University of California General Library - Berkeley
Regional Cultural History Project

Boris Shebeko

# RUSSIAN CIVIL WAR (1918-1922) AND EMIGRATION

An Interview Conducted by
Richard A. Pierce

Berkeley
1961

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Boris Shebeko

PREFACE

The Russian-Americans, although numerically a small proportion of the population, have for long been a conspicuous and picturesque element in the cosmopolitan make-up of the San Francisco Bay Area. Some came here prior to the Russian Revolution, but the majority were refugees from the Revolution of 1917 who came to California through Siberia and the Orient. Recognizing the historical value of preserving the reminiscences of these Russian refugees, in the spring of 1958 Dr. Richard A. Pierce, author of Russian Central Asia, 1867-1917, (U.C. Press, Spring 1960) then a research historian at the University working on the history of the Communist Party in Central Asia, made the following proposal to Professor Charles Jelavich, chairman of the Center for Slavic Studies:

> I would like to start on the Berkeley campus, under the auspices of the Center for Slavic Studies, an oral history project to collect and preserve the recollections of members of the Russian colony of the Bay Region. We have in this area the second largest community of Russian refugees in the U.S., some 30,000 in San Francisco alone. These represent an invaluable and up to now almost entirely neglected

source of historical information concerning life in Russia before 1917, the February and October Revolutions, the Civil War of 1918-1921, the Allied intervention in Siberia, the Soviet period; of the exile communities of Harbin, Shanghai, Prague, Paris, San Francisco, etc.; and of the phases in the integration of this minority into American life.

The proposed series of tape-recorded interviews, as a part of the Regional Cultural History Project of the University of California Library, was begun in September 1958 under the direction of Professor Jelavich and with the assistance of Professor Nicholas V. Riasanovsky of the Department of History. Dr. Pierce conducted interviews with Boris Shebeko, M.M. Shneyeroff, and Paul Dotsenko, each lasting a number of sessions, which were transcribed and, if necessary, translated, each edited by the interviewer and the interviewee, and then typed and bound. In 1959 Dr. Pierce left to become assistant professor of Slavic history at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario. One further interview, with Dr. Elizabeth Malozemoff, was done by Dr. Alton S. Donnelly before he too left to begin his teaching duties at Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, Illinois.

This series of interviews is part of a larger series of tape-recorded autobiographies conducted by the Regional Cultural

History Project with persons who have been influential in some phase of the development of Northern California. The program is under the administrative supervision of Mrs. Helen Worden, Assistant Librarian, of the University of California Library at Berkeley.

Willa Klug Baum
Head, Regional Cultural
History Project

Regional Cultural History Project
University of California Library at Berkeley
October 1961

CALIFORNIA-RUSSIAN EMIGRÉ SERIES

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## INTRODUCTION

These reminiscences, gathered in the course of twelve tape-recorded interviews during the period from December 1958 to June 1959, cover the adventures of a junior officer with the White forces on the Southern and Siberian fronts during the Russian Civil War, and his subsequent experiences as an emigré in China and the United States. Because the narrator naturally had little knowledge of the command decisions and strategy being planned in higher quarters, his story portrays instead the daily struggle for survival of the rank-and-file.

Boris Shebeko was born in Odessa in 1900, the son of a well-to-do military man in whose footsteps it was expected he would follow. Tutored at home until the age of ten, he then entered the First Cadet Corps in Petrograd. He had just graduated and entered military school for officers' training at the start of the Revolution in 1917. Following the Bolshevik uprising of July 1917, his company of military cadets was assigned to guard the Winter Palace at Petrograd. In November of the same year the overthrow of the Kerensky government led to the arrest of all the young men in his school, but Shebeko, through the intercession

of a family friend, was released and fled to southern Russia where the White armies were being organized. In the interview he tells the story of the many skirmishes, raids, retreats, and narrow escapes he survived as the White forces moved across Siberia to Manchuria, and of the difficulties they met as emigrés in China. In August of 1923 he arrived in the United States under the sponsorship of his former commander, General Molchanov. Once here, acquiring a new language became his most urgent task. Eventually graduating in engineering from the University of California, he became an engineer for the Pacific Gas and Electric Company. He now lives in Berkeley with his wife, a native of Moscow, whom he met in Berkeley, and his teen-age daughter.

The interviews were recorded in the living room of the Shebeko home on Los Angeles Street, a large, old-fashioned house decorated with numerous mementos of Russia, including some family heirlooms and photographs retrieved from his old home by his sister at the time of the German invasion of Russia during the second world war. Comfortably seated in an over-stuffed chair, a bottle of Rhine wine at hand, a large German shepherd dog lying nearby, Mr. Shebeko unfolded the exciting story of his early life. A slender, erect man in his late fifties, with a dark complexion and grey hair, he spoke slowly with a slight accent. His English was excellent but he sometimes found it necessary to

use Russian words for which there are no exact equivalents in English, and many of these remain in the text.

The interviews were transcribed, translated where necessary, edited by the interviewer, and returned to Mr. Shebeko for his editing and approval. Mrs. Nina Shebeko, secretary in the University Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, and much experienced in correcting and improving the written style of non-native speakers of English, worked closely with her husband in the final editing. Not only did they carefully check and revise the manuscript, but Mr. Shebeko also prepared two maps for inclusion.

Dates given by Mr. Shebeko are based mainly on the Julian calendar, which continued to be used in the parts of Siberia controlled by the White armies until their final evacuation. Thus these dates are thirteen days behind the reckoning elsewhere. Where the time of other events could be ascertained, dates in brackets have been added to aid the reader. These are in the new style (n.s.) of the Gregorian calendar, but as they have been derived from a variety of sources without thorough checking, they may contain certain small errors.

The account of the operation behind enemy lines during the Khabarovsk campaign in December 1921 is based in part on three

short articles written by Mr. Shebeko for the Vestnik Obshchestvo Russkikh Veteranov Velikoi Voiny (Herald of the Society of Russian Veterans of the Great War) of San Francisco, in 1931.

Richard A. Pierce
Interviewer

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Boris Shebeko's Family

## CHILDHOOD AND SCHOOLING

Shebeko: I was born in 1900 in what is now Poland, not far from where the Russian, Austro-Hungarian and German Empires met. Our family residence was in Odessa, but my father had an estate near Vilna where we spent our summers. It was not very big -- only three hundred desiatinas [810 acres].

My father was a military man. For a short time he served in the corps of gendarmes, and in 1905 the revolutionaries made several attempts on his life. Once there was a report that on a certain night a bomb would be thrown into the house. I was only four then and my sister was five, but I remember how we were both taken from the house at night by a gendarme and brought to the house of my aunt. My father stayed at home, but no attempt was made that night. Later, however, a bomb was thrown, and he was badly shell-shocked by the explosion; it was eventually the cause

Boris Shebeko and his Sister

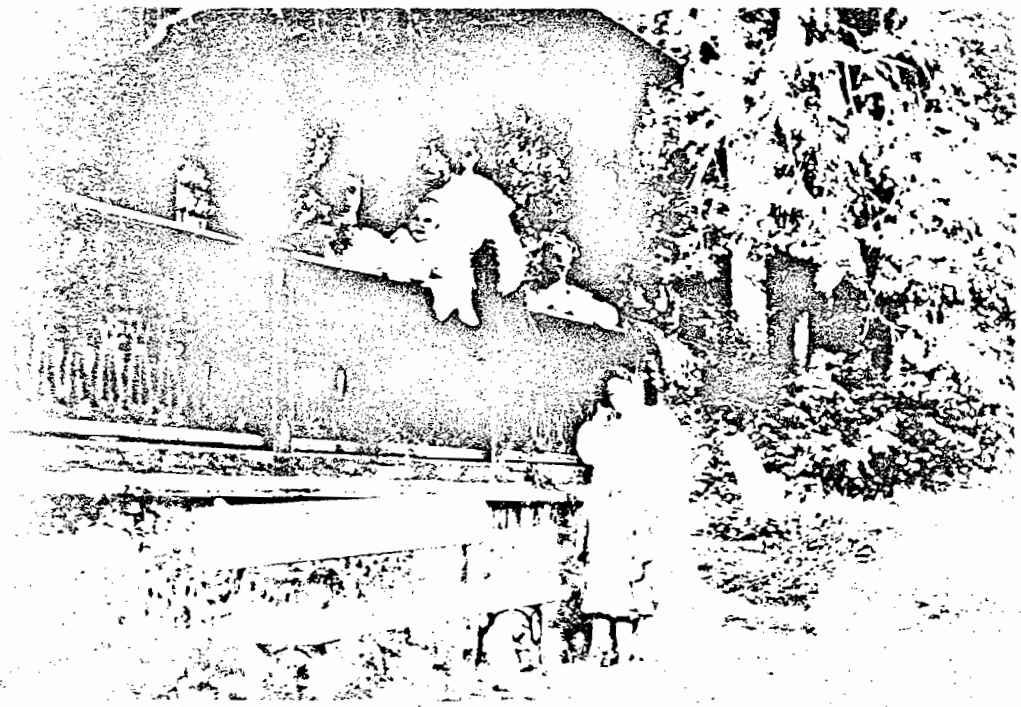
Shebeko: of his death. He died in 1910 at the age of forty-two. He was a lieutenant general at that time.

My maternal grandparents came from Dresden, Germany. Their name was Meissner.

I had a French governess at the age of three or four and spoke French before I spoke Russian. Before I entered school I had a preparatory education at home. Besides my French governess I had a tutor who taught my sister and me arithmetic, history, geography, and Russian grammar and composition.

After passing the entrance examination at the age of nine, I spent one year in a preparatory school, and then passed a competitive examination for entry into the corps of cadets. The school was limited to about four hundred pupils, so each year only fifty boys were admitted. Those who failed the entrance examinations had to attend some other school.

In 1910 I entered the First Cadet Corps in Petrograd, the same school which the son of the Tsar later attended. I stayed there a year and then transferred to the Aleksandrskii Cadet Corps in Moscow. There were three such schools in Moscow -- the Nikolaevskii, Anna Leonovnyi (named after the Russian empress who preceded Elizabeth, with Biron as regent)



Shebeko family Summer House

Shebeko: and the Aleksandrskii. The first was in the former palace of the empress, and our corps of cadets was in the former stables.

I attended that school for seven years and then entered military school. The standard of education was very high; when I applied later for entrance at the University of California I was given a junior certificate at once, with sixty-four credits.

The classes were small and each class was divided into perhaps three or four groups of uniform size up to a maximum of about twenty students in each. Each of those groups of twenty had an officer assigned to it as tutor (vospitatel'), who was with that group for all of its seven years. He was like a father to us. He would take us when we first came, at ten years of age, go with us through all the school until we graduated, and then start again with another first year class and bring them up in the same way. This officer was well prepared. Before obtaining this job he had to go through a schooling grounded in various subjects for a period of four years, with primary stress on child psychology. Psychology was the principal subject, because, after all, he had to deal with raw elements.

Shebeko: We were not allowed to choose our courses, but had to follow a prescribed program: the Russian language -- given for a full seven years -- German, French, arithmetic, algebra, geometry and, later, calculus, analytical geometry, physics, chemistry, cosmography (exactly the same astronomy which I took later at the University of California), zoology, law, and religion (zakon Bozhii). In the last year there was a special course on the history of religion.

In the evening we prepared our lessons. There were three hours of that preparation in the presence of our advisor, the officer. At the end of each hour he asked us questions to make certain that we had learned the lessons.

When the teacher entered the classroom we had to stand. Then he would greet us and we could sit down. He had a black book -- a grade book (zhurnal'), in which our names were entered, and he called upon us and graded us immediately. This was done every day. Of course not everyone was called every day, but since you never knew when you were going to be called, you always had to be prepared. When you were called, you went to the blackboard and were given, for instance, a problem in geometry. The problem had to be solved

Shebeko: on the board and the theory by which you had obtained it had to be proved. There was a certain advantage in this system because if you were unable to solve a particular problem, the teacher would then ask you about it and could judge from your answers how much you knew, so that you might still get a passing grade. In the written examination system used here, you are simply marked down, and that is not right. It all depends on how you feel at the time, whether you slept well the night before, and so forth. During an oral examination the teacher is able to find out just how much you know and how much you don't know. Maybe you hadn't approached the problem from the right direction, but if you were able to show him that you had done the whole thing in a logical way, but that in the very beginning you had made a wrong assumption, he would give you at least a passing grade and sometimes a high grade, depending on how you had answered.

All the examinations were oral. At the end of the year there was a final examination. Prior to that you were given a program, that is to say, forty or fifty questions on a certain subject. That was more or less an outline, but the questions were enumerated one to fifty. During the final examinations your teacher, two

[Above] Being Examined at the Board
[Below] Cadets - B. Shebeko indicated by "x"

Shebeko: assistants, and the officer who had been with you all seven years would be present, sitting behind a table covered with green cloth. They would call the name of the pupil; he would come forth to the table. On the table there would be fifty tickets spread out face down. He would pick up a ticket, for example No. 10. He would look at No. 10 on his program and would write out on the blackboard what was required. Three students were called at the same time. After each had answered his particular question, the examiners fired questions at him concerning different points on the same program. Then each examiner graded you, and depending on the average, you either passed or failed. If you failed in one subject only, you had to stay in the same class a second year and repeat the whole thing. So the system was very strict, and you had to show that you knew the subjects. Such an examination lasted about eight hours.

Here is a picture [shown from photograph album] of an examination in which I was answering questions at the board. My name is on one of the four blackboards. I was in the third class. I was thirteen years old. This was an examination in physics. I

Shebeko: can see that I was proving the law of falling bodies. This was my vospitatel'; this is the teacher of physics; and here is an assistant. This other pupil at the board has an optical problem -- lenses -- and this one had a derivation of the formula of the pendulum.

As a rule the teaching personnel was highly qualified. I understand that here, once a teacher's certificate is obtained, a teacher may be asked to give instruction in various subjects. His special field may be history and suddenly he may be asked to teach geometry. It wasn't so in Russia. Each teacher had to go through a so-called pedagogical school, where he learned the methods of teaching, the psychology of students, and then each one became a specialist in his own subject. If he was trained in mathematics he taught mathematics, not history or anything else. If he was a history teacher he didn't teach geography. Quite a few of the teachers we had were also professors in the university; but, in any case, each of the teachers was a specialist in his own line. As I mentioned before, it was the same with the officer we had as an advisor; he had to graduate from a four-year course.

Several boys shared a room. Each bed would have over it the name of the boy who occupied it. In the

Shebeko: first, second, third, fourth, and fifth classes the beds were hard; but in the sixth or seventh classes the beds had springs. Soldiers made our beds. They were assigned there for four years, and had to attend school too; some were there for many years. They received good salaries, whereas soldiers in the regular service were paid very little. It was an easy assignment, but they had to be intelligent. As a matter of fact, some of those soldiers helped us with our problems when we were stuck.

The regime in the corps of cadets was not unique. It paralleled the system of teaching in the gymnasium and the real school [real'noe uchilishche, so named from the German Realschule], the other two types of secondary school. The gymnasium was a classical school with stress on Greek and Latin. In the real school, the stress was primarily on mathematics and science; Latin and Greek were not included. The corps of cadets was similar to the real school, with the stress on mathematics, physics, chemistry, and science, rather than on classical subjects.

Anyone who had graduated from either of those three Russian schools was given junior standing upon entry in the University here. Quite a few of my

Shebeko: friends who entered the University at the same time I did, but who went into letters and science or commerce, graduated in two years. However, since I went into engineering, I had to stay four years because I needed special subjects.

But this was not only the system in Russian schools; the same system existed in Europe, and still does.

Boris Shebeko

REVOLUTION

Shebeko: I completed my education in the cadet corps at the age of seventeen. Just as I was graduating, in 1917, the February Revolution occurred. The revolution was rather mild at first, and I was still able to enter the Pavlovskoe military school (voenne uchilishche) in Petrograd.

During peacetime the military school had a three- to four-year program. Besides military subjects there were subjects of a general nature, just as at West Point. During the war, however, there was a great need of officers; so first the program was cut to one year, and then to only six months; so when I was in that school we concentrated on purely military subjects.

In July 1917 the Bolsheviks staged their first uprising [3-5 July 1917]. At that time we were assigned to guard the Winter Palace, and my company was stationed there every third day. The first time I saw Kerensky, I was standing as an honor guard in front of his office.

Shebeko: He walked in and soon afterward General Kornilov came in too. General Kornilov was accompanied by his bodyguards, Asiatic nomads who were in the Russian military service. As we stood there we heard a heated conversation behind the closed doors. Kerensky and Kornilov were arguing and neither was agreeing with the other. Kornilov's bodyguards began to get nervous, and suddenly one of them jumped up with the intention of going into the office to find out whether some harm was being done to his general, so we had to restrain him. Soon Kornilov came out noticeably pale; he motioned to his bodyguards and they left. Shortly after that I heard that Kornilovwas arrested [14 September 1917].

While we were guarding the Winter Palace,I was involved in an amusing incident. Once I was in the Winter Palace garden,when I saw an old lady walking there. No one was permitted within the confines of the garden, so I stopped her and asked her what her business was. She became very excited and demanded: "Do you know who I am?"

"No," I said.

She said, "I am the mother of the Russian revolution, Breshko-Breshkovskaia."

Shebeko: "That doesn't make any difference to me," I said. "We have strict orders that no one is to be permitted here."

She was indignant and excited. She told me she would report me to Kerensky; but still I evicted her from the garden. That very night I was called to the chief of the military school. He said he had received a report from Kerensky that I had not behaved very nicely with the old lady. "However," he said, "I congratulate you. You have acted as you should have!"

On the 25th of October, [7 November] 1917, I was riding on a streetcar and when the streetcar stopped, newsboys came in the streetcar and were selling newspapers. And there I saw in big headlines proclaimed that all power had passed into the hands of the Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. In other words, the old government had been overthrown. No one paid any attention to that, thinking it was only a rumor. But it was a fact; that night the power had passed quietly into the hands of the Bolsheviks.

The next day, however, there was quite a bit of fighting in various parts of Petrograd, especially at the Vladimirovskoe military school where the cadets

Shebeko: (iunkera) defied the Bolsheviks. The Reds brought artillery and big guns there and shelled the building right before our eyes. I understand that about half of the defenders were killed.

Our own school [the Pavlovskoe voennoe uchilishche] was immediately surrounded by armored cars and tanks, and we were arrested. We were led through the streets of Petrograd to a barracks of grenadier regiments. Soon after, the commissar came in and segregated the cadets and officers. I was an officer at that time and was arrested with all the other officers and taken to the Petropavlovsk fortress. There we were confined below the surface of the river.

We were guarded by sailors, and every day some commissar would come in with sailors and name some person who would be led away, not to be seen again. One day, after about three weeks, a sailor came in and called out my name and I thought that was my end. I followed him until we came to a bridge leading to the fortress. There the sailor gave me a kick and said, "Now, you go!" I found out later that a friend of mine, who was the director of all the government theaters, had heard that I was arrested. Apparently he knew someone, and I was released.

Shebeko: That very same day I met a countess whose name, I believe, was Panin. She headed an organization which made false documents for officers or cadets to escape from Petrograd. I obtained a false identification from her and that night left Petrograd and headed toward the southern part of Russia, where the White armies were already being organized. Foolishly, however, I removed the epaulettes from my overcoat but left them on my shirt. At the station Fili, the first stop south of Moscow, our train was stopped and Red soldiers came in demanding to see our documents. Unfortunately, the car in which I was riding was so hot that I had removed my overcoat, and when they came in they saw me with epaulettes on my shoulder straps. So three or four of us were immediately arrested and brought to the station. Fortunately, however, the man guarding us was drunk and when we all offered him ten rubles, he closed his eyes and we escaped, taking another train in another direction.

## WITH THE WHITE FORCES IN SOUTHERN RUSSIA

Shebeko: Finally we reached southern Russia, near Rostov. There I joined the 1st Officer Regiment of the White troops forming at that time under General Alekseev [died 8 October 1918] and General Kornilov [killed before Ekaterinodar 13 April 1918, after which Denikin took command].

When I arrived, the army was still in the process of formation. It consisted primarily of officers and cadets. There were hardly any privates at all. The colonels and captains were privates, and except for the Don Cossacks, most of them were foot soldiers.

Pierce: What ideas did you and the others have concerning what you were fighting for -- was it the restoration of the monarchy, for example?

Shebeko: No, it wasn't so much that; it was mostly because of the fact that Russia was at war at that time, and what really caused most of the officers to go into the White

Shebeko: Army was that the Bolsheviks wanted separate peace.

Pierce: Was the feeling then that national honor was at stake, or that if Russia left the war in that way she would have no voice in the peace?

Shebeko: That is right; all of those things.

Pierce: These aims, then, were rather beyond the grasp of the common people -- was that why the White Army was composed mainly of officers?

Shebeko: Yes, that is so. Only later on, in Siberia, it was different. There, there was an uprising of the workers...

This White Army had begun to organize only in November 1917, but the Reds were also only just forming, so for a while there were only skirmishes.

In one of the fights on the Don, near the station Tikhoretskaia, I was wounded and taken to a hospital in Odessa. While I was in the hospital, there was an uprising of workers in Odessa itself, and the Bolsheviks took power [18 January 1918]. However, things were rather mild at first, and nothing of any great consequence happened. There was firing going on all day and all night, but every one became so used to it that they didn't pay any attention. In fact, if sometimes there was no shooting, people became rather anxious, fearing that something was going to happen. Thus, shooting was

Shebeko: actually a normal state of affairs, and quiet was rather unusual.

However, that period didn't last very long because soon the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was signed [3 March 1918], and the Germans occupied Odessa [13 March 1918]. Their rule was harsh, and corpses hanging from lamp posts became a common sight.

Later, the Germans moved out and the Austrians moved in; living conditions then became much easier. The Austrians actually made friends with the Russians.

During this time the officers' organizations remained suppressed, but they continued illegally. One of their main functions was to find jobs for former comrades. Inside their building they had a big bulletin board on which slips of paper with current job offerings were pasted. I went there and was given a job tending horses. At that time they were bringing horses from the front in order to distribute them among the peasants. I worked in the stables where the horses were kept until distribution was made.

That job didn't last very long because all the horses were finally sent away, and I went to the bulletin board to look for another job. There was one item stating that a handyman was needed on an estate

Shebeko: about six miles from Odessa to take care of a garden and also of two donkeys. I didn't know it at the time, but the estate belonged to a family who were old friends of my family, and were related to Purishkevich, who was prominent in the government before the revolution. So that was where I obtained a job as a handyman, on their estate. They were not there, however. They had gone to Europe, and an old woman of about seventy was managing the estate.

One day she asked me to go to the city and buy a keg of tar to fix the roof.

"How am I going to do that?" I asked her.

"Well, what are the donkeys for?"

"Do you think I am going to drive that little four-wheeled carriage with the donkeys?" I asked. "Everybody would laugh at me."

She insisted, and I started out. The donkeys were very stubborn. They stopped at every corner and I had great difficulty in making them move. Finally we came to a barracks occupied by Austrians. The gates were open and two guards were standing on either side of the gates. As soon as the donkeys saw the open gates, in they went at a gallop; and I went after the donkeys, and the soldiers went after me. They told me they were going

Shebeko: to shoot, and I couldn't do anything. There was quite a commotion, and the Austrian soldiers ran out of their barracks laughing. I was very embarrassed! Then an officer came to see what was the matter. He admonished me and I was allowed to continue on my way.

I finally made it to the city, although there were quite a few incidents on the way because horses, for some reason, are terribly afraid of donkeys and when they see one, they buck. When I entered the city, there were a couple of big horses carrying freight. When they saw my donkeys they bucked, the donkeys started to bray, the horses lunged, and finally my little carriage was engaged with the big wheels of theirs. The coachman called me all sorts of names, the police came, people were all around, everybody was laughing and I was so ashamed I was just about ready to go under ground.

When I finally came home, late at night, I swore that I would never have anything more to do with donkeys.

Later, the German and Austrian armies pulled out. Immediately the various officers' organizations started to assemble, and more or less a semblance of an army was created, under the command of General Grishin-Almazov and General Bangerskii. I joined this army and there met six other officers. The seven of us became fast

Shebeko: friends; from there on we were always together. The fate of that group was as follows: I am here; two were killed; one was captured near Krasnoiarsk in Siberia; and later on after several years, I received a letter from my sister that he had made his way to Odessa, a complete invalid -- he had lost an arm and a leg. Another became insane and died of alcoholism. I don't know what finally happened to his brother; the last I heard was that he was working in China as a coolie; and the last one, my best friend, became probably the greatest criminal I ever saw in my life, with about twenty-seven murders to his credit which we knew of, and probably just as many which we didn't know about. I'll tell you about him later; I received some news about him recently.

At that time there was a strong separatist movement in the Ukraine. Most of the Ukrainians were so Russianized that they were really not separatists at all, but this particular movement came from Galicia, which was under Austrian rule at that time. The leader of this movement was a simple clerk. His name was Petliura [became minister of war of the Ukrainian Rada government in November, 1918]. He was able to collect considerable forces, and his troops became known as the Petliurovtsy.

Shebeko: At the same time, there was another army in the Ukraine under the command of Makhno. Makhno was actually a bandit and a very clever man; as a matter of fact, he was the one who introduced the new type of warfare, the so-called tachanka attack. A tachanka was a little carriage on two wheels, drawn by two horses, and to that tachanka was attached a machine gun. The tachankas would usually attack at full gallop, fire, and as quickly withdraw. The tachanka attack was later adopted by the Red Army also. There is a song called "Tachanka."

The Makhno troops discovered the social position of a person by the number of gold crowns in his mouth, and these were immediately removed with the aid of pliers. Makhno caused us considerable trouble. He was not really a Communist; as a matter of fact, he was later executed by the Bolsheviks [fled to Poland in 1922].

Petliura was always just as much against the Reds as against the Whites. The Bolsheviks, however, took advantage of the situation. They sent their agents into Petliura's army and supported his army as much as they could, so that actually the full flow was directed against the Whites. They occupied Kiev [16 December

Shebeko: 1918?] and began to move toward Odessa. At that time a group of about three hundred of us were sent to the station Birzula, a good-sized village, one of the main stations on the railroad, to stop their advance. We came to Birzula on trains on the same day that a big fair was held there. People were coming in from all the surrounding villages. We didn't suspect anything, but what actually happened was that a considerable quantity of ammunition and guns was brought to Birzula under disguise of the fair and a considerable number of the peasants there were soldiers of Petliura's army.

We were rather negligent about the whole thing, and didn't even leave anyone with our guns; they were left standing on the boxcar. That night our commander, named Rimsky-Korsakov, decided to send a detachment about twenty miles forward to a little station called Podberezhnaia, and selected the unit to which I belonged. As I said before, the army was composed primarily of officers, so most of the officers were serving as privates. My six friends and I were in the same unit; the company consisted of thirty or forty men.

We set out with one boxcar and an engine; in front of the engine was a flatca r bearing the guns.

Shebeko: When we arrived at that station, it was cold and so foggy and misty that we couldn't see three hundred feet away. We met a peasant and asked him whether he had seen any of Petliura's troops. No, no, he hadn't seen anyone. As a matter of fact, no one ever saw them there; everything was peaceful and quiet. So we let him go. He disappeared rather rapidly; and then one of us became suspicious, thinking this man could have been a spy, so we decided to fill up sacks with earth and put them around the sides of the flatcar.

