

their lot and went my own way in life. After secondary school I entered a University for medical training. These years of study brought into my life extraordinary experiences and events that shaped my destiny. One of these was my work in Dr. Fridtjof Nansen's organisation, which was feeding Russian students during the years of famine. This activity involved me in tragic happenings: two years later I was arrested, but before I came up for trial I ran away with a false passport with which I lived dangerously for years. Later I confessed to the O.G.P.U. what I had done, but was pardoned, and permitted to keep my falsely-acquired name.

After many vicissitudes of life I started afresh, and went boldly in for motor-cycle sports and at the same time entered the Institute of Engineering. From this moment there began the most adventurous and daring era of my life. I became a well-known sportswoman in Soviet Russia: alone on my motor-cycle I crossed all Russia from Leningrad to Tiflis in the autumn rains and mud in twelve days; took part in

*[continued on second flap*

I AM A WOMAN FROM  
SOVIET RUSSIA

# I AM A WOMAN FROM SOVIET RUSSIA

by

BARBARA MOORE-PATALEEWA

“With the help of Christ, out of this chaos will be born a race of men and women—utterly incorruptible and perfectly unafraid. To them, moral values will be above price and they will look into the eyes of life and into the eyes of death with equal and uncompromising courage”.

(*St. Seraphim of Sarov* said about Russia over hundred years ago.)

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THIS BOOK I DEDICATE  
TO  
THE GREAT RUSSIAN PEOPLE  
WHO HAVE PASSED THROUGH EVERYTHING  
AND TO  
THE SOVIET LEADERS  
WHO LED THOSE PEOPLE TO THE HEIGHTS  
—WHERE THEY NOW STAND

## PREFACE

I AM NOT A professional writer, oh, no! In fact even my English is far from being correct. That is why I had such difficulty in writing this book. There were many moments in the last six months when I would stop and move no further for the want of an expression or for the lack of purely grammatical ease with which to proceed with this book. I had nobody to help me and only one intimate friend who time from time would sacrifice two or three hours of his precious time to correct my mistakes. Only the mistakes but not the style, that is why this book is so different to other ones written in English! I hope it is readable!

Another thing is, that in spite of my imperfect English, I have been in great demand for the last 12 months and four or five days a week I went out, and still go, to different parts of England to give talks about Soviet Russia, which left me very little time to write this book. I can say, therefore, that it was done on trains and buses, and whilst waiting at the stations, but mainly during the hours late at night, as in any case, I only sleep four hours a-night!

What made me write this book? A very simple fact: the desperation over the volumes of labour by persons who hated or feared Soviet Russia, and whose creations adorned (and still adorn) the shelves of numerous public libraries and kiosks of Great Britain. With few exceptions, those books were written by people who have either lived in Tsarist Russia and run away after the Revolution, or by those who visited my country, and finding their dislike for it, decided to express it loudly! Some are by former spies to old or new Russia and finally—just by a pack of journalists who knew how to serve their ever greedy public, in the years preceding June 22nd 1941!

I have been unhappy too many times when reading those books or hearing someone expressing their views after acquainting themselves with Soviet Russia via those books.

As soon as I came to England for the first time in 1934, I was virtually hunted for the purposes of giving some material or even writing my autobiography in Russian, to be translated.

I declined to do this. No money tempted me either and not because I had plenty of it!

Years passed. Things changed. Books are still written about Russia—but how differently now! I am very happy about it, of course. But I thought that a mere switch over from slander to admiration is not enough. I wish the English people, who in their vast majority, have a genuine desire to understand Russia—to know more of the life and people there in the period from 1917–1936, when the new Stalin Constitution came into being. As since then the Soviet Union became a Democracy, only of a more true type than those in the West. But it is the years of 1917–1936—that “dark” period, which still requires “clarification”!

Now, I attempt to give this clarification by describing my own life. Many others in Russia have “passed through everything” and so did I, with only the difference, that I bore no malice for the tragic occurrences and sufferings I experienced. Because I understood, that when a big forest is cut down—the chips are bound to fly about. I was one of those fragments, who survived, in order, perhaps, to tell this narrative.

I have put here everything openly and frankly. Most names, with the exception of those not belonging to Soviet citizens—are recorded in full. I do not spare myself either. I thought that truth, though often bitter, is better than a glittering lie. I must make an apology, though, to all those thousands of people who know me now, for the not absolutely correct autobiographical information I have given them when asked or even pressed to do so. I had reasons for that, and in any case, this book would not be so interesting to read if they had already known all about me!

I have written this my autobiography with the sole intention and great hope that it will contribute to a further real understanding of the new world—Soviet Russia.

I have also found that a good number of people in Great Britain would not read books on Russia that have been written by the so-called “admirers” of the Soviet Union, taking such books as direct propaganda! Now, this book of mine can be read by them without any fear of being “proselytised”! It is not “conversion” I wish to induce, but a real, human understanding of Soviet Russia. Because it shows both sides of the medal, but which will make them think twice before pronouncing their opinions of the U.S.S.R. They might even find, if they are fair enough, that the rest of the world contributed greatly to the difficult, hard and sometimes even cruel life Russia had from 1917 to 1936. But the Russians have such an intense desire to be friendly with this outside world that, I am sure, they have forgotten the things of the past.

I hope too that readers will discern that my occasional expression of opinion and observations of other countries, England included, are not my desire to criticise and belittle them! I like English people very much, but I cannot be blind to some aspects of their life which differ to those of Soviet Russia! But in any case, I do not believe in continual back-patting, this will not serve any useful purpose at the time we live in. I wished to point out those things only which are definitely incompatible with Russia, mainly in the social and economic senses. So much will be required very soon in order to meet the post-war situation, when co-operation between most countries starts. Such co-operation will not proceed far unless the English who, though isolated from the continent geographically but actually part of it, realise that they cannot make Russia accept their standard of values.

Besides I do not believe that English people are so "touchy" that they cannot take any sort of criticism of themselves, without spoiling the "entente cordiale"! They must be as brave as the Russians were, when for years not one kind word was written about anything in their country,—and most of it was even untrue!

I am told from all quarters that one should not attempt to say too harsh things about Germany, Italy and others, as it might jeopardise the peace to come.

It strikes me that the projected friendship of the peoples of this world is going to be so uncertain and as gentle as a fragile glass that could break into pieces from any slight pressure. Such a friendship is worthless and does not pave the solid way for future peace and happiness. And though I object to Vansittartism, I am not for a sentimental praising and closed-eyes attitude to reality either; this is artificial and will not work.

One word about the publisher.

Some people on hearing that I was writing my autobiography, immediately inquired who would be the publisher. "Victor Gollancz," was my answer. "What a pity, it would have been better to have chosen a publisher not so 'Left'"—they would say! I, therefore, wish to state here the following.

Mr. Gollancz is one of the very few publishers who has been brave enough to publish some true material about Soviet Russia, at a time when most of the mighty press were only too busy with printing the poisonous propaganda about that land.

That is why I chose Mr. Victor Gollancz.

BARBARA MOORE-PATALEEWA.

*Mansfield, Nottinghamshire.*

*November, 1942.*



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## PROLOGUE

IN MY VISION of Soviet Russia—this vast land with its great mass of people—it always appears to me as one huge beehive. Russians, like industrious bees, under one queen bee, which is Stalin,—are continually working, re-building the old world and constructing a new one—to their own liking.

But just when they began to feel, that their efforts at last started to bring the desired results—one day there came a bear from the neighbouring forest, who was known for its liking for honey. He approached the beehive, ruthlessly tore away its walls and started to eat the contents greedily. Bees, out of instinct primarily—bitterly attacked him, stinging him all over. He was stronger at first, and enraged went on destroying all their work,—in a kind of aggressive self-defence. But soon their numerous stings finished the giant; with a loud groan he fell and soon died.

Poor bees! Many of them perished too, but those who remained started at once to build anew their honeycomb.

When a child in Russia I witnessed such a scene, which was for ever impressed on my mind. Would this analogy work once again? Yes, it will work, and no magicians will be required to put the great beehive into proper order again.

## PART I

### CHAPTER I

## CHILDHOOD IN TSARIST RUSSIA AND COMING OF THE SOVIETS

I WAS BORN IN Russia in 1905 (1904 orthodox calendar), at my uncle's estate near Stalingrad, then called Tsaritsin. Next day I was taken in a critical condition to Saratov-on-Volga, where I could be attended, as I was not expected to survive. In Saratov I lived most of my life since. Here this great and famous river is at its widest. Large University town Saratov is situated on the slopes of the big hill "Bald", gradually coming down to the Volga itself.

In Saratov the river Volga is almost half a mile wide, and opposite, on the other side, there is the Autonomous German Republic. Forefathers of these Germans came to Russia during the reign of Catherine the Great, and settled in the most fertile region, where they stayed ever since. The capital of their Republic was Pokrovsk, and is clearly seen from Saratov. We used to go there often by the Volga steamer to spend a day.

In July 1941 many of these 800,000 Germans had been safely transferred somewhere beyond the Ural Mountains, so that Herr Hitler should not worry himself over those minorities, which he was so anxious to incorporate into his Reich!

My father was a lawyer, who, along with three other of his brothers, inherited some land and estate. He was a very kind man, and, as is often with kind people—he had not much character. He was fond of giving away money, and advantage was often being taken of him.

My mother was of very opposite composition: she was a clever, strong-willed person and did not believe in being soft and sentimental. Their characters clashed at times, especially over the upbringing of us children. Mother always maintained that severe punishment for even a little escapade could make children obedient, disciplined and diligent, and acted accordingly. Myself, being the eldest among three daughters, I learned her principles of our upbringing very well indeed, as I got most of the blows. I have been beaten so many times, and in such a thorough manner, that even to these days I remember

the weals that remained on my body for a week and longer. I was afraid of my mother, but never lost my presence of mind, mixed with arrogance, and, therefore, was always a ready target for her. Father often tried to shield us children, but that was not very helpful, as it only made her more determined to make "proper human beings" of us!

She herself received a lady's education, and nothing on earth could change her ideal of her daughters being otherwise. All the same, looking on the past now, I am able to appreciate her demand that any person, ourselves included, should be attentive, efficient, refined in manners and upright in behaviour. It was a strange mixture of ideas: she seemed to have her own vision of a true aristocratic type,—but how could she enforce those qualities on us, if we were not born with them? I could see her tragedy later on.

I started school early, in a preparatory class,—before I was six. Three out of four years of school passed quickly, as I jumped one year, being the first pupil in the class.

At the outbreak of the last war, in August 1914, my father was recalled to his rank and sent to St. Petersburg. This event was the first real suffering our family experienced. I was disconsolate for days, crying for father, as I was very fond of him then. I remember he sent us a parcel of sweets on the way to the capital, and when they were all eaten I kept the wrappings for months as a memory of him: he had held them in his hands whilst buying them!

All father's brothers were taken into the army, and many other relations and friends of ours also parted with their menfolk. This at once brought disorganisation to many big households, as nobody was "reserved" to work on fields and farms.

In November of 1914 mother got news that father was to be sent to the front line. This made her collect us children hastily and go to St. Petersburg at once, to say good-bye to him. (Petersburg had then changed its name to Petrograd.)

It was a terrible journey across the frozen country in deep snow. It took a week before we reached the Northern Capital, as priority was given to military trains. At last we embraced and kissed our father, who looked so different in his uniform. By the way, he was jokingly called "Nicholas the 2nd", as his features had an exact likeness to our late Tsar. And this often created funny incidents in the streets and military grounds. I am sure my father enjoyed this, otherwise he would have shaved the provocative "vegetation" off his face, which would have changed him to some extent!

Soon after our arrival it became known that father would not be sent to the front after all. My parents decided to celebrate it by staying all together in the capital until the end of the war, which they hoped to be over by springtime of 1915.

This was not a rosy perspective for me, for I was anxious to go on with my interrupted studies in Saratov. I implored my mother to let me go back to school, to which she consented after a lengthy discussion with father. An officer, friend of my father, was going on leave to Saratov, so I was sent with him.

On reaching home I found life wasn't as warm as when all the family was around me, and after several months, when school closed for Easter holidays, I wished to return to Petrograd to rejoin my people. Mother telegraphed auntie categorically forbidding her to let me go, as there was no one to accompany me. This only added to my desire to leave Saratov, and one day I found the money that was sent to buy my clothes, books, etc., and asking some grown-up person to get my ticket for Petrograd, I departed alone.

I was then about nine and a half years old. The distance I had to travel was about a thousand miles. I launched on this step secretly, without saying anything to anybody, hoping to reach Petrograd in a few days and be a surprise to my family. I took some bread, a few school books and a little pillow to sleep on during travel. I slipped through the platform barriers all right—nobody seemed to pay attention to my little person, as there was such heavy traffic of military personnel. All the better for me, of course.

Two days in a train passed without incident. Soldiers gave me sweets and bread and tea. To their questions why I was travelling alone, I invariably answered that my auntie put me into the train in Saratov, and in Petrograd I should be met by my parents. It sounded quite plausible. But when we reached Moscow all had to change, as it was a terminus. I was so upset by this, that I almost started to cry because I did not know how to get to Petrograd from this terminus, which was still about four hundred miles away. So when I left the train I was completely lost in the crowd.

Hours passed before some official noticed me and asked questions. I confessed to him and asked him to put me on the right train. Well, that wasn't so easy, as it was necessary to go to another line which was on the other side of Moscow.

While he was arranging the means of sending me there with a responsible person, I decided to do my best and get there

by myself, for I did not like the face of that official: he was a severe-looking man with long black moustaches.

Once again I slipped into the crowd, asking soldiers and other passengers if anyone was going to the other station for Petrograd. I don't remember how much time passed before I got a lift in a cab. I felt hungry and not quite so happy. Anyway, I got to the right place, and then started new inquiries about trains.

At this juncture I will mention that my auntie in Saratov, alarmed by my mysterious disappearance, went to the police. They could say nothing, but started a search at once. My parents were informed by telegram of what had happened, and after three days having passed without any clue as to my whereabouts, all railway police were informed to look for me, as my parents decided that I might have "run away" to Petrograd.

At that time, unable to get the train, I stayed several days at Moscow station, sleeping on the benches amid thousands of other stranded passengers.

One thing is very clear in my mind till now.

Several passengers read a special announcement on the walls of the station, that two boys among the travellers had disappeared and they were presumed to be in Jewish hands somewhere in Moscow. These boys were "caught" by Jews for the purpose of taking their innocent Christian blood to add to their "Matzoth", the Jewish unleavened Easter bread. This was supposed to be done in order to keep Hebrew religious law—to commemorate Christ's spilt blood on the Cross.

I must state here that most of the civil population in Russia who had taken part in Jewish pogroms were much incited by this fact alone. It was even known by what process the innocent Christian blood was obtained! The naked body of the live Christian boy is placed in a machine which works by rotary movement. In the middle there is a cylindrical barrel the surface of which bristles with short sharp needles, which being pressed against the body, powerfully prick it, making blood flow into a special container. When enough of it is collected, the boy, nearing death point, would be secretly buried and the blood is sent to a chief Rabbi, who is supposed to take part in the ceremony of preparing the "Matzoth" for the whole Jewish community in Russia.

My parents knew all the details of this ritual of the Jewish religion, as their Jew friend, who was a commercial traveller, used often to come to our place during Easter and would never consent to eat Christian food, having his own with him.

Every year we heard the same story about the "Matzoth" preparation and every time we were warned by our parents to be careful not to be caught by Jews!

Usually, where many Jews lived, like in Polish Ukraina, just before Easter, some Christian boy would disappear. Though he would probably have been stolen and murdered by the police for the purposes of pogroms,—blame would have fallen on the Jews all the same.

When later I had many Jewish friends amid university students I often tried to find out whether this cruel thing was true. They only laughed in reply. But the Soviet Government did much to destroy this stupid horrible fable and now, I don't think, even one person in my country believes this.

So, when after several days of fruitlessly hunting for me—my parents came to the unhappy conclusion that I was also caught for this purpose. Some argued that girls are not meant for this, only boys were required—all the same, they became quite restless and mother immediately left for Saratov to start the search for me afresh.

By this time I finally got into the right train and safely reached Petrograd. I remember when I alighted on the platform—almost immediately some fat military man approached me and inquired who I was. I told him and he at once took me away and in half an hour my father identified me as his daughter! He was so happy to see me alive that he even forgot to scold me for all the anxiety I had given him. I imagined what my mother would do to me when she saw me dirty, hungry but with a twinkle in my eye after all the experiences I had. It was a good provision of fate that she was gone away! So I thought, while my mother was in torments of suffering. I learned later on, that she even vowed to go on a pilgrimage on foot to Kiev, to St. Nicholas' cave near some monastery there, as a thanksgiving if only I were alive. Kiev from Saratov is four hundred miles as the crow flies, and I never knew whether she was ever able to carry out her promise.

As the war wasn't nearing its end in the spring of 1915 my mother decided to go to Saratov as my training would be interfered with if we stayed with father any longer.

I passed exams for entering the "gymnasium", equivalent to an English public school for girls. These "gymnasiums" were of a type to which only rich people could send their children, as they were expensive establishments. Here again my ambition was to be the first pupil in the class, so I worked hard. My mother



lived on the estate, a hundred miles from Saratov, and I had to stay en pension.

While in the "gymnasium" I took passionately to the classical and national dances. For this I was given special permission to attend the ballet dancing school. Thus at the end of terms when we held our school concerts I was usually the leading dancer on the stage, and many predicted that I would become a creative dancer, as movement, rhythm and expressionism were in my blood. But towards the end of my secondary school I became too much preoccupied with my studies and stopped dancing for a time hoping to resume it at some future opportunity. This however never came. Even now, I still dream that one day I shall plunge again into this mode of expression! Music always rouses me into impromptu interpretation. Out of all the arts—music stirs me most.

When I went to our country place in one of the holidays, I found two German prisoners of war who were employed at our household, doing all work in the fields, the kitchen garden and looking after the poultry and domestic animals. One was Fritz and the other Ludwig. Other households also had German prisoners. They were such good and hard workers that when after the war they had to go back to Germany—everybody was sorry to lose them. Some of them even got married to Russian girls—just before departing for their homeland, taking them to Germany.

In February 1917 the Russian Revolution broke out. I was too small then to see and feel its magnitude and significance. Besides, it was so exciting that we children took it as something that might give us extra holidays!

At that time I visited my uncle's and there I heard a lot of talking about an awful Rasputin, who actually, as they thought, was the cause of this upheaval. They insisted that the fall of the Royal House of Romanoff was directly due to the influence and doings of this Rasputin. Overhearing this, I was so intrigued about that evil man with such hypnotic power, that going back to school I "stirred" girls' curiosity about him and one of my companions secretly got a pamphlet from her brother, in which we all read about this person.

Soon I went to live with my uncle's family as our boarding school got burned down. Here it was quite a different life: I could take part in events that came and not see everything through headmistress' eyes!

My recollection of the February Revolution is of the following nature: continual marching of crowds with flags, singing revolutionary songs. Everywhere were displayed portraits of Kerensky. I remember collecting news cuttings of his image: in a mass of flowers, in the midst of grand ladies, on the Palaces' balconies and so on. He looked so handsome, he was an idol like a Hollywood hero. Everybody was talking enthusiastically about some beautiful and unattainable Utopian ideas . . . Progressive people were in a state of intoxication, as it were.

Then came the October Revolution and everything suddenly changed. People became more sober and serious; there was bloodshed again, and many a person with position and money lost his ground. We heard the word "Bolsheviks" for the first time: it sounded ominous but firm. Anyway, more marching crowds with songs and red banners this time. Even as a child I was impressed by fiery speeches from leaders of the workers—in the streets, market places and town squares.

My father was in the Volynsky Regiment in Petrograd when the February Revolution broke out. This regiment was one of the first military units which rushed to the Winter Palace and then to Tsarskoye Selo to demand the abdication of the Russian monarch. Father was one of the participants and this made him a revolutionary enthusiast and Kerensky's worshipper. I remember when he came home after demobilisation,—he talked days and nights on end how life was going to be interesting and beautiful much to the distress of my mother!

In the meantime, our school life had undergone some changes. Because some of the schools had to be closed for the lack of fuel, the remaining buildings were used to house those unfortunates who were left. As a result, we girls were transferred into a boys' grammar school, girls in the morning and boys in the afternoon. This started an era of intense flirting between the sexes—boys leaving love letters in the corners of desks for the girls, the latter replying in the same manner. Many romances started, especially among the senior classes. I am not sure if the staff of both schools did not follow the example of their pupils! All these experiences were new and piquant and were certainly not very conducive to studies!

Some time after the October Revolution all schools became mixed, and strange as it may seem—courting and rendezvous suddenly lost their allurements. It soon gave place to friendship and comradeship between boys and girls.

About the same time new reforms in education appeared; they altered and changed every year until the whole educational system got settled. The result of these changes was that we children had more work to do at school time than at home. Most of the subjects, such as literature, history and even geography, took the form of discussions: each pupil in turn prepared a kind of report on a given theme and then the whole class under the teacher discussed and debated this report. This greatly induced our interest for study as it brought life into dead subjects. It stimulated us to vie with each other as to who would make the best report and discuss it most skilfully! Intelligent children were encouraged to help those who lagged behind or the lazy ones. The class competed for best team results etc. Our school became nearer and dearer to us, and not as if it had been a thing "to be done".

One subject was removed from our syllabus altogether—this was scripture. We were glad about it, as we never liked this subject, which was taught us by a priest in a monotonous way, with the constant reminder not to sin in this world to avoid punishment in the next. Instead of scripture our curriculum was enlarged by the addition of social and politico-economical subjects. The latter ones gave us our first glimpses into the social and political history of mankind, also made clear the causes of suffering of humanity, in the different stages of its development.

I remember when I went to my family's country home in the Easter holidays, my mother suggested that I should go to church for Communion (which is preceded by a confession of sins to the priest) a few days before the seven weeks of Lent is ended to avoid crowds. I promptly declared that I was not going to church at all that year. Why? Because I ceased to believe in it. Ah, one had to see what a change came over my mother! Violently she started to accuse the Communists of spoiling children and stuffing them with horrible antichrist teachings. She insisted that I had better go to church or she would make me do so. I was adamant, trying to explain her what really made me lose my respect for the church and my faith in religion. She would not listen to it and finally pulled the dog whip from the wall (relic of pre-revolutionary days of hunting parties) and brought it down on me. But before she repeated the blow—I jumped forward, pale and indignant, snatched the weapon from her and trembling all over, said, "I shall leave home and never come back again if you impose your will by the old method of beating."

Unhappy, I ran to an empty barn, wherein I cried bitterly. My favourite dog "Bobik" found me there and licked my moral wounds till darkness. One moment this "Bobik" suddenly left me and rushed out. In a few minutes it appeared with father who, having heard of the incident, was glad to see me still home. In spite of all his pleading for me to make peace with mother and even go to church, just to please her—I was determined to go away. I implored him to give me money for a ticket, which he did reluctantly. About midnight I hastily collected my belongings and books and through a window left my home—I never saw it again . . .

I shall never forget "Bobik" running after me till I reached the station, I even thought I might take him with me as my only friend at that time.

This took place in spring of 1918, when I was not quite fourteen. Travelling in a goods wagon for three days (a hundred miles distance) with a few roubles in my pocket made me realise what my life was going to be. Most of the passengers were seasonal workers going to the Volga district to get jobs as stevedores. The wagon which would usually carry 8-10 horses or cows—was this time giving hospitality to 60-70 men, women and children. Other wagons were alike. There were benches crudely constructed by the passengers out of the railway timber they got hold of at some station before I joined them. There were only two tiny windows high up near the roof and as it was warm, most of the daytime a huge sliding door was open to allow light and air in. Inside, human bodies were crowded in all sorts of positions: some were sleeping most of the time—they said it was better to sleep when one is hungry; some were sitting on bundles, some standing, in turn, and the luckiest of all were sitting on the edge of the floor where the door opened, their legs dangling through the opening into space. They could at least enjoy the passing scenery and cracked jokes at each other, while those inside were cramped anyhow.

Sometimes our train would stop and wait hours for either fuel or water for the engine. Passengers would get out on to the grass, to play, sleep or even try to get buckets of water for the engine from the wells nearby or from the river. Food was shared out amongst them—an old Russian custom.

I will always remember that when we approached Atkarsk, a junction station, we were told to keep quiet as the "Greens" were in the vicinity. That meant that partisans who were fighting the "Whites", were hiding in the green woods, as their head-

quarters, making sorties at night. As our train had a special carriage, purported to be full of ammunition, these "Greens" might stop us at any moment to avail themselves of the contents of that carriage. So, in case they did stop our train—we had better leave it quickly, and run into the open to avoid a possible explosion. That night I fell asleep heavily and in the morning was told that though the "Greens" approached our train when it had to stop for a signal to drop, they did not touch the fearful carriage, as they were told it was going to the "Reds".

Our train was getting filled with more and more passengers, travelling with voluminous bundles and some with several children. All the wagons became packed like sardines in a tin and nobody had room even to sit down, let alone lie down. And since our carriages were not made of rubber and could not be stretched to allow an unlimited inflow of newcomers—the passengers were advised to climb on to the roof. Fortunately the sloping roof of a cattle truck could hold a score or more who could "comfortably" stretch their limbs on it, (and without any limit in an upwards direction!) Thus, most women and all children were left inside and men with a few intrepid lassies went on top. I followed them also for I could not stand the overcrowdedness any longer.

It is extraordinarily exhilarating to ride at that elevated position! In the daytime the soft spring sun and warm breeze from the fields and meadows we passed, filled one with freshness. Of course, our train did not go at a great speed otherwise our balance would have been too precarious. We thanked God that we were not thrown off every time the train jolted unexpectedly.

During the night the chillness of the air made the pleasure of our travel less so. It was very funny, when next morning we beheld ourselves quite blackened by soot from the engine. Women, out of natural instinct for a dislike of anything that spoils their appearance, tried to rub off the unwanted black powder. The men did not seem to care at all and remained dirty, which in addition to their beards made them look like some villains from the underworld!

But it was not all a joke. We had a tragedy. On approaching low bridges the engine would shriek a warning, and not all would be quick enough to flatten themselves in time. Two men nearest the engine lost their lives through impact with the structure of a bridge, by decapitation. Because of this unfortunate travelling on roofs, in those years, becoming a regular

affair, the railway authorities had to take special steps to avoid such occurrences.

At last I reached Saratov. I did not go to my uncle's, he would not approve of my running away. I spent several days at my friend's house and then found a tiny room which I rented for one million roubles a month. Inflation was already in progress then, and having sold my fur coat in a market for five millions, I still had some money left to live on.

At that time starvation had already set in. This was mainly due to the blockade and crop failure, and together with the disorganisation of trade and supply, transport and distribution, brought first glimpses of a hungry life to most Russian people, save those who managed to get the services of black markets. In these black markets the late-rich would bring their furs, gold and diamonds, and exchange them for bread, salt, potatoes, sugar and other foodstuffs. The "Tcheka" was hunting down these markets, trying to stop illicit trade and barter, but "speculators" (as they were called then) would manage to escape the traps and emerge to prosper again.

A rationing system was enforced, but it gave the people such a little, that diseases were springing up freely and unchecked everywhere. The most precious part of the daily ration was four ounces of black bread. I remember I used to stand in a queue from 6 a.m. till noon to get this bread,—happily, school was in the afternoon. Later I decided to have bread for three days at once, to save time from queuing for it and also to enjoy three quarters of a pound at a time instead of little bits of four ounces. But then I noticed that I would eat the bread, usually hot from the oven, all the three quarters of a pound on my way home, before even reaching it, and the remaining two days were hungry ones. Since our monthly ration included three pounds of horse and other flesh, two pounds of buckwheat, four pounds of potatoes, and four ounces of oil—we had to make thin watery soups out of those ingredients twice a day, to fill our stomachs with this skilly in order to keep them quieter. Every third day was a joy to me as I had my three quarters of a pound of ryebread!

When winter came, life took a harder turn. As most Russian homes used wood for heating purposes, and because transport was disorganised—we had fuel no more. Our winter is so cruelly cold that it took much human energy, vitality, and endurance to survive this additional calamity. Indeed, soup left over (for the next meal) would get frozen ice-hard in an hour and this was in a living room. We used to wear heavy overcoats

when indoors, and hardly took anything off when going to sleep.

To cook our soups we had to provide some fuel and as no paraffin was available (we had no gas or electric appliances at that time) we had to go out at night and "pinch" someone's fence, gates, or part of the wooden roof even. This went on on such a scale that special guards were organised to prevent this stealing of each other's immovable property.

Of course no one could forbid taking away parts of the buildings that belonged to the government as there was no one there during the night time!

Starvation and cold always brought typhoid and typhus in Russia. These devastating epidemics were literally eating up the population.

## CHAPTER II

### UNIVERSITY TRAINING AND STUDENTS' LIFE DURING MILITARY COMMUNISM

IN THOSE CONDITIONS, many others and myself, had to struggle to go on with our studies. The majority of schools were closed, and those few who desired to continue, despite the intolerable conditions, were united together in the remaining places. I was very fortunate to be able to carry on my secondary school and even to finish it. Till September 1919, I together with twenty others of both sexes, had to work hard, and using the warmth of spring and summer, we finished our training without any holiday or break for two years.

I was still too young, 15½, to go to a university, but I was so bent on it that by some trick I proved my age to be 16½, and was allowed to enter it, in the Medical Faculty.

But the difficulty of my getting into the university in 1919 was not only due to my being too young. Children of only "clean" parents could hope to receive higher education; clean in the political and social sense. This had to be proved by documentary evidence and as I did not have any—my position became desperate. I went to many organisations imploring them to help me and at last a Comsomol League, which knew I had left my parents for good, gave me a letter of recommendation to the committee for the admittance of students into the university. In this letter it was stated that though my parents were of a socially foreign ideology, I nevertheless was a girl

with socially advanced ideas, having broken with home on this very ground.

In those years of adjustment of social and political evils, the Soviet Government in conjunction with the Communist Party, decided that only children of workers, peasants and honest intelligentsia would be allowed to go for training and university education. It was argued, that because before the revolution only the rich, people of position and the clergy could have their offspring educated—now came the time, when the poor and the toilers could enjoy these previously forbidden fruits. Some were asking what had the children of the rich to do with the morality of their parents and why they were not allowed to go to universities? Well, most of the children of the ex-rich had the blood of their class in their veins and still hoped that one day the Bolshevist regime would fall. They also felt that the university was their rightful place and not a sanctuary for “those dirty workers and backward peasants”. In spite of the change of the political system, they still looked on this proletariat as something beneath them and passionately prayed for the return of old times.

Naturally, such an attitude of theirs was quite incompatible with the principles of creating a new society and such elements were prevented from “polluting” the clear waters of the new humanity. All the same, I can recollect several cases, when the authorities allowed exceptions for such youths who really proved that they had changed their outlook and behaviour.

As to the clergy—I must say, that before the revolution their children enjoyed all that money could get, a university education included. They were a wealthy class of people then. Why, there was not one peasant, worker or poor middle class family, who was not in debt to the priests for everything: baptisms, weddings, funerals and even for the consecration of their homes, when on big religious holidays these servants of God came to bring their blessings. It is a known fact that whenever a peasant could save a chicken, or a dozen of eggs, or two or three pounds of butter—he would carry this to the priest, as a part of his eternal debt to him. Oh, yes, our clergy had their day! That is why, when the storm of 1917 swept over all Russia, this section of the community at once proclaimed the coming of antichrist. They quite openly preached that Bolsheviks were the manifestation of the devil himself, and the end of this world was in sight.

The whole thing was simple, of course. The church was separated from the state, and as if by magic, most parishioners



left their "Fathers". As the result of this, anti-Communist teaching started spreading, which in turn called upon the authorities to deal with it in accordance with the prevailing laws of that time.

When I was small, at our country home I used to ask mother—why our priest was always drunk? Also the deacon seemed to be emanating a vodka odour constantly, though I remember he had a voice very much like Chaliapin's. The answer was—that many clergymen had to drink vodka because of their work being so hard that God himself would not be against their indulging in it sometimes. I also heard my father say several times that he had to give a "lift" in his carriage to our priest and deacon, whom he would find drunk, lying in the snow or the mud, in order to deliver them to the rectory. It would always happen at the end of the day after the consecration of hundreds of homes during Christmastide, at Easter, and Whitsuntide; when they received not only the equivalent of 1-2-3 and more guineas at a time at each house, but a glass of vodka or cognac as well. One was in payment for their "job" and the other as a toast of greeting!

It is obvious therefore that the clergy were not prepared to part with such an income, hence the violent attack on anti-christs. As to their children, most of them, as one can easily imagine, followed in their fathers' footsteps (there were exceptions no doubt) and these were also restricted from entering universities.

Merchants' and shopkeepers' children were largely barred from higher education also. This is because their degrading psychology was dangerous to come into contact. That shopkeepers' mentality! In Soviet Russia it is an insult if someone by way of argument or comparison calls another a shopkeeper. It was thought that at least one generation should pass before these "trading elements" could be cleansed of their debasing traits.

In short, only those whose fathers and mothers never exploited anyone, or were poor and oppressed before, were considered worthy of entering colleges, universities, institutes and academies. Referring to the oppressed, I must mention here the fact, that when I started my training at the Medical Faculty, I was astonished to find that among our six hundred first-year students there were about three hundred Jews and the rest were other Russian nationalities including Russians proper. Bewildered, I asked our political organiser why it was that in spite of 169,000,000 Russians then and only just over 2,000,000 Jews,

the latter were represented by fifty per cent? Again the answer was that because Jews were oppressed and suffering people before the revolution, they were given preference now. Truly, it sounds in unity with the Biblical: "But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first" (Matt. 19, v. 30).

I cannot help bringing in Kerensky's utterance, as a comparison: "Revolution is an elemental force, steeped in hatred and thirsting for revenge." That is how most people outside Russia took our revolution, but is it true?

And so there started a new epoch in my life: I was to become a doctor, the thing I dreamed of so passionately when still at school.

By this time I learned that my parents were fast losing their possessions. I cannot understand how they still managed to enjoy their life between 1917-20, as an "elemental force" was working its way fiercely then and nobody was spared.

First they were deprived of the bulk of their possessions and were only left a small cottage with a garden, to live in, some furniture, one horse and one cow, and a few other things. That did not satisfy them! They started to grumble and condemn the Soviet Government; father went even as far as to express his regret for taking part in dethroning the Tsar. Finally, they lost everything and had to go away, forcibly I believe, and spend years in conditions which made them even to wish for the return of their modest cottage, kitchen garden, a horse and a cow! It took them years to realise that a huge mansion with park, much land and money do not necessarily constitute happiness. But what sufferings they passed through in the process of parting with the things they possessed all their lives! Always when I think about the ephemerality of material possessions, I remember my mother in particular, as she was an embodiment of such an example.

Once at the age of about fourteen I made a remark (after reading about the Buddhist doctrine which engaged my thoughts over a long period), that the cause of suffering in this world is due to two facts mainly: first, to be in contact with that for which one feels aversion, and secondly, to be separated from that for which one feels attraction, or not to possess what one desires. Therefore, in order not to feel unhappy, one should desire to possess very few material things, which if lost will not cause suffering! Hearing this my mother exclaimed angrily that she wished I would not stuff my head with such nonsense. She insisted that happiness and contentment of life come only if one has plenty of everything.

I wonder what my parents' philosophy is now, as I know they are both alive and lead quite a different life. But I shall relate about this later.

And so I became a medical student. From that moment the pattern of events of my life took a completely different colouring and shape. Often in thoughtful moments I feel, that there are things in my life so extraordinary as to make me believe at times in predestination.

When small, I was passionately religious. During our stay in Petrograd I spent most of my time in a chapel, attending the morning and afternoon services. I had chosen a quiet spot in that chapel, near my mother's favourite Saint Nicholas, and would stay there for hours on my knees. If the singing of the choir was beautiful and inspiring, I would be immersed in a state of exaltation till my eyes could see the icon no more through my tears. When the service finished later than usual, due to a long sermon, my mother would come to fetch me home. Herself, she went to church very rarely.

Then gradually, through getting in touch with science and sociology, I began to think and act more rationally and finally became an atheist. This lasted a few years and later gave place to quite a peculiar form of religion, which has permeated me ever since. Many a youth in my country passed through such stages of fighting for a personal religion. But none, as I can remember, adopted organised religion with its church institution. The church was too crude an expression of Christianity to us, if the latter was to be goodness, kindness, consideration for others, social justice and an equality of opportunity for everyone. We youngsters often discussed religion and every time would come to the conclusion, like Goethe, that Christianity should not be taught but lived.

Once I heard a Communist at a public meeting violently abusing religion, but when he mentioned the name of Christ—a kind of reverence stole into his voice. He said that Christ was a great revolutionary, because He went against the rich and powerful; He was always on the side of the poor and the suffering, and that Himself, He had no possessions and taught others not to crave for them. In fact, he said, Christ was a real proletarian, that is why He was so treated by the powerful ones.

He even suggested that had Christ appeared now, in the twentieth century, somewhere in Europe or America with His teachings against social injustices, He would be put in

prison straight away. This Communist stressed that there is a great difference between church and religion, and between religion and Christianity, and hardly anything in common between the first and the last. This meeting made a great impression on me.

At the time I started my medical training I was already firmly on the rational line of thinking, in spite of the desperate attempts of my secondary school teacher of Astronomy, who tried, through gazing at the stars, to turn me to religion!

Soon I went headlong into studies. The medical sphere is so different from other occupations. The novelty of wearing a white overall, using a scalpel and tweezers for the first time, the smell of formaline in the anatomical theatre—all these filled one with the meaning of something unusual and important!

We first year students looked on those of the fourth and fifth years with admiration and not a little envy. "Old" students had a sort of "Alma Mater" and "Gaudeamus igitur" air about them, while we were raw and of a new type. Their traditional students' uniform filled us with jealousy for we had none and could not get it. There was something romantic about them, while we were very realistic and suffered from no idealism of their kind.

At that time I was befriended by the clergyman's family, whose daughter and three sons were all at the same Medical Faculty as myself only at the top of the ladder. I used to come to their house frequently, because their place was always full with students of the "old school". How I remember those discussions till the small hours of the morning! At the end of which we would be presented with a huge saucepan of jacket potatoes with salt and black bread—a donation from the head of the family.

Our academic life went on on the same line of indescribable difficulties as in the rest of Russia.

Saratov University was one of the first in Russia to construct its buildings in the style of colossal modern structures, with auditoria that would hold from a thousand to three thousand students; with most modern laboratories, anatomical theatres, mortuaries and many clinics for students' practice. There was something solemn and noble about those four huge separate, cream coloured buildings, between which there were water fountains and flower beds and asphalt paths. Two and a half buildings belonged to the Medical Faculty and the rest to the Physico-mathematical Faculty, Historico-philological one and

to the Faculty of Law. Of course these faculties "borrowed" auditoria from each other when the need arose, and in any case our physics, high mathematics and chemistry were under the same roof with the Physico-mathematical Faculty. Such centralisation of buildings economised administrative expenses, saved space and made many thousand students of different faculties as one big family. But the most important thing was this. Quite a few students, myself in that number, in their spare time attended lectures at the Faculty of Law or the other ones; some of us managed even to pass external examinations at the end of three or four years in these additional branches of learning. Russian youth is so keen on knowledge that it would explore every opportunity to enrich itself. And why not? Nobody had to pay for this "extension" of learning, and the educational authorities did everything to encourage this keenness.

But this is the brightest part of the picture! There existed, persistently, for years, another side of it which tried to discourage us!

With the coming of winter, our university buildings had their central heating system not working—no fuel. Strange as it may appear, but attendance was not much affected by this, fact, our auditoria were always packed. From one lecture to another,—for hours we used to sit in huge cold halls, with steam fast pouring out of our nostrils and mouths! Professors delivered their lectures, wrapped like members of an expedition to the North Pole, so were the students with only the difference that our clothes were of still more "scratchy and patchy" type—anything to keep one warm would do.

Most of the liquids in our laboratories were frozen solid. Due to the low temperatures chemical experiments often had to be repeated many times before the desired results could be obtained. Explosions in retorts were a frequent feature. Those complicated chemical formulae went with difficulty into our heads, when feet, hands and noses were blue from cold, with empty stomachs adding to the discomfort. But most of all we suffered in the anatomical theatre. There were two of them, each in a separate wing, and each containing thirty corpses.

Usually, three days prior to bringing a corpse from the mortuary into the theatre, it had to be injected with formaline, as an antiseptic measure and it also enabled the lymph of the body to remain only semi-frozen. After about two weeks the formaline would "fizzle out" and the corpses became as hard as stone. So that we could go on with the dissection, and

especially when nerves had to be found deep in the tissues—students used to breathe on the parts of the corpses to thaw them out to work on them.

The assistants of our professor of Anatomy were nice people and not older than 28–30 years of age. I do not remember that we grumbled much—most of our difficulties were surmounted with jokes, and half frozen, we continued working hard. I suppose one can get used to anything, and once this “getting used to” state is acquired—discomfort and privations really matter very little.

Students then had a very meagre ration out of university shops, and some money allowance from the State. Between lectures or after, we would queue for our rations, or go to a students’ refectory, where there would be another queue. There we had again the inevitable soup, only so thin, that in two pints of liquid there would float two or three lentils and a bare fish bone for the sake of appearance. No fats, of course. With this pottage of lentils we had two ounces of rye bread and that was all. On rare occasions we had, instead of daily soup, millet mash with supposed sunflower-seed oil in it: the latter was at least more filling than the skilly!

Looking back on those years I do not know how we managed to survive it all and to become doctors in the end. Typhoid was rampant among students, and many succumbed to it. There could not be much resistance in us to this sweeping scourge.

The administration of our university was put on a military basis and the highest authority there was a Military Commissar. Next to him was the Dean of the Medical Faculty, who was in charge of our academic life. This Dean was a German, Professor Dant. Our Military Commissar himself was a student of the last year and a member of the Communist Party. It was funny to see him in pre-revolutionary student’s uniform and with a revolver dangling at his side. Later on he changed into a military attire, which made him look still more formidable. He was a Georgian, of a hot and hasty temperament and we students were rather afraid of him. His entourage, all with revolvers, was in constant attendance and I never saw him passing through the university buildings alone. He had two assistant commissars, one of German nationality and the other a Jew. A few years later these two assistants played a tragic part in my personal life.

Now, this Military Commissariat, established within the walls of the university, was one of those evidences of the period of

Military Communism in Soviet Russia, under the auspices of Leon Trotsky. The function of this Commissariat was purely to deal with the administrative side of students' life: rationing, leave, periodical registrations, meetings, etc. It never interfered with academic life itself, unless there was a complaint that some professors talked irresponsible political nonsense during lectures of say, Anatomy or Physiology.

I remember our Professor Pavlov of Histology (related to the famous one) who used never to miss an opportunity to say something derogatory about the Bolshevik regime. At the beginning of the term, students of many other faculties used to come to listen to his first lecture of the season, as it was always full of sarcastic remarks directed to the Communist Government. It was rather piquant to hear him say things we knew nobody else would utter. Once he went too far and after bringing some analogy between the primitive amoeba and the state of mind of our leaders, he was asked by our Military Commissar (who was his student) to come and see him afterwards! That made the opening season very spicy and we never ceased to wonder why this professor was never arrested. We ourselves liked him not very much either, as in spite of his great knowledge and excellent qualities as a lecturer, he was of an erratic type and never inspired the students.

Our Dean, Professor Dant, a German, was in his appearance very much like Bernard Shaw, only his hair and beard were of an auburn variety turning grey. His subject was Organic Chemistry. He rarely laughed but when he smiled—the whole of the audience felt honoured. What a brain he had and how beautifully he delivered his lectures! Those clumsy, many-storeyed formulae of organic chemistry were so easy to understand and remember, when he explained them. I, for one, became an admirer of logic and power of his exposition.

As I said earlier, all universities became much overcrowded soon after the Revolution: everybody wanted to be educated. And why not? Anyway, our six hundred first year students made quite a noticeable crowd when we happened to be all together, and what a variety of types, skins and accents!

Students were to be self-organised then and had to choose their own representatives to conduct their academic, political, social and economic lives.

Apparently, because I was unusually strong and healthy, and was popular among the students, I was chosen together with two other male students to be their representative. The three of us out of the lot of six hundred—this was very flattering,

though soon we discovered that it was also a tremendous responsibility and worried the life out of us. We were called "Courscom" (course committee). One of our functions was to mediate between the Military Commissar and the Dean. We had to look after everything of the six hundred students: see that lectures, laboratory and clinical work were going on smoothly, that the examination lists were prepared and submitted to the professors. That anatomical theatres were filled with corpses for working on, that the mortuaries were emptied of last year's accumulation of mutilated bodies, and that all intended boiling down of skeletons for the study of osteology was done. If something went wrong with the rations, or the refectory—the poor "Courscom" was dragged in to settle the trouble. If there was a possibility to get some clothes for students—"Courscom" had to find out who was the most needy to claim priority. Even when we were sent free tickets to go to the theatre or opera, the same authority had to distribute them.

But the most original duty of mine was to supply our anatomical theatre with corpses. These I had to bring from the hospitals and clinics. All those persons, who died without leaving relations, could be taken by us to the university for experimental purposes. As this side of our administration was also disorganised, we had to deliver corpses ourselves. I would usually go twice a week on the university sledge or a kind of droshky (no lorries were at our disposal then, as no petrol was obtainable) to the County Hospital and fetch six corpses in black coffins. I would take one male student to help me.

It was a common sight to see me sitting on the black coffins and whipping the horse along the snowy road. On the way back, coffins filled, I would hear shouts of pedestrians, "Look, dead legs are sticking out, oi! Where is she carrying these coffins to?" This was when the corpses were too big for the black containers!

I would come to the hospital's mortuary and scrupulously try to choose not too fat ones, as they are not much good for dissection; but mainly I saw to it that they should not be typhoid cases—these were strictly forbidden to be brought for they were dangerous. Sometimes through a mistake in the office, I would bring a typhoid case and poor me, the professor of Anatomy would get furious and we would have to carry it back.

I remember once I brought a young man's body. In the evening we injected formaline into it and prepared to carry it up to the theatre. Suddenly in the morning there arrived



three motor cars, and a body of armed and important-looking people hurriedly ran to the professor's study. They demanded "that woman" who took away their son, a young Political Commissar, from the hospital's mortuary—just when there was a State funeral in preparation. I was summoned, and if it was not for our professor's interference I should have been probably arrested! Again it was not my fault, but the hospital's, as they put a wrong ticket on the body. Anyway, these indignant people wrested their possession from us and I was glad to escape another scandal.

In the winter we would mostly get frostbitten and gangrenous cases, sometimes militia would deliver homeless dead to us. We would put them near the special stove in the mortuary to thaw out before injecting formaline.

It was often that after all my daily duties were finished, before going home, I would go to the mortuary to see if the lights were off and the doors closed. It took me some few weeks before I combated that uncomfortable feeling of going down the mortuary alone at night! I tried not to show it and would try to sing a little on the way there to give me courage. At long last I got used to it and the procedure did not make my flesh creep.

One day the militia brought there a man frozen to death in the street, whom we put near the stove in the mortuary to thaw out. As usual, that night I went to inspect the mortuary, but just when I opened the door a naked body of a man, with a sort of groan, fell on me in the semi-darkness. I screamed and in a terrible fright ran upstairs, afraid to look back. Only when I reached the theatre, where a few late students were still bending over the dead bodies, I stopped, telling them of what had happened. All together, we found the caretaker (an old man, whose job of putting lights off at the morgue I did to spare him) and approached again that frightful place. What we saw there astonished us: the corpse was lying on the floor near the door. He was alive. Apparently he was not quite frozen to death when delivered to us and, after a few hours near the stove he was revived. But he was weak and drunk and could not speak. We telephoned to the appropriate authorities and he was taken away. That night was the last one that I visited the mortuary in person. Only once I broke this, after being egged on, which was most stupid of course.

These activities of "Courscom" compelled me to spend many nights studying, often with a primitive oil lamp like a sanctuary lamp. Many a Russian home used this gadget, consisting of a tiny bowl with aromatic oil in which floats a little wick;

the radius of light it throws being not more than eight inches. Many students' eyesight suffered badly while studying with this speck of light. It was rare that we could get kerosene then, even with queuing for it.

These late nights were used to catch up what I had missed during the day. Often I would go to the anatomical theatre or some laboratory early in the morning, before the opening of the doors, and with the kind assistants, who would come earlier too, tried to make up for the lost time.

From that time my life went on at high pressure—so many people in Russia lived at this rate. This high pressure life had never been understood by foreigners who visited our country. They simply took it for a haste, a hustle. Many of our things done at this tempo, appeared to their leisurely standards of thinking and working as a senseless expenditure of energy!

Many of our students, and myself, spent the first summer holidays on a cholera epidemic expedition. This was obligatory for each student, save those who were not fit enough for it. We first year ones had to work under the senior students and doctors. I happened to be stationed at Stalingrad. Five of our student comrades died from cholera. With the coming of the cold weather, we were recalled to the university, which we were eagerly awaiting.

### CHAPTER III

## WORK FOR DR. NANSEN AND FIRST ARREST

**I**N 1922, THERE came to Russia the commission of Dr. Fridtjof Nansen, who was at the head of forty-four nations' help for the Russian famine. In the lower Volga region famine was the fiercest, and therefore, most of this help went to this part of the country.

Dr. Nansen visited our University and expressed his admiration for the students who, though hungry, badly clad and in cold buildings continued their studies. From his interpreter we learned that Dr. Nansen was sure that in such conditions no students of European countries could go on with their work.

It took some time before all the preliminary work was done to clear the way for the feeding of the students. To begin with, there was a special committee made up of foreigners, our professors, Bolshevik authorities, and students' representatives. The

Medical Faculty of Saratov University delegated me to be their representative on this committee. In spite of my already overcrowded activities, I felt honoured at this election. I should think so! To sit at the same table with such a great person as Dr. Nansen! Our Rector, Professor Goloobev, Professor Dant and others, were also on the committee. Besides them there were S——y a Jew, and another a German, Karl Schulze, both occupying administrative positions under the Military Commissar.

Soon Dr. Nansen departed for Moscow and then Geneva, leaving an Englishman, Mr. C. as his substitute there.

I remember the meetings that were held at the house of Professor Sokolov, who was in the chair of Ethnography, and who again substituted Mr. C. in his absence. I was the only one of my sex on this committee, the rest were all men. Coming to our weekly meetings, all foreigners were immaculately dressed, with snow-white collars and beautiful ties—that sign of elegance! Their suits were different at each meeting; their hair, perfumed with brilliantine and parted in the middle, made them look ultra-aristocratic. Everyone of them had a fountain pen in the breast pocket—that much dreamed of possession of all Russians then! They would pass over cigars and cigarettes,—oh, the smoke itself seemed to be sweet-scented, compared with our crude Russian makhorka! As I did not smoke, Mr. C. would offer me chocolate. Well, that chocolate haunts me till now, as I never tasted such a heavenly thing, even when years later I reached England, from where those chocolates were brought!

Once a week, in such company, I used to compare our comrades present. With the exception of the professors, the rest were not always even shaven (our men in Russia shave only every other day, or even every third); their shirts not very fresh, caps with greasy peaks, hardly ever polished boots—all these did not favourably compare with the “gentlemanly” foreigners. In addition, not all of us could speak to them directly, for lack of the knowledge of English, though Schulze was able to employ his German.

Once we were invited to Dr. Nansen’s headquarters for a meeting, where we stayed for lunch, and lo, there was Cheddar cheese on the table, some fragrant puddings and ice-cream with wafers. And imagine, those foreigners were eating these things with dull appetites as if they never liked such foods! I just could not understand them. Myself and two of our comrades, just because we had to be nice mannered at that lunch, would have liked to devour at once everything that was laid on the

table. But instead we also appeared indifferent, not to be out-done!

Now, the committee had to organise the feeding of students. The Russian authorities provided us with a huge restaurant building, cooks and other necessaries. About two thousand students were given one meal a day, consisting of cooked butter beans, a piece of white bread and a mug of cocoa. Day after day, for almost two years, such a meal was given us once in twenty-four hours, the rest of the time was of genuine fasting. Still, we were grateful.

The function of our trio (myself, S—y and Schulze) was for one of us to go at 6 a.m. to this place of feeding, give the necessary foodstuffs out of the storeroom to the cooks and see them putting these into the vessels for cooking. Ensuring this, and leaving two students on watch for the rest of the day, each one of us who was on duty would then depart for the University, to attend lectures and other work. In the afternoon we would come again to check over and take the keys of the building.

This work was an additional burden on me, as I had to solve all the troubles that arose in connection with this feeding. But if strenuous, life was exhilarating, there was no time to get stale, to feel dull or become stereotyped. I felt also that I was useful to the community of students.

In the fourth year of my medical training I was elected president of the Philosophico-religious Society, which consisted of about fifty male students of different faculties, half of whom belonged to the Engineering Institute. It is because many students in Saratov were fed at the same place, and most of them were trained under the same vast roof, that we came to know each other so well. Our Society was the outcome of it.

Many students—members of this Philosophico-religious group, in their spare time went to the Volga shore to work as stevedores. A rough work, requiring much physical strength. After a whole summer of carrying heavy loads, members of our Society looked anything but “thinkers”! Some of them used to come to our weekly meetings bringing lentils, rice and butter beans in their bosoms; these, they assured me, were what escaped from dropped sacks, and instead of sparrows and other birds picking up the grains—the stevedores were permitted to avail themselves of it. I would usually quickly empty their shirts and trouser pockets, and while our discussion about God and ancient philosophers went on, some appetising “dish” would be getting ready.

Needless to say, each one of the fifty of us would get as much as a few mouthfuls only!

We often gathered at my big room, sitting on the floor, bed, chairs and even standing. Sometimes we would get so heated in argumentation that only midnight saw us parting.

The room I mention was let to me by a German family, consisting of a man, his frau and a little daughter Hildebrandt. There were so many Germans living in Saratov, their Republic was only a mile away, on the other side of the Volga river. Their big house, as any other of this size, was nationalised and a number of tenants paid their rent to a special body "Domcom", or house committee, which had nothing to do with the previous owner of the house. But this German family sublet me one of their spare rooms, so my rent went to them. My room was next to theirs and I could observe their life very closely, and even intimately. I never stopped wondering why these Germans, their relations, and friends frequently visiting them, were so crude. I was already living in a time of open materialism, but these Germans were exceeding anything that was known to me. It was gross materialistic mentality and poor Karl Marx with his rational ideas looked a hopeless sentimentalist in comparison.

Another thing that made me feel an aversion to the German menfolk, was their treatment of their women. On the background of our new Russian equality with men, comradeship and friendliness—these Germans looked to me hideous. Quite a few German women complained to me in secret, how they were afraid of their men, and what brutality they exercised towards their wives, where the intimate side of married life is concerned.

Now, years later, when I think of those many German families I knew in Saratov, I begin to wonder if it was just Hitler who made them so crude and bestial, or whether he only "improved" on them. Of course, I take them en masse, as there are certainly exceptions, especially among the intelligentsia classes. We Russians never liked the Germans and they never liked us. They denied us "kultur", we never could trace an ordinary human touch in them. One must really know them, not as they are and live in Germany, but against the background of other people, such as Russians or other Slavs—to see what a colossal difference there is between these two national types. I repeat, I am only concerned with the purely human aspect, otherwise I must state straight away, that amid all Westerners Germans are the most efficient people,—amongst many other excellent qualities they possess.

Another year passed. Continuing to live at the same high pressure I reached the end of the fifth year, and after having done clinical work for another year, by the old medical reform we could graduate as general practitioners but not as specialists. Clinical work attracted me greatly but particularly it was surgery that gripped my imagination. I had, what our professor of Anatomy called a "good hand", and later proved to show some promise in surgery. Accordingly I was allowed to attend many complicated operations, and in my spare time also to assist in the operation theatre in our university clinic. It was decided that I should specialise in this branch of medicine. All the summer of that year I spent mostly in clinics, forfeiting my holidays, as in any case I had to attend to my duties of feeding the students.

But as usually, the unexpected always happens, so it was in my case too.

One late evening I was pacing my big room from corner to corner, as I always did when preparing some subject for examinations—when I heard a knock. It was about midnight, and knowing that a man on the top floor, who worked at the G.P.U., might be returning home, I did not take any notice. My sister Klasha then came to Saratov, to the secondary school and lived with me in the next room. She was asleep at the time.

In a minute the knock became louder and more persistent. My German "room lord", cursing the late-comer, went to open the door. From my room I heard subdued voices and presently there was a knock at my door. I opened it and I saw . . . three armed men in uniform, one man in civil clothes and a woman. They politely asked permission to enter my room and then the man in civilian attire declared that I was arrested.

Arrested? What for? What have I done? He said he did not know anything and presented me with an order for my arrest, where I read that not only was I to be arrested, but a search to be conducted, and the seizure of documents and all necessary material to be made as well.

One armed man was placed outside the house, another outside my room, and the third one in the room itself, as to the two civilian-clothed, they at once commenced the search. During two hours they thoroughly looked through all my medical books and anatomical diagrams and charts, read some of the letters, most of which they took. Amid these there were several from Mr. C. from London, in English; they were short and polite

inquiries how we were getting on with our work of feeding students. That time I wrote a diary where I naively and frankly described events and people I met, including Mr. C.! The diary was seized too.

Then they looked under the bed and between the mattresses asking if anything was hidden there. On my reply that they only contained feathers, a man felt inside the slip and tried to get out some important documents in vain. When everything was finished, I was told to take some most necessary things and go with them. I asked them if I shall come back home soon, as I ought to inform the university officials, and leave some message for my little sister—they smiled and said that probably I should be back the same day!

Well, I made a small bundle of things—soap, toothbrush and others, and put my overcoat on. Escorted, I left my room with a hope to see it later in the day.

When we reached the street outside the house, I suddenly remembered I had not taken a towel and I asked if they would permit me to go back to get it. They did, and the guard even stayed outside the house! Then again our procession resumed its parade along the street in the centre of the road, myself in the middle, both “civilians” at my sides and an armed guard behind us.

Now, we have a superstition in my country that if one has to return back home—forgetting something—the mission altogether would be unlucky, so it is better not to proceed with the errand. I did return for my towel—did it mean something really bad, or that the purpose of my going to an unknown place would defeat itself and I will be made free? There was some misgiving in my heart, but I tried to suppress it.

It was snowing, as we proceeded. A very quiet night and no people in the streets. As we turned and crossed roads I tried to guess where I was being led; to prison, militia station or the G.P.U.? Little I knew what was in store for me . . .

On reaching a certain street and turning into it, it became clear that I was in the hands of the G.P.U., and I did not like the thought of it. And still I tried to take the whole thing as one more adventure in my kaleidoscopic life, as I knew that I had no “sins” for which to be punished. As we entered the interior of the G.P.U. I suddenly remembered Dante’s “Abandon hope all ye who enter here”! It sounded very sinister to me.

The officer in charge asked me to sign a form, and after a few questions, another armed guard led me to my “appartement”.

On the way there, my young guard, seeing me still bewildered, said, "Well, it is easy to get in here, but not so easy to get out". I felt grateful for his sympathy and soon my new abode was flung open to me. The room of about ten by twelve feet was empty, with a wooden bench in the corner; nothing else adorned it. My guard wished me good night and locked my door from the outside. At this precise moment I felt that I was free no more. A kind of bitter feelings spread all over me and I decided to be indignant when called before the investigating officer.

For a couple of hours I was sitting on the bench and thinking till I felt cold and sleepy. I put my little bundle under my head and covered my body with an overcoat. Some time passed in a heavy sleep, when I heard the clanking of keys in my door. When it was opened, there entered the daughter of our Dean, Professor Dant. What a surprise it was for both of us! At once I felt cheerful again, now we were two, and if she was arrested for nothing, then there was also some misunderstanding about myself!

We chatted for an hour or so, rather loudly, and then decided both to share the same bench and go to sleep. But just when we laid ourselves down, the corridor, leading to our compartment and others, became filled with many loud-speaking and laughing males, passing to their "lodgings". Some of the voices sounded very familiar to me, and I wondered if any of my friends were among them as well. Half an hour later, another batch of males arrived, and again I recognised the voices as if of my colleagues.

In the morning we were given water to wash ourselves, and then some huge mugs of very weak tea with saccharin arrived, with a hunk of ryebread for each of us. Swallowing our "breakfast", I continued to discuss with my companion as to what it all meant and how long we were going to stay there. Miss Dant assured me that her father would turn over everything to get her out and she, therefore, was certain to be freed that day. Now who could free me?—I thought. Several times we heard voices outside our cell, and continual clanking of the passage keys.

At noon there was brought a parcel of food for Miss Dant from her family. We immediately disposed of it. Later on we were given the inevitable watery soup with the same rye-bread.

Towards the evening Miss Dant was called up to the investigation department, and half an hour later, happy and laughing,



she was set free, being quite certain that I should follow her soon after. She left me her little pillow, a spoon and a book to read—the remaining contents of her parcel. When again alone, I started to pace my cell agitatedly, already in anticipation of my freedom.

But night came and passed and another day closed and nothing happened. Three days crawled by, when my door opened and I was given a parcel from my fellow students. It contained two loaves, rice mash with raisins, some sugar, baked beans and books. When delivering these to me, the person in charge of it—cut the bread in all directions, and stirred the beans and the mash, to be sure there was not anything of a forbidden nature hidden in them! It amused me at first, but when I realised that there might be some message from my friends in the bread or the mash, I became uneasy. But no, everything passed all right. I did, however, find some message in the book, which ran as follows: "I love you. Come back soon. We all miss you very much—Victor." This I discovered after I had almost finished reading that book, when I noticed that certain words and separate letters were underlined, which if put together made that sentence. Since there was not any note in the book it passed the G.P.U. censor!

This parcel touched me deeply and everything tasted nice and sweet.

That night I decided to read, and to sleep in the daytime, as I objected to huge rats running over my body as soon as I lay down on the bench. These disgusting creatures came out into my cell from a hole in the floor, and after finding nothing to eat they would spring up on my bench and back on the floor, again on my body and on the floor, until they either got tired or bored, and left my cell. They were heavy and would scream. At that time I knew they could bite, but not eat human beings. It was later, when I visited India, that I learned about big rats eating away noses, ears, toes, etc., especially of young children.

As the electric bulb was too dull, and hung right on the ceiling, I used to move my bench near it, and standing on it, read until dawn. So often I saw those loathsome rats chasing each other in my cell!

On the fourth night of my isolation, at 3 a.m., I was called up to the fifth floor, to the investigation department. Two officers were sitting at their desks there. Politely they asked me innumerable questions, all of which I answered. An hour later I signed my own evidence, and I was dismissed.

When I attempted to make them explain the cause of my

arrest—they only shrugged their shoulders and said they knew nothing about it! Of course they knew, but would not tell me.

Back in my cell, I sat on the bench, and for hours carefully sorted out all their questions. Finally I came to the conclusion that there was a suspicion on the part of the G.P.U. about my association with foreigners—in the course of my work with them. And also that there was someone who had denounced me to them—who was it? I knew the G.P.U. was on the alert, trying to check any possible foreign influence on Soviet students' life, and above all, to crush any sign of spying—but what had it to do with me, anyway?

Three more days passed. I continued to sleep during the day and read at night. One night, about 1 a.m., familiar keys opened my door, and the guard whispered to me: would I like to go to the men's cell along the same corridor, just to distract myself from my loneliness? I thought first he wanted to test my discipline, but seeing he was in earnest, I took advantage of his offer, and stepped out into the corridor. He only made one warning, that though the night inspection was finished, some official might enter, or newly arrested ones brought in, and so in order that he should not get into trouble he arranged to leave my door and theirs unlocked and clang the keys so loudly and prolonged, at the outside door, that I could immediately guess and run to my cell at once. He would then pretend to open it with the key if the necessity arose.

And so I went to see my neighbours. I shall never forget the pleasant shock I experienced—most of the members of our Philosophico-religious Society were there! They rushed towards me, some kissing me, some shaking hands with me, and finally they grasped me bodily, and attempted to toss me up in a typical Russian manner! I quickly warned them to be quiet as at any moment there might be the prearranged clanking of the keys on the outside. There was so much excitement, news and questions to ask each other, that half an hour passed like lightning. Parting, we expressed our confidence that next night the same guard would once more be our protector! We learned, however, that he was on duty only every other night, when we again had a rendezvous, this time a delegation of males came to my cell.

We tried to compare our evidence and the questions asked on the fifth floor in order to make out the reason why the lot of us got arrested. But soon I noticed that my further visits on that floor revealed some additional charges against me, which had nothing to do with those against my fellow students. Those students were suspected of plotting against the Government,

when we gathered at my place and at others, for our weekly discussion. Later I learned that my German room-lord, in order to get rid of the meetings in my room sent a letter to the G.P.U. denouncing us, saying that he had overheard us many times "plotting against the Government" and that is why members of our Philosophical Society were arrested! When this was found to be not so, they all got released one by one, with the exception of a fellow who happened to be an officer in Denikin's army during the Civil War in Soviet Russia.

One day I had a visit from a man who lived on the top floor of the house where I had a room. He was working at the G.P.U. and was always friendly with me. He obtained a special pass and brought me letters from my sister and some friends, food, a blanket and books. He looked upset, and asked if he could help me in any way.

He was a man of about twenty-five, tall and dark, with a pale complexion. He came from the north Caucasian Cossack region, where as a boy, he fought against the White Guard armies. He always had a sad expression, which bore a reflection of his childhood days. All his family was tortured to death by those anti-Soviet elements, and since then he had only one wish—to revenge them. But as the Civil War stopped one day, he decided to join the G.P.U. and work there on the same lines of eradicating those "filthy swines" as he put it, who could sell themselves to any foreign power for money or position.

In his spare time he attended the university course in the evenings, to become a lawyer. He lived in a tiny room above my own, and spent many nights in studying. His life was lonely and not very gay. But there was one thing he had which apparently gave him relaxation and pleasure, it was his big accordion he had brought with him from his village. He played it rarely, but when he did, I felt he put all his soul into it. The tunes he would choose were all broad and sad, just as all Russia then was, very big and sad.

I remember my trying to find out when he would play next, so that I could be home that moment. I loved his playing, and I would turn off my light and sit in the darkness until he had finished. The accordion has such a maintained and wide appeal to one's imagination. I wonder if he ever guessed about my eaves-dropping on his lonely enjoyment of his stirring instrument!

In the meantime I was called to the investigation department almost every day now, and at night, when it was possible, I would slip away to the males' cell, though only a few of my friends remained there. Soon a priest, Lubarsky, was brought

in. It was he who taught scripture at our gymnasium. We were both surprised to meet at such a place, but while I was full of hope to be set free one day, he kept saying that this was the end of his life. It transpired that he tried to convince his parishioners that according to the Bible, the end of the world was looming near, and that the Communists were the forerunners of antichrist. He also lost his possessions, acquired during his priesthood, and did not anticipate the life of a so-called proletarian. He told me, that out of love for God, he bravely "carried his cross", and to all questions of the G.P.U. officer, he would only answer his assertion of their being satans. I advised him to be less obstinate, and admit his somewhat unwise behaviour prior to arrest, as he would then have some chance to get freed. No, nothing could break his stupid attitude, even towards God.

At the end of two weeks of my detention I was summoned upstairs, and was finally offered to be freed again, if only I would tell them frankly everything I knew about the foreigners. This time there were four of them, and they simply implored me to help them undo the complicated situation that arose in connection with Dr. Nansen's organisation. They told me that there were mostly genuine and nice foreigners in that organisation, but some of them were working as agents of Western capitalism, and tried to exploit their position in the interest of the British Intelligence Service. It was therefore my duty, as an honest citizen, to help them trace the guilty.

I was quite stupefied, as I really did not know anything about this situation, and I felt rather unhappy at the thought that those polite and glossy Englishmen (most of the foreigners in Dr. Nansen's organisation were English)—were enemies of Russia. And still I could not add anything to what I had already told them before. I could however, recollect that many of these foreigners were always most attentive to me, and never missed an opportunity to take me to the cinema, the opera, or dance, and often asked me "strange" questions. Only now it dawned upon me that I might, inadvertently, have given them some information that caused harm to my country. I was sent back to my cell to "think it over".

Next day I saw them again. This time they asked me point blank, how many letters and of what nature, did I receive from Mr. X., who was one of those directly responsible for the feeding of all students in Russia, with headquarters in Moscow. I was astonished as I had never met him. They then produced a few letters addressed to me and signed by him, all of which were

intercepted by the G.P.U. I tried my hardest to reassure them of my never being guilty in this correspondence, even if those letters were addressed to me. Not even their last plea—that the Government badly needed to get rid of such people, foreigners or their own, who plotted to overthrow the Bolsheviks—succeeded to make my confession, simply because there was not any to make. Well, they said, so much the worse for me.

These few weeks spent in the G.P.U. proved nothing conclusive, and I was put under home arrest, until all investigation was completed.

On the day of my release my photographs and finger-prints were taken and two conditions were imposed. That I should have to go to “sign on” at the G.P.U. every day, and if any “subbotnic” or “vōskresnik” would take place (voluntary mass clearance of the railroads and town streets if blocked with snow)—I should have to give my services to them. I was allowed to attend the university however, but forbidden to move frēely beyond a three-mile limit.

During the days that followed, I was uncomfortably aware that my steps were watched. I experienced no more pleasure at meeting foreigners, and declined their invitations. In my mind they were all scoundrels from now on.

When I was set “free” it was twilight. I ran home quickly, excited to the last degree. Oh, soon it would be proved that I have nothing to do with the British Government’s plotting against Soviet Russia, and my life will resume its normal course! On my way I met several public demonstrations that were still going on: I guessed it was March 18th., the Paris Commune day. The air was full of the Marseillaise and other Revolutionary songs. I wished I could join them, but I had to hurry up, as I had to deliver several messages from the male department. These messages I hid in my long hair, and two tiny ones were safely put inside the cover of my wrist-watch. I thought of my little sister and thousands of friends at the university.

