chekist. I am telling you one thing. You are going to walk slowly, keeping your hands in your pockets and I will keep my pistol pressed at the back of your head. The moment I detect that you try either to lift your hands, or your head [detachs] from the pressure of my pistol, I will shoot. Is it clear?'

'Yes, it is clear.'

So we walked that way. He was really afraid that I was going to shoot him because I felt the pressure of his neck against my pistol. We walked like that all the way across the square into the building and to the second floor where I brought him into Captain Istomin's office. Captain Istomin had in the mean time turned the lampshade so that the light would fall on the face of the prisoner while his face was in the shadow.

I sat as usual in the soft chair next to the desk with my pistol on the ready and watched the movements of the prisoner. I was ready to shoot him at the first attempt he would try to make to attack either Captain Istomin or me. Captain Istomin started to interrogate him, bringing up facts revealed *p107* by the interrogation of many other members of the Cheka whom we had interrogated before him. Liadov – it was of course not his real name – denied the charges, saying that his role was a very minor one, saying that he was mostly serving as a guard, and had never interrogated nor tortured anyone. That interrogation continued for pretty long until all facts learned about him were covered. He tried to deny everything. Then Captain Istomin told him, 'Oh by the way, do you remember the case of two officers – they were brothers – by the name of Istomin? You interrogated both of them, you tortured both of them, and you decided that they had to be shot, and you were leading the party of prisoners, five or six of them, to be shot. One of these brothers at that moment when you were crossing the square here in front of this building dashed out and although you and the guard fired on him, he managed to escape and you never found him again. Do you remember that case.'

'I don't remember that case,' he replied.

'Oh you don't?' said Istomin, and he tilted the lampshade so that it turned the light on his face. 'Now look at me, you Cheka murderer,' he told Liadov. I saw the man start to shake.

Istomin said, 'Yes, it is me, the officer whom you tortured. You killed my brother, and now I've got you and you'll pay for that crime as you are going to pay for all other crimes that you have committed here!'

Liadov made some kind of movement and I jumped out and put my pistol almost against his temple and said, 'Sit down or I'll shoot.'

He obeyed, and sat down, and Istomin told me, 'Call the guard!'

Still looking at Istomin, and holding my pistol I shouted for the guard and the guard came and took Liadov away.

Another interesting case was this. I was once assigned to guard duty during the noon hour when the relatives of the arrested Cheka men were bringing *p108* food parcels to the people arrested by the counter-intelligence of the White army. Suddenly it brought to my memory all the humiliation, all the suffering that we had to go through when we were bringing food to my father. Now these fat well-dressed "ladies", dressed in the most expensive clothes – I knew that it was all requisitioned from the victims of the Cheka by their husbands, probably the clothes of murdered people. Some wore furs, and they were all bringing huge baskets filled

with all sorts of delicacies, like fried chicken, eggs, ham, and so forth. When I saw that I lost my temper, and I came to the first of the women who gave me the name of one of the prisoners, 'You, soldier, give that to my husband,' she ordered.

'First I must check,' I said. I could barely control myself. I yanked that basket from her the same way they had yanked the meagre food I had been bringing my father. She was startled, the basket fell and all its contents tumbled on the pavement, chicken, eggs and all. I kicked the food and said 'Now pick up that food and get away from there. There will be no food today from anybody.' And I addressed everybody else; 'Get out of here or I will start shooting.'

It was not very Christian, I know, but it was that revenge that I pledged that I was going to have to avenge my own and my father's suffering. Well, time was flying, and I was considering that my guard duty with the counter-intelligence in Odessa was not so important as my presence on the front, and I was preparing to join one of the fighting units to fight the Reds in the ranks of the White Army. I told my parents about that and they understood me. They knew that there could be no life for any one of us if the Reds ever won. Therefore they consented and agreed with me that I should go and join the White Army and fight, with the fighting units. Not just with the Odessa guard troops.

At that time some of our friends, officers whom we knew even before the *p109* Revolution, and who were mostly artillery officers from the artillery academy in the city of Odessa, came back to vacation in the liberated city and came to see us, healthy, in beautiful uniforms etc. I talked to one of them, Victor Dominik, who later on, many years later, married my cousin, Galina Ulozovskii, who died in Belgium, and he told me 'Listen, this is wonderful,

We came here from the armored train, and I think it would be very good for you to join the crew of the armored train. I'll arrange it with the commanding officer of the armored train who also came with us. As a matter of fact, a group of officers came for a short vacation to visit Odessa and we'll take you back with us to the armored train to the front line.'

That was arranged; the only thing that was difficult, strange as it may seem in this time and age, I had practically nothing to wear. There was that blouse or tunic, there was the coat which I wore, but my problem was shoes. The shoes that I had mentioned earlier, made by the shoemaker for tutoring his son, shortly after the outbreak of the Revolution, were practically worn out. I was walking about in white canvas shoes like tennis shoes, which my grandmother had given me, they were actually her shoes but they fit my feet, so I wore them. So before going to the front I took some black ink and covered these with ink so that they would look like black shoes; I didn't have anything else and it was impossible to get black shoes at that time.

Captain Domenik, who had sponsored my appointment, said that I shouldn't worry, that as soon as we reached the armored train I would get a uniform and shoes or boots. Then he told me that I would be assigned to a machine gun unit of the armored train. The name of the armored train was "General Drozdovskii."

Well, the time had come – it was in August, 1919 – to say goodbye to my parents. I embraced my mother, my sister and my father, who had to fight back *p110* the tears, and mother blessed me also with a little icon of St. Nicholas. St. Nicholas was considered the patron saint of our family. I still carry that icon with me all the time. It survived the civil war and all the terrible years of the Second World War.

I didn't have many things to take with me – some underwear, a couple of pairs of socks, and that was about all. Captain Domenik said not to worry, that we would travel to the front in style. They had come in a railway carriage, actually a freight car, but they had managed to

transform it into a semblance of a cosy living room, with couches, chairs, table lamps, carpets – I don't know where they had got it all. Anyhow, that carriage at the request of the officers was attached to various trains. We went to the Odessa rail road station, climbed aboard that beautifully furnished freight car and then I was introduced to the officers who were there. There were four or five, including the acting commanding officer, Captain Sommers. The carriage was attached to a train and we went rolling toward the armored train on which I was to serve. The trip lasted several days, although we were going into territory already firmly occupied by the White Army, the train service was still in pretty chaotic state. Our carriage was attached first to one train and then another and was standing a long time at certain stations waiting for a train to bring us closer to the front line.

And then one night our carriage was attached to a train which was bringing back to the front line Cossack troops of the so-called Shkuro Division. They were called Wolves and in my recollections they today remind me of Davy Crockett, for they had wolf tails attached to their caps. They were merciless toward the communists and at that time, after all my experience with the Cheka and seeing torture chambers, those terrible things in Odessa, I shared their merciless views. During the stops at the stations they invited ^{p111} me, a young fellow, to one of their carriages. There I saw a large group of the officers and men of this Wolf Division . They had just captured a Soviet spy on that train and they were interrogating him. The man was captured and they found in his suitcase lots of money and plans showing the location of the troops, command headquarters, etc. So he was a Soviet spy sent to rear. They were merciless. He was beaten up, he didn't want to answer questions, they threatened him that they would burn his feet with candles and let him dance if he wouldn't. And then finally the senior officer said, 'well, that's enough. We know that you are a spy, and you are sentenced by me to be shot at the next station.' And then he called for one man from his troops and said 'You will shoot him.' And then he looked at me and said, 'Oh, you are young, you have just joined the White Army, why don't you also take part in the execution squad together with my man?'

Well I wasn't very delighted but I couldn't say anything. The next station came, we jumped from the carriage, the man with the rifle and I with my pistol. We pulled the Soviet spy behind the railroad tracks, forced him to lie down and the other man said 'I will shoot and you will shoot.' He aimed his rifle and shot and I aimed my pistol and I shot. The man was dead. At that point I got sick. I thought, 'God have mercy on me. I have participated in the killing of a human being.'

You must understand that at that time hatred of the communists was very strong in me, but somehow shooting that man ... there was no doubt that he was a spy, any court martial would have ordered him to be shot, but to be an executioner didn't lie comfortably with me. I looked to the sky and thought, I have participated in a mortal sin, killing another man. I know that during the war I saw machinegun bullets from my machinegun kill some more men but that was in battle; this was something different. ^{p112}

So we had to run fast because the train started to move; I didn't jump into the carriage where this Wolf Division was, but into the carriage where our officers were. Evidently my face was pale and they looked at me and said, "Where were you? We were wondering what happened to you!" I couldn't hide and I told them what had happened. They tried to comfort me and said "Well, you shouldn't have gone to that carriage; we were taking you in our carriage here. But you shouldn't be too much concerned about that. The man was a spy of our terrible enemy and the fact that you participated in his execution was all right. Don't worry about it."

But strangely enough, it affected me. Something happened to my health. From that point on I had some stomach trouble; it was colitis, I had to go to the latrine there was blood in my

refuse. Apparently that shook me very strongly, and I still remember that unfortunate night when I committed a cardinal sin.

Well, we moved toward the front and finally I found myself at the armored train. *p113*

Chapter 21 Scenario V

This scenario will encompass my entire participation in the Russian civil war. I will not go into the big strategy and events of that war, but will only describe the civil war as an eyewitness, my little domain of activities as a volunteer soldier on the armored train “General Drozdovskii.”

Thousands of books and articles have been written about the war in Russia, so it is not for me to add a big study to that; it is not the purpose of this story. I have to project the moments of my life into the time and space where the events took place.

First of all, from the previous chapters I have described the incredible rift that developed between the two parts of the Russian population, the Whites and Reds. Tremendous hatred accumulated on both sides, caused primarily by the unbelievable atrocities which were first perpetrated by the Reds. It started shortly after the communist seizure of power, with the torturing and killing of officers. I myself saw people tortured in unbelievable ways, and I have told of what I saw of the dreadful Cheka in Odessa.

So that brings us to the mood of this awful civil war. Actually the point was reached where no prisoners were taken alive. This does not include, however, masses of former soldiers. Peasants and farmers, they were shifting their *p114* loyalties between both sides, Red and White, depending on their successes. They were actually changing sides, taking the red star from their cap and putting a White Army insignia on it, turning their rifles and bullets in the opposite direction.

They were the vast majority. However the leaders – the commissars in the Red ranks and the communist officers on the Red side – were real enemies. And on their part they considered likewise all of the Russian intelligentsia, the people like me who volunteered for the White movement, former officers, former cadets of military schools, and all other volunteers. For us there was no mercy. If we were ever captured we were usually tortured before being killed. Thus, when I joined the army there was already an understanding among friends in the military units never to leave a wounded man on the battlefield because he would be tortured to death. If there was no possibility to bring him out and save him, it was better to kill him; so at least he wouldn't be tortured. That was the incredible state of mind we reached on both sides of the front lines.

Speaking of the front lines, as you recall, it was the 1st day of September that I arrived at the front lines, when I finally reached my destination, the base from which the armored train operated. The whole White army was marching north in the general direction of Moscow. There was great enthusiasm and joy because of the victories. What helped the situation was also ... *p115 is missing*

p116

When our group from Odessa finally arrived at the front I found the armored train. [* picture appended in original typescript, BSE v.7 “Bronepoezd”] This was actually two trains. One train served as a base, that consisted of normal passenger carriages in which we lived. They were comfortable. They were freight carriages with our reserves of ammunition, explosives needed for battle, there was our bakery, our kitchen, and our laundry, all in specially prepared cars. This was our base; we lived on that base. Now the armored train itself consisted of armored cars; in composition the train looked as follows. First there were two flat cars, on

which were stored lots of materials, rails etc. needed for restoration of the railroad tracks. After these two flat cars was the first gun and machine gun armored car. It had a field artillery cannon, of 3 inches caliber, in a turret which could be moved almost 3/4 of a circle, and it also had 3 turrets on the top with heavy machine guns. Also it had openings on the sides for additional machine guns if needed. The armor was very heavy. There were steel plates, then cement, and then other steel plates. So even a direct hit by small caliber artillery wouldn't pierce that armor. After the first armored car with a cannon there was another flat car, again with equipment, rails and all other materials needed for repair, and after that another armored car like the first one, only called *p117* No. 2. That flat car in between permitted the second gun to be directed also forward, in certain position of the train, to fire without hitting the car in front of it. Then after that there was a commander's car, also armored, which had only machine guns and a turret from which the CO could observe the battlefield.

After that came the locomotive. Sometimes it was armored, sometimes it was just a regular locomotive. In certain situations we preferred powerful locomotives of the passenger express trains because they were better equipped for a quick advance and quick withdrawal from certain battlefield situations. However they were vulnerable because even close range machine gun fire could hit the pipes and damage the locomotive. Then after the locomotive we had the third gun and machine gun car with the gun turret directed in the opposite direction toward the rear of the train. This was so that in case the train found itself beyond the enemy lines and we were attacked from the rear we had at least one cannon capable of firing back. And at the end again two flat cars with all the rails and equipment needed for repairs of the track. That was our armored train, part of which participated in the battles.

Immediately upon arrival at the train I was assigned a place to live in a compartment in one of the carriages in the base of the train, which was very comfortable. I shared that with another volunteer, and then I finally managed to get my shoes, *p118* because I came to the front wearing my grandmother's canvas tennis shoes, painted black. Well I got my shoes. I got a warm uniform, I got all the insignia and I was immediately assigned to be a machinegunner. There was very little time for practise, so theoretical learning of the machine gun was easy but I was waiting for the chance to start firing. Finally we got that chance; the machine guns were carried out in the open field, the targets were set, and I learned all the tricks of machine gun fire. I was assigned to one of the turrets in the machine gun car no. 1, that is, the first forward looking car.