About one hour or an hour and a half passed by, and then suddenly we saw a flash and heard an explosion; a shell burst very close to our small train. The infantrymen immediately took their positions at the side of the flatcar; and I and two others, who were machine-gunners, placed our machine guns on the roof above the engine room where the stack was. Soon there was another explosion, and a third, and finally a shell hit the flatcar. No one was hurt because the sacks of earth protected us. We had artillerymen there and they opened fire from our gun. As they fired the shot, the barrel split off from the stand. The man behind the gun was badly hurt when that very

Shebeko: heavy barrel fell on his chest and crushed him. Normally, when a gun fires, it recoils from the springs and then comes back. But when this gun recoiled, it flew back off the carriage. Apparently, during the night at Birzula when we were asleep, somebody came and filed off the stopper on that gun. So we were disabled in that respect.

Soon we saw their cavalry approaching. Apparently they were all drunk, because they were riding wildly on the horses and singing, in spite of the fact that we were firing point-blank at them. Between my legs I had a box in which we had small grenades the size of a plum. Those grenades worked on a somewhat different principle from regular grenades which are released by a spring; those you had to hold in your hands and strike them over a rough surface, and that would ignite them. Then you had about two or three seconds to throw them, perhaps three at a time.

About twenty of our infantry had gone on ahead, and the fog was so dense that we didn't see the cavalry approaching. We shouted as loudly as we could, calling them back. As I mentioned, we were firing point-blank at those cavalrymen, and they were apparently so drunk they didn't pay any attention, because we

Shebeko: killed quite a few of them, and they still kept coming on.

Suddenly we saw our infantry running toward the boxcars. One man was apparently so tired that he lagged way behind, and we thought that he could not possibly make it. We waited for him; towards the end he was actually crawling. We didn't have much time; we knew that we had to pull out, because some cavalrymen were already working on the rails behind us to cut us off. He finally reached us; we grabbed him and started moving back. We lost only one man, the man who was hit when the gun recoiled. The cavalrymen were still working on the rails, and when we moved back, they didn't even step out of the way; we actually went over them. And then we returned as fast as we could to Birzula.

By the time we approached Birzula, it was already clear. On the station platform there were many soldiers apparently not paying any attention to us at all. But near the station there was a viaduct, and on it I saw a machine gun pointing in our direction.

I warned the engineer; but there was nothing left to do but give it full steam and try to get by. When they opened up, they didn't touch us. And when we

Shebeko: approached the station, the soldiers were leisurely walking about; they didn't expect anything, and we let them have it. Then there was a real panic; they ran to the doors, jamming them. It was like a trap, and many fell under the fire of our machine guns.

We moved fast, and suddenly when we had already passed the station, the engineer shouted something and put the brakes on. What had happened was that a switch was thrown so that we would have to go off the main line onto a spur track.

We had to stop right there, but fortunately, the panic was so great back at the station that they didn't realize what had happened. I jumped out and changed the switch. As I pulled it, I fell down with the switch; it was bolted.

There seemed to be nothing we could do, but the engineer said, "Well, let us try, anyway." So he backed up and went at full speed. Apparently the switch was not thrown fully; the train jumped a couple of times, and the flatcar in back was derailed, but the engine and the boxcar were not. So we disconnected the flatcar and left it there with the gun and everything else. The gun was useless anyway. We proceeded about a mile from that place and then decided to blow the rails because the enemy's armored trains were there.

Shebeko: A pitiful thing happened: we placed the flat little pieces of dynamite on top of the rail where the rails come together, and tied them very lightly with string, set the fuses, and ran. Just then a little dog came along and after the explosion there was no dog and the rails were bent and twisted.

We finally reached the station Razdel'naia, about twenty miles from Odessa. There we found the rest of our troops, and learned what had actually happened at Birzula. As I have mentioned, there was a fair and the Petliurovtsy were actually in the midst of our troops. When everyone was sound asleep, they attacked. There was a fight, but somehow our troops managed to repulse the Petliurovtsy and pull out from the station, leaving us behind.

I remember going into a buffet where I met Colonel Rimsky-Korsakov, who was a great friend of our family. He looked at me, and then he began to laugh.

"What's so funny?" I asked.

"You're here!" he exclaimed, "and we thought that you were all dead!"

That night we all returned to Odessa. I was dead tired because I hadn't slept for two nights. My home was in Odessa, so I went there and slept for

Shebeko: about twenty-four hours.

The next morning I put on civilian clothes and told my mother I was going out to buy a loaf of bread. On the street I met one of the officers of our regiment.

"What are you doing here?" he asked me.

"I am going to buy a loaf of bread."

"But didn't you know? The city is being occupied by Petliura's troops! All our battalion is organizing on the Ekaterinskaia Ploshchad'!"

I rushed home and put on my uniform. The streetcars were not operating, so I started out on foot to the assembly point three miles across the city. Petliura's troops were stationed with their machine guns right on the street corners, but I passed by them and they didn't stop me. This shows the state of affairs at that time. No one knew what was happening. Of course I didn't have my epaulettes on, and they probably did not recognize me; but I walked that whole distance through their lines and not a person thought of stopping me.

Our army was assembling on the big square, Ekaterinskaia Ploshchad', on which there stands a monument to Richelieu. When I arrived, there was

Shebeko: quite an assembly; all the officers were there, and General Almazov was running about distractedly, trying to get the battalion into some kind of order. We stayed there all day and night, with our headquarters in the Londonskaia Gostinitsa, one of the two large hotels on that square; the other one was the Peterburgskaia Gostinitsa. We occupied an area with a radius of only a couple of blocks, but Petliura's troops didn't try to drive us out.

The next morning Almazov ordered some of the detachments to advance into the city, and that is how it all started. From that assembly point we radiated in various directions.

Some very nasty street fighting took place. It was really bad. It wasn't very cold; there was no snow, there was just a drizzle. Now what was going on in that city I don't think anybody knew. Another three men and myself were sent to Kazanskaia Ulitsa with a machine gun to occupy a certain corner, and we were supposed to maintain contact with another detachment stationed two blocks to the south. It was impossible to show your face around the corner without being shot at from the other side. So we exchanged fire.

Shebeko: Actually they couldn't see us and we couldn't see them at all; we were just firing into the sky, you might say. There was absolutely no plan...nothing.

Then, at dusk, we received a message to retreat, but the messenger couldn't reach the other platoon, so we were told to send somebody to that other platoon to give them the order to retreat. I was chosen to go.

I reached that point but found nobody there. I was about to turn back when I saw a group of men about two or three blocks away. I thought that I had probably made a mistake, so I started after them. At that time there was no shooting at all. It was very quiet, so I walked freely on the sidewalk toward that group of men. As I approached them, just about half a block away, I saw that they had a different uniform. The Petliurovtsy wore wool jackets, with wool inside and leather of a yellowish color on the outside. That was their uniform, and there they were. I had practically walked into them.

They saw me and sent a couple of men toward me. I turned back, but I didn't run, because if I did, they would probably have opened fire. I walked at a good pace, and they followed just as fast. Then when I saw an opening which led to a gate, more or less a niche, I thought I had a chance to conceal myself from them,

Shebeko: so I stepped into that niche and waited in the shadows, and the two men passed by me. I stayed there two or three minutes and finally they walked back. As they passed me, I decided it was about time for me to go. I crept against the wall so they wouldn't see me. As I reached the corner something hit me on the head. I fell down, and for a second or so I lost consciousness. When I came to, there they were -- Petliurovtsy, three men, holding me tight. I was captured.

They brought me to a room of a three-story building, apparently a warehouse, where they had offices. A commissar was sitting in the room. He was a very young fellow with red hair, very polite. He asked me to sit down. I sat on a bench, and he questioned me about the position of our troops, how many we had, and so on. I gave him some answers which he knew were false. He listened carefully and then he opened his notebook and said, "According to our information everything you have said is all wrong." Then he began to talk to me; he was extremely polite, asked me where I was born and so forth. During that conversation we discovered that we had been in Vilno at the same time, and that our families were acquainted. He immediately called the orderly and commanded, "Let's have some food here for our acquaintance!"

Shebeko: He had a phonograph, and he said, "While we drink tea let's enjoy ourselves!" He set up the phonograph and started playing Ukrainian songs. I felt very uncomfortable.

By then it was already daybreak. Soldiers rushed in and reported: "The Whites are attacking!" The commissar jumped up, grabbed me by the hand and said, "Now listen, I was nice to you. If something happens to me, won't you say something for me?"

I said, "Sure!"

And he told the soldier who was there, "Now you guard him!" and he ran out of the room.

And there I was, sitting there, with the soldier standing in the corner looking very nervous. I felt very uncomfortable because I thought, "What will prevent the man from shooting me right here and now?" We stared at each other; and he was shaking like a leaf. Suddenly, for no reason at all, he placed his gun in the corner and ran away.

I immediately chased after him to the first floor of the warehouse. Meanwhile, the firing had begun to subside. I didn't know what had happened, who had taken the upper hand. But in the corner there were bales of oakum, and I hid myself between those bales.

Shebeko: Apparently I had hidden myself as effectively as does an ostrich when he hides his head in the sand, because I heard steps and then a voice, "Come out, come out!" I pretended I didn't hear anything.

"Hey, you there, come out!"

I still didn't say a word. Suddenly someone hit me in the rear with the butt of his gun. Of course I emerged immediately and saw that it was one of our own soldiers. I was very much elated, but the trouble was that when I was captured I had had a coat on. They had removed that coat and had given me one of those old woolen jackets, so that I was actually dressed like one of the Petliuovtsy. Therefore, although I was elated, the soldier and a second soldier who had joined the first immediately started to discuss whether to finish me there or to take me outside.

I said, "Wait a minute! I'm yours!"

But they said, "When it comes to that, you're all ours!" That was quite a conversation. Finally one of them said, "After all, we can finish him later, let's take him out and find out."

So they took me out, not at all gently; there were

Shebeko: three steps leading down into the street, and they pushed me down those three steps. Fortunately, one of the officers there recognized me immediately. The men who had arrested me were very apologetic. But I was so happy at the outcome that I didn't say a word.

Immediately after, though, I felt ill, feverish, and soon collapsed. When I regained consciousness, I found myself lying on the floor of the London Hotel (Londonskaia Gostinitsa) among hundreds and hundreds of wounded. I had pneumonia.

That night the Petliurovtsy were defeated; they fled from the town. They apparently had not expected the attack at all. There was no reconnaissance on their part; they were very poorly organized. For example, the main station in Odessa was captured by only fifteen of our officers. The station was at least three miles from the center. The fifteen men took a truck, and drove through the city without meeting any fire, straight to the station. It was full of Petliurovtsy; but they entered unnoticed, went up to the second floor, and started throwing hand grenades. Quite a few of the Petliurovtsy were killed, but I don't think we lost a single man. I wasn't in that engagement;

Shebeko: but I talked to some of those who took part in it.

Of course, as the fight progressed, there was more order. Apparently it developed into quite a bloody affair. The next morning, as they were taking me to the hospital, I saw a good dozen trucks going through the town streets with the dead piled up like wood, up to the very top. Who they were, whether they were our men or the Petliurovtsy, I don't know. I think at least several hundred were killed.

In the hospital my neighbor was one of the Petliurovtsy. I spent about a month there and we became good friends. Meanwhile, my friends visited me constantly.

On the very same day that we occupied the city, after the fighting was over, the French intervention began [18 December 1918]. Two French divisions disembarked in Odessa under the command of General Frere d'Anselme, and also a regiment of Senegal troops. We were surprised at the sight of those soldiers in their light blue uniforms, and their tropical hats; they were husky fellows, as black as ebony, commanded by white officers. They didn't speak French or any other European language. It was impossible to argue with them. And in addition to the expeditionary force,

Shebeko: the French Navy also arrived on the scene, including the battleship "Marat."

For some time after that, nothing happened. In March, I was attached to the so-called Black Sea flotilla which was being organized. Captain Vlassov, of the first rank, the commander, asked General Bangerskii to send some men. Men were selected from various regiments and sent there to take a temporary assignment. The flotilla consisted of three wooden gunboats and three armored ones, six in all -- small, fast boats, manned by a force of twenty-six to thirty men in all. Each boat was armed with a couple of machine guns and a mitrailleuse. A mitrailleuse was a gun with a shell about a foot long and about an inch in diameter; it was just like an oversized bullet, but it had quite a penetrating force. They were mostly used against armored trains. They were very light, and when disconnected from their tripods, light enough to carry.

As it turned out, however, although we were attached to the flotilla, we didn't even have a chance to board one of the boats. The Reds, who had meanwhile apparently become annoyed with Petliura's army, attacked, took Kiev [3 February 1919], and started to advance on

Shebeko: Odessa. In Odessa the White forces took all the able-bodied men they could get hold of and sent them to the front. Our detachment was sent there too.

We already had a division at that time, but a division then consisted of only about 1500 men. We took our position about twenty or thirty miles north of Razdel'naia. The right flank, extending from near Kherson, was occupied by the French. We were in the center, and the Greeks were on the left flank, toward Bessarabia.

That was quite a fight. Faced by the French divisions, our own force, and by the Greeks, the Reds were numerically inferior, and they were poorly equipped. However, they first struck at the French troops on the left flank, apparently with such rapidity that the French were absolutely disorganized. Then they hit the Greeks. The Greeks defended themselves much better; but they suffered heavy losses and finally had to retreat, leaving us to take the full blow on the center. The Reds were poorly dressed and armed. I saw some of them armed only with sticks. Many of them were sailors of the Baltic and Black Sea fleets, and I remember that they were all drunk. That was evident as they advanced toward us, singing, while we mowed them

Shebeko: down. However, by that time they had us badly outnumbered. They continued advancing; we lost quite a few men and finally by sheer numbers they forced us to retreat.

Most of our army retreated toward Bessarabia, but because our particular unit was still attached to the Black Sea flotilla, we retreated toward Odessa.

Meantime, the sailors on the battleship "Marat" mutinied and raised the Red flag. I don't remember whether there was any firing or whether they were simply arrested; but I remember that when we entered Odessa, we saw those French sailors, surrounded by Senegalese troops, being taken off somewhere. I think quite a few of them were executed.

The French pulled out of Odessa pretty fast [4-8 April 1919]; I think they went to Sevastopol. The Greeks practically evaporated; I don't know what happened to them.

When we came to Odessa, I had time to come home and say goodbye to my mother and my sister and then went to the port, the embarcadero, where we were assembled. It was practically the same as the time when Petliura's army came, only this time there were only about a

**Shebeko:** hundred to a hundred and fifty of us in all.

There was a great exodus of population from Odessa. There were several large ships -- the "Kavkaz," the "Arkhangel Mikhail," and a third, the name of which I don't remember. We helped the refugees to board the ships and loaded their luggage. I remember that Metropolitan Platon was to leave on the steamer "Kavkaz" -- and, of course, his things were given preference. Apparently someone noticed this, because from then on we were always loading "Metropolitan Platon's things."

The Reds could have come and taken the city with their bare hands because there were so very few of us at that time. However, they were apparently not quite ready yet, for instead they began to shell the port. The "Arkhangel Mikhail," which was heavily loaded with refugees, was sunk and many people were drowned.

By the time we had finished there was no room for us on the boat we had loaded, and there were no others. Of course the small gunboats had been sunk -- scuttled -- that very same day, but they were primarily for river operations anyway, and wouldn't have been suitable for a sea voyage.

Shebeko: There was, however, a small boat there intended only for port service, and having no other choice, the seven of us took that boat and sailed right into the open sea. None of us knew anything about navigation, but we headed in the general direction of Constantinople, about three hundred miles away.

In a short time the boat ran out of coal and water, but a Greek boat sailed by, and when we raised the distress signal, they came to us and supplied us, free of charge, and we continued on our way. That happened three or four times until, about the 19th of April, 1919, we finally reached the Bosporus. Surprisingly enough, we had not missed it by more than five miles.

CONSTANTINOPLE

Shebeko: Meanwhile, boats loaded with refugees had been streaming into the Bosporus, so at first the Turks didn't want to let us ashore. They put us in quarantine and we had to stay on our boat for three or four days. However, we were able to buy provisions because every day Greek merchants came to our boat and sold what they had, charging us triple prices.

The Turkish authorities tried to send us back, but eventually the Russian consul in Constantinople, who still had some authority there, was able to obtain our release; our boat, though, was confiscated.

Before allowing us to come ashore, however, the Turks decided to decontaminate us. They sent us to a steam bath and told us to roll our clothes into bundles, separating the leather goods from the cloth; but they told us all this in Turkish, so of course we

Shebeko: didn't understand. We went through the steam bath while our bundles of clothes were put through a hundred degrees of dry steam.

When we came out, we began to look for our clothes. I couldn't find my bundle at first; the whole thing had shrunk. My gold epaulettes and all my gold buttons had turned silver. I had had a couple of cans of raw preserves in my pocket and these had cooked. My wide leather belt, of the English type, was only about an inch wide and fourteen inches long. Of course I couldn't use it, and as the buttons, which were made of bone, had burned up in the heat, I had neither buttons nor belt, and I had to walk through the city holding up my trousers.

We were sent to the island of Halki, one of the Prince's Islands in the Sea of Marmara. We were to stay in a big seminary formerly occupied by Greek monks, and now under French authority. However, when we arrived,there was no room for us, so the seven of us spent our first night on Halki at a hotel. That was really a night, because as soon as we put out the light, millions of bedbugs attacked us. We scarcely slept at all. Early in the morning we were awakened by the braying of donkeys; the island was full of them; they were the only

Shebeko: means of transportation there.

That very day the seven of us bought ourselves a villa, for we had plenty of money. Just before we left Odessa the banks were broken into and the money divided among the troops, so that each man received about 10,000 rubles. When we came to Constantinople, apparently this money still had some value, because we were able to exchange it for Turkish money and to get full value for it; each of us had at least 10,000 lire, which was quite a sizeable sum. The money lost all value soon afterward; but at the very beginning we even had quite a few notes printed by the government of Odessa which resembled the imperial ruble, and, as the Turks didn't know the difference, we were able to exchange them for money, too. Some of the banking houses went broke soon after that.

Thus at first we had a grandiose time in Constantinople. We were young and spent money recklessly. Whenever we entered a restaurant the orchestra would get up and play a march, because they knew they would be tipped.

However, this had lasting bad consequences for one of our group, my best friend. His name was Chernegin. He was a captain, and an excellent officer. When I

Shebeko: first met him in Odessa, he was a very gentle man. He would not curse and he was always very kind. He was very good-looking and well-built. He had quite a way with women, too.

One day we went to a restaurant in Constantinople and took a table. The next table was taken by English officers and another table by English sailors. We ordered whiskey. The waiter asked us how we wanted it -- with soda, with water, and what size glasses. We told him to bring the whole bottle. The waiter shrugged his shoulders and brought us a bottle of whiskey. When he came with the whole bottle, the English officers looked at us as if they didn't believe it.

The English officers had a special way of drinking their whiskey. They would take a matchbox and stand it straight up; they would then pour that much water or soda, and the rest would be whiskey. Now the second step was to lay the matchbox on its side and repeat the process. The final step was to place that matchbox flat; that much whiskey, that much soda, and the rest would be whiskey. When we poured whiskey into our glasses and started to drink it straight, they all jumped up from their chairs. They finally came over to our table, and asked us to repeat our performance. So

Shebeko: we repeated it several times. By the time we had repeated it ten times, we were quite drunk.

When it was time to pay our bill, my friend Chernegin pulled out his wallet; it was stuffed with money. He paid twice as much as he needed, tipped the waiter, and we all walked out. Then somehow we separated. When we finally returned to our place on the island of Halki, Chernegin was not there.

We were not worried at first. However, the next day he didn't come and the third and fourth, so we began to make inquiries. Finally we found him in the hospital, unconscious, with his skull fractured. We learned that a coachman had found him in one of the streets. In Turkey some of the streets don't have windows facing the streets, and it is very seldom that anyone goes in there because the streets are very narrow with nothing but a blank wall facing the street. It was by chance that this coachman went on that particular street and found him lying there and took him to the hospital. Later we learned that when we left the restaurant and separated, the English sailors went with Chernegin, apparently hit him on the head, and left him there in that dark alley. Eventually he recovered, but his whole personality

Shebeko: changed. He became excitable; he began to drink too much; and at night he would have hallucinations.

Our prosperity lasted for about a month, and then one day the member of our group whom we had elected to be our treasurer announced that we didn't have any money left. We couldn't believe it, but when we began to count, there it was: we were absolutely broke. We had to rent the villa (we are still owners of it, by the way, if it still exists!) and look for jobs.

We all found jobs on a Russian steamer, the "Rus'." That steamer along with the "Aleksandr III," the "Tsarevich Aleksei," and a fourth, the name of which I have forgotten, all belonged to the Danube Company [Dunaiskoe Obshchestvo]. In other words, it was a boat intended primarily for river service. When the Bolsheviks occupied Odessa, the company moved its ships to Constantinople. There a French company took the ships on contract and later they actually passed into French hands. At the time when we were in Constantinople, the lease was expiring, and we were hired as sailors and sent to relieve the French crew. However, we had a hard time doing that because when we came aboard, the French crew didn't want to leave. There

Shebeko: was a fight in which knives played quite a prominent part. Finally the Turkish police came, put an end to the fighting, and expelled the French.

We were sailors on that boat for about a month, making just one trip from Constantinople to Naples, Marseilles, and other ports as far as the Thames Estuary near London. Those boats were luxurious, but they were terrible for sea travel because they were roundbottomed. The "Rus'" rolled and pitched with every little wave.

## CONSTANTINOPLE TO VLADIVOSTOK ON THE "IERUSALIM"

Shebeko: In late June or early July 1919, after our return to Constantinople, an order came from the Chief of Staff of the Kolchak army in Siberia, General Lebedev, for all specialists who had served with the Russian armies to proceed to Vladivostok.

Of course none of the Russians wanted to stay in Constantinople under the conditions there, so this trip became at a premium. Immediately all the generals became specialists and all of the families of those generals became specialists, and as we were not considered specialists, we were actually about to be left behind.

We told them that we were all machine gunners and therefore specialists, and somehow, after quite a bit of persuasion, we were allowed to go along. But that boat carried generals who were seventy or eighty years old, their wives and their children; with the exception of fifteen or twenty young men, there was no fighting

Shebeko: element in that group at all. Most of those people merely went to Vladivostok and stayed there. This was, of course, not the intention of the order.

On the boat General Stilnitskii immediately placed himself in command. Well, we couldn't see that at all, so we didn't obey him, and we were told that as soon as we reached Vladivostok all of us would be reported, arrested and court-martialled. He was a general, but with no qualifications whatsoever; one of those generals who during the war had spent his time in Moscow or Petrograd, and had not even smelled powder. Most of them on that boat were like that; they were nothing but refugees.

Of course the generals occupied all the cabins, and we were put in the steerage, in the hull. We didn't have any money at all, so we decided we would work as sailors during the cruise. But that didn't last very long because we had to shovel coal, and as soon as we entered the Red Sea the temperature was so high that we could work for only half an hour at a time, after which they would take us out and pour water over us and then shove us back again. So we rebelled and they had to substitute natives for us.

Our ship, the "Ierusalim," was a very old Italian boat, sailing under the Russian flag. The boilers were

Shebeko: not too good, and the boiler tubes were constantly breaking so that we had to stop in almost every port for repairs. The trip to Vladivostok, which normally took twenty-nine days, took us a good two and a half months.

However, this gave us a good opportunity to see some of the places along the way. For instance, we had to stop at Port Said for nine days and that gave us a chance to go to Cairo and see the Pyramids. Another stop was at Djibouti, then a French colony, but formerly a kingdom. The king had been deposed by the French, but he still had his palace there. Of course, it was a palace in name only; it did not differ much from any large private dwelling.

One day after visiting the city, I came back on board our ship. It was anchored about a half mile from shore because there was no harbor, and the water was rather shallow. I came back on a rowboat and went downstairs to get something to eat. In the dining room I saw a Negro, one of the natives, sitting quietly in a corner, not saying a word. I was rather intrigued, so I asked the cook who it was.

"Oh," he said, "that's their king."

"Their king? What's he doing here?"

Shebeko: "He wants to see the captain."

"Why don't you tell him?" I asked.

"I don't have time," he answered.

I went to the captain and said, "Captain, do you know who is sitting there in the dining room? Their king!"

"Well," he said, "let's bring him here."

I went downstairs and invited him to the captain's cabin -- he spoke perfect French -- and the captain ordered dinner and invited me too. We spent a pleasant evening; the king was a very intelligent man. Later that evening he was rowed ashore.

The next morning a native boat arrived, and a couple of black officials came aboard and tendered the captain and me an invitation from the king. The captain couldn't go, so I went alone and as I sat on that boat, I felt like a prince myself. Everyone bowed to me. When we came to the palace the two guards at its entrance saluted me as I went through. I was invited to the living room, which was furnished in perfect European style. Then the door opened and a white woman appeared; she came up to me and addressed me in Russian.

I learned that she was a Russian who had graduated from the Smolnyĭ Institute. My sister had attended that

Shebeko: institute too. She was the wife of the king. Soon her husband appeared, and we had a very pleasant evening, a very nice French dinner.

Later the king excused himself and I was left with his wife. She asked me if I would like to see some of the local customs. I said that I would.

"I am going to take you to a very interesting place," she said. "You will be surprised." (They are Christians there, and they are Orthodox too, but their services are not exactly like the services in the Russian church. They are nominally Christians but their service is a mixture of Christianity and idol worship.) She brought me to a hut with a straw roof and said, "This is the church. Would you like to walk in?"

Inside there were people praying, and burning candles of tissue paper, the rolled type, and the place was full of smoke. In a niche there was a statue and they were all praying to that statue. After the service was over, she invited me to come nearer to that statue. I was amazed to see that it was a bust of Pushkin! Because Pushkin had Negro blood they made an idol out of him, and they were praying to Pushkin!

The next day, just before our departure, about six boats appeared all bringing presents from the king to

Shebeko: me and to the ship's officers. His presents were quite appropriate to the country. There were ostrich plumes, that was what I selected for myself; sharks' jaws, lions' teeth, and amulets; a lot of different fruits, of course, and eight monkeys. Six of them were small monkeys, the cutest things you ever saw in your life. But unfortunately they all contracted pneumonia and died, leaving two big Indian monkeys, which caused us a lot of trouble.

One unpleasant incident occurred. A woman came on the boat with a little boy. She was in tears and said that she had to sell her boy. She was too poor to keep him any longer. The boy was very nice-looking and one kind-hearted Russian woman felt sorry for the boy and decided to buy him and adopt him. She paid the woman a hundred francs or so; the woman left. Soon French gendarmes appeared on the boat to arrest the woman.

"Why?" we asked.

"Don't you know that it is against the law to buy a French citizen?"

We had a terrible time settling the matter. Later on we learned that this was a racket. The woman would come and sell the boy and then the police would come and

Shebeko: try to arrest the person who bought him. The victim was fined 500 francs. She had already paid 100 francs to the boy's mother, so it cost her 600 francs altogether.

From then on we had those monkeys with us, and what a mess! First of all, we had chickens on board which were kept in a cage. One day the monkeys opened up all the doors and let the chickens out. Everybody chased them around the boat and some of the chickens flew overboard. The next thing the monkeys did was to open sacks of rice and scatter it all over the deck.

One day a monkey jumped on the lap of a lady who had an expensive diamond ring on her finger. The monkey noticed the ring, and the foolish woman took it off her finger and gave it to the monkey. The monkey was off like a flash. The woman screamed, and everyone tried to catch the monkey who had the ring in its teeth. Finally the monkey climbed up on top of the mast. A sailor went up the mast after it and just as he was ready to grab it, the monkey threw the ring overboard!