Reaching home, I ran upstairs, and with feeling pushed the door open. The sight that was presented to my eyes chilled me instantly; my mother was sitting on my bed with the expression of, “I knew it all along, that you would finish up like that”. I have never learned how she got informed about my arrest, and by what means she was able to come to Saratov, nor from what part of Russia. I had not seen her for years, and now we were facing each other. I wanted to say something, some greeting, perhaps, but she declared straight away that she was there to give me a piece of her mind at long last.

It sounded so menacing that all my feeling of lightness left me as if by magic. Desolate and wretched, I sat near her for a long time, and listened to the bitter reproaches of a mother who has done everything in her power to make a decent person out of myself, and now, in her declining years, she had yet to learn of my becoming a "criminal". Having hurt me already, she continued to lash me morally until I could stand it no more. I got up, and told her that I had to deliver some messages, which would probably take me all night to do. I left my room with the intention never to go back.

I thought: why are not children separated from their parents the moment they are born? These property rights on children make parents selfish, narrow and dictatorial. All my childhood passed before me in a flash. It was one continual subjugation of my will to mother's. Did she succeed? No. But at what a price I retained my own individuality! It was years later that I was able to appreciate the new system of bringing up children in a Soviet community. It made me long to be born anew and to start my life properly.

By the way, a few days later I learned from a cousin, to whom my mother related it, about an experience she had on her way to Saratov. Apparently somewhere at a junction, whilst awaiting her train, a gipsy woman insisted on telling her her fortune for a few kopeks. Mother was never sentimental nor easily taken in so she refused, but the gipsy woman, looking at her face, said that she had better let her, as there was something very important to learn about her daughter. Mother was suddenly struck by such a coincidence of the guess, and asked her how she knew it concerned a daughter; the gipsy exclaimed, "Ha, it is written on your face!" She then insisted on looking at mother's hand, and informed her at once that her daughter was in danger. She also added, that out of three daughters, the oldest one was giving the most trouble. Mother, to conceal her further astonishment said, "Rubbish, I haven't got three daughters", which she had!

The gipsy looked at her hand again, and said that she could not be cheated as there was definitely a sign that she had no son, but three daughters. After this mother decided not to withdraw her hand, and continued listening to the "misfortune" teller. The gipsy then opened her "Taro" pack of cards. She went on telling my mother that this daughter of hers will have a very complicated life and will have very much to travel. She will leave soon for nobody knows where, and mother will lose her from sight.

Then the gipsy asked for some more kopeks if she wished to learn the end of the story. Mother reluctantly paid her price, and heard only one more sentence. That her daughter has rich future, but full of thorns, and after being saved by a dark gentleman, she will rise to the heights, after which she saw clouds and no more!

The messages, I had to deliver, were from the arrested men other than our students, and had to be brought to different parts of the town, so I hurried from one place to another in a wet snowfall. It was difficult to find streets, houses or flats in the darkness, but I had to, as I dared not postpone this till daytime came

By early morning I completed my mission and calling, like an apparition, on one of my friends, I spent a few hours in her bed. I slept, and no dreams and no rats visited me. I woke up from the noise of many students arguing about the question whether to wake me up or not. What a lot to ask and to tell! Hours seemed to pass before we all departed for the university. Another "ovation" was awaiting me there. Professors carefully and sympathetically enquired how I was treated at the G.P.U.

The day passed, and since I resolved never again to see my mother, I had to find a place to sleep. But before this problem arose someone brought the information about my little sister tearfully looking for me. She told me that our mother had left early in the morning for an unknown destination.

That news gave me licence to use my room again, and almost normal life began once more, but . . . not for long.

#### CHAPTER IV

### ESCAPE INTO THE UNKNOWN

EVERY DAY I had to sign on at the G.P.U. There were no "subbotniks" so far, so I decided to continue my interrupted clinical work.

One thing though was clear to me, that my relations with S—y and Schulze became most strained. In fact I began to guess that it was they who had denounced me to the G.P.U. as a person who worked for Western capitalism. Preposterous as it may seem, this assertion had its proof in my past association with the foreigners, even though in the capacity of a social worker!

S——y had small, snakelike eyes, always with an unhealthy glint in them. If I could help it, I always tried to avoid him. He had a typical Jewish accent, but never spoke much. It was not difficult to put him out of balance, and the moment he was thus disturbed, he became dangerous. I do not remember anyone liking him. He had many personal enemies, and I never knew how he got on with the professors. He reached his final year after being in the fourth year for three years in succession, due to his overwork for the Party and other social activities. Otherwise he was quite a capable student.

Schulze was quiet, balanced and cunning. All his steps and movements were deliberate, and I fancy he never did anything without calculation. He spoke Russian with that soft accent only Germans can. Karl Schulze was plump and tall, with a square face. Now, he did not dislike me, on the contrary, he liked me too much, unpleasantly so, and in the end we became enemies just because of this. Anyway, each of these two contributed to my tragedy, and after I had almost got away from the imminent danger, I had to learn that things were not standing still.

Twelve days after my release I was summoned to the G.P.U. by a special messenger.

With a feeling of impending calamity, I went there. Two officers received me. They unveiled the mystery surrounding my case, and I was told that I had to decide either to confirm their suspicions, or deny them with full proof of my innocence. I was not guilty, but that was even more difficult to prove just then. Seeing my difficulty, one of the officers said that I did not look at all well that day, so perhaps, I should come there again, when they would send for me. Oh, it was so kind of him, so touchingly human, that I felt all aglow with gratitude. I was dismissed.

When already in the street, I soon noticed somebody was following me closely. I knew I was watched in any case, but this was someone at my heels. I decided to face him, and turned back abruptly.

At dusk all cats are grey, they say, but this was a bright thing, when I almost bumped into a man in a black coat and a fur cap. He was an officer from the G.P.U., the one who said that I did not look well that day. I was so dumbfounded, that I could not even move. He quickly asked me not to speak, but to listen. He looked straight at me and said to this effect: there are two powerful men, who wish my downfall and disappearance. In a few days I am to be exiled to the Solovetsky Islands in the north. Could I understand this warning? It was difficult to get justice just then, as there were too many cases to deal with, and a few people, like



myself, might get severely punished for even a small crime. That was all. He wished me success and faintly smiling, turned away.

For a few minutes I was trembling all over, and when I resumed my walk, I was shaking like a drunken man for weakness in my knees. The whole thing was so unexpected and so terrible in its implication. I did not go home that evening, but went to some friend who played the piano very well. I asked him to play for me until he was tired. I always find, that often, music was my only refuge, when I needed something to be settled inside me. I asked him to play "Elegie", by Massenet; ballet music from the opera *Aida*; "The stars are shining", Cavaradossi's air from the opera *Tosca*; and our Russian "Two Guitars". These, my favourites, he played continually to soothe me. In all these musical compositions there is so much passionate beauty, despair and movement. As to Massenet's "Elegie"—I was not surprised to learn later that some school of psychiatrists cured cases of mental disorders by this piece of music alone.

Here I might mention that we Russians are a strange people. Music for us is not just an entertainment or something we can listen to mechanically. No, it is a kind of food for the soul. Now, nobody can say that we are a sentimental race, but a Russian can weep if some music deeply touches the strings of his inward being. It is known that under the influence of music a Russian can do anything.

Indeed, when our human batteries get run down—I do not know anything more effective than music to charge them up again with new energy and will. In Soviet Russia this is well understood, and music there is an important part of that great force, called Life.

It was late when I left my friend. While he played—the light was dimmed, as I never like anything to distract me in such moments. Sitting in a corner, I was thinking concentratedly, and when leaving my friend's, I heard him saying, "What happened, Anya? You look so different!" Indeed, something had happened: the decision had been arrived at.

I strode home fast, as if I were afraid to waste my time any longer. Yes, within forty-eight hours I must run away from Saratov. Where to? That was not known to me yet, this was only a detail, an important one though. I must get someone's passport, mine would not do, of course. But where and how, and whose passport could I get, especially so quickly? It must be one belonging to a female of more or less my age.

That night I did not sleep at all. I destroyed all personal papers that were not taken by the G.P.U., and things of sentimental nature, and I made plans for immediate action.

Early next morning I visited the clothes market, and changed my good winter overcoat for a light one of a different colour. Then I called on a friend, he was that Victor, and a member of the League of Young Communists. He took my news bravely, and at once we started the realisation of my flight. Nobody must know about it, only the two of us. Even my little sister was unaware of it, and it pained me much that I had to leave her without even kissing her for the last time. Next day I would leave Saratov for Moscow—this I decided upon. I would call on Dr. Nansen's headquarters, and tell them frankly what had happened, and if they would not be able to help me—I should then commit suicide. Nothing else remained for me to do but that, for I was burning my ships whatever they were, and little time would pass before I would be discovered by the G.P.U. Either I should have to leave Russia with their help, or end my life altogether. It did not occur to me whether they could engineer my escape or not, that was the second stage in my plan, the first one was—I must leave Saratov at once.

But hours were passing, and I still had no passport. Victor thought he might get it from his sister, but he failed so far.

I went to the university to have a last glimpse of it: something contracted my heart, and I almost started sobbing. For the last five years I was there like an uncrowned queen, was so popular, so useful, and now I had to leave it all, and even more. In a few hours, perhaps, I should jump into the unknown. Indeed, "who knows where the illusion of a dream is born, and where is the fall of the human step into the abyss?"

Turning home I simply ran into Barbara Beliaeva, the daughter of that clergyman in whose home I spent many nights in students' discussions. She expressed her sympathy with my suffering of late, and asked if I should like to come to their place that evening, as they again had the old-time gathering. Incidentally she mentioned that she was just back from the Militia station, where at last she got her passport—to replace the one she had lost 3 months ago. Oh! What a strange coincidence! I wanted this document, and she had just got one. She was a doctor, six years older than myself, and a daughter of a clergyman. Her passport would do very well for me, though not everything in it suited me. But I could not afford to be fastidious just then, when it was a matter of life and death to me. Only I could not tell her my plans, nor could I ask her to lend me her passport for a day! Still, my mind was working very fast. Such an opportunity never happens twice, so I decided not to leave her until I got that paper (in Russia, our passports were

just little sheets of paper, and for many years we did not have any photographs on them).

Accompanying her, we reached her home and she offered me to call in to warm myself up, as it was a bitter March wind outside. From that moment I did not leave her for a second. I continually watched her movements, in order either to see her getting that passport out of her handbag and putting it down somewhere, or, if the handbag itself was left unguarded—I should take it from there myself. This game was intense on my part; I was also aware that I was committing a crime, especially that I knew she would have difficulty in obtaining a second duplicate of the document.

In those years in Russia, passports served the same purpose as identity cards in war time in any other country. Everybody had to have these always with them. This fact alone shows the continual state of emergency we were living in, in the Soviet Union. Such a loss to my friend would mean some more trouble in getting another replacement, and inconvenience in the meantime. Yet, I felt I had to do it.

A few hours later I convulsively clutched that precious piece of paper in my pocket. I felt so excited, so happy and also guilty, that I quickly made up some reason for leaving my friend's place at once. I communicated with Victor, and we arranged for me to leave secretly next day. He had to find out all about the train, to get the ticket, and to bring my suitcase to the station.

But most important of all, in order to stop the G.P.U.'s search for me, we decided on the following plan. Just before going to the station I would put on new clothes and change my appearance; another old overcoat, with all my university documents (doctor's diploma as well), and my old passport in its pocket—Victor would take to the frozen river Volga, and put it near an opening cut in the ice for fishing. I heard several cases of people who decided to leave this world that way. It was actually one of the "old-fashioned" methods of suicide in Tsarist Russia. This pretended suicide would certainly put the G.P.U. off the scent of my further movements, I hoped.

That night was the last I spent in Saratov. Next day I would be quite a different person, with a different Christian name and surname. I tried not to think of the future—what was the use of doing it? I had not the slightest idea how my future would turn out, nor that I should not be caught before my train departed.

I could not eat or sleep those remaining hours. A number of students came that evening to see me, as in the old days.

I tried to be gay and carefree, though I felt like being on hot coals. We even arranged to meet for a party in two days' time!

Just at the break of dawn, Victor came and took my case and clothes for changing. Everything was ready, the train was leaving at 3 p.m. and the ticket secured. Later in the day I came to his place to change my attire, and my face as well. He went at once to the station to meet me there a little after.

It was the first time, and the last, that I ever painted my lips! I also made an elaborate coiffure for my long hair, and put on a wide-brimmed black hat with a veil. I must confess, I was too naive then, imagining that I could cheat the G.P.U. by this transformation. What I meant actually, was to make as inconspicuous my departure as possible. My photographs were undoubtedly in the hands of the G.P.U. guard at the station, through whose barrier I would have to pass to get on to the platform. At that time, instead of ticket collectors, we had the railway G.P.U. doing this job. Again it must not be forgotten that we lived then in a period of intense political upheavals and civil conflicts. This required a special vigilance on the part of the Bolshevik Government. The railways were the means by which enemies and their agents were travelling all along Soviet Russia. A strict watch had to be kept over them, if the State of Workers and Peasants was to survive. However, I was preoccupied with my own fate just then, and had to do everything possible and impossible for my personal survival. With sadness, I realised that when a big forest is cut down, the splinters must inevitably fly about. Yes, I was one of those splinters. For Russia to see the light—a huge forest had to be removed. The process of cutting it was painful and ruthless, but there was no other choice.

When I was ready, looking most unnatural in my new make up, I left for the station. To make it safer still, I managed to get to the train from the back, that is, I had to go half a mile to a level crossing, thus avoiding to pass the "ticket collectors".

I quickly secured a top bench in a third class compartment, and anxiously looked for Victor out of the window. He was pacing the platform nervously, fearing that I might already have been caught. At last he spotted me, but on approaching he said, it was a good thing that I had a different name then, as indeed, I resembled Anya no more!

Though the train was not yet due to depart, we said good-bye to each other at once. Should we ever see each other again? I was glad the veil hid my face that betrayed my emotion. A last clasping of hands, and a reminder about my overcoat,

with the documents for its resting place on the Volga—and he was gone.

Alone . . . in the whole of this vast world I was alone, with quite an uncertain and vague future, and with no retreat.

The train was delaying its departure, which made me somewhat apprehensive: suppose the G.P.U. made a last minute order to search for my escape? My heart was beating so violently that I thought some passengers might hear its pounding. To hide this fear even from myself, I climbed up to the top shelf, which is usually reserved for luggage, and tried to calm down there. It was narrow and uncomfortable there, with the ceiling too near to lift my head. Our carriage was full up with people, mostly peasants, Red Army men and quite a few "speculants". They were all talking, some one already started to pour out tea from a huge kettle and to pass it round. One Red Army man was cracking sunflower seeds, and looking so blissfully happy that I almost shouted, "Oh, share your feeling of well being with me a bit!"

Soon a kind of commotion replaced the carefree atmosphere in our carriage. Speculants immediately started to push their black market produce beneath the seats and on to the top shelves, and even under their spacious overcoats. I guessed at once that the militia railway squad was making its last round before the train started. These squads usually did their search for the speculants with a G.P.U. representative. Then the door opened and three or four of them entered with bayonets, and two had revolvers as well. My heart sank completely . . .

A minute or so passed while the searchers were probing various bundles and sacks with the butts of their rifles. I heard them saying, "These two parcels to be confiscated and you, citizen, follow us too." Then they lifted their eyes, so I presumed, to the top shelf. "Eh, what is there? Why are you lying up there—is there not enough room downstairs? Where is your luggage?" I turned sharply and exclaimed readily, "Do you wish me to open my case?" and quickly pulled it from under my head. "No, no, leave it." Obviously my suitcase did not impress them as one filled with flour or grain, and they passed on to the next compartment. For a few minutes I lay still, afraid to think that danger was over, thank God.

A quarter of an hour later our train started, slowly, to move. From that moment all roads to my past were cut off, and a new life began. I stretched my body as much as I could, and started at once to will myself into remembering that from now on I was no more Anya Cherkasova, but Barbara Beliaeva;

that I was not twenty years of age, but twenty-six; that I was born not in Stalingrad, but in Kaluga; and that my father was a priest. This new "birth certificate" I should know by heart, as at any moment I might be required to prove it. Anya Cherkasova was no more, she was supposed to be at the bottom of the Volga river, or what would be more probable, somewhere under the thick ice there.

Cramp in my limbs made me to move from one position to another, which was the only sign of life on the top shelf.

At last the Red Army man, finishing his sunflower seeds, got up and said, "Hallo citizen, why don't you come down here? Isn't it uncomfortable up there? Where are you going to?" On hearing that I was travelling to Moscow he exclaimed, "You are not going to stay up there all the four or five days and nights! Jump down, we have tea ready here!" In spite of my assurances that I was very comfortable there, he insisted that I should partake of tea with him. He also offered himself to go up on my shelf for sleeping, and that I should take his berth lower down, as it was "more convenient for a lady". Well, I climbed down.

As usual in Russian trains, soon everybody gets to know each other, and all sorts of talks and discussions absorb everyone. Each passenger knows where the others are going to, and for what purpose. It is easy to imagine how embarrassed I became when I was also asked who I was, where going to and what for! Somehow I managed to give them evasive information, stumbling all the time. Tea followed and the darkness fell.

The Red Army man told us some of the prowess of the Soviet Army, when fighting with the Whites at Perekop, near Crimea in 1919. Then he commented about the speculants in our train, whose unlawful bundles were confiscated a few hours earlier. He said that it would not be worth fighting for Soviet Russia to make it safe for those rascals. Everybody heartily agreed with him. Indeed, those people tried to make money, by buying and selling in black markets such foodstuffs which were rationed or absent from the shops altogether. The G.P.U. was checking up on their activities, but they were so clever, that they even "got round" those cute authorities.

When it became so dark that we could see only the tzigarki, faintly glowing time from time (tzigarki are bits of newspaper twisted into the shape of cigarettes, tapering like a long narrow cone, and filled with cheap Russian tobacco, Makhorka)—the guard brought us a candle, and warned that when it burned

away we had better go to sleep, as there would be no more to replace it!

I did not wait long before I climbed to my lower bench. It was much wider than the one I had "booked" previously, and though there were not any mattresses or sheets, but the bare board—I soon fell asleep, feeling much safer in that dim light, in the company of simple and unsuspecting folk.

Our train stopped frequently, taking passengers, mail and freight. There was a snowstorm raging outside, one of those last bitter storms of March, before the winter is out.

In the period between the Revolution, and till almost 1930, we had gangs of people, consisting of either waifs and strays, or some anti-social elements whose occupation it was to live on the cheap. That is, they preferred to steal, to cheat, and even to kill sometimes, to get their living. One of their most favourite "trades" was to go round the trains, during the stops, and "collect" bundles, trunks, overcoats, etc. Every passenger knew about it, as posters gave us warnings about it everywhere, but novices often had to part with their belongings in this way. Those gangs knew all the subtle tricks of their profession, as to the speed with which they removed things—it was so remarkable; that I knew of quite a few G.P.U. officials who lost their trunks likewise while travelling, and the snatchers were never caught!

So, knowing all this, I tied my smallish case to my body with a cord, as to the ticket, passport and a little money, I had it all wrapped in my handkerchief, and put into my bosom. Almost every woman in those years did the same.

While still awake, lying on my bench, I recollected an episode of a few years earlier. Those speculants in our train set my memory on the events connected with difficulties in getting certain foodstuffs, and how the population tried to get over such shortages. I remember for example, my father bringing salt by horse-drawn sledge from Baskunchak, in 1919.

When salt became so scarce that no money could buy it, and due to the disorganisation of transport, none of the co-operatives had any, people were flocking into the black markets to get even a few ounces of this most precious stuff. It was ascertained by our medical profession that the spreading of scurvy among the whole population of Russia in those years, could be directly attributed to the absence of salt from the dietary! Only a few dared to dispute this statement, insisting that the absence of table salt had nothing to do with the appearance of scurvy. Anyway, whatever was the cause of this

scourge, human craving for salt was too strong, without going into its protective qualities; everyone thought of it mainly, as only something that was indispensable for the palate.

My family, who had horses on their estate, decided to tackle this problem themselves. One day father hitched a horse to a sledge and departed for Baskunchak, which was on the other side of the Volga, midway between Stalingrad and Astrakhan, a distance of about two hundred and fifty miles each way.

Baskunchak is situated in a desolate, steppe-like flat country, where there is nothing but salt for miles and miles. Most of Russia's supply of salt came from that region. So, father went there to bring as much salt as he could carry on his sledge. With this he meant to supply his own family, relations and the nearest friends. His favourite horse was "Grey", a beautiful horse, he had bought from the army after demobilisation. "Grey" was a good runner and well disciplined, but it seemed that it suffered from shell-shock, as he could not stand loud reports and hooters, which probably reminded him of the war. With this "Grey", father set out on his journey. It took him almost two months to get there and back, due to the waiting in the queue at the salt mine. On returning home he had about ten sacks of this precious white "manna", and I learned that he even had a small separate bag filled with salt, which he generously used on his black bread while driving. This he thought would prevent any scurvy if it was at all latent in him! Such an abuse of salt inevitably called forth a great thirst, and to combat the latter, he was forced to "drink" the snow frequently, by scooping it up in his hand. As a result of continually cooling his throat with cold snow and icicles, in a few days his throat became inflamed, and he could not even eat his ryebread. There was only a scanty population in that part, and for several nights he was obliged to sleep in his sledge by the wayside. All this did not help to lower his temperature, and he even began to regret that he had ever launched out on this adventure.

But worse was yet to come to him. It was already on the last stretch of one hundred miles, when one night, as he was going along and dozing, he missed the moment when the road approached the railway. Suddenly he felt a jolt, just at the time when the passing train gave a warning shriek at the level crossing, and all that he remembered afterwards was that his "Grey" bolted, and as if mad, turned about abruptly, upsetting the sledge, and all the sacks, one after the other, tumbled out. Father, by some strange chance got entangled in the reins,



and was thus dragged along the snowy fields, with the sledge just immediately in front of him. When finally the horse came to its senses, it stopped, hot and perspiring. Somehow, father managed to free himself, and getting up shakily, put the horse and sledge into order. He decided to wait for morning on the spot, and then go back to find those scattered sacks of salt—it would be awful to go home without any, after experiencing so many difficulties in getting it. But knowing that his horse was too hot, he had to circle around for a while to cool him down gradually.

When it became lighter again he tried to trace his lost treasure. Unfortunately, he could only retrieve half the amount he had had, amid which was a huge sack of pressed hay for the horse. Some of the bags had burst, and it was impossible to collect salt out of the snow! A few of his belongings had also got lost, including a parcel of his food—he had plenty of salt to eat, anyway!

That night finally made him quite ill, and he was lying in the sledge, wrapped in his remaining blanket and fur coat. He filled the horse's nosebag, gave it to "Grey" and used the remainder as a mattress. In this position, with a high temperature, he lay till he reached home, unable to drive or do anything else. It was most fortunate for him, that the horse possessed such a strong homing instinct that it unmistakably found its way back.

It was late in the evening when mother and my two younger sisters were about to go to bed. Just then, they noticed a soft scraping on the windowpane, which in a few moments was repeated. As in Russia, in the winter, all windows have double panes, and the houses themselves are very thickly built against the cold, ordinary noises from outside are hardly heard then. But as the rubbing against the window persisted, mother decided to draw the curtain and look. What she saw almost frightened her: through the frozen glass she discerned the shape of our "Grey's" head. Thinking it was a kind of illusion, she called my sisters, and asked if they could see anything. Of course they did, it was "Grey"!

Putting on her clothes to go outside, mother had some sentiments, for she had not heard news of father for the past month, and this made her think that something tragic had happened. When she approached the sledge—she found father lying there, quite still, with typhoid fever.

He was put into bed at once, and the horse stabled. My sister told me later that the horse was so hungry, as it had not

eaten for the last thirty-six hours, that when it got in the stable it began to lick the walls and the floor!

All my family were able to appreciate our "Grey" so much more after the feat it had performed, and though not all the salt reached home, he nevertheless brought father back safely, as he lay almost lifeless for the last day and a half.

A year later they had to part with this horse. It had to be sold and taken fifty miles away. My mother and sisters, and even father, cried when seeing it for the last time. Indeed, one can get attached to an animal not less deeply than to a human being. But what a surprise they had when one week later, this horse came back at night, and jumping over the fence into the yard, it tried to get into its locked stable. When it began whinnying, my people could not make out what it meant, and after father investigated, he brought the "Grey" straight into the dining-room and said, "What shall we do with it now? It will not leave us". Everyone was so touched, and at the same time so upset by this, that the children implored father to do anything so that they could keep it. But decency required him to inform the new owner about his horse running away to its old place! Besides, everything was soon to be taken away by the Government, and our old home was breaking up. When the owner came to collect our beloved "Grey", mother and the children felt quite ill at final parting with this clever and devoted animal.

Next morning, Barbara Beliaeva woke up more cheerful. I had a good night, and though my body was rather aching from sleeping on bare boards, my spirit was more comfortable at the thought that with each kilometre our train was moving further away from Saratov.

Looking down, I observed our passenger peasants were already consuming their early breakfast. We in Russia eat continually when travelling long distances! I never knew the explanation of it. Probably, it is because in my country, no one would start eating without offering some food to fellow passengers, which is usually accepted. But when the next fellow starts his meal, he offers some to the previous givers, which is again accepted. And when the second one finishes his intake, the first one commences a second meal, again offering to others, and so it goes on until they eat all they have. But then at each stop, everybody goes out to the buffet or a small wayside market near the station, to get some more food, after which the process is resumed. In between solid foods there comes tea-drinking. A huge gallon or two capacity kettle is used by the whole

carriage, and the conversation goes on as if at some party. If the mood of the passengers is appropriately employed, singing is the usual pastime then, and an accordion is rarely absent from the picture. I always liked to watch such a scene! It seems to me that it is the forerunner of an ideal communal society, which is permeated by the spirit of friendliness and simplicity.

When leaving Saratov, little did I think of food, I did not even take a piece of bread with me, so on getting up I soon felt hungry. Hoping to get something at the nearest stop, I climbed down. There at once I was offered a choice of things: salted fish, ryebread and scones and pickled cucumbers—all these, peasants usually carry when travelling!

So the day went on, and as in the evening we had a new influx of passengers and speculants, at the junction station another militia railway squad made its appearance, clearing up some more of the black marketeers. While four days were passing, I spent most of my time in the train in hard thinking. The train was very slow, as they always were in those years.

## CHAPTER V

### A SHORT INTERLUDE BETWEEN ESCAPES

ON THE FIFTH day we at last reached Moscow. I prepared myself for another trial—to pass the “ticket collector”. They usually had albums with photographs of all suspected persons of importance (this circulated throughout the Union). My make-up, was not so conspicuous, as I did not dare to use lipstick, so as not to offend the foreigners at Dr. Nansen’s place, as I thought it might!

There was some hitch at the ticket collector’s—I forgot to remove the ticket from my bosom, and when this procedure was finished, I found myself no more in possession of my little case, which I had put at my feet while dealing with the ticket. It was gone in less than a second! There were two or three more people in the same plight, and after sympathising with each other we parted sadly.

Passing through all cordons, I came out into the broad square. Moscow looked to me cold and uninviting. A grey mass of people were hurrying to and fro, and a few tramcars, looking dilapidated, were so overcrowded that some people even tried to hang on to the edge of the roof. I thought that if I

wished to appear decent at Dr. Nansen's, I had better walk there, as my hat would certainly be lost or knocked off and crumpled, had I attempted to get the service of one of those trams.

Icy wind from the north made me shiver all through. It took me over two hurried hours before I found the huge mansion, in an ex-aristocratic street of Moscow, where Dr. Nansen's staff resided and worked. Two of the militiamen on duty outside would not let me go into the mansion, demanding to see my pass. I had none, and did not know that it was necessary. Now, every minute was dear to me, and here I was to wait for some chance to let me in. I could not ring them up, as I would have to explain who I was, since my new name was not known to them. This would at once endanger me, for I had no doubt that all telephone lines to foreigners in Russia were then under observation, and rightly so perhaps. Some time after, however, quite by luck I was able to get in.

Acting for Dr. Nansen in Moscow at that time, was Mr. C. He was most surprised to see me there. What happened? I asked him at once to see me very privately. In a beautiful and warm study, and with the help of his collaborator and translator, Count Serge Tolstoi (grandson of Leo Tolstoi), he learned the whole story in brief. I concluded my sad narrative by asking him to help me without delay, or I should end badly. For some few minutes both Mr. C. and Count Tolstoi sat in silence, as if in the effort to find some way out. I was watching their faces, trying to read my fate.

At last they started to talk between themselves. Then there were called in several other foreigners, and a proper council began. I just wished I could understand what they were discussing, and never before did I so passionately desire that I knew the English language! After a little while Count Tolstoi translated to me the result of their consultation.

Count Tolstoi would bring me to his uncle, who was a professor of Philosophy in Moscow University, where I should stay till late afternoon. Then I would be brought to the station where another foreigner would see me off to Leningrad. While I was travelling there, a messenger who carried their papers to Leningrad, would deliver a necessary explanation of my case to Mr. R., who was the head of the American Relief Administration (A.R.A.) there, and who would be responsible for me until some solution was found. They admitted that my case was rather unusual, and would require careful handling.

Shaking me by the hand, and wishing me a happy way out

of my difficulties, we parted. Count Tolstoi took me in their car to his uncle. There I was given a real good meal, and spent most of the time till I left, in the company of the Professor, who impressed me as being very noble and human. His study had so many volumes, for which I would have given much to read them all. This was always my weakness; I loved reading.

The professor told me some stories about their family, and I greedily listened to Count Leo Tolstoi's life and happenings. I felt so comfortable and warm during those few hours of respite. I wished I could stay at his home for ever! But at 5 p.m. the young Count arrived to fetch me to the station. The wind was still strong and my clothes seemed to be inadequate to keep me warm. He took off his soft woollen scarf and put it round my throat, saying that I would be much warmer with it, and incidentally, it would remind me of him! I still have that scarf.

At the station we were met by Mr. K., a very handsome, athletic looking Czechoslovak officer, who was the next to take charge of me. I noticed him in the morning at headquarters, when several times I caught his eyes on me. He booked a ticket for me to Leningrad and it was his responsibility to see me off safely.

Saying good-bye to me, Count Tolstoi, in an old Russian way, made a sign of the cross on me, which was to express his prayer for my blessing; and kissing my hand he said, "I shall write to you once a week, through A.R.A., but this envelope you will open when the train will have already left Moscow." I shall always remember those last few minutes. If one is to believe in vibrations that are supposed to radiate from persons—those coming from him were strong and so kind that I felt happy for hours after.

Mr. K. spoke very little Russian, most broken in fact, but I was glad to be able to converse with him, even though scantily. We proceeded at once to the platform and then to my train. He looked so elegant and bright in his officer's military uniform, and himself so handsome, young and confident, that I simply envied him. Everything was in order with this man, I thought, he could not even imagine what it was to be in such an awful position as was mine.

Soon the train started and I reached out my hand to say good-bye. He kissed it, and then in a second, before I could realise it, he suddenly moved forward and powerfully kissed me. The train was already moving, and he was waving to me, and myself, I was so overwhelmed by his last action that I

just felt slightly intoxicated. For a moment I felt as if nothing had ever happened to me except that last burning touch!

Only when I was back in my compartment did I remember that Mr. K. had given me a parcel. When I opened it I found many slabs of chocolate, writing paper and envelopes with his address. Fancy me, hunted and unhappy, I who had no home, no friends, no future, and writing to an attractive young man, who only saw me twice briefly! I thought: those romantic foreigners! Life is so kind and nice to them. But while I was thinking so my lips were still burning.

In a few minutes I was sober again. There were three more people in our compartment. One in a military uniform with some military medals, was apparently a political commissar. He sat in a corner, absorbed in his pile of papers. Next to him, semi-reclining, was the famous Russian "Carmen". Her name was Fatima Mookhtarova. She was a native of Saratov, and a daughter of a Tartar father and a gipsy mother. She possessed unrefined beauty just as Carmen should have. Tall, dark, with flashing eyes and long black hair. When a child, she used to sing and dance in the streets. A tambourine was her only musical instrument.

Once, a professor from the Conservatoire of Music in Saratov heard her in a street performance. He was struck with her powerful voice of a mezzo-soprano, and decided to persuade her to have it trained and be a proper singer, maybe even an opera star. When approached, she behaved so unappreciatively, that she even called the old professor names and asked him to mind his own business. That did not daunt him, and for months he did all sorts of tricks to make her come to sing before a group of professors and some Soviet officials. At last she consented under pressure of her mother, who guessed that there was some promise of a better future for her daughter.

This committee of professors very much approved of her voice, and she was sent to Italy for vocal training, by the Soviet Government. A special woman companion-interpreter accompanied her there.

Only two years passed when she returned to Saratov. She changed slightly and became more refined in manners. Being a born talented singer, she soon made her first debut at the opera. At that time I lived in the same house with the prima donna of the opera, who often took me there as well as behind the scenes. So I well remember Fatima's first appearance, it was in the opera *Snow Maiden* in the role of Spring, which in itself was not of much importance though.

On the eve of her first appearance she married a medical student, everyone was astonished at her so modest a choice! Well, in less than a season she became so celebrated as "Carmen", and later as Delilah, that Moscow at once made a demand for her, and in fact she became an All-Union demand soon.

In "Carmen" she was in her own: wild and passionate, rough and beautiful. Sometimes she was a little dangerous when, during performances, she would go as far as to be at one with her role as Carmen: even male actors sometimes complained of her rough treatment on the stage. That was her gipsy blood!

Anyhow, it was in Tiflis, in Georgia, where she created a sensation of her own. A troupe of Moscow opera singers came there for a month to give several operas. That year the summer season opened with *Samson and Delilah*. I remember that hot July evening. Georgians, Armenians and other Caucasian nationalities had filled all seats, and with excitement awaited the raising of the curtain. When at the end of the first act, poor Samson got almost exhausted in his lyrical yearning, and Delilah appeared—such a groan issued from the male throats of the audience, that one had to be present to witness what a wave of electricity passed through the emotional structure of the mass of manhood in the theatre! Fatima, in defiance of all classic traditions of old opera, appeared almost naked! That is, she had some insignificant cup-like covers on her breasts, and very transparent narrow strips of veil descending from the very low belt, thus only just decently covering her and fully exposing her lower abdomen! She boldly stood for a number of minutes before an enchanted and amazed Samson, who looked at her with eyes that expressed the emotion of 99 per cent of the men in the hall. Unfortunately for Delilah there was one per cent present who did not approve of her manner of attack on male hearts, and while an entr'acte was in progress, telephones were at work from the opera to some authorities and back, as to whether the performance should continue or be stopped. The stage producer and others responsible for the opera, swore they knew nothing of Fatima's escapade, as to herself, she was fast receiving a crowd of admirers, who flocked to her dressing-room with a forest of flowers.

Anyway, the "dark forces" won, and the performance continued. In the following act she was just as "atrocious" when trying to tempt Samson: voluptuous movements of her seductive form, almost naked, made him lose his head,—why, even people in the theatre became apprehensive, I noticed!

Next day all the press in Tiflis was reflecting the event, and a discussion opened as to whether such an attack on Soviet

austerity should be allowed to pass unpunished or not. There was much talk and excitement, and seats for the next performance of *Samson and Delilah* were not only all booked immediately, but a special class of speculators at once came into being. The latter decided to make a record profit, by reselling those tickets at five times their original prices.

Art authorities immediately went into a detailed search of the "costumes" that Delilah was entitled to wear. What they objected to was the deviation from the universally adopted attire for her! Soon it was proved that only a slight diversion took place, and Fatima continued "wearing" her nothing!

In a few weeks, the sensation was no longer sustained by the same interest, and I believe she returned to a less exotic costume. Some wicked tongues were even spreading gossip that the hot climate of Transcaucasia had put fat on her, and Fatima was forced to appear more prosaically!

Coming back to our compartment, the third passenger was an engineer, as one of a geological party, going to the north for the exploration of a new mineral, somewhere in the Kola peninsula, in the Arctic circle. He was most enthusiastic about his work. His only complaint was that the winter is too long there, in the far north, and there was not much warm time left for explorations. I learned about his son and daughter, both training in Moscow to be engineers.

While we were talking, the train, being an express, was going fast, with only stops at Klin, Kalinin, Novgorod and Leningrad. I felt somewhat happier and did not want to think about anything, just to rest in the warm train, and then go to sleep. But soon, a trifle of an incident startled me afresh: I dropped a little mirror from my handbag, and it got broken. In olden days we used to believe in superstitions, and I can myself trace this tendency still clinging to me! And according to the Russian superstition, the breaking of a mirror signified some misfortune to come, and very soon at that. On the eve of my arrest in Saratov, a big mirror fell off the wall, and broke. I remembered it then, and thought—what else was going to happen now? After all, it was such a tiny mirror, it could not mean anything! Still, in spite of this reasoning I did not like it.

Absorbed in my thoughts, I hardly noticed the door of our compartment being open, and the controller with a railway G.P.U. representative asking for the tickets. I showed mine, stretching out my hand to take it back, but the controller, instead of returning it to me, passed it to the G.P.U. man.



They exchanged some remarks between themselves, and then I was asked where and how did I get that ticket, and what was my name? I managed to pronounce fairly firmly that I was Beliaeva, and that I got it from the booking office. No, that was a lie! The G.P.U. man said it was taken in the name of Mr. K., and was booked through a special bureau for reservation of sleeping berths. Oh, I guessed instantly what a mistake had taken place, but how to repair it? Apparently, when Mr. K. telephoned to book the ticket for me, he gave his own name, which was written on it, but knowing it not, I gave my own new name to a guard when entering the train. In those difficult years all these exact details had to be checked, in order to track spies and enemies, which were in abundance then.

I tried to explain to them that there must be some mistake, and would they not be so kind as to overlook it. Precisely, it was a mistake, and that is why I should have to leave the train at the next stop, Klin, and follow them—they said firmly.

It is surprising how much a human being can bear . . . That little broken mirror stood out in my eyes as a warning which I had not understood! Seeing my trepidation, all the trio in our compartment tried to intervene to help me, but in vain. The law was the law, which those officials had to carry out, and I—to obey. In a few minutes we arrived at Klin, and I left the train. I followed them into the station, and finally to the railway G.P.U. department.

Having been caught in a new "trap I felt most unhappy. A host of wild thoughts whirled in my brain, each suggesting that if I shall not get away at once—I shall be "discovered". It was quite clear to me that I must do everything to prevent the G.P.U. at the Klin station do any investigation; or everybody who had very kindly helped me so far, would be involved. The point was that such a trifle as a mistake with the ticket, could incidentally undo all my plans of escape and salvation.

The G.P.U. official was kind, and appeared to me a good-humoured man. He asked me to sit opposite him and to supply him with all the required answers. After questioning, he asked me to sign my evidence, on the strength that if it was incorrect, I was liable to five years in prison. Of course nearly all my testimony was false, and if I escaped ten years of exile to the north, I should have an additional five years in gaol, probably added to those ten years. So I thought. I then looked at the clock—it was after midnight. I asked the official what was going to happen next, when should I be free? Oh, when they will find everything out about myself, and if what I said was correct,

they would not keep me there. But it might take a few days, and there was a spare room adjoining his department, where I could stay. Well, it is difficult to describe how tormenting it was for me to hear him saying this. My brain was calling to me: get away, get away, get away!

With hope never leaving me, I made a last appeal to this official. I asked him to let me go with the first train that passed Klin to Leningrad, as I had urgent business there. That if his investigation would show that I must again appear before the authorities, he could summon me from Leningrad. I gave him an address of a landlady, where we lived during the war, and where I thought I might stop for a few days. Of course, I wished I could leave Leningrad at once, so that he could not trace me there at all! All the same, I gave him the right address.

It was not so easy to persuade him on this score. He argued with me that it was not in their practice to act in such a manner. I pleaded for an exception. In fact, it was 4 a.m. already, and the next train to Leningrad was about to arrive. My desperation reached its culminating point. He saw it, and then he said suddenly, "Will you give your word of honour that your written evidence is correct, and if you have to change your address within the next few weeks, you will let me know?" I did . . . and at that very moment lost respect for myself. In my confusion I remembered about "white lies", trying to justify my downright untruth. He looked at me straight,—I felt as if on fire—and then said that he would send a man to get me a seat in the train, as it was a slow one, and usually too crowded, and he did not wish me to stand all the way to Leningrad. I felt so grateful and so ashamed, and I also felt that he was not the first G.P.U. man that I met, who was so human.

In complete darkness I got into the third-class carriage and sat on the edge of a bench. Most passengers were sleeping. Where I sat there were two airmen who huddled together trying to sleep. They got up at once and offered me a proper seat. It was cold in that train, and naturally I cooled down quickly in that atmosphere, and soon felt sleepy. Dozing till the daylight entered our compartment, I then found it was all populated with airmen, returning from Voronezh, after their training. They were going to their stations around Leningrad. They received me as one of them, and did not even ask questions about my person, which eased the situation. They fed and entertained me.

In the evening we had a discussion about the advantages of thinking on the line of Dialectical Materialism. Most of us reached the same conclusion, that in those times we were then

living in, this was the only possible way of thinking. What was the use of thinking about the hereafter? When Russian people were cold, hungry and life was so unsettled, and enemies were so numerous, it was better not to believe in a future life, but to make the fullest use of the opportunities of the present one, without regard to the possibility of any other. Precisely on this ground, many religious people stopped going to church or asking God to help them. The help would just not come. Some argued that perhaps people did not ask passionately enough, though God Himself ought to see the sufferings of His children. Some even advanced the idea that it is vulgar to ask God about material things, as those had no spiritual value in His eyes. And since no one could be absolutely certain that God existed at all—it was better to trust one's five senses, and common sense, instead of intuition and figments of the imagination. Our life then was so cruel that sentimental ideals were being crushed one after another as they came into contact with reality.

And still I felt those young airmen were not crude people. They had very fine ideals, not of the kind that were unattainable, but those which were. Six out of the ten of them were members of the Communist Party. They all plainly saw a tremendous task before them—the restoration of their country from the ruins it was plunged into by that “elemental force” and subsequent events. There was fire in their challenge to the old world, which actually they had hardly known. Each of them seemed to feel personally responsible for what was going to happen in Russia. Besides their air training, they were engaged in doing much social work for two or three hours daily, and that was on the top of party work.

In such company I again felt as if among my own students in Saratov. Soviet youth is such a thrillingly interesting new force. Soviet youth is not mad in its carefree age, because of having young blood in their veins. No, it is serious and gay. They can work hard, and also continually work hard for higher pursuits. In their mass they do not know such an incentive as money. In fact, it is known that money in Russia is usually spoken of by them as “filthy lucre”, and our youth is the first to give this term its real meaning. Money! The great anarchist Bakunin said that money and power spoil people. That is, personal power and personal enrichment. And since everywhere outside Russia big money leads directly to power—the curse is double!

By way of stepping forward in my narrative I should like to make the following observation.

Money certainly contributes directly to the process of the polluting of society. I became aware of this when I left Russia, and for a number of years observed the filthy power of money in the West. I was astonished to see how people in Europe—"the seat of civilisation"—were weighing almost everything against the value of money. People with money are respected, or feared; they are honoured and trusted. And the Englishman Shelley said, "No man has a right to be respected for any possessions but those of virtue and talent". I wish he were alive to-day, he would be happy to learn that this saying of his had found its adherents in the land of the Soviets!

Money is the quintessence of the West. The highest dream and the lowest crime—both centre in this "filthy lucre"! In the established scheme of things—all service is selfishly based and coloured by the money interest in Europe. And money commands the policy of the whole country.

Money can give enjoyment to life, by affording education, travelling and the best services that any poor person might be in need of. Let alone the best food, the best clothes, the best houses, sport and leisure spending facilities. And because it is only the few who are so lucky—they are the more noticeable. It seems to me so appallingly unfair and immoral.

Ultimately, money creates power, and power creates greed, and the latter always leads to wars. Is not the conclusion easy to deduct? Destroy the power of money, and there will be no more wars. No wars, and their following periods of frustration, therefore less suffering. Money is a source of suffering of mankind. One cannot even hope to "regulate" this destructive power of money, or put some restrictions on it, because money is always connected with the lower and basest instincts and inclinations of the human being. That is why the fight against this beast is so difficult. Unfortunately money holds its spell not only over those who have much of it, and I believe it was La Rochefoucauld who very applicably said: "Wide and open is the road to Heaven, but nobody takes it; the narrow gates of Hell are firmly locked, but people scramble to get in!"

I am happy to say money does not play such a part in my country. And society itself is so much cleaner there. It is going to be cleaner still as new generations advance. The moral possibilities of such an age blind me with its brilliance and purity. I wish to live long enough to see it!

The second and last night in this train was coming to an end, and at 4 a.m. I should reach that northern city again.

Sitting in the semi-darkness I became immersed in somewhat

melancholic thoughts. Again I had a short respite from my continual nervous tension of the last few weeks. But Leningrad was approaching and with it new hazards perhaps. Suddenly I remembered the big envelope in my inner pocket, which Count Tolstoi gave me on parting. Opening it, I found his very nice letter to me, some money and instructions. It was clear from the instructions that I should have to go to A.R.A., only four days after my arrival in Leningrad: there was a reason for that. He enclosed a letter to Mikhail Chekhov, the nephew of a celebrated Russian author and playwright (of *Cherry Orchard* fame), who would help me in the meantime. With mixed feelings of gratitude to Count Tolstoi, and some perplexity as to the delay about A.R.A., turning in my mind, I tried to doze a little.

When the dull lights of a big city were already in view—our compartment became alive again. My neighbour, an airman officer, enquired where I would be going from the station, so that he might accompany me—it was quite dark, cold, and it looked as if I had nobody in Leningrad to meet me. I told him frankly that I should try to find my landlady of many years ago, whose address I happened to remember. He insisted on accompanying me there.

Leningrad then was still less inviting than Moscow. Cold and foggy.

So far away from Saratov, I felt more secure, and my companion and I walked briskly to the Greek Avenue, where my family used to live ten years before. Walking, we talked about this and that, and time from time I wondered if my kind escort guessed who I really was!

At last we reached the place. When we entered it from the yard side, we found the whole house was burned down, and only the skeleton of it remained. The militia on duty nearby informed us that most of the tenants of the burnt out place were living somewhere near Lake Ladoga. Nothing doing then, and thanking my friend, I said I should walk about in the streets till daylight, and in the morning I should try to find some other place to stop at. He just would not hear of this, and declared that he had an uncle in Leningrad, who, though he was a very orthodox man and very religious, but because during the Revolution he had lost most of his life's accumulated wealth, became more human; and he was sure his uncle would not mind my staying a night at his place. I did not protest too much and agreed.

When we approached his uncle's house, my friend went in first to find out how the land lay, and I stayed outside awaiting

the result. There passed about twenty minutes, when the airman came out and said that everything was all right. I proceeded straight to my bedroom, which was actually prepared for my escort. After so many badly slept nights in trains—this warm room with its old-fashioned comfy bed of feather mattresses—I dropped into it like into a warm cloud of dreams. I slept and I slept, and I suppose I wished I would never wake up!

Unfortunately, I was awakened about noon by the old maid. She told me that it was Easter Sunday, and my host wished to know if I was desirous of going to church. To go to church! How far away that world was from me then! No, if they did not mind, I would not go.

Instead, I had a much-needed bath, and afterwards joined the late Easter morning meal, which consisted of Easter eggs, Paskha and Koolich—traditional Russian Easter delicacy. Paskha is made of butter, eggs, thick cream, sugar, raisins and other flavourings, as to koolich, it is like a very fine French brioche, which is made of flour, eggs, milk, butter and sugar. The Paskha is spread thickly on slices of koolich, and the taste of this Russian “delight” is beyond description! When eating these then, I marvelled how my host got such ingredients at a time when everyone had just enough to eat. He was a very pious old man, and so was his wife. Their nephew, my friend the airman, fresh and with much vitality, looked, against their background, like a newcomer from another planet!

I behaved at this meal very correctly, as I could sense that they were from the old world and did not wish to hear even one word of the new world! In conversation, my friend who was a Communist, very skilfully manœuvred between the dangerous reefs! What a gap there is between the old and the new! There seems to be nothing that can bridge it. And what is more, it is the spiritual difference that makes it so irreconcilable. The old world was selfish, narrow and devoid of social values. The new one, coming like a hurricane, swept it all away and declared its adherence to the spirit of healthiness, strength and beauty—for all.

After that meal I left the hospitable strangers, and started anew my search for another night's shelter. I went to Mikhail Chekhov, but he was away for Easter, and I had nobody else to go to. A cold wind blew right through me, my light overcoat gave me little protection. I felt so abandoned and forlorn. I recollected several Easters in my childhood, with much to eat, a room to play in with my toys, a warm bed to sleep in . . . ah, those days were far away, never to return!

Strolling along the Neva river in a bitter wind, I suddenly came face to face with the political commissar who was in the same carriage when I was arrested near Klin. His exclamation was, "Indeed, as they say, mountain never meets mountain, but people always do it!" He asked me how I got on after I had left the train. I told him as much as I could, and then he enquired where I had put up. Nowhere. I explained about the burned house, and it was clear that I was homeless. He at once offered his place, saying that he was leaving late that night for Moscow on an urgent errand, and his flat would be unoccupied for two days. His place was not very far from where we met, just opposite the Winter Palace. He first invited me for supper to the military restaurant and afterwards brought me to his place. It was a two-roomed bachelor's flat in a huge block where most of the other flats were occupied by people working in Leningrad's G.P.U. When he told me this in a by-the-way manner, I fancied I uttered a deep sigh: I was forever fated to meet the G.P.U. people everywhere!

On entering that mammoth building I felt somewhat uncomfortable, and decided to stay only one night there, as I was afraid to encounter trouble somehow in the midst of that hornets' nest! In fact, I was not at all sure now, that my very new host was himself not a collaborator of the same institution!

After giving me blankets and things for making my bed on a divan in his little study—the political commissar departed, saying that on his return he would try to get me some place to stay at, if I had not yet found one. The housing problem was so acute then in Russia, and big cities were so congested, that it was absolutely unthinkable to get even a roomlet. I could not take the risk of going to a hotel, where according to regulations, I would have to hand in my passport during the whole of my stay, and this would be inviting danger.

That night I had disturbing dreams: from all corners of the room ugly physiognomies were looking down at me and mockingly pointing out my stupidity in getting into the very net of the G.P.U., in whose place I was. Obviously my nervous system was getting out of order, I thought, every time that I woke up in the middle of the night; I felt as if the very air there had been impregnated with the G.P.U.'s omnipresence—just the thing I was so much afraid of!

Early next morning, looking through the window, I saw many G.P.U. officials leaving the house by car and on foot, apparently off for their work. Well, I thought, if only they knew who was hiding next door to them!

I left a note for the political commissar thanking him and saying that I had found another place at last. Stealthily, I slipped away from that giant building, and decided again to call on Chekhov. This time he was in. He read the letter I gave him from Count Tolstoi, and then at once suggested that we call on his friend Semeonov, a student of the Imperial Institute of engineers, who would certainly be able to help me on the spot. I still had to wait two more days before going to the American Relief Administration, and in the meantime I had nowhere to go when night came.

This student, Vitalii Semeonov, was a most interesting personality. He was a very able mathematician and in his last year at the Engineering Institute. He was the kindest man I ever met, and possessed the saddest pair of black eyes I ever saw. He lived at the students' hostel in a small room. All the walls of his room were hung with oil paintings and watercolours—his own work done on holidays. On the writing table, bound in leather, there was Oscar Wilde's *Dorian Gray*. That book had greatly influenced his life when younger, and had put a definite imprint on his relations with the female sex.

His future speciality would be aero-dynamics, and as he had already shown great inventive abilities in this field, a laboratory was put at his disposal by the Institute authorities, for working out his ideas. It was always like this in Soviet Russia, that if anyone shows a special gift in any sphere—that person is immediately given every opportunity and scope for creative work. Such treatment of talent and ability called forth a great wave of the spirit of invention. Ordinary workers, who before the Revolution were a grey mass of backward beings, now, in their spare time, were inventing something or other, besides attending some classes in the evening. Many of them were offering either some improvements, or practical suggestions, or quite new ideas, at the places of their work. The best ideas were bought up by the government and the inventors were rewarded. Students in the technical colleges and institutes were not lagging behind, and were exploring new fields of applied science. Many special invention committees were set up to deal with these, to sort out and to utilise the zealous efforts of the creators. Even children were inventing day and night—what a scope for imagination!

Anyway, my newest friend, Vitalii Semeonov, took much interest in my personal fate, and we all three made our way to a place where I could be put up for a time. This was the biggest block of flats in Leningrad, the locally famed 44, Ligovka Street. The whole place belonged to an ex-chocolate king, who



ran away abroad during the Revolution. Now this Russian "sky-scraper" was nationalised of course. The flat in which I settled was number 793, and was situated on the eighth floor. I had a spacious room with hardly any furniture in it, but most important of all, it had central heating, which was an extraordinary luxury in those times.

This flat belonged to a family, friends of student Semeonov, who kindly gave me asylum there. The landlady, who was a wealthy person before the Revolution, now had to work somewhere in an office, and also to let several rooms of her flat. She had a daughter and a son, of school age. What struck me about her, was her soft, sad eyes, a beautiful tender voice, and a somewhat unearthly expression: her face was full of a rare serenity, born of understanding. She seemed to me to know some secret, the ultimate goal of human existence! That is why she took all the blows of life so stoically and without complaint.

The same evening I "moved" into her flat she had a visitor, a gentleman. Altogether we had tea, and I noticed that she called him "darling", with so much love and tenderness that I thought he might have been her brother. On leaving, he collected a parcel she had prepared for him. In it there were some scones, and a kind of kippers, which were so difficult to get then. Later on I learned, this gentleman was her husband, who had left her, and lived with another woman. As his second wife was not very well—my landlady sent her parcels with some eatables! I just could not understand it—she must have been as kind as an angel. She really was.

My continual moving, and meeting of so many different people who were all so kind and sympathetic to me, made me feel that at last, perhaps, I had found some temporary refuge from pursuit and uncertainty.

That night I slept without fear or discomfort. In a warm room, high up on the eighth floor, surrounded with nice people, I wanted to forget everything for the time being. Only those who know what disturbance of life is, can appreciate even a little of quietude. For the people who have never, if rarely, experienced the torments of existence—this life becomes a monotonous, clock-like procedure. Such people get used to everything happening in a normal way, and begin to take the smooth-running of events automatically, and themselves become insipid. Of course, I do not advocate perpetual suffering, or living on the top of a volcano, that would be another extreme. But it seemed to me then, when I was granted that first night of real rest, that only those who were hungry can appreciate

what food really is; only those who have been imprisoned can know what freedom is; and only those who have suffered from pain and adversity can feel what peace of mind means. And in order that life should not become stagnant—personally or nationally—time from time some shake-up might be necessary. I cannot say that I needed such a shake-up, as it never was my lot to have peace for long, but then, in Soviet Russia life is not a “constant quantity”, which remains unchanged for months on end, or even years!

Deep, refreshing sleep added to the enormous strength I possessed. In the morning I felt I could face anything that might come!

I also found that at the far end of this once luxurious flat there lived an Armenian girl, who had a piano, which she played very well, and she promised to play for me whenever I so desired. Another factor that cheered me up was a big home library next to my room. With music and books I could forget about food and sleep!

That day my landlady invited me to go with her to a religious meeting place, where many people went to “receive some inspiration”, as she put it. Out of curiosity I visited the place. A very big hall was packed with people of all descriptions. There were old and young and even children. Some were poorly dressed, others were in expensive furs; there were invalids as well as middle aged men in overalls as if just from work. All of them had a peculiar, pious expression, some even too much of it. It was very quiet and the whole congregation seemed to be expecting something important and unusual to happen at any minute. My landlady kneeled, and her beautiful face was immediately transfigured into a spiritual rapture the moment she looked at the Cross in the middle of the platform at the end of the hall. I felt somewhat lost amid this crowd.

Before reaching that place, I was told that all who go there joined a “free faith”, whose spiritual leader was Father Anisimus. He was described to be as a Saint, whose spiritual power was so great that he healed people from various bodily ailments; that blind people saw again, paralysed limbs worked anew and, any worry or suffering ceased the moment Father Anisimus laid his hands on such persons. And since my landlady guessed that I was troubled with something, she thought I might get help there.

At last the door on the platform opened, and a man of about fifty-five stepped forward with his hands outstretched. Following

him, there stood behind Sister Anna, a stout woman of 28-30 years of age. Singing of hymns started almost at once, lasting for about twenty minutes. Still not saying anything, Father turned to the lectern where a big Bible with a golden cross was placed. He touched it and then, as if at a signal, the crowd started to move towards him to receive his blessing.

Father Anisimus had a youngish full face, with a beard and moustache. His eyes were dark grey, and his hair was black and oily. The attire he wore was simple, in the style of an orthodox priest, but from underneath his coat there could be seen a turquoise blue silk shirt, and a huge golden cross adorning his breast. My landlady whispered to me that I should approach him for a blessing and that I should think about that which I wished most. I felt confused, as I did not intend to join this "free faith", nor did I believe in all those things. Still, in order to please her, I took my place in a queue and soon moved towards Father Anisimus. For unknown reasons I felt somewhat frightened, maybe because I sensed that Father did really possess some power. In front of me there were several people who, after being blessed by him, behaved in quite a different manner than before. All the worshippers kissed his hand, some of them he himself kissed on the forehead.

When finally reaching him, I knew I was losing control over my will, and I felt as if in a hypnotic trance. Still struggling with my inner self, I received his blessing but declined to kiss his hand, instead I kissed the cover of the Bible nearby. In a second Father Anisimus leaned towards me, and said, "I know your trouble. You are strong, and will stand it. You shall be great one day." His eyes looked through me—I cannot describe it otherwise. Then he touched my head with his hand, at which moment I experienced a sensation as if from an electric shock.

Perplexed to the extreme, I left the place without waiting for my landlady. I walked home, still feeling his touch and tried to reason with myself about what had happened. I have seen portraits of Rasputin and other "saintly Fathers" that Russia had so many of in the past, but here I was yet to meet one alive. I could not compare Father Anisimus with Rasputin, but he was not an ordinary priest either. That he possessed some power was clear to me, though I was not sure if it could be called hypnotism, mesmerism or some other mysterious quality.

On the way to the religious meeting my landlady told me that so many people became healed by Father Anisimus, by the mere touch of his hands, and that her own daughter was saved from a dangerous illness. And lastly she too was helped, when

after being left by her husband, she was most unhappy, and nearly took her life. At that time she was advised to see Father, which she did, and her life turned out quite differently since. She even told me that she still loved her husband, whom she sees often, but she is no more unhappy about being separated from him. I have seen already the evidence of it myself.

When back, my landlady eagerly asked me what I had experienced, and what did Father Anisimus say to me, as it appeared that he had spoken to me? I declared that I should go there no more, and that I was afraid I was unable to believe in his powers. She was sad about it, and said that one day I shall feel his call, and would go there on my own accord. And sure enough I did, as in a few days I went there alone, and even kissed his hand! Inwardly, I criticised him, but outwardly I could not resist his magnetic power.

In the meantime, four days had passed since my arrival in Leningrad, and I went to the American Relief Administration. The big building was full of activity. Many Americans amid other foreigners and Russians, were supervising the packing and undoing of parcels with medicines, clothes and food. I was led to the head of the A.R.A. there, Mr. R., who received me with a broad smile, saying that he was sorry to learn from Mr. C. about my lamentable position, and that though it would be difficult to help me out of it, he was sure that something would crop up. A man in Imperial Naval uniform seemed to be his interpreter, and appeared to be in sympathy with my situation. My address was taken, and all correspondence from Dr. Nansen's headquarters and Count Tolstoi would be delivered to me there, without my calling on A.R.A. too often. I left Mr. R. with high hopes that my strange position might get cleared somehow soon.

Indeed, about a week later I was brought in touch with two students of Leningrad University (still wearing old students' uniform), who initiated me into their secret plan for escaping to Finland. They were both discontent with the Soviet regime, and though they were not treated badly, in spite of their fathers being rich people in the past, they were still bent on leaving Russia. When I pressed them for an actual reason for running away, they confessed that both their fathers had fled abroad soon after the Revolution, and had already established some business in Berlin. So they just wanted to join them, instead of living in the country where they would have to become proletarians and support this regime.

These students had a well-worked-out plan of crossing the Russo-Finnish frontier, and were certain of a friendly reception beyond the Soviet border. So if I was to join them—the flight would have to be accomplished within the next four days.

The whole of this idea somehow did not attract me. First, I did not like the reason for their escape, and I thought it was not at all necessary for them to do so. Secondly, I did not know what I should do when I reached Finland, and thirdly, it was only when the idea of leaving Russia, maybe for ever, was driven home to me, that I realised how much I loved my country in spite of what had happened to me. I knew how Russian people talked about those “traitors”, who left their country in the time of its distress, and when abroad poured filth and slander on the Soviet regime. I certainly did not belong to that traitor class, nor did I want to say goodbye to my country for ever. What I wanted was some help to get me out of the situation created. On the other hand I knew I hoped to leave Russia with the help of foreigners when still in Saratov. This seemingly contradictory condition became clear to me then. Of course, when in a state of utter hopelessness, as in Saratov, I could then undertake desperate steps, but on reflection afterwards, one begins to act more thoughtfully and calmly. And still I did not know what it would be better to do.

All the same, I had to decide during the next four days. I locked myself in my room, and with all sobriety, tried to think out my final choice. My accomplice students called on me to ask if I was getting ready (I did not tell them about my wavering then). By the way, this project of escape was brought to me by Mr. R.'s interpreter, and had nothing to do with Dr. Nansen's organisation, nor with A.R.A.

The time was passing very quickly, and on an appointed day, we would all three have to leave Leningrad after midnight, with one of the local workers' trains, alighting somewhere near Viiritza. We would have to walk on foot some distance, where a special “smuggler” would await us in his little boat to cross the small river, which formed a kind of natural border there. The barbed wire on both sides of the river would be easy to deal with, as sentries were not closely placed at that particular spot. We would have to be dressed as workers on top of our travelling clothes, and only a small bundle of things could be taken by each. On reaching the other side we would disperse and go separately to Terijoki, where several Russian self-exiled families lived, who were bound to help us. Some little Russian

money would be changed to Finnish by our "smuggler". This final plan ready, we arranged to meet at Viborgsky station, in Leningrad the next day, at about midnight.

When they left me, I continued my thinking. It was just "to go, or not to go". I went to bed early, and could not sleep. My country, prostrate with suffering, and with a superhuman effort trying to get its place under the sun—was stretching out before my eyes. There was a fight in me, between cold reason and a warm heart. It was a complex of feelings and thoughts. In short, I wanted to end the uncertainty and unsafety of my position, and at the same time to stay in Russia. But this was clearly impossible.

Next day, I was punctually at the station to meet my friends! I decided to leave Russia if only in order just to stop the wild thoughts which tortured me, and after all it was the only opportunity, as I did not place much trust in my foreign acquaintances in Moscow. They were certainly not willing to commit themselves to some step that would involve them in further complications. I felt therefore that I should be left somewhat at the mercy of stray circumstances. And after all, the sense of self-preservation was as strong in me as in anyone else!

Spring was coming, and the nights were lighter in Leningrad then, what we call the "White Nights". I loved those White Nights! The air is full of blossom, and even in those hungry years—young people were still able to feel romantic, and spend those nights on the Neva embankment talking about love!

We all met at the station and at once boarded the train. Reaching Viiritza, we proceeded according to plan. None seemed to want to talk, and grimly I dragged my feet out of the marshy patches of my unhappy path. It was a whitish dawn, and damp, as it always is near the Finnish Bay. Our "boatman" was waiting us in the bushes. He was a Finn, and I learned that his profession was to smuggle people across the border. He said that "traffic" from Russia was fairly thick, but only batches of spies crossed the other way. I did not like his face, there was something criminal about it. Still, I was about to commit a crime myself, so why then indulge in vain thoughts? Money was changed, his services were paid in advance, and we got into the boat. It was ankle deep with water, its owner did not even care to keep it dry for his "passengers". Soon we were on the other side. Before saying goodbye to our "Charon"—men lit their cigarettes, under their coats for precaution's sake. Men always smoke before launching on a risky step, and at once do the same after having passed

through the danger, as if heaving a sigh of relief! I was a woman who never smoked, and instead, I bit the corner of my handkerchief.

In two or three minutes we would all part and act according to previous arrangements. But when the boatman went back to his wherry—I suddenly turned towards him, and said that I would go back to the other side, and that I would swim if he did not take me there. I just felt that I must go back, without any logic or second thought. It was a sudden impulse, as if somebody had pushed me. I could never explain what really made me turn back that moment. It was something stern and fixed and abrupt, as if I had crossed the wrong Rubicon! The smuggler attempted to charge me a good price for the extra trip, and in a hurry I gave him almost all the money I had, Finnish and Russian, which pleased him immensely.

It was getting quite light when I started my long way to the station. Several times I lost my direction, as the surroundings looked different in the morning light, and there were three miles to walk. I had just enough money to get a ticket back to Leningrad. Walking back I felt firm and determined to go somewhere in Siberia one day, in the mountains or forest, to stay there a few years, and then come back to European Russia, when everyone would have forgotten about me. This "escaping incident" made me lose fear for the time, fear even of the G.P.U. I decided to be careful, but not to think of being caught, imprisoned, or exiled.

Back in Leningrad I found a letter from Count Tolstoi: he said that I must be patient, and wait till something turns up. He also sent money, and Mr. K. enclosed a little message for me, asking why I had not used the writing pad with the envelopes he had given me on parting! The handsome face of that dashing Czechoslovakian officer flashed into my memory, and I wished I could be less reticent!

My landlady, who knew nothing about that night on the Finnish frontier, noticed my somewhat changed expression, and ventured to suggest a visit to Father Anisimus. I went. Towards the end of the service, I approached him, and again, looking fixedly at me, he said, "You acted quite rightly". This puzzled me more than anything else about him so far. How could he know what I was doing, or intended to do? Nobody except myself and those two students knew of what took place, and even they were far away then.

Somehow or other, I started to frequent his place, and soon was drawn into the cult of fasting. That is, most of his followers

did much fasting, abstaining even from drinking water. My landlady was already doing a five-day fast, her daughter three days, and other neighbours were in different stages of this going without food. The idea behind the fasts was to purify oneself in order to be nearer God. If one can mortify one's flesh—one can acquire second sight to see God in all His Glory. This appealed to me greatly, as it gave a simple and direct way to approach God. It means that one cannot be bad while purifying oneself, and if the process becomes continuous, the human being must necessarily become continuously good also. And that is what God wishes all of us to be. This simple logic influenced me so much that I started to fast straight away. One might ask here, what had become of my rational thinking of a little while ago? Well, there comes a time when natural religion steps in, and in the case of a person who gets the taste of upheaval and suffering, this process is accelerated.

I first started with one day, gradually increasing it by one day at a time, until I reached seven days' duration. Everyone around me in that house was fasting too, though I was beating "records" of length of fasting, mainly because I did not have to go to work as others did. All the people there were kind and helpful, and shared food when it could be gotten in those days. One might even suggest that it was easy to fast, since there was not much to eat anyway! But this is not quite so, water, of which one was also deprived during fasting, made the trial more difficult. As a matter of fact, years later, when I learned the real "art" of fasting in India, I wondered many a time as to how I and others survived those fasts at all, for they were conducted so wrongly from the physiological point of view. Or at least, all of us ought to have undermined our health from much self-poisoning. But no, nothing bad occurred, and everyone did benefit, morally at least. Now that I know so much about fasting, it seems to me that faith can do miracles, as it was the only thing that fired us then. Faith is an extraordinary thing. To my mind, therefore it must be one way or the other; that is, either a person accepts an idealistic conception or, to be more precise, a religious conception of the world, but 100 per cent of it; or the other extreme, a materialistic one, and also 100 per cent of it. The middle way of dilly-dallying is a morally dangerous one. I respect a person who is a definite materialist, and proves it, but I do scorn those who compromise in life on a little of this with a little of that. I admit that there are phases of searching when a person is inevitably wavering. But I cannot imagine a state of mind that is for ever wavering.



Such people, such a society or even nation are empty, and are incapable of great achievements.

When I was very young, I was deeply impressed with St. John's revelation: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." These two verses, I believe, greatly influenced the formation of my character. I hate middle ways, and when I succumb to them I hate myself no less. In my past I was, speaking colloquially, always hot; now I am rather cold! That is, I did things then in a hot manner, now I do the same things, but in a cold way, yet I do the same things all the same! I have never been "lukewarm".

I read very much during those fasts, and kept absolute seclusion. It is not for me to say how much better or worse I became morally as a result of those fasts, nor can I say that I had acquired as yet the second sight and been nearer God. To attain the latter, one should fast thirty to forty days, I was told. But I had moments of extraordinary illumination, where one is near the point of complete understanding. This is purely an intuitional sphere and cannot be elucidated by ordinary language. Here, it was when I had glimpses into the domain where rational reasoning loses its grip. I might even confess that if I inherited a clear and logical mind from my mother, I had at the same time an unusually strong intuition, and those two qualities were for long in disagreement!

Whatever fasting could promise me, I would go on with it, if only because it soothed me and provided the condition for deeper thinking, a kind of introspective thinking.

At that time I came across a picture of Christ, by Paul Rhul,—in some German magazine. Christ was in a desert, where He fasted. I cut that picture out and pinned it over my bed, which made it look like an icon there. It might be strange, but ever since then Christ is always in my imagination like the One on that picture. He was so supremely beautiful that I could not say whether purely physical beauty merged into the spiritual one, or vice versa. His face was sad and serene, and calm wisdom shone through His eyes, otherwise the whole composition was in the traditional manner. I used to look at His face for hours, and I wonder if it was an illusion or "hallucination" of an exalted mind, but at times the picture would disappear, and only two sad eyes would remain looking at me, as if from a mist. Immediately after this I would fall asleep.