We had two kinds of machine gun. In the turrets were firmly set the Vickers machine guns, a very good, excellent piece of weaponry and also we had the light Lewis. We, the gunners, were sitting in the turrets; we were sitting on something like a bicycle seat, with a place for our feet to rest, and we had a little wheel on the side, with which we could turn the turret 350 degrees around, and also in the opening there was a free play for raising and lowering the machine gun. Well, the crew of the armored train consisted of two echelons; while one was manning the armored train during the battle the other one was at the base resting, doing other military duties. So the day would usually start with the wakening of the crew that was scheduled to go into battle the next day, about 3 o'clock in the morning. *p119*

We dressed, and then we were given a good breakfast, usually some hot borscht, bread, sometimes a piece of meat or piece of bacon on the black bread, then we had to go to bring our ammunition and machine guns from storage to the armored train, fix it there, and around 5 o'clock in the morning we would start moving toward the front line. The base and armored train itself during the night time usually was withdrawn from the front line, about two or three railway stations back. Then we would move toward the front lines. The moment we came there we were placed under the command of the higher ranking officer of the sector, in charge

of the unit covering that area, and he would give us certain targets, and assignments, ordering us to do certain things. We would usually move forward, at the head of the infantry. The targets were usually indicated for the artillery, so our guns would open fire. Especially we were always trying to position our armored train on the curve of the railroad track so that if not all three at least two of our guns could fire at the target. Sometimes we had to go forward fast, and even get orders to capture a railroad station. Of course we were very cautious, watching the railroad tracks. In the first flat car, at the very front, there was a forward observer with a telephone who would look very closely at the railroad track and see whether the tracks were not damaged and the train could proceed. *p120*

Sometimes an enemy armored train would come to meet us and there would ensue a duel with that armored train. I participated in many of those battles. We got a couple of hits, but fortunately no one was killed or wounded. Many times we had to repair the railroad tracks. Sometimes we entered stations when the Red infantry was still there. At one place we entered a little station and the Red soldiers didn't even recognize that it was a White armored train and started to ask us questions. Instead of an answer they got concentrated machine gun fire and fled.

So that was how we were fighting. Usually after one whole day in battle we would withdraw and by dark would come back to our base for a rest.

From that point on we were actually resting for over 24 hours because early next morning the second crew would take our place and go with the armored train up to the front.

Now I will give you the location of the places where my first participation in the battles of the civil war started. I will leave with the tapes a map on which it may be seen how we were advancing and retreating, and also a picture of our armored train. One map covers the Orel area, the second the Kursk area and the third the Bryansk area.

I came to the armored train when it was located at the rail road station L'gov, an important railroad junction. Actually the *p121* train was a little south of L'gov, on the line L'gov-Kharkov, so you will find there the railroad station Gorknia. Gorknia was where I boarded the armored train. And then we were going up toward L'gov, fighting the Reds, then we turned toward Kursk, a large city, an important point, and it was really a pleasure to be first in Kursk. However the railroad station was some distance from the city.

We were first to enter the railroad station and then the infantry followed us, seized the city and we marched after the infantry. I remember only the big cathedral, with some beautiful wall paintings of saints. A solemn Te Deum was said, thanking God for liberation from the Reds.

We didn't have much time to be in Kursk so we rushed back to our armored train and continued farther northward toward the other large city, Orel. It was constant battles as we moved forward. We were organized in groups of three armored trains which were called a division [actually *divizion*] – not a regular division, but a group of three trains – two light artillery trains and a heavy artillery train. At one point the commanding general of the area ordered our three armored trains to take a position along the stretch of railroad tracks, since the Red cavalry was going in that direction trying to escape the trap set by the White armies.

We were ... *p122 is missing*

p113

After this episode we proceeded without any hindrance toward the large city of Orel. It was already pretty close in the direction of Moscow. We captured Orel but our armored train was there only a very short time. We just managed to dash into the city together with the

infantrymen who were coming into the town and mopping up the remnants of the Red troops who were retreating from the city. I have only a very vague impression of that town since we were told to return immediately to our armored train, since we were moving elsewhere.

We were ordered to move back to Kursk, and from Kursk westward to that railroad station of L'gov, and then from there we started an offensive in the general direction of Briansk.

There was heavy fighting near the station Dmitriev north of L'gov, then Kamarichi, then – it was already getting frosty at that time – I remember passing through the railroad station Brassovo. Brassovo was the estate of the former Grand Duke Mikhail, who made a morganatic marriage to a woman not of royal blood and therefore she was given a title, Countess of Brassovo, and that was their estate there.

Our goal was Briansk. An interesting thing happened in the meantime. Once we were standing on a station. While our armored train was on the front line fighting I was with the crew that was resting. I had guard duty, walking near our three large four ^{p124} axeled cars in which we carried all our ammunition and explosives. These three freight cars were at the head of our base, of the train which served as our home, and I was walking along the railroad tracks. My duty was to see that nobody approached our cars with ammunition and explosives. At the head of the whole train was the locomotive, ready to move at any time with the engineer and his helper. On the adjacent track there was a huge train full of ammunition and explosives, and again at the head of that train was a caboose where people had a little stove burning and were warming themselves. What I didn't know was that beside the stove they had a large container full of benzine – gasoline.

By that time the terrain was covered with snow and while I was walking between our train and the caboose a terrible explosion shook the air and I felt that I was hit by the air wave, which pushed me so hard that I was dragged underneath our train and found myself on the other side of the railroad track. I saw that at certain spots the snow was burning where that exploded gasoline had spilled. Fortunately, none had got on my clothing, but still I was afraid to move back toward that place, so I rolled in the snow to get my clothing wet and then dashed back. A terrible picture met my eyes. First of all I knew that the railroad train which was on the next track parallel to ours was full of explosives shells, shrapnel, etc., and at any moment would start to explode. At the same time I was concerned about our three cars ^{p125} with our explosives. They were also covered with some of the gas, and there was a little flame flickering on the walls of our cars.

The duty officer was running toward me shouting something, and some other crew members were rushing up there. And at the same time I noticed that the engineer and his deputy on the locomotive were trying to jump out of the locomotive. I realized that if they left the locomotive we would be lost because the explosion would hit our train and everything would be ruined. Therefore I raised my carbine and shouted to the engineer: 'Climb back into that train or I'll shoot!' He understood that and climbed back on the locomotive. At the same time the crew under the command of the duty officer were uncoupling the three freight cars with our explosives from the rest of the train where we had our passenger cars, where we lived. He ordered me to run to the locomotive and order to the engineer to back up and push our train and then move forward carrying with him our three cars with ammunition. This done, our train started rolling after the effect of the push and the duty officer ordered some of us to jump on the train and use the hand brakes as soon as we were clear of the train that started already and was standing on the adjacent railroad track and where the ammunition had already started to explode. At the same time the locomotive with our three cars moved forward fast and beyond the range of the explosions. It was a terrible thing; how we survived ^{p125} I don't know.

The explosions lasted most of the night while our train was back toward the switches at one end of the station while our locomotive and three cars without ammunition were at the other end of the station, also safe from the explosion. It was a terrible night, however finally the ammunition train burned itself out, everything exploded that could explode, and in the morning we went to see what was left. Of course no one survived, those people who were there – we were sorry for them, but they were stupid – who were burning the little stove in the caboose with the tank of gasoline in the same place. Apparently the fumes from that gasoline ignited. Well we moved farther on, after the return of our armored train, toward Briansk. Before Briansk there was an important place to be taken Naviar. Naviar was a huge center with lots of railroad trains congesting the station with all the goods that the Reds had tried to evacuate from the south. So we were ready to seize this loot there. We went to seize Naviar.

However when we reached the place a little south of Naviar there was a little station called Pogriby, and when we came up to that place we discovered that the Reds had destroyed a very small bridge over a little brook. We restored it but it took us about four hours. We moved forward but by that time heavy artillery started to fire against our train. We couldn't see at first where it was coming from and then we found out that it was outside ^{p127} the range of our field artillery pieces, so we started to retreat.

By that time I didn't feel too well; I felt as if I was getting a cold or something. But we were in need of fuel for our locomotive, and we stopped. There were huge forests in that area, the famous Briansk forests, and our locomotive was using firewood. Firewood was stored all along the railroad tracks, and we were sent out to pick up this firewood for the train. When I jumped out of the train I didn't feel well at all. I was shivering, I felt that my temperature was rising, however I had to make the last effort to carry these heavy logs to the locomotive. So finally we managed to fill up all the wood that was possible to collect and move back.

At the time we left there was a Red counterattack toward the railroad station Dmitriev, which was north of L'gov, by the Latvian division – the Latvians at that time were very much in the service of the Reds. The Latvian division managed to break through our front lines and was advancing toward the little station Dmitriev and they captured a bridge which we had to cross in coming home to our base. I was shivering, trembling with high fever; it was getting completely dark and I was lying covered with my coat and the commanding officer came to all of us and said 'Well, we are in a pretty difficult situation. We have just learned that the bridge has been seized by the Reds. We just ^{p128} have to hope that they haven't destroyed it. I will take a chance and just go through that bridge full speed ahead, but before that I would like for you to have some vodka and some food to eat.'

So we got some bacon which was fried on the little stove that was in each of the armored train carriages. Although I didn't have any appetite I was hoping that vodka would help me, but when they gave me a little glass and I downed it my eyes popped out because it wasn't vodka, it was pure alcohol. We hadn't known that; we had to dilute it with water. However that cheered up quite a few of us and in a better mood we started back toward this bridge. When we approached the bridge the order was given to open fire. However I didn't feel well at all so I couldn't even climb into my turret and another man took my place, and we opened fire with machine guns. They told me that they saw some figures near the bridge but they didn't demolish it and we managed to escape the trap. By that time I already was losing consciousness; I didn't realize at the time that I was getting the dreadful enemy of our troops during the civil war, the spotted typhus. More people died of that typhoid fever during the civil war than from battle wounds and bullets. As a matter of fact I remember passing that bridge, but what happened afterward I do not remember. I lost consciousness because I had a terrifically high fever; I don't even remember how they ^{p129} removed me from the train and

brought me to the base train and that base train moved forward. All the events after that I learned much later on when I came back to my senses.

In the meantime our armored train suffered a big calamity! Our base moved without being molested by the Reds first through L'gov toward Kursk due east, and then from Kursk started to retreat in the general direction of Belgord and Kharkov. The armored train was still fighting the Reds in the area of Komarichi and Dmitriev. There were five armored trains that were retreating that way, but something happened at L'gov station. L'gov station was a junction of the main railroad tracks from Kursk toward Vorozhva and from Briansk toward Kharkov. One line was going over the other on a viaduct on a heavy bridge. There was a complete lack of communication, so our retreating forces, infantry, not knowing that there were still five armored trains north of L'gov, blew up that bridge and destroyed the possibility of retreat for five armored trains. Our people had to blow up all the armored trains. They then retreated on foot and were taken by trains and finally joined the base in which I was lying, completely unaware of what was going on somewhere south of Kursk in the direction of Solntsovo.

I was coming to my senses and saw some familiar faces friendly faces, concerned about me – but we didn't have any doctors; we didn't have any medicaments, anything. My friend, *p130* Captain Dominik, who later married my cousin in Belgium, had brought me to the train. He was very much concerned about me and tried to feed me when he saw how weak I was and how I was losing strength.

So that lasted all the way until we reached the station Solntsovo. There an unpredictable terrible event took place of which I already took notice, because I gradually was coming to my senses, but I was so weak I could not even raise my hand. When we reached Solntsovo station I heard some machine gun and, rifle fire, and somebody dashed through the train shouting 'Everybody out! The Reds are on the station!'

I tried to shout 'Don't forget me! Take me!' but nobody heard me. Everybody was busy waging battle with the Reds who occupied the station, while I was left alone on the train expecting that at any moment the Reds might come in and find me; and torture and kill me if they found me there. All the electric lights were on so I couldn't even hide myself in the darkness. At the same time I was so very weak I practically couldn't move. I decided that I would rather kill myself than be tortured and captured by the Reds. Remembering that my Browning revolver was on the shelf above my head, together with my suitcase, I made the effort to raise myself and reach for the Browning. Then, *p131* with the Browning in my hand I fell back on the cushion and lost consciousness.

I was determined to kill myself rather than be taken, but when I came to the train was moving and people [were] in the compartment including my dear friend Domenik. I managed to put the Browning under the blanket so they wouldn't notice what my intentions had been. They were particularly gay because they had managed to repel the Reds and move the train. So everyone was singing, drinking, etc., but I still was only semi-conscious. I came to only when we reached finally the big railroad station of Kharkov. From there on a rapid recovery started as we retreated southward. We were told that we would receive a new armored train when we reached Rostov. The armored cars were being prepared for us.

By the time we arrived in Rostov, I had recovered completely and was looking forward to a rest. I managed to get a new uniform made for me in Rostov, new boots, and even ventured once into a fancy restaurant where I didn't know what to do and ordered champagne and caviar. I had money due to me because we managed to bring with us a couple of freight cars filled with sugar; rather than give it to the communists, we attached the cars to our train and brought them back to Rostov. The sugar was sold on the black market and the money divided

among the train crew, so I had my share of that. In addition, each of us had a bag of about 100 lbs. of sugar put under the sleeping bench. ^{p132} So what helped my recovery probably was lots of that sugar and the availability of eggs. We were making the so-called *gogen mogen*, mixing eggs with sugar and eating that with dark bread; it all helped me to recover my strength. The only thing that was missing badly was citrus; I don't think I ever longed for anything as much as I did at that time, for something sour to build up my body.