When we came to Colombo we went ashore to buy some bananas. I paid a shilling, thinking for that amount I couldn't get many bananas. But to my surprise, for a shilling they gave me a big bamboo stake and whole bunches of bananas not quite ripe. It seemed to me that there must

Shebeko: have been a couple of tons of them. There was quite a procession, with me going in front followed by two boys who carried the bananas. We came on board the boat and I asked the captain what to do. He said, "Why not hang them in front of my deck, where they will ripen."

We did this, of course, and the monkeys discovered them. They began eating them, throwing the skins on the deck, for which they were punished. The monkeys continued to eat the bananas, but now they threw the skins overboard.

While we were in Colombo we drank some of that evil stuff of theirs. It was dreadful. We were all very drunk. The only thing I remember was that we went to some place where I felt a pricking pain in my arm. When I woke up on ship my arm was sore. I looked to see what was under my sleeve, and there was a bird! We had gone to a tattooing artist! My hand was swollen and a friend of mine was in agony. He had a dragon, all around his arm. It had become infected. He almost lost his arm.

Near Formosa we were hit by a typhoon, during which two or three of our men were washed overboard. When we came to Saigon our boat was covered with salt about an

Shebeko: inch thick from the salt water which washed over us and then evaporated. We had to spend about two weeks in Saigon for repairs. However another boat, the "André Lebon," one of the largest French ships of that time, went through the eye of the typhoon, and when she arrived at Saigon four or five days later, the entire superstructure was gone. Only a shell remained.

Finally in September,1919, we arrived at Vladivostok. We were there for only a day. Vladivostok was occupied by Ataman Semenov's troops. Semenov was technically under Kolchak's command, but there was always friction between his and Admiral Kolchak's group. The seven of us wanted to join the Kolchak army, but we were detained by Semenov's people, who tried to persuade us to join his army. We refused, and finally they threatened us, calling us "Bolsheviks," because strange as it may seem, Kolchak's army was composed primarily of peasants and workers. There were very few real officers among that group. They were primarily workers from the Izhevskii zavod [factory] and such places, while Semenov's army consisted mainly of Transbaikal Cossacks and officers who considered themselves the cream of the army. So they looked down on us as "proletarians," and it was with great difficulty that

Shebeko: we got away. We actually had to escape by boarding a train.

## THE "ICY MARCH" ACROSS SIBERIA

Shebeko: We made our way across Siberia to Omsk. There for some time, we were unattached to any part of the army. We lived in a house near the church, previously occupied by the staff of the commandant. We slept on wooden benches and had nothing to do. All day long we walked around the town, looking in the shop windows, from which practically everything already had disappeared.

Soon, however, the order came that we were to be attached to the Samara division. There was a new company formed which was composed primarily of Tatars. The total number of men was about 120. In addition to a company, we also had a machine gun company, of which I was appointed senior officer, while my friend Chernegin was appointed commander of the infantry company.

We left Omsk just the day before it was captured [15 November 1919]. I don't think there was any fight at all, but I had fallen ill with typhus (typhoid fever)

Shebeko: while in Omsk, and by the time we left I was unconscious.

There are two kinds of typhus, one called merely tif, and the other recurrent or vozvratnyi tif. The latter attacks violently, accompanied by a temperature. Recovery is sudden and quick. But then in a few days it recurs, as often, sometimes, as three or four times. I had it twice.

We went by way of the Barabinsk Steppe, a very large steppe, flat and bleak, the earth black as charcoal. It was winter, and the strong wind swept all the snow from the ground, so that we had to use wheeled carriages. Of course riding in them over the frozen ground -- frozen in big clumps -- it was just like going over boulders. I had a high temperature, a terrific headache, and I was almost delirious.

During that ride my feet, on which I had only leather shoes, became badly frostbitten. Soon they swelled to such a size that I was unable to pull off my shoes. Fortunately, my orderly found some valenki [woollen or felt boots] somewhere, which were more spacious. While I was outside my feet didn't hurt, but when we came to a village and I entered a house, my feet would ache terribly. Siberian houses were

Shebeko: always well heated, and the woman of the house would always give me a goose-feather mattress. As I had a high temperature, I would practically burn. In the morning, when it was time to resume our march, my feet would be so swollen that I couldn't put on my boots. I had to go outside and keep my feet in the snow until they became numb, and then I would be able to put on my boots.

The route of the armies was as follows: The First and Second Armies retreated along the railroad, while our army, the Third Army, retreated forty or fifty miles south of it. Only twice, at Achinsk and Krasnoiarsk, did we come to the railroad. Along the railroad, there was more population and the villages were closer together, whereas along the road we traveled, the villages were usually forty miles apart and not as big. Even so, we were better off, for the armies which were retreating along the railroad saw the abandoned trains in which civilians, among them many women and children, were trying to escape. That had a demoralizing effect on them, while we were more or less spared such sights, and our army was the only one which remained intact.

Because of the disorganization of the White armies, the Reds were advancing rapidly and they actually were

Shebeko: already much farther to the east of where the Second and Third Armies were, and constantly encircled our armies.

Behind us one of the regular Soviet troops, the 1st Division, was advancing energetically, primarily along the railroad and also for a distance of about a hundred miles south of the railroad. To the left, in a big triangle, which was made by three cities -- I believe they were Barnaul, Kamen, and Stavropol -- was a big army of partisans which was divided in four corps and commanded by a man named Mamontov.

The worst part of it was that bands of partisans, constantly attacking us, blocked our way. Some of these groups, such as that led by the partisan leader Shchetinkin, for instance, comprised as many as forty thousand men. Shchetinkin was not actually a Bolshevik, because he had a rather unusual slogan. I don't remember it exactly, but it was something like, "For the Tsar, and against the Whites." [P. E. Shchetinkin (1885-1927), stated by the Large Soviet Encyclopedia to have been closely connected with the Communists.] The commander of another partisan regiment, if you may call it that, was a former priest named Rogov, who actually dressed in priestly vestments

Shebeko: while at the head of his troops.

Almost every day we had to fight our way through. And all the while, the Fifth Red Army was approaching close to the gap.

The Third Army, the one I was in, was the most vulnerable to those attacks, as it was closer to them than any other army. It suffered considerably from those attacks, as many men were killed, wounded or taken prisoner.

However, one of the main reasons why the armies melted away was that typhus raged through the ranks. It took a large toll among our men. I would say that about half of the army was ill with it. The only thing that saved most of us was the cold weather. The germs didn't fare very well. Several months later, when we reached Chita, some of the sick were placed in a hospital and there began to die like flies. So during the retreat although many typhus victims recovered because of the cold, as many others died from the cold or were frozen. For instance, I once saw a soldier sitting on a bank, with his woollen shoes off, cutting off his frozen toes with a pair of shears. He knew that if he didn't operate on himself, he would have gangrene. We had no medical service whatsoever at this time, and there were

Shebeko: no medical supplies of any sort.

Now as an example of how the partisans operated, I should like to describe an episode which happened when we came to the station Sizovo, primarily because it was there that we had our first encounter with partisans.

We came to Sizovo late in the evening. After the long march the men were tired, and the expectation of rest was uppermost in everyone's mind. Because we had left the pursuing Reds far behind, no one was particularly afraid of any surprise, and no precautions were observed. My company was quartered next to the house occupied by General Sakharov and his division staff. When I entered the hut assigned to us, I found the room jam-packed with sleeping men. Far in the corner I spied a narrow bench about four feet long and a foot wide. To get there I had to walk over the bodies of snoring soldiers. Somehow I managed to lie face down on the bench. Even in this uncomfortable position I soon fell asleep.

I was awakened by the sound of gunfire outside. The men rushed madly toward the door. I heard someone call my name. It was my friend Vitaly. "Stay close to me!" he said.

Shebeko: Those were his last words, for when we emerged from the door there was a blast from a shotgun, and Vitaly slumped into my arms, dead. On the street there was utter confusion. General Sakharov was barking out orders to retreat to the outskirts of the village.

Somehow my company was separated from the rest. Obeying his order, we started toward the village outskirts. We came to a thick growth of reeds. Working our way through, we finally came to a lake, and there on the ice we saw a considerable number of horses harnessed to sleighs. Unquestionably this was the transportation used by the partisans. In our situation horses were always welcome. The two men left behind to look after the horses were quickly captured.

Suddenly there was a new burst of firing from the direction of the village, and soon we heard the sound of running feet. The partisans were returning for their horses. The surprise they got was no less than the one they had given us. Those who were not killed or captured escaped into the thick brush, destined to return to where they came from on foot.

Gathering our loot, we started back toward the village. However, our ordeal was not over. Our

Shebeko: soldiers in the village, seeing a strange procession approaching from the wrong direction, opened fire on us. It was some time before the situation was clarified.

Later in the day I witnessed the execution of two of the partisans. Remembering my dead friend, I had no pity for them.

After the action at Sizovo, it was decided that we would send our dead to the city of Novonikolaevsk for burial. Since Vitaly had been my friend, I was given permission to go there with his body and the bodies of several soldiers.

When we arrived in Novonikolaevsk I found utter confusion there. At the station I saw boxcars filled with corpses: men, women, and children, refugees who were trying to go along the railroad during the retreat. They were unprotected from the elements. Many had died of typhus, but not even those who were well could survive that terrible cold. The Czechs, at the time, practically owned the railroad, and they themselves were trying to work their way east and therefore they stopped all the echelons which were going from Omsk toward the east. Consequently, this resulted in hunger and long delays on the railroad without fuel for locomotives, and thousands of boxcars filled with

Shebeko: refugees were captured by the Reds.

Also in the city of Novonikolaevsk I saw bands of our soldiers walking aimlessly on the sidewalks. They did not have any guns and they did not resemble soldiers at all. There I met by chance a good friend of mine, who was attached to the First Army in an artillery division, and he told me horrifying stories about what was happening there. He said that the First Army was absolutely in a state of disorganization, primarily due to skillful propaganda which the Reds were conducting, and mostly because of the dissension in the high command. For instance, General Voitsekhovskii, who was the commander of this army, was arrested by, I think, Colonel Ivakov, but the intervention of Polish troops, who were there at that time, saved him. Ivakov, by the way, was executed the next day. The new commander of the whole army, General Sakharov, was arrested by General Pepeliaev, and only the intervention of Admiral Kolchak set him free.

Under these conditions a considerable number of soldiers deserted to the Reds. Some of them formed their own bands, which attacked those who still remained more or less faithful, so disorganization was complete, and this officer friend of mine just didn't know what

Shebeko: to do. I persuaded him to come with me.

The day I was in Novonikolaevsk it became known that the town was to be abandoned. The commandant of the city, afraid that crowds would break into the warehouses where they kept alcohol, and start a riot, ordered the ice broken on the river Ob and all the alcohol, barrels and barrels of it, poured into the river. However, this was a mistake, because the alcohol floated on top of the water and we saw thousands of the city's inhabitants going toward the river with kettles and bottles, pans and jugs, scooping the alcohol out of the water. Of course, everyone was drunk, and to see the whole population in that condition was very depressing too.

Next morning we had difficulty finding a priest to bury my friend, and when we did find one, he wasn't very anxious to perform the services, so we had to drag him by his cassock to a cemetery. It was impossible to dig graves because the ground was frozen and we needed dynamite to break it. However, there were quite a few graves opened already, in which the corpses had been thrown like pieces of wood, so we arranged these bodies in more or less good order, placed the coffin on top of them, filled the grave

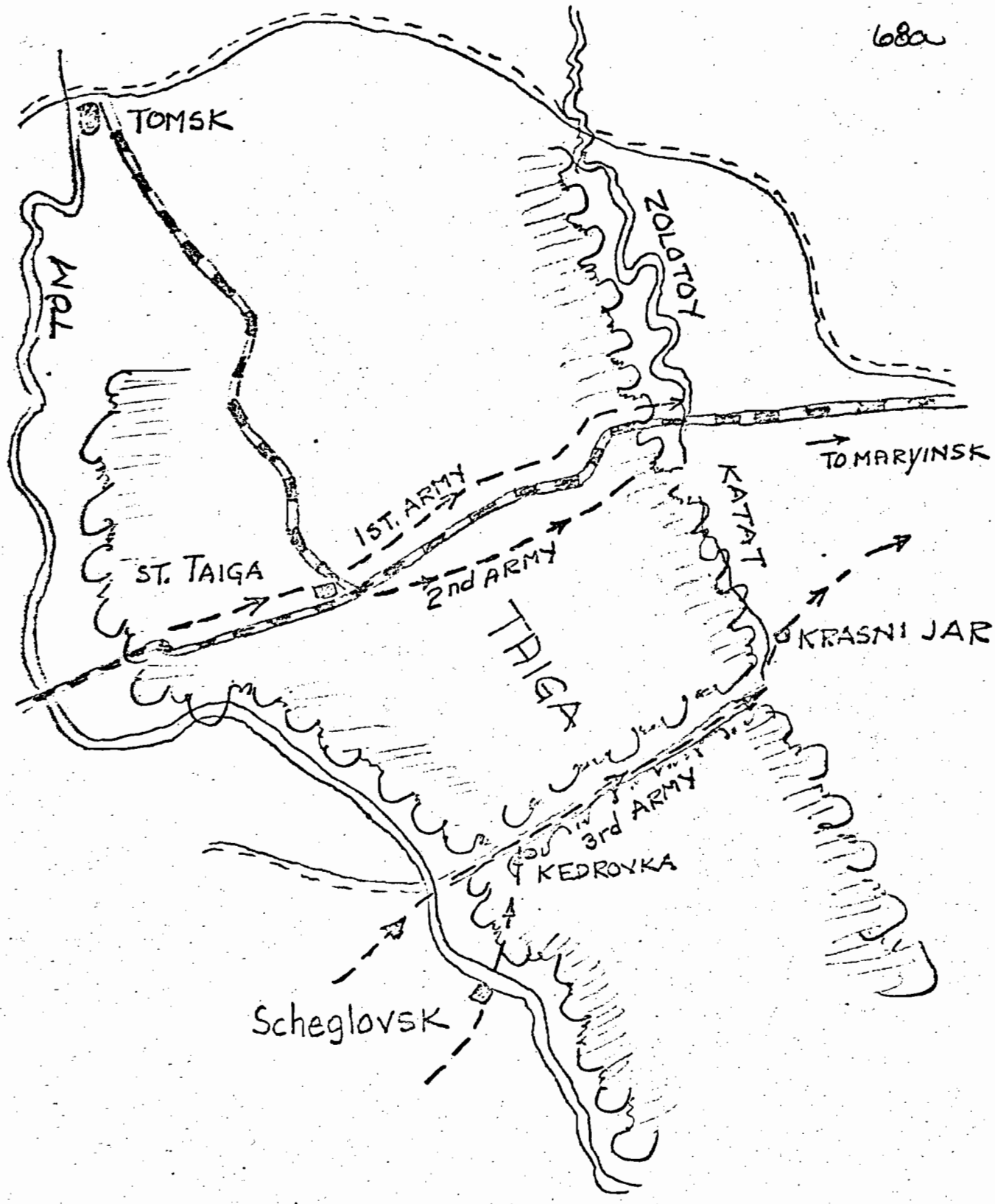
Shebeko: with snow and chunks of ice and let the priest go.

I had been eager to come to Novonikolaevsk because we had been out of towns for such a long time. But I was so despressed that I left that very same night with the other officer and my orderly.

In trying to catch up with our division,we had to go through a region frequented by partisans. We were quite fortunate not to meet anyone until we came to a village where we wished to spend the night. Thinking that the safest place would be the priest's house, we stopped there. However, in the dead of the night the wife of the priest knocked on our door, and whispered, "You had better leave right away! Rogov is here!"

And she was his wife. So that house which we had thought to be a safe one was actually the residence of the leader of the guerilla forces! Naturally, we did not delay, but saddled our horses and went on our way.

Now the armies were rapidly approaching a taiga [forest], the Shcheglovskaia taiga. [See map.] This taiga stretches for several hundred miles perpendicular to the railroad. It begins in the Altai region and then goes down to the south and is about sixty or seventy miles wide. Our map showed no roads going across it except paths used by hunters. However, later they


TOMSK
W.R.R.
ZOLOTOY
TO MARYINSK
1ST. ARMY
2nd ARMY
ST. TAIGA
KATAT
TAIGA
KRASNI JAR
3rd ARMY
KEDROVKA
Scheglovsk

1" = 20 m/s.

Siberian Village - a painting by Safonov

Shebeko: discovered that there was an old road there, which had been built during the time of Catherine the Great, and now was used only occasionally by peasants. And also another road was discovered to the north. All the baggage trains were moving ahead of the regular army, and they entered the taiga first.

Meantime the army was constantly involved in engagements with the partisans during the retreat. The partisans attacked almost every day. Hardly a day passed when we did not come to a village which was occupied by them, so we had to keep pushing them out. And during this period we lost considerable numbers of men. The army was melting away at the rate of a thousand men a day.

Finally we came to a big village called Shcheglovsk. At this time we received information that the First Army, which had been retreating along the railroad, had ceased to exist, that the Reds were pushing their way to the east and that they were already a considerable distance ahead of us in that direction. Our delay before the taiga, because of the narrowness of the road, allowed the regular Red Army to come almost on our heels, so that we were pressed from behind by the regular troops and on the sides by the partisans. As a matter of fact, one

Shebeko: group of the regular Soviet Army was pushing on the other side to close the exit from the taiga.

When we came to Shcheglovsk we were attacked by the partisan Rogov. They had two field guns and opened fire, so we spread into battle formation and started to move ahead toward the village. Many of our men were wounded. To be wounded was practically a death sentence. We finally succeeded in driving them out of the village, and there we saw a terrible sight. The night before, one of our companies from the Ural'skii division, I believe, quartered in this village, had been suddenly attacked at night and massacred practically to a man. About a hundred officers alone were killed in that fight. The populace itself was terrorized, and when we came there they met us with open arms. They told us that Rogov himself had been in this village, that he rode clothed in priest's vestments and carried in his hand a chalice and cross.

The next morning we started for the taiga. When we entered the taiga, it was like entering a big tunnel. The forest was so dense we couldn't see the sky at all. The big trees formed walls on both sides, and the snow was so deep on either side of the road that it was almost impossible to turn either to the right or to the

Shebeko: left. We moved very slowly because of the baggage trains which were still delayed up ahead. Any breakage of harness would sometimes stop the movement of the column for hours.

Meantime, the Reds had already entered the taiga and we heard the firing of the Ural'skii division assigned to defend our rear. That division was practically wiped out. And the firing was coming closer and closer and there we stood, unable to do anything. The order was given to cut all the harness, for everyone who could to mount on the horses -- although almost half were without saddles -- and for those who did not have horses to go on foot.

The Volga cavalry regiment was given this assignment and made a good job of it. I had a nice sleigh and a trunk in which I had a collection of photographs. They came to my sleigh and cut the harness. So I opened the trunk, took out the few photographs which you see here, and then closed the trunk and left it there in the snow.

After that we could move freely. However, we still had to fight our way through a forest of sleighs and abandoned artillery. In one place we had to jump over boxes of burning and exploding cartridges. Of course, when a cartridge explodes outside of a gun, it cannot do

Shebeko: much harm, but even so, when it hits, it hits hard. In some places the road was sunk, forming big holes into which we had to crawl down and then up again, while the Reds were pressing on us. I read an account by a Soviet writer which said the taiga was the graveyard for the Third Army, and in effect that is exactly what it was. Thousands of horses were left there, so tired that they couldn't move. Some of them we shot, while others fell down and died. They say the Reds spent two weeks in clearing up the taiga after our passage.

It took us about five days to travel seventy or eighty miles. There were three or four small villages inside the taiga, but I cannot imagine how people ever lived in that place, because in the summertime the taiga was practically impossible. Although the snow melted, there was not enough sun, not enough warmth to melt the soil. The ground was boggy and there were billions and billions of small mosquitoes. You breathed them into your lungs and they were so small that not even a fine net was any protection.

To make matters worse during this five day period, part of the Second Army lost its way and in the middle of the taiga decided to follow another road. We finally met somewhere in the middle near the village Romanovka.

Shebeko: Then there was still more congestion and everyone was absolutely exhausted. I can still see those drawn faces and sunken eyes -- men moving like the living dead through that taiga. I understand that our high command cherished hopes that on the line of the taiga we would be able to stop the Reds. However, betrayal by the First Army killed all those hopes. They had abandoned the fight and the Reds began an encircling movement.

I recall an incident that happened to me one night. I was riding on my horse and apparently fell asleep. Suddenly I woke up and found myself lying in the snow with the horse standing next to me. I tried to remount, but instead of a saddle I had only a blanket over the horse, and with my heavy woollen coat and in the deep snow I simply couldn't manage it. The horse apparently got tired of waiting and moved away. I tried to stop him, but every time I approached, he would move a little farther. There was no one else around, so I had to walk all night that way. I must have walked between twenty and thirty miles, with the horse always only a few paces in front of me. Finally, early in the morning, I reached the next village and found my regiment there and all ready to move out. And there I was, tired

Shebeko: out, but I had to follow them.

The army finally reached a place on the other side of the taiga which was called Krasnyi Iar. [See map.] We didn't have a chance to get a good rest at Krasnyi Iar because of reports that the Reds had already encircled us. The order was given for all the armies to assemble at the railroad at Krasnoiarsk.

Beyond Krasnyi Iar my orderly obtained a nice sleigh somewhere, the seats of which were embroidered with small beads of various colors, and he also obtained somewhere a couple of very nice horses, so for a while I rode more or less in comfort.

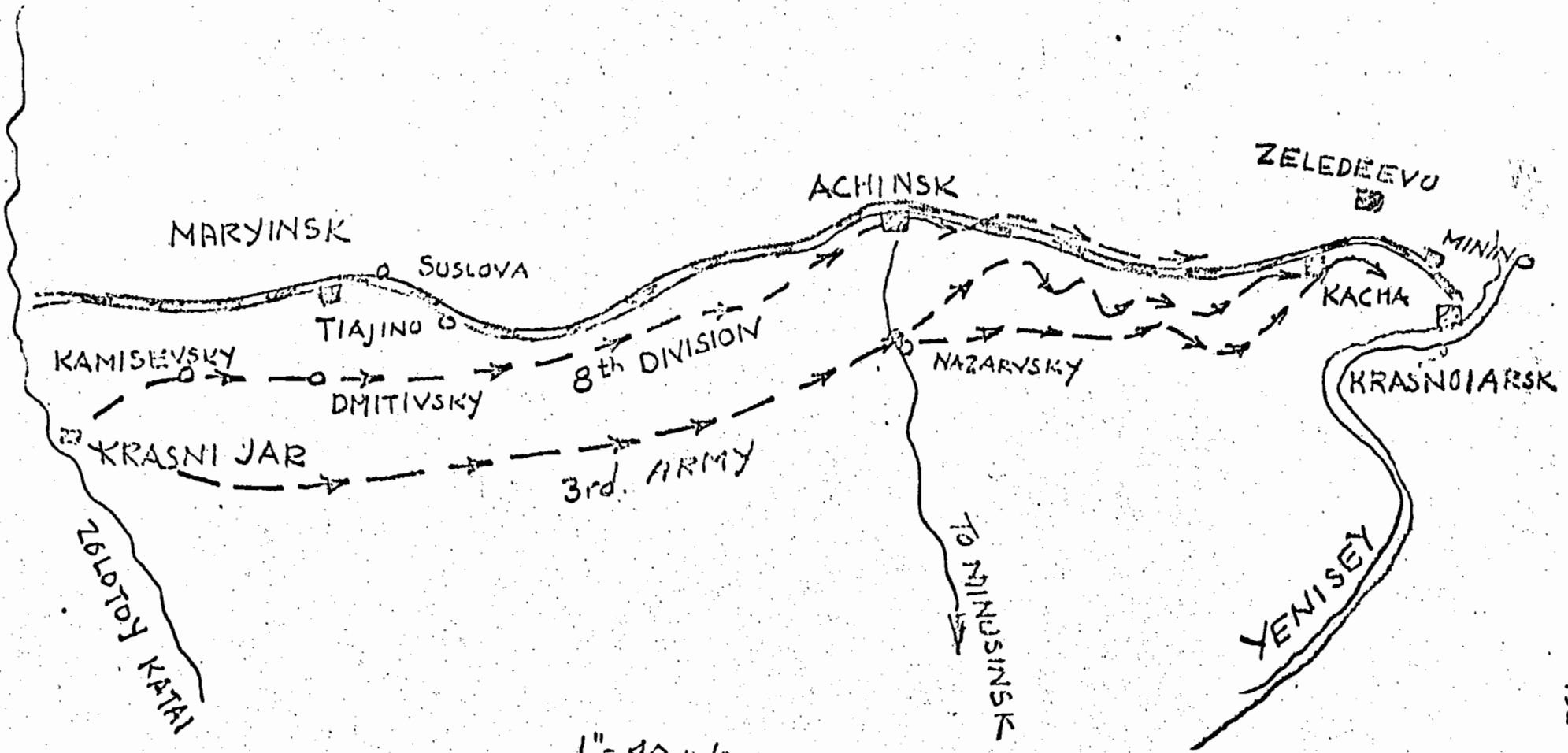
When we came to the railroad I stopped at a small station. When I entered I found myself among illustrious company. There was the minister of transportation, the minister of finance, the minister of education, and several other high dignitaries of the former Kolchak government. There they were much like anyone else, and I remember they were eating baked potatoes.

While we were there the sound of firing was heard outside and panic ensued. Stumbling over each other, we all rushed for the door. I ran to my sleigh. My orderly was already there absolutely terrified. The firing was still going on and bullets whistled over our heads. As

Shebeko: soon as I jumped into my sleigh, Alimkaev, my orderly, urged the horses on and they started running at full speed. But apparently he didn't see where he was going because he headed toward the fence. The fence was one of those used to keep cattle in -- posts with a couple of long pieces of wood laid across. When the horses came to that fence they jumped over it, the harness broke, and the horses and my orderly, who was sitting on horseback, disappeared, leaving me behind with my sleigh in front of that fence. Fortunately he noticed my absence and returned to look for me. When he found me we mounted the horses and left the sleigh there.

I was riding along the railroad, in the general direction of Krasnoiarsk [see map] when I saw an officer standing before me on the road with a revolver. As I approached he stopped me, aimed his revolver at me, and said, "Get off that horse!" To get off and lose the horse would be the same as losing my life, so I decided not to pay any attention. After I rode by, I turned around and saw him threatening another officer who was on a horse.

The whole situation was so fluid by now that I didn't know where my company was; by evening I came to


MARYINSK
SUSLOVA
TIAJINO
ACHINSK
ZELEDEEVO
MININO
KACHA
KAMISEVSKY
DMITIVSKY
8th DIVISION
NAZARVSKY
KRASNOIARSK
KRASNI JAR
3rd. ARMY
ZOLOTOY KATAI
TO MINUSINSK
YENISEY
1" = 40 m/s

Shebeko: a station called Minino, and there I found my company.

It was on Christmas Eve when our army finally reached Krasnoiarsk, only to find that it had been occupied by the Reds [6 January 1920]. The garrison there had mutinied, and General Zinoviev went over to the side of the Reds and actually sent an ultimatum to General Kappel' to surrender. An attempt was made to break through, and the night before our troops, primarily of the Izhevskii and Kamskii divisions, had attacked the city. Under ordinary circumstances we could have captured it easily, but the men were so completely exhausted that the attack was rather indecisive, and we were repulsed.

When we came to the station Minino there was complete disorder. Our army was carrying quite a lot of gold and silver on a special train, and when it reached Krasnoiarsk and found out that the train could not go through, the gold was loaded on sleighs. Part of the First Army was still there, but there were no officers, and the Red commissars walked around among our soldiers spreading their propaganda. And then everyone realized that this gold was going to be captured by the Reds, so an order was issued to take as much as possible. Each soldier loaded his saddlebags with sacks of silver

Shebeko: and gold. Naturally it was lost very shortly after, but this shows how disorganized everything was and how the Reds were intermingled with our troops, persuading our soldiers to abandon the White army and to join them.