My last fast of seven days was significant in many other ways.

I read, and read, for seven days and nights, locking myself in my room. Nobody disturbed me. At the end of it, I went to Father Anisimus' gathering, where I received such a great shock, that I at once found myself cured from this temporary "religious comeback", as I called it. Never again did I join any organised religious worship since then.

True religion is the right conduct of life. It is not a dogma, a ritual, a creed nor a doctrine. It is a happy solution of all the problems of life on earth. God's existence is not in churches or temples alone, but pervades all things.

This was my last and final definition of my personal religion.

First, I discovered that not many really craved to see God through fasting, but rather hoped by this process to attract God's attention to their material needs and requirements. Secondly, I was badly shaken when I found out that Father Anisimus was quite a wealthy man, and was in the possession of much gold, jewellery, furs, good food and money, and a nice mansion to store these "unworthy things", as he preached almost daily to his congregation. Some of his followers discarded their rings, bracelets, gold watches and other valuables, and gave these to his several "secretaries", who collected them ostensibly for the upkeep of the premises, furniture, etc., and also to provide some help to those who needed it, which he never did. I thought: how much God is exploited in this world. . . . In the name of God and Christ many a person spent a comfortable life.

I always thought that the servants of religious cults should remain poor, or they would grow self-satisfied, and would do their duties mechanically, without any fervour. I am reminded of Paul Cezanne who said to Emile Zola that, "An artist should remain poor, otherwise his talent, like his stomach, gets fat and stuffy".

But what puzzled me much, was how such a thing as the case of Father Anisimus was possible at all in Soviet Russia? Why did the authorities not get interested in these religious bodies at once, and keep an eye on them?

Why are the worst corruptions always to be found in the spiritual field? Is it because the devil is ever so near God, ever watchful in order not to miss a single opportunity of snatching from Him his potential reward in the shape of a good man or a good deed?

I remember in 1922, there was a great scandal in South Russia over one Roman Catholic priest, who raped a girl of thirteen. She was doing house cleaning work at his bachelor establishment

for a few weeks, in the absence of his housekeeper. During the court proceedings, it was discovered that while his housekeeper, a Polish woman, was in hospital, undergoing an operation for abortion—he raped that little girl, as a result of which she became insane. It happened in Ukraina, and the people became so indignant about the whole affair that they demanded the closing of the chapel itself, for they said it must be cleaned and purified, after that priest's desecrating touch. After this many stopped going to church there, saying that God can be found in the depths of one's soul, and churchgoing is not necessary at all.

All this was such a moral blow to me, that I almost started to weep. I had no doubt that Father Anisimus was a strong-willed person, and used his power for his own enrichment, but only under the subtle screen of "helping people". It was a case of a strong will-power with negative application.

Now I had found a justification for my not liking his face and oily hair, and his "assistant", Sister Anna, a stout young woman with a hypocritical expression. Suddenly, the whole crowd in the hall appeared to me as a stupid and superstitious lot. I left the place, never to return again.

This was my last dip into an organised form of religion.

Two years later, I heard of Father Anisimus' sad end. His hall was closed, and his great accumulation of valuable things and precious stones, as well as gold sovereigns, were all taken from him, part of which was returned to the owners whom it was possible to trace. He lived with his "sister" in a small flat in Leningrad afterwards. He was not arrested, as he did not interfere in politics, but was deprived of civil rights, as anybody else who was found guilty of anti-social behaviour.

This event of acute moral disappointment had not had time to die down when I got another shock. In the street, I met a man who was one of the close friends of S—y in Saratov. He stopped and greeted me rather sarcastically, saying that they all thought that I had been drowned in the Volga, but instead, here was I safely living in the northern capital. I pretended I did not understand what he was talking about. He insisted that I did very well, and that I was undoubtedly Anya Cherkasova. I left him demonstratively, exclaiming what a fool he was, but I did not fail to hear him pronounce, "Well, I shall find who you really are from somewhere else!"

That meeting then put an end to my short and tranquil existence. I at once went to A.R.A., and told them about the

dangerous encounter. They also realised that something must be done immediately. The interpreter looked at me meaningly, as if to say, "You were offered a splendid opportunity to quit this land for ever. You should have made hay whilst the sun was shining."

Anyway, next day saw me leaving my room on the eighth floor, and saying good-bye to my hospitable and nice people. I told them I was going far away (this I had to say in order to absolve them from any possible trouble, if investigations about myself had started). My landlady gave me a ring to put on my finger, asking me to remember her every time I looked at it. It was a touching farewell, and I still have that ring. My luggage consisted of books mainly, and a small suitcase. A horse carriage took me to the address given by A.R.A. When I reached it, it proved to be St. George's Hospital, which was a military hospital during the last war, whose patron was, I believe, the great duchess Xenia, the sister of the late Tsar.

I was met by the matron, still a beautiful woman of fifty-five, perhaps. She was a sister of a well known Russian writer for youth, Lydia Charskaya, and I am not sure if she had some ties of relationship with Professor Voronov, a famous Russian "rejuvenator", who lives in France, doing his experiments on monkeys and human beings. She was called Sister Voronova. She explained to me that St. George's Hospital was receiving most of its medical supplies from A.R.A., and naturally the administration felt most grateful to them for this. Mr. R. called on her, and asked her to give me refuge in the hospital, where I could do some medical work, living on the premises, and where I could be called just "Sister Barbara". That would give me a necessary breathing space for making some other plans in the meantime. She also said that I must be very careful, and always stay in the hospital, the only recreation I could indulge in, was to go to hospital gardens in the evenings. She was nice to me, and sympathised with my position, and said that if anything had happened—I must not betray her as having known whom she was sheltering. In the evening I was introduced to the chief surgeon, and his niece, an art student; and they were the only people I saw during the number of weeks of my stay at the hospital.

At once I started work there, which distracted my thoughts. I was to assist in the operation theatre—the work I liked the most.

In five or six weeks' time, I felt myself so safe there, that I even asked the matron's permission to allow me to do some

little work outside, as I needed money. (I definitely planned to go to Siberia, and had to make money for the journey there.) At the hospital, as I was not on the staff, but a kind of voluntary worker, I only enjoyed a small room and little food—food was still scarce then, and received no pay. She graciously permitted me this, but repeated her warning to be careful. My friend Vitalii Semeonov found me work for two hours daily, three times a week, in the library of the ex-Imperial Institute for Engineers. In addition to that I got two pupils, both of German families, to coach them for examinations for entering the navigation school.

At my work in that library, I came into contact with Professor Karaooloff, who occupied the chair of Electricity in the same institute, and who eventually invited me to go to a spiritualistic group gathering at his place once a week. I gladly accepted it, and Sister Voronova gave me absence for one evening a week. She understood my requirements for something else besides work in the surgery!

At the appointed time and place I met the spiritualistic group. It consisted of six professors: besides Professor Karaooloff there were a professor of Mechanics, and four others, who were professors of Philology, Literature, Psychology and Philosophy—all from Leningrad University. There was another lady, a widow of Professor Karaooloff's assistant. The evening was spent in a spiritualistic seance. Professor Karaooloff with the widow, were the holders of the saucer, the others were eagerly reading the indications. In turn, we had to record the messages from the other world.

The professor of mechanics, Mitskevich, had lost his wife a few weeks before, so he was eager to get messages from her, which were rather scanty. But Professor Karaooloff was always favoured by the spirits, as he would usually get most of the messages from "wise friends" who had died years ago.

As it was the first time that I contacted spiritualism in its practical form, I became immediately drawn into it, and attended every seance enthusiastically. My earlier recollection of this sphere was in the shape of discussions about the absurdity of spiritualism, and even charlatantry of it, which we had when in our Philosophico-religious society in Saratov. But here I was actually to see it working, and its sponsors were all respectable professors who were too serious to allow any charlatantry. My interest in it was purely as in a scientific phenomenon, in the same way that one might be interested in radio waves. After the seance, we would usually have some refreshment.

One evening I asked to be allowed, with someone else, to try the saucer. This was immediately objected to by Professor Karaooloff. The objection was on the grounds that he himself was the best medium in our group, and the "spirits" had got so used to him that it was very easy for him to attract them. But when I persisted, he consented to let me do it together with him.

With considerable trembling, I joined my hand with professor's, and laid it on the saucer. In a few moments the saucer, as if propelled, moved towards the circle studded with the letters of the alphabet in clock-like fashion. I eagerly tried not to miss one letter of the message that was coming partly through my own mediumship! The experience was most thrilling. But while I was enjoying this unique experience—the message we were receiving was to the following effect: "We do not encourage the change of mediums, please keep to the previous arrangement." Professor Karaooloff triumphed, and I felt somewhat less respect to myself for being not wanted by the spirits. I had to give up the procedure, and the same lady took my place.

That very evening, we received the message that the husband of our lady medium wished her to get a more secure position here down on earth, and that for that reason she must not lose sight of Professor Karaooloff. We thought that it was most remarkable of her dead husband to continue to worry about his living wife.

Several weeks after, I was present at the seance, but feeling a little tired, I did not look at the alphabetic dial, instead I sat myself on a low chair, and listened to the reading of messages by others. Suddenly I noticed that the semi-closed eyes of Professor Karaooloff were not closed at all, but rather wide-open, only in a camouflaged manner. It struck me, and the next thing that I noticed was how his eyes would proceed to the letters just an instant before the saucer would reach the required sign, as if he knew what letter would follow after the last one. In short, his hand was following his eyes, and not the other way about. My tiredness had gone, and I watched the further development of the seance with startled curiosity. The messages came as usual, but exclusively at the will of Professor Karaooloff, and not at the spirits', whose only humble medium he was supposed to be. Again our lady's husband from the other world advised his living wife to stick to his former senior colleague's friendship, and not leave Leningrad as she intended to. I thought, "Aha, now I begin to guess the whole idea behind those seances."

I decided to come to the seance once more, to make sure of my discovery, and then to attempt to open the eyes of the rest of the spiritualistic group. I felt ashamed to be once more fooled in my search, first in the spiritual world through Father Anisimus, and now in the spiritualistic domain through these unquestionable representatives of science.

I consulted my new friend, the niece of our chief surgeon. She belonged to the secret Rosicrucian Society. Yes, secret masonic organisations existed in Soviet Russia, the last one I knew of, was still in being as late as 1930! Apparently, the G.P.U. was not interested in these societies sufficiently to suppress them, or else the mighty G.P.U. was not powerful enough to discover them!

My friend supplied me with the necessary information, and armed with it, I boldly asked to be allowed to have another try at the saucer, when the next seance was due. Astonished, Professor Karaooloff permitted me, most unwillingly, and together we started. I wanted to ascertain whether there was some mysterious force which moved his hand and mine, or if it was a pure volition on his own part.

After a few seconds, the saucer again thrust itself towards the alphabet. I tried imperceptibly to hold the saucer or direct it to any letter at random. Professor noticed my trick and increased the pressure on the saucer, glancing at me every time I tried to intervene. He was so skilful and accomplished in those manipulations, that my attempts to confuse him were somewhat crude, and not too successful, as I was not able to "spoil" that evening's seance as I had intended!

All the same, the seance was marred, as Karaooloff lost his self-control, and was impatient during the rest of the performance.

That night, on the way to our homes—three or four professors had to walk part of the way with me,—we had a talk. It happened to be rather late, and when we approached a bridge to cross to the other side of the Neva, we found the drawbridge was raised to allow night traffic through on the river. As the other bridges were in the same position, we decided to wait until they be lowered. This suited me admirably, as an opportunity to have a talk with them. But to my surprise, they first opened the conversation by expressing their dissatisfaction of that evening's seance. Laughing in a slightly cynical manner, I told them my theory, and what I had personally observed. To commence with they were very indignant, but towards the end, the professor of Psychology said that he would do some impartial investigation next time he was at the seance.

On the following day I called on the remaining members of our group to inform them about my findings. They too were indignant at first, but my plea to their highest authority—their intellect—made them reconsider their attitude. They also revealed to me, that in materialistic times one could not help going to the other extreme, hence those seances. However, they agreed with me that the autocratic manner of Professor Karaooloff made the experiment rather one-sided.

Two weeks later Professor Karaooloff married that widow, our lady medium, the thing that was so persistently suggested by the spirits all the time! And immediately after that event our group broke up, not without some scandal! As to the “chief medium”—Professor Karaooloff attained his main object of marrying his assistant medium.

I remember our discussion, between those five professors and myself, when we were no more facing, or rather hearing spirits. We all admitted that the rational way of thinking is always safer than blind faith in metaphysics! But my final impression of most of them was as of men, who having outlived their time, found themselves in too vigorous and strange an atmosphere to be congenial with it, hence the desire to find some solace in spiritualistic phenomena. All those Russian intellectuals who were more realistic, and who had some faith in the future, worked hard in spite of disappointments, and this had saved them from hypochondria.

Thus ended my brief but decisive intrusion into the spiritualistic world!

## CHAPTER VI

### FLIGHT TO UKRAINA

APPARENTLY, FATE DID not wish me to become stale, as two or three months was the maximum she gave me to settle somewhere somehow.

One late evening the alarmed matron found me, as I was preparing for an urgent night operation. She called me out, and breathlessly informed me she had just had a communication from the G.P.U., asking if among the newest members of her staff, there was a girl, whose name might be Anya Cherkasova? If so she would have to let them know immediately.

The position was so dangerous that I could not even stay overnight in the hospital, but had to leave it at once. The



matron would have to say to the G.P.U. later, that I had joined the hospital temporarily and had left it the very day she had their communication, and my whereabouts were not known to her.

Hastily saying goodbye to her and to the surgeon, I left the hospital. With only a suitcase, I trod my way to Vitalii Semeonov, already after midnight. The caretaker of the students' hostel, opening the door, was surprised to see a girl urgently call on No. 51—the room my friend lived in. Vitalii came down in his pyjamas and dressing gown. I implored him to come out at once, even in such attire, as the occasion could not wait.

He was a very kind person, and always found his way to help others. Hearing of my new misfortune, he was all out to suggest a means of escaping the oncoming trap. I said that I should like to go away altogether, as I could make no more changes of address in Leningrad itself. We walked and walked until dawn—he, still in his dressing gown! There was nobody in the streets, except a few dozing gatekeepers near their watching posts. Then he returned to his place, and after changing into day clothes, we called on several of our intimate friends, whom we knew could help with advice in my new difficulty. Among them were, in the final year at the Engineering Institute, student Pataleev; Kira Nemera who was a nephew of Professor Karaooloff; Engineer Popov; and Headmaster of a secondary school in Leningrad, Korelsky.

With the exception of the headmaster, this little group of young men was much attached to me during my short stay in Leningrad. They were all serious, and very talented people. I appreciated their friendship deeply.

I remember engineer Popov bringing a sheet of paper to our gathering one afternoon! He said it was an interesting "document" portraying the American philosophy of life. When we read it, it proved to be thirteen American rules of life! They were:

1. Learn your business thoroughly.
2. Firmly keep to one occupation, and do not change your pursuits.
3. Be quick, but not hasty.
4. Everything that you do—do it methodically.
5. Once something begun, bring it to an end; one "to-day" is worth two "to-morrows".
6. Don't listen to too much advice, and be independent.
7. Uphold your resolutions, and be punctual to the minute.

8. Never be inactive, always give some useful work to your mind and hands, these can rest only during sleep.

9. Be gentle to every-one, be generous in words and in deeds. Help others on the thorny path of life.

10. Always begin with little.

11. Those who are up now—were once down.

12. Do not aspire to quick enrichment: small but sure profit guarantees prosperity.

13. Remember that thoughts belong to you, while words become the property of others.

In naïvity, we first thought that these rules were followed by Americans in general, and found it most remarkable. But later on Professor Zhukovsky, of Aerodynamics, who had spent several years in New York, told us that in America only rules No. 10, 11 and 12 were mainly in operation, and the rest were only supplementary ones!

We were all enthusiastic about rules No. 5, 8 and 13! I for one printed No. 5 and 13 on a card and placed it on my table to attract my attention to the truth they were imbued with, and in order to be often reminded of them, so as to carry them out myself!

That day, October 13th, we all gathered at the headmaster's flat early in the morning, and without delay started our council. Various propositions were considered, but none looked too safe, and only the last one seemed to be quite sound. That I should go to Ukraina, to the town of Volchansk, near Belgorod. I would be given a letter by the headmaster to his brother-in-law, Dr. Djigoorda, who was the head and the surgeon of the big new hospital just opened there. There I would stay for some time, until something better could be found. Ukraina was far from Leningrad, and if I could reach it at all, then I should be safe there for several months at least.

All my friends clubbed together for a ticket and in the afternoon I would leave. I could not even go to A.R.A., it would jeopardise them and myself. I left letters for Mr. R. and for Count Tolstoi, which Vitalii promised to send.

Student Patalev took it on himself to get my ticket, and others brought some food in a parcel. The funniest thing was that both Vitalii and Patalev exercised an anti-feminist attitude in life, and the latter was even a ferocious woman hater! I never felt brave enough to ask them why they were my friends at all, and gave so much help to one of Eve's daughters!

That afternoon saw me in a semi-disguised manner moving in a fast train towards Ukraina. For the sake of caution, only

student Pataleev came to see me off. He was looking sad, and I shall never forget that most moving gesture he made. Just before the train started, with downcast eyes, he said, "Please take this cross. If you will be hard up—sell it to buy bread. It was given to me when I was baptised," and passed me a golden cross, dated 1860, a family heirloom. I still have it.

In my compartment I found half a dozen young soldiers going to the Crimea and two sailors returning from leave to Sebastopol. They all welcomed the only lady among them. For a moment I thought: suppose one of them is a disguised G.P.U. man after me! But their hearty laughter and joking, and later kind offer of the best seat near the window, and a cup of tea in addition, soon dispelled my suspicions. As we all had to spend the night in that train before changing in Moscow, they courteously asked me where I would prefer to sleep—on the upper berth or the lower one? I chose the upper one, and at once climbed up to sleep. I was not really sleepy, but just wanted to be alone.

And so I was going to another unknown place, to live among strange people once more. I was younger then, and zest for life was so strong that no difficulty nor unhappiness could stop me from overcoming those troubles. But I was lonely. I had to leave behind my friends almost as soon as I acquired them. And all continual running away—where does it lead to? "Quo vadis?"—I remembered. Those had such a goal for which they gladly died, while I was not only unwilling to die, but with animal instinct clung to life. I felt that my life was moving very fast and as engineer Popov put it "like a candle burning at both ends."

When next morning I woke up, we were approaching Moscow. The Red Army men and sailors all had to change for a train going via Kharkov to the south. I thought it was good to be in their company, as I looked less conspicuous.

I had very little money, just a ticket and some food given me by friends in Leningrad. While we were waiting a couple of hours for the next train, feeling thirsty, I went to get some water, and unable to find a water tank specially provided for passengers, I lost myself in the spacious passages and the halls of the station. A railway G.P.U. man approached me and enquired what I was looking for. I suddenly became so frightened that my tongue stuck to the roof of my mouth, and I could just murmur, "I . . . I only w-wanted water, that is all please, that's all." He asked me to follow him, without saying where or what for. That moment my heart jumped violently, and in a

second I felt a cold sweat cover my brow. Like a trapped bird I followed him submissively, thinking: "now I am finished."

We reached the G.P.U. quarters, and leading me directly to a big glass container he said, "You can drink as much as you like. This water is boiled and you can have no fear of infection. Would you like me to give you a bottle filled with it?" I sighed deeply and thanked him, but declined the bottle. However I drank much water which cooled me down a little. Hesitatingly, I moved towards the exit, still not believing that I was free to do so. He opened the door, and I was out of "danger" once again!

One has to experience such moments to know how exhausting they are, sapping in great measure one's nerve force. Some one said: "If pleasures are greatest in anticipation, just remember that this is also true of trouble." This insignificant incident proved this statement! Returning to the group of my fellow passengers I thought: "These G.P.U. people are not so bad after all."

I was glad when our train started for another day and a half journey. My companions had to change at Losovaya, myself at Belgorod. When we entered the Ukrainian zone I noticed there was much more food sold by the peasants on the stalls at the small stations, and though I could not buy much, it gladdened me nevertheless.

When in Belgorod, I enquired about the train to Volchanask, and learned that I should have to wait three days for it, as they only go there twice a week, and I had just missed one. Willy-nilly I had to stay there. A woman who cleaned waiting rooms at the station offered me the only room she lived in, and we shared it for three days. Whilst there, I went to look round Belgorod.

Now it pains me to think of Belgorod and Volchansk . . . At the moment of writing these lines—big violent battles are raging in those two towns. The white chalky cliffs of Belgorod, and the great spaces of sugarbeet fields around, with huge state farms here and there—I just cannot imagine all these trampled under by tanks, and turned into a morass by bombs. What a colossal destruction it must be, and I wonder if the rich soil of Ukraina will be able to produce the same harvests again, after being soaked in so much human blood. . . .

At last my long awaited train left Belgorod. This time I travelled in a goods wagon full of peasants going to the market at Volchansk. These peasants were different to Russian ones. They had a melodious voice and their attire, though not so typical as in the times of Nikolai Gogol, still reminded me much

of the operas *The Night in May* and *Sorochinsky Fair*. Women were most friendly, while men looked more restrained, incessantly smoking their big hand-made pipes. Almost all of them had those famous Ukrainian moustaches, but no beards, and they wore high lambs' fur hats. Much laughter followed the cracking of jokes, which I could not understand, as I knew no Ukrainian language.

Volchansk. What a neat clean town, adorned with Lombardy poplars! Whitewashed houses with green roofs, the silver river just beyond the hospital, beautiful churches and fine-looking schools—where are all these now? Only dust remains, perhaps. . . .

When I arrived there I was surprised to see the white acacia blooming for the second time. And what a rich heavy, intoxicating scent in the evenings!

By the way, our train broke down half way from Belgorod to Volchansk, and all the passengers decided to walk the remaining distance. But as my shoes were unfit for that purpose, I soon got blistered and stopped in a village. Later a peasant's cart gave me a lift, and in the afternoon I reached the hospital in Volchansk. I handed the letter to a nurse, and in a few minutes was received by Dr. Djigoorda. He was a real Ukrainian, with thick black moustaches and a sparkle in his eyes. He welcomed me into his study, and smilingly said, "You are trying to get better luck here! I hope you will be happier in our Volchansk!" That greatly cheered me up.

He offered me to start working at his surgery, though not as a paid assistant, because of the absence of necessary documents. I did not mind that, and at once started my new life.

For a few days I stayed with his family, and then found a room for myself. I had a scanty food ration from the hospital, but otherwise I had to supply myself with everything else, except the uniform. Soon Dr. Djigoorda found me two pupils to coach for secondary school examinations, which helped me to pay for my room. I refused to receive any more money from Count Tolstoi, as I thought that I would never be able to repay him!

I worked hard in the hospital, just to forget my loneliness. As I had to be careful, I tried not to make friends in Volchansk, since I could not be frank and sincere with them about my position. I was also tired of being obliged to tell people endless lies about myself, so I spent most of my off-duty time in reading and perfecting my German. I must say that I had very little to eat then, in fact I starved considerably, without confessing it to anyone.

It is in this period of my wanderings that I often thought of my family, and mother. How much I would give to see them all again! I even dared to think that, after all I had passed through, I might be able to live with my mother more amicably than before. But I knew and heard nothing of my people, where they were, and if at all alive—I had no idea.

Three months later, I received a telegram from student Patalev, saying that he was going to call on me on his way to the Caucasus. I was surprised but pleased to see a real friend.

Indeed, he called at Volchansk for a few hours, just to say that by working day and night on his diploma project, he had passed the finals with honours, on December 22nd, which was my birthday, and which he had specially set as his lucky day! He was at once offered the post of Assistant to a Professor of Constructive Engineering in Leningrad. But he declared that he would prefer to spend two or three years in practical engineering work, and then to return to the academic life, which afterwards he did, and even became a professor himself.

Now he received an important appointment in Tiflis—to take part in designing the great hydro-electric station (“Zages” near Mtzhet), and later to build it. While in Volchansk, he suggested that if I wished, I could come to Tiflis as well, as he would be able to get me some job after settling there himself.

His visit, bringing with it some hope of a better future, refreshed my life in a quiet town, amid nice but foreign people. Inspired, I got some private medical work, and saving every kopek, I had enough money to leave for the Caucasus two months after his calling on me.

I was touched when most of the hospital’s staff, neighbours and a few friends came to the station to say good-bye to me. They brought a lot of modest homemade pastries and sweetmeats to last me the four or five days of travelling. In one of the parcels I found a letter from a young doctor of the optical ward who confessed that he only felt brave enough to tell me of his liking me when I was actually leaving! He wrote that if I ever wished to marry anyone—he would feel happy to fill that role! It was so sweet and naïve of this shy young doctor, that I even thought that he deserved a better wife than myself. Still he did come to Tiflis to see me, but about this later on.

## CAUCASUS AND "MARRIAGE" THERE

CHANGING TRAINS IN Belgorod, Kharkov, Rostov and Baku, I at last arrived in gay and sunny Tiflis.

At once I plunged into quite a different world. Food was in plenty, fruit in abundance, flowers cheap and mountains of them. People—gay and excited: wine—rivers of it, and it was drunk like water. Oriental music and Asiatic costumes; singing all night through, and dancing at the least provocation; strange, guttural language, loudly spoken—all that made me forget about myself after a few days staying there.

This was the time when the New Economic Policy, or NEP, was in full swing. In the Caucasus, where small traders were so numerous—orientals and Asiatics are born traders,—life was surging, though it had never stopped pulsating, as was the case in Russia proper. To Georgia the Revolution came later, and it took a different form altogether. People there never experienced even in part what had befallen the Russians. By nature, Georgians are like the French, greatly adhering to a kind of Madame de Pompadour's *Après nous le deluge*, though new generations are very serious, and have social ideas at heart.

My friend Alexander Pataleev, a talented young engineer, only twenty-three years old—had his own life story.

His father was a rich man from Kiev, a lawyer by education, and the editor of the biggest newspaper in St. Petersburg. He was a man of bourgeois habits, who liked to be in the limelight, and spent money lavishly. His first wife left him with two children when she died. He soon married again, this time a very wealthy young widow of twenty. This lady, when only sixteen was given into marriage with Nikolsky, the famous "Russian Caruso", who retired from the operatic stage almost at the age of eighty. Rich and tired, Nikolsky wished to marry, and this young girl was found for him at once. On their "honeymoon" they went to Jerusalem. Four years later he died, leaving his fabulous wealth to her.

So when my friend Patalëev's father became a widower, he saw an excellent chance of acquiring a young and rich wife, who would give him the status of a decently married man, and look after his two motherless children.

The young widow was not an educated woman (she had only attended elementary school), but she was rich, and although he was almost twice as old as herself—he was a polished and educated man of the world, and was a great attraction to women. So the deal was made, and one of the ordinary dramas of life started its round.

My friend Alexander was their first child, after whom there followed a child every year, till they reached the number of eighteen. With two other children from the previous marriage, the total was twenty. With the size of the family grew the size of the house, and so did the staff of nannies, governesses and other domestic servants. At one time they had three nannies, two cooks, three maids, a garçon, a housekeeper, gardener and a caretaker: an English "Miss", a French "Mademoiselle" and a German "Fräulein". On top of that—tutors to the grown children.

As Mrs. Pataleewa was busy with incubating processes—her husband, a hundred per cent successful man—was changing one mistress for another, spending late nights in clubs, in short, leading a life of "wine, women and song". To pacify his overburdened wife, he surrounded her with rich clothes, jewellery, etc., but otherwise he was little interested in home affairs. In any case, thanks to a lot of money, everything ran more or less smoothly, on the surface at least.

But not so easy was it for their eldest son, Alexander. He was a sensitive creature, and observant. The picture of home life filled him with disgust,—why, none of the young maids escaped being in time a plaything for his father.

When he finished the private secondary school—he entered the Imperial Institute for Engineers. At this moment he found himself utterly lonely in his big house full of plenty. He was disgusted with his father for leading an immoral life, and disgusted with mother, who became like an animal, mechanically bringing her new ones seasonally, having neither desire for them, nor that she felt any tender love when they appeared. It was then that he swore that he would never marry himself, and would dedicate his life to a higher purpose. So great a mark was this on his young mind, that he started to cultivate a strong will power, which would help him to fight temptations of a sexual nature, if they ever came.

Anyway, such a life for his family went on uninterruptedly until that "great calamity" befell—the October Revolution. Soon everything was turned upside down, and rather suddenly, as Leningrad was the centre of the happenings.



As Mr. Pataleev senior was, besides possessing a brilliant brain, a great orator as well, he tried this art during the first post-revolutionary month. But as the substance of his oratorship was not of proletarian stuff, he soon got into trouble and was arrested.

Little by little, the great big house shrank to the smallest possible size, and none of the servants or tutors were left. The children went to ordinary schools, and the elder daughters had even household work to do themselves. In addition, thieves got into the house one night, and much jewellery disappeared. As famine was setting in, the family began to barter valuable pictures, silver and antique furniture for foodstuffs via the black markets.

In 1920, when Poland attacked the Soviet Union, many young people were taken into the Red Army. The young Alexander Pataleev was mobilised, and served with the engineering corps on the Polish front. There he again witnessed a number of unpleasant things that were connected with the sexual sphere, and his determination to remain a celibate grew still stronger.

While he stayed on the Polish front, there broke out an epidemic of dysentery in Leningrad. His four little brothers and two sisters died within two days, and in a week the other four brothers succumbed to the same scourge. This was a great blow to him, as he loved his younger ones very much. Fortunately, this did not affect his mother, as she had others to look after, and being of a cold temperament she soon forgot about them. But during the winter, six other children died from typhoid, and there remained only a few now, all grown up.

When the Polish war was over, and young Alexander returned home, he found it rather different to when he had left it. His family lived in two rooms only, the rest of the living space was populated by other citizens. Father was perpetually sitting in the remaining armchair, smoking his pipe, and talking about the olden days. He became much older, and rheumatism crippled his feet and hands. As to his mother and three sisters, they spent most of their time in queues for bread, potatoes, paraffin, soap, etc.

Alexander rejoined his engineering institute and—here it is where I feel that I must return to my Tiflis juncture of this story!

And so I arrived in the sunny and beautiful Trans-caucasia. My friend Pataleev was glad to see me; I found my room already decorated with flowers and fruit—it was touching!

Straightaway he advised me to enter the school for shorthand writing, as this was very much in demand then, and he would guarantee to get me a job at once when I had finished my training. This would require four or five months, depending on my ability. And all together, such an ordinary occupation would not draw outside attention to my person.

I followed his advice, and started the course of shorthand writing—a thing that least of all attracted me!

Just a week passed in my new activity, when I had another nasty encounter. This time it was one of my “persecutors” in Saratov. The shock was rather unexpected, as I had just only begun to feel some security, being so far away from my previous connections. But one never knows, of course. Bad begins but worse remains.

I went to see Mr. Pataleev. I told him that I was getting tired of these encounters, and was never sure of any day that came. I told him that I seemed to be safe nowhere, and that there was only one thing for me to do—to go to a place where there would be no people at all. Another alternative I thought was, to go to Persia, for a year or so, and to live there by doing some medical work, and then to come back. I had overheard a conversation in a tram in Tiflis, that it was very easy to “run in” to Persia from some Armenian places near Nakhichevan. It was also supposed to be equally easy to come back from there. If I did it, I might gain the necessary respite, after which I would try to start my normal life again.

Suddenly, without any discussion, he offered only one piece of advice, that as he said, could solve the problem simply and definitely: he would marry me—conditionally. We should remain friends, as before, but outwardly I should become Mrs. Pataleewa, the wife of a responsible engineer. This would cut off my ties with the recent past, and another surname would put an end to that person Beliaeva. In the future, if it would be necessary, I should accept his material help, since he earned much more than he needed, even after sending enough to his parents. Also, for the sake of the workability of the idea, we should have to live in the same flat, though occupying different rooms. Otherwise I was free to choose my own way of living, friends, and if I wished later on, I could even live in another town.

Knowing what a woman-hater he was, I insisted that it would be too dear a price on his part to save me from my disasters. He declared that because I was not an ordinary “she-woman”, with the primordial instincts of a female, but something of a different order, as he sensed it,—he wished to help me in this

particular way. Also, if later on, I met a man whom I should wish to marry in earnest, I should be free to do so via divorce.

He was quite clear about it, while I felt very confused. It seemed to me such a self-sacrifice, and was I worthy of it at all? He appeared to me the noblest man I had ever met. As to my life—it would become a veritable imbroglio, involving more and more complications.

Now, common sense mixed with gratitude, and in less than twenty-four hours I acquired a third surname, becoming Mrs. Pataleewa. Our “marriage” took place in a Registry Office, with two witnesses to relieve the picture! Nobody knew about our contract. Our witnesses were, Professor B., the dean of the Engineering Institute in Tiflis, and a young engineer Evald Gross, a nationalised German whose favourite oft-repeated saying was: “*Da ist der Hund begraben!*”

Next day Professor B. invited us to live at his big house, part of which was a flat of two rooms downstairs, and a huge balcony room upstairs. This arrangement suited us admirably (it was still the time of an acute shortage of living-space), and I soon felt that life at last decided to pat me on the back, so to say, and stop its kicks for a little while.

From sheer joy of a “settled” life at last, I made a seven days’ fast which was very difficult to carry out, due to the intense heat in Tiflis, though it was only the end of March. As I did not drink water either, towards the end of the fast my skin started cracking, lips became parched, and my eyes were hot and unnaturally shining. It was the first time that I realised that fasting is the best method to develop will power, for which I had a weakness! For a number of years afterwards I adopted a week’s fasting from time to time, as a method of strengthening my will. On the eighth day, when I broke my fast, I was rewarded with baskets of strawberries, juicy cherries and cucumbers with tomatoes! These things are cheap and plentiful in Tiflis in their season.

In my balcony room I spent most of the time practising shorthand writing, attending classes regularly. Soon I proved to be quite successful at it, and in four months’ time I even won a little competition; writing 120 words in a minute—and Russian words are long and cumbersome! On obtaining a certificate I asked my “husband” to find me a job. He made me the offer to become his secretary, as he had to head an engineering expedition into the heart of the Caucasian mountains, for the preliminary survey of a proposed tunnel through them; also for finding the possibility of building another hydro-electric station

in that region. I gladly accepted the invitation, and quickly learned the technical terminology of my future work.

Soon a big party of engineers, technicians, surveyors, draughtsmen, meteorologists, clerks and others took off to the mountains. Besides my function of a secretary, I had to give some medical services as well, if need be. So much did I look forward to this, that I simply counted the days. To be far away from the towns and worries! There would be mountains and forests, local peasants and members of our expedition—oh, what a change! I always loved mountains more than plains. Neither the sea nor valleys can ever give me the same enjoyment as the mountains. Was it the famous mountaineer Smythe who said that those who live in the mountains have a longer day than those who live in the valley; sometimes all we need to brighten our day is to rise a little higher! How true it is.

When we arrived at the spot—our party outnumbered the population of the village under the name of Akhal Sopelli, which means New Hamlet. The latter was at the foot of the mountainous range with the beautiful name of Nakeral, where our work started at once. As the party was on the move all the time, when we reached the other side of the range Mr. Pataleev gave orders to build several wooden cottages of a light type, as there were no buildings in the vicinity to live in. There were no railways there, and not even a road for cars, only horse tracks. Almost everyone, therefore, had to use a horse, and soon our stable had twenty-two horses. All instruments for surveying, and samples of stones from the rocks, meteorological charts, etc., and even barrels of water from the springs, had to be carried on horseback.

We also acquired several dogs to keep us company and to guard our "castles", when we all had to go away still higher into the mountains for several days. Those dogs were huge and formidable looking, some of them very ferocious. I remember one of them was very fond of eggs. As we had to stock a lot of provisions for the party (everything had to be brought there from about forty miles away) we usually had several boxes with a hundred eggs in each.

Once we all returned home hungry and anticipating good omelettes with tomatoes. On entering the compound we found the head dog Pakhua was lying lazily by the doorstep and would not even greet us, not so much even as by wagging of the tail. We thought that it must be ill, poor Pakhua. But in a few seconds our cook ran out from his improvised kitchen, and almost screamed: not one egg was left in those boxes, just shells only!

Now, whether it was only Pakhua alone, or other dogs as well that partook of this unusual fare—we never discovered. Only it appeared that Pakhua had eaten more than the others, as he was ill for several days, from an overdose of concentrated protein! In the future we locked all the premises, so there were no more temptations for any of our faithful guards!

For my good work—I was the only woman in the party, as secretary, doctor and supervisor of the whole household there—Mr. Pataleev presented me with a Cossack horse whom I named “Orel”, which means Eagle. It was a devil of a horse, as it never liked to be behind the others, nor did it like a leisurely step when alone. His nostrils and ears always betrayed his temper, and he would allow no one else to touch or ride him, but the person to whom he was used to. It therefore, took me some time to tame him, or rather to cultivate some boldness in myself to get used to him. He threw me off so many times, that for several weeks I was all bruises and abrasions, and my riding skirt dirty and torn. Sometimes he would object to my riding him at all, and would try to bite my right foot, and if I would persist in mounting him, Orel would lose his temper, and get into a mad gallop for miles, until some natural barrier stopped him. Most of these natural barriers were in the shape of small rivers or ditches too big to jump over. He would plunge into the cooling waters, and poor me!—wet, and all my secretarial labour would be floating nearby. Later I got a special rubber bag, so that the papers could be saved from the escapades of my horse.

Seeing me dishevelled and bruised on several occasions, Mr. Pataleev enquired if my work was not too hard. I told him that his gift-horse often made quite a mess of me, and that I was just in the stage of getting to like my Orel, for I felt sure that I would be able to master him one day. On hearing this he said he could get me another horse, and in any case, would I not like to try his own one—just for a change? I did, and change it was! His horse hardly wanted to walk even, let alone to trot. I could imagine that it never tried galloping at all in its life, so I thanked him and said that I would prefer to be mutilated by my Orel, than to “enjoy” his Don Quixote’s Rosinante!

We were told later on that my horse was brought from the Don steppes, and apparently he disliked the mountains and hills, which made his temper so bad. Whatever was the cause of his unruly behaviour—he was otherwise a beautiful horse. I always suspected that he had a good owner before me, as he was trained to jump over big ditches and fences. As to his galloping—it was divine! Sometimes I would forget everything when several

if us would enjoy races in our spare time, and my Orel would cave everyone far behind. Local peasants always looked upon me with awe, when seeing me tearing along so madly. It was then that I heard it once said about me that, "she is a bold and earless woman, who is not likely to die of old age!"

Sometimes the huge dog Pakhua would accompany me when I was on horseback, and when Orel started his great races—Pakhua would keep almost abreast for a long distance, and as soon as we stopped it would lie down under the first bush, breathless and hot. For such feats of sport I was willing to forgive all Pakhua's tricks, not only concerned with eggs!

It was wild country round there, and not always safe for travelling at night. There was one incident that is still fresh in my memory, which occurred in my mountainous life.

Mr. Pataleev became short of money to pay for manual labour, salaries to the staff, feeding, etc. This money, from Tiflis, was usually brought by a special man, since there were no post office or telegraph facilities nearby to transfer it. But this time, for an unknown reason, money was more than a week overdue, and Mr. Pataleev decided to send a person to Tiflis, from his side, to get it. Because it was a very busy time at their work, he could spare no one for the mission, so he asked me to go there. I did. Only, before my departure I was warned by people who were familiar with the district, that I should be very careful, and not cross the mountain pass too early nor too late in the day when I would be on my return journey with a lot of money. Because there were still some tribal people who lived in the ravines and who came down to rob travellers. With all these advices and warnings I departed.

My first forty miles would be on horseback till I reached the railway, and then by it to Tiflis. The horse would wait me at the foot of the range in the stationmaster's shed, again to bring me back to our mountain quarters afterwards.

I received a big sum, something equivalent to £8,000 in English money, and signing for it, I went back immediately, travelling there overnight. In Kutais, where I had to change the train, I put the money into my bosom for safety—the same old Russian way!

My Orel was impatient when I saw him after a day's waiting for me, and I even noticed a pleasant expression in his eyes when I approached him—or was it my imagination? Anyway, I mounted him, and together we left for Nikortzminde. The morning was fresh, even the dew was still on the grass, it was quite early yet.

We started the climb rather leisurely, as I always liked to prolong my journey if the scenery was beautiful, and when I was not in too great a hurry. One side was a precipice and the other a steep rock wall, which later gave place to a thick forest hanging over. And together with the trees of the other side of the road intertwining into a kind of green roof, it made this spot a perfect hiding place. I knew that road very well, but I never liked to pass this particular stretch. Suddenly my horse pricked up its ears and halted. I thought perhaps a wild dog or some other rider was nearby. Instinctively, I touched my bosom to ascertain if that precious little parcel was still there. As a matter of fact it was not such a little packet, but rather a clumsy one, and was sticking out through my jumper.

My horse made a few more steps, and again stopped. "What is the matter?" I thought. I attempted to force him to go but Orel was most unwilling. Then I heard subdued voices of several people—just in front of me in the bushes. Instantly I turned my horse back, and like mad we galloped down into the valley. It is very awkward to race downhill, everything seems to fall to pieces, the harness does not hold, and one cannot get a grip on the horse. Or at least it is so when one rides on a Caucasian saddle, which is very narrow, and always has a tendency to slide underneath the belly of the horse, leaving the rider bareback. Still I did not dare stop, nor slacken the pace, as I heard the pursuers behind me yelling wildly to spur on their horses. After several sharp turnings and a good straight stretch on the level, I at last reached the little village, and finally the station at the end of it.

I was hot, and so was my horse. I got off and let Orel do a little grass grazing, and myself had a little respite. But before I sat on a log nearby, I realised with horror that the parcel with money was no longer in my bosom. It was too awful, and I just did not know what to do. To go back and try to find it on the road? It was obvious that I had lost it while racing down, but then those rogues would have taken it most definitely, for they were at my heels. What should I say to Mr. Pataleev when I see him? I seemed to be always confronted with some unusual happenings, and this time it was no exception.

I climbed on my horse, and went again up the road to look for the money. But I had not passed the last hut in the village before I heard three boys running towards me, and asking if it was my parcel, which they thought I had dropped a few minutes earlier. How extraordinary! Oh, goodness, how glad I was! It was like a mountain off my shoulders!

The parcel was wet and dirty, it fell on the muddy ground near a stream. I at once gave those boys a little money, and happy and cheerful proceeded home once more. But in order that the same thing should not happen again, I waited a mile further on, where another tiny branch road joined mine, till somebody else came going the same way. I wanted to pass that dark bushy spot in someone's company!

After this adventure I became attached to my Orel still more, with whom I had many thrilling moments during my stay in the wilderness.

## CHAPTER VIII

### A PLUNGE INTO ACTIVITY IN DEFIANCE OF DANGER

I SPENT PRACTICALLY SIX months on horseback, with only a few hours a day off it. At the end of that time I realised that it was speed which attracted me so much, and not the fact of mere riding on horseback! Of course, my horse became my companion and friend at the end of that time, but I liked it most when it satisfied my tumultuous spirit for fast movement, and perhaps danger. I am afraid these were in my nature, first dormant, and later active. Adversities of life could smite me down only for a short time, after which I would rise again like a Phoenix from its ashes!

About this time Mr. Pataleev had to go to Moscow to report to the State Planning Commission, on the progress and further possibilities of his work. He offered me a paid holiday, and another try at seeing the world again, in the capacity of Mrs. Pataleewa! I enthusiastically accepted the idea, and having booked first-class sleeping compartments, we left the Caucasus for a month.

After having such a thorough rest from all worries and "pursuits"—I felt I could start my life afresh. I seemed to have been born for seething activities, and since I always possessed much vitality, it never took me too long to recover from any blow. It is said that the secret of success—in sport, in business and in living is—not to get tired! I seemed never to get tired, but did it directly correspond with my success in life? Obviously not, because of unfortunate dispersal of my energy and abilities, that was very often through no fault of mine.

So it was this time: I was ready again to plunge into some



new activity. Anyway, together with Mr. Pataleev, we were going to the other side of the Soviet Union, where life was proceeding at a much faster tempo. When we left the Caucasus, in the middle of December, it was just getting colder, but when we approached Rostov—a proper winter greeted us: very low temperatures, much snow, and everyone dressed in furs and sheepskin coats.

We left Rostov at about midnight, and after a game of chess I went to bed. During the night I woke up several times, and every time I noticed our express standing, stilled, at some station. When finally up in the morning, I was surprised to find our train was still at a station somewhere. Curious, I opened the night blinds but could see nothing but snow covering half of my window. Going out into the corridor I found the passengers and guard agitatedly discussing the situation: a snowstorm had caught up our train, and now we were snowbound, for how long nobody knew. The storm quietened down, but almost seven feet of snow made our engine powerless, and there we remained. Of course, the Rostov railway authorities immediately took all necessary measures to dig our train out, but Rostov was thirty miles behind, and no snowplough could reach us quickly. All the same, these snowploughs were working frantically from both ends, in front and behind us.

In the afternoon snow started falling again, and went on throughout the night. Next morning there was only the top of the roof to be seen, and passengers and guard could communicate with each other via inner passages alone.

Soon we were put on rations by the dining car and buffet, as the store of food was not great. Our compartments became colder, for not much steam was allowed to warm up the train. On the third day we got news that Red Army men were brought up from Novocherkassk to add their strength to the exhausting snowploughs, which were working from that direction. Then peasants, schoolchildren and others from the neighbouring villages joined in the effort, and on the fourth day we could get out of our carriages at last. But the train had still to stay where it was, until all the way in front of it was cleared, if only to reach the next station.

Six days and nights we stood in the open fields, semi-starved and cold, and then two days in a siding at the next small station, till the all-clear signal was given. But we enjoyed those two days at the small station! All passengers at once went out to get provisions at the local peasants' market, which was laid out straight on the snow. What a lot of things there were at that

market! North Caucasus is one of the richest regions in Russia. Every passenger was able to reward himself by buying plenty of poultry, butter, cheese and honey. Poultry had a special attraction to them, as the time was approaching Christmas and the New Year. Huge fat geese of 20-25 pounds in weight cost no more than six or seven shillings, turkeys of the same size eight shillings, fat ducks or chickens two shillings each. Butter, primitively churned by peasants, a piece of about two pounds, and hard as stone in such a frost, cost about ninepence. Passengers greedily bought up all the market, and that day our kitchen in the train was mainly roasting passengers' geese, turkeys and chickens! In Russia it was possible to do this. The administration of trains allowed long-distance travellers to have their own meals cooked in the restaurant-car kitchen for a very small charge, on special occasions. Some passengers, looking happy after consuming duck or turkey, suggested that they would not mind to spend all their Christmas holidays in a snowbound train!

For me, this unexpected delay resulted in the following:

While our train, paralysed, stood motionless, all passengers freely mingled, without restriction of first, second or third class. One evening in the restaurant car, I met a famous Russian air ace of the last war, Doobrovsky. He tantalisingly described to me the scale and magnitude of aero-research in Leningrad at that time, tempting me to join them in that work. Himself, he was a director of the Aero-Club Museum in Leningrad, and experimented with aero-sledges then. He was looking for a person who would start a big work on making flying models of different types of aeroplanes. To begin with, this would have to involve many children, so as to make them aeroplane conscious, and then to link this work with the Research Institute, which was connected with the Aero-Club Museum.

After hearing all that, I became all aglow with a keen desire to work in that field. I might eventually become a pilot—the dream of my dreams! In spite of my medical education, I always had a weakness for mechanics and technical things. And here there was an opportunity, and I had no doubt that it would not be too difficult to switch myself over from the domain of medicine to mechanics. Mr. Pataleev heartily agreed with my new aspiration, and was willing to “sack” me from my secretarial job! However, he insisted on my taking his help until I required it no more, as he felt somewhat responsible for my material well-being.

On reaching Moscow, I parted with Mr. Pataleev for an

indefinite period, and Mr. Doobrovsky started to initiate me into my new work while still in the capital. Thus, I had to meet big people with whom in future I would be in touch: Feldman, the head of the Osoaviakhim, then Yevdokimov, the president of the Leningrad Soviet, who happened to be in Moscow. Later he helped me no end in my work in Leningrad. (I believe he was shot during a so-called "purge".) One evening I was invited to a Moscow restaurant for a supper, where I met Serebryakov and Yevdokimov again. Serebryakov was then a Baku oil "boss"; he became interested in our work of making aeroplane models, and made a suggestion to me to come to Azerbaidjan, to give a "push" to this idea in that part of Russia. This man was also shot in one of the trials, I think.

Meeting these important people, and generally entering the arena of public life again—little did I think of any possible danger from any quarter. I wanted to assure myself, that as Pataleewa, I had started a new life, and it was no use thinking of the past. One day I might be able to right out the wrong things I was obliged to do. But mainly I wished to look forward to doing some useful work. Besides being always told by others that I was an extraordinary energetic and efficient person, I knew myself that I was capable of doing much work. Only this time, I was fired with the idea of doing useful work, in a social sense. Energetic, intelligent and willing people, were badly needed then—and there was I, wasting my life in doing something or other—just to justify my existence. This was what I called to lead an incomplete life.

Anyway, a few days in Moscow showed me what strides had been made in the field of aviation and chemistry, the latter mainly in the form of chemical and anti-chemical warfare. I collected all necessary instructions and material, and proceeded to Leningrad. When I entered it, it was not with timidity, but with a sense of my potential worth, which gave me much confidence.

In Leningrad I found a room not so far from my "parents-in-law", it was in the Alexeievsky Street, not far from the famous Mariinsky theatre.

I remember I used to pass a weird spot every time on my way to the Aero-Club Museum, it was called Litovsky Castle. Before the Revolution it used to be a prison for political offenders. It was a centuries old, gloomy building, with many underground thick-walled cells, where a number of revolutionaries

were imprisoned. When the Revolution broke out, crowds rushed to this castle, and breaking the windows and gates, and even setting fire to one of its wings, they managed to liberate many of the men inside. Only those who were confined in the dark and smelly cells beneath the ground were still not freed. Next day the crowd became more violent, and using their combined strength, they forced one of the outside walls with battering rams and crowbars. It took them some time, as the wall was more than four feet thick, but having reached one cell, by subterranean passages, they managed to set free the rest of the prisoners. Some of them had been there years for their underground political work, and I was told that when they came out into the open air, they fainted immediately. They were emaciated, and their skins had become a greenish-grey colour, due to being shut away from air and light for so long. This Litovsky Castle had not been used since 1917, not even as a prison, and was derelict, mainly because the populace had set fire to it afterwards, in an endeavour to rid the place of this horrible eyesore, but failed to destroy it completely, thanks to its tremendous structure. So it remained, roofless, for years, as a monumental reminder of the ugly and cruel past. Nobody paid the slightest attention to it, except to think of the poor young lives that slowly perished to death behind its thick walls.

In 1922 the inhabitants of the district around the castle became aware that their cats, which had survived the hungry days after the Revolution, were fast disappearing. Though cats are not at all popular in Russia, still some householders had them as mouse-catchers, and now they were vanishing from all homes for miles about. Some wicked tongues even went as far as to suggest that the disappearance of these animals was directly due to their being slaughtered for food, and distributed by the authorities through the meat shops. Soon a good part of Leningrad became catless, but little by little people forgot about this event.

When spring came, and then summer with its heat, people who lived in the neighbourhood of the castle and passers-by, noticed a putrescent stench emanating from those ruins. Some thought it might be the corpse of an undiscovered prisoner, rotting, and went by other ways to avoid it. But as the summer heat increased, the more it became intolerable to live in the vicinity. Those who were obliged to pass nearby, held their noses until it was left well behind. At last the people in the locality decided to send an application to the sanitary inspector, for an investigation into the matter.

When these authorities visited the castle, they were confronted with such a picture, that they even had to get the help of the militia. All the underground part of the building was filled with thousands of dead cats in various stages of decomposition. These animals had been skinned. When the investigating committee proceeded deeper into the interior, they came to a huge room in the centre of the castle, where several ropes were stretched across, with cats' skins hanging to dry! This fantastic discovery puzzled them so much that they were quite at a loss to explain it. Then the militia searched all corners, and found the following:—several waifs and strays (the notorious war orphans called "bezprizorniki") were hidden beneath heaps of rubble, presumably left to guard the headquarters of their fur industry! When they were caught, they confessed that they lived in this castle, and that their chief Petka, who was away on an expedition, was directing their work of catching cats, flaying and drying them, and when the skins were ready, they would sell them via black markets, to fur dealers, who made coats of them. Apparently these young prospectors had heard the Government's appeal to the population not to throw away the skins of their dead domestic animals, but to sell them to a special centre where they would be treated, and later used as cheap furs for wearing apparel, as in those years there was very little material for this.

So this company of waifs started a business of their own, and hoped to prosper very soon. But so far they had not succeeded in disposing of one skin, though they had a surfeit of them! Somehow or other, they had not yet been able to get in touch with appropriate traders, and still continued amassing their stock. They even planned later on to catch birds, dogs and other live creatures for further development of their trade.

But here it came to an end! The sanitary inspectors and militia, with much difficulty, and even danger, caught almost the whole of the gang, with the exception of Petka and his nearest assistants, who were too clever to get in the trap. The sanitary authorities had, afterwards, a most nauseating job in clearing the ruins of the horrid accumulation, by using special chemical sprays and masks to avoid possible infection. Thus ended the mystery of the obnoxious smell from this ancient castle, a somewhat undignified ending to the building which otherwise might have been a romantic stronghold for the chivalrous knights of old, but for those unhappy human beings who had almost been treated in like manner to those unfortunate animals.

It happened again, that I was the only woman amid pilots, engineers and other workers in the Aero-Club Museum and Research Institute. All of them enthusiastically took me right to the heart of my immediate work, and soon I was sent to the aero plant "Krasnii Letchik" (Red Pilot) to learn the principles and construction of flying models. Here I may mention, that nobody ever questioned my identity, even when I was sent to the semi-military plant, and later on to the military aerodrome to "baptise" me into flying. It struck me then, that in spite of great vigilance of the G.P.U. and other authorities—spies could easily get into forbidden places, unless I was mistaken. The point is, that if the Russian authorities trust someone through "intuitional channels", or sheer knowledge of a person,—woe betide him who brings disrepute upon himself! Then these authorities will be merciless, and rightly so. Well, in this position of mine, I felt somewhat honoured—in my own eyes—to be allowed to go to all these inaccessible places, and where everybody was only too pleased to give me all information and assistance I needed.

In slightly over a week's time I mastered the secret of making flying models of aeroplanes. Back at the Aero-Club Museum,—there was opened at once a school for boys of school age to make these models. I was appointed to direct this, and to be their sole instructor. In the meantime, I was still continuing a further study of all the best results already achieved in this field in Russia. Yevdokimov, the president of the Leningrad Soviet, presented us with much "building material", and soon this school was working in full swing.

After their ordinary school, boys would come almost directly to the Aero-Club Museum, and till late at night, make models. All the necessary literature, diagrams, instructional albums, were at our disposal. We were given a large hall, where we could test our flying models. Windows were screened with netting to prevent the glass being broken. Many grown-up persons, interested in this, would come and watch for hours our excited races of small aeroplanes. Even pilots would come and give us some advice as to the improvement of the ailerons, or the tail, or the manner of twisting the elastic band, which was the only "engine" we supplied our models with at that early stage. Some of the pilots would bring their own models, which on trial, not always proved to be better than ours!

When the warm weather came, we would go out into the open, to fly our models. We used to go to the squares and quiet streets very early in the morning, about 5 a.m., when there

would be little traffic yet. There we tried out our models, mainly to make the necessary adjustments. After this morning practice, the boys would go to their respective elementary and secondary schools, and when this was over they would almost at once return to the Aero-Club Museum. The use of the open spaces was more to our liking, as well as more instructive, for we could study air-resistance, or the force of the wind that influenced the speed of our little aeroplanes. In spite of the early hour, such a crowd would gather! Children from all over had taken on to this "crazy" idea, and soon I found that many of them had started to make some such models very crudely though, as they received no proper instruction like those at my school.

So that when at the end of several months of this work, the Aero-Club Museum opened a competition for flying models, we received so many entries from a great number of people whom one least of all could suspect of being interested in this "childish" hobby! There were little children, between the ages of eight and ten, and old and experienced pilots. Most of our boys prepared individually, different kinds of models, some were doing them by teams. Myself, I was secretly preparing a very big model out of light aluminium tubes, with a red fuselage and wings, and a beautifully polished oak propeller. When the day of competition arrived, our boys were at the zenith of excitement. Being personally responsible for this event in general, also for all the models from my school in particular, I spent most of the night on the eve, in final adjustments of our own models.

In the morning, the weather was bad—raining. It almost broke my heart, but since the competition could not be postponed, I acquired permission to use the huge manège, where the Imperial court and old Russian aristocracy used to enjoy their winter horse races, as well as being an equestrian school. The Leningrad wireless station at once announced this change of place, and several boys were posted in the originally proposed field, early in the morning, to turn the rest of the competitors to the manège.

An unusually big gathering of admirers of this sport came into the manège, and we had difficulty in handling the crowd so that the flying space should not suffer. Members of the Leningrad Soviet, and other important personages were there, to distribute the prizes. The band of the N. Aero Squadron opened the event, and the flying started, lasting a few hours. The best models would be sent to the All-Union competition, to be held near Moscow later.

A few models got smashed, mostly by choosing a bad landing, though some of them, dashing about and making false starts, wrecked themselves at the beginning, to the real sorrow of their owners. Some other models unexpectedly performed feats of endurance, circling round, diving, soaring and landing perfectly, to the wild cheers of the small and big members of the crowd. Finally came the moment, when three big and especially well constructed models took part in the competition. Mine was among them. It would be bad for my reputation, as an instructor and teacher, if my model did some mischief, or did not show any outstanding result! With a fast beating heart, I started it up. It took off perfectly, and after "soaring in the heights", it suddenly swooped down, and landed upside down. After such a good performance—such a bad ending! But as each model had the right to have three tries, unless it became incapacitated,—I started it off again. Once more it made off nicely, and turning almost 180°, it suddenly jumped up, and got stuck in between the beams in the ceiling, which supported the roof. I thought I would not survive such shame, as many in the hall, the authorities included, looked sympathetically in my direction. When my model was finally extricated from the entanglement with the help of the fire brigade's ladder—I noticed a defect in the aluminium tube, which got slightly bent, and also the left wing had some damage. I quickly adjusted it, and with some little hope, started it for the last time. I shall never forget my great anxiety, gradually thawing away, when my secretly built model, made by such an uppermost specialist, did what was expected of it: it started and landed perfectly, giving the longest flight!

I was too happy to notice that some of my boys were bitterly weeping over the fate of their own models, which had lost their place in the contest. Later on these unfortunates swore that they would be winners the next time, and I liked their spirit!

In the final contest, mine and three others came out top; two from my school, and the other belonging to the group of children of the engineers of the aero-factory Red Pilot. There were several second prizes that my boys snatched also. In my own class, I received the first prize, and next day photographs of myself and my model were displayed in all newspapers, and later in magazines. It occurred to me that it was rather reckless of exposing myself so openly, but in the excitement I did not take much notice of that.

After that competition, the making of models began on a



great scale, as thousands of children in Leningrad and area, became drawn into this occupation and sport. It also gave me much satisfaction, as I knew my enthusiasm and work had done a lot to popularise this most interesting of practical hobbies. I visited many newly-started centres, and gave the necessary instruction there, and later even trained a number of youths at my school, to become instructors at those places. When boys from my school went with me to the All-Union flying models competition, near Moscow—we won most of the first and second prizes, which put then Leningrad into the first place in this field.

The appropriate authorities in Leningrad decided that the best reward for my achievements with the school of flying models, would be to send me to the flying school myself! I was wildly happy about it. Leaving a substitute, whom I fully instructed, I went for a special course at the military aero-training school.

Passing all the necessary medical tests, I was accepted there without difficulty, as my university education served me in good stead. In addition, I always had a predilection for physics, mechanics and mathematics which helped me to enter the accelerated course, omitting the tedious elementary studies, which future pilots had to master. Being the only woman at that flying school then,—I attracted attention by this mere fact alone. And just because I was a woman, better facilities were open to me, so as to encourage other women to enter flying, and as an example, I started to fly sooner than others in the school.

However, my intention was only to learn flying and subsequently to obtain a pilot's certificate, as I could not go further into the specific military training. This would have been impossible, for I would have had to prove my proletarian origin with an array of documents, when I had only one, a false passport at that.

This training and frequent flying, first as a passenger and then as a pupil, and later as a pilot—was perhaps the most thrilling period of my adventurous life. There was only one thing that dissatisfied me, that I never felt speed so much when in the air, but only when taking off from the ground and again on landing. Only on occasions, when I was taken by some aerobatic stunt flyer, did I experience real "frightfulness" and thrill. In this connection I should like to mention my parachute jumping. After having done this from an aeroplane, I tried one day, for a joke, to jump from one of the

parachute towers, which are so numerous in many towns in Russia. Believe it or not, but I could not do this childish trick, and had to ask someone to push me down! It is simply because, when one can see the ground, one can "feel" the jump. And in spite of one being quite safe when leaving the tower, just this seeing the ground so near, makes one fear the jump! But when one has to jump from some height, especially some considerable height, through a narrow hatch, with the distracting noise of an engine, and the speed of the plane not allowing one to concentrate on the fact of jumping—then the whole thing becomes almost automatic. I have never heard of anybody dying of heart failure from an aeroplane parachute jump but I know personally a case of it, when a grown-up person attempted this "thrill" of tower jumping.

In the first winter months of this period of my Leningrad life, I took much interest in aero-sledges (so greatly used in the winter of 1941 by the Red Army against the Germans). These aero-sledges are the very devils of machines. They are so fast, so noisy, and the propellers raise such a veritable snow-storm all along their tracks. Even in the daylight the exhaust flashes that pierce the air are sinister looking, but when the night descends these sparks constitute a kind of flames, ejected from as many exhaust pipes as there are cylinders in the engine. There is no silencer as on a car, hence also the terrible noise they make.

Our aero club made one, to try it out in the northern snows. I remember the excitement of those who made the design of it, the constructors and the crowd, watching its first appearance in the Leningrad streets. All traffic had to be suspended along our route, when we attempted to run it through the city to the open road; as one never knew whether it would strike a tram, or run into a house, or skidding, turn completely round and go in any direction imaginable! Such wild behaviour of the aero-sledge was caused by the absence of reliable brakes in the snow that is not deep enough, as in the town streets. As I was one of the committee, sitting in the cabin of that aero-sledge—I felt that though fate had spared me so far, this time it was perhaps the last that I enjoyed being alive! When we approached some open market place with old clothes stalls—it took less than a second for all the clothes to fly about, to the consternation of the owners. I imagined that if small children in the streets, at the time of our passing, were of a more featherly weight—they would have been picked up by the wind from the propeller, and strewn about like so much chaff!

All the same, we obtained very good results otherwise, and at the completion of the experiment, our aero club celebrated the event with a banquet, and a solemn declaration that next winter would see hundreds of these machines about. Of course, the work on improving the original project of the aero-sledge would go on, as we wanted some enlargement of the cabin, and also we tried to construct one with a pusher propeller, besides a pulling one. Every Sunday we would go out on the snow-covered fields, and try our aero-sledge again and again. It certainly is more thrilling and adventurous than a car, and what I liked most about it, was the lightness and evenness of its movement, softly though swiftly sweeping over the snowy plains. Only once did we overturn and fall out, scattering about in the whiteness of space. (The first cabin we built was an open one.)

Having been drawn so much in all this aero-life in Leningrad, and liking it, I then began to think seriously of entering the Aero-dynamic Institute. Accordingly, I obtained a month's leave from the aero-club school (where I continued to work on the same voluntary lines as before), to get ready for examinations. Then, on passing them, I decided to spend the remaining two weeks before the commencement of a new term at the gliding field, where I enrolled to be one of its pilots.

One day when I happened to be there, and just before changing into a special glider-pilot's suit, I suddenly heard a sarcastic voice behind me: "Aren't you Anya Cherkasova from Saratov University? Of course you are! I am glad to meet you, at last, as I never really believed that you got drowned in the Volga river. What, you are not Anya Cherkasova? But then, it is absolutely impossible! I can easily prove that you are Anya Cherkasova!" The man was a brother of my most terrible enemy in Saratov, S—y.

Shaken to the depth, I left the glider station and hurried home. What made me unhappy most, was the scandal that would take place immediately my identity was disclosed. To think only that everyone who liked and admired me in aviation circles—would soon learn that I was arrested for living under an illegal passport. No, I could not face that. There are moments in one's life when one cannot feel brave enough to stand up to the disappointment of the crowd and one's admirers. "A man had rather have a hundred lies told of him, than one truth which he does not wish should be told." (Dr. Johnson.)

This I admit is a cowardice. And I acted again as before: I ran away for the sake of preservation of my "freedom". . . .

## CHAPTER IX

### BACK TO THE MOUNTAINS AND START OF MOTOR-CYCLING EPOPEE

Now, FREEDOM IS a strange term. Under the force of circumstances, I preferred a life of curtailed actions and incomplete enjoyment, and I called it freedom. Such a crumpled existence would probably last for the rest of my life. But instead of having done away with all abnormalities that led me from time to time to such intense unhappiness and abrupt breaking of an established flow of life—I would again choose the old method of "running away".

So next morning, without saying anything to anybody, beyond sending a message to the Aero-Club Museum about an urgent call from far away, necessitating my immediate departure—I suddenly vanished.

This time I was more than pained, it seemed that my frustration was complete, and I just surrendered myself to the inevitable. On reaching Moscow I sent a telegram to Mr. Pataleev to meet me in Tiflis. I would have to explain to him this new misfortune, and ask him to extend his friendship and protection once more. I had not seen him for a year, and only a few letters mutually exchanged, gave me an idea of what he was doing in the Caucasus. He became one of the brilliant designers of big schemes (bridges, hydro-electric stations, etc.) and was doing important research work as well. He lived a frugal life, giving all his time, energy and knowledge to his work. He had no personal life, no family, and in this example I, for the first time, perceived the idea of a great man who always stands alone. And because he was alone—he was strong. His vitality and attention were not dispersed, his energy was not spent on the big and petty events of every day married life of the average human being. He did not even seek the sweet reward that married life sometimes gives. He dedicated himself to the service of his country, and his work was his calling and duty. Being very kind to others he had many friends, and was welcome everywhere. But he rarely stopped working, so he hardly ever saw people outside his sphere of activities.

At the end of four and a half days of travelling I reached Tiflis. Mr. Pataleev appeared glad to see me. He brought me red roses—my favourite flowers. I was touched.

He had to go back to his engineering party in the mountains at once, to continue the work on a tunnel. He offered me to go there once again, even if only for a rest and wild horse riding. In a few days I was back on my Orel, who had not changed a bit during my year of absence. Nobody succeeded to ride him, as he would not allow it, and Mr. Pataleev kept him just in case I should want him some time. For several days I had difficulty to manage my horse, but I soon got used to him once more. I only felt that after those aeroplanes, gliders and aero-sledges—horse riding was rather a primitive thrill! Though I still loved my horse.

During my stay in those mountains again, I did much mountaineering. At times I wished I could have the strength of will to subjugate my zest for life, and stay in some cave high above, for ever. But after coming down to normal levels again, a person is inevitably drawn back into the whirlpool of life! So it was with me.

Soon Mr. Pataleev became the youngest professor in the Tiflis Engineering Institute. After a few months in the wilds I also returned to Tiflis.

One day, I was passing along the Roostavelli Avenue, when suddenly a motor-cyclist appeared, and flashing past me like a meteor, was gone into the distance. Spellbound, I stood feeling that something inside me was throbbing. Speed! That magic speed! Intoxicated with it, I went home, hoping that I might meet that motor-cycle again. Next day I made enquiries about the local motor-cycle club and its races. It happened that in a week or so, there would be opened a motor-cycle school there, where a number of young people were going to be trained for professional and sporting purposes. I at once enrolled in the list, also becoming a member of the club.

Soon I entered the motor-cycle world with such violent enthusiasm, that I spent whole days in the workshops, in the classrooms, and later at the race course, where we were trained to ride motor-cycles. Again I was the only woman among them. All theoretical subjects on mechanics and so on, were very easy for me, and while others were sweating away at formulae and diagrams—I was already speeding on a motor-cycle along the Georgian Military Highway, spending every

available minute there. A machine was put at my disposal by the director of the school, who saw signs of promise in me! It was a powerful American Harley-Davidson.

When the time of the examinations arrived, I passed all subjects and tests in such a manner that everyone agreed on my unusual riding ability. After this I obtained permission from the authorities to import a motor-cycle from America; it was a 1,200 c.c. "Red Indian". Mr. Pataleev gladly made a birthday present of it to me. I was in a seventh heaven with joy!

From then—motor-cycles became a dominant factor in my life, and myself, I was fused into one with my Red Indian. I parted with it only when I went to bed. But as very soon I started a most adventurous chapter in my life,—I often did not part with it even at night, either sleeping in the side-car, or if riding solo, I spent nights lying beside it. It seemed to some "observers" then that I was in need of discharging my abundant energy, and that a motor-cycle was a means for doing so! I do not know how true it was, but I certainly liked my Red Indian as one might a lover! During this period I won many races in Tiflis, Baku and other Transcaucasian places. My life then was one of continual movement and speed.

In autumn of 1927 I entered the Tiflis Engineering Institute. This was a logical outcome of my interest in mechanics through my motor-cycle. The whole winter passed in studies, and I was only able to spend week-ends and holidays with my Red Indian, taking part in races, mainly speeding competitions along the Georgian Military Highway.

In 1928 I was invited to be one of the thirty riders who were to take part in the biggest yet Russian trial-race: Moscow-Tiflis-Moscow, over five thousand miles in length. This trial was organised by the central military authorities in conjunction with the "Auto-dor" Society, and excepting myself, all participants were military men.