Well, we got our new armored train; there was a difference, however, in its construction. The first cannon was a 75 mm. navy gun, not with a turret but with a shield, like they had on the navy vessels; it was put on a flat car, because the navy 77 mm. gun had a wider range than a simple field piece. The celebration was announced after christening the new train, and here something happened that I will never forget. While we were celebrating in the armored train one of the girls from the kitchen came up to the armored train, climbed the stairs and entered the train carriage, bringing with her some cakes. The commanding officer was beside himself with rage. He said, 'How dare you come here? Don't you know that a woman coming on the armored train brings bad luck?' She got scared and dashed out, but that was that.

By then the army retreat was in full swing. Our train was stationed at the railroad station of Khataisk which was across the Don River from Rostov-on-Don. The first order we got was to go to be on guard duty with the train of the Commander-in-Chief, General ^{p133} Denikin, which was at the railroad station Tikhoretskaia. Our train was stationed by the Commander-in-Chief's train.

I am not going to describe any more battles or big strategy of the White Army since one can turn to two books by two great White commanders, both in English, one the recently published book *White Against Red*, General Denikin's story, and the other the memoirs of General Wrangel, *Always With Honor*. I will only describe the events which actually concerned me.

So we were at that station, Tikhoretskaia. And there was only one assignment, it was not particularly eventful. We only kept constant guard around the train. I saw the Commander-in-Chief, General Denikin, several times.

I spent a very lonesome Christmas night standing on guard duty. it was an awfully cold night; a clear night with bright stars shining, and I was standing there, thinking of past Christmases, good old times of my childhood and some of the terrible events of the Revolution and then my thoughts were all with my family. I was wondering what they were doing; I knew that they were all in Odessa but we didn't even know whether Odessa was still in the hands of the Whites or if the Reds were threatening it. We didn't have any newspapers, just sometimes a bulletin. So that was Christmas night in the Kuban steppes in 1919. At that time I didn't realize that it would be the last Christmas I would spend in Russia, because by that time in 1920 ^{p134} I would already be out of Russia.

We lived through only one very unpleasant moment. It was New Year's Eve. I wasn't on guard duty that night, so after having a drink or so at midnight I slept quietly in my compartment with a friend of mine in the bunk next to me. Then early in the morning we were awakened by shooting going on in the railroad station. I was very much upset because I realized that it was probably an attack on the Commander-in-Chief's train and we were here on guard duty and we had missed this terrible event. So we dressed and rushed out and then we found that this was only the Commander-in-Chief's personal Cossack guard who were celebrating the New Year by shooting up into the thin air from carbines, pistols and everything; that was quite a surprise.

This was a very critical time for the White armies. Our army was disorganized and practically lost control of everything and the retreat was almost a rout. A new force developed at that time on the territory still occupied by the White army, there appeared the so-called Greens. Initially the Greens were actually deserters from the White army and some from the Red army. They were sick and tired of the civil war and wanted to be left alone and organized into some kind of semi-neutral bands which called themselves Greens. However as these Greens began to polarize, some of them became more inclined toward the Reds and a minority toward the Whites, so they called themselves Red-Greens ^{p135} and White-Greens. I know it is awfully confusing to anyone who hears of this now, but that was the situation.

Gradually the Red command managed to take control over the Greens and they became some kind of secret arm of the Reds. So the Greens began to interfere with the retreat of our armies; they attacked lines of communication, they attacked important railroads leading to the oil which we were getting from the Caucasus, etc.

Our armored trains were assigned to protect that railroad linking particularly on the stretch between the city and the stations of Armavir and Mineral'nye vody. That stretch was very important because all freight and passenger trains of the Caucasus were going over that stretch of railroad tracks and it had to be protected because the Red-Greens were mining the rail road tracks, attacking stations, etc. So, initially there were two armored trains, one, our "General Drozdovskii", was coming from Armavir, and another, the "Moguchii" (Mighty One) was coming from the station Mineral'nye vody. They were accompanying the trains to a point where they would meet. Our train was coming from the north and the meeting point was a station called Edinomyskaia. There we would come to that point, trains would pass in both directions and then we would come back to our initial base of action, our train to Armavir, and "Moguchii" to Mineral'nye vody . ^{p136}

One day at Armavir , was I was told that there was somebody in the passing train who would like to see me, and to my great amazement I found a cousin of mine who was being evacuated because he was recovering from the same typhoid fever which I had had. He already felt better, so when he saw our train with the markings of 'General Drozdovskii', he knew that I was serving on it, and he asked somebody to pass the word to me. I was so glad to see him that my good friend Captain Dominik immediately proposed that we take him off the sanitary train and bring him to our train. However, he said no, he was going to a good hospital at Mineral'nye vody, and after recovery he would come to see me. That was a tragic decision because he went to that hospital at Mineral'nye vody and then one day the town was overrun by the Reds and he and all other officers and volunteers like him were killed in the hospital.

So that was our story. Our armored train "General Drozdovskii" would come from Armavir to the central meeting point at the station Edinomyskaia and "Moguchii" would come from Mineral'nye vody. We would meet there, stay there for a half an hour and then return. One day, however, we came to Edinomyskaia and were surprised at seeing our other armored train "Moguchii" standing not at the station but relatively far away, near the signal and switches leading to the station. We didn't understand what was going on; we jumped out of the train and ran to the station and found it ^{p137} locked up and not a soul there. There was no station master, nobody; we couldn't understand what was going on. The commanding officer ordered a whistle to be given to "Moguchii". There was no response, and then suddenly "Moguchii" opened fire on us.

The first shell hit our armored train on our first cannon, the navy 75 mm. gun and disabled it. The one man who was standing there was killed and the other wounded. The second shell hit the locomotive but fortunately didn't pierce anything, but damaged it slightly. The commanding officer immediately gave the signal alarm, we jumped on our armored train and

started to retreat back. The “Moguchii” armored train, seeing that our first cannon was not responding, moved boldly after us, firing. We of course realized that the Reds had managed during the night to seize that armored train, and probably through torture had learned about our plans and were waiting for us at that station. We were retreating fast and couldn’t fire because as I said before our forward looking cannon was disabled. Our commanding officer, Captain Gutkov, was standing on the roof of one of the armored cars and waiting until the train moved into a position where the second gun could open fire. He then ordered the train to stop and we opened rapid fire on “Moguchii” which stopped too and started to retreat. But we didn’t disable her. It was a most distressing story. That was the beginning of the end of that campaign. We came back to Armavir and learned that our troops were retreating rapidly to ^{p138} Novorossisk, that our last port on the Black Sea would be evacuated soon, and that our only chance for salvation was to try to get to Novorossisk. However we learned soon that the Reds had captured Novorossisk, and there was no other way for us to retreat anywhere. So they held a military council. At that time in our group there were five armored trains in that area and some units of Kuban Cossacks, some cavalry and so forth. Our only chance to get through was now to go to another port on the Black Sea to which the railroad tracks led, Tuapse. However we knew that Tuapse had been taken by the so-called Red-Greens and that the track leading from Armavir to Tuapse went through a mountain range and we had to go through six tunnels, three of them making a complete circle while going through the mountain range. We knew that the easiest thing for the Reds would be to just destroy one of the tunnels and all five armored trains in our group would be stuck there. So one day we came to a point – it was a little railroad station called Ganzhar – where we had to stop since the railroad tracks had been destroyed by the Red-Greens who had a fortified position.

The five armored trains gradually came up to that point and many other trains with troops in the general retreat of the White Army. In front of us were hastily fortified positions of the ^{p139} so-called Red-Greens. It was the beginning of March and the sun was warm so we came out of our armored train and were sitting around. Gradually the Greens came toward us, without weapons, and we started to talk to them, sitting together, until our commanding officer noticed that too many of them were coming toward our train, so he suddenly gave the order to stop any kind of friendly talks and get back on the armored train. He was afraid that they would try to capture our train as they had done with the ill-fated train “Moguchii”, so we jumped on the armored train and the Greens quickly retreated to their positions which were close to the railroad tracks. The railroad tracks, as I said before, had been dismantled by them so we couldn’t move forward. At that time some of the higher ranking officers, General Schiffner-Markevich and General Pisarev, tried to negotiate with the Greens to let us pass to Tuapse and then leave for the Crimea. We needed first of all to gain some time by negotiations in order that more troops could assemble there. We learned that Novorossisk had been taken by the Reds, and I learned also that Odessa, where my parents and sister were living, had also been taken by the Reds, but at that point I didn’t know anything about the fate of my family. We knew that it would be very hard to break through six tunnels which were very vulnerable for any kind of sabotage. The Reds needed to blow up only one of them and we would be stuck, so that was the reason for our decision to negotiate.

One young ^{p140} officer from our armored was selected for these negotiations. After briefing by General Schiffner-Markevich this man, Lieutenant Harashkevich, in full officer’s uniform, with saber and pistol, started to walk toward the Greens’ position. We were on full alert, I was sitting in my turret with my machine gun on the ready in case something happened to the lieutenant. It was understood that a locomotive would come from their headquarters toward the point where they had their positions in front of us, that he would mount that locomotive, which would take him to the headquarters of the Greens, where he would negotiate with them

on behalf of our command here and then come back and report about the result of the negotiations. We figured that it would take about five or six hours for him to do that. Shortly after he reached the position of the Greens a locomotive came from that side, he mounted the locomotive – we saw that through binoculars – and the locomotive went back. We waited and waited, more than six hours passed, it became dark.

Only sometime around midnight did we finally hear the noise of a locomotive coming from the other side, so we were on alert and some people came waiting for Lieutenant Harashkevich to appear. Finally he came back, walking, from the side of the enemy. He was immediately surrounded by some of his friends, members of our crew, but he said that he was not going to tell anything until he made a report to General Schiffner-Markevich, so he went back to the staff train and then after about one hour of *p141* briefing the order came which explained the situation. First of all the so called Greens had now become completely Red. Their command headquarters to which our man had been taken was already completely Red, there were Red Army officers, regular officers. Directly after arrival they took away his saber and his pistol and offered their conditions for our passage. They said we had to lay down all our arms, and surrender all our armored trains – everything – and that under their word of honor they would let us pass without weapons through to Tuapse, to call from there the ships from Crimea that would take us there. Of course it was laughable. We knew that the moment we laid down our weapons and they took over our armored trains we would be lost. We would just be prisoners and probably would be executed by the Reds.

So General Schiffner-Markevich and General Pisarev decided that we would start immediately an offensive and try to force our hand and seize the tunnels before the Reds had time to blow them up. The order was given to start firing at the Red position within a half hour. We were pretty close to their position, it was quite within the range of the machine guns and my machine gun turret probably played the most important role because it was the forward machine gun. Altogether two machine guns, from two turrets, could fire at the Reds in front, and also our cannon, that navy 75 mm. cannon that was on the first carriage. So at five o'clock in the morning, we opened fire. After firing into *p142* the Red position for about fifteen minutes we stopped and then sent a reconnaissance unit to see what had happened. The Reds had fled from their position, so we immediately sent a detachment of our engineers who repaired the railroad tracks and as soon as it was repaired the armored trains moved forward. We first went cautiously over the newly repaired tracks and then gathered speed and went faster and faster toward the first tunnel. We knew that after the first tunnel there was a railroad station called Khodyzhynskaia, so our target was to get to that station through the first tunnel at least. At some little stations the railroad personnel told us that the Red-Greens were fleeing fast in the general direction of Tuapse.

At one point we met a Soviet armored train which fired a few shots at us but when we opened fire it retreated fast. No damage was done immediately to us nor to that armored train of the Reds. Toward the evening we reached the first tunnel, we stopped there, it was getting dark, so we sent a reconnaissance group inside the tunnel which came back and told us that there was a freight car thrown off the railroad tracks to block our train from passing through, but it was not a big problem. Our engineers went ahead to clear the tracks, but as we knew that it would take some time to move that overturned freight car, we sent a reconnaissance party over the mountain to see what was going on on the other side of the tunnel. We knew that it would be a long walk for *p143* our reconnaissance group. It was headed by an officer and they took with them a light Lewis machine gun.

I was as usual sitting in my turret dozing and so a couple of hours passed when I heard a short burst of machine-gun fire which echoed all through the mountains. About twenty seconds

after that there was tremendous noise, like an explosion, a very long one, something hard to describe, but it was a terrific noise going on and echoing in the mountains. We couldn't figure out what to think, so we sat waiting and waiting for the return of our reconnaissance group.

Finally we heard voices and they came back. What they told us was almost unbelievable. They said that they managed to get across the mountains over the tunnel, and descend toward the station. They saw lots of troops on the station, lots of movement there. Deciding to bypass the station, they moved toward the little house of the switchman near the semaphore giving the signal for incoming trains to pass or stop. They jumped on that railroad man, gagged him, cut the telephone line that led to the station, and then asked him what was going on. He said that there were so many troops – quite a sizeable number – at the railroad station and that a new reinforcement was coming. The semaphore was green, indicating that the train was due at any moment to enter the station. Then they didn't know what to do, and they already heard the incoming train, so the young officer ^{p144} in charge of the reconnaissance group took the machine-gun, put it on the shoulder of another man of his group and waited for the train to come. The train was made up in this way. First there was a little armored train platform with a cannon, and then there was a passenger type carriage, after that was the locomotive. When the locomotive was passing our group the lieutenant gave a burst of machine gun fire into the locomotive. The engineer on the locomotive, in panic, gave a full brake and so called reverse steam, a counter steam (in Russian) so the locomotive stopped dead in place and the armored car with the turret gun followed by the passenger carriage broke loose from the locomotive and raced toward the station, while the huge train behind the locomotive, consisting of carriages and freight cars filled with men the Soviet reinforcements started falling down.