Pierce: Did very many leave in response to that appeal?

Shebeko: Quite a few. It is only my guess, but I would say that about half the army was either captured or surrendered there. I remember passing an artillery officer sitting on a sleigh; he was ready to surrender. I tried to talk him out of it, but he wouldn't listen. He said simply, "Everything is lost; what's the use?"

Meantime the Soviet Fifth Army and also the partisans under Shchetinkin (this was the region where Shchetinkin was operating) were pressing on all sides. Finally the decision was made for all who were left to go along the river Enisei up to the river Kan and then proceed to the city of Kansk. We had to do this with all possible speed because unless we reached Kansk in time, it would already be occupied by the regular Red troops.

The Reds, meanwhile, were already advancing toward Kansk. It was Christmas night. I remember there was a full moon, making the night bright. We were passing through the foothills of higher hills; the Reds had occupied those hills and constantly fired at us.

Shebeko: Fortunately we were out of the range of their bullets. Soon we came to a forest, made our way through it, and by morning we reached the river Kan.

The river Kan is a swift river which has three or four rapids, and it flows in a rather deep canyon. When we came to the Kan we saw a tremendous stand of timber -- pines -- high and straight and big in diameter. It would have been an inspiring sight for an artist, but it was a rather frightening sight for us. The banks were very high and were covered with ice. In order to get to the river we had to slide down that slippery ice. We pushed the horses until they slipped down into the river, and we had to lower the sleighs with the wounded by ropes.

The march toward Kansk was probably the most terrible part of the whole retreat. The snow was very deep and we were ordered to abandon all sleighs and to mount the horses with the exception, of course, of the wounded and the sick. The care given to the wounded and sick was truly touching. Soldiers actually risked their lives all the time in order to save the wounded. We were forced to abandon some of the wounded in the taiga, but we certainly did everything possible to take as many as we could.

Shebeko: As we were passing over the river we heard someone say that the ice had broken and that there was water on the river. This proved to be untrue. The ice had not broken; it was simply the surface water, and it had not frozen.

The length of this river was about a hundred miles and it took us about four days to travel that distance. There was absolutely no place to rest; there was no village to s top at on the way. I don't think that a single man came outwithout having his feet or his nose or ears frozen. Wherever we had to stop, the sleighs carrying our wounded would freeze to the ice and we would have to pry them loose. Most of the wounded, of course, did not survive. They froze to death.

On the fourth day we finally came to a large village -- Atamanskaia. As we approached the village we heard the sound of firing coming from it. Presumably there were partisans there. We discovered t hat all our guns were practically covered with ice. We couldn't even open the locks. We had to make piles of branches and set fires so that we could thaw the guns before we were able to go ahead. If there were any Reds there we didn't see them at all. We never did find out who did the firing.

Shebeko: We rested there for only a short while -- not for more than four or five hours; just the time needed to feed our horses. There were about five thousand left.

After the Kan the road was easier, and in order to gain time we moved fast. The whole trip before we reached Kansk took about seven days. I remember that in those seven days I didn't sleep a wink. Some soldiers somehow slept while walking. Each man rested one hand on the shoulder of the man in front and walked mechanically.

By the time we reached Kansk the army was in a deplorable state. The men were hungry and absolutely exhausted. The Reds had come to Kansk before us, but fortunately they had been driven out by the Izhevskii cavalry division, which had approached that village from a different direction, attacked the Reds, and apparently caught them by surprise. The dead were strewn everywhere. It was a terrible sight. Some were hanging on fences over which they had tried to escape when they were cut down by the sabers of the cavalrymen. We counted at least a thousand corpses lying there on the streets. In that cold, of course, a bad wound meant death.

The troops that had been driven out of the town were of the Siberian Soviet Regiment (Sibirskii Sovetskii

Shebeko: polk), part of the regular Fifth Soviet Army. We had been badly misinformed about their movements. There was absolutely no connection between the staffs of the different armies. No one knew where the others were. As a matter of fact, an order had been given by the commander of the army for our Third Army to stop at a certain place and to delay the advance of the Red troops. This particular order did not reach us, and it is a good thing it didn't, because if it had, and if we had stopped at that particular place, we would have been encircled and the Reds would have been far to the east of us. It was absolutely impossible to make a stand anywhere along the route because of the presence of all the baggage trains and the enormous number of the wounded and sick. Besides, we had lost practically all our artillery and practically all of our ammunition. Each soldier had only a few cartridges left, and although the army was still intact, the men were so exhausted that it would have been disastrous if we had met with fresh troops. General Sakharov, the commander of our armies, a rather activistic man, didn't know at this time the situation which existed in the various armies.

Pierce: In his writings in later years he was very critical of the Czechs.

Shebeko: Oh, the Czechs behaved very badly. They had their garrison in Tomsk, and when they received orders to move east, they descended on that Siberian railroad and practically stopped all movement. The only trains moving were the Czech trains, and because of that thousands on other trains were captured by the Reds, and most of the refugees, women, children, civilians, were cut off. Most of them died of cold and hunger. As a matter of fact, they later went so far as to take the train in which Kolchak was riding. They cut his car from the train and sent it to a spur track. And that was when he was given over to the Political Center in Irkutsk.

The cold at this time was terrific. The temperature dropped below fifty degrees. The villages could not accomodate the 60,000 or 70,000 who were retreating by that particular road. I myself was never able to get into a hut. We usually made a fire and slept around it. During sleep we unconsciously moved toward the fire, andmany a trouser and coat were scorched.

Pierce: What did you have for food?

Shebeko: We lived off the country. Sometimes we ate very well; whenever we came to a prosperous village we would really have a feast. Other times we practically starved, and

Shebeko: ate only the famous zavorukha. We had some flour and some sugar. We would mix flour and snow in a mess kit, put it over the fire to melt the snow until it became like mush. We then would sprinkle it with sugar and eat it. If I were to eat that now my stomach would probably turn over, but then we were glad to have that at least. For a long time it was almost our only food.

Pierce: What was the attitude of the villagers along the way? It must have seemed as if a swarm of locusts was descending upon them.

Shebeko: Well, yes, but they couldn't say anything. Of course we paid them -- with worthless money -- but at least we didn't rob them intentionally. Sometimes we paid them with IOU's. And, naturally, we had to confiscate horses; by the time we went through and after us the Red Army passed through, those villages were impoverished. Still, we felt that the sentiments of the people were against the Bolsheviks. However, after we had passed through, I wouldn't be surprised if they all became Bolsheviks because we had impoverished them.

The route we followed led us, prior to coming to Irkutsk, through sparsely populated regions, or regions with villages which were extremely poor. The inhabitants

Shebeko: of those villages were primarily emigrés from the Ukraine. They couldn't adapt themselves to the rigors of the Siberian winter and theirs were the poorest villages in the whole of Siberia. The pioneer Siberians were, on the whole, wealthy people.

In Kansk I stopped at the place of a rich Jewish merchant. He was a very fine man. He took pity on me, seeing my torn coat, and gave me a good civilian coat which was lined with very soft warm fur. That coat was the envy of all our division and it certainly served me well. By the time we reached Chita, there was not much left of it.

After leaving Kansk we came to a big village called Aleksandrovskoe, which stretched out for more than a mile. There we had our first real rest and were able to care for our wounded and sick. Quite a number were still ill with typhus, etcetera.

After this rest we proceeded toward Nizhne-Udinsk. The expectations were that the Reds would stop us at Nizhne-Udinsk; that was where they were hoping at least to disarm our army. However, on January 21 we had a fight near the station Uk in which the Reds were beaten and forced to retreat. When we came to Nizhne-Udinsk the town surrendered without a fight. That was on January

Shebeko: 24, and the next day, January 25, Kappel' died. Just before his death he was led out supported on either side, and said goodbye to some troops who happened to be there at that time.

Meantime, the Reds fortified Zima, in the Cheremkhovskie Kopy coal-mine region [where workers rebelled 20 December 1920, N.S.] to which they sent quite a large detachment, some four thousand men, under the command of Comrade Nesterov. The Czechs, who were retreating at that time, allowed the detachment to travel by train.

At Zima, Nesterov and his men built good fortifications under the circumstances. That is, they dug trenches and sprinkled the snow with water; the result was an ice fortress, hard as concrete.

Our troops reached Zima on the 30th of January and a prolonged and stubborn fight took place. Eventually the men under General Verzhbitskii turned the left flank of the Reds and the Reds began to retreat. Meantime, the appearance of the Czechs in their rear caused panic among the Reds. Nesterov himself and a thousand of his men were captured by the Czechs and disarmed. The rest either escaped or were killed. When we arrived at this place about a day later, we found a picture much

Shebeko: like that which we saw at Kansk. The trenches which they had dug in anticipation of our coming were filled to the very top with the dead. The bodies were frozen, so we actually marched over them. I don't know how many people were killed there, but I would say the loss was considerable.

I recall one incident when we were on march between Zima and Irkutsk. No sooner had we left a village in which four of our wounded were left to be picked up later by the baggage trains, when it was occupied by the Reds. We were ordered to turn back and drive them out. We lost quite a few men, but we drove them out.

The soldiers went into the huts to drink milk, and I hung my gun on my shoulder and walked along the street. I turned a corner and came upon a wounded Red soldier lying there before me on the street. He had on a black fur cap and diagonally across it there was a wide red ribbon. He was lying there pointing his gun towards me. I stopped in my tracks. I was utterly defenseless because my gun was behind me, and there he was, carefully aiming at me. I thought that was the end of my days because I was no more than twenty feet from him. Suddenly there was a crash and he slumped. One of our soldiers who was in the hut had seen my predicament from

Shebeko: the window. He broke the window and shot him.

We decided to rest in that village before moving on, when firing broke out on the outskirts. We rushed towards the sound and saw a group marching toward the village. They were carrying a Red flag. Of course we opened fire, while they spread in a line and started to attack the village. However, that was the Kazan division, and the flag which they had was red and green, but in the distance it looked as if it were red. Anyway, we saw red! This fight went on for at least fifteen minutes before finally, I don't know how, their identity was discovered. There were but few casualties, since there was quite a distance between us. The same thing happened later at Borzia with the Orenburg Cossacks. During regular warfare such occurrences are rare because there is a rear, but we could expect attack from any side.

From Zima our march toward Irkutsk was unobstructed. Irkutsk had been taken by the Reds, and Kolchak was in their hands, betrayed by the Czechs. We were making forced marches in order to save him. When we came to Irkutsk the Reds evacuated the city but they grouped their troops on the left bank of the Angara and also near the village Innokent'evskaia. We came to Irkutsk about the 6th of February, but before we could enter the

Shebeko: city Kolchak was shot [February 7, 1920]. This was a maneuver on the part of the Reds to prevent our troops from attacking Irkutsk. And they were not far off in their idea because if we had known that Kolchak was still alive in Irkutsk, the city would no doubt have been attacked and taken, because it was rather poorly defended.

After the White armies learned that Kolchak had been executed, there was no incentive to attack and they by-passed the city. We came to Innokent'evskaia, and there we met Red troops. We had a short fight and captured a couple of their field guns and a considerable amount of ammunition and some baggage trains. Next day we crossed the river Angara; the Reds pulled out.

The crossing of the Angara was difficult because being a swift river, it does freeze in sharp points, like waves; so although it is not wide, the poor horses could hardly walk across it. They fell and cut their sides on the razor-sharp ice, and quite a few men cut themselves too. If a man fell he would cut his hands trying to break his fall. Although the distance we had to travel was very short, maybe five or six hundred feet, it was extremely difficult. We couldn't bring the sleighs over that river at all, and had to abandon them.

Shebeko: When we came to Lake Baikal the weather was mild, and although the lake was covered with ice, it wasn't thick enough. The peasants around there advised us not to try to cross it, and none would volunteer to act as a guide.

We tried to go around the rim of the lake. Lake Baikal is like a crater, surrounded by jagged mountains, and we decided to go through those mountains. We sent a whole cavalry regiment to explore the route and chop away the underbrush in order to clear the way, but they came back saying that the brush was too thick, and that it just couldn't be done.

We had no choice but to cross the icy lake. Luckily that night there was a heavy frost, and the ice thickened considerably, to about two feet.

At its narrowest point the lake is forty miles wide, but the peasants told us that the best place to cross would be farther north, near the small village of Goloustnaia, where the lake is about forty-five miles wide. During the winter the ice on Lake Baikal cracks, and sometimes not just a single crack, but all around, so that a chunk of ice may be floating free in the water. For some reason this was more apt to occur in that narrowest place. We took the advice of the peasants and

Shebeko: moved toward Goloustnaia.

During the march we had unshod all our horses. When a shod horse walks on snow the snow collects on the hooves and when it freezes forms a ball there, and the horse cannot walk. On an unshod horse it is easy to clean the snow off. Now that we were planning to cross over the ice our horses needed shoes. In fact, all the horses which belonged to the peasants had shoes with long sharp spikes to prevent slipping.

There were only two blacksmiths in the village and although they worked all night they could put shoes on only a few horses.

We started across the lake early in the morning [ca. 11 February 1920]. The ice was so smooth and slippery that as soon as my horse stepped out on it, it slipped, fell, and hurt its leg. There was nothing left for me but to walk. At first I thought I would have to shoot the horse, but then I figured that it wasn't very far from the shore and some peasants might pick it up. As the day went on, that whole route was covered with dead horses. Horses whose legs were broken had to be shot.

As we made our way, once in a while we would hear a tremendous explosion. That would be the ice cracking,

Shebeko: sometimes for half a mile or more. There would be a rather wide crack, maybe five or ten feet, and then the water would come up and churn and the crack would come together. We knew of this and we had long boards with us, so that when the ice cracked we could throw a board over the crack and walk across. Once I saw a horse and sleigh go through one of those cracks. The driver jumped out, but we were unable to save the horse.

Worst of all was the wind. The wind there, called barguzin, comes in terrific gusts. It blows so hard it is impossible to walk. You have to lie down and the wind carries you over the slippery ice while you maneuver in order to find a patch of snow which may serve as a brake. Of course those of us who happened to be at the head of the column had the most difficult time because we slid on the ice. By the time the rest of the army came along the road was already more or less compact and the ice, instead of being smooth and slick, was already beaten or ground up.

Several years ago in Ripley's "Believe it or Not" there was a most horrible description of the crossing of Lake Baikal. Ripley painted too dark a picture. Compared to what we had had to endure before, especially

Shebeko: on the march along the river Kan, the crossing of Lake Baikal was actually not too bad. Previously we had faced extremely cold weather, sometimes we were without roads, moving through deep snow--perhaps only by compass--and moving very slowly; that is where so many froze to death. But over Lake Baikal we moved fast.

It took us all day and all night to travel the forty-five miles across the lake. We had no information about what was going on on the other side. It had been rumored among the peasants on the western side of Baikal that Mysovaia, on the other side, was occupied by Red partisans. However, when we finally got across we were pleasantly surprised when we were met by Japanese soldiers. At that time all of Transbaikalia was occupied by the Japanese. They didn't occupy all of the railway east; they were only in spots, but as apparently the Reds didn't want to start a conflict with them, it was enough to have small detachments of Japanese to occupy places. At this time there was already talk of the Japanese evacuating Primor'e. The United States, I think, was pressing rather hard on the Japanese to move out. The Reds knew this and didn't want to aggravate the situation. In Mysovaia there was a small detachment of

Shebeko: Japanese, maybe ten or fifteen men in all.

That night in Mysovaia was the first good rest I had had in months. When I awoke in the morning my orderly called me and said, "See who is there!" I looked out the window and there was my horse! It had walked all night, and its ankle was badly swollen. I couldn't take the horse because it was so lame, but I gave it to a peasant.

TRANSBAIKALIA

Shebeko: We hoped to have a good rest in Mysovaia, but unfortunately, new men were moving in all the time, so they gave us only a night to spend there and the next morning we were moved out in the direction of Verkhneudinsk. The trip was quite uneventful, except that we were constantly sniped at by partisans. That particular region around Lake Baikal is quite mountainous, and as we moved through the valley, the partisans fired at us from behind boulders and we couldn't do a thing. But fortunately we didn't have too many casualties.

In Verkhneudinsk, we were supposed to be put on trains and moved to Chita. However, the trains were not yet ready, and my regiment stopped at a certain village for several days. Meantime, the Reds had occupied the neighboring village of Mukhino, and they were constantly--I wouldn't say attacking us--but they were harassing us by coming close and opening up fire, and then retreating. Consequently, we had to send our scouts at least two or

Shebeko: three miles outside of the village to watch them. On one occasion I was with five men about five miles out. It was already night and suddenly we saw hundreds of eyes around us. Wolves! Of course the horses were the first to sense them and they started to stomp and refused to go forward. Then we saw that those eyes were making a circle; they were all around us. We fired a couple of shots at them, but with no effect.

All at once the horses were not able to stand any more. They turned and started to gallop back. We couldn't stop them, and the whole pack of wolves ran after us. They moved silently, but looking back we could see those eyes following, following. Fortunately we reached the village without any mishap. That was the first time I had such a close encounter with wolves, although we saw them all the time while we were moving. They followed us because of the many horses that were abandoned and left lying dead on the road. They remained at a considerable distance, but they could be seen on the horizon. Whenever there was a gap between the men, they would swoop down on the horses and tear them apart. In the summer the wolves, cowardly by nature, avoided men, but in the wintertime when they were desperately hungry they became dangerously bold.

**Shebeko:** It was decided that the Reds would have to be driven out of Mukhino. My regiment was sent there to accomplish this. The best time to attack a village is early in the morning when the men are still half asleep. We started in the middle of the night and just before daybreak we came to the village. We spread in line and started the attack. Apparently the Reds had been warned because we didn't take them by surprise. They opened up a terrific fire; the bullets whistled all over, burying themselves in the snow. However, we broke into the village without losing any men and drove the Reds out. However, when we moved out of the village, they moved right back again, so nothing was gained.

**Pierce:** These people were Siberians?

**Shebeko:** Yes. I think they belonged to the partisan group of Karataev -- Karataev and another leader. There were several partisan groups operating in Transbaikalia. In Primor'e there was Triapitsyn, and, I think, Nikolaev; in Transbaikalia there was Karataev and near the Amur was Boiko. They were usually large and were getting bolder and bolder all the time. We actually had to break through a ring of the partisans.

Eventually trains were brought in, and we were taken to Chita. There were a couple of incidents on

Shebeko: the roads; the tracks were blown up by the partisans and had to be repaired.

When we arrived in Chita [in late February 1920?] we were practically in shreds and tatters, hardly resembling an army. You have seen pictures of the French troops retreating from Moscow; that's about how we looked. Meanwhile in Chita the officers wore good clean uniforms, and the soldiers were nicely dressed. On the second day after our arrival we decided to have a parade on a big square in front of the church, and that was rather amusing because there we were in our woollen boots full of holes, pieces of straw sticking out. By the time we had assembled in the square it was noon. The sun was shining, and it was an exceptionally warm day. The snow began to melt, and soon the whole square had turned into a lake. We had to march through water in our woollen shoes. Finally we were provided with some sort of outfits -- mostly English coats and other things on hand in Chita -- and material which we could take to tailors to have made into uniforms.

In Chita we began to lose many of our people to typhus. For some reason fewer of those afflicted died while we were on the march than when they could finally be cared for in a hospital.

Shebeko: Chita was under Ataman Semenov, and there were many unpleasantnesses between his soldiers and ours. I met Semenov several times. Once we were drilling in the woods near Chita, when Semenov appeared with his aide-de-camp and a few mounted soldiers. He stopped and addressed my company, which was composed mostly of Tatars.

"How are you?" he asked. But when they saw him they practically rebelled.

"Kill him," they yelled.

I was afraid there would be trouble, but Semenov left and that was an end to it.

I knew Semenov's aide-de-camp, who was an extremely good-looking man. He fell in love with one of Semenov's mistresses at Chita, and when Semenov found out, the aide-de-camp simply disappeared. Everybody knew what had happened to him. Of course, Semenov had certain persons around him who were in actuality criminals. I saw one of them. His name was Sipaiua, as I recall, and just by the look of the man I knew that he was insane; his cold grey eyes stared out of an unsmiling face. And the number of people this man killed could be counted in hundreds. Later, I believe, he was captured by the Bolsheviks and executed. There were others of the same type: Ungern, for example. But Semenov was quite sane. And there was

Courtmartialed

Shebeko: Kalmykov, although I don't know much about him, and others who made bad names for themselves. Such people brought immeasurable harm to the cause. They did more to create Bolshevism than anybody else.

Pierce: And Annenkov?

Shebeko: I don't know much about Annenkov. A friend of mine who served with him thought rather highly of him. As a matter of fact, Annenkov's troops were very well disciplined.

Pierce: You mentioned having a company of Tatar troops. Were there many of these?

Shebeko: There was a mixture. We had three divisions: the Kazanskoe, Ufimskoe, and Vol'zhskoe. In the Ufimskoe division about fifty percent were Tatars; in the Vol'zhskoe division a couple of companies were Tatars. Thus, a good percentage, although not an overwhelming percentage, of the Kolchak army was composed of Tatars; I would say nearly twenty percent. Quite a few officers were Tatars also, just as there had been in the Imperial Russian Army. General Kornilov himself, strictly speaking, was not a Russian, but a Kalmyk. One of our corps commanders, General Smolin, was a Karaim Jew. Skidel'ski, who was much respected by everyone, was one of them. There were quite a few Jews from Siberia in our army, including a few officers.

**Shebeko:** Have you heard of Chinese Jews? There are quite a few of them in Peking. They dress like Chinese and wear long beards. Even their features are Chinese; however they have curly hair. I think they came to China during the reign of Peter the Great.

When we were in Chita our soldiers played a joke on the Chinese merchants who have movable stores. They are small stalls, like big boxes, and inside there is a counter and merchandise. They have no foundation and simply stand on the street. Our soldiers worked all night moving those stores, changing them from one place to another, all over the town. Next morning when the Chinese merchants came to open up the stores there was great confusion; they rushed about hollering all over the city!

Chernegin, meanwhile, had been growing progressively more erratic. As company commander, he was very much liked by his soldiers. He was brave, always in the front lines, but some strange sadistic tendencies became apparent. After a fight he took pleasure in sitting on his horse and causing it to trample over the bodies of the dead. When sober he was extremely good to me. I was in his company, one of his assistants, but if there was some dangerous assignment and it was my time to go

Shebeko: on duty, he would make every effort to send someone else. This annoyed me. When I reminded him that it was my turn, he would merely say, "You keep quiet!" But when he was drunk he would change toward me. At those times he wanted to kill me. He wouldn't send me to a dangerous place, but he wanted to kill me with his own hands. I knew that and I was always on the lookout, so that every time he got drunk my orderly and I would tie him hand and foot and let him sleep that way. In the morning he would wake up not remembering anything and would again be friendly. One night I was lying on the floor in one of the huts. I knew that he was carousing somewhere and that he would be back soon and that he would attempt something. I told my orderly to try to find him, and if he was drunk to call another soldier to help tie Chernegin and to bring him home.

Meanwhile I emptied my gun of all the cartridges, and also emptied his gun which was standing in the corner. Then I went to sleep. Later the sound of some movement woke me. I opened one eye and saw Chernegin standing in the doorway. I saw that he was drunk; his face was red, he had a crazy look in his eyes, and a strange smile on his face. He was looking at me. I knew it was coming. He tiptoed, so as not to make any noise, toward the corner where my rifle stood. He took

Shebeko: the gun, aimed at me, and released the trigger. Nothing happened. Suddenly his expression changed; it was terrible to see. He rushed to the corner and picked up his saber. It was now time for me to wake up. I jumped up and grabbed him. He lost his grip on the saber, it flew up, and the sharp point stuck in the ceiling.

While we were struggling I suddenly felt that he had some added strength. He was not very strong ordinarily, but now he was tremendously strong. I felt that he could overcome me. While we were wrestling I hit the wall with my elbow. The jar shook the saber loose; it fell and hit him on the forehead making a gash on his face. He fell down and went into a sound sleep. I bound him hands and legs, laid his head on a pillow, and then went back to sleep.

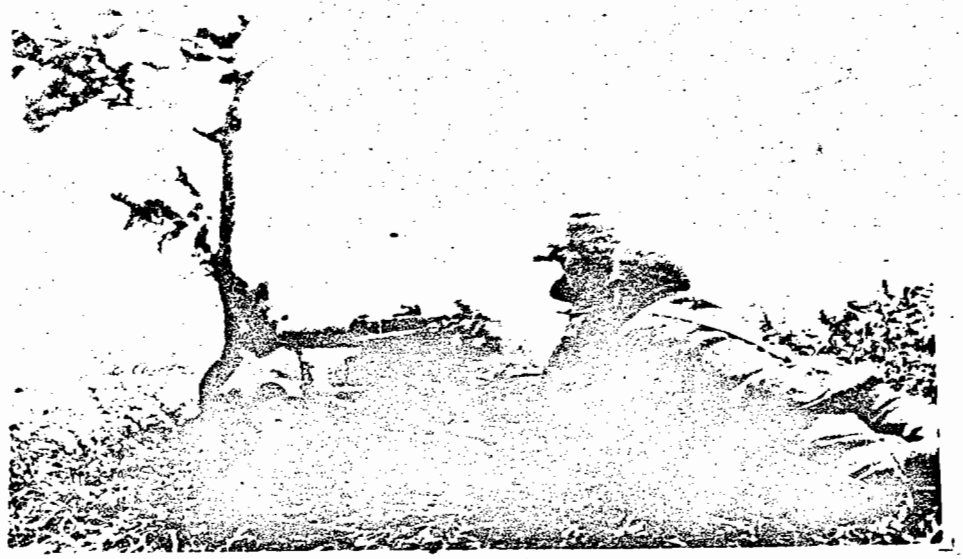
The next morning I told him what had happened. He was terribly apologetic and promised it would never happen again.

"Sergei," I told him, "you had better stop drinking. Someday, somehow, you are going to kill someone..."

In April 1920 the Reds opened up a new offensive aimed at the capture of Chita. They occupied a certain strategic place, two villages Shakhshia and Beklemishevo, named after two lakes. Our regiment was ordered to drive

Shebeko: the Reds out. It took us more than a day to get there from Chita, and in the evening of the first day we stopped in a village about twenty miles from our objective. We officers were all called to a conference with the commander of our division and were given instructions for the next day. That night we started toward Beklemishevo.

The road was terrible. We had to go over a rather high ridge, and the road, which had never been maintained, was full of boulders. Early in the morning of 8 April 1920 we approached the village. I saw members of one of our cavalry regiments already ahead of us, and the soldiers were already bringing in our wounded. As we left the ridge a big field opened in front of us. Close to three squadrons of Reds were on the border of the field. They attacked us, and we just had time to turn our machine guns toward them. We were spread in one thin line, so they could have picked us off one by one, but just then from another direction one of our cavalry regiments appeared. For the first time I saw a cavalry attack. The sound of impact could actually be heard when those two groups met. The battle didn't last for more than a minute -- in that minute the whole field was covered with the dead.



Waiting for the Enemy

Shebeko: That saved us. We moved in and took up our position. I was told to occupy a certain place on the edge of the forest and to support the attack by our infantry. When I placed my machine gun I saw that I didn't have much of a field; I didn't have any view at all. So I decided to place my machine gun in a little valley between the edges of the forest -- the forest was on one side and on the other side was the rather narrow valley shaped like a saddle. What I didn't know was that not more than a hundred yards from that place were the Red trenches.