Besides thirty motor-cycles, we had three Russian-constructed lorries, "Amo", accompanying us. One of them was converted into a van, with a doctor, male nurse and medical equipment; another was with spare parts, tyres and tools, and a third with oil and petrol. In those days we had to carry the last items along with us, as there were no petrol stations for hundreds of miles. Only at big towns could we be refuelled in the normal way.

Our leader, who headed our column in his French Amilcar, was a Red Army commander. The Soviet Military authorities

wished to find out which foreign machines were best for military purposes, also what reaction Russian roads would offer to such a trial. One of the aims was also to learn the degree of endurance one can show, when such a long distance was done in unfavourable weather conditions, and on roads that were not first nor even second class. It was mainly a trial; only when we would eventually meet a first-grade road could we do speeding and compete purely for sporting results. We had beautiful stretches of road along the Black Sea Coast and on the Georgian Military Highway—there we had a grand time, indulging in reckless speeding! Unhappily, one of our team was killed during one of these racing intervals.

Many foreign firms sent their models, in the hope that if they passed the test, the Russian Government would buy them in thousands later on! America, England, Germany, France and Italy were represented there. It was the most glorious motor-cycling event I have in my memory, because it had behind it all the importance of its purpose, all the backing of the Government, and was provided with so generously. In Soviet Russia, if anything is done—it is done on a big scale. Nothing is spared to achieve the desired results, nor could there be found any lack of co-operation between the various organisations interested in such an event. For example, the rubber industry would give gratis all the spare tyres and inner tubes for all the motor-cycles in the trial, because it wanted to know how the articles of their manufacture worked under such strenuous conditions. The oil and petroleum industry was just as interested to test its various grades of oil and petrol, and supplied us with free fuel and lubrication. Sports gear factories would not let themselves be outdone, and presented us with helmets, gloves, goggles and all sorts of gadgets of minor importance, and so on.

Each big or small town that we passed through prepared us a welcome, and crowds with red banners lined the streets. Flowers were thrown at us in the villages. Usually, when we stopped for meals—while we were busy filling our stomachs, the local Council of Soviets would conduct “flying meetings”, to explain to the peasants and workers the meaning of our trial-race. Our putting up for nights—forty-six of us in all!—was provided ahead of us, but when we could not reach the scheduled places, we would sleep in the first village, collective farm or wayside inn. None of these places ever charged for night and food either. The whole country was eagerly watching our movements, and special trial bulletins were issued twice daily.

Several military correspondents travelled with us, seated in the few side-cars we had.

We started from Moscow via Ryazan, Voronezh, Voroshilovgrad, Rostov, Armavir, Mozdok, Ordzhonikidze and Tiflis. On reaching Tiflis, we had three days' rest, though we were repairing our machines, tuning them, cleaning, etc., most of the daytime. In the evenings there would be a banquet and meetings.

We left Tiflis on the eighth of August, via Gori (Stalin's birthplace), Borzhom, Akhaltsikh, all along the Turkish frontier to Batum, then Sukhum, Tuapse, Novorossisk, Krasnodar, then along the shore of the Azov Sea to Rostov, Taganrog, Stalino, Kharkov, Kursk, Orel, Tula and Moscow.

Looking at the photographs of that trial-race now—it seems to me such a great big thing was done. Because since then the Red Army took to motor-cycles with more ardour than hitherto.

We have also discovered that most foreign motor-cycles were not very good for Russian roads, even the best English makes. Their frames were too light, the front fork springs too soft and weak. (I understood when I came to England later, that the good English roads did not require stronger constructions!) Side-cars fell to pieces from jolts on humps and bumps of the rutty uneven roads. The carburettors, not being provided with dust-filters, became choked as soon as we left the built-up roads, and traversed country tracks. Many of the pistons got seized in the cylinders, only to be replaced with the spare ones overnight. But most important of all, the horsepower of most motor-cycles, except American ones, was not sufficient to undergo such strenuous work in our difficult conditions. When rain started to fall on our way—the mud was so deep and sticky, that engines got overheated by keeping in low gear, in continuous efforts to extricate the vehicles from its clutches. Often we had to take our boots off, roll up our trousers, and go into the mud to pull out our machines, which was the only time, when the poor engines had a chance to cool themselves down! That Russian mud must be seen to be imagined, and I am glad the Germans got an idea of it last autumn.

Only American motor-cycles proved to be better in Russian conditions. Powerful and strong in frame, they devoured space and overcame the mud or sand comparatively easier than others. But one thing was against them—they consumed too much petrol and oil. What appetites! Also the permanent setting of their carburettors made it difficult, when from sea level we



had to climb to as high up as it was on the Turkish frontier, and again when crossing the Caucasus. Rarified air made even the riders feel the difference, and it was not such a quick job to adjust those American carburettors every time the engines needed it.

The Military authorities sent along with our trial a special technical committee, consisting of two engineer-designers and two practical engineers. Their duty was to watch and register the behaviour of all our machines and also to find the causes of breakdowns during the trial. Our trial looked, therefore, like a scientific undertaking, planned by so many organisations interested in it. As to the adventurous side of it—I could write volumes, if space and time allowed. However, two or three happenings I should like to mention.

On the way to Moscow, in the North Caucasian region, not far from Rostov, one evening just before we reached Krasnodar, where we anticipated a break for the night—we ran into a swarm of locusts. It being dusk, and as we had been riding for miles in a cloud of dust—one moment we noticed that something heavier than dust was striking our faces. Soon our wheels were crushing something slippery and crackling, and after a while these wheels were turning without the motor-cycle advancing. Finally the whole of our column had to stop. In complete darkness—we passed through fields—we opened a meeting as to what to do. The track was unusable, as locusts covered it three inches deep, and though they did not hurt us any more, having settled on the ground, we still could not make a move. Neither could we try sweeping the track of the pests! Some of us went ahead on foot to see how far the road was in this condition. After almost a mile we returned with no hope. From a hill we could see the lights of Krasnodar.

An hour passed, when we suddenly heard the sound of horses approaching our party. They brought representatives of the Krasnodar Soviet, who were sent to meet us. The town had been preparing for a whole day, to meet us with music and flowers. Hot baths and food were awaiting us there, but we were just not coming. Then they guessed that locusts might be the cause, as all the streets in Krasnodar were strewn with them. Soon several horse carts arrived to take us into the town. We left our steel mounts in the field under guard, and were glad to feel the big moving insects under our feet no more.

Krasnodar and its district are famous for their lobsters. When we sat down to our late meal—the tables were piled with huge red lobsters, surrounded with green herbs, in special big earthen-

ware dishes. I thought of Flemish painters and their luscious pictures!

Early in the morning, a gang of workers and peasants swept the track of locusts, just enough to enable us to proceed. When we rejoined our machines in the field—we could hardly recognise them: they were covered with huge dead and semi-dead insects. Anyway, we got off cheaply, as I know a case when a train was stopped by locusts, unable to move for twenty-four hours. And this reminds me of a terrible happening in China in 1925, when a passenger train was stopped by snakes crossing the railway line. There were thousands of them migrating, and when the engine ran into their procession—it was soon stopped. Immediately snakes started to climb on to the train, and into it. During the heat of a summer night, all windows and doors of a train are kept wide open . . . and I leave the rest of the description to the imagination of readers!

Rivers in flood were another obstacle for our motor-cycles, and as part of our task, we had to pass places where rivers did not necessarily have bridges over them! And because the trial was for military purposes—we had to face every obstacle that might be encountered in war time.

Along the Black Sea Coast we experienced many difficulties, when the rivers got swollen due to the thawing snow from the Caucasian mountains, which takes place throughout summer and autumn. Not so far from Poti, a big commercial port after Batum, we met a wide water plateau, into which our road had run.

The last rays of the sunset disappeared, and we found ourselves in complete darkness. Night, as usual in the south, fell instantly, without warning, without twilight. There was nobody nearby to ask about the depth of this water, or if there was any road on the other side. From some marks left by buffaloes we surmised that it might be shallow enough to cross. We could do nothing else, as marshy swampy ground was on all sides. First went a lorry, and got stuck in the middle of the flood; then one American motor-cycle ventured to "swim" over from another point. It got through all right, but when some smaller machines tried to cross at the same spot, they got stuck too, and their plight was unenviable. Our leader decided that we must cross the water at any price! When I heard that, I felt uneasy, as I knew my Red Indian was not fond of river crossings. The reason was that its ignition was supplied from a magneto, which is situated low down on the frame, so that when water gets into it, the whole thing stops. The other motor-cycles working from accumulators were luckier.

When finally my turn came, I chose quite a new spot, and braving myself, I plunged into the cold and dirty waters. The thing is to go as fast as one can, trying inwardly to push the motor-cycle forward! It must not stop, or one will get stuck, and believe me, it is a most unpleasant thing to experience! So, trying to hypnotise my magneto, splashing and all wet, I passed the deepest part, and was already fifteen or twenty feet from the other side, when suddenly my carburettor drew water in, and there we stopped. Like everyone else, I jumped off the saddle, and tried to push it forward, but what can one do with a heavy machine, half in the water and touching the slimy bottom? Round me I heard shouts, exclamations and encouragements directed to those who still had to cross.

While our engineers were taking notes of this battle against the water, all the drivers and myself, making a team, began to drag out the machines that were standing in the flood supported by their riders.

When finally we had salvaged them all, many of them could not be restarted, due to water in different parts of the mechanism. The same water was oozing from our boots, and we were all wet up to our waists. Feeling cold, we were given our "rations" of cognac, hardly a thimbleful in all, which was specially reserved for such occasions.

Again we held a council about what was to be done. One lorry was still in the middle of the stream, and would have to be dragged out by buffaloes next morning. Our ambulance van had to unload its equipment and take us all to the nearest village for the night. On arrival at the Georgian village we found the local tavern was full of late guests. At once the innkeeper made a fire, near which we began to dry our clothes. Then started the traditional shashlik procedure! Shashlik is—slices of mutton roasted on spits, there on the fire, in front of us. Caucasian cheese (made of sheep's milk), aromatic herbs tsitsmati, and some fermented grape juice appeared on a huge table laid out for our wet company. While we were fast consuming the fare—Georgian music, songs and dancing by some other guests in the tavern started up, entertaining us freely.

We looked forward to our sleep with yearning, still wet, though not hungry any more. As I was the only female among forty-five men, I was given a separate room upstairs. The rest of them had straw brought in, and all together they stretched out their tired limbs on the floor! One could not expect to find the like of an "Hotel Metropole" in every tiny village!

Our rule was to get up at 5 a.m., irrespective of the hour

we went to bed. We slept surprisingly little, sometimes two or three hours only, and sometimes we would ride on all night through, but about this later on.

Next morning the sun was shining brightly, drying our machines! A hurried breakfast in the tavern, and we were back to continue our long and thorny journey.

But this incident was not the worst we had. Oh no! When we passed Sukhum in Abkhazia, one of the most beautiful of places on the Black Sea Coast, we had to use the services of the ferry across the fast mountain river Ingoor, near the town Zoogdidi.

The first load, consisting of ten motor-cycles and one lorry, got to the other side all right, but when the next load of twelve, including mine, and another lorry tried the crossing, the ferry, having been overloaded, in the middle of the river suddenly sank deeper. The boat struck the stones on the river bed that were carried along by the strong stream, and damaged its flat-bottomed surface, as a result of which water gushed in. It was a desperate scene, as we jumped from the sinking ferry boat, leaving our poor motor-cycles there. Ropes were thrown to pull us to safety. The river is so fast that it is impossible to swim, the stream carries one away like a straw.

Well, it took two days to retrieve our motor-cycles from the sunken ferry. Fortunately my machine and two others were put on the lorry to allow more space on the ferry, and it was easier to get them out of the water, but the lorry itself had to be taken out in parts, since there was no such contrivance as a crane nearby to do the job. Later an auxiliary ferry was towed in, and with much caution and prevision we completed our crossing.

Though we started with thirty motor-cycles, we did not finish with the same number. As usual, accidents, and the "elimination" of machines went its normal course, and we lost quite a few. The first to perish in this contest was a "super" German motor-cycle, Winthof, with an engine of six cylinders! It was a colossal thing, and full of great expectations. A German firm sent it to us, as the only prototype of its kind to be tried out. One of the engineers, a member of the technical committee, who saw it built in Germany, was chosen to ride it. The rest of us who had big twin-cylinder machines—felt so puny beside it! Still, when Winthof reached Voronezh—it found its grave there: one cylinder after another refused to work, and it had to be left behind. We learned later that this German firm made

no further attempt to build another model of such gigantic proportions! Then a French Peugeot disliked our dust, and its heart-beat stopped for ever. We had no spare parts to replace its engine. An English B.S.A. had its frame broken in two, and after welding, its electric wiring caught fire and got burned out. When finally restored, the driver whom we had left behind to attend the repair, and who was trying to catch the party up, with its brakes out of order, was hurled, himself in the saddle, into an abyss, with which the Transcaucasian region abounds. Fate saved the driver, by catching him with a thick branch of a tree, but the poor B.S.A. went down to its doom.

On our way back to Moscow, the moment we passed Rostov, our leader and ourselves became noticeably keyed up, as we had to be in the Red Square of the capital on August 26th, and it was already August 21st. Due to the innumerable difficulties that we were being continually confronted with, we could not keep to the strict schedule, which was worked out for us by a special committee long before we started our trial. But we just had to be in Moscow on Sunday, August 26th, and that was all! Because so many organisations, factories, youth clubs and representatives from other towns would come to meet us on the Serpookhovo arterial road, eight miles out of Moscow, from where we would proceed to the city in a triumphal procession—so we had to conquer the remaining distance at whatever cost.

But the weather was against us. Day and night it was raining, making roads unfit even to look at. One of our chief nuisances during the whole trial was frequent punctures. Sometimes five or six a day to each machine. This is due to the fact that peasants' carts used these roads most extensively, and the nails from horses' shoes are strewn all along the route, which our tyres would pick up like magnets. And when the rain washed out the roads, these nails protrude between the irregular cobble stones, or just stick out of the clay, and here we would be the victims again.

On reaching Kharkov we realised that nothing could bring us nearer to Moscow for that Sunday except by riding for twenty-four hours a day. The point was that we could not develop any decent speed at all. At times our speedometer registered only fifteen to twenty miles an hour, due to the pot-holes being filled with water and mud. Then there would be punctures, refuelling, and meals that were eaten in a hurry. We usually had breakfast at 5.30 a.m., and dinner at 3.0 p.m., as to supper it would be at any time round about midnight!

We never have lunch in Russia, and tea is not considered as a necessary meal either, many think it is a waste of time. During our trial, we never had any tea and forgot the taste of it. Sometimes our dinner would get delayed, and not until six in the evening would we have our second meal of the day. Only now, years later, and living among other nationals do I realise of what endurance Russian people are capable, taken individually or in the mass. Particularly is this the case when we are in the throes of getting something done which necessitates temporarily going without food, rest or sleep, which are natural requirements. I have also noticed that we are none the worse for this!

On the approaches to Orel we spent a good part of a day fighting with wet clay that filled up the spaces between the tyres and the mudguards. We would clean it out with tools and sticks until the next lot accumulated in about a quarter of a mile, after which the process would be repeated. At last we all decided to stop and take off our mudguards altogether. This unforeseen wastage of precious time added to our shortage of it already, forcing us to ride all day and night, and part of the next day, making in all thirty-four hours without sleep. Some of us had no time to eat, as we had something or other to repair, and having been left behind, would then catch up.

The last night was a memorable one. We decided not to have any sleep at all, and go on to reach Serpookhovo, about forty miles from Moscow.

Between Tula and Serpookhovo the roads were not only dry, but too dry. In the fields of black Russian fertile soil (chernozym), when dry after much rain, deep ruts are left by the peasants' carts. They are so deep and hard that it is fatal for a motor-cycle to slide into such a rut when at speed. Frames and sumps get damaged, and a maintained speed could therefore only be about ten to fifteen miles an hour (I am sure it would give very little trouble to a tank!).

Our last sleepless night was spent on that rutty road. Lorries, that were carrying our empty petrol and oil barrels behind us, were making such a noise on these bumpy roads, that this alone would keep us awake! But in spite of our continuous riding and this noise, we managed to snatch a few moments dozing in the saddle, which every time landed us in some disaster. Even a wide-awake rider hates ruts, but when one succumbs to sleepless exhaustion—they are a peril. Many of us got flung clear of the saddles, with a sudden awakening, while the bikes finished up on their sides on Mother Soil every now

and then. Our ambulance van was working that night at full pressure. One broke an arm, another driver cracked two ribs, a third fractured an ankle, several acquired abrasions etc. There were bruises, bleeding noses and other injuries. Myself, when flung off, I hurt my elbow and left hand, as to my thigh, I was afraid to think of it—it must have been one big black bruise. That elbow paralysed me for at least half an hour, I just could not grip the handlebar.

In Tula I spent four hours improvising a spring for a broken one at a blacksmith's shop, and fitting it to my front fork. That is why I also had no time to sleep. Our leader gave us a free hand before the finish, saying that if anyone gets to Serpookhovo earlier, let him have a short nap. Well, we didn't, of course. What we were only able to enjoy, was a light meal, as we only arrived there at 8 a.m.

Already in Serpookhovo, we were met by newspaper men and photographers (our appearances were most unflattering, and the photographs only emphasised this!). Government representatives were there to give us a first cheer. They all informed us that important persons and many thousands of people were impatiently waiting us near Moscow, and that we must get ready for a stormy reception there!

The excitement of almost reaching our destination at last, brushed aside our tiredness and sleepless exhaustion. On the last forty miles of the remaining road, which was in good condition, our leader gave us an order to break into speed. Each one of us would thus come to a finish unhindered by the regulations of the trial. Oh, if only cursed nails in the road would spare us! Jokingly, one of the local authorities informed us that all nails had been swept away by the peasants, who knew we would have to pass there on that Sunday of August! Although this was only meant as a joke, it is quite possible for it to have really happened in Russia.

When the last signal was given we rushed forward like mad. I prayed that my front spring would not do me an ill turn, as I was not sure of it at all; it was only a home-made affair at the Tula blacksmith's shop, for we had no spare one from the American firm.

Speed and dust prevented us from seeing the crowds that lined the remaining forty miles of the route to Moscow. The nearer we approached to the Red capital, the thicker the crowds grew. Many military units sent their orchestras to play us a welcome on this last lap of our trial. Those forty miles—we were vying with each other, developing a reckless speed. Real

sportsmen would get into normal fettle the moment the thrill of the speed again intoxicates the blood, which was so with us, in spite of our exhaustion!

Soon a huge archway, draped in red and garlanded with evergreen twigs, came in sight. I don't suppose any one of us knew in what order we should finish. It did not really very much matter either, as it was team work after all, but it would be extremely pleasant to cut through that ribbon in the first person! There were twenty-two of our motor-cycles still in this last wild dash.

Clapping, shouting and music were now uninterrupted, and that arch was approaching us very rapidly. I remember losing my helmet, just before the finish, and that the left sole of my shoe was causing me discomfort. But it was only a "mental" feeling, as I was much too preoccupied with "squeezing" the last ounce from my engine. Passing under the arch, I heard people shouting: "Look, it is a woman, a woman!" Apparently my hair got undone a little after parting with the helmet, and that is how I was recognised. Just beyond the finish, we stopped to form a column to go to the Red Square. My helmet was handed me almost as soon as I came to a standstill, someone had picked it up, and delivered it on a spectator's motor-cycle.

No sooner had we stopped, than a crowd of photographers and enthusiasts rushed to us. I was congratulated at having finished second! I could not believe it until I was officially informed about it. There is an album before me just now, as I write this, which is full of newspaper cuttings and snaps of myself. I feel I am living through that trial-race once again. I had many other races and trials in Russia, and in Europe, but that one stands out as something of which I shall long treasure the memory. I have observed and learned of Soviet Russia, our people and our great tasks, through that trial more than through any other event, however spectacular it might have been. We had among forty-six people in this trial seven members of the Communist Party. They were a particular example of endurance, hard work, comradeship and kindness. With much pain, I try to visualise those Red Army motor-cyclists, who are now fighting Germans somewhere in Russia. How much more difficult, mortally perilous their trials are now, even the most tragic moments of our race in 1928 look like a childish play in comparison. And yet, I am glad that the Soviet Government did everything to train an efficient army. Of course, that trial of ours was only one of the few first steps in the vast pro-



gramme of military training. For some reason, I cannot disclose here certain features of our trial-race, but can only say, that in a sense at times it looked like manœuvres.

At the Red Square there was a meeting at which members of the Government, amid whom Comrades Lezhava, Molotov and the chief of the Air Force, Baranov greeted us. I also was called on to the platform to speak as the first woman in U.S.S.R. who had done such difficult work together with men, proving once more that women can do equally marvellous things! Perhaps, quite undeservedly, I had more attention and publicity than any other fellow in that trial, and enlarged photographs of myself and Andrei Lezhava embracing me in a proud manner, were exhibited in the Moscow shop windows for months afterwards. I remember clasping beautiful flowers given to me by the welcoming crowd while speaking, when I suddenly discovered that my toes were protruding through holes in my riding shoes! Our feet, being continually wet throughout the event, the shoes started to rot. But as we had no time to attend to our personal affairs,—I simply tied a rubber band round the falling-off soles of my shoes, and this served me more or less. But when, just before the finish, this rubber band came off, the whole thing became obvious, and that was why I felt so ashamed when on the platform! Members of the Government made a joke about it, saying that they were seriously considering presenting me with a pair of golden shoes for my splendid endurance during that motor-cycle trial!

Representatives of the foreign firms, whose machines took part in that trial-race, tried to find out privately, and directly from the riders, all the information concerning the behaviour of their respective machines. Some of them, by means of "bribery", in the shape of the promise of a brand-new machine, tried to inveigle our comments, in order I suppose, to bolster up the advertising value of their motor-cycles in their own countries. But we were more than reluctant in satisfying them!

After all photographs had been taken, interviews finished, and tired and swollen hands shaken by all who wished to be "honoured" by this—we were at last allowed to discard our machines, and go straight to our hotels, to have a bath and then sleep. How dirty we were—only a bath revealed, as to our clothes, they were simply thrown away, so much they were worn, torn and greasy. I lost over a stone in weight, others the same. Our noses were peeling like new potatoes. Sunburned, windblown and rainsoaked, we resembled little those people who started the race thirty-five days earlier!

I remember sleeping eighteen hours at a stretch in my hotel, and no amount of knocking made me wake up. I was lucky to get up just in time to go to a banquet in our honour, at the War Ministry headquarters, where we received our rewards, diplomas and badges.

A week later I returned to Tiflis. Once more I was greeted and photographed, and the motor-cycle club presented me with a golden badge, and a special diploma.

After that big trial-race my life became more or less like a pleasant dream. I became famous, was admired . . . and even acquired some enemies!

## CHAPTER X

### LIFE OF INTENSE INTEREST AND A CRASH

**D**URING THE COMING winter, of 1928-29, I took part in several Caucasian races, but in the main I was attending my lectures. I found myself drawn with much keenness into engineering studies.

When the summer holidays arrived, I was invited by the Engineering Construction Department to come to work during my three and a half months vacation at the military plant at Izhevsk, in the Ural region. It is usual in Russia for students to go on practice to respective places of their chosen specialities. In Izhevsk we started to build our own Soviet motor-cycles, after experimental data had been obtained during that big trial-race.

To shorten my time in travelling from the Caucasus to the Urals, I flew this distance till I reached Kuibishev, from where I took a boat along the rivers Volga and then the Kama.

In Izhevsk, there live quite a different people, that is the main population, called Udmurts, who constitute the Udmurt Republic. It took me some time to get used to them. The plant itself was the earliest established in old Russia, about three hundred years ago. It was being fast rebuilt, but a few separate old buildings such as foundries, were still used, and some of them would be left to posterity, as relics of the past. How extraordinarily poor and gloomy those old constructions look! I felt sorry for the workers in past centuries who spent much of their life in those dark rooms, without any ventilation, with

an earthen floor, cold and miserable. And what a contrast, side by side, with the new and spacious, light, modern factory buildings! As it should be, the old plant derived its power from primitive turbines, so a big lake was at its doorstep. The lake itself was one of the most beautiful I have ever seen. It is eight miles long and three miles wide. Pine forests adorn its shores, and the side adjoining the plant now has a new hydro-electric station. Further on, there are swimming and diving places, a boating place and promenade restaurants along the lake. I shall remember that lake!

As soon as my work was finished I would take a boat and go to the other side to make a fire on the sandy shore and bake my potatoes in the ashes. If some others joined me—they would usually start a fishing competition, and then cook the carps they had caught, on the spot. But I preferred to go there alone.

In the evenings, with a dark sky and very bright stars—oh, how beautiful it was! But when the moon was parading in the heavens—then one could stay there till dawn, watching the long pillar of its reflection in such a perfect mirror as that solemn and mysterious lake at night. Many a deep thought visited my mind then. Those nights offered me perfect rest and tranquillity, such as I have never experienced since. By a coincidence, someone else used to come there, not far from me—I never knew who he was—who would play an accordion and sing. That beautiful, low-pitched voice often happened to sing a Neapolitan song, “Come back to Sorrento”, that I loved so much, and I would sit there enchanted, afraid to move. Sometimes he would play motifs that seemed to me to be of his own composition: they were all very uplifting, and acted on me like a stimulant. I would lie on the sand with eyes closed, wondering vaguely whether I lived indeed, or whether I was dreaming some dazzling dreams, too brilliant to last.

Every day at a quarter to six, the siren of our plant would bring out of doors almost half the population of Izhevsk, streaming to their work. For three and a half months I was one of them, hurriedly clocking-in my number 13.

My work was performed in three departments; in the designing office, in the experimental section, and in the garage inside the plant. I confess, the latter attracted me most, where I spent much of my time also. I should think so! All those motor-cycles that had taken part in our trial were brought there from Moscow,

to study their interiors, as well as the wearing of their other parts. I was given charge of all of them, plus a special pass through the gates of this military plant. I could take any motor-cycle out, at any time of the day or night, for as long as I needed, and bring it back when I wished to. This special concession was given me for my knowing those machines so well, but mainly because I had to make additional little trials near Izhevsk, to ride them in the deep sand. Izhevsk is sunk in the sand and is surrounded by it on all sides.

Sometimes I would get so exhausted riding in the sands that I would slip up to the local race course, to make a few exhilarating laps in the fastest manner imaginable—just to refresh myself. For riding in deep sand is quite an art, and I could not do it skilfully straight away, I had to practise for weeks till I acquired the necessary knack. Nobody can ride slowly in loose sand, and every time I drove full speed into it, the back wheel would bury itself in, and from sheer inertia I would lose balance at once, and the whole weight of the metal would instantly pin me to the ground. Sometimes I counted how many times I fell, and twenty to twenty-five was the modest figure! To lift a heavy machine as many times in the heat and dusty sand—one might need some refreshing, if not proper refreshment, that is why I would go to the race course in the end!

There was one man I envied in those first few weeks at Izhevsk. He was an engineer, Peter Mozharov, who by the way, was the first to fly an aeroplane in Russia, many years ago. In his early youth, just before the last war, he went to Germany, and became an amateur wrestler in Hamburg and later in Berlin. Afterwards he became attached to motor-cycles, and spent much time in Germany, working as an engineer at several of their motor factories. In 1920 he returned to Russia. A rich man in the past, he fully realised the political and social changes in Russia since 1917, and honestly joined the ranks of Soviet engineers, working as hard as the rest of them. Several times the Soviet Government sent him to Germany to study everything new about motor-cycles. In our trial of 1928 he rode, after that monster Winthof, another super modern motorbike "Neander", of compressed steel frame, and other devices, that only Germans could invent.

I remember when we were passing the north Caucasus, we developed a good speed on certain sections of the road, the weather being dry, and near Kushchovskaya I was going along almost abreast of Mozharov, when suddenly a cow sprang out from a turning. I managed to put on my brakes at once, but

evidently something prevented him from doing the same, and he struck the cow. His Neander went one way, and himself, he was flung over a ditch, landing on a big stone, that peasants put as a milestone. Oh, what a groan he uttered! When I ran up to him I found his knee all in blood which streamed through torn trousers. As our ambulance van was far behind, I attended him myself, cutting a handkerchief for a bandage. I noticed his knee-cap was broken. But how astonished I was, when I saw him limping towards his motor-cycle and starting it up again. Its handlebar was bent—he corrected it with an easy twist of his vice-like hands, and then we both took off. He was an immensely strong person, physically and in character. When we arrived in Armavir his temperature was high and knee swollen. He went to bed straight away, and next morning, without proper bandaging even, he mounted his motorbike, and went without saying anything or complaining to anybody. I had to report this accident to our leader, as I was afraid Mozharov would have bad consequences. Unwillingly, he allowed the doctor to examine him, and it was confirmed that the knee-cap was broken, but Mozharov would not leave his motor-cycle. I have never met another man like him.

So when I arrived at Izhevsk I found Mozharov there, as the head of the designing department. On hearing a little later about my difficulty with the sands, he went with me one day, to demonstrate how to “manage” that element! He also showed me how to stop a motor-cycle going at a good pace, without brakes—simply by lowering his feet on to the ground! What physical strength that man had! When I tried the trick, with even much lower speed, I only acquired another couple of bruises. My admiration of him grew ever since.

In 1931 our Government sent him to Germany again for a detailed study of the materials used in the two-stroke D.K.W. motor-cycles, for a year. At that time I received a long letter from him, with many photographs of different machines, and some beautiful places in Bavaria. At the end of it he added: “I love you with the love of a motor-cyclist, and you will for ever stay in my memory as the only woman who rides like a man.” One can imagine what I felt after such a compliment from such a man!

But back to Izhevsk.

During my three and a half months stay there I saw and took part in the gradual construction of real Russian motor-cycles of two types: a light and a heavy one. Later on, the light type was produced in a Leningrad factory, “Red October”,

the motor-cycle itself adopting that name. As to the heavy one—this underwent many experiments under engineer Mozharov's genius, until it was finally ready for mass production, mainly for the use of the Red Army.

As the autumn term in the Tiflis Engineering Institute was due to commence, I was obliged to leave romantic Izhevsk! I say romantic, because I saw much beauty in it, I met strong people there, and it was the only time that I never for one moment thought of my past. Saying good-bye to the Urals, and my twenty-two motor-cycles, and engineer Mozharov, I firmly decided to come there the next summer. Good-bye to those lakes, those pine forests and deep sands—shall I ever see them again?

I went by boat along the rivers Kama and then the Volga to Gorky. From there by train to Moscow, and then by aeroplane to Sebastopol in the Crimea.

Sebastopol . . . it is no more now . . . only a name remains. My heart is so pained when I think of it as just a heap of rubble now. I think of God: why did He try to test those brave and doomed people to the last? Perhaps it is in the scheme of things that we mortals do not understand. Perhaps even all this cruel and brutal war is also in the scheme of things,—who knows? But I am just an ordinary human being, who passionately loves her country—which Russian does not? So I am thinking: why does not God stop all this? He is All-powerful, and All-kind, and does He not love His children? Or is it true, as old Russian folk say, that those whom God loves most, they He tries more than others to see if they are fit to fulfil His promise? I do not know. Perhaps it is all in the scheme of things, and that is why Russia once more is put to the test . . .

I left beautiful Sebastopol for Yalta by car. The winding road over the hills, by the forts, amid vineyards, led to a big surprise, when our car suddenly emerged into a dream-like panorama. Every visitor and tourist gets the same wonderful and pleasant shock, when passing through the gates of the ancient fort of Bakchi-Sarai.

Suddenly, without warning, or expectation, one faces such an extraordinary beauty that one can pinch oneself to feel if it is not all a dream. And everyone ejects the same sound: "Ah!" I opened my eyes wide, as if I wished to embrace it all at once, not missing anything. It seems to me that an artist, to create a beautiful picture, must feel that "Aa-h" uninteruptedly till he finishes it. Or am I mistaken, and does he do

it in a businesslike manner, mixing and testing colours and shades, and least of all feels the beauty of his creation? I do not know.

On the right, one contemplates the Black Sea, which is not at all black, but wonderfully blue, there, down below. On the left a mountainous range, all green, with sub-tropical plants and flowers hanging over the road. Between the road and the sea, white palaces and villas were scattered here and there amid the green verdure. As I witnessed this scene towards the evening, the last purplish rays of the sun fallen into the sea, were still illuminating the top of the peak Ai-Petri, lending it an unearthly charm. Oh, how much beauty is in this world, I thought then! And now there are Germans there. They have put an anti-aircraft gun on the top of Ai-Petri, where before an astronomical observatory was standing. Many people used to gaze at the stars there, and now it is used for destructive purposes. How ugly life can be . . .

It was quite dark when we reached Yalta. After having a bath, and consuming clusters upon clusters of luscious Crimean grapes, I went to the sea. It was there, almost under the windows of my hotel room, in fact only about fifteen feet away. On the Crimean Coast everyone goes out to the sea, when the night descends. The atmosphere there is always charged with some peculiar scent, from magnolias and oleanders, mixed with a kind of electricity in the air. One can hear the waves gently splashing about the shore, and sometimes music from guitars and balalaikas coming from the boats that sail along the coast. I crawled over the parapet, and sat in a quiet spot, on the pebbles of the beach. The sea was calm, and the warmth of its breath, slightly moist and salty, fanned my hot face.

In solitude, one does not often live in the present. Either one goes into one's past, or builds castles for the future. In that night I did the same. When alone, I am always inclined to analyse my life, and criticise the past. At that period generally I was very severe towards myself, and never even tried to justify the wrong things or mistakes I had done. The result was that I disliked myself for many things, and it was then that I noticed that self-criticism is not always beneficial. I am afraid it is very much a Russian characteristic—never to be content with oneself. Perhaps because of that, Russian people do not get happy so easily.

It was late, and just before returning to my hotel I recited aloud, as if to impress resolutely on myself, knowing that there was nobody near me: "Remember, there are four things that

come not back: the spoken word, the sped arrow, the past life, and the neglected opportunity" (an Arabian proverb). But just when I had finished the last word—some one behind me said: "Really!" It startled me, and I rose at once. A man was leaning against the parapet, but in the darkness I could not see much of him. Confused, I tried to avoid him, and went along the beach towards the hotel. As I was climbing over the parapet to the road, that man again was nearby, offering me his help. "What impudence," I thought, and was about to pronounce it, but in the glow of the street lights, I suddenly noticed his uniform—it was either a military or a G.P.U. one. It also showed his high rank, I quickly walked away to my hotel, still feeling a little silly. Going to sleep, I dismissed the incident and forgot about it.

Next day I was sailing from Yalta to Batum. When later, walking on the deck, I saw a man in uniform, intently looking at me. Soon he approached me and said, "I believe I met you on the shore last night! I liked that saying—can you repeat it to me again now?" Before I could say anything, he introduced himself to me, and I learned with awe that he was the chief of the secret department of the Transcaucasian G.P.U.

For the first time since the preceding two or three years I felt creepy all over. But I did not lose myself, and reciprocated the introduction. He exclaimed, "Indeed, how fortunate! I shall therefore have the pleasure of seeing you for three days, while our boat sails to Batum." That is how it started. The funniest part of it all was, that we became friends, he still not knowing who I really was! I liked him, he was so human.

In the evenings, sitting on the deck, we would talk about this and that. He knew that I was a well known motor-cyclist, though not at the time of his eavesdropping on the beach at Yalta! During those talks I learned that the work of the G.P.U. was hard, and took all their time. It was his first holiday for the last four years. His health almost broke down, and that is why it was insisted on his having a rest. He spent it in Crimea, and was now returning to Tiflis.

He made it clear that when we were back in Tiflis, I should take him on my motor-cycle, and give him a good ride! He heard about my prowess, and wanted to experience the thrill! He also learned about my grievances, that when I go alone on my motor into the mountains, passing uninhabited places, or meeting tribes in the ravines—it is not always that I feel quite comfortable without any weapon in my pocket, especially when I get stranded in such places during the night. He admitted



that these must be unpleasant in the extreme, and promised to get me permission for carrying a revolver, which I could buy at a G.P.U. shop. Well, that was something! He proved it later, as in less than two weeks I had a "Browning", an automatic pistol.

During this sea voyage I had another interesting encounter. Coming from Africa, via Marseilles, the Balkan countries and Crimea, a party of one professor and two doctors was returning to Sukhum.

They had with them, on the same boat, fifteen big cages with monkeys from Africa. These they were bringing to the Soviet Experimental station in Sukhum, where there were already many other monkeys. Professor Korostev (I hope I remember his name correctly) was in charge of experiments on monkeys in conjunction with the rejuvenation of the human species. Prior to their final departure for the Soviet Union from Europe, he saw professor Voronov, also Russian, but permanently living in France. The latter being the only famous rejuvenator in the world! Apparently, they reached some agreement as to co-ordination of their experiments. Professor Voronov had himself to finance his work, while our professor Korostev had all the backing of the Soviet authorities, with huge sums of money for experimental and research work.

When Prof. Korostev learnt that, in addition to my motor-cycling occupation, I was also a doctor by education, he immediately expressed lively interest in my person. And soon, without further preliminaries, he asked me rather bluntly—would not I like to help their work at the Sukhum station? "In what capacity?" I inquired. "Oh, in a very great capacity, in fact, in a most important one!" Then followed his explanation. You see, I impressed him as a very strong, healthy woman, with all the signs of being a true feminine type, though of a strong variety, intellectually much developed, and my temperament just suited his purpose admirably! Well, he decided with Prof. Voronov, that if only they could "captivate" a woman with the above-mentioned attributes—they would, probably, solve one of the cardinal problems that beset mankind! It transpired that their aim was to find out whether the injection of a mixed sperm of a human male and a male monkey into a female—would not produce a higher species than those humans who so far crowded this earth! What an interesting task, I thought, but what was wrong with the present human beings, anyway? I had an impression that this particular problem of creating quite a new kind of human being was Prof. Korostev's own

bright idea, and not sponsored by the Soviet Government! All the same, the professor insisted that the old type of mankind was obsolete, so to say. That this "antiquated" mankind would not accept new and healthy ideas of living and working, without continual sliding back into the old and putrid ways of existence. That mankind needed forced regeneration, and to do it speedily—one must put a new biological structure into it. This could be achieved by "borrowing" this regenerating element from the nearest species to the human—a monkey, with its unspoiled, natural qualities. "Suppose," I asked, "you succeeded to produce such an experimental type—how could you put the production of them on a big scale?" Yes, it would not be an easy job, but, he said, he already had some ideas of simplifying the task, but only he could not disclose them yet. The first step was to produce the prototype. I laughed at the whole idea and told him that I was not anxious to have any progeny, and that my personal life was composed in such a manner, that the question of propagation never interested me at all. But he became quite earnest, and asked me to think it over seriously, as it would be a great service to mankind and to science. Still laughing, I asked him—who would be the supposed father of such a creature, born in a monkey's establishment in Sukhum? Also, did he think it would be a definitely pronounced sexual type or some neutral kind? And what would happen if the experiment went wrong and some semi-human semi-monkey was the result? No, it was mathematically calculated, the proportion of the sperms and the fact that the mother was a human female had a decisive say in the matter. Now, the more I became stubborn about being caught in this experimental net, the more persistently the professor implored me to consider his request!

When my newly-acquired G.P.U. friend heard of the scheme he also laughed but said that it would not be a bad idea to produce mechanically a better humanity,—he could cease then his hard work in the G.P.U. for ever! It struck me then, the fact that the G.P.U. was necessary only because a certain part of humanity was not willing to become better unless forced to. This was quite a new light in which one could look at the G.P.U. This haunted me in relation to my own case. After all, the G.P.U. was after me only because I was supposed to be guilty and harmful in their eyes. Due to my successful avoidance of final contact with them—I was still at liberty. Judging me by what I now appeared, in view of the fact that I had several friends among them—none of them was anxious to deprive me of this freedom! Another thing was that in spite of the many

stories circulating about the cruelty and inhumanity of the members of the G.P.U.—myself, I had already met a few of them who were more human in a sense than those outside their sphere. My friend D., had sad eyes. He frequently sighed as if trying to overcome some stray, unhappy thought or suppress some emotion. This especially made him human. I learned some facts of his life-story during the civil war in North Caucasus and how later he was a young commander of a party of peasants and workers who tried to repel the hateful English when they came to Baku in 1918-19, to “fish in troubled waters”. He had a genuine contempt for Western European Democracies and what he thought to be their decadent civilisation. Some of the things he told me about the brutality of the British Expeditionary Force to the Caspian Sea region made me shudder.

Being a student of politics, he sardonically exclaimed: “The British ruling class keeps so-called political liberty only because it is more profitable for them to do so, and not because that this governing clique is so anxious in this direction. Such a harmless concession allowed them to exploit the great mass of people, otherwise leaving them callously to their own fate.” He did not think much of the British proletariat, who, being doped with that worthless political liberty, lost its will and ability to fight for a real place under the sun.

He was also bitter about the stripping of Russia territorially, on the insistence of Britain and France, after the last war, and rewarding themselves with still more colonies at the expense of conquered nations. He concluded by saying that he hoped to live long enough to see the world really liberated from all chains—social, economical, political and imperial. Now, years later, I sometimes think of that man. Is he still alive to see not only what he longed for, but the crushing of a new variety of world enslavement under the name of Fascism?

On reaching Sukhum, Prof. Korostev took several photographs of me and asked me to come to his Institute as soon as I got my holidays. He said he would write me again to remind me about my performing a “duty to mankind and science”! I laughed once more.

Sukhum is the warmest place in Russia (all the year round), situated on the southern hilly slopes, on the Black Sea Riviera. It is the only place in my country where monkeys can live, without much feeling the loss of their natural tropical zone. Next summer I went to that Experimental Institute in Sukhum, and spent several days there, but declined once more to agree to take part in that great experiment! Monkeys lived in a large

compound of natural sub-tropical scenery, with high nets as walls, preventing their escape. There were over a hundred of them.

In Sukhum, a Commander-in-Chief of all armed forces in the Caucasus joined our boat. He was of a friendly disposition, and soon, through my G.P.U. acquaintance D., we became friends. This Commander-in-Chief later played an important part in my life, of which more about in due course.

When I arrived by train from Batum to Tiflis, I found Mr. Pataleev was away in Armenia, when an earthquake had destroyed several towns and many villages with a big death roll. He had to learn on the spot, with seismological instruments, of the further dislocation of the surface, and new geological formations replacing the old. Also to find the reaction to the shock of various building materials that were used there for the construction of houses. The Soviet Government was very much concerned with the frequent shocks and quakes that were taking place in Armenia and Georgia for a number of years. In 1923, I believe, there was a very severe earthquake in Gori, the birthplace of Stalin, the ruins of which I saw two years later. The railway subsided, and the railway station itself looked funnily askew.

Immediately after that Armenian earthquake there was established the newest Institute for Seismological Research, and Mr. Pataleev was appointed its director. Besides that post, he was already in possession of six others, and worked day and night, sleeping very little. It was at a time when high specialists were in great demand, but were few. These latter were obliged to fill the role of many, by having several responsible posts simultaneously.

A few months later the Russian Government opened a competition for presenting the best anti-seismic project for a building in that area. Foreign firms and engineers were invited to enter it also. It was necessary to design such a house that would withstand even the strongest shocks. Quite new building materials would have to be used to secure this requirement. Mr. Pataleev, of course took part in this competition. Having made experiments with a special semi-synthetic compound, he discovered the necessary formula, and when the results of the competition were published, he was awarded the first prize of much money. As a student of the Engineering college I helped him do the drawings and mathematical calculations for that piece of work. Now all the houses built in that quake area are constructed on Mr. Pataleev's idea.

I was continuing my studies in the Engineering College, now

and then taking part in local races. During the Christmas holidays in that year, I went to a remote part of the wild Caucasus, and there I was thankful for having my "Browning"! Unfortunately, I got entangled in "a road dispute", and was arrested and brought to Tiflis together with my motor-cycle. But in a few days I was released which I attributed, without any doubt, to the interference of my G.P.U. acquaintance, D!

In March of 1929, amid my studies and sporting activities in Tiflis, one day I had the shock of my life. I received an alarmed express letter from my mother, informing me that someone, out of revenge to her, was about to denounce me to the O.G.P.U. as the one, who had lived under a false passport for a number of years. My mother was most unhappy, as it was she who, on learning about my position years before, had told this secret to that person. She implored me to do what I could to save myself, and wrote saying that she would not survive if I were arrested and put in prison for many years.

This news was such a blow to me, that the first thing I thought of, was suicide. What else could I do? I had, committed myself in life to a social and sporting reputation, I was forgotten by my enemies, and had acquired many good friends, amid them a number of members of the Communist Party. And now there was this sudden calamity again.

But after thinking for a few hours, I decided to give myself up. It was senseless to run away again, as I did in those past years. I saw no wisdom in repeating the same painful experiences. I had grown since then, and wished to live a useful, active life. But fate, apparently, resolved otherwise. I was pinned to the wall, and had to face the consequences.

Mr. Pataleev was very upset. Indeed, he had done more than much to help me, and relieved me of many sufferings by "marrying" me. We were great friends, and we thought that one day when I would become an engineer, we should get a divorce and go our own ways in life. But everything comes to an end, and my partial security acquired through him, was threatened. But together with this security would go the respect and recognition I had enjoyed for the last few years.

So I decided bravely to face whatever was in store for me. I took leave from my College, packed a few things that would be useful if I was to go to prison or exile, and in twenty-four hours I left for Moscow. My intention was to go to the O.G.P.U., and confess to them all about myself. I also hoped that I would get there first, that is before my denouncer.

I spent four days and nights in the train, in a most philosophical mood. I knew I was burning my ships for the second time. Imprisonment or exile—one of these I expected—would not add more zest to my life, even after I should once more be free. No, this was the end of my bright and eventful life, so rich in experience.

But I must be brave, and face it all. I had one most faithful friend, Mr. Pataleev. Did he not say at the station, that whatever happened to me, even the worst, I must remember his readiness in helping me again. With such a friend, like a rock, one cannot perish.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE UNEXPECTED ALWAYS HAPPENS

STRAIGHT FROM THE station in Moscow, I went to Loobyanka Square, where the famous O.G.P.U. headquarters stand, like an eternal guard of big dimensions.

Before entering it, I looked around me for the last time, at the traffic, at the pedestrians, and at the old China wall opposite, and taking a deep breath, I stepped into the place, from where not many come out, as I had heard people say.

Two sentries asked for my pass, and as I had not any, they directed me to another part of the building to obtain it. At that moment, a cowardly thought stole into my mind, whispering to me that I was still free, and could run away to a place where nobody would find me,—why not try? But I was set on my decision, and in a second the commandant was asking me whom did I wish to see, and for what purpose?

Whom? Oh, someone important, but I was sorry not to know their names.

For what purpose? A very important one, but of personal significance.

He looked at me with some surprise, and repeated his question, that at least I should name the person I wished to see. I said, "Could I see Comrade Yagoda, or someone nearest to him?"

I could read real astonishment on his face this time, and he dialled the inner telephone. One of the direct assistants of Yagoda, Comrade Biikov, would receive me.

Immediately I was escorted to his study. On the way there I had to use a lift, and pass several corridors. Those long passages, resounding to my steps, seemed to say: "Now you cannot

retreat, even if you wished it more than anything else in the world! Now you are going to your doom, freely chosen by yourself!" I tried not to think anything, just to be calm.

At last we reached the required department. My escort knocked at the door, and in a moment I entered a big room, with a large carpet and red leather furniture. The man, Biikov, stood up, and invited me to sit down.

My heart was violently beating, as if it wanted to break into small fragments before I could open my mouth. Comrade Biikov asked me why I wanted to see somebody important at the O.G.P.U. I said very simply: "To make a confession."

"A confession? What about?"

"About my life, myself, about everything."

Seeing my emotion, he took out his cigarette case, and offered me a cigarette. "No, thank you, I never smoke."

"It is a pity! It would be useful at a moment like this!" said he, smiling. I faintly smiled also, as if to thank him for a little human gesture.

"What is it all about, anyway?"

I took another deep breath, and briefly told him the whole story about myself. From the beginning, about Saratov and all that followed. I did not even attempt to spare myself, emphasising the fact of my being constantly aware of having done wrong things. This wrong was increasing as time went on, because now that I had reached the stage of being known in the country for my motor-cycling achievements—I felt a moral responsibility for deceiving the authorities, and enjoying their confidence at the same time. When he heard me telling about my motor-cycling, he asked: "Are you not that sportswoman Pataleewa, who took part in the military trial-race, and was feted in Moscow last year?"

"Yes."

"Oh, well!" as if he wanted to say something else, but instead took a cigarette out and lit it.

He asked me many questions, and then calling for a shorthand secretary, he dictated to him the account of my confession in brief. I had to sign it. Then he made an order that the G.P.U. in Saratov should send by air all papers concerning my case.

I still did not know what was going to follow, but Biikov turned to me and said: "You will come here again, in three days. Your papers will arrive by then, and we shall see."

"Do you mean that I can go out of this building, not detained?"

He laughed and said, "No, not detained! We shall do it if necessary, when we have looked into your case!"

I got up, and still bewildered, left him. I had to give my Moscow address, but as I had prepared myself to the thought of going to prison, I did not make any arrangements about finding a hotel prior to going to the O.G.P.U. I was therefore requested to inform them as soon as I found a place. This fact of their "trust" in me—again surprised me.

My escort, winding through corridors, and then down the lift, brought me to the exit, and in a minute I was at large again. I was happy to be still free, for at least another three days; I also felt encouraged by his quite human treatment of me, but I was aware that the most important thing was those papers, my case, that was deposited in the archives of the Saratov G.P.U.

Suddenly an idea flashed into my mind—I should see Andrei Matveevich Lezhava, the man who appreciated me so much. I must see him and try to explain that if he should hear about my imprisonment or exile—let him not think it was for some terrible crime I had committed, but simply for the reason of a long standing "feud" between the G.P.U. and myself. I was afraid of losing his respect, which I treasured so much.

Being a member of the Soviet Government; his offices were in the Kremlin—but how to get there? I had with me a copy of the newspaper *Izvestia*, where my photograph and article appeared after the military trial-race. There in the picture, I was together with Lezhava, who was embracing me as if to show his paternal pride in "such a woman". I thought that if I presented this to the commandant of the Kremlin, he would allow me to enter. At first it looked as if I was going to use it like some feminine trick, but because I was so pressed to get in, and had no other means of helping me, I thought of this dodge. After the usual questions as to whether I had an appointment and what it was for, I produced that *Izvestia* as my document! More argument followed, and at last I made my way into the sanctum sanctorum.

When one gazes at the Kremlin from outside its walls, one imagines it crowded with small and big churches, bell-towers, and medieval palaces! But when I got in I was surprised to see, besides palaces and churches, well-laid out drives, avenues with trees, and the most beautiful cars I had ever seen before or since, which were awaiting their owners. One of them especially interested me, being long, white and with a silver edging. It was so white and pure in colour that I thought it



was a pity to use it in the ordinary streets, carrying ordinary people about! Beautiful cars and powerful motor cycles for ever conquered my heart. I can stop and admire any sporting model until my eyes have absorbed it, just as a normal woman would stop at a dressmaker's window and lose herself in contemplating fashion's latest creation!

I thought: it must be very inspiring to work in such a wonderfully beautiful place as the Kremlin. In spite of its being in the centre of the city, it is at the same time quite an isolated world of its own. That fortress, where the old and the new met, and now were working for the future of Russian humanity.

Through all the cordons of guards, secretaries, etc., I was brought into the sanctuary of the vice-President of the Soviet of the Peoples Commissariat of the U.S.S.R.

Lezhava was very surprised to see me there, and jokingly asked me if I had come again all the way from the Caucasus to Moscow on my Red Indian! I told him that I was too much in a hurry to use my motor bike this time, and that I counted myself a very lucky one to be able to see him. He at once enquired as to what had brought me there. I stated immediately that though it was very important, it was of a purely private character that I wished to tell him. He said that because he had a conference in half an hour, and that if my mission required more time than he could spare then, would it not be better for me to come to his home, and tell him all I wanted without any hurry? It was so kind of him, that I immediately accepted.

In the evening I punctually arrived at his residence, as had been arranged. He seemed to be still intrigued at the purpose of my sudden visit to Moscow. Simply, I told him of this purpose, and added the reason for my seeing him as well. While listening to me, I felt that he was in deep sympathy with me. After I had finished, he sat silently for some time, and then told me the following.

When he was young, and having finished at the Kazan University, where Lenin was also trained, he worked with Stalin in some underground political organisations in Georgia and in Baku. One day they were arrested, and after the usual procedure, they were sent to Siberia. Later, Stalin ran away from exile, which he did in a most audacious manner. Himself, having suffered from heart trouble, Lezhava could not undertake the same step as Stalin, and had to wait his chance. This chance would arrive with the coming of winter. Winter in Siberia, he said, is such a terrible thing that only a few people could live in that part of Russia. Temperatures are so low that newcomers like himself get their ears and part of their noses frostbitten

on the first day of settled winter weather there. Thousands of birds freeze to death while in flight, and fall to the snowy ground, as hard as stone.

All the same, after spending two years in Siberian exile, the degrading conditions of which left him with no more desire to live (he had another eight years to drag on)—he decided to try his luck at escaping. His plan was to go into the tundra, as soon as a first slight break in the weather appeared. He hoped to reach some small settlement in the north, and in the spring go up by the river, and later by some means go abroad to join Lenin in Switzerland.

So when the long awaited softening of the weather occurred, he took some bread with him to last three or four days, wrapped his feet in fatty rags against the frost, and in the darkness left the village where he was "stationed". Everything was favourable to him, as even the police guard of their exiles' settlement was out at the governor's annual party, enjoying a good time! He had a tiny compass to direct him, and a small map of the widely separated settlements in the tundra region. It was a night when the moon would rise late, thus helping him to orientate himself.

With high hopes he set out on the only track to the nearest populated settlement forty miles north. Only once in a fortnight, reindeer-driven mail sledges passed that way, otherwise nobody ever traversed it.

He walked all night, and made about ten miles. When it was light again in the morning, he had his meal of bread and several mouthfuls of snow—the only "water" obtainable, and then continued his journey. Another ten or twelve miles he covered, and he already visualised himself in a more or less safe place by the next morning, when all at once, he noticed a cloud of "snow dust" approaching him across the wastes.

As if by magic, the whole picture changed, and of the calm that pervaded Nature only a moment ago, not even a trace remained. A whirlwind suddenly developed into a snowstorm, which started one of its most cruel doings. It swept the hollows and plains, here lifting up the heaps of snow, and powdering it there into sharp and hard bits, it hurled the whole mass down again. In a short while the whole scene became unrecognisable, and Comrade Lezhava could move no more.

A few hours passed. Cold and still, he was sitting buried in the snow. Around him, the elements were continuing their work. Night fell. He felt unhappy at the thought of his cruel end. He knew, that only one in a thousand survived such a

winter storm in Siberia. All he could do was to "climb" to the top of the snow as soon as he was buried by it. But the snow was too crumbly, and he would sink back in it at once. In his attempts to settle in the snow, now and again—he dropped his parcel of food, and realised it only when he felt hungry and wanted to chew some stale bread. This aggravated his condition, as an empty stomach in such prolonged cold spelled disaster.

As the night progressed, his limbs lost their sensitiveness. When his scarf got undone, and wind swept it and his hat away, he pulled his overcoat up to protect his head and throat, and in this huddled up position, he waited his doom.

Towards daylight the storm quietened down. He was surprised to find himself still alive. His left hand was more sensitive than the right one. He knew that it would be impossible to walk—the snow was too deep and soft, but at least he would try to crawl. This would be a slow advancement, but it would keep his limbs warmer. He thrust his hand into his pocket and found the compass there no longer. This was the last straw. Now he could not tell where was the north, nor the south, nor west from the east. And it was no use trying to find it in the snow, worse than a needle in a haystack.

Relieved of all his burdens, but life, he helplessly and hopelessly started to crawl, just to keep the blood circulating in his almost dead limbs. It was very quiet and the day was dull, without even the sun to guide him.

Being exhausted after doing perhaps only a few yards, he stopped. Later he resumed the crawling, only to stop and again to resume. The third night saw him still advancing, very slowly with many long stops, but in what direction—only God knew. Then one moment, stopping for a rest, he realised he could not move again, now being completely exhausted. Apparently his heart began to weaken, and he found his eyelids were drooping. Motionless he lay on the white bed of snow, cold, hungry and weak.

How long he remained like that, he did not remember. How many hours or days passed, he could not say. Only when at last he opened his eyes—the dazzling sun almost blinded him. The whiteness of the snow was so hurtful that it was best to keep his eyes shut. He was very weak, and all his limbs were as if paralysed, he could not feel them. But having attempted to move, he experienced pain, especially in the feet. It was warmer in the sun, which relaxed his whole body.

He could not think, lying in a semi-coma. But somehow,

vaguely in this dream-world, there were passing unreal pictures of warm and sunny Georgia, his native land. Something, without any definite image, but something sweet and beautiful brought warmth to his frozen form. Suddenly he experienced a sharp pain that started somewhere inside him: he wanted to live again, to see his Georgia. His Georgia!

As if electrified, his mind suddenly began to work fast. Pictures of mountains, great forests, his native village in Kahetia, with grapes, grapes, grapes! (In Kahetia nobody drinks water, but a light wine, as grapes are the chief produce of that Republic.) And now he would never see his Georgia again, he was dying. If only—oh, if only something would happen and could return him to life once more! Reaching the height of his dreams, he collapsed: all became dark and inscrutable.

It was in a smoky and crowded yurt (a kind of nomad tent in that part of Siberia), when next time he woke up. Two big Lapland dogs were sniffing at him, and a man and a woman in fur-skin clothes were energetically rubbing his limbs with snow. Slowly his very recent past floated through his mind, and with a sudden clarity, he realised that he was saved! He felt very weak, but he was alive,—what else could he wish? Those strange furry people were shouting, trying to speak to him, but he could not understand their language. Their children, also dressed like Eskimos, were playing nearby. Then he was given a hot drink with a most unpleasant taste, made of herbs and fats. He swallowed it. But just before they brought roasted deer meat for him, he collapsed again.

Days passed, maybe weeks. Between life and death he was still lying in that smoky yurt, covered with smelly skins. But he was alive and was free—how wonderful!

It was only when spring came, and great snows started to thaw into big rivers, that he was able to get up. Both his feet and hands were frostbitten, and his feet were still partially black. Miraculously, gangrene did not set in, though the skin on all his limbs was sticky with pus, and falling off dead tissues.

His feet healing, and gradually getting stronger (having tolerated the dreadful Eskimo food) he saw the summer come. Nobody ever guessed where he was—this yurt was out of the way in the tundra. By means of convoying timber logs when the nearest big river, Lena, was in flood, he reached a small northern port unmolested. From there, by steamer, he went to Kamchatka. One day a Japanese ship needed a deck hand to go to Vancouver, and Lezhava then took his chance.

The Revolution in 1917 brought all those political exiles back to Russia, where they rightfully occupy big and responsible posts now.

When Lezhava came to an end of his narrative—his eyes were slightly moist. I thought: how much those revolutionaries had suffered, and why? Just for the sake of an idea. None of them ever benefitted or wished to benefit in a narrowly personal sense. So far as I know, materially they all live very modestly, when they could have anything they might wish now, to reward themselves for the years of imprisonment and exile, and other hardships.

As he finished this recalling of his past—he looked at me and said: “When I finally came out of danger, surviving death and acquiring freedom, I promised myself that I should always help those who were in real peril.”

Without any further comment he immediately rang up Krupskaya, Lenin’s widow, and asked her to receive me next day, and do what she could to speed up my case at the O.G.P.U.

Krupskaya got in touch with Biikov, and apparently asked him to look into my case with speed, but also with thoroughness. Why was this necessary? Because my case, with its root in Saratov years before, probably did not deserve the punishment that was then meted out to me. Now it could be reviewed in the light, not only of that past, but also in the light of what I had done since. The latter aspect would prove my being a useful social unit, and not that adventurer who was almost induced by foreigners to act against the Soviet State, as it had been alleged then.

All the same, in spite of such powerful persons who became interested in my case, I nevertheless, expected two or three years’ imprisonment, instead of five to ten, as I feared at first.

Three days after my first visit to the O.G.P.U. I was recalled there again. When I presented myself before Biikov, I learned that all my papers had been already brought from Saratov. He asked me quite a number of additional questions concerning different personages involved in my case. Amid these were many foreigners who had, I should think, by that time all left Russia. After obtaining new material, Biikov gave another date for my coming to see him, and once more I was dismissed without any curtailment of my liberty. Going to my hotel, I thought that as humans, we always live by hopes, and I too indulged in them!

A few days passed, and another visit to the O.G.P.U. was made. After that I had to go there almost every other day, until a whole month had gone. But since the O.G.P.U. staff worked in a manner of their own, I could make no guess from the questions they made as to how my case was proceeding, nor could I foresee how it would end.

During this stay of mine in Moscow, I did not venture anywhere, not even to distract myself. Nor did I pay any visit to our central Motor-Cycle Club. Most of the time I spent in my hotel room reading.

At the end of the month, I was summoned to the O.G.P.U. From the wording of the message I gathered it was the last time I had to go there. I felt uncertain as to how things would go. I did feel guilty for some crimes, such as running away from Saratov under a false passport, and living thus until then, though I knew definitely that the O.G.P.U. ought to prove that I was at least not guilty in the initial stages.

I entered the huge familiar building with a new feeling of apprehension. Sentries met me with a smile, just to show that by now they knew me well enough, and my escort to the fourth floor even made an attempt to talk with me on my way there.

Biikov met me this time in a less official manner, informing me that my case had taken almost a month to wade through, due to its complications, and at last they were now able to come to some definite conclusions. What he further told me, so much astonished me that I could have wept had I been more sentimental.

He revealed that on closer investigation into my Saratov case, it was found that in reality I had been guilty of no real crime there. The only thing against me was my stubbornness in not consenting to sign certain papers, thus giving cause for suspecting me. As to the foreigners with whom I was supposedly involved—the O.G.P.U. had made all necessary discoveries about them at the time of their activities in Russia. This was during the existence of A.R.A., Dr. Nansen's organisation and other allied societies. I was given to understand that several foreigners were found proven to have come to Soviet Russia for spying, and other such work, under the cloak of helping to feed the starving people there. Also that certain of these latter had tried to get in touch with me in order to exploit me to further their aims. That is why I did not receive the letters from Mr. X., which had been fortunately intercepted.

Thus my original "sin" was expunged. But there remained the further one of my false identity, and all official information ever since given about myself which was spurious. And with this latter part they would now have to deal. But . . . my going to them first and making a confession of it, partly exonerated me, and my subsequent activities as a woman pioneer of motor-cycle sport in Soviet Russia, who achieved such heights and performed such useful work, in a field where only men were until then supposed to lead, made me seem still less punishable!

While he was pronouncing all this, I felt that new firm ground was being put under my feet, and so unexpectedly. When he concluded this in the presence of other big officials, I asked him only one question . . . what about my false birth certificate? Would they have to change it back to my original one? No, they said! It would be complicated, and even undesirable, in view of my becoming a too well-known person in Soviet Russia. Let my newly-acquired name remain with me, and if in future anything should arise in connection with my so-called false name, I was to fear nothing, as the only authority concerned with the identity of all citizens in the Soviet Union was themselves, the O.G.P.U., and they were already aware of it.

I felt that I could jump, out of wild happiness, but as the place was so austere I had to restrain my impulse! Finally they all shook me by the hand, and Biikov said, admonishingly, "Now go, and never do such things again. If you are ever involved again in something that you feel to be wrong, it is better to come to us to have the matter dealt with. Since we are here to serve our country, this is the simplest way to get justice for yourself and others!" Finally wishing me success in my motor-cycling, I left them completely free, for ever.

After I left their room I noticed that no escort followed me! I ran along the corridor, then down the stairs, forgetting the lift, and out into the open, even forgetting to give up my pass to the sentries, which they retrieved by shouting after me. I felt that I could embrace them both, or do any mad thing, but instead, I rushed out once more, and almost bumped into a huge, beautiful car, just outside the entrance. For a second this car sobered me, as it was a new and dream-like Isotta Fraschini. I ran around it, thinking that it might be Biikov's, and I felt that I wanted to kiss its radiator, but on second thoughts I fancied it may belong to Yagoda himself,

which almost provoked me to spit on it, so much I disliked the man!

Then I turned to the left, and next to the O.G.P.U. building there was a place of refreshment. I suddenly felt hungry and went in. On entering I found it full of people, all standing, and hastily eating their meals. There were no chairs and no ordinary tables, only round polished black marble tables, chest high, from which one had to eat standing up. For a few minutes I lost myself there, as I saw everyone taking his fancy dishes from the shelves without getting any tickets for them. Seeing me so confused an attendant kindly instructed me. He told me this was an "American Bar", and one could get what one liked without being either served or checked, and on leaving one must inform the cashier what has been consumed, and to pay for it. This was such a complete novelty to me that I at once thought about America with much respect. Just to think, how honest those Americans must be! The attendant added that only three such establishments were opened in Moscow to find out if the idea would take on. I thought it was a good place to put such a temptation to one's honesty, next door to the O.G.P.U.!

Being a vegetarian, I enjoyed the selection of salads and fruit with cream, I even put some apple pies, I liked so much, into my pocket to take away. But when I came to pay for what I had eaten, a hitch arose over the pies in my pocket, for which I wanted to pay, as the place was only intended for refreshing oneself on the spot. The management decided that I could not be charged for these, and at the same time they could not be replaced, as I had handled them. As it was an unprecedented case, I was advised to take them without paying. Again I was told, by the cashier, not to do it again! A second warning of the same kind in one day!

Out of the American Bar into Loobyanka Square, I found the sun was fast thawing the remaining patches of snow. Nearby was sitting a woman with a huge basket of violets and primroses, and I half emptied it immediately. It was much too much for me, but I did it out of sheer joy. Then I ran to the telegraph office and sent a wire to Mr. Pataleev in Tiflis, saying "Free like the wind and going home".

On leaving the office I found I had crushed all my apple pies, and I thought that this free gift had not served me well!

The same afternoon I went in person to see Krupskaya and



Lezhava. I told them about the happy ending to my trouble, and also thanked them for being so kind to me in pushing matters forward.

That very evening I left for the Caucasus.

## CHAPTER XII

### “FREE LIKE THE WIND

NOW I WAS going “home”!

So many daring day-dreams came to my mind! I really felt then like Archimedes must have when he exclaimed: “Give me but one firm spot on which to stand, and I will move the earth.” And now I had that firm spot, in my complete freedom. Being so strong and ebullient as I then was, those new feelings of released energy made me feel that the carriage I was in, was too small for me. One thing alone would satisfy me just then—to ride at full throttle on my motor-cycle! The second best was to stand for hours on end, leaning out of the corridor window of the express, with the cold wind striking my face! I spent two days like that.

When our train left Rostov, it was a dark and gloomy night, and just after passing Bataisk, our compartment of four was almost all fast asleep. Opposite me in the upper berth was a high G.P.U. official going to Baku, and this time I was not afraid of him! Beneath me was a professor from Moscow University, and the opposite lower berth was occupied by a young Red Army lieutenant on leave from Leningrad Military Academy. It appeared that our train slowed down at Bataisk, otherwise the following little drama might not have taken place.

I was awakened unexpectedly by a cold strong wind on me, and a phantom hand coarsely passing over my face. I turned over immediately to the window, and beheld a huge man in a Cossack hat, leaning in through the window, and grabbing as fast as he could every available object in our compartment, with special hooks for this purpose. The moment I saw him, I let out such a yell that I lost my voice instantly, and striking out at him with my fists at the same time as he made an attempt to snatch my gold wrist-watch, hanging from the rack over my head. Everyone else immediately woke up from my shout:

Then the following all happened at the same time.

An accomplice from outside shouted, "Get down, the train is going too fast!" and at the same moment he flung a stone through the window, apparently at the G.P.U. man in the upper berth, who was the first after me to realise what was happening, and was instinctively aiming his revolver through the window. The stone did not go through the open window, but hit the narrow side pane, just over the professor's berth. Meanwhile the professor, still half-asleep, got up suddenly, knocking his head on my berth above, and at that moment the full force of the broken glass caught him full in the face, resulting in severe cuts. The young lieutenant, still less understanding the situation, and obviously having a nightmare, shouted, "Help! Murder!" Simultaneously violent knocking began at the door, with voices demanding its immediate opening, which completed the inferno. Actually the door was locked from within, and at once there started a tattoo on it, and a chorus of voices of alarmed passengers in terror as to what was going on inside.

As all this was taking place the intruder jumped down, and I am not sure whether the G.P.U. bullet did not do its work. Coming to my senses I opened the door, and a whole stream of clamouring humanity in night attire, dishevelled and frightened, surged into our little space, whilst the train suddenly jerked to a standstill. Everyone was anxiously asking to know what had happened, as blood streamed down the professor's face, and smoke was still emitting from the revolver!

Before answering any questions, all four of us suddenly realised that we were left without any possessions, not even an overcoat! The controller of the train and the guard came to discover the cause of the stop, and on dismounting from our carriage, they found a rope ladder outside, left hanging from the roof by the thieves. On attempting to close the remaining window, it was seen to be covered with thick sticky honey, which had been used by the bandits in forcing it down, whilst hanging perilously from the roof.

When the debris had been cleared, and our train then started again, we sat denuded of our things, unable to sleep any more. Jokingly we collected the tabs of our coats, left on the hooks, as the only souvenirs! Skilfully thrown in thieves' hooks had torn the overcoats completely away from the tabs, the whole process being done without any noise. We were explained later that these bandits belonged to a discontented class of Kulaks, who found it better to do this highway robbery than to get down to the Government's proposal of organising into collective farms.