It was a very sharp curve and very steep terrain, so they fell, first on the highway far below and then some of them rolled even farther, down to the little river. The whole train was tumbling down. They couldn't believe what they saw. So that was what the racket and noise had been that we heard on our side of the tunnel. Then they managed to get back into the mountains and came back to tell us what had happened.

Well, we were anxious to wait until daybreak and the moment daybreak came, heavily armed with machine guns, we moved through the tunnel to see what was going on. The Reds had fled the station Khodyzhenskaia. We saw the pieces of the overturned ^{p145} armored train and the passenger carriages at the station, and then we heard some kind of moaning and most terrible sight unfolded before my eyes. In the broken freight cars were mutilated bodies and half-conscious people moaning. All the troops in that train had been either killed or badly wounded. I will never forget one man who was lying under some heavy parts of a broken freight car and showing to us his hand, which was hanging from the arm by only a few shreds and asking only that we kill him. I couldn't do it, I only turned my head aside and passed by, but somebody who had probably more courage than I did so. I heard the shot and the suffering of that man was ended. This was how one man with a short burst from a machine gun defeated a whole detachment of the Soviet army.

It took us all the next day to clean up the mess. We summoned all the railroad people and all the people of the local communities to take care of the wounded men and left whatever medical supplies were needed for them. However our main task was to clean up the railroad track, which we did. It took us the whole day and the night but early the next morning we were already rolling toward the next tunnel. This big catastrophe for the Reds shook them up and they didn't show any more resistance, however we knew that we would have resistance at the main mountain range, before we reached the Black Sea. It was the ^{p146} Malagin [Navagin?] Range, in which there were three tunnels through which we had to go and which

would make a complete circle in such way that one station, Goit,(?) was standing almost on top of the other, Induk, which was down below. Three tunnels made that knotty pass.

The Reds occupying the ridge had quite a sizeable force so that our infantry that came with us couldn't move up and knock them from the range because they had a much more advantageous position there. We couldn't give them any help from our armored train because the entrance to the first mile-long tunnel went on a curve and first we had to enter some kind of corridor with stone walls on both sides and then at the entrance, only shortly before the entrance to the tunnel, the railroad went straight. We had discovered that when we came to the entrance the mountain above the tunnel was so steep and high that our cannon couldn't be raised high enough, even our machine guns from the turrets couldn't be raised. Requests were coming all the time from our infantry trying to attack the Reds on the ridge of that mountains to provide them support. They didn't even have machine guns. Then the commanding officer of our armored train, which was at the head of this, came into our machine gun carriage and addressed us machine gunners. He said that we had to provide support to our troops, otherwise they would never be able to dislodge the Reds from the mountain ridge. 'I ask for volunteers,' he said, 'Who would like to climb on the ^{p147} roof of the carriages, bringing with them light machine guns and, hiding behind the turrets, open fire?' Another man and I volunteered, but the moment we showed our heads near the roof the Reds opened fire. It was a very unpleasant feeling when we heard the bullets hitting the steel roof of the carriage on which we had to get. Finally I gathered my courage and told the other man that I would climb on and he should give me my machine gun and then throw me the ammunition. And I will tell you, I was hiding behind that turret. Finally I managed to put my machine gun on the turret and opened fire on the ridge, and I and the other man were lucky because the Red bullets didn't hit us.

The machine gun fire helped our infantry and they managed to throw the Reds behind the ridge. When we came inside of our armored carriage the commanding officer told both of us 'You'll get St. George crosses for what you have just done.' I was very happy about that.

However further progress was stopped by intensive fire and a counter attack by the Reds on the other side of the ridge. So a man from the infantry unit came down from the ridge to our train and asked our commanding officer to move as soon as possible into the tunnel before they attempted to destroy it, and ^{p148} to try to break through the tunnel and with our artillery help our troops to go over the ridge. We had our Navy gun as our #1 gun of our armored train in the front, so we moved into the tunnel, which as I said before was over one mile long, and with a relatively sharp descent.

We had moved approximately half way through the tunnel when the commanding officer ordered the engineer on the locomotive to stop and sent a few men as a reconnaissance troop to see what was going on at the exit from the tunnel. I as usual took my place at the turret and looked at the light at the end of the tunnel, as they say now. I saw what looked to me like some kind of figures there, but it was hard to distinguish what was going on there. Then our reconnaissance people came back and told us that there were a few men apparently trying to attach explosives to the railroad tracks. Also that the Reds had placed an artillery piece at the exit of the tunnel pointed directly into it. Apparently they expected that when we appeared at the exit they would start firing that gun against us, which was a very dangerous situation.

The commanding officer called a quick council of war. All the artillery officers were called to come to the forward gun platform and were discussing the possibility of firing that gun from inside of the tunnel. Well various arguments were heard that the tunnel was too small and that any raising of the gun would result in the fired shell hitting the ceiling of the tunnel. ^{p149}

However, since we had that navy artillery gun, which was better as far as trajectory was concerned, they decided to move a little bit forward and then, before the Reds fired into the tunnel, we would fire from the tunnel against that gun. So the order was given to the locomotive engineer, if possible without any noise, to start rolling down a little bit more toward the exit from the tunnel. And actually the engineers managed almost noiselessly to put our armored train into motion and by inertia and by that steep descent the train rolled down. And then at a certain point the commanding officer ordered the locomotive to stop, and then we started to aim the gun against the fieldpiece of the Reds which was aimed at the exit of the tunnel. The question was who would fire first. We were in a hurry because through binoculars commotion could be detected around that fieldpiece of the Reds.

Where we were it was all very quiet except for the sound of water running down the walls of the tunnel. It was cold and there was practically no noise of escaping steam of the locomotive. Practically every artillery officer of the armored train checked the aim of our gun. Looking from my turret, it was as if I had the first seat in a theater. I saw that gun and looked at the officers as they checked the aim and then I heard the command 'Fire!' Then, something happened that probably no artillery officer could ever have foreseen. I saw the very bright flash of light of the firing gun, I heard the thunderous *p150* report of the shot fired in the darkness of the tunnel, and then the next, very strange sensation that I felt that suddenly I was hit as if by a very heavy object at the back of my head and I fell down from my seat and on the table that was placed underneath and then a genuine whirlwind started in the tunnel with sand and stone swirling around. What had happened was this: I believe never before in the history of artillery had anyone tried to fire a cannon in a tunnel. Usually artillery pieces are fired in the open air. And here it was like firing the gun into the relatively narrow tube which was the tunnel.

The gasses which followed the shell pushed the shell out and created immediately a vacuum behind them, and that was the shock wave that hit me at the back of my head and threw me down from my saddle in the turret, and that whirlwind was started by the on-rushing air in the back. Anyhow, that was quite a cannon fire. As soon as everything was calm we moved boldly forward but to the consternation of all the artillery officers when we emerged from the tunnel in the daylight, the cannon of the Reds wasn't hit, we had missed it. After that our artillerymen were subject to all sorts of jokes for having missed it. However this shot created panic among the Reds, they quickly abandoned their positions, our infantry units immediately descended over the ridge down there, and we proceeded with them. We had to take two more tunnels; curving tunnels that made that complete spiral circle *p151* of the railroad. And finally with the help of some of the infantrymen who were put on our trains because four more armored trains were following behind us, we emerged beyond the Navagin Ridge and were rapidly moving toward Tuapse. We came to Tuapse toward evening. There was apparently such a panic among the Red-Greens or Reds that they abandoned everything and we entered cautiously into the freight station of Tuapse, a nice summer resort and harbor on the Caucasus shore of the Black Sea.

Just to be sure that everything was alright the commanding officer ordered us to open fire, firing just into the thin air from all our machine guns to show that we were there, to frighten any of the Reds who might still be around and then we moved to the main station, and Tuapse was captured. The jubilation of the people was incredible, and it's an interesting thing to see how in a very short period of time life comes back to normal.

We were heroes of course to the local people, and already the next day when we were walking around they were asking us to come aid have meals with them and have Caucasian wine etc. And on the second or third day in Tuapse even the circus opened and other theaters and shops

started to function. The circus was connected with some not very pleasant experience for me. A group of us had gone to a restaurant and had a good sapper, with probably a little too much wine to drink, and then decided to go to the circus. So I went there, slightly under the influence. As *p152* heroes of the victory we were immediately placed in first row near the ring and we were watching the usual circus program.

One of the numbers was a trained dog, a little poodle who was trained to waltz on the barrier of the ring, while the orchestra played. When that dog waltzed in front of me, for some unknown reason which probably was explained by the quantity of wine I had consumed before that, I jerked its tail and the dog stopped dancing and ran away, it was a very laughable thing for me and my friends but certainly not for the people who ran the circus, and the officer on duty who immediately came to me and asked me for my ID card and I was arrested for conduct un-becoming an army man in a public place. Anyhow, I was arrested and put under military arrest for three days. I wouldn't say it was a very harsh punishment, because there were so many of our military people celebrating that there were quite a few of us in that little military jail.

Well on the third day we were released and continued our happy life there. However, the Reds whom we had chased out of Tuapse now started to consolidate their forces and new masses of Red troops were coming up along the railroad track on which we came into Tuapse, so the armored trains one by one were pressed into battle duties. The time came for us too, and we went from Tuapse toward that mountain range. The mountain range had already been taken by the Reds from the side from which we came, and we just tried to protect the perimeter around Tuapse, *p153* firing at the Reds while they were pressing very heavily down. So the time had come for us to think of abandoning Tuapse. Part of the troops that managed to escape through our capture of the mountain range and Tuapse continued along the Caucasian shore down south, but we were told that we had to destroy our armored trains and would be taken away by transport ship, of which several had already come to the port of Tuapse.

It was a very sad thing to see when our engineers had to lay the rails all the way along the breakwater to the very end, then all armored trains were put on it one after the other. We of course took off all the machine guns everything of value from them, and then a locomotive was sent to push them and all five beautiful armored trains rolled into the Black Sea. After that, we, the crews of these armored trains, were put on the ship, the transport ship Nikolai, and we left Tuapse in the direction of Crimea.

The sea voyage was uneventful except that a Red airplane appeared over us, but they didn't drop any bombs. We reached Kerch about four days before Easter.

Kerch is an important city and port at the tip of the Kerch Peninsula which if you look at the map of the Crimea is a sort of appendage sticking out toward the Caucasus and divided by narrow straits between the Azov and Black Seas, so it was an important strategic point. *p154*

However, the influx of troops who were dislodged from the transport was such that upon our arrival they didn't even know where to put us and we spent our first night in the Crimea in the open air on the pavement of a courtyard of three surrounding units. It was raining and cold; we felt miserable, then someone of some more enterprising soldiers told us that there was a wine shop, the back door to a wine store. And since we had reached the point that we were so cold that we kind of acted already more on instinct than anything else, we talked it over and I decided to break the door and get some wine to warm ourselves. But when we started to try to break the door an old man came out, looked at us almost with tears in his eyes because we were so young, and said "I know how you feel, I will give you some wine, don't break the

door, it is not necessary; I will give you as much wine as you want because I know you have to be warm after all that you have experienced.”

So he brought wine and gave the bottles to us, approximately one for every three or four men, so that helped us pass the night, under the open air, in the rain.

In the morning our commanding officer apparently managed to get permission to put us in a more sheltered place and we were marched into the city theater. Instead of sitting on the street it was much more pleasant to sit in the theater seats. We took a few rows in the back of the theater and one little unit took *p155* the stage and to have more privacy they pulled the curtain. It was Good Friday. Of course that wasn't a very comfortable night either, for to try to sleep in the theater seats in sitting position is not comfortable, however it was better than the night before.

Early in the morning when we started to wake up and stretch ourselves, and try to find out where we could wash and get some thing to eat, a strange dramatic event occurred. We suddenly heard a pistol shot on the stage behind the curtain, and then a body fell through the slit between the curtains down into the orchestra pit. Somebody, one of the young men, couldn't stand this whole thing anymore, and shot himself. It was so strangely dramatic.

It was Saturday, and Saturday night we would ordinarily have attended Easter midnight service, but in Kerch we didn't even know where the church was. However, then a little miracle happened. In the evening we were sitting in despair in that theater, it was still raining outside when some nice ladies of Kerch came in bringing some ham and a little *kulich*, the traditional sweet Russian bread. So each of us got a little piece of ham and a little slice of that bread. Traditionally we should have waited until midnight when 'Christ is risen' is said in church before we ate, but we were so hungry that we violated the fast rules, eating that ham and bread immediately, and then went *p156* to church. We finally found the church and that was the solemn beautiful Easter midnight service. It was the 29th of March 1920. Again I didn't know it was to be my last Easter service in Russia. We couldn't see our future.

Shortly after that there was a change in the high command of the White Army. General Denikin was removed and the command of the White Army, all of which was now concentrated in the Crimea, surrounded by a sea of Reds, was taken over by General Wrangel.

On the 1st of April all of us with appropriate educational background, that is those who had completed gymnasium, were all called up by our commanding officer who told us that by order of General Wrangel we were assigned to the military academy. Actually it was like an officers candidate school, and would be called General Kornilov's Military Academy in Kerch. Well, that was a big change. The academy was located in the big building of the gymnasium.