When our infantry advanced, the Reds opened fire. It was quite sudden, and our infantry retreated. I was left alone with four soldiers and a machine gun. I opened fire, but my machine gun jammed. I sat sideways, and started to fix it. In the meantime the Reds opened up fire from <u>their</u> machine gun . Bullets struck the dust all around us. Fortunately I had time to fix the machine gun. I reopened fire and they quieted down, but a minute later the gun jammed again. Once more I tried to repair it, but then they resumed fire. In no time at all they killed three soldiers, and I felt a sharp pain in my leg. The bullet entered my leg and later lodged in my body. It was not removed, and I still have it.

Shebeko: I lay down, but I was conscious. I saw the Reds coming toward me. I smeared some of the blood over my face and pretended to be dead. One of the Reds saw the English belt which I had. My leg was broken and as he unbucked my belt in order to remove it, he turned me around and my broken leg bent. I was in terrific pain, but I didn't dare to open my eyes or scream. He took both my belt and my revolver. I was conscious all the time. However, our infantry went into a counter-attack and repulsed the Reds. There I was, all alone. I couldn't move. Then I saw one of our cavalrymen passing by. I stopped him and asked him to help me. He answered, "How can I?" and motioned downward. I looked and saw that half of his foot was gone. However, he reported where I was.

By the way, we captured the banners that these Red troops had; on them in big white letters were the words, "Kappel'evtsy -- here come your gravediggers!"

Finally I was picked up and brought to our artillery battery where we had a first aid station. One of the officers walked to the cart I was lying in to talk to me. As he did so, the Reds opened up machine gun fire and he was wounded in the chest. They laid him next to me. It was a dreadful trip from there on. As I mentioned before, the road was full of boulders. I was in terrific pain.

Shebeko: The man lying next to me died shortly thereafter, so I rode with a dead man. Finally I lost consciousness and was unconscious for nine days thereafter. When I came to I was already in a hospital in Chita. The Reds were defeated; most of them were captured. Their offensive was unsuccessful at that time.

I was in the hospital for several months, during which time our troops were sent to Nerchinsk and Sretinsk to fight the partisans. By that time the army's spirit had returned, and it was clear that it still possessed fighting ability. Although no decisive result was reached, the partisans were either annihilated or chased out. They were no match for our soldiers.

The Reds started a new offensive. The hospital was evacuated from Chita, and I was put in a hospital train with the other wounded and sent to Manchzhuriia (station). But I decided that I hadhad enough; I was not going to stay in a hospital any longer. Although I was still on crutches, I rejoined my regiment then at the station Borzia.

I remember the date because it was my name day, the 24th of July [1920]. We had a big celebration, and during that celebration a tragic thing occurred. We were all sitting at a table drinking when two officers started to argue. One said that he would make a wager that he was

Shebeko: going to shoot himself. The other laughed at him.

"All right," the first said, "will you bet five rubles?" The other agreed; the first officer then pulled out a gun and shot himself, and thus won the bet.

By this time we were all drunk, and we went outside. I remember there was a full moon; somebody suggested that we shoot the moon. There was a fusillade of shots, and we all saw a falling star. Somebody then claimed that he had knocked a piece out of the moon and another one said that he had done it. There was an argument and the man who made the claim first called out his company, the other fellow called out his, and a fight, with shooting in the streets, began. Fortunately, no one was hurt.

The next day, when we were all sober, General Iastrebtsev came in, and our regiment was exiled, you might say, to a little village called Kliuchevskaia, about twenty miles from Borzia. This village, situated in a small valley with high hills all around, had twice been the scene of a massacre. The year before, when Semenov's troops were there, Red partisans occupied the hills, closed all the avenues of escape and then attacked. Later another group suffered the same fate.

Shebeko: And that was the place to which we were sent. We were almost massacred there, too. So that's why I remember my name day and the big celebration we had.

We were in that village until October, 1920. Meantime I had recovered and could walk again. And then we were called back to Borzia. While we were in Kliuchevskaia there had been a truce more or less between our troops and the Reds. I don't know who was so shortsighted as to have agreed to it, for it gave the Reds a chance to bring in new supplies and new troops while we remained absolutely depleted.

The situation by now was such that our command was in favor of abandoning Transbaikalia altogether. However, Semenov, who was officially the commander of the army, resisted this because if he abandoned Chita he would lose all his prestige. It was his domain, and he was holding it to the last minute.

Semenov's wishes prevailed, and we were spread out, thinly, from Chita all along the railroad almost to Manchuria. I don't remember what part of the army occupied Chita, but our particular group occupied Borzia and the Second Corps occupied station Ouodanaia. That, of course, gave the Reds a field day because they could attack any of those small forces and cut the railroad. There were constant attacks at various places along it. One attack,

Shebeko: for instance, was near Borzia. We were living in boxcars, and one night we were awakened, assembled, and without being told why, were told to move out. We were moved toward the village of Chindan', about ten or eleven miles from Borzia. We marched all night and arrived there early in the morning. Chindan' was occupied by regular Soviet troops, and we attacked the village. We set up a couple of field guns on the outskirts of the village and fired the shells, not as shrapnel, but low over the ground, so that they would hit the ground, skid over, and then explode a few feet in the air. It was quite effective. Later when we broke into the village we found that where the shells had exploded you could not even recognize the men who were lying there; they had been torn to pieces. Of course this is possible only in winter, so that the shells can skid on the ice or snow. Before we broke into the village the Reds had already begun to leave it. There was only one road along which they could retreat, and that road was parallel to the line of our advance, so we advanced in a long line with the Reds retreating before us. We sent our cavalry ahead to cut them off, and of course we set up our machine guns. It was like having target practice; we mowed them down. The Reds lost a terrific number of

Shebeko: men. I think the village was occupied by four or five hundred men, and I doubt very much if sixty of them escaped. That was a regular unit, part of the Fifth Army, I believe, and possibly, the Sibirskii regiment.

This was just one of the attempts the Reds made at cutting the railroad. Considering that the army at this time comprised only six to seven thousand men, this plan of spreading the army so thin -- it is quite a distance from Chita to Manchzhuriia -- was not much of a defense.

Semenov's idea was to keep Transbaikalia, and probably, to eventually lead a counter-attack. Reports were arriving that the Reds themselves were in poor shape, and that there was rebellion in their midst. All this put the idea of non-submission into Semenov's mind. As a matter of fact, just about the day before Chita was captured by the Reds, he held some kind of a council there.

When the Reds attacked, Semenov himself escaped in an airplane. I think he was finally persuaded that Transbaikalia should be abandoned. But for a long time we didn't know what had happened to the troops that occupied Chita. The Reds outflanked the city and the troops there were completely cut off. We learned later that they had succeeded in breaking out.

Shebeko: After Chita was captured by the Reds our retreat had to be rather slow in order to protect the troops which were left behind. This gave the Reds a chance to make several attacks. While we were in Borzia we were sent several times on small expeditions to chase out the Reds, both regular troops and partisans. The partisans operated primarily from the direction of a village called Tsiganaul'skaia. They had quite a large force there. The Red troops, meanwhile, tried to cut us off on the south.

Once my company was sent to protect a railroad bridge. We had a couple of boxcars there. A terrific storm blew up, and at the same time our boxcars were shelled by Red partisans, who were advancing from the village of Tsiganaul'skaia. We all rushed out of the boxcars into the trenches we had dug, and in no time at all the trenches were coveredw ith snow; it was so cold that whenever we removed our gloves our hands would freeze so that we couldn't feel them at all. It was like being paralyzed, and we simply couldn't fire a single shot.

We remained outside only a few minutes and then rushed back into the boxcars. The storm lasted about forty minutes, and soon the sky was clear again. It was so quiet that we sent a detachment to find out what

Shebeko: had happened. We found all the Reds -- there were about two hundred of them -- frozen; all were dead. Of course in the open no one could survive that cold; there was a strong wind, the temperature was fifty below, and the fine snow felt like thousands of needles driven against our faces. It was terrible! We were in the boxcars, but those poor devils were caught in the steppes, and not a single one of them survived. They fired only one shot and that was the end of it.

Another time in Borzia I shot down one of our own planes. I was on duty with my company at the time, and the situation was rather tense. One very foggy day I heard a plane approaching from the direction of the Bolsheviks. It flew very low. I immediately called my company and we took positions. When, a little later, we saw the plane coming back, I gave the command to open fire. The plane was brought down. Of course I imagined myself to be a hero, until I saw that it was one of our pilots, and he was cursing furiously. Fortunately he wasn't hurt. The plane, though, was ruined. I was not to be blamed because, under the existing conditions, it was only natural that I should have mistaken it for an enemy plane, but it was a great disappointment to me. There were only three planes in the squadron -- Farman biplanes (Biplany as they called them) -- planes no one would dare fly in nowadays for

Shebeko: fear they would break up in the air.

During this same period, I was with a body of troops which accompanied General Molchanov when he went to talk with Baron Ungern at the station Dauria. There was constant trouble at that time between the Kappel'evtsy [troops which had been led by General Kappel' until his death], and the troops of Semenov and Baron Ungern. It was impossible for our officers to pass through the station 86-aia Versta or Dauria on the way to Manchuria because Ungern's troops were there and would arrest them; some of our officers were even executed for no reason at all. So that was one of the reasons for this particular meeting. Ungern would probably have detained General Molchanov too, but we had quite a few men with us and so he didn't dare do that.

A friend of mine, who is now dead, used to be Ungern's chauffeur, and he told us many stories about Ungern. The Chinese have a special pad which they put on their head when they carry something heavy. My friend used to wear one of those pads under his cap as a buffer, because when Ungern was displeased with something (if, for example, my friend wasn't driving fast enough) he would hit him on the head with buntush [stick]. However, Ungern finally discovered my friend's padding and

Shebeko: punished him. One of the punishments which Ungern meted out to his men was to put them on the roof of a house with nothing on. There they would have to stay --perhaps for so long as a month-- without clothing in any sort of cold wild weather they might have there. Ungern was certainly mad, absolutely insane; but, at the same time, he was extremely powerful. He was a living god in the eyes of the Mongols, and they worshipped him. The man was very well educated; he spoke several languages; and he knew the history of the Far East better than many a professor. He was a friend of Semenov; they had been together in the same Cossack regiment during the First World War. In the end, Ungern was seized by his own men, Cossacks, and turned over to the Bolsheviks, who later tried him in Moscow, together with Ataman Annenkov, and executed him there.

The Reds finally made another attempt to capture Borzia. And that is when we had quite a big all-night battle at a place called Cheremkhova, a village near Borzia, and destroyed practically all the Red partisans there. The day before the battle we were all called and assigned our positions in case of attack. Our trenches were already dug. We were sleeping in boxcars on the railroad when the Reds opened up artillery fire. The night was dark as ink and we couldn't see a thing. I

Shebeko: collected my company and we moved in the general direction of where my position was supposed to be, still unable to see. As we approached the fence, the Reds appeared not more than thirty paces away. Fortunately, they couldn't see where they were shooting, so not a single soldier in my company was even scratched. We immediately opened our machine gun fire in the direction of the fence and apparently made a good hit, because I heard moaning. I remember it just as if it were right now; I heard a voice calling, "Mikha-i-lov, he-lp me! Mikha-il-ov, h-elp me!"

We didn't find our positions so I told my soldiers to spread out at the place where we had stopped. I put the machine guns on my left flank, and there was nothing on the left side of me. In the morning I discovered that there was another regiment about five hundred yards from me. There was a gap there. The shooting had lasted throughout the night. Then the Reds made an accidental hit on our train which had the supplies of ammunition. There was an explosion right behind us; soon the whole train was in flames, and we were exposed: we couldn't see them, but they could see us perfectly well. Immediately shells started dropping only fifteen or twenty feet from the place where we were lying. I lost about a quarter of my company, some were wounded, but most of

Shebeko: them were shell-shocked. I was shell-shocked myself.

At daybreak I felt rather than saw some movement in front. Shadows were moving in front of us. I crawled toward my left flank and told my machine gunner to open fire in that direction. He opened up fire and soon I heard moaning and then everything was quiet again. We crawled until we came upon fifteen or twenty bodies lying about fifty feet from us. We went over to them and there I saw one of the Red commissars whom I had met during the truce, when I was sent to get some hay for our horses. I talked to him. He was an old peasant -- six and a half feet tall. He had been wounded in one cheek and he had plugged that hole with a red handkerchief.

Meantime the Reds had retreated. We went through various houses and found some Reds hidden in the basements. Then somebody shouted that the Reds were advancing. I looked up and sure enough the whole horizon was covered with them. They were galloping toward our position. We immediately opened up fire. There was quite a bit of disorder and then they disappeared. Shortly afterward we saw a column of Cossacks going into the village. Oh, they were cursing! Those were Orenburg Cossacks. They were there defending the bridge. The Reds had retreated so suddenly at night that they had not seen them,

Killed in Combat

Shebeko: and thinking that the village was still occupied by the Reds, they had decided to break through. We had then opened up fire and had wounded a few of them -- our own.

I was shell-shocked, but although I couldn't walk very well, I decided to stay with the regiment. We left Borzia and the Izhevskii division took our place. We were moved to a place called Kharanor, a station not very far from the Manchurian border. We were there only a couple of days when the Reds began to advance again. They cut the railboad in one place and captured one of our armored trains. I was an invalid at that time, so they decided it was not much use to have me in command. I was sent to a prominent point in the hills to watch the Red advance and to telephone down to the staff where they should open fire.

I did a pretty good job, I think, because our artillery hit smack on the target. Then I saw that quite a big group of Red cavalry was flanking the station. Quite unexpectedly they appeared from nowhere. I called down, "The Reds are advancing on the flank!" After a couple of minutes the commander of my regiment told me, "Come down, we are retreating!"

It was easy to say "Come down;" I was on horseback of course, but the snow was so deep that it came up to

Shebeko: my horse's belly and it could scarcely move. It took me a very long time to get down from my station, and when I came down there was nobody there. I rode along the railroad trying to catch up with them. There was an explosion and all I remember was that I went up in the air and then found myself buried in the snow; I couldn't get out. My feet were sticking out, but I felt that I was suffocating. I couldn't move my hands and my feet, and I was just about to lose consciousness when I felt somebody pulling me by the legs. It was one of our nurses who had stayed in the village to pick up the wounded. A shell had burst right under my horse; I was not hit at all. But I was badly shell-shocked. For about two months I couldn't keep my head steady and my hands from shaking. I was taken to a hospital train bound for Manchuria. Once across the border we would be safe.

Before I was put on the hospital train, I was brought to a little military town, probably Dauria. Our aviation squadron was there. One day my orderly brought me a mess kit full of honey. I was very hungry and ate a great deal of it and shared it with my neighbors. Later I learned that everybody around there was eating honey too. And then one of the pilots ran in; he was upset and very angry.

Shebeko: "We cannot take off!" he said, "Because your soldiers have stolen the glycerine! We cannot warm up our engines!"

And that was what we had been eating. We all suffered from stomach ache. Practically two barrels of glycerine had been eaten, and that was the end of our aviation. The planes had to be abandoned there.

On the way to Manchuria there is a small station called Vosem'-desiat'-sedmaia versta -- that means 86 versts [approximately two-thirds of a mile] from the border. As we approached it, our train stopped, and at first we didn't know what was happening. Then we saw that in front of us, in front of the semaphore, was another train, and there was a great deal of commotion there. What had happened was that the Reds had attacked that train with the wounded in it, and had massacred everybody. That was the fate that was awaiting us. We jumped from our train. Ill as I was, I and several others ran from that place and hid behind a snow bank. We saw the Reds enter our train. When we were sure they did not see us, we headed toward the Mongolian border.

We walked all day, all night, and the next day, and finally crossed the border. We went only a little way into Mongolia, but that took us about two weeks. A couple of my friends died, although they were husky

Shebeko: fellows; I and a couple of others survived. Fortunately we were picked up by a Mongolian caravan and travelled with that caravan for about a month.

Once a Mongolian prince gave us a big feast in one of his urtas, and I am afraid that I insulted him. The Mongolians eat a tremendous amount of food, apparently because of the climate, but all of it is prepared in grease and lard and tastes terrible. We all sat around on beautiful oriental rugs. They brought in mutton, fat and greasy. They brought in fish that had not even been cleaned. And then they gave us tea prepared with salt and butter. Not really butter, but lard. I ate as much as I could, and yet according to their standards I hadn't eaten anything, so I am afraid I offended my host.

Finally we were picked up by the Chinese who brought us to the station Manchzhuriia, just over the border, where the remnants of our army had gathered [after the taking of Dauria by the Reds on 18 November 1920 depriving the White forces of their last vestige of control in the Transbaikal region]. By this time I had begun to improve, although I was still very shaky and my head sometimes turned involuntarily to one side. I felt very sensitive about this, I remember.

Shebeko: Once in a restaurant, I started to drink a glass of tea and at that instant my head turned and it spilled. The waitress smiled, and I was so ashamed that I walked out, went to my railroad car and did not leave it for the next three weeks.

Pierce: What was the situation around Manchzhuriia?

Shebeko: The Reds came only as far as the 86th verst station. They didn't want to get involved with China.

The Chinese soldiers were very cocky and insulted us at any pretext. One day they attempted to arrest one of our officers, so we came out with hand grenades. We threw those grenades and as they slid over the ice, the Chinese disappeared in a second. They didn't bother us from that time on.

From Manchzhuriia station I was taken on a Red Cross train across Manchuria toward the Maritime Province. There was a delay at Manchzhuriia because the railroad, under joint Russian and Chinese control, didn't want to give trains for army transportation without being paid in cash. I don't know how it was finally settled, but by that time I had been taken on a Red Cross train to the station Er-do-au-hedze, beyond Harbin, midway between Harbin and station Pogranichnaia. Our train was stranded there for about two weeks.

Shebeko: An interesting incident happened while we were there. It is rather a mountainous region. The soldiers went up on a high ridge to hunt pheasants, our train was at the foot of the mountain, and the village of Er-do-au-hedze was on the other side of the railroad cars. Someone dislodged the trunk of a large fallen tree, and it started to roll down, gaining momentum as it headed toward our train. There were some wounded on the train who could not be moved. Just as we expected the crash, it hit a boulder and flew over the roof of the train and landed on a big Chinese wineshop, levelling it to the ground. The proprietor had seen it coming and had time to escape.

This region was a pheasant hunter's paradise. There were so many pheasants that they were sold at ten cents a piece. To catch the birds, Chinese soaked the seeds of gaoliang (a tall grass which is grown there) in hanzhin, their alcoholic drink, and scattered them around. The pheasants ate the seeds, became drunk, and the Chinese could collect them with no effort at all.

MARITIME PROVINCE

Shebeko: From Manchuria we went by train to the station Novo-Ussuriisk, in the Maritime Province, and from there I went to join the other members of my regiment. They had already been obliged to surrender their arms to the Japanese, then in control of the province, and were quartered in barracks near Razdol'noe, a former garrison town about fifty miles north of Vladivostok.

Semenov's troops occupied Grodekovo, and there was a constant feud between our troops which were at Razdol'noe and those at Grodekovo. There were no fights, but if one of our soldiers went to Grodekovo the chances were that he would be arrested and never return. This situation was extremely unpleasant. Here were two armies, both White, at each other's throats.

In Razdol'noe we did absolutely nothing, and this didn't help our morale one bit. There was little food, but discipline was still maintained. I remember one incident. The cavalry was drilling on the square and an old horse nearby was carrying a barrel with water.

Shebeko: When the signal to fall in line was given to the squadron that horse, an old cavalry horse, came to life and, water barrel and all, took a position in the line.

We had a horse, at that time, which the soldiers, having nothing else to do, trained to go up the iron stairing to the third storey of the barracks. Every day, at exactly the same time just before dinner, the horse would climb up those stairs and receive a bowl of soup. One day General Verzhbitskii, who was at that time the commander of the army, came to Razdol'noe. He gave us a speech and then he decided to inspect the barracks. It happened that the general came there just before the hour the horse was accustomed to appear. So there was the general inspecting the beds when we heard clomp, clomp, clomp up the cast-iron steps. The door opened, the horse walked into the dormitory. The general almost fell over; he didn't expect this. We were given hell; he didn't have any sense of humor at all.

When I arrived in Rozdol'noe and began to inquire about various people, I learned that my friend Chernegin had disappeared. Then we began to get news that this man was killed, that man was killed, and in each case the murderer was not found. Unexpectedly one day Chernegin appeared at my door. He was friendly again, and as we

Shebeko: sat in my room talking, he pulled a black book out of his pocket and opened it. I glanced at it, there was a list of the men who had been murdered. After each name was a cross. And there were other names. I grabbed the book from him, and he tried to recover it. We were struggling over it when a couple of my friends entered. The helped me subdue him, and then we examined the book. I read my name, which didn't have a cross; the name of General Molchanov, commander of our army; the name of another friend of ours; the whole list consisted of about a hundred names. Twenty-seven already had crosses.

We didn't know what to do. We had no proof that he had committed the murders, so they let him go. I kept the book, however. I had it for a long time.

Chernegin disappeared again and now I was cautious; I had a screen put on my window. Two days later somebody threw a hand grenade into General Molchanov's room. Fortunately he wasn't home. Of course an investigation must be made when an attempt is made on the life of such an important person. I was called on to testify and I produced the black book. Immediately an order was issued to capture Chernegin dead or alive. But he had vanished.

Shebeko: A couple of weeks went by. I was lying in bed when something shattered my window, bounced back from the screen, and exploded. A soldier who was outside was wounded. I rushed out in time to hear an insane laugh which I recognized as Chernegin's. I fired a couple of shots in the direction of the bushes, but he was gone.

All was quiet for a while and one day I decided to go to the village of Razdol'noe, about a mile from our barracks. Midway between this village and our barracks there were other barracks which were occupied by a Japanese regiment. A Japanese guard was always in front of the gate. I went to that little village, entered a restaurant, and was awaiting my order. The door opened, and who should walk in but Chernegin. He saw me and immediately was all smiles; he seemed genuinely glad to see me. We sat there chatting for a while and then he pulled out a revolver and laid it on the table in front of him. I made a grab for that revolver, but he, of course anticipating this, was quicker and picked it up with an insane laugh.

"Don't worry, don't worry," he said. "I'm not going to kill you this time. There are too many people around."

We sat there. I felt very uncomfortable. I was unarmed. Finally I got up.

Shebeko: "Well, I'm sorry but I have to go," I told him.

"I will accompany you," he offered.

I tried to decline, but he insisted, "There are so many dangerous characters around; I'd better take care of you."

There was nothing left for me to do, so I said, "All right, let's go."

When we reached an isolated spot he started to pull back. I knew the trick, so I slowed down myself.

"Let's walk together," I said.

So we walked together, and whenever he fell back, I did too. We played cat and mouse in this fashion until we approached the Japanese barracks. I knew that he was working for the Japanese, and that if he killed me the Japanese wouldn't lift a finger. It was time for me to do something. The road went over a steep hill and as we climbed it, I gave him a sudden thrust and started running down that hill. He fired two shots, but missed. I came home badly bruised and my wounded leg was injured.

As soon as we moved out of Chita, the Far Eastern Republic or DVR (Dal'ne-Vostochnyi Respublik) was formed there, and as we moved east it moved in behind us. The Red troops fighting us were supposed to be the troops

Shebeko: of the DVR, although actually the DVR was only a Bolshevik organization.

When we came to Maritime Province the DVR was in control of the civil administration. The Japanese would, of course, not tolerate Bolsheviks, so there they called themselves Mensheviks or Socialists. A Jew named Tseitlin headed that government in Vladivostok.

And then rather abruptly, in May 1921, it was decided to overthrow the Tseitlin government. The army of the former Kolchak government had arrived in the Maritime Province, and there in Vladivostok was a government opposed to the ideas of this army which intended to continue the fight against the Reds. So this government had to go [25-29 May 1921].

On the day when Molchanov left for Vladivostok to perform the painless operation of overthrowing the government, being without an aide-de-camp at that time, he asked my general, General Sakharov, if he had any officer available who could serve in that capacity. General Sakharov chose me because I was still on crutches. "He is no good to me right now," he told him. So Molchanov took me with him to Vladivostok.

The Tseitlin government was overthrown immediately. A couple of shots were fired, our troops moved in, and

Shebeko: that was all. We went to the former residence of the governor of Maritime Province and there I sat for three days doing absolutely nothing while Molchanov attended conferences. Of course we had been disarmed by the Japanese when we entered the Maritime Province, but now we were given arms and ammunition and called "militia."

Tseitlin? I don't know what happened to him; I think he escaped.

The next task was to choose a head of the government. At first we had a military regime. Then, I don't know how or why, the two brothers Merkulov were appointed. Apparently they had money and influence. One, Spiridon, was a lawyer, and the other, Nikolai, owned a match factory. I think Spiridon was an honest man, but Nikolai was definitely not. Both of them were rather colorless individuals; they didn't play much of a role. If anything, during the Merkulov government practically the whole power was in the hands of General Verzhbitskii and General Molchanov. Verzhbitskii was the commander of the army and Molchanov, strictly speaking, was the commander of a corps, but when we came to Vladivostok he became the chief of the Vladivostok garrison.

Spiridon Merkulov had a daughter whom apparently he thought I was going to marry, for I was invited to

Shebeko: dinner at his place on several occasions. I remember I invited her to the theater once, and when we arrived at the box-office I discovered that I didn't have any money, so she had to pay the admission.

As chief of the garrison in Vladivostok, General Molchanov had an office there. Being his aide-de-camp, one of my duties was to give him the names of the officers or soldiers who were arrested during the night. One day I saw Chernegin's name on the list which the orderly brought me. He had been arrested in a restaurant for wild conduct. When General Molchanov saw Chernegin's name on the list, he told me to go there immediately, remove him from the hoosegow, and take him to the prison. Chernegin seemed glad to see me.

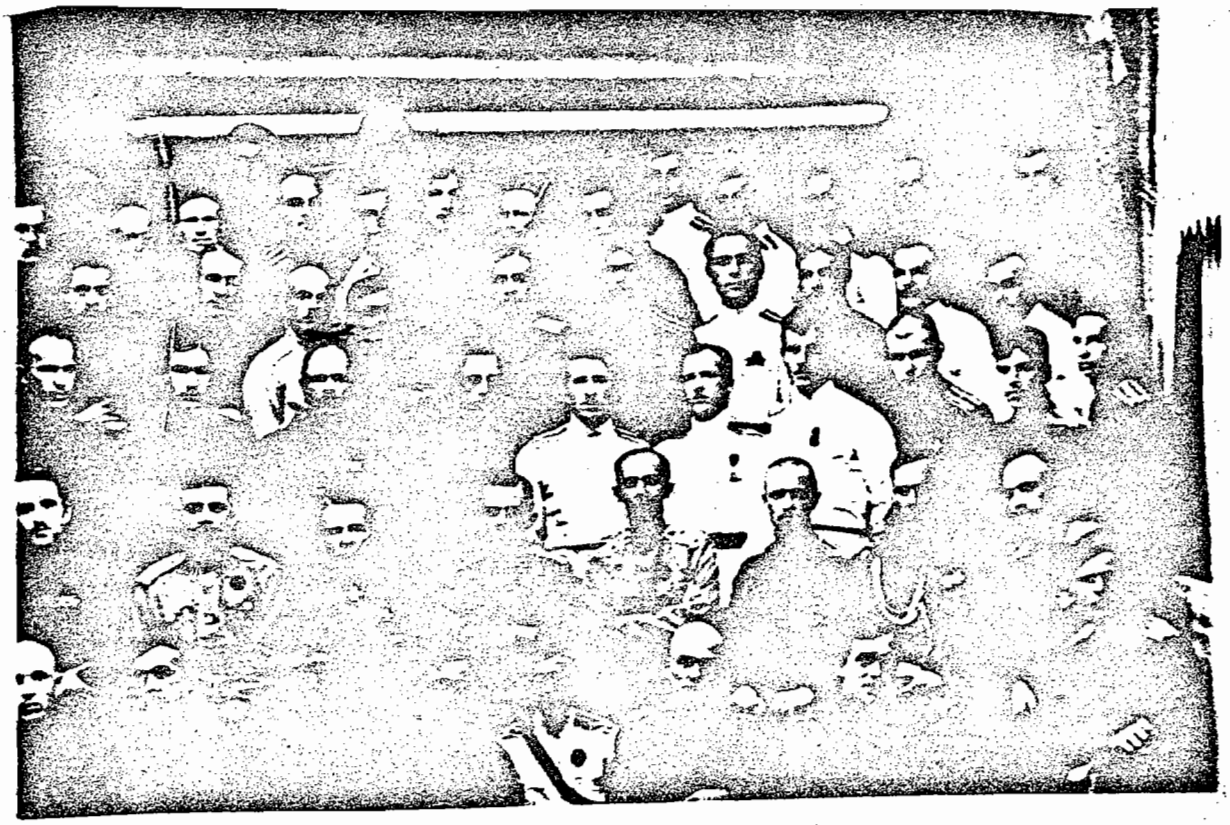
"How long do I have to stay here?" he asked me.