The poor professor's face was swathed in bandages, and myself, without my voice, and my long hair undone—as all hairpins had disappeared in the pocket of an overcoat as well—I looked like Ophelia! The G.P.U. man inspected his portfolio that had been safely under his pillow, wondering if all his papers had really escaped. As to the young lieutenant, confused with shame, he sat disconsolately without speaking on the edge of his bunk!

Three days passed. Our fellow passenger Ershov, the high G.P.U. official, left us in Baku. Later he became one of my closest friends, and came to see me in Tiflis many times. He was born in the Don Valley, and fought in the Civil War soon after the Revolution, when he was barely a boy of fifteen. He was another most human person, very clever, and devoted to the cause of the Communist Party. Through him I learnt things that made me still more respect the G.P.U. organisation.

When I arrived at Tiflis—the first thing I wanted to do was to have a ride on my motor-bike! When going to Moscow, I had said good-bye to it, as I thought I might not see it again for years; now I could touch and ride it again!

As Mr. Patalev was not in until the evening, and I had not seen him yet, I thought of spending that time in going to the Military Highway, for a dash of speeding. Our house was on the highest spot in Tiflis, on the top of the Tsitsianovsky Rise, over the river Kura, just opposite the ancient Metekh Castle, where Joseph Stalin was imprisoned at one time. To get out to the town or to that highway, I had to go down the Tsitsianovsky Rise, which is a very steep road, besides having hairpin bends. All traffic goes very slowly along it. I knew this dangerous rock-carved way very well, as I had to pass over it often several times a day over a long period,

I had taken the motor-cycle apart on my departure, and now I quickly reassembled it. Having got it ready, I set off leaving a note for Mr. Patalev. Just as I started to descend this declivity I found that my brakes were not functioning properly. Since I was now in the middle of the slope and my machine was at its fastest, and with vehicles in front and behind, I could do nothing but wind my way through them, and hope not to break my neck at the bottom. Fearing the worst, I came to the end of the descent, but there I met a main road crossing my path, teeming with traffic. In a breath-taking manoeuvre I slipped between a tram and a bus and other vehicles, missing them by a mere hair's breadth, and as the gradient finished with a slight rise, my inertia was brought mechanically to a standstill.

Just as I was taking in a gasp of the cool air, wiping off my cold perspiration, and giving thanks for my deliverance, a militiaman ran up to me in great agitation. He demanded, "What have you done?" I tried to make an explanation, but my voice had not yet returned after the incident on the train, and I only managed to utter a few husky sounds. The militiaman, presuming that I was drunk, insisted on my going with him to the militia station. Pushing the motor-cycle I followed him. There I heard him telling his superior officer that I was that woman who was always dangerously speeding, but this time I had done it in the Tsitsianovsky Rise, which one could only do when drunk. This enraged me, and I tried to explain in a hoarse whisper the cause of my unusual speed. I insisted on an inspection of my brakes, to which they would not listen. I then asked for the militia doctor, to prove my sobriety. As he was away, this could not be done either, and having observed me speeding on this gradient for years, they found it was a very opportune occasion to catch me and teach me a lesson. So, my first day of freedom at home ended with my being in a cell at the militia station!

I stayed there overnight, and only next morning did Mr. Patalev find in which militia station I was detained. The funny part being that on the second day my voice was still the same, thus proving that my alleged drunkenness was only a surmise of the militia. Mr. Patalev decided to intervene into the matter, and summoned an inspector from the motor transport department to examine my brakes. On this being done, it was found that the brake-lining was shrunk from dryness, being already well worn, and the front brake got disconnected altogether for an unknown reason. Thus there was now no longer any cause for my further detention, although I was liable to a reprimand and even a fine for the condition of my brakes. After this I was set free. Anyway, I had my so longed for speeding, but unfortunately it was a short-lived one! Once more I learned the lesson of not doing a thing in a hurry, which probably was responsible for my maladjusted brakes, thus literally proving that, more haste less speed!

Soon I resumed my studies at the Engineering college. Unfortunately this encounter of mine with the militia put them on the alert for catching me again, because of my having shown the absurdity of their charge about my drunkenness. I should mention here that Georgians, otherwise very friendly, gay, and hospitable people, are very excitable and easily provoked. These qualifications were ill-suited to militia on duty, and this was

why many traffic happenings were so partially treated, by reason of their hot-headedness, and often carried beyond the code of regulations.

I have witnessed so many scenes, where a poor donkey, or a couple of oxen or buffaloes carrying loads, were involved in traffic incidents, at which the militia would behave very heatedly towards the animals, as if they were humans, and knew all about regulations. These animals, besides being very obstinate, and not readily responding to their peasant drivers, were not really meant for city traffic—and so why should a dignified militiaman lose his temper with them! This might give one an idea as to the degree of irascibility displayed by a Georgian militiaman towards a being that can talk, and not just an inarticulate animal! Of course Russian people are very different in their temperament, and therefore in Russia proper we are deprived of all these amusing incidents, which are daily occurrences in Georgia. I might add though, that I have witnessed exceptions to this rule also, as I shall subsequently relate!

Personally I have always been surprised that Comrade Stalin's personality does not reflect any of these Georgian characteristics at all. He is so cool and collected,—indeed strong like steel, and one cannot suspect him of any display of temperament, though he is known to be very kind and human.

Very often I happened to go to my lectures on my motorcycle, and sometimes I would not reach the college, or get home in time, or even to sleep, having clashed again with the militia on my way. Soon this acquired chronic repetition, for I lost my respect for the Georgian militia, and became rather arrogant towards them.

With the coming summer vacation, I did not go to Izhevsk, but instead, spent part of it in helping Mr. Pataleev in the execution of the design of a project for a bridge for military purposes. A competition for this was declared open by the Soviet Government, and over fifty most prominent designers took part in it.

The bridge was stipulated to fulfil stringent requirements, some of them being: to span a three-hundred-yards-wide river; to be made of iron; to be assembled from constituent parts within thirty-six hours, and dismantled within twelve hours. There were first, second and third prizes, and the right reserved by the Government to purchase the plans for its materialisation. This work took up almost two months of our time, as it was

a colossal scheme. The last two weeks before submission of the project, we worked almost day and night. Our hopes were very high, though we heard secretly of the number of competitors! Another two months passed, and Moscow pronounced its decision: Mr. Pataleev got the first prize, and the project was bought, which meant the authorities inviting him to execute his scheme.

I should like to mention here, that Mr. Pataleev, during this Russo-German conflict, is one of the leading engineers of military importance. All the many crossings and re-crossings we have heard of, of the Dneiper, the Donets, the Don and other mighty rivers, are not without his direct technical participation, I imagine.

The remaining holidays I spent visiting Crimea on my motor-cycle, going along the Black Sea coastal area, and crossing the Kerch Strait by boat. On the return I called on Professor Korostev at Sukhum, to see his monkeys. I enquired whether he had found a lady to consent to the experiment he urgently needed to make the year before. No, he had not. This was a grievous confession for him to make!

Soon after the beginning of my third year of college life, I took part in a motor-cycle trial-race to Persia. On learning of this a few weeks before, I was so excited about it, that I decided to learn some Persian. Four times weekly, I visited a Persian scholar, who most enthusiastically tried to initiate me in this language. Being a fair linguist, I soon grasped the elementary rules, and even learned sentences for everyday use. With some difficulty I could read and write, but could not speak it!

Again I was the only woman to take part in this event, in which there were eighteen entrants. Because of its unusual character it promised to be very interesting.

There were no proper roads in Persia, and petrol was most difficult to obtain. Later on, after our S O S, the motor-cycle club of Baku sent us a lorry with petrol and oil, which was like taking coal to Newcastle! This visit to our neighbouring country showed us how backward and undeveloped a land, full of potential riches, can be. This made us very proud of our own country. Anyhow I was to have my first glimpse of Asia and the East.

We encountered only a few motor-cyclists there, who, though friendly with us, had not got anything of our spirit of the sport! We returned by the way of Armenia and the Turkish border, bringing back with us a very rich experience. Five machines

had to drop out, due to breakdowns, and one driver got badly maimed in one of the spills.

Tiflis prepared us a very good welcome, and the last forty miles was a real race.

I was among the first three going almost abreast, and when only half a mile from the finish there occurred a most tragic accident. Crowds lining the streets, who go to watch races, are not always so wise as not to rush into the track of the passing vehicles!

In this particular race fate once more played a bad trick with me. Just at a critical moment, when, contesting for first place, we three leaders dropped into single file in order to get round a traffic island, just then a woman rushed from the pavement clutching a babe-in-arms and urging two other youngsters ahead of her in order to reach the safety island, at this most inopportune of all moments. The two small children tried to get through between the leading motor-cycle and myself, whilst the mother got involved behind me and the following machine.

When I was presented with this crisis—I could do nothing but either run them down, or crash myself to avoid them. At such moments one instinctively chooses what is right to do, but it is not necessarily the safest way for the driver. I could neither turn nor swerve, but leaning my machine far over, I managed to scrape nearer to the island, which my motor-cycle grazed, and by the law of ricochet, I was flung with it, and overturning fell to the ground.

I was hurt, my machine damaged, but before fully realising anything, I was surrounded by a crowd, angrily demanding my immediate punishment for killing two innocent lives.

The race was over. Militia on duty rushed to protect me. I was placed on a traffic militiaman's motor-cycle, and taken to their headquarters, followed all the way by the excited people. My thoughts were dark. I just could not fathom why this should happen. I asked the escorting militia if the children were killed outright. They could not say, as they were taken away unconscious in someone's car; they assured me, though, that my motor-cycle was in the hands of my fellow drivers.

On reaching headquarters, information was given that I must proceed to the hospital to where the children had been taken. When we approached the hospital gates, another crowd was waiting there. Feeling on the verge of breaking down myself, I was escorted by the militia to the surgical ward. There, in a vestibule, the mother of the children was in a typical Armenian

manner mourning her loved ones, with her hair down, and wailing frantically, supported by neighbours and relations.

This scene was too awful for description, but worse came when the doctor appeared. I asked him faintly, "How are the children?"

He looked at me most severely and said, "They are dead".

"Dead? Are they both dead?" I asked incredibly.

"Yes, both," was the reply.

I experienced the sickening feeling before one faints, but at this moment a young woman doctor intervened, saying "But we still try to save them, doctor, don't we?"

The doctor cut her short with "It is hopeless."

After this I was taken back to the militia station, where I was only asked for brief evidence, the investigating officer saying that he was afraid this would be the end of my motor-cycling career. He also added rather grimly, that children's brains bespattered the cobblestones, and this was such a horrible sight that it put everyone against me. I was struck by the inconsistency of this statement and the one by the woman doctor, who said they were still trying to save the children. How could it be possible if their skulls were split open? I put this to the officer, but he replied that this was exactly what had been reported to him.

I was then taken to a detention room where I had my own wounds attended. I learned later what stories were circulating about "that Russian woman who cares nothing for Georgian children". I never discovered whether those children were Armenian or Georgian.

Here it should be said that Chauvinism was at its height then in Georgia, and Russians were looked upon with mild disfavour. This was mainly due to the influence of menshevik groups who were still existing there. These antagonistic feelings were completely dispelled as time went on.

Towards night, on the first day of my arrest, there came in a delegation to the headquarters, all the motor-cyclists who took part in the Persian trial, some of them important members of the Communist Party of the Baku oilfields. They brought with them a petition asking my immediate release, supported by the evidence of the third motor-cyclist, who was just behind me, that the children had not been knocked down, and if they were killed at all, it would have been by him, who was following me. Though the mother with her baby child were between us, he was still able to make a sharp turn, and avoid them and the island altogether, and be even unhurt, in spite of a minor fall.



This rider stated definitely that the other two children fell headlong to the ground, more from fright perhaps, than from having been knocked down, and I had not even touched them.

On learning this, through a young militia sergeant who sympathised with my case, I dared to hope that though the children may be dead, I had not killed them.

Four days passed. I was still there. This time even Mr. Pataleev was unable to get me out, all he could do being to send me food and bedding. On the fifth day the same motor-cyclist delegation reappeared, this time with clear proof that the children were still living. During those five days they had gone every day to the hospital to make enquiries about their condition. And now that it was definitely established that they were alive—why then my continued detention?

When Mr. Pataleev learned this, he went to the hospital to see the surgeon about it, who rather confusedly informed him that the children had been taken home. Mr. Pataleev asked why he had withheld this fact from the militia? The doctor sarcastically said that it would do me no harm to keep me a few days longer in a cell. The children were two days unconscious, after which they were treated for severe shock, and finally discharged, whilst I was still in detention.

After this pressure from all sides, the chief of militia summoned me to his office, where, after lecturing me for half an hour, he released me. He wished to impress on me that apart from this accident, the life of children in Russia is considered to be so precious, that the punishment for killing, or even maiming them, is much more severe than in the case of adults. From this I also understood the reaction of the crowd, when it behaved so demonstratively. On the other hand, being himself a Russian, he emphasised that I had to make allowances for the Georgian temperament, which is very expansive and excitable.

When I left his office, I was met by the group of motor-cyclists awaiting me at the entrance. My friends photographed me at once then, as I looked extraordinarily unlike my usual self!

Once more a free citizen, I was whisked off home.

That evening the All-Caucasian Motor Club was holding a big banquet in honour of the participants in the Persian trial-race. In view of my arrest it had been postponed, and was now taking place.

After this race I got down to my studies still more seriously, in an attempt to forget those unhappy memories. But I found

that my notoriety had spread too far to enjoy the peaceful life of an ordinary motor-cyclist. My chronic detentions and arrests went on unabatingly, as is always with those who once acquire a "dare-devil" reputation. I had many unpleasant consequences to most of my Caucasian adventures. To add to that, my possession of a revolver made things worse at times, as my "enemies" often deliberately provoked me to use it, and thus making the situation still more aggravated.

At that period I was passing through a most trying time. I knew that most of those troubles were due to the fact that I was a woman, who dared to contest man's invincibility in motor-cycling there! This might be a trifle in itself, when one remembers that human activity is not limited just to motor-cycling! But the fact remained, that because I was the first woman to do it—I inevitably had to suffer the results of this interference into "man's sphere". It is different now. Now it would be impossible. The emancipation of ideas has progressed at such a pace since then, that it would be ridiculous even to mention the differentiation between the sexes in Soviet Russia. Still more, I wish to emphasise again, that the Georgian people are too emotional and somewhat impulsive, which makes them so different to the Russians. But I love them for their great hospitality, generous nature and gaiety.

In connection with the Georgian temperament, I am able to recollect one incident, which is quite amusing, though.

In 1926 or 1927, on his way from visiting Europe, the king of Afghanistan, Amanullah Khan, with his queen and a large retinue, passed through Soviet territory. He landed at Batum, and deciding to pay a visit to Russia as well, he stopped in Tiflis for a few days, as a guest of the Soviet Government.

Imagine the excitement of the Georgians when this became known! Some king at last would tread upon Russian soil! He was the first of the existing monarchs to do so.

On the eve of his departure, through Baku and Persia, there was given a great banquet in his honour at the Vorontsov Palace, where the president of the Georgian Republic, Shalva Eliava, was the host.

Of course, Russian hospitality being well known, this time it was to take place in Georgia, therefore, the natives did everything to show their utmost cordiality and welcome.

For two days preparations were going on, and the whole of Tiflis was talking only of the royal family and its movements. We even learned what coiffure the queen was having for the banquet, as the barber, who happened incidentally to be trained

in Paris salons years before, was invited to perform the task of dressing her hair!

All the grandest cars from every government department were summoned to help with the guests, and here I noticed they were mostly Mercédès.

I was a fortunate one, as Shalva Eliava's chauffeur, Herr Weber, a German, who was my friend, was able to secure me a good place, from where I could see the arrival and departure of the royal party. By the way, Shalva Eliava was known for his love for speed. He had only one leg, the other being artificial. He also had four powerful cars, besides the Mercédès, there were a sporting Bianchi, a Hispano Suiza and an Alfa-Romeo (belonging to the Government, of course). His driver, Herr Weber, knew his master's craze for speeding, and did his best always to satisfy him. Even in a town his car always went at a dangerous speed, but the moment they were on an open road—the Mercédès went all out. It was known to us that as soon as there was a good and unobstructed stretch of road—Shalva Eliava would immediately do some "driving" himself, by merely putting his only foot on the accelerator!

Anyway, at about six in the evening, the guests at the palace started to arrive. All the trees opposite the palace were occupied by sightseers, and all around crowds were in their thousands.

For a couple of hours the feast was in progress, and most of the crowd were patiently awaiting the end of the banquet. In about an hour and a half, I noticed through the open windows that there was a strange movement in the palace, and some of the cars outside were regrouped, while others hurried away with some people from the commandant's office.

Soon after, the major movement started, and we guessed it to be the departure. I was quite near the scene, so observed it very closely! What astonished me was the fact, that when Amanullah Khan came out of the palace with the queen, he was looking rather sombre, and the moment the door of the car was opened, he got in first, the queen following after! Was it an Afghan or an Eastern etiquette generally, or was it due to some other reason?

The queen was dressed all in white, with rather a low cut in front and at the back, with a little tiara of jewels on her head. A week before their arrival in Tiflis, I saw her pictures in an illustrated magazine, where she was described as being chosen a queen of fashion in Paris, during their stay there, and was said to take back with her to Kabul, hundreds

of gowns, specially created for her by the best Paris dress-designers.

Next day, after the banquet, we heard the supposed end of the royal visit. They departed the same night, instead of the next day. This was because the king did not wish to stay any longer. The reason? Oh, a funny one!

At the height of the banquet in the palace, when much champagne was drunk in many toasts,—next to the queen was seated an important member of the Georgian Government, who got up unexpectedly and proposed a toast of his own, to the most beautiful woman he had so far met. After a few more words of admiration, he suddenly bent forward and kissed the queen at the base of her neck!!

It is difficult to describe what followed! Confusion and perplexity reigned for quite a few minutes before equanimity was restored. The comrade was “taken ill” at once, and the banquet had to be over almost soon after.

Poor Amanullah Khan! He knew that wars had been declared for less, and here was his own consort “assaulted” by one of those Bolsheviks! Indignation and hurt dignity so much obscured his reason that he even forgot the rules of good manners, and got into the car first, leaving his queen to follow!

The comrade was put in a mental home for quite a time to get over the misdeed he allowed himself! At least this was necessary diplomatically, to prove to Amanullah Khan his “abnormality”, though the comrade never before or after that banquet suffered from any mental deficiency! What potency that Georgian champagne had, especially in conjunction with their native temperament!

And here I might mention another interesting side of Georgian tradition: it is their love for enjoyment and their capacity for wine-drinking!

In Georgia, if any event of personal importance takes place, such as a wedding, a baptising or a treat for a special guest—these events are conducted on a very grand scale, and nothing is spared to make it last in one’s memory. Usually such feasts take three or four days: days and nights of drinking, eating, dancing and singing!

I was present at such parties of shorter duration several times before, but once I was specially invited by a friend whose brother had his first child, a son, baptised, and I was to be his god-mother. As I had just become a champion motor-cyclist—many wanted to invite me then!

I remember we arrived about noon somewhere in the Rion

Valley, some hundred miles from Tiflis, at the family house, where several brothers lived together.

The house was in the middle of a huge vineyard, with fruit orchards at one side. I was taken round, and just a few yards away there I was shown a most precious spot—a wine cellar! Many immense earthenware vessels with this “elixir” were half buried in the ground. The host proudly showed me them all, giving the name of each kind of wine, and pressing me to test every one of them. A special ladle nearby was used to fill my glass—to try and appreciate their qualities. Even before the proper party started—I already felt I had had enough through “sampling”! Some of the vessels were filled with wine which was very old and was kept for the most special occasions: it was strong and mellow and seemed to be thick in consistency. And it had that “full bouquet” in it!

On the way back from that cellar to my room to change for the party, I had to pass the grape garden. When I looked at the heavy, ripe clusters of hanging grapes—just asking me to be put in my mouth—I could hardly look at them after that great tasting!

At about six o'clock in the evening the huge room with a balcony became loud and gay with guests. There were a hundred of them in all!

Round the room, four long tables, joined together made a perfect quadrangle, with the guests sitting at one side only, which enabled them to face each other and see no backs. The middle of the room was reserved for dancing and for the servants who had to carry in the food and replenish the jugs with wine. A Georgian orchestra was playing national music on the balcony.

As usual, first of all, the guests choose the “Tamada”, or the master of the feast, who is one of the guests, but the one who can drink most without becoming drunk, and the one who can encourage others to do the same; he also entertains the rest all the time and proposes the toasts. It is a hard job, I must say, and I pity the Tamada, especially when the feast goes on for a few days and nights! He has to stay at his “post” all those days and nights, and remain sober. In short, the Tamada must know the art of drinking!

That is how we started. The Tamada was chosen, he was the uncle of my friend, and a god-father of the newly-born boy. He had grey moustaches and a grey goatee beard, and wore a national costume. He impressed me as being about fifty-five.

All tables were loaded with shashlik, chawpattis, fruit, sweetmeats and "tsiplonka-tabaka". The latter means young chickens beaten flat and roasted, which makes them extraordinarily tasty. Flowers were vying with the fruit in the gaiety of colours. There were also dishes with fresh trout (just from the pond) lightly steamed and served with heaps of aromatic herbs.

The main thing about these feasts is—one must drink as much as is imposed by the Tamada (and he is merciless!). And if one does not follow this traditional rule, then one automatically loses the respect of everyone, and offends the host. So one must "eat, drink and merry be . . ." for three days and nights!

Another thing—in order not to become easily intoxicated, let alone to be drunk,—one must continually eat, even a little, after each glass of wine. The effect of the wine then is not so strong. When any guest is called out for a dance in the middle of the room—one cannot refuse, it is considered impolite, and even if one can hardly stand on one's feet (after gallons of wine have been consumed), one must dance, even if just only a round on the floor. The dances are of course Georgian, mainly "Lezginka" and "Shamil".

Amid the guests there were about sixty men and forty women including myself, being the only Russian there. Now, because of my sporting activities—it was taken for granted that I should behave like a man, which meant drinking all those days and nights, and dancing most of the time!

The Tamada starts his toasts very decently, with only just wine glasses, and begins with the host and hostess, and then the cause of the occasion—this time it was a baby, and then goes on for every guest present. This means already a hundred toasts! In between—dancing and eating. This would take all night and part of the next day to get through. Next day at about noon, continuing, when all the hundred guests have been honoured, the Tamada commences a further stage of his job by offering toasts for the relations of the host and hostess, and likewise of the guests! (What we used to say—for all those born, dead and yet unborn!)

But as the "orgy" proceeds the Tamada gets bolder, and later, wineglasses are replaced by bigger ones of about half a pint capacity, and these have to be dealt with by the guests at the signal from the master of the table. Some, unable to swallow one more mouthful—try to do away with the contents of the glass, either by spilling it on the floor—since nobody

notices it, or by pouring it unseen into the flower vase nearby!

But the Tamada is tireless. At a certain moment he produces a curved horn with a silver edge. This horn takes about a pint of wine. He then selects some guests at random, I should say, singles them out, and recollecting suddenly some special aspect or adventure of the given person, he invites him to empty a filled horn. I always called it not an honour, but a punishment, because such an offer by him must be carried out, and if this comes at the end of the second day of feasting, then one is indeed finished after that horn! On the other hand, everybody stares at one, and clapping hands in a rhythmical manner usually accompanies it, as if to help the liquid go down quickly and more pleasantly. After the horn is emptied, this person must overturn it to prove that it has not even a drop on the bottom, and then someone immediately challenges him to a round of dancing!

This is how I spent my three days and nights at that baptising of a baby! To prove that I was worthy of their great tradition, I had to drink continually, and at the same time to show them that I was sober. A most difficult thing of all, I am now sure! Actually, it was on one of these occasions that I discovered that a cultivated will power can do real miracles. That is, to keep control over one's intoxication, which is a physiological condition. While the Georgians are accustomed to much drinking, and acquire a kind of immunity to it (in fact it is in their blood),—we Russians are not subject to this "natural" quality, and so I had to use some other trick to uphold my personal dignity, and prove my Russian capacity for this sort of enjoyment!

What surprised me was that Georgian women were not far behind their men in this drinking, and danced just as lightly and with much vigour as if they were absolutely sober.

If any guest absents himself suspiciously long, the Tamada sends a servant to find out about it. Some tired out revellers try to snatch a few minutes of sleep somewhere in the garden or in such a corner that is difficult to guess, but usually these "guilty" ones are brought back to continue the feast.

At the end of those three days and nights one looks anything but fresh, with a pale complexion and hollow-eyed. Then the bedrooms of the host get filled with the carousers, who lie prostrate from sheer exhaustion, and remain so for another twenty-four hours at least!

This was my longest and final indulgence in such a purely Georgian festivity, as I would no more descend to this Bacchanalian pastime!

That year there came to Tiflis the famous producer Pudovkin, with his troupe, for the whole summer. He had to make two films in a mountainous setting. It was during one of my local outings on my motor-cycle that I encountered their company, taking mass scene shots in the mountains.

Passing by, I stopped to look on at their acting, when one moment Pudovkin himself approached me and asked me how I liked it. I told him that I did. A few minutes later he suddenly asked me if I would like to take part in that film myself. In great surprise I retorted, "How can it be possible, I don't even know what it is all about!"

He explained to me briefly that a partisan dispatch rider would just do on the scene, and my incidental presence there would help them out. Being an artist of such high calibre as Pudovkin undoubtedly is, it occurred to him spontaneously on the spot that he should create this scene, though it was not in the original script!

The idea attracted me tremendously, and donning a kind of partisan's attire, I went into action straight away. I remember even the actors were surprised to see this unexpected new addition to their cast! With some brief instruction as to what my role would be, I started darting from one place to another, and being quite a novice to this new adventure, I was not a great success, I am sure, for the whole of the day! Yet, I found it so interesting that I decided to carry on till the end of the picture.

A few days later, Pudovkin asked me to take him on my motor-cycle to go ahead of the film party to find a fresh locality for further shots. This was much to my liking, he interested me greatly as a type. We went so far ahead of the party, following us on lorries with the filming paraphernalia, that we had a spare hour or two which we spent partly in "wild west" shooting with my Browning at chosen targets, and the remaining time—on a discussion. The theme was, the ultimate aim of human existence!

I remember we were sitting, he on the fallen log of a tree and I on a stone just opposite him. In his hand he held a flower, from which, as he spoke, he plucked its petals, one by one—I shall never forget that amusingly naive picture. He had a sad and philosophical expression as I battered him with my



denial of the triumph of the materialistic conception of life then prevailing.

With all the confidence of youth, I almost counted him as a potential pupil of my own philosophy, which had never been a materialistic one, in spite of my earlier "wanderings". What surprised me about him most then, was that he, who could create such fine works of art as his films, which were known throughout the world, should be at a crossroad in his own soul. Seeing his commanding ability during his shooting of the films, it was unbelievable that he could be so humble and almost weak during personal and frank moments.

Just as we were nearing the climax of our discussion, the caravan of lorries with his assistants, actors and apparatus appeared in the distance, and our talk had to be interrupted till the next opportune time.

That day we worked until the departure of the sun behind the mountain peaks, and on the way back, Pudovkin insisted on my taking him again on my motor-cycle. Apparently he liked speed, and it seemed that I had instilled the idea very firmly in him, that if he wished to feel real speed, he should drive motor-cycles, and not cars. The latter are only fit for invalids and the aged!

On our return, which was a long downhill drive from the mountains, and as the road had good continuous stretches with unexpected turns, I gave him a full taste of the wild dash. At times when it was even for me a little too much, I restrained myself by the thought: what a loss it would be to the Soviet film world should we break our necks at one of the very sharp bends!

When we arrived at his hotel, covered so much in dust, we could hardly recognise each other—so black we were! Still he was very excited and spoke most enthusiastically about our thrilling return. It gave me much satisfaction that I had made at least one conversion, if not to my philosophy, then to the lust for speed anyway! We barely had time to change to go to the opera, where that famous Fatima Mookhtarova was giving one of her sensational performances, as I have already described.

As I went on with the work of his party, day after day, I became friends with most of them. His young scenario writer became especially attached to me, and though in the middle of one of his next scenarios, he decided to change the theme of it by making the main figure in it a type of dynamic woman, as he later confessed me to be!

In the middle of all this I seriously began to think—why should I not go into film work professionally? In Russia it is not necessary to be a glamorous Hollywood star, it is ability and talent that is required. I felt sure I could be very useful, somewhat in the style of that first screen adventuress Pearl White, but of a Soviet pattern of course.

As this idea tightened its grip upon me, and Pudovkin was encouraging it, I was about to decide to launch on this step. But one of his actors, a man of great acting experience, thought differently. He was a fine man of about fifty-two, with a face much reminding one of Maxim Gorky, only his eyes were extremely sad. He had been, until recently, Russia's champion hammer thrower.

One evening this actor invited me to dine out with him, and when we met at an open-air restaurant, he asked me straight away why I wanted to enter the film world. I told him that I thought I would find my real self-expression there, which would bring satisfaction into my life. He laughed a little sadly, and somewhat amused said—how did I know that it would bring satisfaction? He clearly thought me unspoilt and naïve about it all, and in the capacity of my friend, he felt it was his duty to give me timely warning. He said that if one is a born genius and altogether lucky, then one might get satisfaction in this work through self-expression. But even then, so much depends on the producer. However, if a person is not inherent with these qualifications, then he should meditate on it before going headlong into it. He also said that he knew me to be a person of a most natural disposition, and what would it do to me if I were made to re-act the same scene over again and again, ten or twelve times, when not satisfying the producer at first? He told me that when he started his film career, and even sometimes lately, in spite of his experience, he would have to do many re-enactments, when the producer happened to have different ideas about how the thing should be done.

He said that one starts at the beginning of a scene fresh and more or less naturally, but if it happened that an expression of the face, or a turn of the head, or a movement of the hand does not satisfy the producer, the act would have to be repeated, and if still unsatisfactory, yet another try is made, and it is only obvious that each repetition becomes less and less fresh and inspired. This leads to further going over the act, until after many unsuccessful attempts, the actor is dismissed for a rest. Of course there are lucky exceptions!

He brought me an example of a young actress who had the role of a mother, who was supposed to have lost her sons in the war, and was so grieved that soon she became very thin, and almost hysterically emotional. Then one of her sons suddenly returns, and on seeing him, the climax to the scene is so intense that she is in a complex of being happy and melancholy, crying and laughing together. Now this actress, being otherwise well talented, could not produce this scene, in spite of many retrials until she was so exhausted, that she began to hate her role. The producer was neither too happy about it, and had to employ special methods of his own. He put this actress in a separate room, locked her in, and gave her for three days no food nor drink, and made it impossible for her to sleep longer than two hours at a stretch. This was no punishment, of course, but only his way of bringing about the condition he desired, and which she could not produce by her natural effort. Be sure that when final shots for that scene were taken—nothing was left to be desired; at the end of the scene she actually collapsed, which was an additional gain to the film! Thus she played her role to perfection, but at what a price! The producer, of course, was Pudovkin.

After giving me several other illustrations my friend concluded that film acting is most unnatural. He added that on the stage it gets just the same when rehearsing, but at least in the final presentation of the play, the actor is in his own and acts as one with his role. In any case a film is made up of many small bits, which are later on assembled together, and very often actors play the last scene at the beginning and vice versa to suit the convenience and requirements of the film production.

We were the last to leave the restaurant, and accompanying me home, we made such a slow process of it, that it was with the first rays of dawn that we parted. Wishing me goodbye he said, "I hope at least I have saved one soul from plunging into that dazzling mirage of film stardom!"

Next day I was long in thought, and thus ended my short-lived aspiration into this sphere of self-expression! After this rude awakening, in order to substantiate my friend Chestyakov's statements, I went to another film group working in Tiflis permanently, where the production of another big picture was going on at that time. And what I saw there more than confirmed all that Chestyakov had told me before. That finally cured me of this new fancy of mine for ever!

I continued my friendship with Pudovkin and many of his

actors, but I confess that whenever I went to see a film it took me a long time to get over my obstinate inclination to "analyse" each actor's part as something that was chewed up to threads, with no natural feeling left in it!

In this period of my living in Tiflis I took an active part in one interesting and purely Soviet feature of the life of women in Russia now. This is the International Women's Day on March the 8th, which is celebrated in the Soviet Union every year since the October Revolution.

Usually, nearing this date, all outstanding women there are put on a list for awards or promotion, others are appointed for special posts of difficulty or responsibility. And of course, on the day of celebrations, most women are doing nothing but marching with red banners, singing and otherwise enjoying their day. No men are seen in the processions! Only women have a day off on the 8th of March, as most of them are given special leave from the places of their employment. Women workers in the factories, collective farms and offices—are given rewards for good results of their work or social activities.

In 1930 I was "advanced" by the Transcaucasian Transport Trade Union to be a driver in the main Post Office. This act was of an honorary significance, and I could not possibly refuse it, even though I was very busy with my studies, nor did I actually need to work, with which to earn my living at that time. So I accepted this appointment, and started my job at once. This activity was for six months.

The idea behind it was to show that women can do the same jobs as men, often in spite of the tremendous physical difficulties of this hard manly work. Thus, I had to drive a three ton lorry, an Italian Fiat. The condition was that of twenty-four hours on duty, and forty-eight off. For twenty-four hours I had to drive that lorry from the main Post Office to the station and back, carrying parcels and mailbags, and at night—deliver thick leather bags with money, heavily guarded, also to the trains; and in the morning to the banks.

I remember the difficulty of starting the engine up at night, when it would get cold after an hour's interval, while the parcels were unloaded and a new lot reloaded. Though winter is not severe in Tiflis, it is nevertheless quite cold, especially at night. The starting handle was hard to turn to move the engine, and it took me some time to acquire the necessary skill to do this easily. It was quite a different thing to kick a motor-cycle starter! In a week or so my muscles of the abdomen, and the biceps of my right arm, were developed sufficiently to start up

that ungainly Fiat almost at once. Another thing I had to acquire was—not to feel sleepy during the hours of dawn, when on duty!

After my motor-cycle, the clumsy lorry was rather a different sort to drive, and every time when off duty, I would enjoy my Red Indian immensely, while going on it to the College for lectures.

For three months I carried on this work, but I found that it started to interfere with my studies, as after twenty-four hours on duty I would have to sleep most of the next day, thus missing my college for half of the week altogether. The Trade Union then offered me to take a lighter job, that of driving a new Ford roadster, to clear the street pillar boxes. The work would be twelve hours on duty and twenty-four off. This was much better, as I was able to attend lectures more regularly.

A new Ford roadster, jade green, had just arrived from America, and I took possession of its steering wheel at once. I barely gave its engine a few days of gentle work to run it in, and soon started speeding with it. From six in the morning till six at night I was clearing the post boxes of half of Tiflis, on the right side of the river Kura. I was only to drive, and a special man had to collect the mail.

It was the first small two-seater car that appeared in Tiflis then, and it looked so sporting and dashing that even myself, I acquired somewhat an air of an American "high speed" star! The hours of my passing through certain localities were known, and crowds of children and grown-up Georgians, Armenians, Kurds and others would gather to watch me doing my "crash stops". Which meant that I would go at top mad speed from box to box, and would stop right near the required spot, driving on my brakes. It was wrong from the expediency standpoint, but it was too tempting for me not to indulge in these "speedway stunts"! I enjoyed it. Besides, the work of clearing the boxes was strictly scheduled, and as I was not given extra time for any possible delay on the way, which frequently happened in the Asiatic part of the town in particular, so to make up for the inevitable loss of time, I had to speed continually. The latter just suited me!

Actually I was the first to do this clearing on a fast car, and as before the collection had been made in a lorry, the authorities wanted to know how much quicker this job could be done. I am afraid I surpassed their expectations by creating a record time for the clearance, and I was sorry for those who had to carry on after me—who were not fond of speeding—they would always be behind time on their rounds!

Many amusing incidents took place during this period of my six months honorary work. At the end of that time I was asked to drive for an extra month a Leyland double-decker bus; this was in order to make "propaganda" for attracting women into heavy vehicle driving. At that time there were no women in Georgia in this occupation. I was therefore a kind of pioneer to give a start to it, even though some years elapsed before women generally accepted this form of work in that part of Russia. The driving of that difficult and awkward Leyland double-decker was the last in the chain of vehicles attached to my temporary but important work, more from social, professional and propaganda point of view than the sporting angle!

It was on one of my last trips on that Leyland that I became involved into rather an unpleasant incident.

One day early in the morning, I was bringing the huge double-decker to the garage, to adjust its brakes before setting out for a provincial town with passengers, when suddenly I heard whistles of the militia and a kind of siren, and I noticed people were running to the side streets, into shops and other hiding places. All vehicles also had to dive into small lanes and stand there stationary. When a militiaman stopped me, demanding my immediate withdrawal—I decided to disobey his order and continue my way, since I had to hurry up to the garage to attend the brakes. He said that there was a great military exercise in progress in that locality, and everyone, as well as traffic, had to behave in accordance with the extraordinary temporary emergency. In spite of this I decided to slip through the cordon, thinking it might pass all right. Well, it did not. A little further on I was again stopped, but this time by two militia motor-cyclists, who blocked my way, and in a minute they arrested me together with the Leyland. I was then escorted to the militia station, my bus having been left in the first side street, to be taken later into the garage by the administration.

I felt ashamed for my disobedience, and at the same time angry for being put in a cell of my own in the dirtiest militia station I had ever yet been detained in! There I had to stay for five days, before I could be brought before the court for obstruction and disobedience.

I had been so many times arrested and detained in my life that I got used to the experience, but this time I especially objected to the fact. It was the beginning of the new term at the college, and I wanted to spend a few days off on my bike,

the moment I was free from the appointment of March the 8th, prior to starting the studies.

Five days and nights in a cell again! Mr. Pataleev was away, and therefore could not help me out. My friends brought me fruit and water melons twice a day—to soothe my aching spirit! The military exercises went on for several days and even nights, and I could watch from my tiny window the searchlights and aeroplanes in that mimic warfare. It was in 1930!

At night I discovered that my sleep was interfered with by fleas, which were besieging the wooden bench I slept on, and after scratching my entire body till it bled—I called for a militia superintendent. I lodged a complaint, and asked him to give me another bench. He said it was useless, as those fleas were everywhere in the building, because of its being in a locality where those insects were coming from the dry marshy soil. I asked him if he had them in his study, which fact must have been most distressing, as he would certainly have been unable to work peacefully when continually scratching different parts of his body. Oh, no, he said, they managed to keep that nuisance away from his office by constant application of chemicals, so he did not suffer such an inconvenience. I immediately seized on this idea, and exclaimed that I would not mind to change my cell for a place like his office—just for the night, to have a proper sleep! It was so logical, it seemed, that he could not say “No”, and made an order allowing me to spend the nights in one of the rooms of his office, on a sofa there. Thus I continued my detention until the five days elapsed, at the end of which I was escorted by two armed guards to the court, passing through the central part of the city.

I remember when I was walking like this, in my leather jacket and a sporting cap—passers-by exclaimed, “Well, Pataleewa has again got into some trouble!” I had.

Before the court started, I noticed a military person was awaiting my arrival there. He informed the clerk of his presence, and then asked permission to speak to me. And what I heard almost made me laugh. The Commander of the All Military Forces of Transcaucasia wanted me to take part in their military exercises on my motor-cycle, in the capacity of one of the “enemy” forces. The military authorities learned about my arrest (in connection with their exercises, but in rather a stupid way)—and now they themselves wanted me! But as I was about to be “bound over” for my silly behaviour a few days earlier—the position was quite piquant, and it was only later that I learned that I was allowed to be freed against their

guarantee, and after taking part in those exercises—I never heard any more of my being summoned for the hearing of my case.

I always suspected my friend, the Commander, of having found his way to help me out of my trouble by such a witty method!

## CHAPTER XIII

### BECOMING A CHAMPION

IN JANUARY OF 1930, Mr. Pataleev became a member of the Communist Party. It so happened that in that year there was a big campaign throughout all Russia to enlist as many members as possible—to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Comrade Stalin.

Mr. Pataleev himself came to the conclusion, that if he loved his country, if he believed in the cause of Communism, and if his energy and knowledge were needed by his countrymen for rebuilding the old world—he could not stay outside the Party any longer. It would be futile to continue to work so hard, and not to be one of those who devoted their whole lives to social reconstruction. So he applied for membership.

I admired him for such a step, though I felt I could not do the same myself. Why? It was for the first time that I realised that I was selfish enough not to surrender my personal liberty entirely to one thing alone: to the cause of Communism.\*

To think that in Russia, among a hundred and seventy-five millions of population then, there were only about three million members of the Communist Party! Why such a small proportion? Because only a few could prove their worthiness, ability and devotion, and be so self sacrificial as to have almost no personal attachments to life.

Communists in Soviet Russia must be people of high discipline, they must be absolutely firm in their convictions, and no wavering enthusiasts can be accepted in their ranks. It struck me later when I met abroad representatives of other political bodies, such as Conservatives, Radicals, Liberals, and others. They all impressed me that in belonging to their respective political parties, though out of conviction, it was still not a dedication of their whole lives. It is a kind of social occupation of their spare time, with the exception of those who get salaried jobs in politics, and these become professional politicians.



Others join different political parties in order to protect and further their material interests. Otherwise ordinary members of the above mentioned parties, can and do, leave their party for another one to suit their circumstances, or if their political views change.

Since the existence of many parties in the democracies entails a continual scramble between themselves, this alone brings a kind of stimulus to the movements of each given political organisation, which would otherwise be static and stagnant. But to say that members of these different parties would willingly die for their political causes, is false, while Communists in Russia and elsewhere have done so and would do it if need be. This alone places them on a totally different plane, and that is why only a few feel an urge to become members.

I knew personally many Communists in Russia. The material aspect of their lives was always very austere and unostentatious. They worked hard, it seemed too hard for ordinary mortals. Each of them had their respective work, to be carried out honestly, industriously and with the conviction that the duty performed was for their country, and not for personal aims and gains. The standard scale of their salaries, whatever profession they were in, was very low, until quite recently. In other respects as well, they always have to be examples for others to follow, which means their continual self-discipline, and watch against being unbalanced, partial, or unkind and inconsiderate; such small things as alcoholic drinking, even a little, or mild swearing occasionally to relieve one's temper—they can hardly indulge in either!

Communists are people who must readily grasp the cold facts of reality, and act without any personal preferences. All members not possessing these many qualifications are constantly cleared out from the party as being unworthy of it.

To me, there is something in Russian Communists that is on the verge of the deeply spiritual,—I can find no other definition. Their devotion to the cause is so absolute and intense, that no other issues of life can distract them or dilute it. This cause is—working for the betterment of mankind, first in Russian territory, and then it might be, on a world scale. The idea itself, is to work for others, for a community, for a mass of people, for mankind. If this cause demands parting with a pleasant environment, with one's family, with one's loved ones, in fact with everything that is personally dear, and go anywhere to fulfil some difficult and even dangerous task—then this must be done, with the heart stifled and feelings

diverted to the future work. I have heard, when abroad, people say that it is so cruel and senseless, and even inhuman, to be so "fanatical" to the cause,—but then it was therefore equally fanatical of the earlier Christians, who with joy went their way of suffering, because of devotion to their faith. In principle there is not much difference between this modern social Christianity and that first unspoiled personal Christianity. Only those Christians were carrying their individual cross, whilst Christian Communists of the twentieth century, suffer and die from persecution and cruel treatment everywhere now outside Russia, for the real cause of humanity that is here on earth.

That is why there are only so few Communists, even in Russia. They are few, but their single-mindedness, and absolute integrity, make them so strong, that they alone can carry the weight and responsibility of the direction of rebuilding the old outlived, chaotic and ruined world, into a morally and physically new era.

So after being accepted, Mr. Pataleev was put on twelve months' probation. This was necessary in spite of his well-known honesty, hard working, and other outstanding qualities, because he came from the class of the so-called bourgeoisie, and his father had been once a rich man. All those people who had had a "doubtful" origin, had to pass such a test. Of course, a year later he became a full member,—it would be difficult to find a more ideal type of Communist than him.

In the summer of 1931 I took part in a big team race from Moscow to Gorky, about four hundred miles. This was a combined race for cars and motor-cycles. At that time the construction of the world's biggest radio station was about to be commenced in Gorky, and this race was to attract attention to the event.

When I returned to Moscow, our team having won the race, the Russian Government gave me a permit to import from U.S.A. a new Harley-Davidson motor-cycle, which made me wildly happy.

Returning to Tiflis for the last year of my training, I put all my energies into it, to obtain a certificate for mechanics in the summer. Almost at the same time my new Harley was coming in to the port of Leningrad. I rushed there to receive it in person.

I intended to start working in Leningrad, in some engineering field, but in the meantime to make a new long distance record on my new motor-cycle.

On reaching the docks at Leningrad, I expected to find

the crate, packed in America, with the contents of my precious bike. The port authorities however, assured me that the consignment of goods which had arrived a week earlier from the U.S.A. was sent on to Moscow, and contained no such thing as a motor-cycle. Losing heart, I spent a whole day going through the warehouses, searching through all crates and packages for my lost Harley. Nowhere could it be found. On learning that the next arrival from America would only be in a month's time, I almost felt like tearing the hair out of my head. Foreseeing that I might again have a bad streak of luck, I dashed to Moscow, to the central customs department, as I was in possession of the invoice from the American firm that my motor-cycle had actually been dispatched some time ago.

In Moscow I was informed that a motor-cycle, answering to the one described in my invoice, had been delivered to the War Ministry, as it appeared to belong to them. I proceeded to the War Ministry. It took me several days before I could find the necessary place and right person who could enlighten me on this matter. It was finally confirmed that it had been sent to White Russia, to be used by the frontier guards.

In complete despair, I proceeded there, in a vain hope to retrieve my elusive motor-cycle. In Minsk I was informed that when the described motor-cycle arrived there, it was found to be an error, and was returned to Moscow. So there I returned also. A new search went on in all departments, and it was caught up with at last, just on the verge of being sent to Odessa. I went full haste to the responsible authorities, and asked the prevention of this new dispatch, as I had proof that it belonged to me. I succeeded.

Two huge boxes were sent overnight to Leningrad. When they were taken to my private garage, and the beautiful new machine had been duly unpacked,—each part I took out with so much affection! It was due to some mistake in the accompanying papers from America that I almost lost it!

When it was finally assembled, the first thing that I did was to ride it to the Leningrad Motor Club. I saw such envious expressions on all the faces of our club members, when I came on the scene riding my sleek new mount! (Only very few and most "deserving" persons could obtain the Government's permission to import motor-cycles in those years in Russia.) I think I was so radiant myself, that I am not sure if I did not outshine the sun itself, which was reflected in the bright burnished parts of my new machine! Amid all the club members there

was one, by name Skrobansky, an engineer by profession, who so passionately loved motor-cycles, but especially the water-cooled English Scott, that all his spare time was dedicated to this sport. All the money he earned was given to the cause of motor-cycling. He was for ever repairing or tuning a friend's machine, for the love of it.

His father was a professor in the Leningrad University, in the chair of gynaecology of the Medical Faculty, and my friend was the only child, twenty-six years of age. His parents could not refuse him to convert one of their big rooms into a kind of workshop, where several dismantled motor-cycles of his friends were continually brought for repairs. This room was a fully equipped repair shop, and the smell of kerosene and oil was constantly emanating from it into the professor's drawing-room; when the repairing would start, the noise of the lathe and hammering could definitely madden anyone but his family!

But as their flat was on the second floor—all motor-cycles had to be taken up the wide marble staircase, dragged over the carpets of the drawing-room and others, to get into his sanctuary! I was always surprised that his parents took this smilingly with never a protest!

Skrobansky had a personal corner, with a bed and books, built on a kind of platform, made of timber, under the ceiling, reached by a ladder from below, as the loftiness of the repair room allowed this. Thus my friend Skrobansky lived, worked and enjoyed his life!

There was one peculiar thing about him, that he did not agree with others on the question of the earth being underpopulated! He maintained that all discontent and suffering of the people, which finally leads to quarrels and even wars, was due to the earth's over-population. He could not understand why mankind was continually afraid of a decrease in the birth-rate, and why different governments used all manner of inducements to get women to produce more children. He thought this idea of a heavily-peopled planet of ours was lacking in intelligence. With his usual irony, he would ask, if it would not be better when only a third of the inhabitants of this world populated it? Everyone would be much happier, as all would have a sufficiency to work, to eat and enjoy, instead of all the states, or groups of people, and even separate individuals, scrambling for raw materials, for living space, and even for a morsel of food—in fact for the very fruits of the earth! As if not to subscribe to this fallacious tendency of further increasing the world's two milliards, he never married himself. That is

why, perhaps, he loved motor-cycles more than anything else, they were his daring noisy children!

When Skrobansky had heard of me some time before, he had often wished to meet me, taking me to be the only other person in the whole of Russia who was so attached to motor-cycles as he was himself! And that day he met me. He declared at once, "Comrade Pataleewa, you can count on me as your most devoted slave. My garage, workshop, my motor-cycles and my time are always at your disposal". This was very touching, and we soon became everlasting friends.

The following day, I let him into my secret, that I was intending to make a solo long distance record across U.S.S.R., from Leningrad to Tiflis. He fell in love with this idea at once, and within the next few days I was ready for the start. I just gave myself enough time to run in my new engine.

For personal reasons I did not wish the fact of my starting, nor the time of it to be known, beyond half a dozen persons immediately concerned—but the wireless disclosed my secret almost as soon as I left Leningrad.

Anyway, my friend Skrobansky and I worked late into the night on the eve of my start, packing a spare petrol drum and oil, spare parts and tools, a groundsheet and a few personal requirements. I ventured to take a sidecar with me, to carry petrol, oil and other cumbersome necessities, though I knew it would very often be a nuisance to me, which it did prove later, when I had to discard it finally and continue solo.

Skrobansky accompanied me several miles out of Leningrad, the last to see me off, when at 6 a.m. I took start. The morning was very bright, being the end of August. I felt so exhilarated in anticipation of my great adventure. I should think so! I wanted to dare to prove that a woman can do a race over such a long distance, with bad roads or no roads at all, alone, with nothing prepared on the way, as when the races are organised and everything is arranged. Another thing was, that no one before me had ever undertaken such a difficult enterprise singly, not even a man!

Unfortunately, these high spirits were marred early on by a most unexpected accident.

We were about to pass under the last of the famous arches in Leningrad, that lead to the outside of the city. Heavy early morning goods traffic had already started, and as I was going against the glaring sun, it made my passage through these lumbering lorries difficult. As these vehicles entered through the city gates, they spread out fanwise on their various errands

of delivery. On approaching the archway, I saw a huge monster of a lorry suddenly turn upon me at good speed, as if I were a mere insect it could not possibly notice. Skrobansky, just behind me, yelled something incomprehensible, and accelerating abreast of me, he rode into me at the same time, so as to ward me off the oncoming danger. I made a sudden swerve, but another lorry, coming up behind me, unexpectedly cut across my path, and in a flash, just as I escaped this predicament, the granite mass of the arch appeared in all its immovable solidity before me. Faced with this monument, and still at some speed, with another big lorry almost crashing into me, I was still able miraculously to swerve again, to the wrong side of the road this time, into the oncoming line of traffic. Happily, there was a gap in this elephantine procession, and I was able to bring my machine to a stop near the kerb. But as this was so sudden, several spokes in my rear wheel were broken, and two tyres were deflated. I left my motor-cycle, and feeling weak with trembling, I just wondered how it was at all possible to have escaped death. That powerful lorry loomed in my eyes like an omen.

But what has happened to Skrobansky? He was nowhere visible. In about ten minutes he approached me, limping, having had his machine smashed to pieces by the oncoming ten tonner lorry that was threatening me; due to the construction of the frame of his Scott, he was able to extricate himself from the entanglement, though injuring himself. A second before the impact he had cunningly sprang out of his saddle and fell on the cobblestoned road, badly hurting his thigh and leg.

Having risked his life, and saving my own through his act of devotion, and having lost his own motor-cycle, the first thing he thought of was to put mine into order. Taking myself in hand, I spread out my tool kit, and soon we had the repairs going. I remember two motor-cyclists on their way to work stopped to give us a hand. The spokes were replaced and the tyres inflated, and within an hour I was ready for the road again. I said good-bye to my friend Skrobansky, who told me that he would await news of my movements with much impatience, and once more I set off.

Before me lay the long, long trail to the extreme south of Russia. The Leningrad-Moscow road was always in a more or less decent condition, so I decided to speed ahead. However, my journey throughout proved to be a succession of what seemed unsurmountable difficulties, which had I been less determined, would have turned me back many times.

Speeding along, with Leningrad already forty miles behind me, I became once more a victim of the menace of Russian roads, a cow, phlegmatically crossing my way. She appeared so suddenly out of the roadside bushes, where it was rather narrow, that in spite of doing all I could to stop, I still had to face her with some speed, just as she leisurely came to the crown of the road. I was in a dilemma, either to swerve into the bushes, or to bump into her, as the spaces between both her extremities and the bushes did not allow my passage, as well as my not knowing what her next movement would be. At the critical moment she just stopped and placidly gazed at me, and at a much reduced speed I struck her amidships!

She was big, and because she could not fall—as my front wheel was wedged beneath her belly,—she recoiled, and I myself came to a stop. My number-plate cutting into her side, she gave a fierce bellow and started wild movements to clear herself. I jumped down, and dragging away my motor-cycle, made off in haste, lest she charge me, leaving her to lick her wounds.

On reaching the next village, I called on the local soviet, where I had my kind of log-book stamped with the date, place and time of my passing, as at many other points on my route. I asked the officials there to investigate after that unfortunate beast, and if she were seriously damaged I should be willing to compensate the peasant to whom it belonged. The secretary suggested that it may belong to the soviet cattle farm, and in that case I should hear no more about it, which actually did happen.

In this same village, the peasants, learning of my venture, presented me with gherkins, apples, fresh bread and thick cream, when I stopped for a meal there. It was the only meal I was to have that day. Usually when on long distance riding I eat very little, being pre-occupied with my driving and getting on, nor am I used to eat much either!

After this village, until reaching Novgorod, my tyres were continually picking up nails, cast on the road from horseshoes. When the last puncture, the eighth, was repaired, it was already getting dark. As thunder was rumbling in the distance, I thought of reaching Novgorod before darkness, and the storm enveloped me. At the last village before Novgorod, the road forked, and stopping to enquire my direction, I was told by an old woman that the inhabitants had all gone to the A.R.P. exercises (in 1932!) and she knew not the road. So I decided to go one way or the other and kicked my starter. Suddenly the engine

backfired into the carburettor, setting it alight. Flames instantly spread to the electric cables and in a second the entire engine of the motor-cycle became a mass of flames, which I feared would explode the tank.

Seeing a pile of sand, apparently for the A.R.P. exercises, and shouting, "Help! Help!" I began throwing sand on the flames. At that moment a crowd ran up in the darkness,—the local youth were returning from their A.R.P. training, and without further ado, joined me in flinging sand on to the flaming engine. Horror stricken, I vainly tried to close the soft copper petrol pipe by squeezing it in my bare hand in the fire, with the single terrifying thought, that at any moment my poor bike would explode.

In a few long minutes, with our combined efforts, the fire was subdued, and I was able once more to feel that I had escaped another calamity. I was happy that I could still touch my Harley in the darkness, though unable to ascertain the damage done, nor could I resume my journey.

The youths, helping me in this trouble, offered me night hospitality at their local club room. I pushed my motor-cycle under a shed and straightaway went to sleep, upset at the delay, but glad that it might have ended much worse. Just as I was dropping asleep—the rain started to fall heavily.

Next day was Sunday and I got up at dawn, unable to sleep any more, and impatient to push on. I went at once to inspect my Harley, and found the carburettor was full of sand; it had to be taken apart and thoroughly cleaned out. All pipes had become unsoldered, and electric casing badly burned, almost to the wire, but not yet unusable. I did everything possible in repairs, and found a local workshop, where the soldering was done for me. Having fixed everything, I took off, soon after noon, thinking what next adversity would befall me!

Still intrigued as to the cause of the fire, I recollected that the petrol given to me by friendly airmen at a neighbouring aerodrome, was a strange mixture of a highly inflammable variety, which may have been unsuitable for my engine. On bidding me goodbye, those airmen expressed their confidence in this particular brand of petrol, by assuring me that if I could get it on all my journey, I should very soon arrive in Tiflis. But my carburettor thought otherwise!

After passing Novgorod, and still having a decent road before me, I sped on continually in order to catch up lost time, as I learned in Novgorod that the radio had let my secret out, and Moscow was expecting me at the end of that day.



But my path was not strewn with roses, on the contrary. Besides nails, which my tyres greedily picked up, the constant procession of ducks, geese, chickens, piglets and other representatives of the farmyard, were always in a hurry to cross the road when I was least of all expecting them! This, besides often bleeding them to death, made my heart bleed also, as I love all harmless animals. Had I been one of those medieval scholastics, I might have indulged in a speculation of how many souls of those creatures, killed during my motor-cycle career, could be placed on the point of a pin; but fortunately I had no time for such indulgence, moreover it really applied only to the souls of women, which were supposed to be so infinitesimal, that many millions of them could be placed on that sharp point!

I did reach Moscow late in the evening, where members of our auto-club met me, and after the usual welcome, they sent me to sleep, and themselves groomed my motor-cycle for an early morning start. The only thing they had not managed to do, was to freshly repaint the burnt parts of my Harley!

Next day I set off briskly at 5 a.m. It was a glorious morning again, and I already visualised Kharkov, but soon after thirty-five miles had passed, before entering Serpookhovo, I encountered potholes of such dimensions that my sidecar spring would not stand up to the strain. Another halt for a few hours. Aero assembly plants, and their training grounds, which abounded in that district, supplied me with enthusiastic help to get me out of my new trouble, by manufacturing another spring on the spot.

I lunched with airmen there, and they promised to tune in to the radio every night to learn of my progress, hoping that this would be my last hold-up. But after another hundred miles or so, this newly made spring snapped! Obviously it is no use to do things in a hurry, and I did not even give them time to test it. This fresh setback happened just outside Tula, centre of small arms manufacture, and also of famous Russian samovars.

As I was inspecting the broken spring, a military lorry stopped near me and offered help. On learning the facts, they showed much concern and said, "Look here, we don't advise you the making of a new spring again, we shall take you to our headquarters in Tula, and there we are bound to find a genuine Harley-Davidson spare, as these machines are in our service." I beamed! Could such a thing happen in any other country?

I left my motor-cycle by the roadside with one of their men, and was taken to Tula. I was brought at once to the appropriate

stores at the army supply depot, and the officer in charge, hearing of my plight; immediately issued the necessary spare, adding that he would send a mechanic to help me fit the spring to save my time.

This having been done, I now had to pass through Tula again, where the motor-cyclists there, learning of my presence in the vicinity, gave me a warm welcome and insisted on my taking a meal with them. Just before departing, the president of their club presented me with a box of famous Tula rich honeycakes. He said laughingly, that when next feeling hungry, I could refresh myself with these without stopping!

Soon after noon that day rain reduced my speed, and it was getting dark when I stopped at a collective farm to stay the night. It was somewhere in the neighbourhood of Orel. The peasants were just returning from the fields after their day's labour, and were surprised to see a woman on a motor-cycle stop at their communal centre where they have their meals together on working days. (When no farm work is done, they eat at their individual homes.)

As my motor-cycle was very dirty, several young Comsomols asked to have the honour of cleaning and polishing it for next day's start. It was taken into a spacious stable, and with much gusto they got on with their self-appointed task. An army of village boys and girls surrounded them, watching the procedure with jealous expressions, that they could not assist. After seeing their familiar and clumsy tractors and combines daily, this new and shining little chariot fired their imagination!

In the meantime, the peasants decided not to miss this rare opportunity of hearing a woman who was performing such a feat of endurance and daring! We had our meal quickly, consisting of Ukrainian borsch, jacket potatoes with butter, cucumbers and large bowls of blue whortleberries, which was their second crop of the year. It was a lovely sight of over a hundred seated at long tables heartily enjoying their hard-earned meal! They were simple folk, happy that the day's work was done and what particularly impressed me was their sunburned faces, and flashing strong white teeth, crunching and munching the huge chunks of rye bread and cucumbers and everything else that required vigorous working of the jaws. Humour and gaiety pervaded the atmosphere. Children are usually fed separately, as they consume more dairy products, and are served at different times.

As soon as we finished, the president of this community took the chair, and a meeting started. A young Communist, the head

tractor driver, made a short introduction of myself to the gathering. He assumed rather sweepingly, that he felt sure in another ten years time each collective farm woman would be driving her own motor-cycle! But so far, he said, I was the only one in the Soviet Union who was doing these long and epic hazards. After this I reported to them the reasons for my making this difficult journey, and described some of the adventures from it, expressing my hope to reach the destination without too many breakdowns. Winding up, the chairman stressed his wish that all collective farms on my long way should help me in all necessary measures, and to whom he asked me to convey the brotherly greetings from that meeting. To finish the evening, one of the lads fetched his big accordion, and they sang their local songs in chorus. It was not until late that I was able to retire, as they eagerly asked me all manner of questions.

Early morning, when I was ready to start, I found the peasants all gathered to wish me good speed, and standing in wonder around my Harley. Finally saluting them, I gave my starter an energetic kick, and lo, there was no response but a mild cough from the engine. Again, and I had the same result. Somewhat confused, I explained that the chilly morning air was the cause. But the more I kicked the more I became perplexed, and only a few minutes later I made the right guess. Whilst cleaning it, on the eve, children had poured buckets of water over it, to make it "as clean as a duck", as they boasted. But in this ablution my carburettor was flooded, and now I was obliged to dismantle it and dry it out!

Many children got up as early as the grown-ups to see me go, and were rather disheartened at this sad discovery; the crowd waited in patience until I had put everything in order. At last my motor-cycle came to life again, and once more waving my farewell, I tore myself away, carrying a delightful memory of a healthy and hospitable community left behind.

Towards Kharkov, rains were ceaselessly taxing me. Unable to wear goggles in this, as they obliterate one's vision in the rain, and without them it was still worse, because the head-on rain lashed me like needles, I had to screw up my eyes to a slit, which was a great strain. Being wet to the skin in spite of a thin leather overcoat, the journey was no longer a pleasure. To make up for all the delays I had had, I had to keep up a good pace all the time. In those years in Russia we had no Wellington boots, that make motor-cycling in England so comfortable and cosy in wet weather,—I wore simple shoes and a light boiler suit which left my legs unprotected. Volumes of liquid mud

were sprayed by the front wheel in spite of its mud guard, as if from a hose..The result was that my feet were soaked for days, and when continually working my foot clutch and brakes, they gave unpleasant squelches.

I arrived at Kharkov towards night, which was rather later than my schedule. In spite of the rain and the late hour, Ukrainian motor-cyclists were waiting me at the outskirts of the city, some of them came miles to meet me. They heard of my many difficulties on the wireless, and thought that maybe I was stranded somewhere. But they were most disappointed to learn that I should leave very early the next morning, as they had prepared a little programme of sightseeing in the city, mainly to see the colossal and monumental buildings recently erected there, of which they were tremendously proud—as if these belonged personally to them!

I slept that night in their club, which had been filled with flowers in my honour. All my soaked clothing and shoes were taken home by them to be dried. They asked me to make one concession at least, when they came again at 5 a.m., that I should, on my way of leaving Kharkov, pass together with them by those magnificent new buildings of the Ukrainian capital! I can imagine what a heap of rubble has become of those prided constructions, now the Germans have got there. . . .

At Kharkov I left my sidecar, as two leaves of its spring got cracked again, obviously through bumping in potholes. In order not to increase my delays, I decided to part with it, tying extra petrol and oil and some spares on the pillion behind, which made my bike look like a loaded camel!

From Kharkov onwards, my way lay through the Donets plateau towards the Don coal basin. Here there were a few third class roads, but mostly they were tracks, running through the immense fields of wheat, rye and millet. In Russia, in these regions there are no signposts to give one direction and mileage, the only guide being the information one gets from the local inhabitants, which, as in all other countries, is not always reliable! If it is ten miles on to the nearest village, they will say it is twenty; and if it should be twenty, they would say it is ten, which is all right if one is going for an annual visit to a neighbouring fair. But it is distressing when, having passed the promised ten miles, and no village is in sight, one decides that one has taken the wrong track altogether. Even this would only be half the trouble if the correct direction were given. It is on my sad record, that after going for miles in an assuredly correct direction, I have had to go back and start once more

to find the right road. Then, added to this, rain and mud complete the picture of a motor-cyclist's suffering!

Passing through Stalino, I had an amusing incident. A herd of pigs was going to the meadows, when from a sudden turning I met them. Some of them dispersed quickly, but a few were still in my way, and as I was about to pull up, one of them suddenly ran sideways into my front wheel, and I immediately heard a terrible squeal set up as she bounced away like a rubber ball, with blood streaming down her neck. I stopped, and saw then that her ear had been completely and neatly severed, as if by a skilful surgeon. Looking behind me, there was the pink ear, lying in the road! I felt very sorry for the pig, but by now not one was left in sight, only I could still hear the plaintive squeals.

Soon after Stalino, to my dismay, I discovered that the pipe feeding petrol to the carburettor was leaking, due perhaps to the imperfect soldering at Novgorod. I noticed this too late as my petrol tank was empty and my reserve was all used up. I started pushing my bike, with very little hope of reaching anywhere to replenish the supply. It was hard and unpleasant work because the wheels stuck in the wet clay, and my muscles were overworked. This I did for a mile, feeling that I should have to drive all night through in order to catch up this lost time. Suddenly a saviour appeared in the shape of a huge tractor ploughing its passage through the thick mud, and casting huge chunks of clay into the air. We stopped, and I asked him at once if I could have a little petrol from him, to get to the nearest petrol filling place. He laughed broadly and told me that I would not find one in a hundred miles. However, he gladly offered me his crude fuel, paraffin, to help me along. I knew it would not do for my motor-cycle, but it was Hobson's choice, and I accepted it with gratitude. But because my engine could not start on this unusual diet, though it would run somehow when once started—this good samaritan, with a twinkle in his eye, produced a small bottle filled with clear pure petrol. This he kept as a helping hand when his own tractor showed obstinacy in starting. Overjoyed, I injected this precious liquid into my cylinders, and with a little patience, I soon had it working again. It was not running very healthily, firing and backfiring irregularly, and though at a reduced speed, I was able to proceed, after having patched up the leak with insulation tape. This latter came off after a while, but fortunately I was then in a small hamlet where I obtained some soap, which did the job more efficiently.

Still in the dark about where I could get petrol, I made my way to the nearest railway station, where I hoped to find some. But this nearest station proved to be a long way off, and as dusk descended, I still saw no signs of inhabitation. I hoped only that my paraffin would hold out.

When it became quite dark I heard the barking of dogs somewhere in the vicinity, and I concluded that I would soon be all right,—only to find that a quiet river barred my way. I stopped. Having already not very happy memories of crossing rivers in the past, I decided that being alone, I would not risk dashing into it, and instead, removing my shoes and rolling up my trousers, I tried to fathom the depth of the water. In the darkness the cold water felt particularly ominous, and in two or three yards I was in up to my waist. I backed out abruptly, and whilst dripping on the bank, I gloomily reviewed the situation. I could not go back as the paraffin was fast ebbing, and I could not risk a crossing. Nothing else to do, and I decided to spend the night on the spot.

Not very cheerfully, I pushed my bike up the bank a little, and spreading the tarpaulin over it, I made up my mind to sleep under it. Just as I was preparing this, I suddenly realised that I was ravenously hungry, as I had had nothing since leaving Kharkov at 5 a.m. On leaving that city, my motor cyclist friends had given me a parcel of food, with the thought that it would save me time in finding refreshment. When I opened it, I found inside a cold chicken, scones and an apple pie,—what more could one wish? But I am a vegetarian, and in spite of that, I must confess that the aroma of the chicken tickled my nostrils! Putting temptation aside, I finished off the remainder and soon fell asleep, even though it was cold and my clothes were wet.

I do not know how much time passed, when I was awakened by a snarl next to my ear. Startled, and hurting myself against a protruding part of my machine, I sat up under my improvised tent. What could it be? A huge dog? A wolf? Then I heard a paw scratching the surface of the tarpaulin, and I instantly realised that the chicken was the cause for this intrusion. I thought that if I could somehow throw the chicken out, without endangering myself, it might do the trick. Moving cautiously, I flung out the provocative fowl in the opposite direction, and heard a scampering to get the morsel.

Feeling more secure then, I tried to sleep again. But no, my wild visitor, having whetted his appetite, sniffed around for more. That changed my mind about sleeping. Getting no

other parcel thrown out to him, he became bolder, and tried to get beneath the tarpaulin. Still thinking it may be a wolf, I decided to use my electric torch to frighten him away, a method used in dealing with wolves. Now it remained for me to have enough courage to get out of my tent, which was the most difficult part of the scheme! So I attempted a less risky step, and getting a screwdriver, I made a hole in the covering, and began to flash my torch through it. This put him off, only to make him more persistent on the other side. I longed for daylight, and peeping through the hole, I could see his eyes gleaming in the darkness a little way off. I was left without any doubt that it must have been a wolf, and taking out my tools, I started such a din of clanking of spanners against mud-guards, and banging metal parts, hoping by this to keep him from making a direct assault on me, until light.

After some time at this, I began to tire, and cursing the thing outside, I stopped for a rest. To my astonishment, I heard it no more running around, and still afraid to crawl out, I sat motionless until my peephole informed me of approaching dawn. Overcome with fatigue, I fell into a doze, and promptly at five, as shown by my watch, I rose "fresh" again.

Before starting off, I naturally had to investigate all about the river crossing. There was no bridge in sight, but I noticed horse tracks leading to the water. I saw in the distance people walking towards some straw ricks, so I ran to them quickly to enquire about the road. I was told that it was rather deep to cross it with a motor-cycle, although horses and oxen get over. They also asked me how I had got there, as it was so far off the beaten track, and it seemed that in the darkness I had taken a wrong turning. I was directed, with much relief, to a place where I could obtain petrol, and proceeding there, I used up my last drop of paraffin.