Assignment to the military academy was quite a very rewarding experience, because through all the suffering of the retreat we had deteriorated into a band of unruly soldiers, not a really proper military unit, and everything changed overnight. On the 1st of April we became cadets with strict discipline and order. *p157*

The greatest relief of course was that we were lodged in the former classroom of the gymnasium, that we had beds to sleep on, that the feeding was organized, we had breakfast, lunch and supper. It was not very sufficient as far as calories were concerned, but still we started to eat regularly. Then we started immediately with the drill, like basic training in the American army. We were drilled very rapidly; at the same time we had to attend classes, taking various subjects, tactics, fortification, and so forth. One of the most rewarding experiences for me was shortly after the beginning of the functioning of the military academy at one of the morning formations the commanding general of the Academy, General

Protozanov came up to read the order of the day, and then he read an order by the supreme commander, General Wrangel, in which I and a couple of other men were awarded the St. George Cross, the most coveted decoration in the Russian army. The orders read that we were decorated for bravery in climbing up on top of the armored train and with our machine gun helping the infantry to seize the Navagin Ridge and helping that infantry unit to break through the Red lines. The captain who led the infantry, Captain Graug, by the same order was promoted to colonel. I was elated. The coveted St. George Cross was mine.

The cadets of the new military academy were divided into two groups, those who had never served in military units, who had ^{p158} just graduated from gymnasium and so forth and didn't know much about military life, and we who had military experience. Therefore we were put in charge of drills etc. Since I was considered an experienced machine gunner I was attached to the machine gun unit and I had to train the cadets in handling machine guns. We were actually drilled from the early hours of the morning, 5:30, until very late in the evening, but in a short time we started to represent a really smart military unit. Then one day it was announced that the supreme commander, General Wrangel, was going to visit Kerch to see all the units there and we started to prepare for parade march. Those preparations took us a couple of days but we really marched very smartly. I will never forget the big parade in Kerch when I first saw General Wrangel, a tall man in Caucasian tunic uniform; he addressed us; the cadets, and we answered him in unison. Later on at the formation we were told that General Wrangel was very pleased at our appearance, at our march, etc.

Well life continued. In my free time I tried first of all to find out about the fate of my family, father, mother and sister. The only way to do this was to get in touch with my cousin who was an officer in the navy of the Black Sea. I sent a letter to Sevastopol' to the Navy Department asking them to forward that letter to the First Lieutenant of the Navy Nicholas Ulozovskii (who passed away in Nice, France on January 22, 1975) and to my ^{p159} wonderful surprise I received a letter from him one day in which he informed me that he was already in touch with our family, that they had safely escaped from Odessa before its capture by the Bolsheviks, and had settled in Varna, Bulgaria. So I started to await news directly from my family. Then I got a letter from my family in which my mother wrote that she was trying to get from Varna to the Crimea, that is, to Kerch, to see me. In the meantime the fate of the White Army became more rosy. General Wrangel first of all managed to restore discipline among the White soldiers and create well disciplined units. We managed to break out from the Crimea Peninsula into the plain of South Russia and the army again started to advance. There were some ambitious plans forthcoming. First of all one operation was planned to cross the river Dnepr to its right bank and then to spread out, and then probably send an amphibious operation to capture Odessa, and the other one was to have an amphibious operation on the shores of the Caucasus. There was information from the Caucasus that many Cossacks who had been fighting with us in the White Army who were reluctant to leave their home towns in the Kuban were revolting against the Reds, and were ready to help us in case we came to the Caucasus with ammunition and weapons. So in addition to regular studies and drills in the military academy we gradually started to prepare ourselves for forthcoming military operations, because we were told that because of the shortage ^{p160} of troops, the military academies would also be thrown into the battle.

The Reds were constantly sending their spies and saboteurs across this very narrow strait on our side to Crimea. Once our battalion of military cadets was sent to occupy a position on the shoreline to prevent and possibly capture some of these saboteurs. Also that was good training for us in preparation for a landing operation.

On our return from that short assignment we senior cadets were moved from the gymnasium building to a former tobacco factory on the beach, on the outskirts of the city. It was not far from the old Kerch fortress, where the garrison commander of the Kerch area had his residence and headquarters. By that time the food situation had deteriorated and we felt hungry all day. We were given very little bread and some local little fish, called *khamisa*, which looked like anchovies. We were sick and tired of those fish. I even got so sick after eating some of them that I had to be taken to the hospital for a few days. But we could do nothing. That was the overall situation in the Crimea. We were hoping for the harvest from the area north of the Crimea, taken over from the Reds; that would relieve the situation a little bit.

The Reds were very active in the Kerch area. One night I was assigned to duty to a duty platoon on the ready in case of any emergency. Then a duty officer came at midnight with a list ^{p161} of cadets and awakening us, said 'Go fast and noiselessly down stairs and fall into formation.' We were all there in a very short time and the battalion commander came and told us the following. He said early in the night a group of Red saboteurs had come across the Kerch Strait and had gone to the railroad station, where they threw some hand grenades, and killed some people and now the local police were unable to capture them, they had called for help from the cadets as the most reliable unit in the city. So we were called and a big truck was brought in and we went in the direction of the railroad station. There we were assigned a perimeter near the station and ordered to go into every house and search for saboteurs. There were quite a few sympathizers of the Reds so we had to be very cautious. We had to go in twos. So my friend and I went on that search operation from one place to another, asking people if they had seen anyone and everyone answered 'No, no one, no one.' Finally we came to a house and looked all through it, even under the bed, then came into the yard. I noticed that in the corner of the yard the straw was piled up in a rather strange way, too high up for a small quantity of straw. So with my rifle I just poked at that straw, and suddenly the straw fell down and I saw a young woman. 'What are you doing?' I said.

'Oh, ' she said, 'I came by the late train and it was too late to go anywhere so I decided to stay here.' ^{p162}

'Stay here, covered with straw?' I took her by the hand, pulled her out of that place, and we immediately contacted our officers and the police. The local policeman came and searched her and found that she had lots of money hidden under her blouse; she was probably one of that party of saboteurs. Then we heard pistol shots in the distance and we realized that we had apparently come across that group of saboteurs. By daylight three men and this woman had been captured. They were taken for interrogation by the police and we returned to our military academy. That was quite an exciting night.

A few days after that the local police came to us and said that every night they saw in a certain area of the city signals by light coming out from a house, but they couldn't locate that house. When we looked the next night in the direction the police officer pointed out we saw that somebody was indeed signalling with a light to the Reds across the strait. By daylight we couldn't distinguish among the small tightly packed houses where that particular house was. Then somebody had a bright idea. We had among our weapons an old French machine gun called a Pieton with a fluorescent front sight. We decided to use this to point at that building the next night. So the machine gun with its stand was brought up on a balcony on the upper floor of our building and placed there and when the signalling started we aimed our gun at that window of an unknown house. A guard was ^{p163} put near the machine gun so that no one would move it in any way.

As soon as it was daybreak we identified the house and the window and after that the police managed to capture the Red sympathizers.

About three weeks later, again at night, somebody awakened me and again I saw the face of the company commander who again was looking at the list and he told me to get dressed quietly and go down. We assembled and he then addressed the whole group. He said that the Red saboteurs captured three weeks before had been condemned to death, with the exception of the woman, who got only a prison term. The execution would be by hanging that night and since we had information that some Red sympathizers would try to interfere our platoon was ordered to see to it that the execution of these three men was carried out.

Well we cadets didn't quite like that mission, and moreover after we were told that even the local police were not very reliable and that if at the place of execution they refused to hang these men we were to kill both the police officers who were there and the three Red saboteurs. I was ordered to take a light Lewis machine gun. We again climbed on the truck and went through the quiet city and went to the other end of the city where the prison was. It was a kind of eery, strange night. At the same time there was a bright moon but a dark cloud with thunder claps was approaching from the west.

We came to the prison, jumped down from the truck and ^{p164} awaited orders. Here I saw a dramatic scene. There was one lit window facing the street from the prison. Inside I saw two prison guards and a priest, and the condemned men brought into that room. Two of them kneeled and kissed the cross and were taken away, but when the third, a big man with bushy hair, was brought in and the priest came to him with the cross he extended his arm and pushed the cross away and shook his head and started to say something. Then the guard came in and took him away.

Shortly after that all three prisoners under heavy guard were brought to the truck. They were seated in the middle of the truck with their hands handcuffed behind them, and we, the cadets, were seated around them. I, with my machine gun, sat in the back corner. And we started that sad trip toward the place of execution which was the old fortress. Our route led us through the workers' quarter of the city and it was expected that here an attempt might be made to free the prisoners. Here a strange thing happened. Suddenly the truck stopped. The officer in charge of our unit immediately ordered a few cadets to jump out of the truck, ordered me to have my machine gun on the ready and I noticed that a commotion had started among the seated prisoners. They were whispering something to each other.

Of course the officer rushed to the driver of the truck. The driver said it was just something with the engine, but we didn't like it and we didn't trust the driver, so the officer pulled out a pistol and told the driver to move or else. I don't know ^{p165} whether the driver was involved in the plot or not, but the engine started to purr again and we jumped back on the truck and moved to the fortress without any further incident.

When we arrived at the fortress the first light had begun to appear on the horizon to the east. And I saw that three nooses were hanging from the unfinished construction in the fortress. The prisoners were taken to that place, were given cigarettes which we helped them to light and then we surrounded the whole area. There were several policemen around and the district attorney who started to read the sentence. I remember the names of two of the men. One bore the name of the father of the White Army, Kornilov, and the other the last one the big, tall, bushy-haired man was Schmidt. The paper stated that they were sentenced to death by hanging for sabotage in wartime.

The first to be hanged was the man named Kornilov. A little bench was brought up on which the condemned man had to step and then the noose was placed around his neck. He was asked

whether he wanted to say something. He didn't say a word and then the bench was knocked out from under him and the body fell down. The body fell down but the feet of the condemned man touched the ground and the body started moving back and forth and I heard with disgust the hissing sound of air coming from his constricted throat. The police officers immediately pulled the rope ^{p166} higher and the man was dead.

The second man when asked if he had something to say, said 'Yes, I would like that you carry a message to my daughter and tell her that while dying I was thinking only of her.' He was then executed.

The third and last man was the big husky and bushy-haired Schmidt who had refused the cross when the priest offered it to him in the prison. Since he was very tall and since he saw what happened to the first man who in the process of being hanged had touched the ground, he said 'Don't you think' – he was very calm – 'you had better raise up the noose because I am a tall man and I might hit the ground like the first man.' The police officer ordered that, and they made a few knots on the rope so that the noose was higher. Then he stepped on the bench. I saw that he was trying to get into the noose, but his hands were tied behind him. A police officer thought that he was hesitant or something, and said, 'Why are you torturing yourself and us? Go ahead, get your head in the noose.' He said 'Well I am trying but I can't because it's a little bit too ...' Then he said 'Alright, I can.' Then he was asked if he had anything to say and here he started shouting: 'The day will come when all you White bandits will be wiped out! I hate you, and long live Soviet Bolshevik rule! etc., etc.' He was getting madder and ^{p167a} madder and the police were looking on doing nothing until finally our officer in charge of the detachment rushed forward and knocked the bench from under him and his huge body hung up. After that we turned around and marched toward the truck and were taken back to the military academy. When we got back I had a bad taste in my mouth. I really hated the whole scene.

Several years after that when I was already in the emigration in Belgrade, I read in the Soviet press about a big solemn ceremony in Kerch when the Soviet government built a monument to these three men and their bodies were buried in a central place in the park facing the sea, on the seashore.

In the meantime we continued preparations for the amphibious operation. It was already the second part of July and we were ready to go; we knew that we would go to the shores of the Caucasus. All the free time that we had, from lectures we spent on maneuvers, firing practice and so forth. I was made a platoon leader of that operation, and was particularly busy with the machine guns of my platoon.

Shortly before we went on our operation, which was highly classified as a secret operation, my mother came from Varna via Sevastopol' to Kerch. Only then did I discover that there were some relatives of ours living in Kerch. She came to stay with them and came to see me. Our reunion was a glorious moment; ^{p167b} she told me how they had escaped from Odessa and so forth, how they were living in Varna, and how she had managed to come to the Crimea.

I met my relatives. They were second cousins, one of whom much later on married Aunt Asia who was with the United Nations. We are still in correspondence. Her husband was one of the officers living there in Kerch. I visited with them and mother several times and it was a wonderful departure from the routine of the academy. [In particular] they ate differently than we did in the academy; we were practically on starvation rations. I also saw my cousin who came to Kerch with his submarine, the A G 22. It was American made. They invited me aboard the submarine; I visited with my cousin and met all the officers of that submarine and had a good time.

The main thing was that with the aid of Nicholas Ulozovskii, my first cousin, my mother had arranged that I be transferred from this military academy to the naval academy in Sevastopol', that the orders were already cut for that transfer, and that I had better get ready and go. I had some mixed feelings about that. I had always wanted to be a navy man; I loved – and still love – everything connected with the sea, but I could not abandon my friends and leave the school when we were ready to go into battle, particularly because I was responsible for this little machine gun platoon. I didn't want to alarm mother, so *p168* I told her 'Alright, I will go, but we are going first on some long maneuvers. After we return I will be ready for the transfer.' It was decided that we would meet the next morning, but around three o'clock in the morning we were awakened by an alert and marched to the landing craft.

We boarded the craft and put out to sea. It was the 2nd of August 1920.

Months later mother told me that she came to the military academy in the morning, found it empty and was told that we had already embarked on the amphibious operation. She then returned to our relatives in Kerch and from there went by way of Simferopol, where we had some other relatives, to Sevastopol', where she stayed with my first cousin Nicholas Ulozovskii until I returned from the amphibious operation after being badly wounded.

Our landing craft was a huge barge towed by a little boat, and we were accompanied by other ships; there was an ice breaker with heavy artillery mounted on it, etc. An ice breaker of course was not needed as such at that season, but that was the type of vessel.