"I'm sorry, Sergei," I said, "but I have orders to take you to prison."

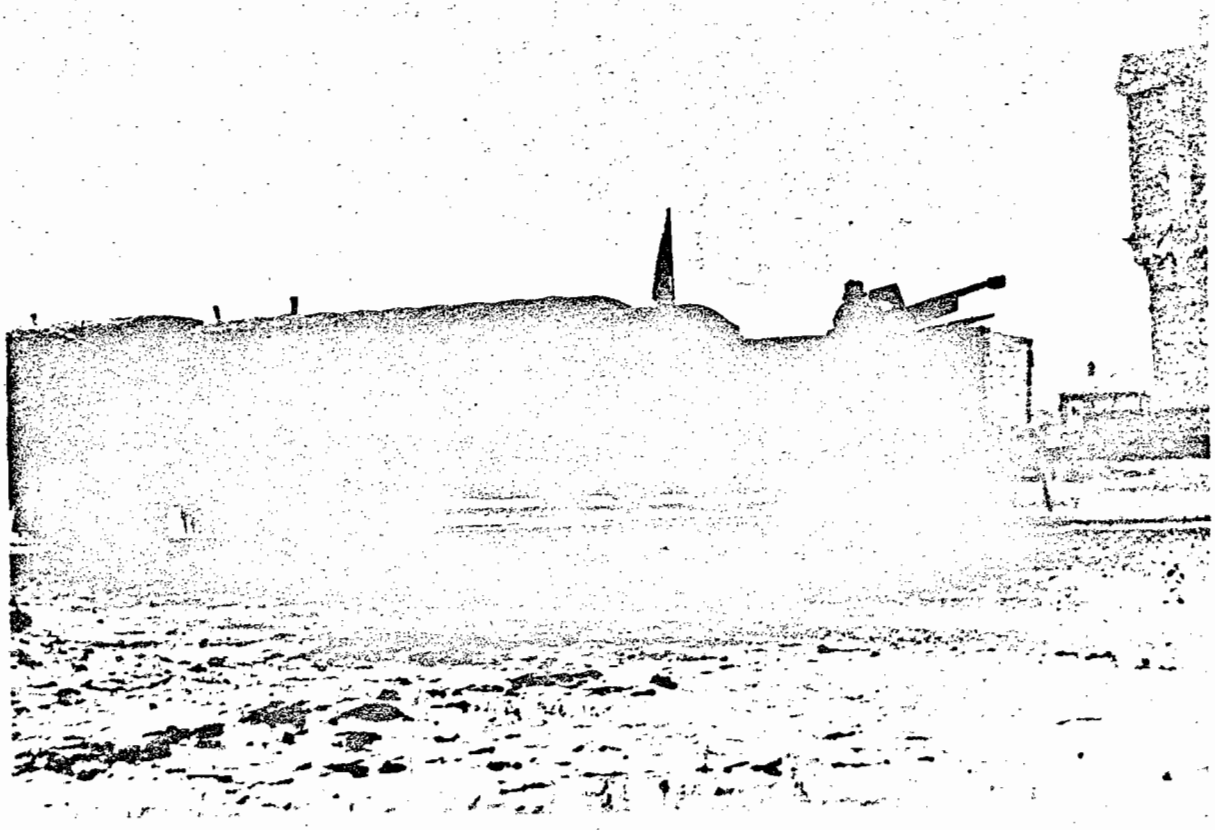
"You wouldn't do that!" he declared.

"I certainly will, because those are my orders and I have to obey," I answered.

He was handcuffed and led to prison. The trial was set; meantime he worked as a clerk (<u>pisar'</u>) in the prison office. Every once in a while he would telephone to me to complain that the food was not too good, and to ask me to send him such things as covers, pillows, etc.



Officers of the Volga Group in the center: Generals Verzhbitsky, Jastrebeff, Dietrichs, Molchanov, and Colonel Efimov.



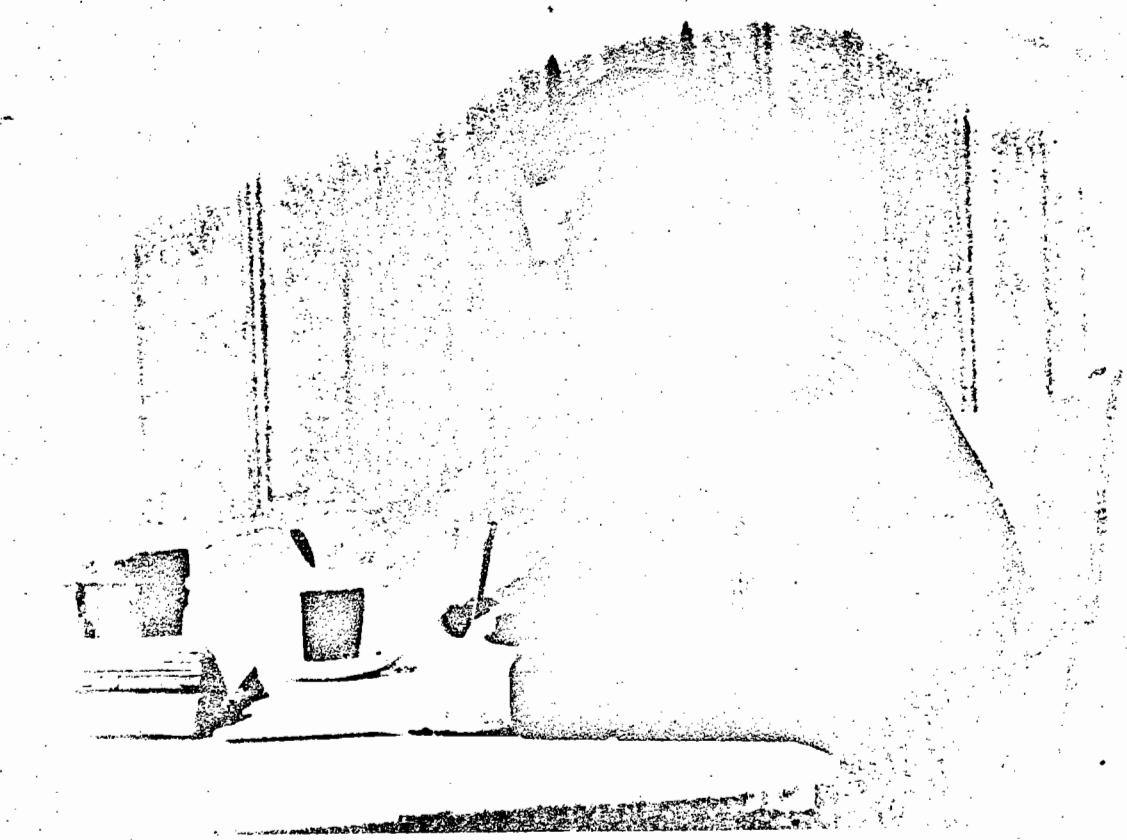
## THE KHABAROVSK CAMPAIGN

Shebeko: A campaign was planned October 1921 to capture the city of Khabarovsk. We did not have guns at all since the Japanese had disarmed us, but Japanese influence extended only to a certain station, beyond that they did not have any control. As soon as we crossed this border we obtained a few guns. Whatever else we needed we would have to capture from the Reds.

During the advance [Anuchino (25 November); Stantsiia Ussuri (30 November); Iman (3 December)] somewhere between Iman and Bikin, we gave Nikolai Merkulov quite a treat. We heard that he was coming to inspect the troops, so General Molchanov called me up and said, "I tell you what -- give him a good ride on the armored train!"

When Merkulov came my general invited him to board the armored train accompanied by me. I spoke to the commander of that train and he agreed not to stop even though Merkulov would ask him to. The train

General Molchanov [above] and Colonel Efimov



Shebeko: soon reached our positions, where fighting was in progress. Merkulov peered through a peep hole.

"Look at that!" he exclaimed.

By this time he was already a bit nervous, and a little later he told the train commander to turn back. But we rode on until we were in front of our lines, and the Reds opened up fire on our train. By that time Merkulov was lying on his stomach crying, "Go back! Go back!" A shell exploded behind our train and blew up the rails, so I told Merkulov, "I'm sorry. We can't go back because the rails are blown up in back of us."

"What are we going to do?" he demanded.

"We can sit here and wait," I said. "This is an armored train. They cannot do much damage to us."

By that time he was in an absolute panic. We always carried spare rails on our train, and we started to put them down under fire. I asked Merkulov, "Would you like to see how the men work under fire?"

"No, no! Turn back!" he cried. So we did.

When we returned he didn't stay a minute more than he had to, but went right back to Vladivostok. So I reported to my general that we had had a good ride.

Shebeko: My general had been given a railroad car, formerly belonging to the director of the Chinese Eastern Railway. The car consisted of four compartments -- a suite and four bedrooms. One of the bedrooms was assigned to me. In addition, there were two more cars for the officers of the staff and soldiers. In front of the locomotive was a flat platform filled along its perimeter with sandbags for protection from bullets. From a distance, the whole contraption looked like an armored train.

Leaving station Ussuri, we rolled toward Iman. Station Iman, according to reports, was then occupied by the Sixth Soviet Regiment under the command of Comrade Nelson-Girs (a former captain of the tsarist army), and a battalion of the Korean troops that had joined the Red army. In addition, the Reds had an armored train there which was equipped with two field guns.

As we came closer, we heard the sounds of artillery fire. Soon we discovered the reason for it. The gun platform of the Red armored train was derailed and the men were frantically trying to replace the rails. In order to protect the workers, the train sent shell after shell toward our entrenched troops. When the Reds saw us approaching, they apparently mistook us for something more formidable

Shebeko: than we actually were, because they hastily disconnected their damaged platform and retreated at full steam northward.

This morning (December 3, 1921) my former regiment took part in a battle for the station. Presumably, after the station was captured, the soldiers went into the houses to rest and relax. Suddenly from nowhere appeared a column of marching troops which quickly spread into battle formation and started to advance toward the station. No one paid much attention to them, thinking they were our own troops. However, one soldier was sent forward to warn the approaching line that the station was already occupied. There was a shot and the soldier fell dead. Even then the opinion was that the whole thing was a mistake and another soldier was sent out. Our men saw the soldier plunge a bayonet into one of the advancing Reds and crack the skull of another with the butt of his rifle. Miraculously he himself survived. This was the signal -- my regiment attacked. In a matter of minutes the field was covered with dead Koreans. This was the last attempt by the Reds to recapture Iman. We counted more than one hundred of their corpses. Our own losses amounted to twenty-seven men.

During my association with him, I learned to love and respect my general. I think that his feelings toward me were not entirely indifferent, because otherwise

Shebeko: he could have been rid of me long ago for all the inconveniences I caused him. However, at this time, I was becoming bored by inactivity again and I wanted to rejoin my friends. To change a life of ease and comfort for a life of danger and privation was not too inviting, but I finally decided that I should do so. I knocked at the door of the general's room and at his "Come in" I entered. He was sitting at the table reading dispatches. Without lifting his hand he asked what I wanted.

"May I, Your Excellency, rejoin my regiment?"

He looked at me. "Why?"

"I have nothing to do here, Your Excellency."

He was silent for a moment and then said, "Sometimes I wonder why I have you."

"For prestige, Your Excellency," I answered.

"Well, I think I can dispense with this prestige. You are free to go."

I must admit that I was hurt. I had half-hoped he would refuse, or at least try to persuade me to stay. But the step was taken, and there was no turning back. I assembled my equipment and went to report to my regimental commander, Colonel Belianushkin, who told me, "Lieutenant, you are a fool; many people would like to be in your place. Now go back to your company." But my friends were glad to see me, though they shared the opinion of the colonel. By this time I was sure they were right. My regiment left

Shebeko: Iman the same hour I rejoined it. Now I found myself marching with the rest and longing for the warm bed I had left behind. From the very beginning, my luck was against me.

That night we stopped in a small village whose name I do not remember. Considering that I was still fresh from my extended rest, I was assigned to a night duty, to man the outpost at the village outskirts. The hut where I stayed was overheated, which made me very sleepy. I was sitting on the bench in front of the table and trying hard to keep my head from falling. Finally I hit on a brilliant idea. I took a fork and placed the blunt end on the table and the sharp points against my nose. This I felt would surely wake me up in case I would doze. I dreamt that I was captured by Reds and they were hanging me by inserting a hook into my nostrils. I woke up with a bloody nose, which did hurt me for a considerable time after!

The Reds were retreating without offering any resistance. At station Gubarevo we found total destruction. All the rolling stock was burned, the water tanks blown, etc. On December 9th we reached the village Novo Pokrovka. The Reds were determined to stop us at the line extending from the village Vasilievsky to station Bikin and General Molchanov was just as determined to destroy them there. The village Vasilievsky was defended by the Fifth Soviet Regiment, and Bikin by the remnants of the Sixth.

**Shebeko:** At Novo Pokrovka I was told that Colonel Belianushkin wished to see me. I entered his hut and the colonel pointed to the corner where on the floor was an open box.

"I understand you read French."

"Yes, sir."

"Then see what you can make out!"

I picked from the box a long wooden stick and something resembling a rocket. On the outside of the wrapper on the rocket was a picture of a parachute with a dangling light. Under the picture were instructions in English. My foolish pride did not allow me to admit that I did not understand anything.

"Well, do you know how to use it?"

"Yes, sir."

"All right, go ahead and show us!"

I took the whole contraption outside. Already a crowd of officers and soldiers, eager to watch the performance, had gathered. I confess, I was a bit worried. At first glance the thing looked quite simple. The rocket unquestionably was used for illumination at night. There was a fuse on the bottom side which should be lit. In order to go up, the rocket should be placed pointing upward. So far, so good. But why the wooden stick? I finally dismissed it as being an unnecessary addition. So I placed the rocket on a fence post and applied a match. There was a hissing sound, the rocket rose in the air, described a perfect

Shebeko: curve, and crashed through the window of a house on the opposite side. Next there was a blinding flash and the fightened inhabitants of the house ran out into the street. I took an active part in putting out the small fire that started. The purpose of the wooden stick now became clear. It was to have acted as a rudder. In my next attempt, I attached the stick to the rocket and pushed the other end into the snow. By this time everyone kept a respectful distance from the unpredictable device. The performance was a success, the rocket rose gracefully, exploded high up, and a beautiful bluish light floated in the air, illuminating the countryside, inspiring a roar of approval. Part of my reputation was salvaged; however, from then on my linguistic talents were under question and I was not given a similar assignment again.

The operation against Vasilievsky and Bikin was under the overall command of General Sakharov, a comparatively young man, good-looking, impulsive, and recklessly brave. Sakharov's general plan was as follows: my Volzhsky regiment was to start at midnight and cut the road between Vasilievsky and Kozlovsky villages; the Kamsky regiment, under the command of Colonel Sakharov, was to follow at one A.M. and cut the road between Vasilievsky and Bikin; one hour later, the Uralsky and Egersky regiments, under Colonel Klimovsky, were to proceed toward the village

Shebeko: Vasilievsky. The general attack on the village Vasilievsky was to be at daybreak, December 12th. Meanwhile, the Izhevsky brigade, under Colonel Efimov, was to occupy station Bikin.

Colonel Efimov was a good friend of General Molchanov. In temperament the two men were as unlike as hot and cold water. While Molchanov had an impulsive nature, Efimov was always as cool as a cucumber. Both were brave in their own way. While Molchanov would throw himself into the thick of battle with complete disregard to his life, Efimov would sit on horseback and coolly give orders under murderous fire. Both were loved and worshipped by their troops.

Little I knew then that four years later fate would bring us, Molchanov, Sakharov, Efimov, and myself together, under entirely different circumstances, as common laborers in the California Steel Corporation in Berkeley.

On the evening of December 12th we were issued white coveralls so the men would blend with the snow and therefore be less conspicuous. Colonel Shiriev, who knew this region, was appointed as our guide. Colonel Shiriev was a remarkable person. Born in the Maritime Province, he had spent all his life there. When free from duty, he was roaming the countryside, hunting wild animals. In the process of doing that and in order to outguess his prey, he developed a sixth sense. Beside that, he became

Shebeko: very proficient with a gun. To waste a bullet was a crime with him. When the civil war began in the Maritime Province, he decided to take matters in his own hands. He chose from among the Cossacks seven of the best sharpshooters he could find. With this group he started his own partisan war, by penetrating behind the enemy lines and creating all kinds of unpleasantness for the Reds. Eventually this forced the Red command to put a price on his head.

The night was pitch dark when we started. The assignment given to our regiment was to encircle the village Vasilievsky on its right, while the Ural and Eger regiments were to attack the village frontally. My wounded leg was still not in the best of shape and I could not move as fast as the others and so was gradually falling back. Soon, to my horror, I found myself all alone. It is difficult to describe the feeling of helplessness and sheer panic that took hold of me. Not being blessed wih a good sense of direction, I apparently was drifting to the left. The snow was deep, powdery, and cold. I was painfully limping on my bad leg without hope of getting anywhere. The endless hours passed by and the dawn was breaking. Cold low fog was rising above the snow. The dead silence was suddenly broken by a dry cracking of a machine gun. This lasted only a short time, then everything was quiet again.

Shebeko: In the distance my eyes caught sight of some dark object. As I came closer I saw a machine gun pointed in my direction. I fell flat on my face, expecting any moment the familiar sound of ta-ta-ta, but nothing happened. I cautiously raised my head and saw that the machine gun was unattended, which meant that I had captured the enemy single-handed. This had an effect of raising my sunken spirits.

In a little while the white-clad figures of soldiers appeared. They belonged to the Eger regiment. As they came to me sitting triumphantly on the machine gun, I saw the admiration in their eyes. It was a great feeling to be a hero, and at this moment I did not want to spoil it. So in answer to their questions I modestly replied, "When they saw me, they ran away. You probably heard the firing."

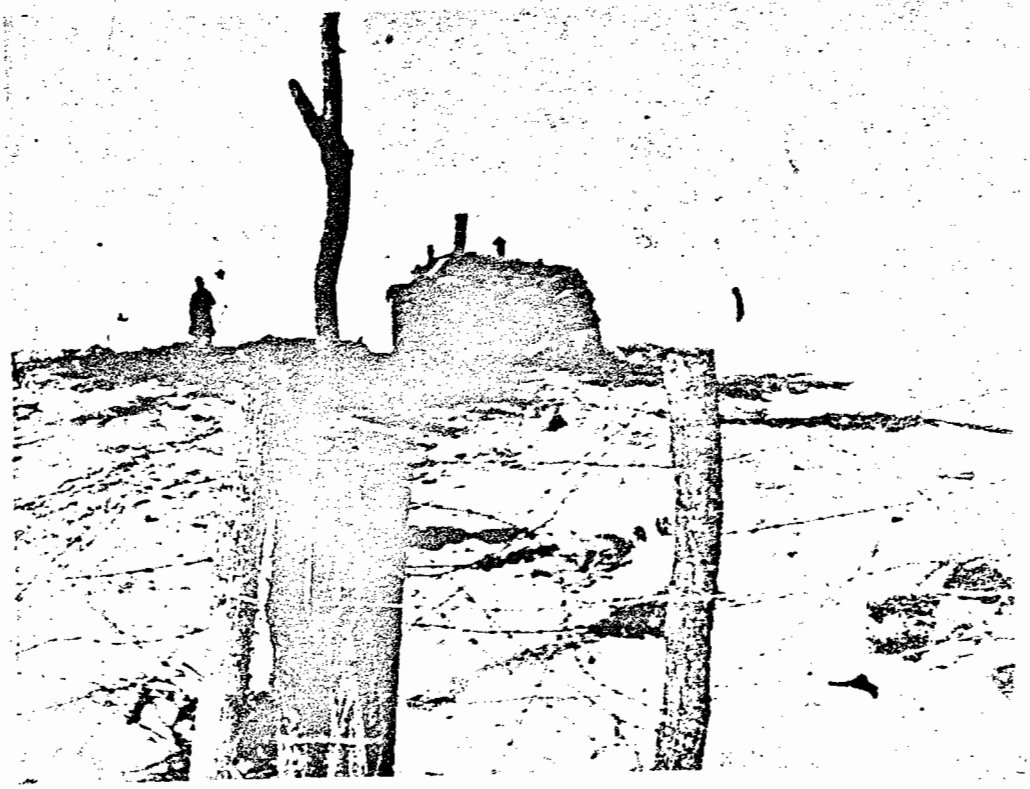
Later I found out that this machine gun was manned by the Red outpost which was attacked by our cavalry squadron and quickly subdued. I was glad that no further questions of my "heroic" exploit were raised, and I wisely kept my mouth shut.

The regiment spread into a line in preparation for the attack. The sun had already risen when we reached the outskirts of the village. The Reds opened fire. Our troops, with shouts of "Urá! Urá!" surged ahead on the run. The 1st and the 3rd squadrons of the first cavalry regiment, under the command of Captain Vasiliev, were the first to

Shebeko: break into the village. The Reds were disorganized and began to run for their lives. One of the Reds turned around and fired point blank into the chest of Captain Vasiliev, killing him instantly. The village of Vasilievsky was captured. I was the last to enter it.

The Reds were retreating toward the village of Kozlovsky. They never reached it, because they were intercepted and trapped by my Volzhsky regiment. Some of the Reds escaped by climbing over the surrounding hills. My regiment did not pursue them because it started snowing hard and soon the evening turned into a blizzard. All told, we captured four machine guns (including mine) and 115 Reds. Besides, we counted about seventy dead bodies. Our losses were very light, few killed and several wounded.

Soon I rejoined my friends. They were quite concerned about my safety and were glad to see me alive. However, the consensus of opinion was that in my present condition I was more of a liability than an asset. In the evening of the same day we left the village Vasilievsky and marched toward village Kozlovsky. At the same time, one squadron of the first cavalry regiment made a reconnaissance toward the village of Lonchakovo and found that the Reds had abandoned it and retreated to the station Rozengardovka. The order was therefore given to our troops,



Shebeko: which included my regiment, to march toward Lonchakovo. However, according to information our staff received later, the commander of Red troops, Comrade Serishev, on December 13th issued an order to reoccupy Lonchakovo.

The situation was this: we were moving toward unccupied Lonchakovo and at the same time the Reds were doing the same and as it happened we arrived at the destination almost at the same time, we slightly ahead. The Reds, according to our reconnaissance, had at their disposal the fifth sharpshooter regiment, the remnants of the sixth regiment, the detachment of Korean troops, two armored trains, and one artillery battery. The distance between village Vasilievsky and Lonchakovo was about forty miles. The night, for a change, was beautiful and clear. However, as far as I was concerned, this night for me was a nightmare. The wound in my leg opened up and the pain was unbearable. I could hardly walk, so finally Colonel Belianushkin, seeing my plight, allowed me to ride on the sledge. This was better, but the lack of movement almost caused me to freeze to death.

It was late in the morning of December 13th when we entered Lonchakovo. Everyone was exhausted and had only one thing in mind -- rest, rest, and rest. No sooner had we gone to the houses and dropped half dead on the floor than firing was heard on the outskirts of the village. The Reds, under the cover of surrounding hills and high brush, appeared as from nowhere. We jumped out

Shebeko: as we were, some half-dressed, and counter-attacked with bayonets playing a prominent part. Later, to my dismay, I discovered two torn holes in my perfectly good coat. Now how I acquired these holes, I do not know. I doubt that these were bayonet holes; most likely some tears from nails on the door jamb which I hit as I hastily left the hut.

The Reds, who were in no better shape than we, soon gave way and began to run, our soldiers in hot pursuit and I at a snail's pace. I was soon outdistanced by our advancing lines. To the right of me, I saw a large group of men. Not to be left alone, I decided to head toward them. This was a mistake. It happened that this group were the Reds who were left behind and who were waiting to be taken prisoners. The Red artillery mistook them for our advancing column and opened shell fire. The shells were exploding uncomfortably close to me, spraying me on occasion with particles of black dirt. This unexpected development forced me to increase my pace in the opposite direction. Suddenly the firing stopped. What actually happened I found out later was that the cavalry group under command of General Blohin was sent from station Bikin to support the operation at Lonchakovo and Rozengardovka. The group arrived when the fighting was in progress and the Reds were retreating. The Red artillery battery did not see the approaching cavalry column. General Blohin

Shebeko: decided to attack. The sudden appearance of galloping Whites spread panic among the Reds. Some of the Reds, with arms raised in surrender, were running toward Whites; some were running away trying to escape. The field guns, in perfect condition, were left for the taking.

I finally reached Rozengardovka, which was by this time occupied by our troops. Somewhere I found a long stick and I improvised myself a crutch. I was hobbling along the street in search of my regiment when I saw a sleigh, drawn by two horses, and in the sleigh was sitting General Molchanov. When he saw the pitiful condition I was in he beckoned to me.

"By looking at you I can see you have had enough," he said.

And all I could reply was,"Oh, Your Excellency, am I glad to see you!" And thus ended my short adventure.

The capture of Khabarovsk [23 December 1921] called for a celebration. Since no celebration is complete without liquor, it was necessary to procure it. When the Reds abandoned Khabarovsk, they took good care of the situation. Not a drop of liquor was to be had in the whole city. The next source of supply was our train, that was stranded on the southern end of the Khor bridge, which was blown up by the Reds. Because I was the most expendable man on our staff, I was appointed to execute this mission. The guide and the sleigh were hired and on December 23rd I departed.

Shebeko: The best road was along the frozen Ussuri River. We rode in silence for several hours, then the driver casually remarked, "Look."

I saw a huge beast slowly moving in our direction. It was a Manchurian tiger. They grow them big and ferocious in that region. At this moment it must be admitted I realized that I was not born to be a big game hunter, and besides, I began to feel an unpleasant sensation in my stomach.

"What are we going to do now?" I asked the driver.

"You have a gun," he answered, "but I don't think you will have to use it. I don't think he is hungry enough."

He was right. The tiger turned suddenly, made a tremendous leap, and disappeared in the high brush on the Chinese side. The rest of the trip was uneventful. From our supply train I was able to obtain four cases of real wine and champagne and only three quarts of vodka, to which the train personnel apparently had taken a strong liking.