It was a raw day, with a cold north-east wind, and my still damp clothes did not contribute to my comfort. I drove on.

Now the Don basin was opening before me, and I hoped to reach Rostov some time early afternoon. By now, having done more than half my journey, I felt that, barring major misfortunes, I should reach Tiflis in scheduled time. But, as practice usually shows, there is little sense in counting one's chickens before they get hatched. I had three punctures that day, which considerably delayed me. At Shakhtii, when I entered it, I found several organisations had prepared me a great welcome; some people of this important coal mining town remembered me when I passed it in a military trial-race four years

previously. I wished to spend as little time there as possible but was dragged into a celebrating banquet with speeches, toasts and greetings, and it was not until three hours later that I left for Rostov. It was warm with sunshine as I was banqueting, but when I took off—then there started a sudden thunderstorm and in addition, further on, a group of peasants advised me to take a short cut towards Rostov, which actually proved to be the longest cut I ever had. In the middle of this "short cut", in an open field, the torrential rain came down with such increased vigour that I was forced to stop, and spreading my tarpaulin, took what shelter I could beneath it until the storm abated. By this time the clayey soil was soon flooded till I was ankle deep. Rain, the like of which I have only experienced since, during the monsoons in India.

When at last the downpour had ceased, and a rainbow appeared in the sky, I found it was impossible to move an inch. My motor-cycle had sunk into the clay, and as it was so heavy, I was unable even to push it. It also tended to fall over, since no sidecar supported it!

Looking around me, I could see the crops lying flattened to the ground—such a heavy rain it was. Then I thought that I might be able to go along the edges of the fields, using the carpet of weeds as a foothold for the wheels. Gathering bundles of different grasses, I lay down a track in the pasty ground, so that I could reach my projected path. With a tremendous effort I dragged the bike from where it was made fast, and very slowly, I was only able to advance in second gear, as my wheels kept sinking in. Darkness inevitably overtook me, but fortunately I had by then come down by the fields on to a very third grade road which at least had a direction.

I was determined to push on and get to Rostov, even though I travel all night. Towards 3 a.m. I passed Nakhichevan, which is only a short way from Rostov, when suddenly my motor-cycle lost all its springiness, and the steering became harsh. Stopping, and with my torch, I found the front spring had broken. Quickly pushing it to the nearest house, I asked refuge for the night. Letting me in, I snatched two hours' sleep. In the morning I looked at the breakage and came to the sad conclusion that I had no spare spring, nor could I obtain a replacement in this small town. With some wire and a few pieces of steel I did a makeshift repair, which allowed me to proceed at a low speed, carefully avoiding all the bumps, until I reached Rostov. I remember stopping every few miles to see that my frame had not cracked as a result!



In Rostov I found no one in the Motor Cycle Club, as it was so early, besides they had expected me the day before. The caretaker immediately informed members of my arrival, and meanwhile I was dismantling my front fork so as to replace the spring. But the main thing was to find a spring. Together we rang up every conceivable place to get a new part, but without success, being told each time that the G.P.U. alone had Harley-Davidsons, and they alone would have the much-desired article. G.P.U.! Easy said!

Still, known to be an undaunted person, I went to the headquarters of the North Caucasian G.P.U. Dishevelled and dirty, I approached the commandant and told him why I came there. Smilingly he told me that the G.P.U. was not a right place for supplying those things! Of course, I said, I knew that, and told him of my vain search elsewhere, and that my only hope was to try the G.P.U. as the only possessor of the same bikes. He was adamant, and repeated a polite but firm refusal. Suddenly recollecting the name of the Chief of the Frontier Corps of this region, Comrade Boichenko, who privately owned a Harley, as I had been informed, I sought permission to see him. The commandant, still objecting to it, 'phoned through to Boichenko's department, and in a few minutes I was allowed to see him.

Entering his office, I glanced around and saw several secretaries seated there, and other assistants taking orders from him. Boichenko received me simply, but with a peculiar ironical expression, and asked me, "What can I do for you, citizen?"

I answered, "Very much indeed, Comrade Boichenko. If you haven't heard about me, then I am Pataleewa, and am motor cycling from Leningrad to Tiflis on my Harley-Davidson. I have just had a breakdown, and no one can help me but you."

"Me?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, you, as you have a Harley too, and must have spares."

He laughed and said, "Ah, I see! So you are Pataleewa! I am very glad to see you, as I have read of you in the news, but I haven't got the part you want."

I became so desperate, and exclaimed: "You must do something to help me. You are the only one who can do it. Unless you arrest me, I shall not leave your office until you do something about it."

A settled expression came over his face, and really expecting to be arrested for my impudence,—he sat down and in a slow, calm and deliberate voice, in front of all those present, he said: "Do you know, I have lived my life and met people, but you

are the first person who is so irresistibly insistent that I ever came across."

Without saying more, he gave orders to his staff, and dismissing his assistants, said that he would telephone his return, and turning to me pronounced, "Come along."

He was a tall, well built man, in the G.P.U. uniform, with a big revolver at his side. Proceeding fast before me, and myself trotting behind, trying to keep up with his pace, I was rather afraid to say anything more. He led me straight to the G.P.U. garage, summoned all his mechanics, and in a voice that brooked no refusal, he asked if they had the required spring, and if they had not they were to get one. Knowing very well they had none like this, the mechanics went through the stores, bringing out hundreds of springs of all descriptions, but not the one I needed. Looking at me, Boichenko said, "Well, I have done my best, but in vain. Can we do anything else for you?"

Plucking up all my courage, I dared to say, "But what about your own motor-cycle, is there no spring on it?"

Striking his forehead, he exclaimed, "Ah indeed, how could I forget that?" And I could not make out if this was in earnest or in irony, as it meant his dismantling his own machine and giving up the spring. Commenting no more, he took up a telephone and got through to the G.P.U. summer camp, just outside Rostov and asked, "Is my motor-cycle there? Then get it ready, I want it." Again turning to me he said, "Now I shall take you there by car, and if the spring is there, you shall have it."

Driving his official huge Buick, he took me to their summer camp. On the way, myself seated beside him, I felt more certain about the spring. Later on Boichenko thawed out a little, and asked me questions about my journey, the roads, the weather, and even added that he himself preferred motor cycling to car driving, and when off duty or on holiday, he indulged in it. Oh, the affinity between motor cyclists!

Just half way to the camp, with a loud report, our back tyre flattened. Not having his chauffeur, who would do the job, he himself changed the spare wheel. We had not gone a couple of yards when the same wheel noiselessly deflated again. He looked at me, as it appeared to me with a menacing sparkle, and feeling as though it was my fault I said, "Couldn't I help you, I am so used to this business?" He laughed again and replied, "Oh no. Spare your energy for your own tyres, I shall manage alone."

The midday August sun was hot, and excusing himself for removing his tunic, and putting his revolvers on the verge he proceeded to repair the puncture. I felt that everything was against me that day, as his chauffeur had forgotten to leave a spare inner tube and Boichenko had to patch the punctured one. Finding the rubber solution, it was so dry that it was unusable. He said, subduing his anger and throwing aside the solution tube, "Ivan, my chauffeur, will catch it for this!"

Using my ingenuity, I cut open the solution tube with a penknife, and found in the middle just a little that was sticky. He looked at me in surprise and said between his teeth, "I see," and went on with the repair. Finally in order, we resumed towards the camp.

Passing through the gates at the camp, and seeing one sentry after another jumping to the salute, I thought—how important he must be. But I received a shock when his perplexed A.D.C. informed him that after 'phoning, his chauffeur had taken the motor-cycle to Rostov. "How is that?" Boichenko asked. "We didn't see him on the way, and we spent a considerable time with punctures. I ordered it to be got ready only. I didn't ask him to bring it."

"Oh no, he has gone by a short route, as we took it you wanted the Harley there at once," was the answer.

Turning the car round we returned to Rostov.

Going at a good speed, and hoping to overtake the motor-cycle near Rostov, we came upon a crowd in one of the suburbs, right in the middle of the road. Pulling up, Boichenko perceived his chauffeur, standing forlorn, and looking most unhappy. Slowly advancing, and saluting with a trembling hand, the latter reported, "I am sorry, Comrade Boichenko, but your motor-cycle has come to an end," and faintly indicated the spot.

"What do you mean?" asked Boichenko, getting out of the car like a bullet, with me at his heels.

Concealed by the crowd, there lay the remains of the motor-cycle. It scorched my heart for many reasons, but I was revived on seeing the front fork was flung clear with its spring and wheel, lying a little distance away, undamaged. Afraid to show the crudeness of my joy, as the occasion did not call for it, I looked at Boichenko. He clenched his teeth, and a little pale, he ordered his chauffeur to remove the required spring at once, and stay there until he would send a lorry to collect the fragments.

From an unknown cause, the machine had blown up, as the

chauffeur was getting off to attend to some irregularity in its working. Consequently he was not killed, but only hurt.

At last clasping the hard gotten spring in my hands, we returned to the city. After some silence Boichenko said, "That was a million to one chance, and my poor bike got it."

Thinking that I might be hungry, which I admitted, he brought me to a restaurant, where he left me. Then he sent his car to fetch me to the motor-cycle club, where my Harley was waiting me. Just when I set to work, rolling up my sleeves, I saw Boichenko enter with two men in uniform following him. Smiling, he declared that as it was already getting late, he thought it would save me time if he brought his mechanics, to help me. What a warm heart that cold man had, I thought!

For half an hour he sat watching, while we three were busying ourselves with the spring. It was already 5 p.m. when I was ready to start again. Boichenko, looking at me straight but somewhat more gentle than before, said, "Now, it is rather late,—don't you think it would be much better if you stayed the night in Rostov, and after a good rest start early to-morrow?"

"No, I shall go at once, and do what mileage I can till night-fall."

He sighed, which surprised me, and uttered, "No, I thought you wouldn't stay. What a woman you are! I sensed it this morning when you came to my office. At least allow me to accompany you to Bataisk, as there is a shorter road for military use, which is closed to ordinary traffic. I will say goodbye to you there."

Boichenko in a car, with his adjutant at his side, I following, and a light van with his two mechanics tailing off behind my motor-cycle—we set off.

When we approached one of the tributaries of the Don, on the outskirts of Rostov, there was no bridge and no other means of crossing. Of course our procession stopped, and I thought with friendly malice: "Aha! Now Boichenko has met something that is beyond him, as we can neither jump nor swim it!" We got down, and I was about to ask him a question, but precisely at that moment he made a sign, and as if from nowhere, there appeared a pontoon bridge. This magic carpet was hidden by the bank in a most inconspicuous manner, and at his "will" another hidden force set it in motion! The whole thing opened out fanwise, and swung round till it touched the other side, and we comfortably crossed the water.

I felt so confused at my previous doubt in Boichenko's power, that I did not even dare to express anything. But he looked

at me with an expression as if to say, "Oh, that one's nothing, we've got some more up our sleeve!"

We proceeded. After skirting the foot of a hill, I looked up and suddenly saw a black, menacing and ominously thundering sky. In front of us another obstacle loomed up. The roundabout road from Rostov was crossing our path, only at the top of a very steep forty-foot cutting, and though I tried not to think of Boichenko's inability to meet this barrier, I still believed that the "supernatural" might yet happen!

When we reached the foot of this cutting, we stopped. Then he got out of his car, and coming close to me, he said, "Now, you see that sky? Before you get a mile further you will be wet through, and as night is on top of you—won't you reconsider your decision and return with us to Rostov for the night, and in the morning we shall bring you back here?" I must say that I really did not like the picture unfolding itself before me, but being already behind my schedule, I ought to persist in going ahead in spite of any obstacle. But most important of all was the fact that I did not want to appear before Boichenko as one so easily dissuaded from facing the difficulty! He sighed deeply, as if to say that he could do anything but deter me. Lastly he said, "Please, promise me, that if in spite of your determination, you will find that rain, mud, and night are too much for you and your motor-cycle—you will ring me up at the Rostov G.P.U. from a post office two miles further on on the road, and we shall fetch you back". I promised that I should, and we shook hands. He stepped forward, and making a fresh gesture, the preciseness of which I missed, being preoccupied with my motor-cycle,—suddenly, a platform large enough to carry a big lorry, appeared. Looking at me, he silently invited me to place myself and my bike upon it, which I did, and in a second I found myself on the arterial road above.

This final astonishment made me immune to feel the large drops of rain already falling down. Leaning over, I heard Boichenko shout up, "Don't forget to ring me up!" I just waved, and kicking my motor-cycle to life, I was off.

I set off at such a pace as if to race the clouds rapidly overtaking me. Gusts of rain came on, accompanied by thunder and lightning in otherwise complete darkness, which made further progress impossible. By this time the road had descended to the level of the surrounding country, and a little further on a flash of lightning revealed a haystack by the roadside. I swooped towards it, and pulling down armsful of hay, covered my machine. Having done this, I dived into the stack myself,

burrowing a shelter in it. My soaking boiler suit was unpleasantly clinging to my body, and all alone with the elements unleashed around me, I felt far from happy. Inevitably, the warnings of Boichenko came into my mind, and the picture of staying somewhere in Rostov in a comfortable warm bed, made my present position feel still worse.

Since I had to spend the night where I was, I tried to make the best of it. The rain was easing off, and getting out for a moment I investigated the possibility of moving on. But I found the soil gummy and heavy like a quagmire, and as the night was pitch dark, with a promise of more rain—I sadly succumbed to the prospect of spending it in the haystack. This time I hollowed out enough room to curl in for some sort of rest. After this I attempted to remove my garage suit, and spread it nearby to dry out, but the hay began to prickle so much that I had to put it on again for protection. My leather overcoat had been tied up amongst my kit on the pillion, but as it would be wet—I did not care to get it out.

In a little while my feet got cold, and I could not fall asleep. Tossing about, I tried to chase away thoughts of my discomfiture, and instead to think about my most adventurous day. Boichenko was definitely a kind of symbol in my eyes. The symbol of a hidden power, at the same time human, though so masterly subdued. I thought, I should like to meet that man again, but perhaps in circumstances of equal strength and power. Little did I know that this wish would materialise, and in a way least of all expected. All the same I was much intrigued about those conjuring tricks that I had witnessed, and which had helped me to reach this haystack! I was aware that these were secret military points, and I ought to feel so privileged to be able to get a glimpse of their working. What astonished me most, in the process of my thinking, was the fact that Boichenko seemed to take it for granted that I should put all I had seen—into oblivion. I must mention therefore, that because Rostov fell to the Germans just over a week before writing this, I do not betray any military secrets in describing the above.

From sheer tiredness, perhaps, I managed to snatch an hour or so of sleep. The dawn looked very gloomy, with a strong wind blowing wisps of hay about. My clothes got half dry during the night, which was better than being quite wet. I scrambled out of my hole and unfolded the map. The next big plateau on my way would be Kushchevskaya, and the road appeared to be flat like the steppe. I pushed my motor through the intervening slough to the road itself and started

off. Apparently I was only eight or ten miles from the place where I had left Boichenko!

In about an hour, I arrived at a village where I could get some food. Unfortunately, there the road forked, and my direction lay through the fields along a miry track, though the telegraph poles marking it at least promised to lead me to the right place.

Fortifying myself with a light meal of milk and bread, I decided that I should try to ride all day non-stop, with only refuelling halts, until late that night, when I hoped to reach Mozdok, near Grozny. The road would have been good if the rain during the night had not made it so muddy with continuous stretches of pools of water. Of course, in a strictly European sense of motor roads, it was not one at all, it was simply a farm track across the fields, stretching for over a hundred miles. From what I read in Russian motor-cycle magazines, this would present the English motor-cyclist's dream of a "trial", whilst in Russia, we had to endure it when in a race!

Little streams and dykes, usually very shallow in the summer, were now in full flood, and every few miles I would have to cross one. Having sad reminiscences in connection with such crossings, I would stop at each one, and try it out on foot both ways, and if I found it passable, then I would venture with my motor-cycle. At one place I encountered a depth that was too great, and had to seek a bridge over it or a more shallow ford, but no.

Whilst searching for a crossing, a glider came down in a neighbouring field. I approached the pilot quickly, explaining my plight, and asking if he had noticed any way over the flood, or some end to it. He had not seen anything to help me, but had spotted some peasants in a field a half mile off, and was sure they could give me help.

I immediately ran towards them, and in half an hour I was embarking with my Harley-Davidson on a farm dray. Peasants and their children came to haul it up a ramp consisting of a rough board, and a horse forded us to the other side. I was so happy, that I got out some money to reward the children and the peasants for their help. But they all refused to take anything, declaring in typically Russian fashion, "Oh no, we must help one another along," adding that, "God helps us, so we must help others." This incidentally is the religion of the Russian peasant, so simple and so true!

Once again out of difficulty, I resumed my "race". Soon I ran into wet clay, just of that heavy, stiff consistency, as used

by sculptors in modelling. Unhappily, my wheels did not take a liking to this. I spent a couple of hours cleaning clay from the mudguards each time, after only a few yards' progress at low speed. This patience of mine was due to the hope that I should soon find myself out of the clutches of this dreadful clay. But the dark brown covering of the earth seemed to stretch beyond the horizon. Almost with tears in my eyes, I decided to remove the mudguards, knowing full well that I should have to waste more time in putting them back again, or take the consequences of being sprayed with mud before and behind, if left without them. Eventually I chose the latter, and one can easily imagine the state of my appearance during the remaining days of my ride. My face was continually plastered with mud, and my clothes became thickened with congealed layers of sand, clay and chernozyom.

In the improved condition, without mudguards, my progress became more evident, though owing to better speed—I was thrown into many sidespins.

I stopped neither for drink nor food. After Kushchevskaya, the clay gave place to chernozyom, and the rain started again. I would reach a water-logged stretch, dismount, gather wayside weeds, and lay a track in the mire to enable a grip for the back wheel. When unable to find weeds, I had to pull it out by main force, floundering in half a foot of marsh. This went on for the rest of the day, and I shall never forget the strain put on all my muscles, especially the abdominal ones. It seemed to me that if such an experience would go on for another day I should get a rupture.

To save time in taking off my shoes each time I waded into the mud, I kept them off, tied together and hanging round my neck. Thus I had to ride barefoot for that day, and with continual braking and use of the foot clutch—the flesh on the soles of my feet was laid bare.

That day I only managed to reach Armavir at about midnight, and as there were too many odds against me, shortage of petrol, hunger, and slight tiredness as I had not eaten all day, I decided to stay there for a few hours' sleep, which I could not do at once, as I had to mend a puncture picked up at the last moment.

At 5 a.m. next morning, just as I was about to start, a man in uniform approached me, and saluting, said that there had been a call from Rostov G.P.U. enquiring if I had passed Armavir, and how I was getting on. I felt warmer with the thought that someone was concerned about my progress!



On leaving Armavir I made my plan to call at Pyatigorsk, where our patron Lezhava was taking the waters at the spa there. It was slightly out of my way, but I decided to call, and give him my greetings near the end of my run to Tiflis.

Passing one of the villages, I disturbed the peace of the local children, and a whole gang of them chased me with much noise; even their dogs joined in, which made me slacken speed so as not to have any accident. Approaching the end of the village, I saw a number of hens and their chicks basking in the centre of the road, as they are apt to do everywhere. They were half buried in the sand when the dogs, barking and running beside me, roused them, and in their perplexity they scattered all over the road. To avoid killing any, I swerved aside and plunged into the edge of a marsh hidden by weeds. My machine began subsiding on one side, and in an endeavour to right it, I clutched the hot cylinders between my bare legs. Instantly I felt about to be thrown out of my saddle by the sharp burning pain. I just managed to stop, getting clear of the marsh and then dismounted. The hot fins of the cylinders imprinted themselves into the flesh of my legs, and the sensation was of an unbearable torture. I hastily and clumsily wrapped them in large dirty handkerchiefs, bound them with string, and thus proceeded.

On reaching Mineralny Vody I passed an infirmary, where I was given first aid attention. It was a nice sunny day, with everything drying up. There was a bit of decent road in front of me so I speeded through, but soon it became very hilly. On arriving at Pyatigorsk I found Lezhava had gone on to the next spa, Zheleznovodsk. (Pyatigorsk means the Town on Five Hills, Zheleznovodsk means Iron Mineral Water Spa, and Mineralny Vody is Mineral Waters.)

The way there was off the main road, along a horsetrack, dotted with granite boulders, and its presence only indicated by occasional horse marks. Local inhabitants described the short cut—over the big hill into the vineyard, then over a river and there, beyond a ravine I should find Zheleznovodsk. The gradient of the hill became so terrific, that with the projecting stones it made my zigzag climb quite perilous. At times I had to lean over and grasp the edge of a boulder, with one foot on the ground, to prevent my motor-cycle from slipping back from under me! There seemed to be no end to this slow climb, but I felt it was better to go forward and up than to go down, which would have been much more dangerous, had I wished to try another route. While performing this mountaineering feat, I thought: how much safer it is to go to Zheleznovodsk by rail,

as all people do! Still, I had to do it on my bike, and on reaching the summit, I stopped to rest a bit. Looking back at the precipitous climb, I thought I was just lucky not to have broken my neck! My cylinders were hot from low gear work, and after cooling them down I went on through vineyards.

Finally I came to Zheleznovodsk, which lies in a beautiful ravine, surrounded by hilly forests. I soon found Lezhava, who was surprised but most pleased to see me. He told me that he had been following my race by the wireless and newspapers, but never dreamt that I should call on him. On hearing that I was going to push on at once, he insisted that I have at least a meal with him; he also telephoned at once for medical help to attend my burns. I went so far as to take a bath even, and whilst having it, my boiler suit was rapidly cleaned, so that I stepped out refreshed and renewed!

While dining together, Lezhava bombarded me with questions, and told me in the end that he was very proud of me. He said that to him I was an embodiment of Soviet Woman who would go through thick and thin, through fire and water, to achieve the aim set. I did not feel like accepting such praise, though it flattered me immensely.

Lezhava insisted on my staying the night, as it was already getting dark, besides the surrounding region was inhabited with a tribal-like population, to whom the night travelling of a white woman would look like an opportunity for waylaying. I gave in, as I really needed a good night's sleep. He then gave orders to his garage to clean my machine and get it ready. In the meantime, I went to the dental clinic there, to attend to my previously damaged teeth. I have not mentioned yet, that five days prior to my departure from Leningrad in this race, I had an accident.

I was riding an English water-cooled motor-cycle, a Scott, from Novgorod to Leningrad, with several members of our club. On approaching Leningrad, and just before crossing the Neva, a girl dashed out from the pavement, right in front of me. In order not to run her down, I turned aside sharply, and brought the motor-cycle over on its side, still at speed, whilst the following motor-cycle to avoid the same, turned and crashed into a tramcar. On falling to the ground, my handlebar rebounded and struck me in the face. My leg was pinned beneath the machine, and when a crowd had released me, I felt unable to answer any of the many questions thrown to me. Both my jaws were stunned, and blood was streaming down in profusion. I was picked up, when I heard, "Look, her teeth are hanging!" and only then I realised that something was wrong with my

mouth. Militia fetched an ambulance and I was taken to a first-aid station. There my upper lip was sewn up, my nose-bleeding stopped, and teeth were temporarily arranged until I reached an odontological institute. There, two professors spent some time resetting my teeth, as I insisted to retain them, if it was at all possible to save them. Though they had been torn out of my jaws, the roots had not been damaged, as an X-ray revealed. A metal shield was put on each jaw, to which every loosened tooth was fastened separately; I was supposed to keep this inconvenience in my mouth for two months, to let the teeth grow in, if they would!

And when I got to Zheleznovodsk I decided to remove that metal contraption, as I thought my teeth had by then grown in firmly again. Besides it was a great nuisance, in talking and eating, and my lips were continually torn and bleeding by catching on the metal shields. When it was found to be less than three weeks in, the dentist refused their removal, and only after much insistence did he clear the upper jaw only. He was surprised to find how speedily my upper teeth had grown in, saying that he had never met such a strong person, adding that I must possess tons of vitality!

In the late evening I spent some time talking with Lezhava. Ever since I learned about his episode in the Siberian snows, I felt drawn to him, because I sensed that he had much spiritual force in him, which is, as in many other Bolsheviks in Soviet Russia, hidden so deeply that one cannot find it by just looking for it. This subtle quality,—because it is not manifested in them outwardly—I found belongs to all those people who have suffered much in life. And which old Bolshevik did not pass through such hardening tribulations?

Next day I departed early, Lezhava and others saw me off. He asked me to send him a telegram when I should be nearing my finish, as he would feel very worried about me, after hearing of so many obstacles I had met with already.

I was shown out of the spa, and the way to join the arterial road leading to Grozny. Between Mozdok and Grozny I had to turn into the fields again, in order to by-pass the latter, as the approaches through the oilfields would take hours that I could not spare. That led me to some of the Soviet grain and cattle farms, which struck me with their vast scale and the happy activity of men and women working there. It seemed that everything was solid and in plenty, whether it concerned machinery or buildings, or even the appearance of the cattle. It pains my

heart to think that all these are now destroyed and trampled down. How ardently I pray that it is not for long. That it will soon be over, and that at least some parts of Russia will be spared this holocaust . . .

The road through the fields was very uneven and bumpy, and I could not get up any speed, in fact I do not know if I gained any time at all in by-passing Grozny. Further afield I found that my route led me along a narrow track raised about ten feet above the normal level, with a dyke on either side. This went on for some way, and as it was highly cambered, I found myself keeping with difficulty from sliding down into the dykes.

When I was about midway along this "embankment", peasants in a narrow two-wheeled ox-cart met me head on, and neither being able to pass the other, we stopped. The scene that followed reminded me of the story of the two obstinate goats that met on a narrow plank-bridge. Neither of us was willing to give way and descend into the dyke, but whilst it was impossible for me, with some difficulty they could manage with the oxen. In spite of my reasoning with them, the two drivers would not give way, and placidly declared that even though they wait five days, there they would stay. On hearing that, I became so enraged that I said, "Look here, I ask you for the last time, let me through. You don't meet motor-cyclists in this way every day, and if you don't, then . . ." and I pulled out a big Colt revolver threateningly. Before I had finished the sentence, the oxen were rapidly whipped aside into the dyke, and I was gone! I laughed over this as I went on, knowing quite well that I would not shoot in any case. But what a magic effect it had! So they did not have five days to wait! One of their motives in not giving way, was an urgent errand to the collective farm, and so now I was sure they reached it without delay! These men were not Russians, but of Cherkessian type, and that would probably explain their stubbornness, especially in not wanting to be outdone by a mere woman.

When I got on the proper road again, I proceeded at full speed towards Ordzhonikidze. This is the new name for Vladikavkas.

I was already one day overdue on my original schedule, so I decided to ride all night, and reach Tiflis early next morning.

Ordzhonikidze is at the beginning of the Georgian Military Highway, at the other end of which is Tiflis. I knew every inch of these remaining 140 miles, and so in spite of its precipitous heights, hairpin bends, overhanging rocks, terrifying gradients, and a multitude of other dangers, I thought to overcome them

all in a final night drive to Tiflis. After rains, and due to continual thawing of mountain snow, rapid torrents add to motor-cycling difficulties by crossing one's path, and through which one has to splash.

I reached Ordzhonikidze at dusk, and refuelling for the last time, and having just a bunch of grapes for refreshment, I sped on. The surface of this road is never muddy, being partly metalled and part of stone, so one can keep up a good speed where it is straight. But as most of it winds dangerously round acute bends, many of our races along it were very tragic, as every event would finish with a fatality. All the same, I would try my luck and devour that space during the night.

When I began the climb of the mountain pass, the cold night air rushing towards me made me shiver. As I passed places where there were continuous walls of solid rock with overhanging arches and caverns, the noise of my exhaust resounded and reverberated, making my ears hear sounds that were perhaps more imagined than real. On the other side, there was a precipice, at the bottom of which raged the fast river Terek, adding its fussy noise to the din. Usually no one passes there alone at night, partly because of the danger of driving, and also that there is a risk of encountering the mountain tribes, who come down at night to waylay and rob travellers. With these people, even then the Soviet Government had not been able to deal, as it would take some considerable time to re-educate or "liquidate" them.

The higher up I went, the colder it became, and finally I reached cloud-level, which is always lower at night without the sun to lift it up. Added to this weirdness, my headlamp was throwing its stream of light, which, with the many sharp bends, was flashing from one side of the gorge to another, as if some giant with a torch was trying to locate me. Strange shadows and patterns followed me in grotesque and hurrying shapes, and at times the ground mist would gather in white shroud-like forms on which my light played many fancy tricks.

At the foot of Mount Kazbek (16,552 feet)—is the highest altitude of this highway, and it is rare, if ever, that there is neither rain nor hail there. And so, when I reached this highest spot, I was exposed to the full play of the elements, because at that time the most awful thunderstorm that I have ever experienced overtook me. Lightning flashes pierced the sky and lit up the mountains in all their wild starkness, and it seemed to me that the darting arrows of light, in anger and rage, tried to tear off lumps from the mountain ridges. I felt such an infini-

tesimal speck amid this fury, that it looked as if I could not avoid being swept away far down below. As in all such moments, awe-stricken thoughts crowded my mind, suggesting that one single flash might pierce me through, as I was in contact with metal parts, although insulated partly by rubber tyres.

After Kazbek, I hurried down in frightful haste in order to get to a lower level, where I knew the rain would not be falling. Then I reached Goodaooty, where the rain really lessened, though the flood pouring along the road, almost carried me with it.

Later, on a good straight stretch, I opened out to full throttle, and just as I was passing a lonely settlement of two or three houses, I heard a sound like a gunshot, when my back tyre not only flattened but came off part of the rim. I stopped, and taking my torch to examine the happening, found it too sodden to give any light. In pitch darkness I could do nothing, as the headlight was of no use to me either. Unfortunately when I left my side-car in Kharkov, most of my luxurious kit with an inspection lamp among its things, was left behind.

I leaned my motor-cycle against a huge stone and sat down beside it. I thought, "Why do all these misfortunes and setbacks dog me unceasingly?" There was only one comforting feature, that I was very near my goal, Tiflis.

I walked back a little to investigate the house I had passed, and knocking there, an old Georgian, who was known to motorcyclists as a blacksmith, opened the door to me. Astonished at the late hour, he nevertheless welcomed me, and hearing my sad story, went out to push my bike into his smithy. Then he offered me some food that I greedily partook, as I had hardly eaten that day. It consisted of mountain cheese, grapes, chawpatties, and instead of water, a light wine, which is their usual beverage. The latter warmed me up wonderfully, and soon, out of sheer tiredness, I fell asleep sitting in an old chair.

A couple of hours must have passed thus, when with a sudden start, I realised that I was doing nothing. With a feeling of shame I sprang up, and taking a kerosene lamp, went out to do the repair. To my dismay, I found the inner tube badly lacerated which I had to patch so much, that I used up all my puncture outfit. It was not quite five when I was ready to start again.

Since leaving Armavir there was no news about me, and nobody knew what had happened to me. Comrade Boichenko, after several direct calls from Rostov to Tiflis, found no satisfactory answer to my whereabouts, and decided to trace me through G.P.U. channels. It was by this means also that Tiflis

learned about my nearing it, after I had passed Ordzhonikidze.

Meanwhile I was fast approaching the Georgian capital, Tiflis. Near Passanaoory, I had two nasty punctures in quick succession, fortunately a passing çar gave me a spare inner tube, which helped me out. After this there remained only some fifty miles to my goal.

About twenty miles from Tiflis, a whole column of motor-cyclists met me with flowers and greetings. They had been waiting me there for six hours, due to my delay in the smithy. My friends congratulated me and otherwise expressed their joy at my safe and happy arrival! But as I had got so inured to my bitter and adventurous run of continual movement, when I reached Tiflis, I had no feeling that it was the end, but just another of the many stops on the way.

Everyone found me looking very thin, and black from the sun and dirt, and my clothes least of all remindful of a champion. When all together in procession, we entered Tiflis itself, the usual photographs were taken, and journalists had to satisfy their insatiable curiosity. As to myself, I was just longing for a little rest!

That evening I attended a banquet in my honour, given by the Georgian authorities and the motor-cycle club. In the middle of it there came a telegram from Moscow, congratulating me on my success. The telegram was addressed to the champion motor-cyclist of Russia.

This news filled my heart with joy, and I felt that all my sufferings and difficulties in this record run were rewarded, through appreciation of what I had achieved.

When I say a "record run", I mean that though I spent much of my daytime in combating adversities on the way—I did a lot of night riding, to catch up for the lost time. Altogether it took me just over eleven days.

Here is one of the quotations from the Moscow newspapers that wrote about my race:

"We are glad to report that Comrade Barbara Patalewa has just accomplished her race on her Harley-Davidson motor-cycle, from Leningrad to Tiflis.

"This route of 2,640 miles, in spite of continual rains and impassable roads, as a result, Comrade Patalewa covered this distance in record time, even for a man. This race has a very great social meaning, as it shows, that in respect of heavy motor-cycle riding in such conditions, a woman does not take second place to a man.

“Comrade Pataleewa took a successful part in a big military trial race in 1928, proving that this her last race was not an accidental stroke of luck.

“The attraction of women into mechanical transport and the running of tractors on collective farms is a most important and necessary task at present, and demands the involving of hundreds of thousands of them in this work. That is why we think that races and trials in which women participate, prove more in achievements than if men only take part in them.

“In this sense we more than welcome the initiative of Comrade Pataleewa in doing this most difficult and lonely run, and over such a long distance, virtually across all Russia.”

In these simple words I felt fully rewarded.

#### CHAPTER XIV

### MORE LIMELIGHT, SUFFERINGS AND A SECOND ‘MARRIAGE’

**A**FTER A FEW more days in Tiflis I returned to Leningrad by rail, with my motor-cycle following me in the same train. I had plenty of rest on my way back, planning to make another individual race from Moscow to Vladivostok next spring.

On arrival in Leningrad, I was again met and fêted by clubs and other organisations. Later there came a badge and a diploma from the Government—the rewards for my last race.

Only a couple of weeks after my return from Tiflis, I was challenged to make a non-stop endurance run from Minsk in White Russia to Leningrad. This had to be performed on a light Ford lorry. There would be another car to follow, with members of the technical and investigating committee.

At that time there was much discussion in our Auto club and allied organisations, working in conjunction with the Red Army,—whether it was possible to establish the fact that an ordinary Red Army driver could take an average vehicle for thirty-six hours' continuous driving. I insisted, that from my own experience, I could state that with exertion a thirty-six hours' run was possible. It was quite another proposition though, when the time was spread over night-day-night, instead of day-night-



day. All the same, I was pleased to accept personally such a test of endurance. Interest would be doubled by the fact that I was a woman, and the proposed course, in part, was marshy and added to the trial.

The timing was conditioned to be: night-day and again night. A distance of approximately 720 miles had to be covered. As it was already autumn, and rains were falling heavily, the committee calculated that on good roads the speed could be 35-40 miles an hour, while in marshy regions it might be possible to make only 5-7 miles an hour. Taking in account the inevitable punctures, and a few refuellings—the average speed should therefore be about 18-20 miles per hour.

Off we set with the car and light lorry by rail to Minsk, and having a whole day for sight-seeing in the capital of White Russia, at 6 p.m. I climbed into the driving seat of the Ford, which was rather different to my Harley-Davidson's saddle! Further conditions of this run were: to avoid unnecessary stops, and not to give me time for resting. The members of the committee would do puncture repairs en route, in the body of a lorry, having spare wheels with them. A barrel of petrol and oil were in my lorry. One of the committee sat next to me, and two in the body, the rest followed in a car.

From Minsk, the first part of the journey, until darkness, was quite exhilarating, as the setting sun was throwing its rays beautifully on the forest of pines that lined one side of the road. It seemed to me that all the night would pass in this pleasant manner. But after it became dark, we turned into a thick-wooded marshy region, which extended over sixty miles.

Immediately my lorry began to get impeded, by sinking one or two of its wheels, or even all four, in the spongy ground. I had to change gear continually to cope with this obstruction. At times there were patches of wet sand which treacherously buried the wheels up to the axles. All this made my engine as hot as the tropical sun. There was no question of speed, but a mere crawl, and I thought it may take me seventy-two hours to reach Leningrad! I battled with this boggy surface till dawn, and felt not in the least sleepy.

After an hour or so of decent road, I plunged into marshes of slimier consistency, which happily did not last too long. Right in this marsh I had a puncture from an unknown cause, and almost knee-deep, the committee immediately replaced the wheel. Whilst waiting two or three minutes for this, I hastily partook a light snack.

Out of the marshes we proceeded towards Rzhev, the road

becoming better. I was glad to enjoy a faster pace, as my nature could not tolerate this dawdling! The sun was bright in a clear sky, and my little lorry was doing quite well. Every time I felt hungry I drew from my store in a vast pocket I had. We had only two punctures that day, which was quite a treat, though I am not sure that the car with the controllers behind me got off so lightly, as I noticed they were often out of sight!

Towards Rzhev we ran into hills, and then continued into the Valdai Hills region, that stretch almost to Lake Ilmen. I always liked the Valdai Hills, because of their wave-like regularity of 1,500 feet in height. The road being fairly straight, goes in a Roman-like fashion, up and down, instead of curving through the valleys. Here I was always tempted to shut my eyes and go on, as long as I could, and feel by sound that I am not getting dangerously near to the edge of the road, at the same time listening for the note of any approaching vehicle. The ups and downs are very thrilling when you do not see them!

Still feeling in the best of spirits, the second night descended upon us. Skirting Lake Ilmen, we headed for Luga, and met marshy ground again, though not so badly as before. Until the small hours of the morning of the second night, I felt quite perky, but after then I started nodding, which increased as time went on. At dawn even the member of the technical committee by my side, who was supposed to keep vigil over me, started to doze. Myself, I felt so sleepy that I could not drive off this drowsiness. The chilly morning air did not refresh me, and I started catching myself zigzagging over the road, realising every time that my watcher would notice it. But glancing sideways, I saw him snatching some moments of delicious oblivion, broken by a few low notes of snoring. It gave me a little malicious joy, as I knew that he had already spent part of the day in sleep at the back of the lorry!

All the same, I continued to catch myself getting too near the edge of the road, which meant that I was closing my eyes for short lapses of time, and this time not out of pleasure as in the Valdai Hills, but out of sheer exhaustion! In one of these spells, as I was veering towards the edge, I suddenly heard my neighbour gasp, "What are you doing?" as he suddenly woke up. This startled me so much, that it was by pure luck that we did not get overturned into the ditch, but it certainly woke me up completely. He also began to take himself in hand, and for the rest of this journey to Leningrad I sat very tensely without any movement, a kind of concentration of will power, by not allowing myself to feel the exhaustion.

Soon much more traffic made me more wary, and I must confess that I was looking forward to my finish more than ever before in my life!

We arrived at the club two hours behind scheduled time, thirty-eight hours since starting, which might be ascribed to the fact that we had had more punctures than we had expected, and that my drowsiness had not been anticipated! There I signed in, and was taken by another driver to my home. I was told afterwards that on approaching my place I was already fast asleep. My friends had no heart to wake me, and carried me up to the fifth floor; there my people received my sleeping form, and only removing my leather coat, shoes and helmet, delivered me up to Morpheus. I slept so long that it seemed an eternity had passed when I woke up again.

Next day I felt very triumphant when I went to the club, where all those interested in my latest experiment were foregathered to discuss its possibilities in application to the Red Army's needs. I ventured to suggest that because I was a woman, and could stand the test, the average man would certainly prove himself better still. On hearing this, everyone laughed heartily, saying that they were afraid that knowing all my "feats", they took me for a "superhuman"!

In late autumn of 1932, I decided to start work in the engineering department at the huge Kirov plant in Leningrad, one of the biggest, and the oldest of its kind in Russia. In the meantime, I was taking part in local races, carrying off many of the laurels.

I usually used my motor-cycles for all needs, always riding fast. This often brought clashes with the police over traffic regulations, and several times I was summoned for speeding and "dangerous driving". Of course, it was only too natural for me to develop a sort of arrogance, and pay no attention to these happenings when one knows that one is a champion! This nevertheless, put the appropriate authorities on their guard, waiting for an opportunity to prove that they were right in asserting that I was a danger to public safety on the city roads.

Indeed, such an opportunity did come one day.

In October 1932, I had an accident, in which an old woman of eighty-four was involved.

In Leningrad most of the city roads were then paved with wooden blocks. These are excellent when dry, due to their smoothness and sound-absorbing quality, but they become treacherous when wet. On that particular day, I was just approaching the club for a meeting, reducing my speed to

almost walking pace, when suddenly from a gateway that old woman with a basket hurried to cross the road without looking. Out of caution I applied my brakes, and at that very moment my rear wheel locked, causing me to skid towards her. She threw aside her basket from fright, and with a scream attempted to run, but slipped and fell backwards, just as my front wheel stopped a few inches from her leg. It has been argued later on that my motor-cycle had only just reached her, without running over her leg, and therefore, there was no case to prove that I had damaged her. The militiaman on duty saw the accident plainly and so did a pedestrian witness. Yet, the woman's leg was broken. Later, in the hospital, doctors advanced the view that the fracture was due to her fall and the fragility of her aged limbs. Neither were there any signs of the bruising of flesh by the impact of the motor-cycle. Afterwards, at the militia station all evidences were given and I was released.

But as I had also noticed, misfortunes never come alone, but bring others in their trail. The very next day I had the greatest scandal of my life, which this time proved to be the last and fatal one to my career, and in fact, the start which led up to the turning point in my life.

Mr. Pataleev and I made the acquaintance of a young Englishman who had come for a two weeks' visit to Russia. On the eve of his departure I took him on my motor-cycle to show him the night illuminations of Leningrad, which is particularly beautiful on the Neva embankment, with the aloof and serene river flowing under the massive bridges.

When we were threading our way very slowly along the Square of the Revolution, a couple attempted to cross just ahead of us. I gave sharp warning with the electric horn, which might have been too piercing, for the woman screamed out, "Oh, you are mad!" and clung to her companion. I instantly retorted with: "You are mad yourself!" and continued the ride. But hardly a second passed before her companion leaped towards me, and laying a powerful grip on my handlebar, swung my motor-cycle round and, instinctively putting on my brakes, I came to a standstill. I looked at him and asked, "What does it mean?"

With an air of self-importance and confidence in his power he said, "You are arrested!"

I became quite stupefied and exclaimed, "I am arrested? What for? And who are you, in any case?"

Still unperturbed, he declared, "It doesn't matter who I am, you are arrested."

It was dark and no street lamp happened to throw any light to disclose his attire. Still grasping my handlebar, as if afraid that I would vanish, he was awaiting the arrival of a militiaman. By this time I was very angry indeed, and I said, "Look here, you fool, take off your hand or I shall do something bad to it". His woman companion became very irritable and exclaimed, "How dare you to insult him so? You will pay for that dearly!" With a sarcastic laugh I said, "Aha, we shall soon see who will pay and for what!"

My English friend, not following the argument, asked me what was the matter. As I did not speak English, I explained the situation to him in broken French. The man who had stopped me, on hearing French spoken, addressed himself at once to my companion in the same tongue, and for the first time I realised that he was Commander Z.

Continuing to feel indignant, I perceived a militiaman hastily approaching the scene from behind, carrying a torch. He sprang to the salute, which left no more doubt that my enemy was a persona grata. Still at attention, the militiaman took orders to arrest me on the spot, after which he commanded that I get off my bike. Seeing red, I pronounced, "I will do nothing of the sort, as I see no cause for my arrest", and kicking my starter, I endeavoured to take off. At this the militiaman also seized my handlebar, and blowing his whistle, summoned the help of his colleagues. When they joined us in a few minutes, they forcibly pushed my machine with me still in the saddle, and my companion behind, towards a street lamp. There the Commander took out his pocket-book and started to make notes.

The militia were pleading with me to leave my motor-cycle and to follow them. When I finally refused to do so, they dragged me from the saddle against my will. After a short struggle, I was overwhelmed by four strong men, and separated from the machine. By this time a huge crowd had gathered round us, and some of them, recognising Commander Z., could not believe their own eyes, that he was involved in a street scandal.

While this scene was in progress, Z. tried to shame me for such behaviour, as I, at the top of my eloquence, called him all the names I thought he deserved, adding that it was most shocking for me to see a Red Army Commander abusing his position in the way he did. He was rapidly putting notes down in his book, and time from time turning to my English friend, he remarked that I was apparently drunk, and in any case did not know how to drive.

Finally, the militia van came, and I was led to it to be taken away. Passing by Commander Z, I found nothing better to avenge myself than to slap his face, which I did lustily, at which the crowd gasped. The scene became very wild, and the last thing I remember, was being hurried into the van.

On the way to the militia station I felt bitter and unhappy about the whole thing, but what made me most upset was the position of my foreign friend who would get lost; I also thought of the fate of my motor-cycle.

In the militia station I was, of course, detained, and after three hours of waiting, two officers took me to the district centre for the sobering of drunkards, or detection of their condition, as the case might be. On entering that institution, I felt very disgusted that I should be subjected to such humiliating treatment. Two doctors and a nurse started their "diagnosis".

My mere breath disclosed nothing to them, and suspecting that I might have had some alcohol earlier in the day, they made a special chemical test. This naturally neither produced any reaction. The militia officers insisted that it be repeated, which the doctors reluctantly did. The second test, of course, again was a failure. I already felt triumphant, and visualised myself being set free. But the officers ordered a third try. At this moment, their young assistant doctor immediately protested at such repetitions, stating that it is a very unusual precedent and against all regulations, as one test is always infallible.

At the commencement of the third test, this doctor left the room as a gesture, saying that he would report the case to higher authorities, and being a Communist Party member, he would not let the matter be forgotten.

When the thrice proven failure showed my being absolutely sober, nothing else remained then but to let me go. But apparently it was necessary to prove that only in quite an abnormal condition could a person insult such a figure as Z. Though I was by now outwardly subdued, inwardly I felt wildly excited. I told the officers that it is against Soviet ethics to act as they did. That only enraged them further still. They conversed with the doctors so that I should not hear, and soon I was subjected to another examination, this time under the assertion that I was a narcotic addict, assuring me that my enlarged irises were direct proof of it.

Being thus pinned to the wall, I remarked that if a person is brought to such a state of nervous tension and excitement, it would be strange to expect his irises to be normal. This observation did not touch them, and as they had no other

means of proving their new accusation, they decided that I be sent to a clinic for the mentally disturbed, in order to diagnose my condition.

It was already 2 a.m., and just before I was to be taken to this new place, I asked them—what made them think that I was in a state of mental unbalance? The officers declared in chorus, “Oh, the way you behaved with Commander Z. has left us in no doubt that you were too excited.”

With much indignation I exclaimed, “But then Z. himself behaved very wildly. First accusing me of being drunk which has now been proved to be false, and in any case I never drink alcohol. Secondly, he asserted that I don’t know how to drive, and of course, even you will laugh at the idea of this. But because he was angered by my upsetting his wife’s equanimity, who obviously has poor nerves, he went as far as to involve himself in a most undignified street quarrel. I can see, that in order to have his reputation rehabilitated, he has instructed you to prove my guilt at any cost. And you are going to do it. But I assure you that justice does exist in the Soviet Union, and we shall see who will have the last laugh.”

Just as we were starting to move, the door was flung open and my young English friend rushed in. Two militiamen were in the background, having brought him to where I was. I was most surprised to see him there. He asked me at once what had happened. I told him briefly, and also where I was now being taken. He immediately asked if someone could interpret, and one of the doctors, knowing French, agreed to help. My friend then told them in a very firm voice that he was on the eve of his leaving Russia, and that he would return to England with a very bad impression of the Soviet Union. Stating that he was the sole witness of all that had happened, he demanded being brought in person before Z., prior to his departure home. He also asked for my immediate release, as there was no reason in detaining me. He said that he was a doctor himself, and could state definitely that I was normal and sober, and was only excited due to the provocation of the incident. As to the question of my driving ability, he said,—all Russia but Z. knew who I was. This declaration of his seemed to have produced an effect, as the officers took counsel with the doctors. In a few minutes they decided that they would let me go conditionally, that I should come in the morning with my witness to militia headquarters to give further evidence.

When out in the street, my English friend said that he had

spent many hours before locating me with the help of the militia. He also thought that he was now bound to delay his departure, in order to help me out of my trouble. I was grateful to him, as I felt that this time I would have great difficulty against such an opponent as Z. As this is now in the past, I can see how naïve I was then to hope as much!

Dawn was breaking as we walked to his hotel, almost at the other side of the city, my own home being in the opposite direction. I painfully felt the absence of my motor-cycle. I also felt that as my bike had been the cause for so many disturbances in my life—I ought to hate it, and yet I loved it. I do till now, just as passionately.

On returning home I found Mr. Pataleev was still working at that early hour in the morning, on his latest project for the Government, having been at it all night. When after midnight, he guessed that I must have again got into trouble somewhere, which was quite usual in those days. So he had telephoned to several militia stations to find out where I had been detained this time, but he could not trace me. Learning of what took place, he was very disgusted, and felt particularly awkward that an Englishman should have witnessed such an ugly scene.

Later that same morning, with my English friend, I visited the headquarters as was required. I was collected and spoke very little. My friend gave most of the evidence through an interpreter. In the end the officers apologised before him for causing him such an inconvenience, also for giving him an unpleasant memory of that unfortunate incident. They assured him though, that they would make a full investigation.

From there we went to the military headquarters, as my friend wished to seek out Z. in person. This was not possible. I then suggested our going to the G.P.U., and try to ask their help in making Z. see the foreigner. They got in touch with the military, but found that the Commander had gone away that morning.

After this first failure to contact the Commander, the Englishman was still more determined to prolong his visa for another week or so. Mr. Pataleev, and myself tried through all channels to speed up the investigation. But before another twenty-four hours had elapsed, I was subjected to a further series of humiliations, and only then I realised that Z. had wasted no time in pressing all the buttons at his disposal.

The week passed in my intense suffering, at the end of which I went to Moscow to the appropriate authorities to demand



the return of my motor-cycle, which was still detained. This I achieved, and I also learned that my case was involving more and more issues, due to the importance of those concerned.

Soon things began to go very fast, every day bringing some new and unexpected developments. In a talk with Mr. Pataleev and the Englishman, I told them that I knew I was not guilty of anything that could call for such treatment as I was getting, and that feeling my innocence, I would not even go for help to the powerful friends I had in the G.P.U., who would certainly put things right straight away. It was a case of a small David fighting a big giant Goliath.

In the meantime the case of the old lady with the broken leg was going on, and those who had charge of it came to the conclusion that it was coincidental that she broke it in such circumstances. They had the evidence of doctors and witnesses to substantiate it. It was suggested that I go privately to her people and make a friendly settlement to help her. As the woman's leg healed, they thought the matter too insignificant for further proceedings. I therefore, asked my friend Skrobansky to go and negotiate a settlement. She was found to be away with distant relatives. We decided that when she returned, we could find out how much she had to spend on extra nourishment during her recovery as well as other expenses involved (medical services are free to all in Russia) and then to agree on a sum.

I was gradually getting worn out with the constant harassing of all my movements, and my motor-cycle became no more a pleasure, as I was so watched, that it was unnatural for me to return from any outing, or even from work, without some additional scandal. These were due to the overhanging investigation in connection with the Z. affair, and the super-vigilance of the transport militia in trying to catch me for the slightest offence or for no offence at all.

I was very strong in physique, and perhaps due to this, my nerves were steady, but everyone noticed that I had become sad and unhappy. Mr. Pataleev, who was still officially my husband, but in reality my nearest friend, suggested that I should take leave, and go to the Crimea to have a rest and distract myself from the tensivity of this distressing situation.

This I did, and on the day of my arrival in Sebastopol, I was fortunate in meeting Comrade Boichenko, who also came there for his holidays. He looked tired,—G.P.U. work is harder than any and drains the vitality out of one. There he was less

severe looking, and the more I learned of him the more I came to like him.

Knowing what a powerful man he was, I never dared tell him all that had happened with Z., being afraid that he might like to help me, which I thought would be too personal. I wanted his respect, and perhaps being a woman, I felt his admiration for my sporting prowess. And if I told him about my troubles—he might have some pity for me, which I least of all desired.

I traversed all Crimea, staying at each beauty spot for a few days. Boichenko accompanied me to Yalta, where he remained. From the many interesting talks and discussions we had, the most vivid of all in my memories are his spicy stories of how the G.P.U. fooled the British Intelligence Service on several occasions. This made me laugh, and I even asked him if it meant that the G.P.U. are the cleverer!

I had a wonderful rest, and returned to Leningrad fortified for my battles. Unfortunately, my enemies had not left me in peace, as the "investigation" of the Z. affair went on apace.

One day soon, I received a summons to appear before the transport court, charged with motor-cycling offences.

When a few days later I entered the court room, I found it was full of transport militia officers. Quite a number of motorists came there too. It was only after the bench was seated that I noticed the judge was a woman, her name being Kalatosova. Then the proceedings started, and I heard the charges read out. These included all offences that had never been officially recorded, but only remembered by the present gathering of the transport militia. All my "dangerous driving" for a number of years was recollected there, as well as all the arrogance with which I had treated the transport authorities. But the crowning item of them all was my damage to an old woman's leg!

I asked the indulgence of the court to permit me to make a statement before giving evidence. That is, since the long finished case of the old woman was brought up again—I demanded that my witness should be present. This created some confusion, and after a consultation, the court was adjourned.

I was glad to see all these officials looking disappointed, as they had missed the relish of seeing me uncrowned. But I did not fail to notice that the woman judge gave me a glance full of determined decision that I should meet her yet. I learned afterwards that she was hand in glove with the transport militia

in helping them eliminate undesirable elements from the city roads.

It was with much difficulty that my witness was traced, as he had been transferred to another job in a distant town, and the court met again in a few weeks. The same array of officers was sitting, and the same charges were read against me. My witness came, and his personal evidence showed that he had hardly seen the accident and could not help very much. The judge became angry, and asked why he had given different evidence before. The witness, getting very perplexed and nervous, continued muttering nonsense, and the case was turning out to be more complicated. I again asked the discretion of the court—to summon the militiaman who was on duty near the place of the accident, and who had already given evidence in my favour. It was stated that he was away. All the same, I insisted on his being present, and the court was once again adjourned.

This time I saw plainly that the transport officers gnashed their teeth, and could not hide their displeasure. As to the judge, she looked definitely sinister.

It was winter, February of 1933 already, when the military authorities in conjunction with our club decided to hold a winter race to Moscow, across the snows and the ice. This race was to commemorate the fifteenth anniversary of the Red Army, and consisted of ten aero-sledges and ten motor-cycles. I was to take part in it, which thrilled me as it was my first big winter race.

Our motor-cycles had snow skids under the front wheels to enable them to slide over the snowy surface. The wheel was locked in position on this runner, like a truncated ski. The motor-cycles would have to go ahead, and the aero-sledges to follow them.

Our start was in Uritsky Square, one of the best known in Leningrad. The square itself is in front of the Winter Palace.

It was Sunday, and the crowd was so immense that the transport militia officers had much trouble in keeping people back, who tried to settle round our machines like flies round a honey pot. Every time those officers met my eyes, they felt somewhat uncomfortable, while I felt a little triumphant! So many photographs were taken of me that day, that I still retain a full album of them. I am represented in them looking very much like a young bear, in a short thick fur coat, fur driving

helmet, and thick padded trousers, as worn by Red Army men in winter, and high felt boots. Everyone else was attired the same. Again I was the only woman amid the men in that race.

It was our first big experimental race in the snow, and we were very much anticipating some interesting and important results. The military authorities were particularly interested, in connection with their plans, to use those units in actual warfare, should it ever become necessary. They required us to test out three tanks of a fast new type, equipped with a special complicated system of caterpillar tracks, and a wide runner in front. Like the aero-sledges these tanks were driven by Red Army men. We had several newspaper and military reporters on board the sledges, and a cinematograph unit, and of course a technical committee and a doctor as well.

That year, the winter came with heavy snows, and it was exceptionally cold. We prayed that we should not be met with too violent snowstorms!

In this race, we had yet to learn the relationship between each kind of vehicle, as they all behaved in quite different ways when on the snow. And indeed, our six day run to Moscow was full of thrills, adventures, and even dangerous surprises. In spite of many difficulties, I enjoyed it, as to deal with the snow is better than with mud, and in any case there were others to help if one got stuck!

Starting from Leningrad, and on leaving it behind, we plunged briskly into the snows. The first few hours were quite delightful, but when the aero-sledges had caught us up, the picture changed. They mastered the snow so well and playfully, that soon they were at our heels, continually urging us to go faster, which we could not. The further we advanced into the open spaces, the deeper we sank, and our progress became slowed down. The commander of the race finally gave the signal for the aero-sledges to pass us.

Instantly we experienced such a hurricane of wind, and blinding snow was thrown at us with such force that many of the solo motor-cyclists were flung bodily with their machines into the snow, and the following sledges completed their vile business, burying us with still more snow driven by the propellers. We had our faces snow pasted, and our eyes could see no more. Our friends the tanks came along behind and their crews helped us on our feet. After this we were glad to be separated from the aero-sledges. Later on we learned a trick: every time one of these snow devils overtook us, we would

lean our machines in their direction for counter balance, and turn the backs of our heads to them to receive the pasting!

The first night at Chudovo, saw us so tired after a whole day of wrestling with snow and snow-drifts, that most of us went to sleep straightaway. We knew that next day we were to enter the Valdai Hills, where virgin snows would challenge our strength and endurance to the extreme. We envied the hateful aero-sledges, which skipped over the white fields like swallows cutting through the air.

Next day our column was joined by Professor Samoilovitch, the famous Russian Arctic explorer. He wanted to see personally the power of our aero-sledges and motor-cycles in combating such deep snow and ice as there was in the Valdai Hills. He was anxious to bring these units into service in the Arctic Circle. We were glad to learn later on that after our race many of these were sent there.

Half of the sledges had engines of Russian construction and the others were by Siemens-Hallske. To our satisfaction we found that our own engines had better performance than the foreign-made ones.

Apart from these military and constructive aims that our race had in view, our six-day run itself wrought more destruction and chaos than it was reasonably possible to expect! This was mainly due to the fact that aero-sledges were then still more or less in the experimental stages of development in Russia, and it was after our race that special cowling was provided to prevent the propellers producing whirlwind effects along their sides. That is why many rows of thatched houses, in the villages we passed through, were left roofless to the consternation of the peasants. Some were lifted clean off, others suffered only partly. The local soviets had plenty to do in repairing these damages afterwards! But one thing that upset us very often was the sledges' noise which annoyed and frightened the peasants' horses. At times our procession would meet a score of horse-drawn sledges carrying such building materials as stones, bricks and timber, and as soon as we met them, before even the aero-sledges had time to get out of their way, the horses became so alarmed that they would rear up in fright, overturn their vehicles, breaking the harness, and then bolt into the open. After Novgorod, the commander of our race had to take measures, that in order to avoid such incidents, a certain section of the route in advance should be cleared of horse traffic. All the same, it was we motor-cyclists who, following behind, got

all the blame and curses of the peasants, the sledges being by that time far ahead!

Yet the aero-sledges did not enjoy themselves all the way. The portions of the road that were covered with ice provided treacherous moments for them and motor-cycles alike. But while our inertia was much less than theirs, they were very often thrown clear of the road into the ditch. Then we had our laughs on seeing the doctor, ciné-operator, engineers and drivers climbing out bruised and dishevelled, whilst we passed with a cheery wave of the hand! These spills of the sledges were not always so mild, sometimes the propeller blades broke, or the skis came off, and near Moscow it was even more tragic. The leading sledge was flung sideways into a stone wall, the engine was smashed, and its crew gravely injured.

One might easily imagine with what difficulty we started up our engines in the morning. The aero-sledge mechanics would be up from two to three hours before the others to warm up their engines. Blow-lamps were used to heat the cylinders and the sump from the outside. We motor-cyclists tried to wheedle some high octane petrol from the aero-engined sledges to start our own, and when that did not help we resorted to the more ancient method of pushing one another's machines until the engines fired.

As I have mentioned the aero-sledges elsewhere, I shall not indulge in a further description of their working and manoeuvrability.

In relation to the motor-cycles in this winter race I may add that it was one of the most difficult I have had. Often, in open fields, we would be so buried in snow and unable to advance, that only our faithful friends, the tanks, could pull us out of the snow's clutches. In fact, we became very much attached to them and tried to keep together!

Most of the towns and big villages on our way, prepared us a very hearty welcome. Local soviets, party members, and peasants with school children lined the streets to see us through and when we stopped for our meals. What a lot of spectators had their hats blown off, and as to women with their voluminous skirts, we had pity for them!

On the approach to Kalinin all the aero-sledges were behind us, as that day had been a most unlucky one for them, and we motor-cyclists and tanks went ahead. It was already night, when we perceived two lorries standing by the wayside, filled with a brass band orchestra. They were jumping about, clapping their arms and blowing in their hands, to get a little warmer.

When we came level they immediately started to play, and on reaching the town itself, we learned that they had been waiting there over five hours to greet us. It was exceptionally frosty that day, and towards night it became unbearable. Realising that our sledges might be delayed still longer we sent a message back to the orchestra to come to the town. The messenger found them still playing, hoping for the sledges at any time, but the latter would not come. Many of the players had their lips bleeding from contact with cold metal in such a frost. It was really most touching to see these people do their utmost to express their admiration and give us a proper welcome, but we felt very ashamed that they had to stand so many hours in the cold and undergo such torture in that terrific frost. But again, this illustrates the Russian nature. If there is an idea behind his undertaking—a Russian can endure anything. This orchestra was voluntarily organised by the local musicians, and was a very fine one.

Later on the aero-sledges came in, when we found that the headlights of several had failed to work (due to the discharge of their batteries), and with other obstructions that delayed their advance, those with lights had to lead, the others cautiously following behind. When at last they reached our stopping place, the crews and passengers found our motor-cyclists and tank crews just finishing their dessert, and all the speeches of welcome were over. It was already midnight! We enjoyed this revenge on the speedily fluttering and unfaithful sledges!

After Kalinin the weather changed sharply. We ran into such a blinding snowstorm, and the fallen snow was so feathery that we could get no firm hold on it. We put heavy chains on our wheels but with little effect. The tanks alone enjoyed this nightmare, and many of us wished we were tank crews and not motor-cyclists. The whole day we struggled on. Towards night we were covered with so much snow, and with our faces all frozen, we were looking like fir trees of the north.

This storm delayed our advance for a good few hours. But next morning met us with calm weather, though there were mountains of snow with a harder surface. This was all right for the sledges, but very difficult for us. As we had a motor-cycle with us equipped like a miniature fire brigade, and another running on a caterpillar track like a tank, we were most anxious to bring them undamaged to Moscow, to show that we also had something up our sleeves!

Unfortunately, the end of our journey was marred by one more accident. The petrol tank of one of the aero-sledges

developed a leak, unnoticed in time, and with the help of one stray spark from the exhaust, the whole vehicle was enveloped in flames instantaneously. Everyone inside managed to escape with a few burns, though the driver suffered more severely. This particular machine was built for the East Siberian Gold Industry, and its fuselage was made of wood, which is why it so easily caught fire and perished this way. All others were made entirely of duralumin. So we went to Moscow with only eight sledges in all.

In Soviet Russia, the Government took much trouble in "baptising" peasants and local populations into all the novelties of modern invention and construction. Thus usually, if a new tractor or aeroplane, or aero-sledges and even motor-cycles happened to be passing their way, it was a custom to give a ride or flight to those who could summon up enough courage to venture near these monsters! During our stops for meals, and nights, we had the additional service to perform of introducing our machines to the populace.

I remember that when peasants were invited to take a ride in the aero-sledge, with much apprehension they dragged themselves near to it, and after removing their hats, they would cross themselves in the orthodox manner, and only then enter the cabin. The meaning of it was—to counteract the influence of the devil, which those aero-sledges certainly inspired in them. I should think so! The terrifying roar of the open exhausts, the whirling propeller making a virtual blizzard, and the awe-inspiring speed as they were whisked over the snow; and at night throwing out flames, would have left no doubt that they could not possibly be the creations of God! Given the best conditions, those machines could skim along at a maximum speed of eighty-five miles an hour.

I gave numerous rides on my pillion to spell-bound, open-mouthed children, who thought it was the moment of their lives to whizz round the village church or square. Peasant women who were the pluckiest of all, were especially radiant with the experience, in spite of their enormous frilled skirts getting caught and damaged in the wheels and chains.

Perhaps the most amusing was the venture of a long-bearded ninety-year-old peasant who was challenged by the women folk to have a dangerous ride! Trembling, but not giving in, he approached my motor-cycle, and said, "One doesn't die twice, but we have to once in any case", an old Russian saying, and with this he mounted my pillion. I asked him to hold me firmly, and we took off. Everyone around clapped and



encouraged old great-grandfather Ivan. Starting gently, I gradually increased to a good speed hoping that he would not die from too unusual an adventure at his age! When I brought him back to the starting point he looked pale, with running eyes, but calm, and everyone rushed to congratulate him for his intrepidity.

Due to the great snowfall encountered, we arrived in Moscow not in the morning, but at dusk. A red glow in the sky behind us made us appear to emerge as if from a fire!

Over the last stretch of thirty miles we had, once more, to go all out as in a proper race. When I passed the finishing tape, and just as I came to a stop, two militia officers approached me and said, "You are under arrest".

"Arrested? What for?"

"We don't know, we have had orders from Leningrad to arrest you as soon as you get here."

I was dumbfounded. On informing the race committee about this, I took one officer behind me, and the second followed on another motor-cycle. We went to some unknown militia headquarters at once. On the way there I was thinking about the banquet that was already awaiting us at the famous Hotel Metropole, and I was sorry to miss it as Lezhava would be there, whom I so much anticipated seeing again.

When we reached the place, I was led straight to the officer in charge. He showed surprise to see me arrive in all my furs and skins, as if I were just back from a Polar expedition. He straight away asked me—why I had left Leningrad without the court's permission. I replied that I was unaware of the necessity to obtain such permission, besides the court had been adjourned indefinitely. I felt at once that this was the combined work of the transport officers and that woman judge, Kalatosova. I said to my interrogator, "You are not going to detain me now, when I am so cold and tired after these strenuous six days? The high authorities are bound to learn of my arrest, and I assure you that even you will get in trouble over it." It was a little impertinent of me perhaps, but I could not afford to be more polite at such a moment. Soon the telephones were working to different places, and I guessed that an order had been made to release me immediately and be delivered to my hotel.

With but little time to take a bath and change, I went at once to attend the banquet. I arrived in a black dress with a wide red flowing sash. Seeing me again, so very different from my appearance of two hours ago, my fellow riders and guests all stood up and proclaimed, "We shall toast her straight

away", and up went the glasses of strong wine, or at least so it tasted to me!

Then Lezhava approached me and said, "You long-suffering soul, when at last will you have to enjoy things a little, without being pestered by misfortunes? I know you for a splendid fighter in life and in sport, and I am certain that you will get out of your present difficulties unscathed. Let me know if something too bad happens to you".

The banquet went on till after midnight, and in spite of our tiredness and the hard work of that day, we even managed to do some dancing on top of the festivities and many speeches in our honour. Indeed, what a capacity we Russians have for life!

After a few more days of staying in Moscow, and having been fêted by many other organisations, and taken to the Kremlin for sightseeing, we received our rewards—badges and diplomas,—we all returned to Leningrad.

On my return home I found an order of the court requiring my presence before the judge. I went. Infuriated, Comrade Kalatsova demanded a reason for my going on that race without her permission. Before I had uttered any reply in defence, she pressed a button, and to a militiaman who came in, she said, "She is arrested! Take her!"

Having got used to being so frequently arrested and detained, I seemed not to react so painfully this time. But I had a temperature, and my throat was swollen as a result of the race, so I made a plea to her to let me go home, and when well again, I would return for detention. Apparently she had not lost all her womanly heart, for after arguing a bit, she let me go!

From there I went straight to bed. A few days spent thus relaxed, made me very contemplative. I began to think that there was little doubt that I was going to be hobbled for good, unless some kind fay intervened for me. And yet I did not want to ask any powerful person to help me, not even Lezhava, as easy as that would have been. Until this day I can never understand why I took this course, maybe it was because I was somewhat fatalistic, and so I decided this time again to let my fate choose its own way. I knew though, that I should fight in each separate case that I be attacked. Such was my nature.

When I was better, I packed a few necessities with several books, and went back to the judge. This time she was ill! When telephoned from her office, I learned that when she would be back she would see about me, and so I had another indefinite respite!

A few days after, I went again to Moscow (again without permission!) to fetch my motor-cyclé, which had been left there after the race. I stopped at the famous Moscow Intourist Hotel where in the evening I met a foreigner, who was a British subject. His people lived in the East, and himself he was a young doctor from Berlin. He came for a few weeks to visit Russia. I could only speak a smattering of French and German with him. I had always had a predisposition to the East and anything connected with it, so this acquaintance gave me an opportunity to have a glimpse in that world which interested me so much. I remember how we walked all night on the Moskva river embankment, and in the Red Square. He was leaving next day via Leningrad, and so I invited him to call at my home, which he accepted, as I was returning myself to Leningrad.

When introduced to Mr. Pataleev, they took a liking for each other at once. My "husband" suggested that this foreigner stay longer by extending his visa. Mr. Pataleev could speak German and French fluently, and so they became good friends. During his stay of the next two weeks, I had continual troubles with the transport militia and others, and had not seen much of him.

By this time my moral condition was aggravated to the last degree. I felt that life was no longer worth living, since continual suffering constituted quite a negative principle in my existence then. That, in spite of my abilities, energy, and immense physical strength, I was otherwise an unlucky individual. These continual clashes of my personality with others, not a few of whom I felt were somewhat below me intellectually, were straining my vitality and would finally wreck me. At the same time, I knew that I could not compromise with myself and make a rapprochement with my enemies, in order to neutralise their antagonism. It was known to me that a good deal of this enmity towards me was on the ground of my extraordinary success in the sporting field, and the petty jealousy of a small bunch of individuals. I realised also that if I could retreat into some obscurity, and do some small but useful work, away from the limelight and its inevitable reactions, it might enable me to find rest and regeneration.