My cousin's submarine, the AG-22, was to play an important role in this operation. They landed on the shore of the Caucasus ahead of our outfit, with an advance detachment of scouts whose task was to prepare first of all a landing place for us and then to get in touch with the Cossacks who were revolting against the *p169* Reds. The man assigned that dangerous task was a Colonel Lebedev. Strangely enough, after many years I met him in New York in 1952. It was awfully hot and unpleasant in that barge. We were packed like sardines and we travelled the whole day and waited at sea until the early hours of the next night, when we approached the place where we were to land. It was Cape Utrishok, between the ports of Anapa and Novorossisk. We had already been told during one of the lectures on tactics what we were supposed to do. We were not the main landing force. Our task was to demonstrate an amphibious operation and draw the Soviet forces on our detachment which was small. Altogether there were 1,200 men, of which our academy was one battalion, of 300 cadets. The others were some Cossack units with two mountain artillery guns. That was all. The commanding general of the expedition was General Cherepov and the commanding officer of our cadet battalion was General Montezanov. The battalion commander was Colonel Iakhnov; he was a little hard of hearing, but a very brave man.

Here I have to describe something that happened just shortly before we went on that landing operation. I will never forget that day. It was a Sunday and all of the cadets were assembled at the church. At the end of the service the priest told us that he had heard that we were going into the battle and according to Christian ritual we had to say our prayers and confess our sins and get holy communion, but since he said there was not *p170* time for individual confessions he would give that confession to the entire battalion. So we knelt and that was an unforgettable scene. Then he started to say certain things; he said 'I sinned in that, and sinned in that,' and we repeated that and prayed. Tears were rolling down his cheeks as he was doing that. And after that we all took holy communion. When we finished that the service was ended and we stood in formation near the church, then the battalion commander, Colonel Iakhnov, came out and said a few words: 'Cadets, don't be afraid of death. Death in battle is like the peace of a beloved woman. Don't be afraid of death; you just confessed your sins, you got holy communion and God will spare your lives.' And he was crying.

Well, that was shortly before we went on the landing operation. Now we saw the silhouette of the Caucasus Mountains in front of us and then we saw a little light on the beach. That was the fire made by our advance party, landed by the submarine, which marked the place for our landing. So we went straight in the direction of that light. By the time that we were disembarking it was already bright daylight. There were no Reds around so we disembarked like we had during maneuvers and exercises, with no firing or anything.

As a matter of fact it was so peaceful that after feeling so hot in that barge during our sea voyage I had even time to undress and rush into the water and had a wonderful swim but I ^{p171} had hardly managed to dress when I heard my name being called. I was told to take a light Lewis machine gun, jump on a little carriage driven by two horses and with a detachment of six other cadets go reconnoiter the roads leading up the mountains. I was told that being the senior, being already at the time a kind of higher ranking cadet, as they say in Russian *Starshii portupeii iunker*, I was in charge of that detachment. One cadet was given a horse, and he was riding it.

So our little group started to move up a hill on a narrow and winding road. I was told that we would reach a certain point on the intersection of the road and that friendly Cossacks, the so-called Greens, but White-Greens, would be waiting for us with harnessed oxen and lots of carriages which we would have to bring back to the main landing force.

So we were driving up when suddenly the man that was going in front of us on horseback stopped and raised his hands. Then I saw two cavalymen coming in our direction. I thought at first that it was two of our Cossacks, but then I saw that they were taking up their rifles and I realized that they were Reds, that it was a Red reconnaissance patrol. We jumped from our little carriage and rushed toward them. Before they could open fire we dragged one of them from his horse, however the other one turned and at full gallop managed to escape.

The one we captured was trembling, a very young fellow. ^{p172} I asked him what his mission was, and where had he come from. He said his detachment was in Abraudeusol, a famous place in the Caucasus, a little place famous for its champagne; there was a champagne factory there. They were reconnoitering the seashore because they knew that the Whites were coming, so our secrecy was no good; they knew that we were coming. We didn't know what to do with him, so we disarmed him, I took all his documents, and we continued. When we reached the intersection, we saw to our dismay that the oxen were not there. I asked him what had happened and he said 'Oh we chased them away.' Some of my cadets wanted to shoot him at this point, but I said "Oh no, we are going to send him back," and sent two cadets back with him to our headquarters on the beach. I ordered the two cadets who were taking the prisoner to report that we could not find the oxen and therefore we were not sending anything back to them but were continuing forward because we wanted to get in touch with the Cossacks who revolted against the Reds, who were supposed to be in that area.

We crossed the mountain ridge and started to descend into the valley, going at full speed, and suddenly saw a group of about twenty or thirty people standing there with rifles on the ready. We were going so fast we could barely stop our horses. As we approached them I saw white ribbons on their fur hats, so I realized that they were not Reds but Whites. They identified ^{p173} themselves as the rebels who had risen against the Reds. We joined forces and they said they were waiting for another group to come soon and guided us to another crossroad and we waited there for the group that they said would come there. However there was something about these men that I did not quite trust. I knew that I was on enemy territory, and that they were capable of any kind of ruse. So, when we reached the point where we were supposed to wait I maneuvered myself so that my back was against a big tree, placed my machine gun in front of me on the ready, and whispered to one of my machine-gunners 'Listen, if anything

suspicious starts, keep close to me, tell the other cadets to close ranks around me and I will take care of the rebels with my machine gun.'

But everything was alright; the Cossacks brought us some food. I was so delighted, we got finally fresh tomatoes, some bacon and wonderful bread.

'Where are you getting this?' I asked.

'Oh, ' they said, 'in a nearby villager we go there every night and there are some contacts of ours who hide us and help us with our food and so forth. However we lack ammunition and we know that you are bringing us ammunition.' Actually we were bringing lots of rifles and ammunition for these people.

Well, it started to get dark, the first day was already over. I was still very much on the alert and I placed my head ^{p174} on the machine gun and asked one of the cadets to be always on the watch and immediately nudge me if something suspicious happened. Then around midnight we heard the hoofs of horses and some voices.

I ordered an alert, but the Cossacks said, 'Don't you worry, our people are coming.' And as it turned out the people who came carried some burning torches and were accompanied by a man in a colonel's uniform. I recognized him as Colonel Lebedev. I reported to him at once, and described the situation. He thanked me and said he knew about that; he was already in contact with the main forces of our detachment, and that our main force from the beach was already on the move.

Early in the morning I heard rifle and machine gun fire coming from the area of the beach and the mountains. We were all on the alert and gradually our cadets started coming in together with some other infantrymen. Then the commanding general of the amphibious operation, General Cherpov came and we learned that a very bad situation had developed on the beach. That morning, the entire amphibious group had started moving up the hill along the same road that I and my six cadets had gone up first, leaving only a little detachment of about 12 cadets and an officer to guard our base, including a very large amount of ^{p175} ammunition, provisions, etc. which we had unloaded on the beach. The entire landing detachment was moving along that road, which unfortunately was the only road, with very little area on either side where you could place reconnaissance units.

While they were climbing, the Reds suddenly attacked the middle of the column, and there was a very bad battle in which many people were killed and wounded. They captured our field kitchen and killed the cooks, and cut our long column in two. The fighting was going on because we heard machine gun fire all the time, and rifle shots. We heard that the tail of our column had managed to break through, but the Reds had captured our landing place and we didn't know what had happened to the detachment that we left there.

Then our reconnaissance reported that some other Red forces had started moving on the other side, so gradually all our companies were sent into battle on the little perimeter that we occupied. The center of that perimeter was a huge oak tree under which the staff was assembled, and I was attached with two machine guns to be at the disposal of the staff near that oak tree. There were also two nurses, very dear girls we liked them, and flirted with them. The battle was raging all around us, and the reports were very discouraging, there was no longer any chance for us to break through as had been planned. We were supposed to move farther inland to reach a certain place called ^{p176} Raevskaia and if we succeeded in getting more Cossacks on our side to go forward and try to break through to a station called Panernaia, which was a very important junction on the railroad to Novorossisk. But all that had to be abandoned because overwhelming forces of Reds now surrounded our amphibious unit in that little perimeter that we occupied. So we were in the mountains, our base on the

beach was taken by the Reds, and we were practically surrounded. Actually there were only two companies left of our fourth battalion, near the headquarters. The next day, toward evening, I was called to the staff. A staff meeting was going on. There was General Cherepov, commander of the landing operation group, General Protozanov, superintendent of our cadet school, and other staff officers. I was called in and told that at 5 o'clock in the morning one company, the second company, would be ordered to move back to the beach by another road and try to recapture our base with all this material that we had, and that my two machine guns would be sent with that company. That was the greenest company in our academy; they were just newly assigned boys who had recently graduated from the high schools, etc., so they had never smelled powder. What they had to face early the next morning would be their first battle. I was told that we had to wait for a guide, a local man, who would lead us along a very intricate path to the beach. Well, I returned to await the morning, and there was that nurse, with whom I was flirting a little bit. In my boxes of *p177* machine gun cartridges one box was empty, which I, knowing that it might be needed, filled up with cans of corned beef. I have loved corned beef ever since that time, it tasted so delicious to me then. It was Australian corned beef, though some of our smart alecks said that it was made of monkey meat. So, that nurse and I, we spent a romantic night eating corned beef sandwiches .

At 5 o'clock, early in the morning, we were ready to go, but the guide who was supposed to lead the company and my little machine gun platoon was delayed. And here was an interesting thing; if I ever had a premonition it certainly was at this time, this waiting and waiting for departure into battle. It was a most unpleasant experience. I felt that something probably would happen; I fell asleep, and only about 10 o'clock the guide finally came and we moved. It was the 6th of August 1920 and beastly hot weather.

My machine guns and other packs were put on the carriage with two horses and the company – I forget the name of the commander – moved with the company sergeant, a cadet, Sergeant Noshenko, who was a good friend of mine. The deputy commander was Lieutenant Colonel Falk. So we were going down the hill toward the seashore. By the time we reached the seashore we were completely exhausted from the heat, tired of going on the steep hills along the very narrow steep roads. We drank all the *p178* water that we were carrying in our water flasks, and we were still thirsty. When we came finally close to the sea we saw an abandoned well; we could see some water in it, so we put our flasks on belts and tried to get some water; when we brought it up it smelled terribly, but we were so thirsty that we drank it anyway. I filled up my flask with that stinking water and we moved forward.

We started to go very cautiously, because it was only about a mile from the point where we landed and at any moment we could confront the Bolshevik troops.

The day before we had heard heavy shelling coming from the sea, from heavy guns; we didn't know what was going on; we knew only that there was a heavy gun shelling some object along the waterfront, so we sent patrols on both sides and through the bushes which grew parallel to the beach and tried to hide, because if we all walked on the open beach we would be detected immediately. The configuration of the terrain was this: there was a beach, there was shrubbery, bushes, and immediately after that a steep hill coming up to our left. Finally we reached the point where we were sure that it was already the place where we were disembarked, so the whispered command was given to stop, and spread out.

Unfortunately there was very little room for maneuver because of the narrow area between the beach and the mountain *p179* that rose pretty high on our left. So we started again to lose contact with each other through that heavy brush and bushes.

Two men, I still remember the faces of those two boys, were sent as a forward scout group to see what was going on. And this was very unfortunate, that two inexperienced boys were sent on that reconnaissance patrol. They went up forward and I sent one of my heavy machine guns (a Vickers) to the left toward the rising hill and a light machine gun with two cadets in charge of it, and I went with them. We positioned ourselves in the bushes closer to the scene. So these two boys went forward. Shortly afterward we heard rifle shots, then silence for a moment, and then whistles. Someone had a whistle and was giving a signal. Before we knew what had happened, the Reds opened up on us with machine guns. It was devastating, because soon several cadets were hit, and I heard some moaning and crying. We were hit by machine gun fire without seeing the enemy because of the bushes. I didn't see the company commander – he was probably back somewhere – he didn't even have a chance to give a command. So Sergeant Nosenko assumed command, and he ordered the cadets to move forward, so we could see, but we were under such heavy fire, from two or three machine guns at one time, that it was very hard to do anything. I knew that our salvation lay in our machine guns, therefore I shouted to the left toward the men who were manning the heavy machine guns to move forward ^{p180} and I myself with these two boys who were manning the light machine guns moved forward.

But before the heavy machine guns could open fire the machine gunners, the cadets, were killed there. I didn't know that, but I didn't hear any machine gun fire from ours, so I ordered my boys to move very cautiously forward, until finally I could see the Bolshevik machine guns firing at us. They were firing from a slightly elevated base near a house around which was stored all our baggage, all the boxes with ammunition and everything that we had brought with us while landing at that place. Also I saw the bodies of the two cadets who were sent on the forward patrol. One was killed and one heavily wounded; we managed to drag him away and he told the story of what had happened. When they came upon the boxes, they saw that some boxes were broken by artillery shells that we had been firing the day before. That was from our ships, at sea, when they learned that the Reds had captured our landing site. All the cadets who were defending that place were killed or captured, except one named Rybak, who although wounded in the chest managed to swim and was picked up by boats sent by one of the navy ships that was firing at the Reds. When we came to that place the navy ships were still standing near the position which we were taking, awaiting signals from us for artillery support, but at this point there was nothing that we could do. The boy who was wounded in that forward patrol told what ^{p181} happened later in the hospital and it was the stupidest thing that one could imagine. He said that when they came to the point and saw that they were at the point of our landing they saw that several Bolshevik soldiers were peacefully playing cards on the grass. Instead of returning at once and reporting what they had seen, one of them raised his rifle and fired a shot into that group. People immediately jumped up, realizing that we were there, they whistled commands, and opened fire in our direction. As I said it was unfortunate that green untrained men were sent on patrol duty toward the enemy lines.