On the way back we decided to travel along the Chinese side of the river since there were rumors that Red partisans were roaming on the Russian side. Everything was fine until we came to a small Chinese village. Two soldiers stopped us and inspected my luggage. After

Shebeko: that, they took me to their commandant, who happened also to be the owner of a liquor store. Undoubtedly he saw the opportunity to replenish his dwindling supplies with what I had. To make it legal, he accused me of armed intrusion on Chinese soil. Fortunately for me, at this time a long column of sleighs appeared on the horizon. This gave me a chance to inform him that if anything were to happen to my cargo that there would be nothing left of his store. He became very apologetic and let me go.

It was getting late and with the setting sun the weather was getting colder and colder. Suddenly I heard a pop-pop-pop. Some activity was going on inside the wine cases. I suspected the worst and told my driver to sit on top of them, as protection against the elements. This did not help and the nasty sounds continued to come from the inside. When we reached Khabarovsk and the cases, with great anticipation, were opened, the only thing found inside was broken glass and chunks of ice. The only survivors were the three quarts of vodka. The expedition was a complete failure, for which I was, of course, blamed. When people looked at me, they simply frowned.

## BEHIND THE ENEMY LINES

Shebeko: While we were in Khabarovsk I was again officially the adjutant of General Molchanov, although I actually had nothing whatever to do. General Molchanov was working day and night in his office. The chief of staff, Colonel Lovtsevich, shot around the staff building like a meteor, shoving aside anyone who happened to get in his way. The staff officers were suffering from having too much work to do, while I was suffering from not having enough. In any case, I had no taste for office work, and the energy of my twenty-one years demanded an outlet.

This outlet was soon forthcoming. Colonel Karlov, the commander of the Volga battalion, in which I had served earlier, was ordered to form a partisan detachment for operations in the rear of the Red forces. I

Shebeko: immediately offered him my services, and he accepted readily. It remained only to obtain General Molchanov's permission, so I knocked hesitantly on the door of his office. I knew he did not like to be disturbed.

"Come in!" he said, and I went in. "Well, what do you want?"

"Your permission, Your Excellency, to go with General Karlov."

"Don't you like it here?"

"There is nothing to do, Your Excellency."

"All right, to the devil with you! Go!"

With this good wish the short audience was concluded. But after obtaining permission, two very important questions still remained unanswered. To go on what? I had no horse. To go in what? I had no valenki (felt boots). For the latter I made a mutually agreeable deal with Zotov, General Molchanov's driver. Zotov took my sapogi (boots), and I took his valenki, which were destined to go much farther than I. I obtained a horse from the transport command. Looking this animal over, even my first impression was unfavorable. He was more accustomed to carrying water casks, or to transporting the

Shebeko: dead to the cemetery. He was high, and resembled a camel. 'I'll have to get up on you with a ladder,' I thought. But for want of anything better I had to be satisfied with what I had.

## Setting Forth on the Expedition

Shebeko: On 2 January 1922 the detachment, consisting of a squadron of the 1st Cavalry Regiment, under Captain (rotmistr) Struve, and twenty-five cavalrymen of the Egerskii Regiment, under Lieutenant Anan'ev, under the general command of Colonel Karlov, assembled before the corps headquarters. General Molchanov came, said a few words of greeting, and wished us a safe return. Colonel Karlov ordered, "Mount! Follow me!" and the whole column moved forward -- all, that is, except me. Not relishing the prospect, my horse held back. When I yanked on the reins he turned his head and nipped one of my boots. I asked Zotov for a stick and only then, when the horse realized that I was not joking, did he begin to hasten after the departing column. Thus did the campaign begin for me.

Shebeko: We went along the Amur. The day was cold, a strong wind was blowing from the north, and I began to long for the warm room I had left behind. Soon a snowstorm began. Conversations died, and noses went deeper into fur collars. All my efforts to keep up with the column met stubborn resistance from my Bucephalus. My insistance at last was broken by his obstinacy and I finally let him do as he pleased.

In the evening we arrived at the village of Verkhne-Spasskoe, occupied by a detachment of General Nikitin. Ahead of us were the Reds. General Nikitin gave us good quarters and we spent our last fairly comfortable night. At noon the next day, accompanied with good wishes, we went forth to meet the unknown.

Even now I can clearly picture that day. The sun shone clear and cold. From one side to the other, as far as the eye could see, the frozen surface of the river was a white waste. There was not a breath of wind. Everything was silent, gripped by the frost. Only the sound of the horses' hoofs broke the dead silence. Even the trees were hidden behind the river banks. We were entirely alone, subject to the whims of fate, with no hope of aid if we got in a critical situation. But we

Shebeko: were in good spirits. Our unusual situation aroused boldness. Little by little conversations began, and jokes. No one thought of the dangers ahead. Only one man was afraid -- Colonel Karlov -- he rode ahead on his grey horse, deep in thought, for on his shoulders lay the responsibility for the whole project.

We had to go unnoticed into the rear of the Reds. Our route lay through the village of Zabelino. If we could get through this point undetected our situation would be much easier later on, so we built all our hopes on this moment. It was already dark when our detachment came to a small shack three versts from Zabelino. An old fisherman met us.

"Are there any Reds in the village?" Karlov asked him.

"Who knows? Maybe so, maybe not."

"When were you there last?"

"Not long ago, and I didn't see anyone."

Further questioning revealed that there were no regular units in Zabelino, but that foraging parties came for hay from time to time. Things seemed to be in our favor. However, we sent scouts ahead, while the rest of us followed behind. The night became so dark

Shebeko: that it was hard to make out the silhouettes of the riders ahead. Talk ceased. Then we heard the barking of dogs. We had come to the village itself.

Suddenly ahead of us there was the flash and the dry crack of a rifle shot, and a bullet buzzed over our heads. Then there was another shot, and then another, and another, and soon there was a whole line of fire ahead of us. On the left a machine gun stuttered. Everything became lively. The air was full of the whistling and buzzing of bullets as if someone had carelessly stuck his hand in a hive and aroused the sleeping bees. We didn't reply in order not to hurt our own people ahead, then we heard the galloping of horses and the scouts came back saying, "Colonel Karlov, there are Reds in the village!"

"We know that too!" he said. "Is everyone here? Then commence firing!"

An interchange of courtesies began, in a language of lead. But it soon became clear that there were more than foragers in the village, who didn't want us to enter. Surveying the situation, Colonel Karlov decided to retreat. The return trip to the fisherman's shack was much quicker. When we got there we discovered that

Shebeko: nine of our men were missing. This was not a good omen for us because if they were taken prisoner by the Reds our plans would no longer be a secret. This unlucky end to the day had its effect on some who doubted the successful outcome of the expedition, especially the members of Captain Struve's squadron. But the bad luck didn't affect Colonel Karlov's intentions. The officers were assembled for a council. Captain Struve proposed that we return to Khabarovsk. He couldn't be blamed; he was a courageous man, and if he had not had the heavy responsibility for the lives of his men on his shoulders he would probably have been one of the first to urge that we go ahead. Nor could his men be blamed, considering the situation we were in. Later, as will be seen, they bore out fully the gallant name which they had earned in previous struggles with the Reds.

After a short conference it was decided to go around Zabelino on the opposite bank of the Amur. This would be risky, as we would be in view of the Reds. At four o'clock in the morning we got under way. The shores of the Amur were steep by the fishing settlement, and we had to descend to the ice upon our horses, holding the reins.

Shebeko: Unfortunately for me I chose a poor place for descent. Already on the way down I saw that in another second I would be in a hole in the ice, and that was exactly what happened. I fell off my horse and went knee-deep in icy water. I didn't stay there long, but even "not long" was long enough for my valenki to get soaked with water.

This mishap put me in a gloomy mood; I forgot everything else and centered all my thoughts on my valenki. Anyone who has ever been in a similar situation will understand why. Soon I began to notice that they were changing form. First the fore parts began to look like pancakes, they began to move a little ahead, and then the heels spread out, until my valenki looked like skis. Then the water in them began to freeze and halted further expansion. Going on foot became extremely difficult, so I got on my horse. And then I made a new discovery -- I couldn't get my feet in the stirrups. That was the last straw -- weighed down by my feet, and riding shaken around on the saddle. At that moment I felt that I presented a pathetic picture.

The Chinese side of the river was like a desert.

Shebeko: There were not even any small shrubs to be seen. The snow was deep and the horses had a hard time, and finally became completely tired out. To make better time we had to go on foot and lead them by their halters. It was no easier for us. We had to stop again and again to catch our breath. Because of this we didn't get along very fast. Everybody felt that any moment the Reds might appear in our pursuit. Everybody became nervous, glancing involuntarily behind, the smallest dark spot in the distance catching our attention and causing us to be on the alert. It was like that until dark.

Far away on the Russian shore we saw lights. We came to the village of Pokrovka. Our faint hope that the village would be unoccupied by the Reds gave way to our fear that it might be. We were so dead tired that we could not have put up a fight. But, as it happened, luck was with us, and the village was free. We quickly established ourselves and fed our horses, went into warm quarters and without even undressing, lay on the floor and fell into a deep sleep.

The next morning was cold. We and our horses were rested, our morale had risen, and the detachment was

Shebeko: again ready for future events.

For concealment it was decided to go again along the Chinese side, so that in case of danger we could go quickly over the border. Opposite Pokrovka, five versts away, was a small village inhabited by Goldys (Amur natives). We set out for there.

Our trip was not uneventful. Halfway to the village there was a small island with a Chinese on it. Nearing it, we saw a Chinese with a rifle standing guard. Seeing us he began to run, and we chased him. We saw that the inn was occupied by Hunghuzes (Chinese bandits).

In the yard there were carts loaded to the top with hampers of cigarettes, butchered pigs, and all kinds of utensils. Around the carts was a crowd of Chinese, gesticulating, shouting in their gutteral language, obviously not in our favor. A loud shout from Colonel Karlov caused them to fall into silence momentarily. We went into the inn and found it full of Hunghuzes. They had apparently just returned from an expedition with plunder and were resting before starting out again.

Soon our attention was drawn to a group in a far

Shebeko: corner, trying to hide something from us. Interested, I wandered over, and saw the following:

On the floor lay three Goldys, tied in the most barbarous fashion with thin cord, which cut deeply into their flesh. So that the Goldys could not move, the cord was tied around their neck and in back of them extended to their legs. Colonel Karlov ordered them freed at once. This order caused a storm of discontent. The noise grew. We had to use the butt ends of our rifles. The Hunghuzes subsided and unwillingly gave us the Goldys. Colonel Karlov then ordered the Hunghuzes to put down their guns and immediately get out of the inn yard. The frightened Chinese did as they were told.

We learned later that we had taken the Goldys from the jaws of death, as the Hunghuzes had been just about to execute them. Their joy knew no bounds, and when we arrived in the village everyone greeted us as liberators. The mother of one of the freed men fell on her knees and kissed Karlov's feet. In spite of their poverty, the Goldys fed us all they could, taking nothing in return.

After a short stay in the Goldy village, we went to the settlement of Staraia Rusa, from which we would have

Shebeko: to go through the taiga to the railroad and thereby fulfill our main task, which was to burn bridges and thereby keep the enemy from sending his armored trains to the station In, which our army proposed to attack. The rest of the day went quietly enough, and toward evening we arrived at the settlement, but couldn't stop there. Fifteen versts away in the stantsiia [station] of Nadezhdinskaia was a detachment of about two hundred men under a commissar named Pokrovskii. The day before this detachment had been there to requisition horses.

The inhabitants of Staraia Rusa, knowing that we were Kappel'evtsy, were very glad and showered us with requests to get their horses back from the Reds. They assured us that the Reds had got hold of khanshin and were all drunk and it would be no trouble to take them by surprise.

Their requests were so insistent that Colonel Karlov decided to tempt fate. In the darkest night we set out for Nadezhdinskaia. It was so dark that the guide lost his way. We began to lose our way. We had learned that the detachment of Commissar Pokrovskii was to get reinforcements in the morning from the stantsiia Tekhmenevka, so we were going to have to take

Shebeko: Nadezhdinskaia and get away again as soon as possible before the Reds arrived. However, instead of hurrying we blundered along, losing valuable time. It was already getting close to dawn when we began to see the houses.

As we had hoped, the Reds were sound asleep, not expecting any danger. They hadn't even posted a guard. At first everything went very well. We simply went in the huts and routed out the befuddled Reds, but in doing this our men lost their caution and made noise. On the other end of the village a machine gun opened up, there were commands, dark figures began to run out of the houses, there were rifle shots, and everything fell into confusion. In the darkness everything became confused; people shot anywhere and at anything; several Reds in their alarm took us for their own, fell in our ranks and kindly offered us cartridges. Sometimes the affair became a hand-to-hand struggle, in which the peasants played an important role.

The battle, if you can call it that, did not last long; the Reds began to run, leaving the less fortunate with us. Our soldiers began to scatter out over the village. One of the riflemen ran to me with a message

Shebeko: to go to Colonel Karlov. I found him in one of the huts questioning prisoners. "Go right away to the telegraph office and gather up all the ribbons there!"

Putting my rifle in the corner, I went out into the street. The office was at the other end of the village. When I got there I discovered that the door was locked from within. I knocked; there was no reply. I knocked louder and heard a voice from within: "Who is there?"

"Open up! One of your own!"

The door opened and on the threshold appeared a very tall figure in a black sheepskin coat, and there was no mistaking a shining revolver in his hand. I looked about, but there was no one else around. I could see that I was in a tight spot. I thought fast, looking for a way out. I remembered that the Reds were expecting reinforcements. I would have to use this. But the proximity of the revolver muzzle was sobering in influence. My spirit sank lower and lower.

"What do you want? Who are you?"

"We're the ones you've been waiting for from Tekhmenevka, and you receive us in this fashion!"

"But we were expecting you much later! According

Shebeko: to the telegraph your battalion had only started out. There's some mistake!"

"For which you will answer," I said.

Then I heard the crunch of approaching footsteps in the snow. As the danger receded my spirit rose. A small group of soldiers appeared. It was time to act. I quickly grabbed Commissar Pokrovskii -- it was he-- by the hand. At the same instant one of the peasants swung and hit the commissar on the jaw. Blood trickled from a cut lip. He begged for mercy. I ordered the beating to cease and Pokrovskii to be taken to the staff headquarters to be questioned. So we went in a procession, Pokrovskii firmly led. Of his former authority there remained not a trace. Face downcast, with drooping shoulders, he looked like a poor beaten-down man. I actually felt sorry for him.

In the staff they started to question Pokrovskii, but I was not interested. While the other soldiers had looked admiringly at his warm half-overcoat, my gaze had been drawn to how well he was shod. He had a very nice pair of ichki, soft leather boots, lined with fur. I asked him whather he was willing to exchange them for my valenki. He was so scared that he

Shebeko: consented very readily. They fit me perfectly, and walking from one side of the room to the other I felt untold comfort and lightness. Everyone envied me.

After a while, Pokrovskii asked Karlov's permission to go outside and relieve himself. So Karlov told the soldier standing at the door, "Take him out." But the soldier was asleep and did not hear him, so Pokrovskii went out the door alone and did not return. Neither did Colonel Karlov's dappled grey horse. People were not so sorry that Pokrovskii had fled as they were that he had taken with him his warm Romanov sheepskin coat, which several had already considered their own. Colonel Karlov, suffering more than anyone else, vented his displeasure with curses at Pokrovskii. Modesty does not permit me to go into detail regarding his lexicon, but I can say that my knowledge of this field of language was considerably increased.

There was a light strip on the horizon, foretelling the approach of dawn. No one wanted to remain in the village any longer, because soon we could expect guests from the stantsiia Tikhmenski (or Tekhmenevka), a meeting with whom would do us no good. Taking the

Shebeko: prisoners and the horses, we left the stantsiia Nadezhdinskaia and headed back toward Staraia Rusa. There it was decided that we should rest before starting the hard march through the taiga to the railroad siding (raz'ezd) of Aur.

The sun was high in the sky when someone hit me on the shoulder and awakened me with "Lieutenant! The Reds!" Sleep vanished in an instant at this unwelcome news, and I threw on my coat, grabbed my rifle, and ran outside the hut. Bullets were whistling in the street. The detachment had already gathered on the edge of the village and I hurried to join it.

Against the white snow could clearly be seen a long line of the enemy, embracing the village with its flanks. Colonel Karlov gave me his binoculars. Looking through them I could make out clearly the dappled grey horse and the familiar figure in the black sheepskin coat. Commissar Pokrovskii was paying us a visit. I looked at Karlov. He was furious, but his better judgment made him give up the idea of battle. trading shots, our detachment quickly retreated and made for the woods. Our prisoners did not try to escape and stayed with us. The Reds did not try to

Shebeko: follow us and we made it into the forest safely.

The attack on the stantsiia Nadezhdinskaia was a great mistake on Colonel Karlov's part, revealing our plans to the Reds and accounting for the failure of our attack later on the stantsiia Landokovo. But the mistake had been made and it was too late to correct it. Now we had to make our attack on Aur and burn the bridges so that we could hinder the movement of the Red armored trains toward the station In.

From questioning the inhabitants we found out that there was a path to the siding, used by hunters, partly through the woods, but probably covered with snow. There were no settlements along the way. It did not appear possible to make such a journey for such a distance through deep snow, all the more since the horses were exhausted, and none of us had slept for two days. The prospect of spending the night in the forest in deep frost is no joke. The prisoners we had taken at Nadezhdinskaia, almost equal in number to our detachment, held us back, and to take them along in such risky circumstances was dangerous. Colonel Karlov decided to return to Petrovskii so that we could rest and make another attempt to reach the Aur siding the next day. It was proposed to

Shebeko: release the Reds.

It was already dark before we again saw the lights of the village. Within an hour I was stretched out under a bench in a warm hut, soon forgetting the events of the day and fast asleep.

When I awoke the daylight was just beginning to show through the frosted window. In spite of passing a quiet night I still felt very tired. My head and my whole body ached. I got up with difficulty and went outside to look after my horse. In the yard it was dismal and cold. I drank in the fresh air, and my head became a little clearer. The horses stood in a row, tied to the fence. They were covered with white frost, obviously chilled to the bone, and shivering.

My Bucephalus showed no pleasure at seeing me, pressed down his ears, and tossed his head in displeasure. To restore good relations I clapped him on the neck and gave him a crust of bread. He raised his ears and as a sign of good will thrust his muzzle against my chest. I watered him and gave him some oats and our friendship was reestablished. During the Civil War man and horse were as one. Horses shared all the difficulties of our campaign. They bore hunger and cold with us. In

Shebeko: difficult moments they carried us out of danger. Most of us owed our lives to our horses. We were used to them, and looked on them as thinking beings. They were our most faithful and devoted friends.

When I returned to the hut the others were already up and were drinking tea. They were all serious, and by their movements one could see that they were nervous and jumpy. It didn't take a psychologist to understand their thoughts. Our situation was serious. There was no longer any doubt that the Reds knew all about our presence and would soon take measures to get rid of such unwelcome guests. The future was not rosy.

Just then Colonel Karlov's orderly came in and told us we were to prepare to march. Within a quarter of an hour we were out of the village. Halfway across the Amur, Colonel Karlov suddenly brought the detachment to a halt, stepped before us, described our difficult position in a few words, warned us of the difficulties before us, and finally said, "Any of you who do not want to continue the operation I will not hinder. There is still time for you to return to Khabarovsk. For those of you who remain with me I can promise nothing. All those wanting to return step ten paces forward!"

Shebeko: For a moment there was embarrassment in the ranks. Everyone looked at his neighbor. Finally Captain Struve stepped forward, and as if at a command, all of his squadron. Behind remained only a pitiful handful of twenty-six men. In spite of the temptation to get out of danger, pride did not permit me to evade what I had volunteered for. The detachment divided. But fate was to play a cruel joke on Captain Struve. On the way to Khabarovsk his squadron met a large band of Hunghuzes, and during the skirmish that followed he was killed.

The Capture of the Aur Siding

Shebeko: The remainder of Colonel Karlov's detachment, now only a handful of men, made its way carefully along the Amur. The icy wind in our faces bore a cloud of fine snow, blinding us and striking painfully like sharp needles. The vapor from our breaths froze on our lips and chins. Thick icicles formed in our horses' nostrils. Our legs became numb from fatigue, and our fingers ceased to move. In our frozen brains there was only one

Shebeko: thought -- to get into warm quarters as quickly as possible, but there failed to appear even a sign of any sort of habitation.

Suddenly we saw dark human forms, forms running across the Amur toward the Russian shore. In binoculars it could be made out that these were Chinese, probably taking us for Hunghuzes, and fleeing for their lives. Colonel Karlov commanded "Double time!" in order to cut off the fugitives and save them somehow from certain death, but this only gave new speed to their legs and soon the last Chinese disappeared from view. Several days later, passing anew over this area, we came upon their bodies, most of them frozen to death.

With unpleasant feelings of our involuntary guilt we made our way toward the deserted Chinese village. We decided to not remain there in the hopes that the Chinese, seeing that we had gone, would come back. But from fear the eyes are big; the Chinese went so far that they could not see our departure. We continued to look back for a long time, but the Amur, as before, remained deserted. Finally, vexed that we could not warm ourselves, we consigned the Chinese to the devil and, already not looking back, continued on our way.

Shebeko: With advancing darkness fate took pity on us by sending us a small fishing shack and, still better, a great six-foot fish, left by the fishermen. This discovery put us in a joyful mood. All that there remained behind was forgotten and the eyes of all dwelt lovingly on the fact that soon the fish would be the property of our stomachs, which had long been indignant at being forgotten. The soldiers lit a fire in the small stove, pulled out the ramrods of their rifles, put small pieces of fish on them, which then were browned slightly over the flame and sent to their destinations. Inasmuch as twenty-seven hungry mouths engaged in this, one can understand that all six feet from head to tail were gone through very quickly.

Weary of this occupation, everyone soon lay down where he was and soon the hut resounded with a chorus of snores. An unseen observer, looking down from above, would have seen a small area in which human forms were heaped in disorder. Here and there stuck out from this pile arms and legs, shod in valenki, perhaps resting in someone's face. From this heap came twenty-seven different sounds depending on the construction of the noses of their possessors.

During the night Colonel Karlov roused the

Shebeko: detachment. Only half awake, it was hard to find one's hands and feet. Some time passed before everyone unravelled and became ready to go on. The wind dropped on the Amur, but for this reason the cold increased. It was painful and difficult to go out in the still air. The full moon stood high in the sky and clearly illuminated the snow-covered shore. The crystallized snow glistened, reflecting its rays. And the Amur, covered with a white shroud, went far ahead and disappeared. The picture was wonderful, worthy of the brush of an artist, but too cold and uninviting for us to enjoy it.

We led our horses by their bridles. The snow squeaked underfoot. The tips of our noses and cheeks began to be nipped. I took up a handful of snow and began to rub my face. After a while my face began to glow, but not for long, and soon the same procedure had to be repeated.

After going five versts along the Amur we turned toward the Russian shore. There was no road, and we were up to our knees in snow. Here I made an unwelcome discovery. The idiot Pokrovskii had been too lazy to sew small straps on the tops of the boots and instead of this had simply poked holes in them. This opened a way for fine snow to enter the boots and all my efforts

Shebeko: to warm myself were unsuccessful. I felt anger toward he who had placed me in such an awkward position. "Fall into my hands again," I thought, "and I'd make you run barefoot on the ice!" I looked with envy on the valenki of the soldiers and thought it a crying shame. It would not be easy to make a trade.

A whole day passed, and toward evening we reached a forest, where we spent a long cold wintry night. Finally dawn came, and with it Christmas Day. The moon set, and in its place on the horizon appeared a strip of light which became wider and wider, finally seizing the whole eastern half of the sky as the night departed in the west. Finally the first bit of the sun appeared, and as it rose the snow took on a rosy hue. But it was still cold, if not colder.

On the right a small forest appeared. Beyond it, by our calculations, should be the Aur siding. Whether or not Aur was occupied by the Reds was the question which occupied our thoughts. We felt the usual weakness in our knees, and we began to try the bolts of our rifles. The grease around them had congealed and they did not open, so we had to build small fires from twigs and warm them. On the edge of the forest we stopped in

Shebeko: order to acquaint ourselves with the situation. The siding was in an entirely open place about one verst from the outskirts where we stood. A more inconvenient situation for an attack would have been hard to imagine. At the same time the snow was so deep that an attack would have to be made very slowly, giving the Reds time, without being in a hurry, to take us to a man. Involuntarily one thought: to go or not to go, and would they not pick us off like partridges?

Colonel Karlov finally decided. "Leave the horses with the ringleader!"

"Now it starts!" I thought.

"In a skirmish line -- follow me!"

We ran into a line and the advance began. Our figures must have been clearly visible against the white background. A beautiful target for a machine gun. We went forward, leaving behind us deep paths in the snow. I felt that I was exhausted. My heart beat madly, as if it would leap from my breat. My face was covered with sweat. I took off my fur cap. Hot.

And at the siding quiet. If only they would shoot -- the silence got on one's nerves. They probably wanted to let us up close and then get us for sure. But the

Shebeko: danger was in vain. The closer we came to the siding the clearer it became for us that it was not occupied. Smoke rose lazily from the chimneys of houses of the tiny settlement, the inhabitants of which probably were still asleep. Even the dogs did not sense the presence of strangers. And, as always happens in war, the feeling of tension in people began quickly to change to a feeling of ease and bravado. Fatigue vanished somewhere, and we covered the remaining distance almost at a run.

By order of Karlov, I first of all went to the telegraph office. The first that I met there was the frightened, sleepy face of the telegraphist. He began to roll his eyes in the hope that I was a dream and not a hostile reality. Finally, convinced that I was not a product of his imagination, he became terribly pale, and looked at me beseechingly. I hastened to convince him that I was in no way such a terrible being as he imagined, and would not offer him the slightest harm. He seemed to be reassured, and began to mutter something, but speech was still not altogether obedient to him and I was unable to make head or tail of it.

The telegraph apparatus stuttered.

Shebeko: "Free the key!" I ordered the telegrapher. He hastened to fulfill the order. The narrow ribbon began to drift on the table.

"Aur receives," tapped out the telegraphist.

On the ribbon dots and dashes began to be printed.

"Read me what they send to you!" I ordered.

"To the Chief of the Economic Section. Send immediately two cars with hay, the horses pant with hunger."

"Transmit that the request will be delivered."

"The request will be delivered," tapped out the submissive telegraphist.

"Now ask, how are affairs at station In."

In reply on the ribbon began to appear: "All quiet. We are awaiting the attack of the Kappelevtsy."

"Now call the station Tikhmenski."

"On the wire the commandant of station Tikhmenski."

"Transmit: 'Here is station In -- what do you know of the Karlov detachment?' "

There was a pause, then: "Who asks?"

For a second I was put in a difficult position. What to answer, so as not to arouse suspicion? I was already sorry that I had taken on myself the initiative

Shebeko: to chat with the Reds, without the permission of Colonel Karlov. To break off the conversation at the present moment was unthinkable, inasmuch as the Reds would come to understand at once that something was wrong. Considering all this I decided to go at a tangent.

"It is none of your business. Answer as you are ordered!"

I must confess that I didn't expect a reply, but my sharp phrase evidently frightened the person sitting at the other end of the wire, and dots and dashes began to be printed anew on the ribbon. "According to Comrade Pokrovskii the Karlov detachment is somewhere in the vicinity of station Landakovo. From station Tikhmenski a unit is being sent out for the liquidation of the detachment. An armored train guards the railroad."

"Don't you suppose that the Karlov detachment may be in the vicinity of the Aur siding?"

"There is a danger of such a possibility; the armored train has been ordered to carry on reconnaissance."