But at that time I was younger, and wished either to live life to the full, or not at all. And in any case, I had become inwardly tired, and I just felt that I did not wish to live any longer. I was then not quite twenty-eight, and by that time I had had enough. Life seemed to have given me very much,

but it took from me considerably more, so the balance did not even out. I might also point out, that in spite of the trend since my childhood towards Buddhist philosophy and religion—at this very moment I felt so prostrate that even this Eastern doctrine brought me no relief. As I can see it now, years later, that moment was a real climax of the spiritual forces that were at work in me. And what I lacked perhaps, was that degree of reconciliation and harmony that would put things right for me. But because of this evident irreconcilability, I chose the way of least resistance, or that is at least how common morality puts it. And . . .

One day towards evening I went to the telegraph office and sent a farewell telegram to Lezhava, with whom I felt I had deep, though undeclared, spiritual bonds. I wrote: "I am leaving this world as my suffering makes no longer any sense in living. I am carrying a beautiful memory of you. Good-bye." I planned, in a quite cool mind, to make an exit that very evening.

But the girl telegraph clerk, on reading my message, refused to accept it. I insisted on its transmission, saying that I was at least free to do that. She went hurriedly to the postmaster to consult him, and in the meantime, a young man who stood behind me, intervened at once, asking me to pardon his intrusion for wishing to talk to me. He told me that he could conclude the contents of my telegram, and he thought it absolutely impossible to let me take such a course. I tried to dispense with his attempt to interfere in my personal affair, but he was insistent. The girl and her chief returned, and the latter tried to persuade me not to send such a telegram. I told them calmly that even if they would not accept it this would not prevent me from doing what I had resolved, only they would deprive me of the last wish I cared for. As if convinced, they accepted the telegram, and it was sent.

I left the building with the young man at my heels. He would not leave me, saying that if in the Soviet Union people of my age choose suicide, then there must be something wrong with the whole thing. He showed me his Communist Party ticket, and said that that alone made him responsible for the step I was about to take, since incidentally he became aware of it.

He followed me to my home, asking me to do nothing until noon the next day, by which time he would set everything possible in motion to prevent such a drastic move on my part. "After all," he said, "isn't life beautiful, and in everything around us, we are aspiring to such inconceived heights! We

need people like you to help build this new world, and thus to go to the stars!"

This almost broke my heart, as by nature I was deeply idealistic. Yet, I fenced with his arguments, and implored him to leave me alone. He replied that if I would not promise him this on my word of honour, then he would force himself not to leave me until he turned me away from my resolution. He looked so utterly pathetic in his impotence to save me. His final plea was that I could still do what I wanted if, at five minutes before noon the next day, he would not come to bring me succour. A friend in need is a friend indeed, and for once in my life I yielded.

With overwhelming radiancy, he thanked me, and with an intense feeling as if it were a great personal favour to him, he ran off quickly, as if not to waste one precious moment.

When in at last, and alone, I tried to make no justification to myself for having given way to the unforeseen stranger's altruism. And though I had made such a concession, I did not believe in its inspired solution.

In this spirit I set about destroying my personal correspondence, piles of newspaper cuttings about my motor-cycling victories, and even several albums filled with memorable snaps. In the evening I told Mr. Pataleev of my decision. He was shocked, but not surprised. He said that at that juncture he could see that all he had done for me—now proved to be in vain. That my tragic life over the stretch of many years that he had known me, had not failed to be reflected on his life also. But because he was a member of the Communist Party now, this charged him with another duty for a greater cause, which enabled him to think of being useful to many rather than just to one person—myself. Yet, he still felt much responsibility for myself, and suffered agonies that he could no longer help me decisively. In deep sorrow, he asked me to wait a few hours. Later I noticed that he went out with our foreign friend. They both returned long after midnight, and immediately invited me to listen to them calmly; they wished me to weigh up their most unexpected and only suggestion.

It was this. They both agreed and decided that only a very drastic turn of events could save me and but one way was open at present—for me to divorce Mr. Pataleev and marry this foreign friend. The marriage would again be conditional of course, but it would give me the chance to leave Russia, and after having a little rest somewhere abroad, I should come back again to my country. Though this solution was not ideal,

somehow it was a straw for a drowning person to clutch. It was inevitable that our foreign friend would experience some inconveniences and even difficulties in rendering such help to me. But he consciously and bravely gave himself up to it. Indeed, when they had finished detailing their offer, I felt as if some ray of light was flashing in the distance, bringing with it a faint hope. The point was, only, that it was not so easy in my position to materialise such a performance for the second time in my life. We talked till morning, and they both urged me to risk such a proposition.

I left it open to think it over. There was much in it that made eternal hope to spring again, and fate appeared not to wish me to have it my way. But, together with this "liberation", I was sure, there would be a store of new misfortunes and suffering awaiting me. It always was like that in my life.

A few hours after, I had a message from the sports organisation, that they had just received a telegram from Lezhava in Moscow, demanding an immediate investigation of my affairs here, and a full report at once.

At exactly ten minutes to twelve, the young Communist arrived and asked me to follow him by car to the Smolny Soviet of Workers and Peasants Deputies. There I was awaited by three apparently important persons, who at once began to question me and record all my answers. I still felt somewhat apathetic, and had not even been interested to know if there was any connection between Lezhava's telegram and this investigation of theirs. When I left them, late in the afternoon, I had their assurance that now I had only to wait results as things would move very speedily.

Thanking them, I left, and on coming home I found a summons to reappear at the court, which had been twice adjourned. This in itself brought freshly before my memory the things I had already endured and that were still to come. Events were now moving at such great speed; that it was surprising I did not burn up with merely living through those times. The court was to reassemble in two weeks' time.

Next day our friend would have to leave for Europe, and I had to decide finally on the marriage question. Suddenly, just an hour before the closing of the registration office, we all three went to it and without any further delay, performed the double ceremony of my first divorcing Mr. Pataleev and secondly of marrying our foreign acquaintance.

Thus I acquired a fourth surname. For the sake of the person concerned I wish to refer to him by letter A. only. The

marriage was strictly a secret one except to two very near friends, our witnesses. One of them was an Indian Chattopadhyaya, brother of the great Indian poetess, Sarodjini Naidu, one time President of Indian Congress. He was expelled from Germany by Hitler and was working then in the Comintern, at Moscow. The other witness was my devoted motor-cyclist friend—Skrobansky.

Having crossed the Rubicon, I felt that a new phase had commenced, and now, as there was no more any retreat, I would have to steel my heart and be brave.

On our way back after the "ceremony" we all felt as if our tension was relaxed, and we even decided to go to a restaurant and make some kind of "celebration". It must be very strong in human nature to act always in the same customary manner, though in our case it was least of all called for, and we did it only as a distraction.

All three, we spent the remainder of that last night walking, talking, talking and talking.

In the morning, we went to the British Consulate where our marriage was duly registered, and on payment of fifteen roubles I received a British passport. It all seemed so easy, but this was only the beginning! Later in the day my new "husband" departed for Europe, and it was most improbable that I should ever see him again. Our final agreement was that if ever I should be outside Russia, my first concern would be to liberate him by divorce. How naïve we were all three then! As many minutes did it take to register our marriage in Russia, so many years it took to dissolve it abroad!

I never saw that gallant man again.

## CHAPTER XV

### PRISON AND THIRTY DAYS HUNGER STRIKE

THUS, "MARRIED" FOR the second time, I still continued to live near Mr. Patuleev's parents, when in Leningrad, who never knew anything of the validity of my first marriage, or of the divorce of their son, nor of what followed after.

A week after my re-marriage, early in the morning I was awakened by the message that two G.P.U. men had come to

see me. I was barely given time to dress before I was taken to the Leningrad G.P.U. headquarters. It was not an arrest, but a "taking" of me there for something of importance. I was hardly surprised because I was getting inured to this sort of thing. I was only a little upset that I had not had enough sleep, spending most of the night with a lawyer friend, sorting out some documents and papers and going over my evidence in readiness for the impending court. When I arrived at the G.P.U., I had to wait some time for an important official from the Moscow O.G.P.U. whose train was late. Immediately on his arrival I was invited into the spacious room, where I spent several hours in a lively battle of interrogation and elucidation.

The official was a nice man, and on opening his big file of papers, presumably concerning my person, he started unhurriedly asking me questions. He politely enquired whether I was on the eve of court proceedings, and expressing his regret on hearing all the sad news about my latest happenings,—he then gradually came to the crux of his visit to Leningrad. He said that it was definitely established that I had been married recently to a British subject. He wished to believe that it was a serious step on my part, and that no other motives than my liking for that foreigner made me do so. I remember my inward commotion and perhaps shame, when he was quietly telling me these things, with a calm expression on his face, and with his blue eyes that saw right through me. I was grateful that he did not press on my confirming about my being in love with that foreigner, and that the marriage was a consequence of it,—and indeed, why should he waste his time, since he knew all the answers better than I did myself!

Then, settling himself more comfortably in his armchair he asked me point blank, "Do you know, citizen Pataleewa, who are the relations of your new husband in India?"

No, I did not know.

"That is a pity," he said, "because it is important. Did you know that your foreign husband's uncle is one of the heads of the Intelligence Service in India?"

Had a thunderbolt crashed beside me, it would have perturbed me less than this statement.

"No," I said, "I did not know that."

"Well," he answered, "that is the position now, and we take it that you are a gain to the British Intelligence Service, which is a tragic thing for your country."

Trying to extricate myself from this quandary, I replied that I had married a man without ever enquiring into his family



tree, and in any case, this relationship does not necessarily imply that I should automatically become a British spy. He was willing to admit this, but at the same time he was obliged to inform me, as practice so far showed, that most of the Russian girls who had married foreigners, since the Revolution, including some of those who ran away—became tools in the hands of various foreign Intelligence organisations. "We have got too many examples of such services rendered to the Gestapo, Sûreté, British Intelligence and others, for us to take lightly to your escapade."

After all, he said, it was at the discretion and the goodwill of the Soviet Government whether to allow me to leave the country or not, even if I had married a foreign subject. According to Soviet Russian law I shall not be given an exit visa, until I be struck from the list of Soviet citizenship, and this is a matter of more complicated considerations. Then he asked if I would like to be a Soviet citizen no longer? Of course I wished to remain so. And I told him that since there was a provision in Soviet law, that one may become a foreign subject by marriage, and at the same time retain Russian citizenship, I would certainly prefer to enjoy this privilege. "Ah," he said, "I am not so sure that you will be granted such a privilege!"

At that moment, as if in a maelstrom, my thoughts, preceding one another, conjured up in a wild dance: if I shall lose my Soviet nationality I shall never be able to come back to Russia, but it is hardly possible now that I shall be granted this, because of my being married to such a dangerous background. On the other hand I just had to leave Russia for the time being, to have the thorough rest I so badly needed, and also later to divorce Mr. A. What was I to do?

Whilst I was thus being tortured by my own thoughts, my interrogator sat opposite me, and unobtrusively watched my face.

Many other things passed between us, the relevancy of which is not in the nature of this book. I can only add that when our interview was over, I was exhausted and felt still less happy. At the end of this, which lasted several hours, I think we were both equally exhausted. It was only then that I realised how difficult was the task of the men of the G.P.U., it would seem to be a superhuman task. What a continual vigilance these people had to keep not to miss any opportunity of discovering if anything went wrong within Soviet borders, and after finding it, they would have to tackle that wrong in a most efficient and corrective way. I thought that if I could never become a member

of the Russian Communist Party, because of the great sacrifices, much hard work and the responsibility involved,—how much more the G.P.U. people, who were Party members at the same time, had to give in serving their country. Indeed, from this high standpoint, the lives and activities of ordinary citizens looked to me puny, selfish and somewhat aimless.

Under the pressure of heavy thoughts from my last visit to the G.P.U., I was getting ready for the last trial, which was to take place in a few days in court. At this time Mr. Pataleev received an express letter from my second "husband", informing him that on arrival at his address in Berlin, he was expelled from Germany within twenty-four hours, on Hitler's personal orders. Having chosen to go to Paris, the French authorities immediately deported him to England. The grounds for both expulsions were the same—his recent visit and somewhat prolonged stay in the U.S.S.R.

Here I must jump ahead of the story in throwing light on his further movements in Europe.

The Gestapo informed the Sûreté about him at once, and so, on being unable to stay even a day in France, he proceeded to England. But on reaching the English coast, the authorities there confiscated his passport. He was given to understand that he would have to go to China almost at once, for which purpose he would be given an explanatory note in lieu of his passport. He was also warned not to think of returning to Europe again. Still later, Mr. Pataleev learned from Mr. A. that just before sailing to the Orient, the latter had news from his powerful uncle in India informing him of receiving the greatest shock of his life—his nephew's marriage to a Bolshevik girl. His uncle wondered if it was necessary to import one more Soviet spy into the British empire! For taking such an important step in life, as marriage, without consulting his uncle, who was acting for his deceased father, and added to his going to that Communist country without this "paterfamilias" knowledge—his young nephew would have to sail from England direct to China, without ever going to India, as Mr. A. had intended at first, this being his severe uncle's punishment. In China there lived some of his relations.

When I learned of all this later, I thought: what a strange fate was mine—anyone entering my orbit had inevitably to suffer. And that my new "husband" had also to pass through the same vicissitudes in helping me—a perfect stranger in distress. When life becomes as complicated as that, one begins to ask: is there a definite but unknown purpose behind one's

actions or is it all just blind chance with complete anarchy of an individual human existence as a result?

Still a few days later, precisely on April 10th, 1933, I attended the court. It was indeed a very big gathering. Most of the Leningrad newspapers were represented. One wing of the court was occupied with transport militia officers, whose expressions, this time, reflected their absolute confidence. All motorists of the city, who happened to be free, came to hear my case. As to my personal friends and well-wishers, they were all there, saying that they had come to congratulate me on the success they had no doubt would be mine! Mr. Pataleev accompanied me, and I remember I came there elegantly dressed, as if also with the thought of being sure to return home after the proceedings.

But it seemed to me that I perceived an air of tense expectation in the packed court. From the moment that I entered, I was the centre of attention, and though I was much used to the public gaze and talk of me, this time perhaps it was too much for me.

Soon the jury and the judge took their seats, and subsequently I was called to face them. I shall never forget how supremely calm and confident I felt, as if I knew that I was going to win. But so did the enemy camp!

It transpired shortly, that my only and last reliable witness, the militiaman on duty at the accident of the old woman, was dead. Was this another effect of being involved in my orbit? I wondered!

From the prosecutor's summary of my offences, I concluded that the basis of the accusation was still the incident of the old woman's leg, forgotten by everyone, while emphasis was put on my other so-called negative activities, including Commander Z. scandal. My alleged dangerous driving figured prominently, and the faces of the transport militia officers glowed with indignation at the mere mention of it. Though in Russia we can employ lawyers from their kind of guild for a very small fee, or even as a free service if one prefers it, I chose to conduct my own defence personally. I was feeling perfectly sure that being not guilty—constituted my best defence.

As the proceedings unfolded themselves, I realised more and more, that single handed, with even all actual and logical proof of my not being the colour I was painted, I was getting overpowered by the tricks of logic of the other side. Especially when it came to the theme of my being an "anti-social element", as it was termed by the transport militia and even the prosecutor.

Here the battle began, lasting for another two hours, and both sides were often brought to order by the judge. This fencing developed into almost a personal heated quarrel between those transport militia and myself, which in essence it was, the difference being that we were using the court and not private premises for that purpose.

After a break, fresh attacks on me were resumed. I was given a chance several times to speak at length in my defence. I pinned the prosecution continually on that part of the charge concerning Commander Z., as it was obviously the mainspring of the whole affair. And I also noticed that all his charges against me were in their hands, while official records proving my innocence, as in the case of the doctors' report at the Anti-Alcoholic Station and others, were absent. Having no employed legal defence, I had overlooked this fact, and it had not occurred to me that I ought to have procured copies of the reports in the circumstances now making this necessary. Even the lawyer friend, who helped me one evening to get my case cleared for myself, suggested that all these documents should be already in the court.

When I had finished my defence, I could see that most of the public, and myself, felt that I had clarified the matter, and that I would be found not guilty of any of the charges. I sat quietly awaiting the end of my case. After the jury withdrew to come to their verdict, everyone surrounded me to congratulate me on an excellent self defence, assuring me that all those rascals—the militia officers and other enemies—would not be able to triumph after all!

Forty-five minutes later I stood up to hear the decision of the jury. For twenty minutes the reading of the court went on, which surprised me, because it only took them three-quarters of an hour to decide on and to get it down in written form. I heard almost to the letter a repetition of the prosecutor's charges. The culminating part of it was, that since I came from old Russian aristocratic stock, "from whence princesses come",—one could not expect any different behaviour from me. With all this leading to a crescendo—the sentence was pronounced as follows:

- Three years of imprisonment;
- Five years' deprivation of civil and social rights after my release;
- Confiscation of my two motor-cycles; and
- Five years' prohibition of any kind of driving when set free.

For a few moments there was such a complete silence in the court that I felt I would faint. Everyone seemed to be thunder-struck. It was only when the jury left the hall that my friends in the court came to their senses again.

As a guard was placed near me at once, I could communicate no more with those who wished to speak with me. I saw the whole row of militia officers, taking cigarettes out, and look with satisfaction at my side, as if to say: we knew you could not get away this time! Indeed, I did not . . . Instead I had to follow into prison in a few minutes.

The fact that I was not at all prepared for such an ending was that I had not even brought with me such small necessities as a towel or soap, and my clothes were least of all suitable to wear in prison. Soon a van took me to my new abode. There, after the usual formalities at the prison office, I was taken to the women's ward, cell No. 13.

Walking through the courtyard, and then the corridors of the building, I was still like in a trance, not believing that I would not see the outside world any more for three years. There was only one thought running through my consciousness: "I shall appeal, I shall appeal!" I knew that there was justice in the U.S.S.R., which I would have to find, other than this partial judge, by whom it was my misfortune to be tried. The whole thing seemed to be so appalling, that for the time being, I just could no longer think of it in all its details.

On reaching the ward, I was led into a room about thirty feet by fifteen. There were about a dozen women in it already, but whilst the warden was bringing me there, he said, that quite a few more arrivals would be brought in overnight. There were only about ten beds in all, and in the corner was one not yet occupied. The arrangement was for two women to have a bed, but as mine was a very narrow one, I was lucky in having it all to myself.

In a dim electric light at the far end of the room, I looked at the crowd of women who were to be my companions for how long I did not know. Every new arrival had to pass through eighteen days' quarantine in that room, after which each prisoner would be sorted out and put into appropriate cells.

I remember sitting on my bed for a long time without moving. I was thinking . . . There is no greater pain than to recall a happy time in wretchedness . . .

In the corner at the far end of the room was a sink and tap, and alongside of it a long table.

I made no attempt to speak to my neighbours, but perhaps on

seeing me with such a dejected expression, two or three of them approached me and enquired the reason for my being brought there. They said at once that I looked so different from all the others, that they could not make out what sort of a crime I had committed. I just said that it was for driving offences, to satisfy their curiosity. One of them exclaimed, "Oh, you must have killed someone!"

"No," I replied, "I wish I had", and thereupon, removing my overcoat I tried to pretend I was going to sleep, by covering myself with it.

It was well after midnight when a whole batch of women with bundles and parcels were brought in, and towards morning a final lot of them flooded us once more. In all, there were forty-six of us in that compartment. Of course there was no question of providing them all with beds. The long narrow table was taken by storm, on which four women settled for what was left of the night. Most of the beds had to make room for one more, the rest had their sleep on the floor in between the beds. The congestion was complete, and soon I felt I could hardly move! Everyone was anxious to air her grievances to the others, and a many-voiced murmur continued into the morning.

At 8 a.m. we were brought tea. While the mugs of weak tea were disappearing down the throats of our "coterie", everyone seemed to be friends with each other, and freely discussed their respective destinies. My nearest neighbours decided to make a determined approach to me. But skilfully manœuvring instead, I got them to tell me something of themselves. During the next few hours I learned the full life story of many of the occupants of our cell. Some of them tried to weep while unbosoming themselves, some tried to complain, but the majority took their present position more or less philosophically, as if they accepted the punishment due to them.

A young woman peasant nearest to me, was sentenced to one year of imprisonment for adulterating milk that was given to the Government. To make it clear, this meant that out of each gallon of milk, the peasants had to sell, at a controlled price, a certain portion of it to the Government, which distributed it among schools, hospitals and maternity homes, where it was given charge free. This woman, like many others, was caught by the milk inspectors, who after two warnings and a third reprimand, were obliged to summons her. In Russia it is a great social offence to do this kind of sabotage, as milk containing powdered chalk and other such ingredients was definitely harmful for consumption, particularly in the case of children, invalids and

those in hospitals. When this woman was summoned to court, she said that she could not see why she should have to surrender part of her milk to the Government at a lower price, and even when the judge tried to explain that the Government had to do that as it could not afford to pay the normal price for such great quantities, since it had to distribute it for nothing. The Government did all this only because there were insufficient state cattle farms and dairy farms to supply such milk to all those institutions. (Since then this is no more, as the state has its own dairy farms to satisfy the demand for dairy products, without calling on private peasant owners to give up some of their milk at a fixed price.)

The judge tried to impress upon her that it would be her noble contribution in the country's hour of need, when in spite of many difficulties, the State tried to build a new world. The peasants would not be impoverished by giving such a small proportion of their milk at some reduced price, as the same peasants would get all their goods from the co-operatives at much lower prices than would be the case if the Government did not subsidise them. And this peasant could not be convinced that she was doing wrong by selling adulterated milk to the Government, and she was cursing the Soviet regime for anything and everything.

Next to her was sitting a sturdy woman of about forty, with coarse features and calloused hands. She and her husband had been sentenced, he for two years and herself for six months, for stealing timber belonging to the Government. This timber was being used for building schools, hospitals and other social institutions in their region, and when this pillage had acquired a big scale, the authorities warned the population concerned to stop the practice, otherwise disciplinary measures would be taken. That did not deter the peasants from taking away timber to use it as fuel, and after this warning, being caught again a number of times, they were finally brought to justice.

When the judge tried reasoning with them, that they were definitely impeding the effort of the Government to provide schools, hospitals, clubs and other buildings for the benefit of the population, and free to them, and at great cost to itself,—it was most despicable of this population to behave thus. And there was no real necessity for doing that, as peasants have horses to go into nearby woods to get any amount of wood fuel, besides they could always get some through the co-operatives, from the numerous woodyards at a nominal charge. This woman's argument was that since everyone else did it, why not they?

That is why the authorities had to imprison several people like her, so that the others would stop their evil ways.

A third woman narrated her story in this manner. She was living with the famous ballerina Pavlova's near relations in the vicinity of Leningrad. As church parishioners, they were collecting foodstuffs for their priest, since in Soviet Russia the latter get no salary from the State, but from the voluntary church funds, and this particular priest complained that he had not had enough. In Russia, even in pre-revolutionary days, it was always the custom to give the best to the priest, but now, as they were no longer State-supported people, such collections acquired a bad trend at times. Some unscrupulous priests would use clandestine methods to get as much food and other articles from their parishioners as they could. Thus, the priest's parish witnessed the following events.

Several ladies; nearest friends of his, went to collect the donations, consisting of flour, sugar, eggs, chicken, butter, etc. Some of the parishioners protested, as they knew that they had contributed enough to pay for his upkeep, but the lady collectors insisted it was not sufficient for his livelihood. So the local populace gave what they could to help him further.

Unfortunately for the priest, it was soon found that the cupboards, larder and the storeroom at his house were filled with foodstuffs, and still more of it was coming. Such hoarding called for the interference of the militia, and the priest was warned to stop such practice or he would be summoned. For a few weeks he lay low, and then again resumed the robbing of his church-goers. But to succeed this time, he had to bribe the collectors; those ladies would have some share of the spoils, thus not working for nothing.

In due course, the militia received complaints from members of the local church, and on investigation it was found that in order not to get into trouble again for hoarding, this priest was selling most of the donations to the kulaks, which showed that this collected food was not actually for his own use. When the priest and the lady collectors were ordered to court, the judge asked him, that being a servant of God, was he not ashamed to be so greedy and continually begging from the inhabitants vital foodstuffs which were proved to be not for his sustenance, but to satisfy his avarice. The judge even added Christ's saying, that God's true children should not worry about what to eat and with what to dress, that they should be as birds, who neither sow nor reap, nor store in their granaries, and that God in Heaven looks after them,—would it not apply to him still more



so than to his flock? Did he not preach all these things from his pulpit, and act directly opposite in life?

In order that such an example would not give a lead to others, the priest was put in prison for six months, and the two ladies three months each. These were social crimes against the community, and were severely punished in Soviet Russia. My lady narrator was condemning the Bolsheviks for treating herself and the priest in such a barbarous manner, hoping that one day God would avenge them! After listening to her denunciations, I felt that the authorities were too lenient with such hypocrites and worthless citizens.

Another of my cell mates was weeping most of the time, saying that she was a widow, and was arrested for concealing the surplus of wheat and potatoes which should be sold at a fixed price to the Government. This woman said that she and her neighbours did not contemplate such a thing, and preferred to let the potatoes rot, and to bury the wheat in order to sell it at a good price, should a shortage of grain arise. In her own case, the judge said that it was most dishonest to act as she had, knowing full well that the State bought these surpluses for special grants to areas where there had been a bad harvest, and also for distribution to the communities who had insufficient grain for the spring sowing. What was left of the surplus would go to feed the Army and fill the grain elevators as a provision against times of war, as well as for export. This woman was crying all the time, bringing down all kinds of profanations on Stalin's head for such a treatment of herself.

It seemed to me then, that such a tendency of the individual to act only in accordance with his own wishes—could not be possible in an organised society where the main principle is: "One for all and all for one."

I could enumerate each case in that room, the complaints being of the same description, and there is hardly the need to add that they were all of the kulak type—that is, once rich peasants. It amused me with what naive frankness they were telling all the details about themselves, which did not portray them flatteringly!

As I had to spend eighteen days together with them in that quarantine, I heard more stories of things that were taking place during the period of collectivisation. I could not help thinking how difficult the Government's task must have been to deal with such people, who lacked in duty and a consciousness of communal prosperity. Whilst listening to them, I wished that any of the judges who had pronounced judgment on them, had

been in charge of my own case. The result, I was sure, would have been quite a different one!

I received from home a bundle of things—clothes to change, a blanket and a pillow; the parcels of some foodstuffs arrived almost every other day, which were shared with my neighbours. I received daily dozens of letters, from which I learned that all sporting and some social organisations were appealing for a revision of my sentence, or even a retrial if need be. Those eighteen days in quarantine will never be forgotten.

While still in quarantine I sent an appeal to the High Court of Appeal in Moscow. I strongly felt that I should get justice there.

On expiration of the quarantine period, we were all allocated into different categories according to our sentences. The prison administration had a dilemma, as they saw that I was quite a different type of prison inmate, and in fact, my case was one that they had not had before, this being more politico-social than just a criminal one. When we were sent to our respective cells, I was included with about twenty others who had been there some time already. I had not come across them yet and had to make a new orientation. It was a very large room with a stove for those who wished to cook additional meals for themselves with a big central table, corner sink, and even pictures on the walls. There was also a good sized mirror in an alcove.

This was the cell for long term prisoners and everyone had some work to do. Excepting myself and one or two others, the rest of our inmates were working in the prison tailor shop and receiving wages for it. They worked seven hours a day, with every sixth day free. Two of my neighbours, at the time of my joining them, received notification that they would be given three months' leave for attending the harvest time in their home villages, after which they would have to return to prison again. Another woman prisoner had just come back from a compassion leave: her mother was dying with nobody to look after her.

Every morning on the siren, the girls and women would hurriedly finish their breakfast, and with songs and general excitement would go to their work. At lunch time they would be back for a meal and return to the factory till four. In the evening, often there would be some meeting, concert, or reading, or a visit from some outside educational or political organisation, to give talks on some aspect of the international situation, or to elaborate some item of home news.

The first few weeks I spent in reading, as I was not forced to work in clothes-making, since I did not even know how to

sew and had no wish to learn it. But seeing that my appeal had not yet shown any signs of life, I decided to perform some physical activity rather than be alone with my books and thoughts. So I asked the administration to let me do some such work, and soon I was set driving a tractor that pulled a truck from the clothing factory to the dispatch store, or taking wood into the kitchen and even distributing large soup and mash containers to the men's and women's sections. All this, of course, was within the walls of the prison. When driving this tractor, with sadness, I thought of my motoring epoch, and how long should I have to wait to touch my motor-cycle again? On the other hand I was grateful that the prison authorities allowed me to drive that tractor. It appeared they had overlooked one of the conditions of my sentence!

One evening, sitting round the table in our prison room, it occurred to me that we should all do some physical exercises. I had done them every day of my life, but this was prevented me in prison. I began to feel that my muscles were getting flabby, and my companions were also somewhat shapeless, so I suggested to start a kind of physical culture class. They first took it rather sceptically and even laughed, but after I had shown them some of the exercises and invited them to try, they suddenly took to them with much interest. After that we did them regularly every evening, usually with a woman warden curiously looking through a small window in the door. I am sure she envied us! I learned that other women prisoners tried to get our girls to show them these exercises while they were working in the factory. I wonder whether this initiative of mine ever established itself as a regular practice there!

Several times Mr. Pataleev and other friends came to see me in prison. On the advice of those in a position who knew that my situation was hopeless, Mr. Pataleev briefed a very prominent lawyer who had previously conducted many outstanding political cases. His function was to collect all possible material about me, and time from time, go to Moscow to speed my appeal made there.

In the meantime, over three months passed that I was in prison, and one day I was suddenly called to be medically examined by the prison doctors. This fact surprised me very much as I was a very strong and healthy person. I asked the doctor the meaning of it, and though he was not supposed to tell me the reason, he did so. If I were proved to be strong enough, I was to be sent north to a lumber camp for driving tractors there.

Coming back to my cell, after this examination, I felt deeply

unhappy. Did it mean that my final appeal had failed also? I was dreading the thought of going north for three years. It all came back to my memory that, years before, I had escaped exile to that north, and now I was finally to be taken there.

My brain worked very fast, as I was given to understand by the doctor, that next evening I was to be included in a convoy of prisoners, heavily escorted, going to the north. There was no time left for me to communicate with the outside world to decide what move to take to prevent this new adversity. So I did the only thing I deemed possible: I straightaway declared a hunger strike unto death. According to prison regulations, any important step to be undertaken by a prisoner would have to be informed by him to the public prosecutor, and the prison governor. I therefore, wrote a declaration to both about the fact of my starting a thirty days' hunger strike. I suggested therein that the thirty days would be enough to revise my case, and if not done in that period, I did not imagine that I could longer survive, doing it in prison conditions.

Sending off this declaration, I had my last meal, giving away all that was left over in my little store. On hearing about the hunger strike, my companions gasped, saying that it would be better to suffer three years in the north rather than to make such a drastic step and die without having got any freedom. Well, I thought otherwise.

Next day all the prison, even the men's part in a separate block, learned about my hunger strike. About noon that day there came a prison officer who informed me that hunger strikes were forbidden in the Soviet Union, for they were looked upon as counter-revolutionary acts. As it would mean that a prisoner serving a sentence, is endeavouring to prove the wrongness of the court's decision, which it was not supposed to be possible to happen in the U.S.S.R. In other words, a prisoner attempts to prove a partial and, therefore, wilful verdict on the part of the court. I declared promptly that that had exactly taken place in my own case! He looked at me as if he had just heard a great blasphemy, at which I assured him that I was in my clear mind, and quite responsible for what I had said.

He then made it his duty to tell me that my hunger strike would bring me no real victory, as it might take a much longer time to revise my case than the limit I had set, or that I would so much undermine my health that I would become an invalid for life, even though I be freed. To illustrate this, he gave me the example of a male prisoner there, three years before, who had died, only two weeks after declaring a hunger strike, almost

on the eve of his liberation. But I was firm, and would not be dissuaded. He then tried a last argument, that according to Soviet law, if a prisoner dies from a hunger strike, the whole administration of the prison go themselves into prison for ten years. How true this was I never learned, but I told him it would bother me very little when I am dead, and the administration enjoyed their liberty now, when I was confined to four walls without deserving it. The officer could see plainly that nothing would deter me from my decision, and in defiance of the anti-hunger-strike law, I continued my fast.

That day I had several other deputations from the medical, political, and again the administrative department, who tried their best to show me the futility of my attempt. I was unmoved.

It is strange how such an individual step may raise the hopes of many others, because the third day of my fast brought the list of hunger strikers in prison to about twenty. But I was to learn that these cases were not taken seriously by the administration, as the extent to which most of them lasted was twenty-four hours, or a little longer, after which they called off their ordeals. This was due mainly to the fact that the authorities, as soon as they saw the prisoners getting weak, advised them to withdraw their declarations, saying that it was already sufficient to call the attention for a revision of their cases. Of course, it was only a trick, and the poor souls never got rewarded even for such a short fast! Some of these who did not persist, tried to convince me that I too should follow their example, as apparently, they thought they had achieved what they wanted! I said, "No" to everyone, as I did not believe in promises; I had set my will on all or nothing.

Four days after I had commenced my hunger strike, I was isolated in a tiny cell all to myself. This was necessary in order not to depress others, and to place me under complete observation in case I should feed surreptitiously. It was also my wish that I be isolated, as all fasters know how difficult it is to be in a room where people eat. But at the time of my moving from the common room I was warned by the doctor, that if I get so much weaker that my life is endangered, they would be obliged to apply forced feeding. I smiled at this and said that I did not suppose they would be called upon to do so.

As our prison was rather overcrowded then, and as I had to be under the constant observation of the authorities, they found it only possible to segregate me into a dreaded "death cell". This was in the basement, directly below the administrative offices. There were eight of these death cells in all, all

single and one double sized. Each would be about six feet by ten, with a small barred basement window, a wooden box to sleep on, filled with sand so as not to be movable, a straw mattress and pillow, a small table and chair. Along the corridor a guard was continually pacing and peering through small apertures in the doors. We were supposed to be bolted from without, and the whole of that basement was locked outside, where another guard was placed. But in reality most of these cells were not bolted, and each one could leave his "cachette", and even spend some time with the others. The guard was never petty about it, and tried to help these solitary people to feel less miserable than would be otherwise.

Now, even when I was in the women's communal ward, we all heard and discussed at length the fate of two women condemned to death, who awaited their sentences whilst their appeals were being considered at the All-Russian Central Executive Committee. The usual time limit set for that was ninety days, at the expiration of which either the person is freed, or the death sentence commuted, and if neither of these—the sentence is carried out.

These two women were, a young twenty years old one, called Nyurka, who was one of a famous criminal gang in Lenin-grad, condemned to death for murder; the other was a middle-aged woman called "Auntie Paraskovia", sentenced for systematic stealing of textile goods in the factory where she worked, which she sold to black markets. They were both in those death cells awaiting their final fate, and it was known among the prisoners that they each behaved very differently. Every day we used to ask our wardens, "How are Nyurka and Auntie? Are they still here?" Hearing of their being there yet, we felt relieved, although there were only a few who sympathised with Nyurka, for her being an atrocious type of person. Even the guard was afraid of her, and prison officers on duty would never enter her cell without being well armed.

But here I was myself now, to see and even speak to them. Nyurka was in the adjoining cell to mine, and "Auntie" next to Nyurka's. In fact not an hour passed since my arrival there before Nyurka came to see me. She entered my cell without knocking, and asked at once, "What are you condemned for? Did you kill anyone?"

"No," I said, "I am not condemned, I am just isolated here, as I have declared a hunger strike."

She exclaimed, "Hunger strike!" and started to laugh cynically. She thought it was quite foolish to do such a thing,

and on hearing that I did this because I did not want to go to the north, she said, "Oh, that's where I escaped from last year!" She said that she would be glad to be exiled, or even further imprisoned, because she could always run away as she so frequently did in the past five years. But here was this execution hanging over her, and she was so heavily guarded now that there was no hope of escape. Then, getting more confidential, she told me in undertones that she was certain that other members of her gang were doing their best to get her out, and in fact she even knew that they often came outside the prison walls, and it was only the question of waiting a lucky moment and to strangle the guard; and weather assisting, with the aid of rope ladders they would reach her cell window. That is why, she said, she now spent most of her nights gazing at her basement window. I asked her about the bars over it,—“Oh!” she exclaimed, “Don't you worry about that, we know how to tackle them!” The rest of the details she confided in me showed me what audacity these people possessed!

Nyurka was a big woman of six feet, and very powerfully built, but well proportioned. She was blonde and blue-eyed, with a pink complexion. She smoked cigarettes continually, and swore almost incessantly. She was illiterate, and was not interested in anything but her nefarious occupation. During my stay in her neighbourhood I was frequently visited by her. She would come to my cell and ask if I was still alive, then would sit on my sleeping box and tell me parts of her autobiography. As her movements in that death ward could not be curtailed, she was free to enter my cell, unless I objected. But as I was slightly afraid of her, I never objected! Always, the moment she entered my enclosure, the guard would stand in such a place as to have her under observation, though not openly so, in order to avoid Nyurka's displeasure!

I could write volumes of detective stories about Nyurka alone, apart from her fellow criminals, but here it will suffice to say, that the last crime to bring her here was of the following nature.

The gang of which she was a member, and which she had just rejoined after her escape from the north, had a very tempting commission from another gang, composed of a group of Germans, who were interested in a certain important Communist in Leningrad then. Nyurka's band was offered substantial money, if only it could procure a portfolio of documents and other papers securely kept at that Communist's flat. To prove that the German gang was anxious to get those papers, it had advanced them a portion of the reward. From that moment the poor Communist

was carefully shadowed, and soon the criminal's plot came to fruition.

To cut this long story short—the papers and portfolio were stolen, but in this process the Communist was slaughtered. He was literally slaughtered, as he was cut into pieces and buried under some flagstones in a cellar. Militia and detectives could find no trace of the guilty ones, as the gang worked in gloves, in order to leave no fingerprints, and even militia dogs were of no avail, as the criminals used some odourless, colourless chemical to eradicate any scent for the dogs.

When Nyurka was telling me this ghastly story I felt like fainting, as I was already much weakened by ten days fasting. She confessed to me that it was her part to strike their victim with a special hammer, on the temple, so that the murder was done without any bloodshed. What a revolting story, and this person hoped for survival in order to continue as before!

All the same, I felt sorry for Nyurka, one so young, with her rough beauty, who had chosen such a terrible path in life. I felt sure she would not be pardoned, and would be shot. Her father was a kulak, but somehow she got separated from her family, and began her career at the age of fifteen.

The fact was that one male member of the gang happened to have a liking for her, with no response from her side, and when she openly scorned him, he betrayed her by writing a letter to the militia, giving her whereabouts and denouncing her as the slayer. During the court proceedings, she betrayed no word about any member of her band, even the death sentence would not move her loyalty. Indeed, honour exists even among criminals!

At the time when I was brought to the death cell, Nyurka was spending the last two weeks before the expiration of the time allotted for her appeal, and she was noticeably disturbed that nothing had yet come.

According to Russian law, those sentenced to death can make any request concerning food, clothes, books, cigarettes and other reading material during the entire ninety days of appeal. This is in order to minimise their mental anguish and ordeal of waiting. Nyurka enjoyed to the full all these advantages, whilst the other condemned woman touched little even of the food brought to her. "Auntie" Paraskovia was so nervous and exhausted, and the thought of her child left with relations, made her indifferent to any other things.

It is never known to these people when the hour of the supreme penalty will come, nor when to anticipate a pardon, should this arrive. Usually it was the practice, that in the case of a pardon



or commutation of the sentence, this news was brought to them during the daytime, and in the case of the appeal failing they were taken for execution at night. That is why those condemned to death dreaded the approach of nightfall, and most of them slept in the day and kept vigil at night, as in any case they were unable to sleep then, because of nervous tension. For that reason the guard was very careful lest he clink his keys after dark, as it made them jump in terror. Two or three years before there was a case of a woman, also condemned to death, who, while awaiting her final fate, became so hysterical, that one night when the guard had to use his keys while bringing someone in, she took up a towel and strangled herself. Since then the guard was doubled so as to be more watchful against such occurrences.

Here I was in this hair-raising atmosphere! I had committed no crime, and I was not condemned to death, and yet I was in a death cell! From the moment that I was brought there, twice a day I was visited by the prison doctor, who would come to see how I was feeling, and to take my temperature and pulse. He never missed the chance to say that I was looking awful and must be feeling very hungry, and would conclude by adding that I only pretended looking so cheerful! Every time on leaving me he would warn me that the moment he noticed I was getting too weak, he would make an order to feed me forcibly. I would always retort, "Oh, you won't see me too weak yet, doctor! I shall never show it to you, and you will have no other means of discovering it." He would then say, "You are an extraordinary person," or "I never met such a woman before!" or "I hope at least you will get what you want!"—depending on the mood he was in!

As a matter of fact, after about ten days I became considerably weaker, due mainly to my being continually self-poisoned by retaining the intestinal contents which were decomposing. I did not want to ask the doctor to be allowed an enema to cleanse my insides, as is always done in properly conducted fasts. As a result of this intestinal decomposition and self-absorption, I looked quite green in the face, and my gums started to fester. I had an unpleasant taste in my mouth, with a tongue heavily coated. Apparently my body began to exude the smell of a corpse, so that even the guard complained that he could not enter my place for delivering letters without feeling sick. But being so permeated with the smell myself, I could not detect it. One day I asked the doctor to have the glass removed from my tiny window, as it would not open. This was done, and only then, with plenty of fresh air, did I feel somewhat better,

though it became much colder in my cell. After ten days I was sleeping most of the day and night, the remaining time I was reading.

On the thirteenth day of my fast I was visited by a public prosecutor who said that for such counter-revolutionary acts as that of my hunger strike, I could not much expect a pardon. I corrected him promptly by saying that it was not a pardon I wanted, but justice. I told him also, that if I ever get that justice, I was not sure what would happen to those who had sent me to prison. Though he came for a general inspection of the prison, he found special pleasure in stopping at my cell, and, for more than half an hour, in talking to me abusively. He found it necessary to remind me of my past "sins", and when I asked him with feeling to spare me at such a moment when I was weak, he continued to wound me. At last I could stand it no longer and burst into convulsive sobs, and as I stood in a corner, I just slid down and fell on the floor from exhaustion. After this he left me at once, and the guard immediately called the doctor to see what had happened to me. Of course I was given, without delay, valerian essence with water, to quieten me. The doctor insisted that my nerves were getting too bad and he thought I ought to terminate my hunger strike.

Next day my cell was invaded by half a dozen important personages: the prison governor, two doctors, and representatives of political and social organisations from outside. They altogether declared that as already two weeks had passed of my "striking", they were pretty sure that the revision of my case was proceeding speedily, and because I was getting weaker—it would be advisable if I brought my fast to an end. I told them that I was prepared to believe them, that my case was in a stage of revision, but I preferred to go on still as only the day before I had had a visit from the public prosecutor, who almost assured me that I should have to complete my three years of confinement, for in his opinion I undoubtedly deserved it. So, therefore, either he tried to frighten me or they did not know what they were speaking about. And I declined their suggestion to break my fast. On seeing my stubbornness, the political and other representatives said that it was getting rather awkward as news of my hunger strike was fast spreading outside the prison, and it certainly produced a negative impression on those hearing of it. "So much the better for me," I told them, "As this is going to stir the authorities into the revision of my case without further delay."

Then the doctors expressed their opinion that I had better be transferred to the hospital ward where I could be looked

after. I immediately declared that I knew this trick, because the moment I was removed from my isolation, I would automatically be considered to be fasting no more, and would be just a hospital case. The doctors tried to assure me that I was misinformed about it, and one of them even approached me, trying to lift me as if anticipating my going with them. Like being stung, I sprang from my bed, and leaning against the wall as the only support for my weak body, I cried out, "So long as I still have some strength in me I shall go on fasting and nobody will remove me from my cell. And if you use force in doing that, I shall then do something awful which you would regret!" I told them that if they were observant at all, they should have known my character by then, instead of negotiating with me in that manner, and only exhausting me physically. After this they left me with a sigh.

For fifteen days I had not taken water, except those valerian drops, and I was so thin that my skin became all shrivelled and I looked twenty years older. In his next visit to me the doctor said that I should have in the morning, and in the evening, half a medicine glass of water flavoured with a few drops of mint essence—just to sweeten my mouth. As this was only water, and no nourishment at all, it would not be considered as breaking my fast. I agreed to it because my mouth was absolutely parched and with a terrible taste in it. I even started to feel that under those circumstances I would not be able to live longer than the thirty days I conditioned.

In the afternoon of the same day the door of my cell was flung open and Nyurka burst in, wildly excited, telling me that an officer had just informed her that in a few minutes she would be leaving prison. I asked her feebly if she thought she would be freed. She said she did not know, but the fact that they came in the daytime meant that she was not to be shot after all. Then she added that if they dared to come at night to take her, they would not be able to do so before she had done for two or three of them. She already had a small collection of primitive weapons hidden in her mattress, such as very long nails, glass splinters like dagger blades, and even a knife. Nobody ever knew how she acquired them while in a death cell.

Then asking me what feelings I had, whether she would be free that day,—she kissed me and ran into the corridor, where three officers were waiting her. The guard told me later that because she was such a difficult person—different methods had been used to deal with her. Anyway, a few hours later she was shot. Poor Nyurka, perhaps it was better for her to be dead. . . .

That night I was awakened by the sound of many young voices in our corridor. I guessed that several youngsters were brought in to swell our diminishing population. They were all put in the double cell. From the moment they entered there began such a hullabaloo in our so far very quiet place, that I could neither sleep nor read. This continued throughout the night into the next day. They were singing, shouting and screaming, raising much clatter and banging, and finally started kicking against the door. Several times they were asked by the guard to stop, but with no effect, and as corporal punishment has been abolished in Soviet Russia,—no other means could be used to bring them to order but that of persuasion.

I was told they had been brought from the juvenile section where they were very much of a nuisance to the others, thinking that in isolating them in such a quiet place, they might quieten down themselves; but I should imagine it was like a red rag to a bull for them!

During the late morning their rowdiness abated a little, and thinking that at last they had tired themselves out, I attempted to sleep.

How much time passed I do not know, but some time after I was awakened by suffocating smoke, and heard an alarmed voice calling, "Pataleewa, carry her out quickly!" Two strong hands grasped me and, already losing consciousness, they took me out into the yard. Revived, I then returned to my cell, and passing by that double cell, the door of which was open, I saw such a mess therein that the whole picture became quite clear to me. Those four youngsters had emptied the sand from the box, and spreading it on the floor, they managed to set alight to the box itself. Whether it was one of their usual escapades or just in revenge for their isolation, I do not know, but by this they contrived to leave their short confinement in our basement. I was later told that they were sent to a G.P.U. Juvenile Camp, where they would soon be sobered with a lot of training and work!

It was already the eighteenth day of my hunger strike. At noon that day I was surprised to see my lawyer call on me. He was nice to me and tried to persuade me that my hunger strike might only harm me, as it angered the Leningrad juridical circles immediately concerned with my case. He said that he was just back from Moscow, where he tried his best to push my appeal. Again, I told him quite firmly that I would proceed with my fast whatever it would bring me. He said that he could hardly recognise me so bad I was looking. Well, I knew that.

No sooner had he left me than another visitor came to see me. This time it was a young man in G.P.U. uniform. He said he had just learned of this appalling business that was going on with me, as part of his social work—he was doing voluntarily politico-educational work among prisoners. He asked me if I could write an application giving all the facts with my own statements about the whole affair that had brought me to prison. It would then be typed and he would take it in person to Vishinsky in Moscow. After this he sent me a quantity of paper and pencils for the writing.

Feeling as if a new stream had entered my stale blood, I at once set about composing an application. I went on with it through all the night, and such an influx of energy surprised even myself. When I had finished, I was thoroughly exhausted, and on counting I found there were twenty-one pages as a result of my labour!

It was morning of the nineteenth day. Very early, that young G.P.U. man came again, fearing that I may not have been able to do the job, and seeing that I had written so many pages, he scolded himself and said that had he known it would be so long he would have sent a shorthand secretary to relieve me. Collecting the papers he repeated that he would personally go to Moscow overnight and hoped to see me still all right when back. He alone encouraged me to continue the hunger strike, saying that time from time big problems are solved by some such individual sacrifices. I could not quite understand what he meant by this, and it was much later that I remembered how right he was.

That very night our "auntie" Paraskovia was taken . . . She was also going to the Valley of the Shadow. When officers came into her cell—she fainted and they carried her out to the waiting van. Now, her crime was bad enough but did not seem to me to deserve shooting, but in order to stop others stealing the People's property—one had to be so treated to impress the rest. Life itself proved that the old generation in Soviet Russia was still lacking in social consciousness and very often behaved not like the citizens of a Socialist country.

The young generation was very different—it did not call for such drastic treatment. A reprimand or an exposition in a wall newspaper was enough to put an end to any misdemeanour. But then, they were a new race, so to say, born after the Revolution—which makes all the difference.

Thus, now I was remaining quite alone in the whole of the basement.

SOVIET JUSTICE STRIKES MY ENEMIES AND  
SETS ME FREE

IN THE MORNING of the twentieth day of my fast the doctor found my pulse very weak and my face and hands were cold. He became frightened, and almost with tears in his eyes, he implored me to allow myself to be taken to the prison hospital. He said that he would have a nurse continually beside me day and night, as my heart was getting weaker, and if I happened to pass away at a time when nobody was in attendance, not only the governor would suffer, but he too would have to go to prison for that. He added that they would fulfil any condition I liked to make, and finally acceding to his plea, I put forward the following demands:- That I should be alone in the hospital room, and that no smell of food should penetrate into it, and finally, that they should keep their respect for my fasting and not try to dissuade me any more.

In less than half an hour stretcher bearers came with a nurse to take me there. Still fancying myself strong enough to walk, I refused the stretcher, and supported on both sides, we went slowly across the yard into the hospital. On leaving my death cell, the guard wished me success and said that he would pray for me, which touched me deeply.

When in the open, the fresh air overpowered me and I felt faint, but grasping my supporters more firmly, I managed to proceed, though very very slowly. Reaching the centre of the courtyard, I suddenly heard voices from windows of the men's and women's prison blocks, shouting, "Look, Pataleewa is walking, she is going to hospital! Did you break your fast? What has happened to you?" I was recognised at once as I was wearing a motor-cycle riding outfit for most of the time in prison. I feebly waved my hand, which made them conclude that I was ill.

In the hospital I found the doctor kept his promise. A huge, light, and sunny room was emptied, even spare beds were removed, only my bed stood in the corner, with a little table beside it, on which a bouquet of lilac reminded me that spring was already in full bloom. The nurse put me to bed, where the warm glow of hot water bottles placed all around made me feel grateful. However, I declined to have a nurse in constant

attendance as I could use a bell when I required her. She would also look in from time to time to see if I was all right.

Soon I fell asleep, but on awaking, I seemed to perceive the smell of food nearby. I felt angry as I thought it was reaching my room from the kitchen, and turning over I tried to get rid of this intrusive odour. But I soon found myself unable to combat it, as the smell was still pursuing me. Those who have fasted know how difficult it is to fight this tantalising thing. I suddenly sat up in my bed, thinking to counteract that smell with the scent of a spray of lilac, when I suddenly noticed a dish of food on the table beside me. It consisted of a vegetable cutlet with fried potatoes and tomato sauce. My heart was just strong enough to allow it to produce an outburst of anger, and in a second the whole thing was dashed to the floor. Hearing the smash, the guard and nurse rushed in to enquire the cause of it. I was white with indignation and, unable to speak, I just pointed to the floor.

The doctor appeared and explained apologetically that it was absolutely unintentional, as it might have happened while the guard was temporarily absent from the door. The serving nurse, uninformed about me, may have put the meal beside me as she did for other patients. He thereupon gave strict orders that even the food wagon should not go near my door.

It was quite late that night when the young G.P.U. man came to see me again. He had just come from Moscow, where he personally saw the people in the High Court of Appeal. He was certain that only a few days remained for me to wait their decision. He brought me magazines and newspapers to pass away the time, and departing, he gave me further courage to go on with my hunger strike!

Every few hours a nurse would come and replenish my hot water bottles. I even asked for some instrument with which to scrape my tongue! But my gums were soft and I feared the loss of my teeth.

Another slow-footed day passed by. At the end of the twenty-first day, in twilight, I lay watching the last rays of the receding sun reflected on the wall. I felt so comfortable and warm that I even thought I could go on fasting for many more days. It is strange, but I never for once entertained the idea of a bad ending to my "strike", so much did I live in hope! Closing my eyes, I was sinking into sleep, when I suddenly heard a commotion near the door, and a voice, "Open the door quickly, I must see Comrade Pataleewa at once!"

Startled, I thought that no prisoner was allowed to be called

“comrade” but “citizen”, (as that honour has been lost after his sentence) while somebody definitely pronounced “Comrade Pataleewa”. What did it mean?

By that time the scrambling near the door was over, and in thrust himself my knight valiant, the G.P.U. man. He ran to me, and almost throwing himself upon my bed, exclaimed in excitement, “You are free, you are free, do you hear, you are free!”

Tongue-tied, I managed to utter, “Do you mean that I am free?”

He shouted, “Yes, yes!” and shook me like a playmate at some game.

In a great haste he asked, “Can you come with me at once, or do you need a stretcher? Or would you prefer the governor to come here to read you the telegram from Moscow?”

I bolted out from my bed, and asking him to put a prison dressing gown on me, with his support, we paced our way to the main offices. Soon a doctor and a nurse came after us in case I should need their attendance. Grasping my hand, the doctor said that he thought all the way I would win. I smiled!

In a huge study I found assembled the prison officials and the governor, the head doctor and the chief of the Council of State Defence, all standing. At once a telegram was read which ran as follows: “To the governor of Leningrad prison no. 8. Release Pataleewa immediately. Report same. Vishinsky.”

After this reading I was congratulated in chorus for my hard won success. And just at that moment I felt such weakness in my knees that I was about to fall.

When my thin lifeless hand was wrung by everyone, the governor told the chief doctor, “Now you will keep her in hospital for three or four days, and see that she is given the right food to strengthen her.” I immediately protested saying that I would go home next day. They laughed as if to say how childish I was! I made a request to have my home and Mr. Pataleev informed of what had happened as soon as possible. One of the staff volunteered at once to go in his car and take the news there. Then I was taken back to my hospital room.

The surprising thing was that, as if by magic, the whole prison had learned of my release, for on crossing the prison yard again, though it was getting dark, I heard numerous voices congratulating me from all quarters!

The first thing I did when back in hospital was to ask the nurse to bring me copious amounts of hot water which I drunk until I could take no more.



In about an hour the prison officer who took the message to my home returned, bringing me a bundle of clothes and a huge packet of delicacies, which my people thought would suit me most after my fast! As I had no knowledge then of how to break fasts, the doctor suggested I have semolina milk mash, on which Russian babies are fed. But when I opened the parcel of food, I at once started greedily to swallow one thing after another. There were delicious biscuits, Russian confectionery, fresh butter and two enormous oranges sent by Chattopādya. These I tried, in succession, until I felt so weak that I fell asleep.

I woke up in the middle of the night from pains inside. The doctor was summoned at once and necessary measures were taken to relieve me. So actually all I had eaten so voraciously was lost! In the morning I felt stronger, at least I could move about as my blood could circulate more freely after the long drink.

That day at noon I was to have visitors, but I became so impatient to get real liberty and freedom of movement, that I insisted upon leaving the hospital at the moment they arrived by car, and accompanied by them, to reach home. The doctors became perturbed and said that I really must stay in bed there for a few days. But with my old unyielding and stubbornly persistent nature, with its dislike for delays—I was determined on leaving hospital and prison as I had planned. After all, I was now a free person at last, and no one could keep me there, even with good intentions!

My suitcase was packed with all my things and was brought to the office where I had to be formally discharged. When this had been done, I was advised to wait a little as the car had not yet come. But my impatience was now so rapidly growing, that in order to feel my freeness to the full, I wanted to leave the very building itself, and go into the outside world! I decided to wait the car near the entrance.

Indeed one has to experience all this to feel what freedom really is. One must lose it in order to appreciate it. While standing there for a few minutes, and absorbing in a tremor that sunny stream of air, and the sound of chirruping sparrows on the nearby trees, I felt it was all mine now. That I shall never lose it again!

A distant image of Nyurka appeared in my memory, to which I said, "You will never enjoy these again" . . .

One comparison floated before my mind then: which is more painful to live through—being a slave and working in chains, or to move without fetters and yet be confined to prison walls?

The former can at least enjoy the air, the wind, and the sun, see the trees and hear the birds, while the latter faces nothing but his four walls. On the other hand, according to Richard Lovelace, "Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage." Maybe!

Coming out of my reverie, I realised that the car was still not there. Continuing to be impatient, I decided to go along the street and meet it on my way. But it looked as if a hitch had occurred, and on reaching the crossroads I entered a tram and went home alone. Unfortunately I had to change to a bus and later go on foot a certain distance to reach my place.

When I was in the tram and facing its passengers, I caught their pitying looks, as they thought how thin and ill I was looking. But the great surge of joy was in my heart as I secretly triumphed: if only these people knew how exceedingly happy I was—just from a prison's . . . death cell!

My trunk was growing heavier and heavier in my hands as I carried it on the last stage of my journey home. The huge block of flats frightened me when I began my slow climb to the fifth floor, as the lift was not working. Still feeling stronger in spirit than in body, I attempted to carry my case to the top, with two or three stops on the way. At last I could ring the bell and that was the last thing I remember, as I collapsed.

When in my bedroom, I came to my senses and saw my friends and relatives anxiously leaning over me, I heard the following exclamations: "How stupid to allow her to go alone!" "She could die in the street!" and so on. But my opening eyes relieved them at once.

I learned that two cars had gone to see me, my friends carrying a lot of flowers, only to learn that I had already left the prison! Now these flowers were surrounding me. How much there was to ask and to say! But I was rather weak, and they spared me for a few hours.

What they could not get used to, was my appearance—I looked so different to how they had last seen me. My eyes were deep sunken and full of sadness, my cheeks were gaunt, my hair dull, and my body with so little flesh that it was virtually skin and bone. Mr. Pataleev even said jokingly that I reminded him of photographs of Mahatma Gandhi, but Skrobansky was not content with humour, and advanced the thought, which struck me then, that what he had seen of Russians convinced him that they were capable of superhuman things. Skrobansky was of Polish extraction and spent his early youth in Western Europe, before his parents settled in Leningrad.

For the next few days I was in my bedroom, frequently going to bed; I continually received deputations of friends, club members, and even people who knew me very little. I had so many flowers, that one would imagine I was running a florist's shop,—their scents intoxicated me. What I wanted perhaps, was some music to complete my blissful happiness.

Unfortunately, the more prosaic side of my existence in those days soon brought me to a rude awakening.

In spite of the warnings I had, and my own common sense, I was continually eating something or other, and while my people encouraged me to rebuild my strength, even they became alarmed. At the end of the fourth day I became blue in the face and was about to faint. A doctor was summoned, and if not for his immediate interference, I should have died that night from complete blockage and intestinal bursting into the abdominal cavity. What an ignominious ending after battling with life like a lion!

At that time I received a communication from Moscow, advising me that as soon as I feel strong enough, to go there for the final clearance of my case.

On the seventh day of my release I felt sufficiently recuperated to go to Moscow, informing them by telegram. My visiting the Assembly of the High Court of Appeal was a never-to-be-forgotten event to me, as the first thing I heard on facing this august body, was their rather human exclamations, "Let us see this brave woman who plodded her way through death!" And once more my hand was shaken by all.

All the relevant papers and documents were before them, and they only had to ask me questions relating to the prosecution, judge, Commander Z., transport officers and the rest of my "enemies". Even I could guess that there was something formidable in the air, and perhaps it would be only myself now who would have the last laugh, which I promised Z. ten months earlier.

A couple of hours later I left the assembly with such a feeling of satisfaction and relaxation and such firmness of my position, that I even dared to think that it was the end of all my sufferings. On returning to Leningrad I soon learned that several big officials, a few transport officers, also my judge Kalatosova, were "purged" for overstepping justice in my case. That is, they were dismissed and "reduced to the ranks" with the proviso that none of them occupy a position of responsibility for the next five years. And so the law of retribution turned the tables!

As to Commander Z., several weeks later he was "trans-

ferred" to a remote far Eastern region to some other post. No one failed to deduct that it was the direct outcome of my case.

It came to my mind then that the famous "cherchez la femme" worked its formula to the full this time! I am certain that Commander Z., had he been alone on that ill-fated day, would never have been involved in that street incident which turned out to be such a scandal. It was his wife who made him forget the dignity of his position, and even the ordinary decency of a man of self respect. Indeed, it seems to me that Sanskrit poets are right when, dwelling on the dark side of women generally, they take delight in describing them as the foremost obstacles in man's entrance into heaven!!

## CHAPTER XVII

### ANOTHER JUMP INTO THE UNKNOWN

**A**FTER MY FINAL triumph over all enemies who were working for some considerable time for my downfall, I felt I could allow myself some rest. I had also great satisfaction that my dignity was restored, my achievements in sport had not lost their recognition, and that my motor-cycles were returned to me; and perhaps, after having a really thorough rest, I should be able to start something very different. All the same, I could not fail to notice that the last stages of my life's happenings considerably changed my attitude towards people in general, and my own place in society. But above all I needed rest. I was still very thin, and the deep marks of my hungerstrike were on my face, telling its sad tale.

I went for a week to Peterhof, where I stayed near the famous palace by the sea. The summer was at its height and the weather was soft and breezy from the sea. I would take a boat to go along the coast and stop at such spots where nobody could disturb me. There I would think for hours, perhaps for the first time for years experiencing the beneficial influence of serenity so fully. It was probably because I had lived so fast for the last few years, which culminated in that final climax, that I had no time nor desire to give myself up to relaxation.

Gradually, I came to the conclusion that I needed, at least for a time, a completely different atmosphere to return me back to life. It dawned upon me, why not to use the opportunity

of going away from Russia for a few months or a year? Though originally such a thing was in my plans, when under the pressure of tragic events, I also meant to leave Russia,—it was very different to the present situation. There was nothing to push me into taking such a step now.

And still I thought: why not add some more experiences to my life by going abroad and seeing the outside world for myself? Nobody in Russia could do that at his own desire, as it was impossible to leave the country, and if through such an intricate turn of events I was in possession of a foreign passport, I might use such a chance.

One of my ambitions for many years had been to go alone on my motor-cycle round the world—and did not such an opportunity present itself now! The adventurous side of my nature took an upper hand, and I decided to try to encircle the surface of the globe! Neither had I forgotten that I should have to go abroad if only to divorce Mr. A.

The more I dwelt on this idea, the more it attracted me, and I thought that my Harley-Davidson might enjoy better roads if we both sped along foreign highways for a while! And when we get back to Russia again—we should settle down to some proper and really creative work.

Having decided on this, I started at once to work for realisation of the plan. First of all I had to retrieve my motor-cycle, which I had not had time to attend to. But it soon proved to be not so easy, as the Leningrad transport authorities detained it in spite of myself being free! I had to go to Moscow several times to complain about it before my machine was returned to me. Then I had to get permission from the appropriate Soviet authorities to take the motor-cycle abroad, which I received eventually.

I thought to take very little with me, only just what I could carry in my side-car and enough money for modest travel for a few months. I had an idea to go to England first, since my passport was British, and after staying there some time and getting a divorce from my foreign husband, I would see if I could get means to go round the world. I even got in touch with the Harley-Davidson firm in America, to help me in supplying spare parts, etc., on my tour as an advertisement. I would earn the money for my travelling by writing articles about my journeys to different foreign magazines and papers. The Indian, Mr. Chattopadya, helped me greatly to get into touch with various clubs of this sort and editors in Berlin, Paris, in America and even in India. And if I should fail to materialise such a

scheme—then, after seeing Europe and England, and having freed Mr. A.,—I would return to Russia by Soviet steamer from London to Leningrad, with my motor-cycle on board.

So I thought . . .

But from the beginning of my preparations for departure, I was met with a fresh series of almost impregnable difficulties. First of all I discovered that my passport, which was resting at the Foreign Office whilst I was in prison, had been held up there. The fact that I went eighteen times to Moscow within two months to get it back, and then to find out what was holding up my visa for departure,—showed how the devil was anxious to put a spoke into my wheel!

Someone from the Foreign Office advised me to go to the British Consulate, where I was issued a duplicate passport, and when I got it I began anew my attempts to speed up the visa. Here was another obstacle, concerning my retaining, or not, my Russian nationality.

While this latter was being decided, I busied myself with maps for the European crossing, and getting permission from the State Bank for taking money out of the country. My friends who were helping me, and the motor-cycle club, also got excited, as it was the first time in their history that a member should go abroad. As to the motive of my going to Europe, only very intimate friends knew, the rest had to put up with an explanation I deemed to be sufficient.

My next step was to acquire the tryptiques and laissez-passers through all countries I had to cross. Here there was another shock awaiting me. Since Russia had no Automobile Conventions with most countries, I had to ask the British Consulate to help me in this, as they represented a Government which had such conventions. It would be easy for them to give me this assistance, but they would not extend it for reasons quite unknown to me. What they were willing to do was “to help” me to go direct to India on my motor-cycle, via Persia and Baluchistan! They insisted that I had nothing to do in England, since my husband was in the East, and they thought it was my duty to join him there instead of adventuring in Europe. Here was the rub! Least of all I wanted to join my so-called husband, and much though I dreamed of ever seeing India, I would never dare to go there as a “niece” of that formidable uncle, about whom I had such a warning from the G.P.U. (When in India, I met the “uncle”, who occupied a slightly different post to the one he was supposed to have. He proved to be a most delightful person to know, and very kind. I made

a lasting friendship with him and his family. He died last year in Bombay.) Besides, it was more than impossible to cross Persia and Baluchistan on a motor-cycle. I went to the Persian and Afghan Consulates, and was told there that nobody ever went that way on a motor-bike, as it was dangerous, especially for women, and impassable in any case. Still, the British Consulate was adamant, and seeing that they would not move a finger in helping me to leave for Europe, I resolved no further asking them.

I managed to buy a German tryptique, as Russia had a convention with that land, and for other countries,—the Baltic States and Poland,—I left deposits with their Consulates, and finally got ready for departure. These additional and unexpected difficulties exhausted me considerably, as with the exception of that week at Peterhof, I had not been able to have a proper rest after my prison and fasting. But the final blow was still ahead of me.

Two days before departure I received my passport from the Foreign Office with the visa, to which there was attached a paper informing me that since I insisted on going abroad—I was no longer in possession of Soviet nationality. Which meant that I could not come back to my country if and when I wished to.

For one dazed second I could not comprehend whether the ground was really departing from my feet, or that it was all just a hallucination . . .

It was such a mortal blow to all the construction of my plans, that I could only say that suffering was a never-ending thing for me. It was too late to cancel or to alter anything, and I simply had to go to Europe, which I began to fear and even to hate. It was my self-exile, therefore. Exile, which came in such an unexpected manner, but for which I seemingly asked. Life is a very complicated thing.

On leaving Russia in such circumstances, I felt more unhappy than I had ever yet been. I vaguely felt that this time my life would be amid complete strangers whose language I even could not speak. I had not one friend or even acquaintance in the whole world outside my country. Was it a punishment for my lightly conceived rest somewhere in Europe? It must have been.

Many friends and motor-cyclists came to see me off. Except Mr. Pataleev and Mr. Skrobansky, nobody knew my tragedy. Everyone was envious about my going to see the world. Everybody asked me to write to them either from Berlin or Paris

or London and Bombay and other big cities, and bring much interesting news back to them about sport, roads and motor-cycles in Europe. I smiled and tried to appear happy and undisturbed while my heart was bleeding, and I in turn envied them, who remained behind.

One last shake of hands and a wave of farewell, and I took off. I remember for the first few miles I was continually crying, and my eyes could hardly see the road. Still, I went on and on till I reached the frontier. There I had a last look at my country, and last Russian people. It was there that I signed that paper—never to return. After this I made another jump into the unknown. Everything was completely darkened before my inner vision, just as when one falls into an abyss . . .

My motor-cycle was the only friend I had left with me now. My most faithful friend, it had seen the days of my successes and my misfortunes, and now we were together and quite alone. We were starting a new and perhaps the last chapter of our life's wandering.



## PART II

### CHAPTER I

## THE WORLD BEYOND THE SOVIET BORDER

“Every country should contain the greatest number of healthy, happy human beings.”—RUSKIN.

**W**ESTERN EUROPE! WHAT did I find in it, what did I see there that impressed me most, and how did I feel in this quite different world, after I had left Soviet Russia?

If I myself had any illusions about Western Europe—I soon became cured of them. Like a man who, having longed to take a dip in refreshing and cooling waters, finds after jumping into it, that it is too cold and uninviting!

I shall start with Poland, for it was the first country where I began my observations of this wonderful Europe!

I passed through Esthonia, Latvia and Lithuania quickly, as if in a great hurry. Only when I reached the semi-frozen Lithuanian marshes did I slacken my speed a little, as I also had to turn more to the east, towards Brest-Litovsk, for a better road, after which I proceeded directly to Warsaw.

I must say I did not like Poland, and for this I hope to be forgiven. Its upper class, the ruling class and the military caste—were an arrogant and insolent people, who met me with a sneer and an air of a nice little nation under the warm wing of the big Western Powers. Poland felt with satisfaction that because she was a buffer between the “dark and evil forces of Soviet Russia”, and the rest of the highly civilised world—she was a pet nation to whom everyone wanted to give a chocolate, or a sweet! Or protection if need be.