I was lying with two of my boys; one asked me what kind of gun sight to use. I said 'Well, it is such a short distance that you can just fire directly on the target without raising the sight. He started to fire but was immediately hit by a bullet. He was badly hit, in his stomach, apparently, and he rolled in front of the machine gun. I thought he was dead. I looked back and saw that the other man, who was supposed to bring me ammunition, had also been hit. He raised his right hand, which was a bloody mess; as I learned later he lost three fingers on his right hand, and was also grazed by a bullet on his left. He looked terrible, so I shouted to him to throw to me the ammunition; he did throw the packages of cartridges, and I managed the machine gun myself. I tried to steady my nerves, pulled a little bit behind the bush so they wouldn't see me and ^{p182} opened fire.

I saw very well; my aim was good and I managed to silence one of the machine guns at least, because it stopped firing. Perhaps they had moved to another position, but I was sure that I had forced them to stop.

At the same time I was disturbed at hearing that individual rifle shots were coming from somewhere on that mountain on the left. I looked there and saw that the Reds were coming on the top of that little mountain looking down at our cadets and aiming individually at them and firing at them, and that their line was coming on farther and farther, so that if they were not stopped they would surround us.

There was no time left, so on the spur of the moment I decided to turn around and stop that group of Reds who were going on the top of that elevation to the rear of our boys, who were all lying down in those bushes under heavy machine gun fire, and who couldn't even open fire because they couldn't see anything; I was probably the only one who was firing at the Reds. But now in my haste I failed to take precautionary measures. I should have pulled behind a bush and then turned and aimed my machine guns on that mountain to stop those people, but being in a hurry I turned in the position where I was and thus exposed myself to the Reds for they apparently saw me. I managed to open fire and I believe I got every man on the top, for at least *p183* they stopped their penetration toward the rear of our group. But, I exposed myself. I immediately detected machine gun fire concentrated on me, so I turned back again toward that, and the bullets were hitting the ground in front of me and pieces of sand and earth were flying into my eyes.

I was trying to clear my sight and to fire, when at that moment one bullet hit, grazing the machine gun and next something hit my left elbow. It felt as if someone had hit me with a big stick; the only thing I noticed was that my left hand from my elbow down started to jump convulsively, without any control. I was wounded, and bleeding so rapidly that the blood burst into my face. At the same time I noticed that the first cadet, who was wounded in the stomach, started to moan; he was lying in front of me, my machine gun over his head. I didn't know what to do. There was an understanding between us cadets that if at any time we had to leave a wounded friend alone in retreat we had to kill him to save him from torture. So I remembered that I had my Browning pistol, but I couldn't do anything because my left arm was disabled and I couldn't pull the trigger. I knew that my machine-gun was the only chance for salvation of the company, so I stood up, already losing consciousness apparently, almost completely blind because I had lost so much blood, picked up the machine gun and said a little prayer for my friend. His name was Kortiev, by the way; he was a Caucasian Ingush type. I recently *p184* read in the local newspaper here in the United States of a woman named Kortieva; I wrote her asking if it could be her relative and she replied that it was one of her brothers.

I started moving back, losing more and more blood, and finally lost consciousness and fell down. I came to my senses to find two cadets tightly binding my arm to stop the bleeding. They stopped the flow of blood, but completely constricted any blood circulation in the rest of my arm. I was so thirsty I only asked 'Water, water, water!'

'We don't have water,' they said.

'I don't care,' I said. 'Bring me sea water!'

At this point it is important to recapitulate this battle because for me it was the last battle in which I participated in the civil war. Thereafter I was unable to take part in any other action because as a result of that battle and my wound I lost my left arm. That changed my destiny completely, because from that point on I could never rely on manual work, but only on my intellect, because I was an invalid, with only one arm left.

I have to describe the whole situation and what happened to our amphibious force. We had landed quite safely at Cape Utrish or Utrishok; we managed to disembark all of the ammunition and provisions for the “Greens”, Cossacks who reportedly in large *p185* strength had rebelled against the communists, and then we had several tasks to perform, one of which was to make a demonstration and attract the Red forces toward us while the main amphibious effort was planned a few days after ours, to go across the Taman Strait to the shore of the Caucasus across that narrow strait facing the Kerch Peninsula.

From the very beginning we were unlucky; we managed to get from the landing area into the mountains, but were surrounded by overwhelming forces of Reds and our little landing group of 1,200 men, which included a battalion of 300 cadets of the military academy. Our base on the beach was captured by the Reds., and we were surrounded. The company to which my machine guns were attached had the task of trying to break through that ring of Reds to the beach and recapture our base, since we were thinking only of retreating and again boarding the landing ships which were standing out at sea and going back to join the main amphibious effort in Kerch. However, the company to which I was attached, about 60 men strong – under normal circumstances it was the strength of one platoon – was composed of youths who were never in battle before, and only a few people such as myself and another machine gunner, the sergeant of the company and his deputy, were more or less experienced in battle. While we managed to reach the shore of the Black Sea safely, and started moving cautiously toward the place where our base was, the company *p186* found itself in the heavy bushes that were growing along the sandy beach and due to the stupidity of our forward reconnaissance patrol before the company managed to prepare for battle we were pinned down by heavy machine gun fire of the Reds.

Unfortunately the heavy machine gun on the left of me, manned by three men, stopped functioning because all three men were killed, almost before they managed to fire a shot. The cadets with rifles couldn't do anything; they were just pinned down and lying down flat, they couldn't fire because they would hit their own people, so I managed to move forward and finally to see the red machine guns, very close by. My number one machine gunner opened fire and was wounded in the stomach, and a second member of the machine gun crew, Troianov, was wounded too, and so I had to take a machine gun. I managed to stop the fire of the one machine gun, probably forced them to retire or killed the crew, stopping the dangerous penetration of the Reds on the elevated area who were trying to get behind my group. When I was wounded – I was lying down while firing the machine gun – the bullet pierced my arm below the elbow. It was a very little one; the doctor afterward said he could scarcely see it, but since it was such a short distance from the machine gun that fired it, the bullet apparently was moved from its trajectory by the bone, and made havoc of the upper side of my arm above the elbow, where a chunk of flesh was torn off and all the arteries *p187* and veins were cut out. I started bleeding so badly that my face and hair were all covered with blood. When I stood up I was covered with blood. I lost consciousness, asked for water and finally they managed to bring me sea water. To compensate for the loss of liquid in my body I drank about half a gallon of sea water. That helped me, and they also stopped the bleeding. When I came back to my senses I asked about the machine gun. “Who of you knows how to fire it, “ I said.

“I know,” one said, “you taught us how to do it.”

“You continue firing,” I said, “for the Reds may continue moving after us, and fire in that general direction so they know we are still here and we are fighting.”

Only my machine gun was firing; nobody else was, if we stopped firing the Reds would certainly move after us. At one point the cadet who fired the machine gun said that it had

jammed. Well, I explained what to do, and he managed to reload and continue firing with short bursts of fire; that was all that we needed. Then a medical nurse, a girl, came – not the one who shared the corned beef sandwiches with me, but another one – they were brave girls, they were with us in the front lines. “Oh, I need to do some work on you,” she said.

At that time each of us had a so-called Japanese first aid kit, a little ampoule of iodine wrapped up with two bandages. She had a little bit more medical supplies so she started to dress ^{p188} my wound in a more professional way, but there came heavy machine gun fire from the Reds, and she collapsed and fell on me. Can you imagine, she was hit in the upper part of her leg, but that brave girl said “Alright, I am hit, but first I am going to take care of you.” So she managed to dress my wound and I felt better.

Later on doctors told me that it was fortunate that I began to drink that sea water, because since we all came from the primeval seas, the composition of blood and sea water are almost identical. ‘It was a sheer miracle, your good luck, with the help of God,’ they said, ‘that you were given sea water.’ The question was raised, ‘Where is our company commander?’ He was not a very young man, a colonel, and I didn’t see him. I saw the deputy company commander, who was lying flat on his face; passing by him I thought ‘Well, he is killed, ‘ but he wasn’t. He was more experienced with that terrible machine gun fire and knew that to save his life he had to lie flat. Well, I didn’t know much about that because all my battle experience had been on the armored train. Later on, there were complaints about the company commander. He remained in the rear; he never came forward; he never gave a command. However, from a sheltered place he managed to signal the ships that were standing by. I don’t know what with, some people said he used his undershirt. Well, a motor launch with a machine gun was sent toward the ^{p189} shore farther back, and we retreated toward that motor launch. The sailors jumped out with an officer and he said he was going to take only wounded people back to the navy vessel. So I was among those who were taken. I was dazed, and didn’t feel well at all. They took me and four other men, including Troianov who had lost three fingers on one hand, and put us all in a little officers’ lounge. I was lying on red velvet seats. And then a shock came upon me and I suddenly felt that I was dying. I was gasping for air and I felt that this was the end. A sailor this and I told him, ‘Take me quickly to the fresh air!’ so he and another man brought me up on the deck and laid me on the deck. The last thing I heard was the remark, “Well, this young fellow is dying.” After that I lost consciousness.

I was awakened by a terrific report, the boom of a heavy gun. The officer told what had happened to our company, and that the Reds were still firmly in possession of our base, so the naval vessel, which had 6 inch guns, opened fire upon the Reds. The first report had awakened me and I realized that I might survive. Until then I thought I was dying.

Well, when I had had enough fresh air they took me back to the officers’ lounge and the ship went at top speed to bring us to Kerch. And it was a terrible night; I began to feel terrible pain, not because of the wound but because of my tightly tied up arm. Two or three times I had again the feeling that I was ^{p190} dying and I asked the sailors to bring me out into the fresh air. I was restless, uncomfortable and in terrible pain; the others who were with me were too, one was crying, and Troianov was praying out loud.

Finally we reached Kerch. There we were to be taken to the hospital. I remembered that the submarine might still be in Kerch and therefore I asked a sailor to go see whether the submarine AG-22 was still there. He came back and said ‘Yes, we are almost next to it.’ I asked him to go there and ask my cousin, Lieutenant Ulozovskii, to come and see me. Soon afterward three officers from the submarine came, but my cousin was not among them. They looked at me and were shocked at my appearance, I was still covered with blood. One of them, Lieutenant Mukhin, said, ‘Your cousin is in Sevastopol’. We are leaving now for

Sevastopol' and we will gladly take you there.' I said 'Oh no, I need to go to the hospital or I will die, ' for I felt already that something was very wrong with my arm. So I thanked them and asked them to notify my cousin and through him my mother, who was staying with him.

Well, finally the time came for them to take us to the hospital. I was taken on a horse-drawn carriage with another man and we started through the main street of Kerch. I saw horror on the faces of people when they saw me, completely covered with blood, from head to toe, and then a young officer ^{p191} rushed to me. It was my second cousin, Roman Labin, whom I met shortly before going on the previous operation. "What happened to you?" he exclaimed.

"I was wounded," I said.

"What hospital are you going to?"

"I don't know." He immediately asked the driver, and he said we were all being taken to the 4th field hospital which was located in the girls pension, a very exclusive school. Because of the extreme lack of accommodation in that school, the lower floor of that school was requisitioned for the hospital, while on the top floor the girls continued their studies. It was quite fortunate that Roman ("Roma") Labin saw me, for his parents, my aunt and uncle, came at once, bringing with them a former surgeon of the Imperial Court, Professor Solntsev, who in consultation with a local man in the hospital examined me and immediately decided that surgery would be needed. However they didn't tell me about that at that point. My bloody uniform was removed, my face and hair were washed, so that I began to look less like a Red Indian and more like a normal paleface again. They gave me morphine injections so that I didn't suffer so much; I felt much better as a result of that. Then my relatives sent a wire to my mother in Sevastopol', saying "Sasha wounded lightly in left arm, come to Kerch."

The next day my wound started to play up very badly. I developed ^{p192} a fever, which indicated gangrene. The lower part of my arm began to smell like rotten meat. I couldn't tolerate that anymore. Again Professor Solntsev and Dr. Fishelson had a consultation and they told me that immediate amputation was needed, because I had started to run a fever very peculiar to gangrene. The temperature would shoot up to 104 and then go down very low within an hour or two and that kind of fluctuation indicated great danger.

Taken to the surgery, I told Professor Solntsev and Dr. Fishelson "Please, if you have to amputate my arm, cut it high enough so that there will be nothing left of that rotting meat, which I can't stand." They gave me shots and a mask with ether.

I had developed gangrene, the worst sort, gas gangrene. I was in mortal danger, so they operated immediately. They now sent a second telegram to Simferopol saying that 'The wound is more serious than originally expected; amputation of the left arm is possible.'

I was kept under heavy sedation, so came to my senses only on the morning after the operation. The strangest sensation was that I couldn't move my head. I felt that I had my arm, and I felt all the painful sensations in the hand and fingers, so I asked the nurse. She finally told me 'Yes they did remove ^{p193} your arm, but you are out of danger now.' Then with some effort I managed to turn my head and I saw a white bandaged stump instead of my arm.

Well, at that time my only concern was whether I would live or not. I knew that mother would come, but I was afraid of seeing her because I knew what kind of shock it would be to her. Speaking of mother, I recalled that when I was leaving Odessa for the front my mother blessed me with a little wooden icon of St. Nicholas, painted on the wood, and I kept that icon always with me in the watch pocket of my military trousers. It was all soaked through with blood as all my garments were soaked, but I kept it and later on, in Belgrade, my mother had

that little icon put in a metal casing behind glass. I still keep it and have carried it through all my travels and troubles.