Warsaw was a fine city where people with money enjoyed all that life could offer. Chic, smart Polish women of the upper class visiting shops and crossing the streets and squares were the perfection of the calculated skill of how to display their best aspects. Their make-up, it seemed to me, would take up the best part of the day, so complicated and deliberate it was. (This impressed me much as I could not fail to compare our own women, who were much plainer in attire and with no

make-up at all. Such women would be ostracised in my country. During the last few years some women might use lipstick, and I am sure they pay for it dearly in loss of respect, unless they belong to the ciné-theatrical world where such sophistication is forgiven!)

France seemed to have the main influence on Poles, as one could hear the French language frequently there, and most of the shops exhibited the latest from Paris. Glittering uniforms of Polish officers, and frequent clicking of their heels when they bent to kiss the hands of lady friends—pervaded the atmosphere with a feeling that here these people tried their hardest to show that the old world of chivalry and romance was in clear evidence, otherwise so remote from the daily life of that Republic. There was something unnatural to me in this deliberate desire to keep outlived customs going. I must confess my cynicism when I thought: "Well, I wonder how long this rottenness is going to last?"

I did not go to the Ghetto. I had seen enough of the poor peasants, whose villages I passed. What poverty I witnessed there! I thought that the unhappy faces of chronically hungry peasants would haunt me for ever. There were millions of them there. And not because they had a bad harvest, or some other temporary condition undermining their standard of living. No, it was because they were so heavily taxed, and had to work for their "pans"—landowners, that they had not even enough dry bread to eat. Many of them spoke my language. They timidly asked me questions about Soviet Russia to which they belonged till Poland invaded it in 1920 and chopped off a good part of Western Ukraina.

It pained me to see them barefooted, when it was already cold November; they were thin and emaciated to the last degree. They asked me if it was true, as they had heard, that in Soviet Russia all peasants, by order of the Government, had to pool their land and cattle together, so as to become more prosperous. Yes, I said, it was true. How envious they felt, and they asked God why the same had not happened to them. I thought: well, these people who knew what real and hopeless poverty was—were dreaming about what some Russian peasants had rejected so stubbornly. It means that only if one were at the very bottom of despair and utter helplessness, only then could one appreciate even a little the improvement that the Russian peasants got by 1934. Can one blame me for feeling hatred to those chic representatives of the ruling few in Warsaw?

It was also clear to me then, that while in the Soviet Union the peasants were still passing through many hardships and deprivations—all these were of a temporary nature. The future was before them, and it entirely depended on the co-operation of these Russian peasants to bring that secure and prosperous future sooner than later. But here, in Poland, nobody cared for them, nobody promised them anything in the near or distant future; in fact they were slowly dying and degenerating, millions of them.

Most of their villages had no schools even, and I felt I could not be so cruel as to tell them what strides education had made in Russia. That any peasant could send his son or daughter to a university and pay nothing for it. Poland alone made me think about the causes of the Revolution. It seemed to be incredible that these great masses of people could tolerate such awful conditions,—for how long, though?

That is why I did not like Poland. It is because the new Russian generation, to whom I certainly belong, judges everything firstly, from the social and economic point of view, after which come the political, religious, aesthetic and other aspects.

Unhappy at the sight of all this, I continued my journey to Germany. I hoped to find things different and better there.

By the way, I had a most amusing incident on the Germano-Polish border. When I approached the German line somewhere near Schneidemühl (I took the northern route to get to Stettin to call on a friend whom I suddenly recollected to be living there)—the German customs authorities took special precautions with me. It was much worse in Poland, though. Anyway, they took my motor-cycle into the customs yard and ordered me to take out everything, even the tools, and put them all on the bench before them for inspection. I obeyed, and spread my possessions, including spanners, screwdrivers and pump. Looking through everything, and touching my tools as if they contained secret chambers with Communist propaganda material in them, they came across a little parcel wrapped in a Russian newspaper *Pravda*. Having undone the parcel containing two dictionaries, one of the officials started to scrutinise the newspaper itself. In a moment I heard very excited agitation and swearing amongst them—on the second page of that *Pravda* was a portrait of Comrade Stalin in full length!

Viciously he crumpled the paper, and looking threateningly at me, with much feeling he threw it into an anthracite stove that stood in their office. For a few minutes they shouted and

clenched their fists as if about to give me a good hiding for attempting to smuggle in that cursed Communist literature!

I stood there, not knowing what to do next, whether I should try to explain that I had no evil intentions in bringing the picture of Stalin to Germany; or should I not silently see the end of the incident without further worsening it? After a little consultation, the whole lot of them decided to give my bike a proper examination. They looked into the petrol tank with a torch, turned this bolt and touched that gadget. No, no more "indiscretions". Then one of them suddenly thought of the bright idea of letting the air out of my tyres to see if there was anything between them and the inner-tubes. I began to get angry at this stupid idea, as it is not such a pleasant thing to remove a Harley-Davidson's wheels and to put them back again. Still, I had to. They found nothing of course, and I allowed myself a little cynical laughter under my helmet!

But before I could pack all my things once more, they took an objection to a chunk of cheese I had with me from Russia. They proposed I should pay duty on it. I assured them that this was solely for my own consumption, and not intended to be sold in Germany. After a few minutes' argument they confiscated it, and I presume, they had it for their supper, unless the suspicion of it being poisoned made them throw it away altogether! Finally I was asked to go into a room where a woman officer stripped me almost nude and had a thorough search through all my garments, inside my shoes and stockings as well.

All this finished, I had my tryptique passed, and only then was allowed to proceed on their territory. Well, I thought, if I shall have to undergo some more of this kind of crossing the frontiers—I shall be totally exhausted before I reach England! All the same, this customs procedure gave me some insight as to what the official German attitude was towards the Soviet Union, full of hatred and fear.

At last inside Germany; I went to Stettin. When I arrived there I had to pass the dock area to the suburbs beyond it. Just as I opened my map of Stettin and surroundings—another motor-cycle stopped dead near me, as if having chased me for some time. Hot and in haste, he commanded: "Kommen Sie hier, bitte!" and led me to the gates of a huge building. I gave a sigh and followed him. Soon I learned that the agitated customs officers at the border forgot to stamp my passport for entering German territory! For some reason they could not trace me on my way from Schneidemühl to Stettin, but at last caught

up with me near the docks there. My passport was taken, and after a lot of questions, but not more searching, it was endorsed with Stettin on the stamp, as if I had entered there! I had my laugh!

Not finding my German friend in Stettin, and having his Berlin address given me, I proceeded to the capital, where in any case I had to go. By the way, this German, Otto H——n, was my first motor-cycle training teacher in Tiflis. To him I owe much to this day.

It was about 9 p.m. when approaching from the distance, I saw a bright glow in the sky over Berlin, like a huge fire. I hurried to reach Berlin, as I had to find my friend there before midnight, thinking he might be able to help me get a place for putting up. When at last, emerging from the dark road, I turned into a brightly-lit wide thoroughfare, I suddenly had to stop. I just did not know where to move—so much traffic, light and crowds confused me. Then I spotted a policeman. He politely tried to explain to me how to get to the Sports-Palast on Potsdammerstrasse. He said I should have to go to the other side of Berlin, and if I did not know their traffic regulations, the journey would be difficult. He smelt of alcohol and had a coarse voice.

Immediately a crowd gathered round us. Everybody wanted to help but did not know how. After much discussion, two Nazi youths in uniform volunteered to help me get to the Sports-Palast locality, if only I would let them ride on the pillion behind! The crowd and policeman cheered as if approving such gallantry on the part of the two young men, and we set off.

Every time I had to pass squares and traffic lights, I would just miss the forbidden line and cross it. Instantly the whistle of a policeman, and an excited crowd would surround us. It was only the first few weeks since special complicated traffic regulations had been put into practice in Berlin, and as in every novelty, there were many mistakes and transgressions on the part of drivers. But as I was altogether a stranger in Berlin—I just failed to see any difference between three white lines that barred the way to a vehicle, when a red light appeared. The police fined the drivers on the spot. That is why crowds spent their leisure time near the traffic lights, as it was most entertaining to count how many people would have to part with their five marks! But soon I noticed that when a policeman ran up to us holding a receipt for the fine, and a pencil in his hands—my two guardians behind would stretch out their arms

with "Heil Hitler!" and the policeman had nothing else to do but reciprocate the greeting!

Continuing my traffic blunders, we reached the Potsdammerstrasse. Those young Nazis brought me to the doorstep of my friend, and saying goodbye, they expressed their hope to see me one day at the Sports-Palast or Autobahn races! I thought it was very nice of them to accompany me through all Berlin, where I should have lost myself had it not been for them.

My friend Otto H——n, took me to the hotel, where my Harley was garaged. He poured out questions about Russia and Tiflis. He so much regretted that he had ever left that country where he was actually born. Some of the other Germans who decided to return to the Reich also, were equally unhappy and wished they could obtain permission to get back to Russia. But alas, as the waters of a river do not flow back, so the people in Germany could not alter their destiny.

Next day I went out to the city, to see the first real European capital.

Everything everywhere was very orderly. What struck me there at once was the fact that all prices in the grocery shops were put for quarters of a pound in weight:  $\frac{1}{4}$  lb. butter, cheese, sausages, etc. I asked my friend why this was so. He answered that most people could not buy more than a  $\frac{1}{4}$  lb. of anything at a time, why then trouble putting the price for the whole pound!

As I stayed in Berlin for a month, I had plenty of time to observe many sides of the life of this "un-Russian" place, and its people. It seemed to me that time, energy, human virtues and any deviation from them—were all very well calculated in the mode of life of this capital, I should even add, of this nation. A clear and unmistakable wind blew over the bridges. Order, order—was evident everywhere!

Whilst I was there, the winter relief collection was in progress, and Herman Goering was to go to the Sports-Palast—to put an extra punch into this campaign. As I stayed opposite that vast building, with others I perched myself on a balcony for hours, in order not to miss Herr Goering passing by.

The excitement of the crowd was considerable, and hours before this "advent", streets were already flooded with people. Loudspeakers proclaimed his movements by car from the Nazi headquarters to this place. He was sitting in a sports model Mercédès-Benz, waving his white-gloved hand time from time, or thrusting it out in a "Heil Hitler" gesture. He looked rather youngish, with fat rosy cheeks, and his huge chest heaving

with many medals and crosses. "Brown Shirts" devoured him with their eyes and exultantly shouted their organised greetings to him.

Then it became known that next day Hitler himself would take part in distributing some warm clothes to the poor, and also pour out hot potato soup to all present in the hall, at a feeding centre.

As my friend belonged to the Fascist Party, we obtained special passes and rushed to the scene. But there were so many important people who sought their way to the ceremony, that we were only able to stay outside the building, near the open doors, and hear the Führer's voice through a microphone.

There was so much talk then in Germany about the wonderful Führer and his magic ways of pulling the country out of chaos and ruins. His portraits were everywhere, not even one shop window had forgotten to exhibit it, even if a tiny snap of him in one aspect or another. Here he embraced a child, there he shakes a hand; now he reviews the old Fascist Guard, and then he receives the flowers! Hitler, Führer, Hitler—on everyone's lips. As the elections of the Reichstag were to be made that month, the friend of mine was not surprised to see so much of this "popularity campaign".

This friend of mine became a member of the Fascist Party only because he could not succeed in earning his livelihood otherwise. Coming from Russia in 1930, with only little money to start some business in Germany that would enable him to bring all his family there as well, he found that he unfortunately had a slightly foreign accent, which patriotic Germans disliked. His optical and photographic shop was not so much frequented as was his neighbour's, though the latter established himself much later! He soon learned the secret, and employed a young optician, who was typically German or rather Aryan, that is blue-eyed, blond and with a pink complexion, and whose language was beyond reproach. Things immediately improved, but he noticed that if he himself, was occasionally present in his shop—those days brought no trade though many clients called in. A year later it became rumoured that only a hundred per cent Germans would be allowed to keep a trade, and those who were not quite like Aryans would have to quit trading.

He therefore, had no other choice but to become a Party member, to forestall the oncoming trouble. I asked him if there was anything he cared about in the programme of the Fascist Party. Not much, really speaking, but then who knew what was going to happen? Were there many like himself, I asked.

Quite a few, but mainly among the middle-aged ones. Most of the youth were enthusiastically behind the new movement.

A few days after my arrival this friend had a tea-party, where several others were present. Inevitably a discussion got going about the international situation, and here for the first time I heard most bitter things said about England. Apparently the Germans did not share the admiration that the British had for themselves. They objected to the treatment of Germany by the French and the English, ever since the last war, and they hoped that one day their country shall be avenged. As to the idea of political democracy itself—none of them approved of it, and with different degrees of irony, they just “spat upon it”. The youngest of those present suddenly got up, and with utter contempt in his voice and gesture, exclaimed: “As our great Nietzsche said—‘What have we to do with the herd morality which expresses itself in modern democracy? It is only good for cows, women and Englishmen!’”

Everybody heartily laughed and I felt that these people knew what they wanted. I did not agree with their aims, but then they did not agree with mine or Russia’s!

It took me a month in Berlin to get moving towards England. My money reserve was getting low, though I lived more than modestly. But when I attempted to obtain permission to cross France, I failed. The reason was the same as before, because my motor-cycle had Soviet papers, and as there was no automobile convention between Russia and France—no passage therefore.

At the Automobilclub von Deutschland in Berlin I was advised to go to Switzerland, where I might be able to get a special tourist visa for crossing France. I immediately took up this suggestion and got ready to depart for Zurich.

It was already December, and a strong frost was setting in. I did not anticipate my journey. I had no warm clothes, not even anything like my Russian felt boots, and I could not spare money to get something more protective.

On the day I planned to start for Switzerland, I went to the garage early in the morning to get my Harley ready. I packed all my things as usual, and because the Berlin Motor-Cycle Club wanted to take snaps of me for an article in their magazine, it was arranged that their photographer would meet me near the Tiergarten just before my start. But just when I tried to get my engine going, I found my battery was somewhat low, and as I did not want to postpone my departure, even for a few hours, in recharging it, I decided to push it a little to the



top of a rise and descend to the Potsdammerstrasse to get the dynamo working. I did this all right, and got down the hill, but still the engine would not start.

There was a severe frost that morning, but I was quite hot from pushing. When I reached some crossroads and came to a stop with another climb in view, and halted for a breather—a gigantic policeman approached me and enquired what the matter was. I explained, after which he loudly laughed to the accompaniment of clouds of steam-laden air issuing from his mouth. Turning around, his gaze met three or four boys on their way to school; he beckoned them, and inviting me by gestures to steer the motor-cycle, he himself and those press-ganged schoolboys began pushing my machine up the hill! I was just able to restrain myself from bursting out into laughter as I had not asked for this service, though I was most grateful at the same time. They did this in a most thorough and business-like manner without stopping until we reached the top. When finally there, I felt a little confused as to how I should thank them, with money or with words alone. But before I could decide, the policeman with an encouraging slap on my shoulder, gave me a start down the hill, and this was the last I saw of them! My obstinate battery came to life and soon I reached the Tiergarten.

Two or three German friends, met during my stay in Berlin, brought me some chocolate to munch on my way, and with a final glance at das Reich's capital, I gathered speed towards Potsdam. When I had left the suburbs I immediately felt the biting and piercing frost, penetrating under my light leather coat and turning my fingers and toes into icicles.

Still, I had to go on, and no amount of tempting coffee houses on the way could stop me, though I badly needed to get warmed up. Only at a place where I had to refuel did I enquire if I could have a few rolls to allay my hunger. The last crumb devoured, and I resumed my frosty way. With the approach of dusk I decided to stop the night at one of the small places, called Lubast, a short run from Leipzig, and getting a very cold room for one mark, I soon went to bed, trying to get warm for the first time that day. I could not fall asleep for a couple of hours as my feet and hands were suffering from the "hot-aches"

Next day the weather turned sleety and soon my feet and legs got wet through, since ordinary stockings and shoes gave me no protection. It was so cold that I shivered incessantly,

and as towards the afternoon the temperature suddenly dropped very low, my wet stockings froze to my feet.

It may be of interest to mention that when I passed through Leipzig, where I had to call at the local club to have my log sheet stamped, the young secretary was very glad to meet a woman motor-cycling across Europe in winter. Full of sympathy and enthusiasm, and seeing me so cold, he invited me at once for coffee and a chat on sport. It appeared that he took me for an Englishwoman! He told me about the 7 days International Motor-Cycle Competition in Germany the previous year and added many of their members would very much like to go motoring in England and in particular to take part in the T.T. races at the Isle of Man. I concluded that he had a high esteem for English motor-cyclists.

All the afternoon of that day I stopped frequently to plunge into wayside "Gasthauser", where under the pretext of getting a cup of coffee, I would sit in the warmth to thaw out a little for short spells. What I really needed was to change my wet and frozen shoes into something dry, but this was impossible, and so I continued in this miserable state.

After I had passed Zeitz I suddenly noticed that my carburettor was leaking very badly due to overflowing of the float chamber. As in December the days are short, it soon became dark and I felt I just could not stop to adjust the float, which meant dismantling the apparatus in the darkness and severe frost. Unfortunately, the places I passed through then, were so sparsely inhabited that I was in danger of being stranded, through loss of petrol and the impossibility to get refuge for the night. With much difficulty I reached Langeberg near Gera, and dived into the first farmhouse I came across. In spite of my appeal for putting me up they sent me somewhere else. In despair I tried a few more houses in complete darkness (due to fuel economy in Germany in those years, the small provincial towns had hardly any lighting). I remember that at one place I almost cried, so cold and frozen to the bone I was. At last someone sent me to the local Gasthof, where it took me over half an hour and much imploring to let me in for the night, as they said they had no vacant rooms.

Once in, I immediately set about removing my shoes and stockings, and it was only then that the Hausfrau's heart softened a bit on seeing my toes quite white. She put my footwear into the oven to be dried for the morning and even offered me the inevitable coffee. I felt so wretched and could have cried aloud from the painful ache in my feet. But at that very

moment there was a knock at the door and three massive policemen entered the premises. They called the proprietor aside and after talking in undertones I was invited into a separate room to be interrogated.

Though I had nothing to fear, nevertheless, I did not fancy this encounter. On entering the small room, behind the billiard hall, and after asking me to be seated, they all began the leisurely removal of their top coats, helmets and other paraphernalia as if anticipating a long investigation. In their midst I felt as puny as a chicken about to be plucked!

Taking out their notebooks and pens they first demanded my "Papieren" and in the space of the next couple of hours they were in possession of all personal facts about me and the reason for my travelling. As they could not read my passport in English, they made a careful copy of it from cover to cover, even of all the visas of other countries I had traversed! They were most interested to know why, if my aim was to reach England, did I have to cross the whole of Germany and go to Switzerland first? My explanation did not visibly satisfy them, and to "safeguard the safety of the state" they insisted on my passing a prearranged place (Strassenkreuzung) on my route at a fixed time, so that the police of that district could verify my going through there. Many other questions were asked and at last I was free to go to sleep. I was not certain that the host and hostess liked this routine at their place. They told me of their reluctance in putting up foreigners for they had always to inform the local police at once about it.

Next morning I spent some time in repairing my carburettor and "fortified" again with coffee I took off for Nuremberg. The crisply frozen roads urged me to speed on, and on approaching Hof I had my first puncture in Germany! When one is accustomed to these happenings as I, it presents no difficulty, but when one's hands and fingers are like lumps of ice, such trifles as taking off a wheel and repairing a puncture becomes wellnigh impossible. I remembered my Russian winter races, when I was warmly clad, and furs and woollies—made light of the Arctic conditions, and a puncture there would just be an added adventure! Jumping about uncomfortably I began the repair. I progressed so slowly and every tool fell from my hands on the snow as they could not get a grip on them.

Just in the middle of the procedure, there happened to pass a lorry full of Young Nazi Brown Shirts, going with their wind instruments to a local musical festivity. Passing me with a cheery wave of their hands, the lorry stopped abruptly after

a few more yards, and pulled back to where I stood. Several of them jumped down at once and immediately volunteered to lend me a hand. Soon I was ready again, and giving them my thanks I resumed my journey. I thought then: how strange it was in Germany that side by side there existed two such paradoxical aspects—one being cruel, crude and calculating, another human, sensitive and helpful!

I had not passed a quarter of a mile before the same tyre once more gave out, and the whole thing had to be gone through again. Fortunately, a motor-cycle telegram dispatch rider passed by, and stopping to inquire my trouble, offered to run down at once to Hof and procure me a new inner tube as my old one would require too much repairing. He laughingly said to me that though he would try as fast as he could to go to the town and back with the inner tube, he would still have to report at his office that he had had a puncture himself—hence his lateness there! Women never know when they will next meet a chivalrous knight errant!

My advance across frozen Germany was very slow, mainly because I suffered so much from the extreme cold. It was that day when I realised that my toes were frostbitten and travelling on my motor-cycle had become a torture.

Passing Bayreuth and its vicinity, I felt I would like to stop and spend some time there to look at the beautiful forest clad slopes with the picturesque buildings that nestled among them. In the light of the red setting sun, the scene was of such extraordinary beauty that I even thought: Richard Wagner knew where to go for his inspiration!

It was quite dark when I felt I could drive no more, with my foot clutch and footbrake, my feet refused to work the pedals any longer. So seeing the first Gasthaus I made straight for it and stopped for the night. The first person I met within was a tall young American smoking a pipe. On learning that I was not a German he was glad to have a chat with me as apparently he disliked the Nordic race! He had come on a forestry contract to the Bayreuth district and was feeling lonely there. He invited me to a share of his supper and hearing that I was having trouble with my feet, he promised to get me a small pot of goose fat for smearing over them as a protection against further frostbites.

Feeling a little relaxed in the warmth of the inn and spending an hour or so in the company of this friendly human being, I felt somewhat less the strain. This young American gave me his home address in U.S.A. and invited me to call if I ever

happened to be that way. He also had a Red Indian motorcycle and so it turned out to be another case of affinity between two motor-cyclists!

When at 6 a.m. I went down to claim my machine I found it was standing in a byre where I witnessed the following touching picture. A lamb was contentedly lying on top of the luggage in my sidecar, and beside it a cow was placidly licking it as if it were her own young! I hardly wished to disturb this affectionate animal domesticity, but the shy lamb jumped down on my approach and in a few minutes I left the cosy Creussen, thus starting another day of my torturing journey.

I liked the beautiful city of Nuremberg and its wonderful ancient castle in particular, which I had to encircle when I lost my way, enabling me to see it fully.

After Nuremberg the weather became a little less severe and though my hands were rather aching I could use them with more ease. As to my feet they had become so swollen that it was an unbearable pain to have them enclosed in my shoes as they had almost doubled in size in spite of the liberal application of the goose fat! That night I slept at Donauwörth. Here I had another police inspection, which although it did not last so long as the previous one, nevertheless spoilt the rest I intended to have in a warm little tavern.

In the middle of the following morning I was passing at a good pace along a stretch of the road by the river Danube, when suddenly a little ahead of me some wooden gates closed across the road. Luckily, with screeching brakes, I was able to pull up without crashing into them, and in a moment, as if from the bushes, two traffic policemen emerged and began an inspection of me. They expressed their satisfaction that I passed that spot at the appointed time, and after looking in my sidecar and then checking the passport they let me go.

Nearing Switzerland I naturally became more excited as that land of beauty is for ever in the dreams of every Russian. I wondered if the winter added to the landscape or took away any of its splendour.

About noon I arrived at Meersburg, proceeding straight away to the ferry to cross the Bodensee. To my dismay I was half an hour late and the next boat would go only in the morning. I decided to kill time by going along the lake and then on the top of a hill—to see Switzerland from there!

But my feet were painful and in order not to injure them further I went to the ferry café and wrote several letters to Russia, one of them to comrade Lezhava. Soon someone else, also stranded

like myself, started to play a piano in the tearoom. Chopin was in the programme and it at once put me in the appropriate mood. Suddenly I felt very lonely. It seemed to me then, that it would be better for me to be on the move always, never to stop, as then I would have neither time nor need to feel my utter loneliness.

Soon my thoughts returned to the country I was about to leave, Germany. I felt no regret in leaving it behind. I did not like Germany very much; I felt a kind of pity for it as I recollected the faces of some of those I met who had returned there from Russia in 1930-1932. They were not happy and in spite of their difficult life in the Soviet Union after the revolution, they still found it was better to live in the U.S.S.R. I asked them—why? Because, they said, there was hope that things would be better there one day, whilst in Germany they had no such hope. It seemed so simple a logic.

Being a Russian, I was appalled to think of the gross crudeness of the majority of the people in the Reich. Everywhere one tried to extract a few marks or even a few pfennigs out of a person, who did not know the ropes. At almost all the places I stopped for a night I had to pay extra money for a hot water bottle, when I rented icy-cold rooms at the inns for a night; at one hotel I was even charged a few pfennigs for a jug of hot water to wash my face in the morning. But the most astonishing thing was, when, unable to move any further from the deadening cold in my limbs,—I knocked at a house somewhere on my way and with the short "*Ich bin kalt*" I was allowed to enter. As the habitants happened to be having tea then, and seeing that I was shivering, they offered me to join them, which I promptly did. But I got a shock when on leaving them I was asked to pay half, a mark for my participation in the hot beverage! Since then I never accepted invitations to tea with strangers any more, and not only in Germany! So strongly did this impress me.

I disliked the position of women in Germany. They are just incubators and housewives there. Men treat them with such an air of superiority that I felt I could hate these men as if they were my personal enemies. And in contrast—the free women of Russia, free socially and economically and equal to men in every sphere—those women stood out in my eyes like a symbol.

As to the German efficiency—it was sickeningly good! I only wondered if such meticulousness in everything did not affect the spiritual side of a person or of the people. Still, it is their characteristic and they seem to be happy with it!

In the morning a very nice, white coloured ferry conveyed my Harley and myself to the other side. Just before I departed, a representative of the Automobilclub von Deutschland recorded my impressions on journeying in Germany by motor-cycle in winter, to put in his magazine, and then our ferry started to flounder its way through a thick fog until we reached Switzerland.

On the boat, one passenger, who happened to be an Italian and having learned that I was a Russian—started to speak to me in broken Russian. It immediately warmed me up and I felt more at home! He had been in Russia before the last war and had married one of our natives. Now they lived near Davos, being apparently wealthy people. He insisted that I should come and see them there. That is how it happened that I went straight from Constance to their place high up and stayed there almost a week. This allowed me to attend to my feet, which started to trouble me incessantly.

I had enjoyed my climb to Davos. Snow, snow, and warmth! The higher I went the warmer it became—as it was a sunny day. But I had to pay dearly on my way down to Zurich, when I burned my brakes out on the steep descent! Coming down as low as Chur I stopped to have a meal and as it was dusk already I thought of getting a hotel and on the morrow to proceed to Zurich. I left my motor-cycle outside the restaurant and on coming out, when I attempted to start it up, it did not obey. I kicked and kicked in the darkness, but the engine would not respond. I then pushed it to a street light and soon to my horror discovered that all the wires from and to the dynamo, battery and sparking plugs were severed. Someone, evilly intentioned, had done this "service" to me. My first thought was: such a nice little place like Switzerland and yet it still has bad people in it!

I pushed my machine to the first garage and spent a good part of the next day in replacing all the wires. I was told there that the evil deed might have been performed by a person who hated Russia, and who could not have failed to have seen the identification disc with "S.U." (Soviet Union) on the back of my machine which gave him an opportunity to express his hatred in a practical way!

My ride from Chur to Zurich finished my feet: the toes became dark and I feared gangrene would set in. I spent one week in this beautiful Swiss city—just healing my extremities, as my hands were swollen just as badly.

To my sorrow I did not find it possible to obtain a tourist

visa for my motor-cycle with which to cross France. So I decided to go to Basel and there to try my luck, as I was told that it would all depend on the officials at the frontier! I went there and found it indeed depended on the mood of the officers in charge: they demanded £108 duty to allow my Harley to pass!

Well, by this time my funds were depleted to the last. I have not yet mentioned that just before my departure from Russia I received a notification from the State Bank informing me that I could take with me only a very limited amount of money. Which, if I calculated rightly, would last me to feed my motor-cycle and myself long enough to reach Germany. That news added to my despair and still I risked to go. Now it proved that I managed to feed my Harley till Switzerland, as to myself—I mostly drank coffee which continually stimulated me and so I needed much less food! I became much thinner too!

And here I was demanded to pay £108, an undreamed of sum. It was night and snow was thickly falling. The Swiss customs passed me but in a few yards the French customs—stopped me. For an hour I argued with them about the possibility of finding another way of letting me pass through their country! No, nothing could be done, and I was obliged to retreat to Switzerland once more.

Angered with this unlawful demand by the French to pay such a huge duty for only just passing through their country on my machine—I turned back from the frontier at Belfort to Basel. It was the first time that I met French people in France, before I only knew the “mademoiselles” at our gymnasium, and I must confess that these real ones I saw at Belfort amused me by their excitability of behaviour, their loud and fast speaking, and somewhat loose gestures! And I also doubted their certainty of knowing the laws and regulations well enough, as I noticed that it took some considerable time for three ruddy complexioned men with black curled moustaches, to find out all about the duty on my bike. They were arguing and discussing between themselves and calculating how much to ask me to pay, as if there was not a definite and fixed regulation on the matter. Here I had an impression of the muddle and chaos in the affairs of la belle France, and it was not long after, that I witnessed some scenes in Paris which convinced me that my first observations were right!

As it was late and snow covered the roads a foot deep, and there was hardly any traffic, I could not ask anyone to direct me to the centre of Basel. Somehow I took the wrong turning and soon found myself outside the city boundary. Cold and lateness



made me stop and try to inquire at the first big building with a few bright lights by the road. On ringing, the door was opened to me by a nun in a long black robe and an unusual white headwear.—Perplexed a little I explained to her about my being stranded and that I wished to be directed to some place for the night. She quickly went upstairs and in a minute the Mother Superior came down to see me. It transpired that those sisters of mercy decided to give me refuge at their convent as it was Christmas eve and they thought it would be nice to do such a kind thing to a person in distress then. I accepted immediately, and pushed my machine into their yard.

Then the Mother Superior sent a nun after me to ask me some questions. She first inquired of what nationality I was, and on hearing that I came from Soviet Russia—she became almost white with fright, and for a few moments did not know what to say. I guessed at once that had she known this terrible news a little before she would not have let me in, of course, but it was rather awkward to “push” me into the street now! Seeing her consternation I wanted to say that I would leave the convent and try to get another place for the night, but she decided on something else. She said that I should first have a wash and hot drink, and then go to the chapel for the late service, and again early in the morning would attend Christmas day mass, after which I would leave them at once. It looked as if this was the penance I would have to pay for my unintentional “desecration” of their place!

Later on, standing in the chapel, filled only with nuns, and witnessing them pray and sing their hymns, I thought: are they so very much cleaner and better than I, who come from condemned Soviet Russia? It was clear to me that had I belonged to any other nation—those nuns would have felt happy to please God by rendering such an act of service as to let a stranded stranger have a warm bed and meal on Christmas eve, but because I was an “awful Russian”,—these same sisters of mercy felt they may call forth the wrath of the Almighty for sheltering me in their clean and blessed home. I could not understand this and felt sad.

Next morning I left the convent and garaging my Harley at the Swiss Automobile Club—I went to Paris by train. I wanted to find at the Touring Club de France if I could still get permission to bring my motor-cycle over without paying that heavy duty.

Paris impressed me with its beauty and something else that this place alone possesses, but I was not able to settle my transit

travel there. On the advice of some English motorists at the touring office there—I made up my mind to go to England and see what I could get there.

Crossing the Channel I was continually thinking of the possibility of my passport being confiscated by the British authorities as I was coming from the U.S.S.R. It worried me. While on the boat, I was trying to “feel” what the English people were like, as most passengers were British. They appeared to me quiet, restrained, and with the exception of several persons who felt sick, the rest were silent. I thought: how different they were to the French!

On arrival at Dover I passed the customs and passport inspection all right; they only took special note of my documents. That cheered me up finally, and in an hour or so I was alighting at Victoria Station. There I was met by the daughter of Dr. Haden Guest, M.P., who took me to their home. I encountered her at my hotel in Paris two days earlier. She was very much interested in Russia and invited me to her place when in London. Dr. Haden Guest kindly gave me hospitality for a few days; I had to speak to them with the help of my dictionary as I knew only a few words of English then! Still I learned that Dr. Haden Guest went to Russia during the years of famine, as one of the investigating committee, if I remember this correctly. I felt I liked him, if only for his kind intentions towards Russia when my country was in need.

The very next day, on January 12th, 1934, the *Daily Herald* wrote:

“Mme. Pataleewa, Russian wife of a British citizen, speaks no other language than her native tongue, except for a smattering of English.

“Despite this handicap she has crossed frozen Europe on a motor-cycle unaccompanied, and arrived in London yesterday after three months’ travelling. Through Russia, Poland, Germany and Switzerland this plucky young woman has forged her way over ice-bound and snow-covered roads.

“Finally she was forced to end her motor-cycle journey at Belfort, because the French Customs authorities would not let her pass unless she paid £108 duty on her machine.

“Though she is still suffering from the effects of frozen feet and fingers, she declared yesterday that she would cross Europe again by motor-cycle as soon as possible to go to India. In broken English Mme. Pataleewa, champion woman motor-cyclist of Russia, said, ‘Not so good for woman cross so

many countries in bad weather, alone and not able to speak the language.'

"Between Leipzig and Nuremberg it was 36 degrees below freezing point."

Some magazines, among them *The Motor Cycle* published the following article on January 25th, 1934:

"Last week I had the pleasure of meeting Mme. Pataleewa, the charming wife of a British citizen, who, after three months of strenuous travel, has just arrived in England. Starting from Leningrad on her Harley-Davidson outfit, this adventurous lady carved a lonely path across the wastes of Russia, through Poland, Germany and Switzerland, to the French frontier at Basel. Here the Customs demanded £108 duty to allow the machine to pass, so Madame continued her journey to London by rail.

"In the course of conversation (with the aid of a dictionary!) I learnt that the temperature for a good part of the journey was more than 30 degrees below zero; that frequent stops were necessary to pull the machine out of snowdrifts; and that it is Madame's great ambition to obtain an English machine and then continue her journeyings to India! Who said woman is the weaker sex?

"I was interested to learn that the sport in Soviet Russia is extremely popular—that is, so far as the general conditions of the country will allow. Apparently it is necessary to obtain Government permission to purchase a new machine, while no private individual is allowed to import a machine for his own use. On the other hand, the Government make quite extensive purchases of foreign machines (B.S.A., Harley, and Indian are the favoured makes) for post office and similar work. The result is that there is quite an extensive trade in second-hand machines, since approved individuals are allowed to purchase the Government's 'cast-offs'.

"That the Government is alive to the value of the motor-cycle as a means of conveyance is shown by the fact that factories for their manufacture have recently been started in five large towns. At the present time the best known home produced machine is the 'Red October', which has a 350 c.c. air-cooled two-stroke engine. However, great strides are being made at a new factory at Izhevsk, where production of a machine closely resembling the German B.M.W. is in full swing.

“All factories in Russia are, of course, under the Government control, and the ultimate destination of the machines produced is at the Government’s discretion.”

A photograph of myself on my motor-cycle accompanied this article.

A day later, without any difficulty, I obtained a tryptique from the Automobile Association, by becoming a member. I had to leave £25 deposit with them for bringing my machine to England. As for crossing France—I had my biggest laugh as yet, as not only did I not pay a £108 duty to the French authorities but not even one centime for staying on their territory as long as I wished with my motor-cycle! My respect to the English for the simplicity and efficiency in dealing with questions of tourism—soared very high at once! And without delay I went back to Switzerland to fetch my long-suffering motor-cycle to London.

Ah, one should see the scorn and irony on my face when I once more had to pass through the customs on the French border at Belfort, where I handed my English tryptique over to the same officials who had earlier barred me altogether!

After entering French soil I started to advance briskly towards their exciting capital. Indeed, it proved to be even more than just an exciting one, it was almost in revolt, as when I reached it—the Stavisky scandal was at its height! Paris was in the grip of “something about to happen” and police and special mounted guards were everywhere. The Place de la Concorde did not seem to me to be much in a state of concord and harmony, and several corners of it were already damaged! I remember passing near the Chamber of Deputies on my motor-cycle, where I stopped to have a glance at the crowds running to and fro and mounted police rounding them up. I thought: “What if a revolution breaks out in France with the blessing of this Stavisky affair! Surely the French could improve now upon what they had failed in 1789–1793!” And with these thoughts I began to get excited myself, feeling that I might be witnessing the beginning of new era in Western Europe!

But at this very moment, whilst musing thus, several policemen approached me and demanded that I should leave the spot. Suddenly one of them noticed my “S.U.” disc and immediately demanded an explanation of what it meant. I laughingly translated it and before I had finished the description I was rounded up with the others and taken to a police station.

I shall never forget how those fellows handled me. They almost wrested my leather wallet from me, wherein I kept my money and documents, and then, on finding that my passport was a British one—they demanded to know how it was that I could not speak English and why did I travel by motor-cycle? Then they grasped the wallet again and shook everything out of it. A few banknotes attracted their attention and they freshly demanded a further explanation as to where I had got them. After this I was searched all over by a woman in the presence of a dozen plain-clothed and policemen. I could not understand the reason for their rudeness and only guessed at when I heard them swearing about Soviet Russia. I felt so upset that I would have liked to slap all their brutish looking faces.

It was decided that I should be detained till everything concerning me was found out. But at this moment one of the clerks there spoke to me in Russian, he was a refugee from my country. I told him that I should lodge a complaint at the English consulate as soon as I was set free. This he reported to the excited officers who soon let me go, as they obviously did not want to get into more trouble over some one having a British passport in her pocket!

That is how I managed to extricate myself from the clutches of the Paris guardians of order and justice!

## CHAPTER II

### ENGLAND AND THEREAFTER

AFTER THAT PARISIAN adventure of mine I raced to Boulogne and early in the morning reached the English coast. To my great surprise—nobody searched my motor-cycle and no questions were asked by the appropriate authorities as to why I travelled on a motor-cycle, or why I had come to England at all!

Just before I approached central London, I had a nasty puncture. A crowd gathered immediately and every one wanted to help the foreign girl who could not speak their language. Some one has said that the English are particularly kind to children, animals, policemen and foreigners! I can testify to that!

But not all English were as kind to some such foreigners as Russians from the Soviet Union! Four days later, after I had

established myself temporarily in Chelsea, I was to take part in a little trial organised by the London Motor Cycle Club. Just as I started up my engine to take it out of the garage—one of the cylinders seized up before it could explode. It was a good thing that I left the saddle just in time and thus saved my legs from injury. On inspection it was proved that another "well-wisher", a few hours earlier had put fine iron shavings and bits of steel into the cylinder through the sparking plug hole. I called on Scotland Yard but they said it would be difficult to find who had done it, and I had to get another engine over from Holland to have my machine ready for the next race in England.

But I was dogged with bad luck in these isles, as my motor-cycle was continually damaged by evil persons. It was even suggested to me that I take off the "SU" disc which undoubtedly attracted the attention of those who wished to do some harm even to a machine bearing that sign! In spite of these happenings I left the disc where it was.

After a little over a week's stay in London—I had a visit from a person who, when I opened the door, turned up the lapel of his coat and showing me his badge, made it clear that I understood who he was. I had to show him my passport and answer questions. The authority to which he belonged, had received several anonymous letters all anxious to inform them of the "Bolshevik girl" who was in the neighbourhood, with a motor-cycle. Hence his visit!

The first few weeks of my stay in London were strange. I felt much like a fish out of water. Everything in that city was unfamiliar to me and neither like in Moscow nor Leningrad: people, life and the general outline of things, even the food and clothes!

I myself immediately became a curiosity and the first few friends I acquired, at once started to teach me English slang, just out of fun. I remember a week or so after my arrival, people used to ask me—how did I like England and what impressed me most here? Having no knowledge of the English language it was very difficult for me to learn straightaway the country's life, so I was obliged to give myself to visual observations. And on being thus asked—what struck me most here, I would usually say: "An awful lot of cats, an appalling amount of artificial teeth and much chocolate wrapping paper strewn all over the place!" People laughed when, with the aid of my dictionary, I managed to express this much. They would invariably say, "Oh, these foreigners are so frightfully funny!" Well, I used to think something else about the English!

Anyway, having an organic dislike for cats, as most Russians have, I was astonished to find that the English were so fond of them! Russians instinctively dislike and mistrust cats, whilst the English "intuitively" adore them! (Of all domestic animals—cats possess negative magnetism, which affects the qualities of human beings by drawing away their positive magnetism. It is not without reason that ancient sorcerers had black cats with them as a most necessary "equipment" in their performances!) As to the artificial teeth of the English nation—I tried to make a connection between the chocolate wrappings on the streets and these, on the strength that too many sweets might be the cause of it!

It was only when I started to "master" the language that I was able to learn about life and the people more deeply, but about these I shall write another book later on! I can only say that the longer I stayed in England—the more I felt a yearning to go back to Russia.

One thing that delighted me first, but made me cold later, was the high degree of politeness in this country, which I thought at times was even embarrassing! I cannot help remembering a witty definition of this quality: "Politeness is like an air-cushion—there may be nothing in it but it eases the jolts wonderfully." Now, we Russians are only "normally" polite but never in excess, that is why foreigners find us rather rude! As a matter of fact, I observe that English people are far less polite now, during this war! I wondered why and came to the conclusion that they are more natural now, which means that politeness is an artificial quality!

Soon after I had settled for a time in London, I sadly admitted that my life had suddenly turned into an empty existence, with no more problems, tasks or even creative suffering, and I myself became an ordinary being, thinking only just about food, sleep, clothes, a few recreations and other commonplace things. But, happily, not for long!

It seemed to me then, that the life of most people in Soviet Russia has a pace much faster and intenser than normal, and when I looked at the English with their unhurried work and continual craving for pleasures and entertainment—I just could not understand it. Even sport in this land of sports—disappointed me by its professional trend. I particularly disliked dog racing and football pools,—how much purer and more enjoyable sport was in my country!

I could see that life in the West was easier than in Russia and no one here even wanted to talk about complicated things, let alone to endure sufferings for the sake of advancement. It

is not realised in Europe that "suffering has more behind it than only a morbid side". That is why people in the West shrink from suffering, while in my country we take it as a part of Great Life.

I also found that in Europe people are much imbued with materialism. Not the kind that Karl Marx taught, oh no! It was much cruder: a narrow and selfish materialism. But nowhere else did I hear so much talk about spiritual things! One of the things that was charged against Soviet Russia was the "absence of spirituality" there and also the suppression of religion. It impressed me that the British could forgive anything but these last two things. This made me think of them first as a people who believed in the Gospel with passionate intensity. Alas, it was not at all the case! I even thought quite recently that the Rev. Bottomley (I believe) was right when he said that "as the world is in such a great tragedy—a little lukewarm religion of the West will not do now". And perhaps the Russians were much more sincere and honest when they discarded the old, outlived dogma and are trying now to find an ideal which will fill their hearts with a great flame that will rise to the heights.

Why in the West is sex-appeal cultivated, encouraged and even exploited? Take the Hollywood variety of cinema or just the ordinary relationship between the sexes of young people here,—it is all permeated with sex-appeal. I did not think it healthy. By sheer contrast—the picture of the youth of my country stands clear in my vision: it is of a healthy, natural companionship, comradeship, friendship and perhaps—romance. I deliberately put the words in that order, because Soviet youth finds romance mostly as a result of the first three! The sexual and emotional energy find their expression and outlet in so many indirect ways, such as social work, exuberant sport activities, various trainings that absorb all one's attention and much of one's time, and other channels of human activities of the mass of youth there. Which leaves just a "normal" amount of biological urge to function in a natural capacity of life-instinct. Anyway, in Soviet Russia the association of the sexes permeated with that air of sapidity which alone can ensure the absence of both extremes, that of insipidness or that of the animal urge. Also perhaps because in Russia now, a woman is equal to man intellectually, socially and economically and often even in physical strength and endurance. This brings their relationship on an equal footing and does not put a woman in the category of "weaker sex" in every sense. When in Russia



—I felt I was a fully-fledged human being, while in the West I am only a woman . . .

Often to my mind came pictures of the troubled life I had from time to time in my country, and strangely—I never felt any bitterness about that, as I realised that I myself not infrequently was the cause of it. In analysing those personal events, when in Russia, I could plainly see that it was only when Soviet people became aware of the less dangerous atmosphere around them (after 1936), that they could afford such new laws as for example, that “no person may be placed under arrest except by decision of a court or with the sanction of a State attorney”. Also social distinction in respect of education was abolished in 1936, as well as the civil and social rights which were returned to the ex-kulaks and clergy, disfranchised until then.

Thus, everything comes in its own time, and I can now understand that till 1936 such “luxuries” were not possible. For years Russia was in a kind of state of emergency and everyone knows what are the implications of it. Hence the curtailment of personal liberties there in the past.

On the other hand, an “excessive zeal”, of which Stalin spoke, was in evidence there almost till 1936. This means that local authorities sometimes displayed too much severity when the case did not warrant it. In my own instance of three years’ imprisonment—this “excessive zeal” was also present, partly in a wilful form. But for the latter—all persons concerned were punished by the central authority afterwards.

The same Comrade Stalin said in 1931, I believe, that, “We must not continue to look upon every member of technical intelligentsia as an uncaught criminal”,—this was during the time of the ghastly sabotaging by engineers and technicians with an ideology alien to the Soviets.

And still, human nature remains for long the same, and only extraordinary events, like Revolution, can reshape the psychology of a being. Even so,—it took a new generation to grow up into a new, reborn society, to prove how difficult the process of the betterment of mankind is. I can also appreciate what Stalin’s words mean when he said that, “Men must be grown as carefully and attentively as a gardener grows a favourite tree”. Indeed, it is what is already being done for the new growing generations in Russia now. These get the best of everything: up-bringing, education and care of the State in a multitude of aspects. While the preceding generation—their fathers and mothers—served as a “manure” for them, for their future. Such is the wisdom of the rotation of Life.

The abuse of power when it is entrusted to people can acquire such dimensions that it is sufficient to be reminded of Yagoda and others in the O.G.P.U. to prove the case. And yet, persons outside Russia—millions of them—who pronounced their judgement upon the Soviet Union, must have been hard people, who demanded that if everything could not be ideal in Russia then—then everything there must be horrible. Forgetting, that Soviet Russia had less than a quarter of a century at its disposal to put every side of life in proper order. Which it did manage to a large extent by the year 1941,—astonishing!

I remember the English often asked me, with almost a pious expression on their faces, "Isn't it terrible that the Russians had to tolerate the tyranny of their leaders for so long?" I used to open my eyes wide and ask them, "What do you mean?"

"Well, the starvation, the disorders, the diseases and the arrests, and all that un-Christian treatment of the people in Russia."

"Do you mean the time and the consequences of that period, when European Powers were blockading and intervening in Russia after the last war? And when they had tried for years afterwards to sow the seeds of utter disorder and disruption there, which necessitated arrests on a big scale and other measures to cope with espionage and counter-revolutionary acts? And were the Soviet leaders guilty if there was a blockade and a crop failure for a number of years, or that hunger and cruel winters brought epidemics?" Often, with somewhat childish naivety, these people would exclaim, "But it cannot be true that England tried a military intervention in Russia after the last war!" What a short memory these people possessed!

I also noticed, that the English continually indulged in easy-going tolerance towards everything and everybody, but not so in relation to the Soviet Union! Here they were so much indignant, condemning all there that was not to their taste, that I only thought, "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" And in England there were such glaring defects of a permanent nature of the political system and in social and economical spheres,—that in Soviet Russia these would not be tolerated even for a short time.

I have had one passionate desire—that one day the English, who are fundamentally good-natured, will be able to look deeper into the Russian "enigma" and perhaps discover that there is something there they might even like! Well, "thanks" to

Hitler, that day came, and great was the price Russia had to pay for it.

In the meantime my life outside Russia went its unpredicted course. Many things happened, including my going over to the Continent with my motor-cycle several times, and finally travelling to India and other lands, where I stayed for about two years. But here perhaps I shall take a jump over all that period straight to the time just before the outbreak of war in 1939.

About three weeks before this war I married an Englishman, who was almost the first person I met in London when I came there on my motor-cycle a few years earlier. Then I could not even speak to him, for my poor English, but he was very patient, and even attempted to learn Russian—to converse with me! On returning from India—I met him again, and here it was that we got married.

In my own peculiar way I longed to find myself and my place in life. Being a Russian woman, with all the education and training that my country gave me,—I found the function of a housewife only (as an occupation!) could not satisfy me, though I know that millions of women are quite happy in this role. This is what new Russia did with women—it simply changed their nature; while high education, being open and free to all women there, added to our spirit of independence and our own calling in life.

It may appear strange that after so many years of complete oblivion with the sphere of medicine, that one day I should awake with a renewed interest in it. After witnessing many failures of the orthodox medicine with its inevitable reactions of disappointment—I was incidentally met in India with, quite a new to me then though in fact a very old, science of healing. One that had its principle mainly in dietetics, special breathing and exercises, and the application of a Universal Force.

Perhaps in order to shorten the narration of my several years of work in dietetics through personal experimenting it would be sufficient to say here how much I benefited myself from my new knowledge, as I am quite another being now. It also changed my outward life considerably. For example, I eat only once a day, my diet consisting of raw vegetables and fruit, nuts and honey, and I drink nothing but water. This "meagre" food keeps me strong and healthy; my weight is constantly the

same—9½ stones! I sleep not more than four hours, but often less. I am never tired, though I work hard, and I am never ill, being no subject to colds and chills. I have learned the “secret” of regeneration and do not expect to die (barring accidents) till I reach the age of 150 at least, and even then I hope to die young! Yes, young, because I have already stopped growing older, and in the last few years I definitely feel that my life has just begun. And this is in spite of the fact that I have already lived a long life within a short space of time.

All this I have described elsewhere some time ago and have found a number of followers in Great Britain and abroad, who decided to try my way of living—with much benefit to themselves!

And still it might be of interest to quote here what I have already written about my diet, this being only part of my description of it in one of the leading health magazines<sup>1</sup> in Great Britain. Under the heading “More about My One Meal a Day,” by Barbara Moore-Pataleewa:

“From adopting one meal a day my life became so much easier and in so many respects, that I have even evolved a saying that: *to eat more than one meal a day is sheer waste of time, money and health.* Now, if I can do this, I do not see why others should not,—if they wished it!

“To begin with, many have wanted to know the time of the day at which I usually take my one meal. It is usually between 2 and 3 p.m., lately more often between 3 and 4 p.m. I have noticed that the stomach is the most ‘obedient’ of all organs of the body, as it ‘sticks’ to the ruling one may subject it to. I will agree readily that it is difficult to acquire any good habit, but once acquired it is the easiest thing to possess! This applies also to feeding. In the space of a few years I omitted gradually from my diet such things as tea, coffee, cocoa, bread, pastries, and all cooked foods, etc. Each of these items I missed for a while, but as soon as I got into the habit of eating and drinking the proper things, my craving for them disappeared. I would insist also that a little will-power should be used in cases where temptation is stronger than conviction!

#### ONE MEAL A DAY

“I am only too often asked now—how can one live on one meal a day? Invariably I reply that it is easier to live on one meal a day than on three or four, provided it is a proper meal. The ordinary meal of the average Briton (say lunch) would

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted by courtesy of *Health for All*.

soon starve one to death. If my one meal a day had consisted of cooked food, bread, tea, etc., probably I should have been unable to write this article! No, I eat only vital foods, such as raw vegetables, green-leafy stuff, fruit (mostly dried now), and occasionally jacket potatoes with butter. It is a hearty meal, too, as my stomach is quite empty after a day of fasting (now every day of my life) and it is ready for more food than the traditional 'salad' consists of.

"Since I am not a theoretical dietician but prove in a practical way on myself everything that is of value to my diet—I have come to the following conclusion. All cooked foods are dead foods, as temperature definitely destroys vitamins. Does not cooking convert the organic salts of raw foods into inorganic salts? This is proved by experiments of physiological chemistry. It is also true that cooked foods only nourish and do not eliminate, while raw food performs both these functions. The result is clear. I know not one person, living entirely on raw food, who is ill or tired; but I know too many enjoying cooked foods and bad health.

#### AWAITING A CHANCE

"I am only awaiting a chance (perhaps in Russia) to prove my 'discovery' on a grand scale, when a generation of youth could be brought up on this one meal a day raw diet—to grow into giants in every sense. I can contemplate such a great experiment being made only in Russia, the country which is continually searching for new ways. Also it is easier to deal with the young, whose tastes are not yet completely spoiled, and who are more adaptable to new conditions.

"There is another important fact I must also mention. One ordinary, cooked and starchy meal a day would preclude bowel evacuation. On very rare occasions now, when I happen to have such a meal (when invited out for lunch!) I invariably have difficulties in natural evacuation afterwards. Therefore I drink a copious amount of hot water until the desired result is achieved (no laxatives). Normally I have two evacuations a day after only one meal!

"What more is there that can prove to me the absolute truth and logic of my dietetic regime? I am inclined, therefore, to believe that one meal a day is Nature's law for the human being. My belief is strengthened by my observation of humanity's ill-suffering.

"I feel, perhaps, that I ought to relate here an unusual experience I had in India, in 1937, which made a great impression on me.

## TWO REMARKABLE MEN

“Wandering on my motor-cycle on the southern slopes of the Himalayan region, I came across a pair of remarkable people. In a kind of cave or stone hut there lived two young men who had ‘retired’ from the world and dedicated themselves to a simple life in the mountains, growing their own vegetables and fruit near their hut, also looking after the flowers, birds, and some animals around them. One of them spoke some English. They cordially invited me to partake of their modest meal which, feeling hungry, I accepted. Mutually, we asked questions, and I soon learned that those two ‘young’ people had eaten only one meal a day during the last 80 years! I was so perplexed by that utterance of theirs that I swallowed a large piece of coco-nut without chewing, and choked myself. They helped me out of this trouble and we continued our meal and conversation. Thus I learned that eating less means living longer. Eating less gives one more energy, as we spend much of it in digestion, assimilation, and elimination. One should not eat flesh foods, nor cooked foods, and no stimulating drinks like tea, coffee, etc. My mentors also stressed breathing as a most important factor. As I stayed near them, in the village below, for a few days, they taught me this special breathing, which is the most exhilarating thing I ever experienced. One can get much food from the air. Before one can assimilate the necessary elements from the air, however, one must cleanse one’s system, otherwise the process is impossible. One should drink much water before and after the meal, but never together. I have learned much other information which is not relevant here.

## THE SECRET OF HEALTHY LIFE

“I felt I had found the secret of healthy life. But what a surprise there was in store for me when on parting I asked them their ages. One was 116 and the other 119! I wanted to pinch myself to test if I was all right and there was no mirage before my eyes! My Indian friends looked not more than 32-35 years of age. They had clear skins, and shining eyes; their hair was black and teeth white and beautiful.

“When I left them I was deeply in thought. . . .

“Then I went down to the village where I had stayed a few nights previously. I made inquiries about my friends in the hut, high above. I was told that the third generation of that village had seen those two there—just the same, unchanged. Peasants take them coco-nut and some fruit, as not everything can grow

so high. They revere those two and go to them for advice and moral help.

“When I went down to Calcutta I thought that I had learnt the secret not only of healthy but long life. It took me four and a half years of continual work on myself, fasting and dieting, till I came to the same point when I too could live on one meal a day. Of course, I do ‘their’ breathing. That is why, when I have to stay from two to three hours in a smoke-filled carriage during travelling, I am so poisoned that it takes me a day or so to eliminate the filthy smoke from my system.

“As space does not allow me to say much more about my dieting and ‘discoveries,’ I shall confine myself to the following extract from the book of one who knows what fasting and dieting really means: Upton Sinclair. It is the most inspiring passage I ever read in any book.

‘PERFECT HEALTH!’

“‘Have you any conception of what the phrase means? Can you form any image of what would be your feeling if every organ in your body were functioning perfectly? Perhaps you can go back to some day in your youth, when you got up early in the morning and went for a walk, and the spirit of the sunrise got into your blood, and you walked faster, and took deep breaths, and laughed aloud for sheer happiness of being alive in such a world of beauty. And now you are grown older—and what would you give for the secret of that glorious feeling? What would you say if you were told that you could bring it back and keep it, not only for mornings, but for afternoons and evenings, and not as something accidental and mysterious, but as something which you yourself have created, and of which you are completely master?’

“Sinclair also said: ‘I look about me in the world, and nearly everybody I know is ‘sick. I could name one after another a hundred men and women, who are doing vital work for progress and carrying a cruel handicap of physical suffering.’

“By fasting and dieting Mr. Sinclair has found not only good health but perfect health. He has found a new state of being, a new potentiality of life, a sense of lightness and cleanness and joyfulness, such as he did not know could exist in the human body.”

And so I spent those few waiting years in personal experimenting and investigation in this field, which went on until June 22nd, 1941. As on that day, with many other peoples,

I received such a shock when Russian territory was invaded by Germany, that my whole life seemed to have halted for one long moment . . .

My first impulse was to try by some means or even a trick to get to Russia, to contribute what I could in my humble capacity to the defence of the U.S.S.R.; as after all, being an experienced motor-cyclist, I would assuredly be of use there. But it was impossible to get to Russia, just a separate individual as I was. The same happened when I tried to go to Abyssinia in 1936, to work there as a dispatch rider, but the Ethiopian Government was unable to transfer me there.

As events on the Eastern front went ahead very fast, my personal agonies increased, and often after listening in to the Russian broadcasts, and learning of the frightful atrocities the Germans were inflicting on Red Army men and the civil population, for weeks I was in such a state of utter and disconsolate unhappiness that nothing could relieve me.

When the Germans were approaching Moscow, I felt that should it fall, and with it all the social system so hard gotten, I should no longer believe in the goodness of intentions from Above. Then I should feel that dark forces alone would triumph, and I should simply refuse to comprehend the evolutionary process of this world.

At the climax of the battles around Moscow, I found myself with no peace of mind, such that I could not even sleep and no more did I feel a desire to live. It was because I was so helpless in my role of forced inactivity and being a mere spectator. Only one thing remained open to me then—to pray.

As an individual prayer for my unhappy country, I decided to fast for 30 days. This fast was difficult but it was at the same time light, as it was inspired by the love I had for the land where I was born. During those 30 days of fast I cut myself completely off from the outside world, even from the news about Russia. I just lived then in the great hope that tragic things would not continue.

By a coincidence, the first news I again had from Russia, after my 30 days fast was ended, was that the Germans had not only been halted before Moscow but that my countrymen themselves had gone on the offensive, which they continued throughout the winter. I myself revived, and as soon as I became strong enough after that fast—I plunged into a new activity in which I found relief and moral satisfaction. This activity was the beginning of my talks and lectures on the Soviet Union to a great number of people in the audiences that have heard



me in many places in England. I felt myself qualified for this task, since I knew the new Russia so well; and that is why, despite my imperfect English, I felt many a time that I awakened in these people a real interest in Soviet Russia, and its social structure. Of course, this task was easier—now that the resistance of the Red Army and the people there astonished the world! But I still find many incredulous people in these isles who still cling to their “knowledge” of Soviet Russia of the days pre-June 22nd, 1941! It is to them that I wish to talk about the U.S.S.R.

Being but a mortal, I often feel sad and bitter about the terrible material destruction inflicted on Russia by this war. Those grandiose and colossal structures of plants, dams, bridges, hydro-electric stations, etc.; those beautiful creations of architecture—palaces, museums, sanatoria, theatres and universities; those numerous Parks of Culture and Rest,—in fact all cultural establishments not for the privileged and few but for all people, the like of which I have not seen anywhere in the West. All these were built with much difficulty and self-sacrifice by the entire people in the U.S.S.R. over a number of years.

Still, what of that? Only those who could destroy their own work—can create it again. How strong the heart and nerves of such people must be! They were strong, calm and hopeful when they were building all that, while the rest of the world was seething with unrest in its vain search of peace!

And that brings me to my last observation.

Only those who are morally strong and healthy—will win this war. The preponderance of armour and weapons of war are seemingly impressive and promising only in the first stages of the fight. Germany has proved it amply. Now it is for Russia to say the last word. And Russia will win the peace also—for the very simple reason, that it will not suffer from crisis with its inflation and unemployment after the war. Its healthy social and economic system will preclude it, and the Russians will go straight to “rebuild their honeycomb anew, under one Queen-bee, which is Stalin there!”

## CONCLUSION

“From great Moscow to the farthest border,  
From our Arctic Seas to Samarkand,  
Everywhere man proudly walks as master  
Of his own immeasurable Motherland.”

*(From a Soviet song.)*

**T**HIS IS THE end of my long narrative. In some near future I may describe my impressions of England and its people and what I think about life itself here. But in this book I wished to deal only with the Russian aspect of my life, and also in part, with my wanderings after my immediate departure from my country.

Now, I do not wish to spare myself in admitting the mistakes I have made while in Russia. Also, to this very day, I am unable to understand what took place at the last moment, that I was not given the privilege of retaining my Soviet nationality as well, like some other Russian women enjoyed, when married to foreigners. This is of course formally speaking; as to the inside story of my so called “marriage” to a foreign subject—one could not expect a different ending. Apparently, the authorities decided that as I still insisted on going abroad after I had triumphed at the end of all my troubles, then perhaps, it would be better to let me have my exit. Unfortunately, I lost my Soviet nationality in the process. That is why the shock was so great and at the moment of my going on a much-envied motor-cycling tour to Europe I was desperately unhappy.

I continued to be unhappy about it throughout all the following years of my wanderings in Europe, India, Egypt and some time of my stay in England. To this was added an ordeal I had to pass through, when in England I met with a most hostile attitude towards Soviet Russia, which ran throughout the press and reactions of the people.

In all these last few years of my living abroad, I had contact with my friends and family—my father and mother and sister. The latter never knew why I went abroad. Nor was our correspondence ever stopped or censored by the Russian authorities, which makes me think there has certainly been too much exaggeration, if not direct lies and slander, about the so-called persecution of people in the Soviet Union, who had connections and private correspondence with their friends or relatives outside

Russia. Unless, of course, such connections had harmful implications.

And through all these last years I never stopped longing to return to my country. I made several attempts to materialise this but was unsuccessful. Even when I went to India—I made an application to the Soviet Government to allow me to pass there on my motor-cycle, but was refused and had to use another route.

After this I decided to do something to be worthy of receiving such permission for going back to the U.S.S.R. It may sound strange to people in England, who know that they can go to and fro from their own country unhindered. Well, it is different in respect to Soviet Russia. Our country is sacred soil to all true Russians, and it is particularly so since the Revolution in 1917. Only those who prove that they hold this sacredness dear to them—could be called true sons and daughters of Russia. Those who do not care, or prove by their actions to be neglectful and harmful—cannot enjoy this privilege. Perhaps my desire to go abroad for a rest and for an adventurous sporting life—made the authorities think that I was “unworthy” a person. Perhaps.

That is why I decided to do something that would “exonerate” me in the eyes of the Soviet State, to be able to return there. By now I can say that I have acquired that something which makes me think that I shall go back to Russia after the war. I am so determined upon going back there that I hope the Soviet Government will permit me to do so . . . otherwise I shall be obliged to outwit the frontier guards in carrying through my determination! In any case, there will be a great exodus of people to Russia after this war: many will go there purely on idealistic lines—to help the Russians repair their country more quickly after the present ravages and destruction.

But of course, I do not believe there will be any more such guards at the frontiers, after this war. I firmly believe that the life in Europe and Asia will be very different to the one we used to know. Are there any barriers between the various Autonomous Republics in Russia itself? None! And so there will be none between the future Autonomous Republics of Europe, who will belong to only one Social Order under the banner of Justice, Equality and Brotherhood. (I exclude England from this, as being not yet ripe for such a change, and the Channel will be their only frontier guard then! Because the English, with a few exceptions, wish to have the desired changes in economic and social fields—to come in a constitu-

tional manner and not by way of force. This is where the rest of Europe will show them how to get those desired things without awaiting them for another three hundred years. It is astonishing how people object to a revolution! Why? Because it involves bloodshed! But do not wars claim many millions of lives and do these wars achieve anything positive? A *successful* revolution, with its comparative little bloodshed and destruction,—at least brings a mighty and speedy advance in all spheres of life.)

That is how I visualise the post-war world. The main thing about it will be—that Russia will do nothing to “enforce” such an order of things: the peoples of Europe will come to it of their own accord. Because when mankind gets plunged into an abyss of sufferings, as it did for the last three years, and become saturated with them—then, and only then, will this humanity come to a free choice of its own destiny. The choice of the mass of people is clear. As to the separate groups and individuals, who would try to preserve the status quo,—well, these will be swept away in the purifying stream, as they were in Russia twenty-five years ago.

The future Socialist Europe need not repeat the same mistakes as Russia did: it can profit by the experience of its great neighbour. Nor would it be necessary to use the same methods of achieving the real Socialist Order—why, Europe will have no enemies around it to prevent it living the life it chooses, like my country had for the last quarter of a century.

All the same, it is only now, several years after my leaving Russia and having lived in different countries of Europe and the East, that I am able to see—how lucky I was to know other parts of this world beyond the Soviet Union. Yes, I am lucky. Because it is the best way to learn what colossal differences there are between these two extreme worlds. And I often wish that some so-called “discontented” Russian people, though few in number, had my opportunity to see foreign lands and life in them. Because it would make them dream of their own country, as it made myself.

There are many things that I should like to express here, but as I cannot further delay this book, I must confine myself to say only a little more here.

First of all, what did the Soviet régime give me, and did I visibly benefit from it whilst I was living my life there? This book is the answer, and as to my life, as I understand it, it stopped the moment I left Russia. Since then I am continually digesting all that I learned and passed through there. The great experience of

Life itself stopped somehow, and I plunged into the accumulative process through observation and study. Perhaps I should feel grateful for this transitory period also.

I had much rest—even too much. In England life is undisturbed and goes on in a well-established “rut”. After this long “hibernation”, I am ready now to start activity, creative activity this time. I have grown considerably since my days of Russian “mad-capness”, and now I am ready to start a really useful work,—useful in the social sense,—the one to which I feel I am most fitted to perform.

So I shall go back to Russia.

It was in Russia where I saw how people worked without expecting any immediate or personal reward. At that time I could not understand how such people had the incentive to exert themselves—just for the sake of their convictions. But it was much later, that the spiritual side of such a supreme attitude towards life became clear to me, and I am able to understand now what the following words of Afinogenev mean when he speaks through his Matvei, a Communist and the Red Army Corps Commander, in “Distant Point”. Matvei: “And the more I bring off and accomplish in life for the happiness of those close to me, the longer I shall live after death!”

The other person, Vlas, a priest, who joined in the discussion, asked him: “And you’ve got lots of people ‘close’ to you?”

Matvei (with the ring of a trumpet in his voice): “Enough! More than plenty! The workers of the entire world . . . ! The country is mine—the Party is mine—the children are ours . . . ! Their life is my life—it is myself in three persons, as you understand, you priest—only I am not in three persons but in millions of persons . . . It’s a long way from your God to mine . . . !”

Vlas (sombrely): “And I’ve got no one close to me . . . And I’ve got no children, and nothing at all . . . And I don’t need anything, either, except myself . . . All I want is to live for the joy of my eyes, and let all the rest go to hell . . . To save them I wouldn’t lift an eyelid . . . !”

Matvei: “That’s why you’re afraid of death! *There’s* the answer to your question! You live all alone, like a mushroom—and like a mushroom you’ll decay, die, and return to emptiness . . . !”

“We all have only one Distant Point, a world in which all men shall live their lives in freedom and happiness. . . . We all think of that, live for that . . . to the very last second of our last hour. And when death comes—why, we’ll die alive!”

This is how I came to the realisation of my own deep selfishness, and the reason why I never became a member of the Communist Party in Russia. And this brings me to another most important point.

I have always been considered an individualist, and found to be a person so different to all people around me. While I was greatly admired for my many-sided personality, energy, ability and what not—I was at the same time a selfish and often adventure and pleasure seeking person who was somewhat less devoted to the same ideas as those simple and altruistic masses of people of my age in Soviet Russia; who have that collective spirit that moves things, as it moves mountains. That is why I myself stopped admiring so-called personalities, unless they give their all to the common cause, whatever it was. And that is why I fail to understand the so-called personal liberty in Democratic countries, where such liberty is put above all things. It is a most selfish conception, even from the Christian point of view. Because, if the creed is that: "I am, and I don't care what is round me"—"the law unto himself"—then I see in it sheer selfishness only. Such a conception excludes self-sacrifices for that common good, which is the only criterion of a Christian standing.

And that is why people from the West fail to see the underlying idea behind Russian "collectivism", which "exists at the expense of the suppression of individualism", as they say! Collective ideal is an advance on the individual one, as it can only exist when narrow and personal sentiments give way to the common good or make no manifestations. What is Unity? That which nothing can break. And how is Unity possible amid people having different interests, aspirations and ideals? The latter would always keep pulling in opposite directions.

Here, therefore, lies the strength of present Russia, in its perfect Unity of a mass of people, who have the same aspirations and ideals, like that Matvei in "Distant Point".

But Russians are not prototypes of each other, where all are made to the same pattern. Each one is different in intellectual development, general outlook and temperamentally,—how could it be otherwise?

The new generation—and there are a 100 millions of them there—are a new people, a new force. But even their individual self-expression in various creative and executive spheres of social and administrative duties, political or military work, or science, art and technique,—all these are subject to one ultimate aim only: the real promotion of happiness—equally for all. Like most

Russians, I go all dreamy when I think of that beautiful future—for all.

Much labour and personal sacrifice, difficulties and hardships—are still more the stepping stones to that achievement as nothing gotten easily lasts long. But Russian achievement will last a thousand years to come, and will shine as a great, bright torch to all mankind—from now on.

Thomas Paine said: "An army of principles will penetrate where an army of soldiers cannot. It will march on the horizon of the world and conquer." Yes, it will conquer!

And Russia, new Russia, is going through the thorny path to the stars, nay—to the sun!