My relatives visited me, encouraging me, etc. The food in the hospital wasn't too good, and my relatives were bringing me hot cocoa and other items to give a little bit extra.

The commander of our military academy was still in battle on the shores of the Caucasus, but the whole operation went very badly and after a week all the troops had to leave the Caucasus and return to the Crimea. The trouble had been that instead of there being, as we were told, about 4,000 Cossacks expecting our arrival, we didn't meet more than about 300 to 400, which was not of much help to us in fighting the Reds. *p194*

That sensation that I had in my amputated arm was once even dangerous, because one night, the second night after amputation, I turned around and wanted to put my non-existent arm as a support, and I fell from my bed. It was a painful experience, but fortunately nothing was damaged.

Mother came to Kerch on the third day after the operation. That was a dreadful day for me because it was to be the day when they would first remove the bandages, and I was scared stiff because I knew that it would be very painful. Mother came and tried to be awfully brave, but I knew that her heart was bleeding for me and we both tried to pretend that we were happy in meeting.

Then I asked her to leave, for the time was coming for removal of the dressing and I was afraid that I might shout out from the pain and she might hear me.

The change of bandages was probably the most painful moment since I had been wounded. By the time she came later on I was already feeling better. What was most encouraging was that the doctors said that the sound was in good shape and that the healing had already started.

Soon after the remnants of the academy returned to Kerch I had a visit from the commanding general of the academy who came to me and said 'Here is the St. George Cross of the 3rd Degree, for your bravery in battle. Moreover I have sent a *p195* recommendation for your immediate promotion to officer's rank, 2nd Lieutenant, for actually you with your machine gun saved the whole company, for if you had not continued firing the company would have been doomed, so for that heroic deed you are recommended for immediate battlefield promotion.'

I was very happy. In the meantime my cousins, with the help of mother, etc. , since they knew that my uniform was ruined, managed to get a new uniform for me and to this was attached the second St. George Cross, and the first time I visited, mother and I went to church. It was still very hard for me to walk long distances because of my lost balance through the changed center of gravity in my body.

Finally my name day came, on the 30th of August. I was able to come celebrate my name day with my family, with whom my mother stayed, and they prepared a traditional meal of vodka. When I had a glass of vodka something like hot fire pierced my wound, with the second glass, the same thing, so I said no more. The next morning when I had the regular change of dressing, the doctor looked at my arm and said "Oho! Yes, I know, you had some vodka!" 'Yes,' I said, 'but how do you know?' 'Well,' he said, 'it chases some of the liquid out of your wound, it's not too good, but we can detect it. Actually more pus was chased out of your wound because you had this.' I understood then, that when I had the hot sensation it probably pushed the pus out. *p197*

Well the happy day came when the commanding general with some other officers came to me and brought my officers' shoulder pieces and congratulated me with the promotion; I became

an officer, and the date of my promotion was actually the date on which I was wounded, that is, the 6th of August. And it is strange, that in the good old times, in the Tsarist army, the young officers were usually promoted, after maneuvers, on that same day of the 6th of August. So the day of my promotion was the same as that of innumerable cadres of the old army.

Well again I celebrated that, however the situation on the front became more and more difficult. After the unsuccessful attempt to reach the shores of the Caucasus, another attempt was made to expand the perimeter that we occupied above the Crimea toward the west. For that we needed to cross the Dnepr River. Some units managed to cross the Dnepr but they were beaten off, and finally by September the situation really became grim.

In September another interesting thing happened in Kerch. The food situation was very bad and since the number of wounded had increased, the hospitals were filled to capacity and very few people were helped by relatives or anyone. So the wife of the commanding general of the garrison proposed a plan jointly to the Red Cross and other ladies' organizations to have a festival, at which a lottery would be held. The idea was that the citizens of Kerch buy lottery tickets, each of which bore the ^{p197} name of a wounded officer or cadet or soldier in the various hospitals, and then whoever drew that ticket took it upon himself to take care of that wounded person in the hospital. We knew of that and it caused quite a commotion in our hospital.

I had escaped certain death, but when I was recovering I felt so well, so good. However my amputated arm still bothered me. Any change of weather was very painful; as a matter of fact even now, after 55 years I still feel the same thing. I was afraid that a certain grimace in my face would remain constant, for I always felt that pain, but at the same time my spirits were high; again I was out of danger, I was alive and I was young, and didn't think of the consequences of being crippled. But there were also bad cases when someone was dying in the hospital, it was a kind of terrible routine; when somebody was a hopeless case they would remove that person from the regular ward and take him to a special ward which we called the death ward or death detachment, and quite a few people were moved there. I was sorry for these people because when they moved them there they knew that they moved them so they would die in peace there.

We in the hospital were anxiously awaiting the results of that odd lottery in which the citizens of Kerch were winning the names of all the soldiers in the hospital. Shortly after that some ladies started to appear, bearing little pieces of ^{p198} paper with the names, and bringing some food, and soft pillows.

One of the first was a big fat lady who won, of all people, the name of my comrade-in-arms, Sergeant Nosenko, who had had a bullet in his spine and was now recovering. She knew what a wounded man needs, she brought him a large pillow and bottle with milk and some other goodies from her house; she sat with him, talked with him, and made him quite happy, and promised to bring him food every day from that point on.

Other ladies came, claiming who they won, and everyone was fine, mainly because it brought some additional food, because we in the hospital were on almost a starvation diet. So gradually all the men in our ward had acquired their lady patrons, except me; nobody came to claim me; and I was beginning to get upset. Until finally, about three days after the rest of them, a very attractive young lady appeared at the threshold of our ward, and read my name and the name of a certain Captain Blinov; she had bought two tickets. Since she had the names of two of us the hospital administration decided that for her convenience it would be better if both men were in the same ward, so they moved one man out and put Captain Blinov

in his place, in the bed next to mine. Well, she was a very attractive young woman named Victoria. She didn't bring us lots of food but we enjoyed ^{p199} her company. Blinov was wounded in the arm too, but his arm was not amputated and he already walked, so she said that she would gladly go with him to the movies, to concerts, etc. Well, Blinov started his evening strolls with her; of course I had my relatives and mother, but I was a little jealous of the captain.

However, one evening when I returned from supper with my mother and relatives I found him lying moaning in his bed. 'What happened?' I asked. 'Oh,' he said, 'a terrible thing has happened.' They had gone to a concert, after which he took Victoria to her home, where her husband was a very sick man. While there Blinov stumbled and fell on his wounded arm and dislocated his shoulder. He was in terrible pain and the shoulder was swollen and at night the doctor came and said that he needed to have special treatment and advised that he be sent immediately to Sevastopol' where they had special facilities for this kind of emergency. So in the morning Captain Blinov was taken to the train and sent to Sevastopol'. When Victoria appeared late in the afternoon and asked about Captain Blinov I told her what happened. She was awfully sorry, but then she became kind of my companion. Well we didn't go out much; but we went once to a concert given by the well known Nadezhda Plevitskaia. She was very popular. She used to sing with Chaliapin, one of the most famous Russian singers. She later became the wife of the commander of Kornilov regiment and later of the Kornilov division, General Skoblin. ^{p200}

They lived for a long time in Paris, until in 1929 she managed to get in touch with communist agents and she betrayed the leader of the White movement, General Kutepov, so that he was kidnapped in the center of Paris by Soviet agents and taken to the coast of France where a Soviet ship was waiting. It was a terrible thing; Skoblin fled, and disappeared, and Plevitskaia was arrested by the French and died in prison. That was nine years after the concert. At that time she was a beautiful singer. The situation of the White armies on the front became very difficult. The trouble started with this. Great Britain, under the government of Churchill, was helping us by sending ammunition, tanks, and so forth, but then the new cabinet of Lloyd George came to power. He was a left leaning statesman of the Labour Party and one of the first acts of his government was to cut off help to the White armies of Russia. He started to negotiate for trade with the Bolsheviks, and when someone in the British Parliament attacked him for that he said, "I don't care; one can trade even with cannibals; the main thing is that we want to trade."

Another factor that adversely affected our position in the Crimea was that the Bolsheviks were also fighting with the Poles, and the Poles got massive support from France. Even General Weygand was sent to Warsaw to organize Polish defences, the flow of arms, ammunition and so forth. But the Poles managed to stop the Soviet offensive, peace was concluded, and all the Soviet ^{p201} armies that were fighting the Poles were immediately directed against us, so we were overwhelmed by the mass of the Reds, who had under their control the central part of Russia with all the heavy industries, etc. and we didn't have anything. We didn't even have the breadbasket of the Ukraine at our disposal. So we were beginning to starve, both as far as ammunition was concerned, and food. There were shortages in everything. General Wrangel already had a contingency plan to evacuate the entire army from the Crimea in case of collapse of the front and because of the freak weather in October that became inevitable. For the first time in 50 years suddenly very cold weather settled down in Crimea and particularly in the north where the shallow lagoon which protected us from any massive attack by the Reds was frozen and the Red cavalry managed to break through across the ice of that lagoon.

This was the only chance that the free world, the western allies, had to stop communism. We didn't need any foreign troops, we needed only help with foodstuffs and weapons, and with that we could have won our battle against the Reds and there would have been no more of that Red danger which was to threaten the world in an ever increasing sense from that point on. We would have destroyed communism inside Russia and would have certainly established a democratic government, because the goal was not restoration of Tsardom but bringing back the Constituent Assembly and the decision of the Constituent Assembly, based on ^{p202} free elections, would have been mandatory for deciding what form of government Russia would have. That was our goal, nothing else, and we were fighting against the Red dictatorship; merciless, bloody dictatorship. But the Allies didn't see that; except for Churchill, they didn't realize the danger of it. They didn't understand communism, how it could spread outside of Russia, and they realized it only when it was too late. Well, I would say that the Americans were more generous than anybody, although they didn't send us military supplies, we were at least getting lots of medical supplies through the American Red Cross. All our hospitals were supplied with American medicaments, bandages, thermometers, and everything. Then the Americans dumped on us a large amount of their uniforms. We didn't have any factories to produce uniforms. So actually in that last stage of the war I was fighting and wounded in a World War I American uniform. Only the insignia had been removed.

Anyhow, the situation became desperate, and the troops were retreating from the northern part of Tavrida, the perimeter, into the bottleneck of Perekop, and into the Crimea proper and the orders were given to the troops where they had to go for their assigned evacuation. There was tremendous difficulty in finding enough vessels; anything that would float was immediately commandeered by Wrangel for evacuation.

At that time mother and I decided that it would be best ^{p203} for us to go to Sevastopol'. I didn't need to stay in the hospital anymore; I needed only to go every third day to have the dressings on my wound changed. The wound was healing pretty fast and there was a fine naval hospital in Sevastopol' so we decided to go there and live with my cousin, Nicholas Ulozovskii, who passed away just recently in Nice, France.

The trip from Kerch to Sevastopol' was very difficult and painful. We spent the whole night in the overcrowded train, and people were pressing on me and my wound until some officers there learned that I was a recent amputee.

We settled in Sevastopol' in the second part of October. The front was collapsing and orders were given to start boarding the ships. There were all kinds of ships. Upon arrival in Sevastopol' I reported to Wrangel's headquarters and since I was an officer and not attached to any particular unit, I said I would like to be attached to the old Imperial guard regiment. There was only one battalion which was the nucleus, so I was assigned to that and at the same time I got permission to go to the naval hospital for changing of the bandages and checking on my wound.

So it went on and finally the day came when we had to evacuate and leave Russia forever.

Evacuation took place on the first of November 1920. My cousin was with his submarine but his wife, as the wife of a ^{p204} naval officer, had to leave shortly before we did because there was a special ship, part of which was assigned for the families of naval officers. So she left us and I didn't see her from that time until 1972, when I saw her briefly in Nice.

We were assigned to the ship, the passenger ship *Aleksandr Mikhailovich*, which later became the Yugoslav passenger liner *Dubrovnik*, on which I travelled once trying to locate the in which I was evacuated.

We were lucky to get on the passenger liner because the majority of people were being evacuated from the Crimea on just about any kind of vessel, even on barges, because of the short age of vessels. Everyone wanted to leave, believing that after the Reds invaded Sevastopol' there would be a blood bath, which actually happened, as we learned later. So mother and I boarded that ship and since I was a wounded officer, mother and I were assigned a little cabin. We were lucky enough that on that ship the headquarters of the Sevastopol' command was evacuated, and also the Red Cross organization and the so-called White Cross, which was a rival organization to the Red Cross during the Civil War. Apparently some people didn't like the word Red. Well, I certainly profited from that because as soon as we had settled down representatives of the Red Cross came to our cabin and promised help. Within a short time, representatives of the White Cross came too, and they put me down on a list of people they ^{p205} should help. I didn't mind, because getting two rations meant that my mother could eat relatively good food as well. Then on board the ship were all the bishops and higher clergy of our Orthodox Church, including the Metropolitan Anastasii and many others. They carried with them the miraculous icon of Kursk, which was taken out of Russia, and many years afterward was brought on several occasions to our home here. Finally the signal was given that all ships had to move into the harbour because the Reds were already in the outskirts of Sevastopol' and one could hear the rifle and machine gun fire. Our liner moved out and then the order was given to go full speed ahead to Constantinople.

I went on the upper deck and we saw the Russian shores receding in the mist. It was a terrible heart breaking experience for me. The clergy were saying a solemn *Te Deum* on the upper deck, and we all knew our Russian land was receding farther and farther away. The last piece of Russian land that I saw was Cape Fiolet, near Sevastopol'. And I didn't see Russia again until last year, 1974, when I gathered courage and we visited Russia and the Crimea.