"Don't trouble yourself. We will send an armored train from station In."

"The armored train has already left station Tikhmenski

Shebeko: and we cannot call it back."

"All right. Goodbye." I cut the wire and left the premises. Some of the soldiers had already sawed down telegraph poles, others placed hay under the wooden bridges and soaked them with kerosene, and a third group tore up the rails ahead. The track was destroyed for about a verst westward. Colonel Karlov led the destruction of the siding. I went to him. "Colonel, an armored train has been sent out from station Tikhmenski."

"And where did you learn that?"

"I talked on the telegraph with the commandant of station Tikhmenski."

"And who gave you permission?" He looked me sternly in the eye.

Suddenly a dangerous thought flashed through my head. "At my own initiative, Colonel."

"Next time don't display your initiative -- but thanks for the news!"

The colonel immediately detached several horsemen as an outpost, and ordered the rest to hurry up with sawing the poles and burning the bridges. Soon the poles began to fall down in a confusion of wires and the hay

Shebeko: under the bridges burned gaily. Tongues of flame licked the frozen sleepers and logs, which hissed and yielded reluctantly to the flame. We had to throw on hay several times before the bridges burned. Four or five bridges were burned on the side of station Tikhmenski and one by the siding. When it became clear that the flames would finish their work without our aid, we all went inside to take a well-earned rest.

In spite of the danger of the arrival of the armored train, we could not resist the temptation to sleep. I arranged myself on the floor in a corner of the room and closed my eyes. Probably only minutes passed before I dozed.

"Boom, boom, ta-ta-ta-ta," I heard through my slumber. I opened my eyes and jumped quickly to my feet. In the room it was almost dark. Some of the men already had run outside, others pulling at their belts, were running toward the doors. I hastened to follow their example.

Along the railroad bullets whizzed. In the distance against the darkening sky was clearly delineated the silhouette of the armored train. Suddenly from it glittered flame, then a thick explosion, and grapeshot with

Shebeko: a shriek went through out ranks. The next shot was on the mark; the shell exploded several paces from us throwing pieces of the frozen ground and fragments of ties high in the air. Constantly stuttered the two Red machine guns, hurling sheaves of bullets at us, too near for comfort. "To horse!" commanded Colonel Karlov.

I mounted my Bucephalus only with great difficulty. Bursting shells were not to his taste. He ceased to be the apathetic animal which I was used to considering him. His nostrils flared, his ears were pressed back, and his fore hooves pawed at the snow. When I tried to jump into the saddle he made an unmistakable movement, trying to kick me. "Yes, and the same to you, brother!" I said, striking him with the palm of my hand on the mortse, from which his head shot high upward and his teeth ground on the bit.

Finally, victory was mine, and the subdued Bucephalus at a gallop covered the distance separating me from the riders ahead. The Red armored train did not want to leave us in peace, sending flame in our direction, and shrapnel after shrapnel, which burst high over head, throwing out lead balls, and these very shell fragments

Shebeko: themselves cut through the air with an unfriendly whistle.

Finally, when the Reds saw the uselessness of further effort they ceased fire. Colonel Karlov stopped the detachment and asked, "Is everybody here?"

To general satisfaction, everyone was. The day could not have been better. The task was successfully carried out entirely without loss. It remained to thank the slowness with which the armored train had come from the station Tikhmenski to Aur. If it had not come as darkness set in, but a little earlier...

To Station Londakovo

Shebeko: A description of how we moved from one Cossack farmstead to another would not be of much interest so I will skip a short period following our destruction of the Aur siding...

...The detachment moved in a narrow corridor bordered by giant trees. Their thick branches formed a dense vault over our heads, through which the rays of the sun seldom penetrated. The path sometimes widened in a small glade, sometimes became so narrow that the

Shebeko: three sleighs loaded with hay and silver (which we paid the Cossacks) could scarcely pass between the tree trunks. Our Cossack guide went ahead of the detachment on a sleigh. He was a healthy fellow who had spent all his life in the taiga, hunting for the animals with which this forest abounded. I established myself with him in the sleigh, telling Colonel Karlov that I would do this to protect the bags of silver. At first my Cossack was not talkative, and some time passed before I finally succeeded in breaking the ice and in dispelling his moroseness. After that he became a very gay and interesting conversationalist. My conversation with him greatly shortened the long and monotonous hours of our journey. He had an inexhaustible store of reminiscences of taiga life, for me unknown and little understood. He knew the taiga like his five fingers, which made him irreplaceable man for us. If several of the participants of this expedition still enjoy the privilege of being among the living, it is to our guide that they owe this.

In order that this may be clear, I will depart from the chronological order of our story and return to our old enemy, Comrade Pokrovskii. After his successful escape, Pokrovskii gathered his shabby detachment, enlarged it with conscripts, and set out to catch Karlov.

Shebeko: So far he had not succeeded, but now appeared a good time to revenge himself for his humiliation. Pokrovskii knew very well that we proposed to make an attack on station Londakovo. As a local inhabitant he knew the road which we would take. Whence he learned of the day of our attack was a mystery to us, but the fact remained that on this day Pokrovskii was close on our heels. Of course, we did not know then of this, and we went on in complete ignorance of the approaching danger. The events at the Aur siding were still fresh in our memory and everything now seemed easy and accessible.

Because of my conversation with the guide time passed quickly for me. His tales attracted me by their novelty. With pride in his expensive elk-skin coat, he told a long story of how for three weeks he tracked it down, as the elk with almost human cunning tried to cover his tracks. To my question of how he could pass winter months in the taiga far from any habitation and not freeze, he showed me in a small roll a tent and a little tin stove, and with these things, he said, he was never parted.

My footgear attracted his attention. "You have fine <u>unty</u> [soft leather boots lined with fur], Gospodin

Shebeko: Officer [Sir Officer]."

I agreed with him that they were good, but expressed regret that they had holes poked in the ankles, through which the snow filtered.

The Cossack shook his head sympathetically. "You have a long road ahead, and you'll freeze in those."

I again agreed with him, but said that I couldn't help it.

"You know, Gospodin Officer, my valenki are at least warm, and I could get along in the unty."

On this we agreed. The valenki appeared to me to be my size, and were truly warm, while the Cossack, looking slyly at me, got a needle and thread from somewhere and, quickly sewing the holes, put the unty on his feet.

Evening approached. The darkness quickly advanced and soon was so dark that it seemed that we were plunged in ink. We made our way groping, and counted more on the senses of our horses than on our own senses. The horses held closely together, trying not to separate from each other. Conversations ceased and even my companion ceased his tales. The quiet was broken only by the snorting of the horses and the sad creaking of

Shebeko: the trees swaying in the wind.

It was time to think of a place to stay. When we came out on one of the glades, Colonel Karlov stopped the detachment and ordered us to make camp as best as we might. The soldiers cut up a small tree, heaped up the dry branches, and soon a fire blazed up gaily. On ramrods were roasted raw meat, bolted down with frozen bread, and then we lay around the fire in a tight ring. I cannot say that I felt comfortable. The half of me turned toward the fire was hot, while the other half froze, but nevertheless, after a while, I managed to sleep.

I was awakened by a nudge, opened my eyes, and saw our guide leaning over me. "Gospodin Officer, come to me in the tent." I did not require a second invitation. I lay in the tent in my coat and valenki, but soon was so warm that I had to take them off. The remainder of the night passed in warmth and comfort. As I emerged from the tent in the morning, the others who had spent the night outside presented a sorry picture. Many had burned their coats and valenki, several managed even to burn parts of their fur caps, and one of the soldiers burned one half of his great-coat.

Shebeko: Without hesitation he cut off the other half and made something in the nature of a woman's jacket.

Assembling, the detachment pushed on. The day passed without particular adventures and we spent another night by the fire. This time I was not so lucky, as Colonel Karlov occupied my place in the tent and I had to share the lot of the rest, the result being a burned coat. On the third day before sunset we felt that we were nearing the end of our journey. The forest began to thin out and the path became a road. On the snow one could see fresh signs of horses' hoofs. Evidently here not long before had passed riders -- this alone aroused suspicion in us. Passing still three or four versts, we came upon livestock, the forest ended, and before our eyes we saw the station village.

Colonel Karlov looked for a long time through binoculars, trying to distinguish the presence of people there. Finally he decided to send three horsemen for reconnaissance. The horsemen rode forward at a gallop and soon disappeared behind the houses. After only a few seconds there were shots and our scouts, flying out from the village, flew headlong in our direction, one of them lagging behind. In the next minute appeared

Shebeko: Red cavalry, about a squadron in number, on the borders of the village. Comrade Pokrovskii had succeeded in warning his own about our intentions. One of our scouts was wounded in the neck. Good sense prompted Karlov to send scouts a verst ahead. Some time passed and the scouts galloped back with the news that some sort of detachment was moving along the path to meet us. The news was in high degree unwelcome; it meant that they would catch us in a pincers. The situation was hopeless. To go forward was useless. To accept battle meant being massacred.

Here our Cossack guide came to our rescue. "Gospodin Commander, follow me." We turned to one side, directly into a thicket of forest. Fortunately it was not too dense in this place, nevertheless the deep snow made it very difficult to proceed. At this time it began to get dark. We went about a half verst when suddenly in the road behind was a heavy fusillade. There was no doubt that the two Red detachments, trapping us, had met, and not knowing who they had met were clashing in the darkness.

Judging by the number of shots the battle they were waging was no joke. Then, after about ten minutes,

Shebeko: all was quiet. Whether they discovered their error, or whether one of the detachments had fled, we did not know.

With the onset of darkness our movement presented a sufficiently complex task. Sleighs became stuck every minute, people tripped, bumped into trees, and on top of that, the forest became denser.

Colonel Karlov ordered me to look after the silver. I went to the sledge every five minutes and asked the driver, "Are the bags here?" Each time I received an affirmative answer. Finally I decided personally to check on their presence. Putting my hand in the hay I felt drops of cold sweat on my brow -- one of the bags was not there -- it probably fell out during the shaking up of our flight. Asked whether they had taken the money, the two other drivers answered negatively. What was to be done? I overtook Karlov. "Gospodin Colonel, one of the bags fell out of the sledge."

"What...?!" he roared.

"One of the bags is lost," I said quietly.

"I want that bag! Find it wherever it may be. Scour the whole forest, and don't return without it."

I knew that Karlov was not joking. Never yet in my

Shebeko: life had I felt myself so miserable as at this moment. In search for the bag I passed over all the road we had covered down to that from which we had turned off. I got down on my knees and rummanged in the snow, and after two hours, exhausted and vexed with the fruitless search, returned back. Approaching the last sledge, I sat on it, undecided whether to go to Karlov and give the unwelcome news. I sat and suddenly felt under me something hard. Brushing the hay aside, I found what I had so long searched for. In a fury I threw myself on the driver. "You scoundrel, you kept quiet when I asked. You wanted to steal the money. You ought to be shot for this!"

"Don't harm me, Gospodin Officer," entreated that one, making a sincere cross, "I thought that it was nails."

The excuse was absurd, but the money was found, and that was all that was necessary for me. What a fool I felt, that I did not look at once in all the sledges.

At that time Colonel Karlov, understanding the uselessness of going on in darkness, decided to await daylight. In view of the proximity of the enemy, fires were not lit and we were even ordered not to speak above

Shebeko: a whisper. Siberian frost is no joking matter, and people awaited the morning with frozen cheeks and noses. Going to the sledge where lay our wounded man I found only his stiff body. A wound of little danger in other circumstances had proved fatal for him.

During the next two days we continued our way through the almost impassible taiga, often hacking it with sabers and axes. In the end, on the night of the second day, we came to a more open place and somewhere nearby heard a dog barking. To exhausted people he sounded better than any music. Even the horses picked up their ears and went faster. But our hopes to find shelter were soon dashed. As we went forward the barks became nearer, then became distant. We were somehow wandering in a vicious circle. Our scouts, sent ahead, returned one after another with the news that they could not find the village. Only in the morning did we entirely by chance stumble upon a large Korean fanza, sheltered in a ravine. How wonderful it was to lie on a floor, and feel the flow of blood in our veins again. The Koreans boiled us a great kettle of fish soup for which fish were used entirely uncleaned. I have never eaten such bitter soup in my life.

Shebeko: Our guide told us that the great Cossack village of Voznesenskaia must be in the vicinity, so Colonel Karlov decided not to stay long with the Koreans and to move on to the village in order to rest there.

For the Cossacks our arrival was very unexpected; they had in no way expected to see Kappelevtsy appear among them, and were very glad to see us. For two days we enjoyed their hospitality, slept to our hearts' content, and ate our fill. This was our first decent rest during the whole expedition. In that village we and our guide parted company. Somewhere with him went the unty which had belonged to Pokrovskii and then to me.

In the rear of the Reds we could do nothing more. Although our task was not wholly fulfilled we nevertheless had done all that we could. It was time to return to Khabarovsk.

That morning before our departure it was my and another soldier's turn to take a lookout post and relieve two men who were already there. The lookout post was about a mile from the outskirts of the village. As we approached our destination we saw two men galloping at full speed in our direction. Passing us, they shouted, "The Reds!" We turned our horses and followed

Shebeko: their example. At this moment my horse developed a stubborn streak. He simply didn't understand why I was in such a hurry. In desperation I fired a shot over his ear. He lunged ahead and I almost lost my balance. Apparently the Reds misunderstood my action and thought the shot was for their benefit, because they answered with the same. Bullets whistled over my head and injected new life in my horse. I soon caught up with our man and when we reached the village I won the race.

Our detachment, hearing the commotion, was already mounted and ready to depart. We descended to the river, to find another column of Reds approaching the village along the left bank. Colonel Karlov, not desiring to provoke a fight, ordered us to cross the river toward the Chinese side. The order was variously executed. As usual I was dragging well behind. A few mounted Reds separated from their column and headed in my direction in order to investigate the unusual situation, for apparently our presence here was hardly expected.

Our soldiers who were already on the other side, in order to help me in my predicament, opened fire,

Shebeko: which stopped the Reds in their tracks. However, this also stopped my horse. For a few seconds he was undecided which way to go. Finally to my relief he chose the company of our own horses.

When I reached the other shore Karlov asked me, "Where did you get this old nag?" And then, "You were certainly not born to be a cavalryman!" This I strongly suspected myself, and therefore didn't argue.

Our march along the Chinese border was uneventful except for the difficulty of going through deep snow without any road. By the evening the air had become cold and freezing. The sky was clear and a bright moon shone on this white plain. The desire to find a warm place was overwhelming.

On the Russian side we saw the welcome sight of lights in the windows of a small village. According to our map it was the same village from which we started our march towards station Londakovo. Karlov decided to take a chance on the presumption that the village was not occupied. We entered the village unobserved.

On the street we saw a long line of peasants in front of one of the houses. To our question of what the occasion was, we received the reply that "Comrade

Red Commissar

Shebeko: Zverev is paying for the hay which was requisitioned earlier by the Reds." As for the type of money he used, we found that it was only promissory notes. Some of us entered the house. There in the middle of the room, at a table littered with paper, sat a husky fellow. As we came closer he said, without lifting his head, "Go back and wait in the line." Someone put a hand on his shoulder. He raised his head and almost fainted.

Karlov called the headman of the village and told him that we needed oats and hay, for which we would pay in real silver rubles. This extravagance on our part had a magic effect. The peasants even offered their help in guarding us, so we could spend a good restful night. They kept their word and we spent the night without incident.

The next morning someone told me that a certain peasant was looking for me. When he was brought to me I noticed that there were familiar features hidden behind a big shiner over his left eye. Another familiar sight were my woollen boots on his feet. By this time they looked like two big pancakes.

"Well, brother," I said, "Who did that to you?"

"Comrade Pokrovskii," was the sullen reply.

Shebeko: I felt myself somewhat responsible for the black eye, and so I said, "Would you like to exchange them?"

"Yep!"

So we sat down and the boots changed feet. I did not feel too bad about it, since I had already noticed that Comrade Zverev had a nice pair of boots of his own which he would be glad to exchange for mine.

We were already close to the main line of the front, and to avoid detection it was decided to move the rest of the way under cover of darkness. Our detachment left the village at dusk. Comrade Zverev did not have a horse of his own -- his was probably stolen by one of the Cossacks -- so he was therefore assigned to the sleigh where we carried the feed for the horses and our bags of silver. He walked alongside the sleigh with his feet widely outstretched, because the wide spread of my boots prevented a more normal sort of locomotion.

The peasants on the Amur River fish for sturgeon in the water. To do this they cut a hole in the ice, and when they get their fish they do not bother to cover the hole. That night I stepped into one of those holes and found myself in icy cold water. I was pulled

Shebeko: out in short order, but the problem arose immediately of what to do with my wet clothing. This problem was soon solved to mutual satisfaction between me and Comrade Zverev, and I finally got my woollen boots back for good. Some people have an attachment to things. This is understandable. But when a thing has such a strongattachment to man, it is remarkable.

They put me in the sleigh, covered with hay, and poured almost a full bottle of vodka down my throat. This warmed me up and got me quite drunk. I was in such a good mood that not even when Karlov told me that I was only a big trouble to him was I offended.

In the meantime Comrade Zverev kept himself warm by running. The ice that formed on my clothing provided a good insulation. Since he was not complaining it was assumed that he felt quite comfortable.

On the way back to Khabarovsk we again met the same band of about one hundred and fifty Hunghuzes we had met at the Goldy village when we had first started out. However, there wasn't much of a fight because they ran away almost at once. Prior to that they had been badly mangled by Shiriaev's group. He had only seven men with him, and the Hunghuzes had about seven

Shebeko: hundred men, but his boys were all sharpshooters. They opened up from a long distance and they didn't waste any bullets, so the Hunghuzes lost quite a few men. They became panicky because they thought they had met a whole army, and they started to retreat, actually to run. So when they met us we just fired a few shots and they fled. That was actually very good for us, because they had quite a supply of pork which they had stolen from some village. When they ran away we captured all their food supply, so we were pretty well set.

Shiriaev was under General Molchanov, but he was more or less a lone wolf. He was a hunter by profession, a colonel. I think he was under Semenov at one time, but he broke away from him and decided to continue on his own. He was an adventurous type, but we relied on him for obtaining information and somehow he was able to work his way through the Red lines without being noticed. All the boys with him were hunters, all from that same part, from the Maritime Province. They were given various assignments and operated behind the Red troops, causing all kinds of trouble. He had only seven men with him, so they

Army Staff Headquarters, Khabarovsk

Shebeko: couldn't do major damage, but he became quite a legend.

During the remaining days nothing extraordinary happened. Comrade Zverev was a friendly soul and we began to count him as our own. That is, until the night before we rejoined our troops, when he disappeared, with our sleigh, bags of silver, and all.

As far as I can remember our troops had not yet begun to retreat when we returned to Khabarovsk. We came back shortly after the Reds under Boiko, a partisan guerilla, had made an attempt on the staff headquarters [12 January 1922]. They infiltrated at night and attacked the headquarters of General Molchanov. They were already in the back yard, and they started throwing hand grenades into the building. Molchanov and his Chief-of-Staff Lovtsevich were both asleep. They woke up when the attack came and ran outside. Lovtsevich was still in his BVDs, but he ran towards the Red machine gun and killed the machine gunner. By that time, of course, the soldiers around woke up too, and the partisans were driven out. I remember that the building was all pierced with bullets, and the windows were broken.

Pierce: What was the population of Khabarovsk when you were there?

Shebeko: It was quite a big town, at least for Siberia. I would say that it was 50 or 60 thousand.

Pierce: What was their attitude toward the White forces?

Shebeko: They were not hostile, but at the same time they apparently didn't believe our force would win, and consequently they were rather aloof. They were afraid that if they supported us openly they would pay for it later on. The population around Khabarovsk were Amur Cossacks, and they certainly were hostile to the Reds, but although they were very friendly, and when we went in the rear of the Red troops they didn't do anything to betray us or hamper our movements, at the same time they were rather cautious and didn't want to support us openly. One of the main purposes of this expedition was to start an uprising, but that didn't work out. While we were in the rear of the Red Army our troops had already met with several reverses. That was already known and they all knew that numerically we were not much.

Pierce: The population of Khabarovsk had already been under Red rule for over a year. How much of the old social structure was still apparent?

Shebeko: The town itself was not destroyed at all, but it had a very bleak look. Most of those who were well-to-do had escaped from Khabarovsk to Vladivostok, so there was not much social life there.

Pierce: Then those who remained were mostly the petty bourgeoisie and working-class people?

Shebeko: That's right.

Pierce: Did any refugees leave when the White forces did? [Khabarovsk was reoccupied by Red troops on 18 February 1922].

Shebeko: I don't recall any.

Pierce: And then how did the retreat go, was it orderly, always ahead of the enemy?

Shebeko: Yes. Actually we retreated rather slowly; apparently the Reds also suffered considerable casualties at Volochaevka, at In, and at Kazakevichi, and they were not anxious to pursue us very energetically, so the retreat was orderly. We took our time.

Pierce: Was this by rail?

Shebeko: No, the railroad was blown, so we had to go on foot. Even in the Maritime Province several bridges were blown. One at Khor, another at the river Bikin, and I think a third at Guborevo. It was not until we came to Spasskoe

Shebeko: that we were able to go by rail.

During this time the Reds began using regular troops from European Russia, even though the DVR was theoretically still in existence. In any case, the DVR was actually nothing else but a Bolshevik organization, a front. But during the Khabarovsk campaign they already wore the "bogatyrki," pointed hats with a big red star in front. (The bogatyrka was a cloth hat sewn so as to make the point. There was no padding in it.) It is strange that while they were dressed as we were, we felt one way, but when we saw those so-called bogatyrki on their heads we began to feel that now we were confronted with regular troops, more efficient, with a strong commanding hand behind them. Blucher was the Red commander at that time.

Pierce: I am interested in the matter of morale. The White forces had had that terrible retreat, and a constant struggle for such a long time against seemingly overwhelming odds. Just what was it that enabled them to keep going?

Shebeko: Mostly fear, I think. In other words, everybody knew there was no comeback, and there was fear of being captured, shot or sent to prison. I think that was the main reason people tried to keep together. It was

Shebeko: a matter of self-preservation. The realization that if there would be panic all would be lost. There was also the propaganda that the Reds were not taking any prisoners, that they were executing them on the spot.

Pierce: And this was often the case?

Shebeko: Not exactly. At the very beginning I would say yes, but later on there was a change. As a matter of fact, quite a few of the people I knew were captured and either inducted to serve in the Red army or first sent to prison and then after some time inducted into the army. A friend of mine, for instance, a captain, was captured at Krasnoiarsk and then inducted. Four years afterward my sister wrote me that he had returned to Odessa. (During service with the Reds he had had both feet amputated.) Another example was Marshal Govorov, who was quite a famous figure during the last war. He was another officer of our army who was captured at Krasnoiarsk. He entered into the Red service and finally became a marshal. It all depended on who captured you. For instance, there were certain Communist brigades which were composed primarily of political personnel. If you fell into their hands there was no escape. Well, the same thing was true

Shebeko: of us. If we captured a commissar, we would certainly execute him. During our advance towards Khabarovsk, that actually happened in my company. We were absolutely unprepared; we didn't know where the enemy was. However, we were still advancing in formation when we saw in front of us soldiers wearing epaulettes. Naturally we thought they were on our side. As we came toward them, they opened fire and eight of my men were killed outright. They had tricked us by wearing our uniform. We attacked and captured every one of them. Here, there was no mercy at all. We shot them right there and then. A friend of mine who commanded a cavalry squadron captured a group of Communists which had caused considerable damage to his own squadron. He formed a long line and said, "All right, boys, now take off your hats and pray to God."

They all threw their hats up in the air and said, "Communists don't pray." They were shot.

On the other hand, during the Khabarovsk expedition we set free a considerable number of Reds whom we had captured. This was because most of them had been mobilized from the neighboring villages and forcibly inducted into the Red army.

Pierce: What was the state of morale in the attack on Khabarovsk?

Shebeko: There morale was very high. First of all, there had been a period of inactivity while we were in Vladivostok. Everyone was tired of waiting and, fortunately, we met with success at the very beginning; Khabarovsk was taken without any fight at all. The Reds retreated from there. Later they formed their lines about forty miles west of Khabarovsk and received reinforcements constantly.

We met with quite a heavy defeat at the station In, but even that didn't break our morale; then there was another large battle at station Volochaevka, where we lost a considerable number of men and still our morale was very high. And when we started the retreat from Khabarovsk the retreat was very orderly.

The people who comprised the Kappel' Army at that time had no choice whatsoever. They were thousands of miles away from their homes, and they knew that they couldn't go back.

Pierce: But was there a feeling in this advance on Khabarovsk that this could actually be the beginning of a break-through?

Shebeko: Oh no, I don't think anybody had that feeling. As a matter of fact, everybody looked upon it simply as an adventure...

Pierce: ...that would merely slice off a bit of Siberian territory, but wouldn't get any further?

Shebeko: I don't think our command ever cherished this thought either. There were, of course, attempts to start an uprising among the Amur Cossacks. That was one of the reasons we were sent to the rear to attack. It didn't work out. No, I think every one felt that that was the beginning of the end. We harbored no hopes for we knew very well that the Reds at that time already had a considerable army against us, much better equipped than ours.

Pierce: Operating mainly with Japanese equipment?

Shebeko: No, it was not Japanese equipment; it was all Russian equipment. As a matter of fact, Japan didn't give us any equipment whatsoever. There was a demarcation line, which was, I believe, station Spasskoe, beyond which the Japanese didn't venture. We had already started this advance as far as Spasskoe, and when we came there we didn't have any guns whatsoever.

Apparently there was some sort of agreement with the Japanese. It was not kept secret, probably. But suddenly ammunition appeared, guns appeared, and the next day we were all armed. The Japanese at least had made a good pretense that the army was disarmed. During

Shebeko: all that march from Vladivostok to Spasskoe we didn't have any armament at all. As a matter of fact, neither did we have field pieces. We captured our first field pieces from the Reds later on at the villages of Venchakova and Rozundovka.

Pierce: Then how about the partisans? What was their composition for the most part? Were they actually thoroughly indoctrinated or were they local inhabitants who were hostile?

Shebeko: In the Maritime Province there were quite a few former convicts who were released from jail and usually those convicts became leaders. They inducted their men from the villages where, of course, there were many dissatisfied people. I think Semenov by his actions was the one who created those partisans in the Maritime Province and in Zabaikalia. He was certainly not a man who had, you might say, an unimpeachable character and he certainly didn't understand the desires or the feelings of the people. Anyone who was against him was treated like an enemy. Yes, Ungern and Semenov were the ones who created this movement, particularly in Zabaikalia and in the Maritime Province... But quite a few of those partisan leaders were former convicts who had been sentenced to hard labor for

Shebeko: crimes such as murder.

Pierce: And who were the partisans who operated against you during the retreat?

Shebeko: Those were mostly peasants. But those partisans were neither White nor were they Red. Later on the Bolsheviks dealt severely with all of them. Shevchenko, for example, actually had a slogan -- I don't remember exactly what it was, but it was something like "For the Tsar and against Kolchak." Probably, to some extent, that was also the whole Red army, because during this retreat we had to requisition horses and also food from the peasants, paying them with worthless IOUs. Naturally there was dissatisfaction. But it was not only that; another factor was propaganda. The Bolsheviks had agents behind our lines who formed guerilla detachments. But those Siberian partisans were not Red. As I have said, the Bolsheviks dealt very severely with them later. Shevchenko, I think, was shot. After we had retreated, the Red army followed on our heels doing exactly the same thing we had been doing. They also requisitioned whatever was left and the same partisans turned against them.

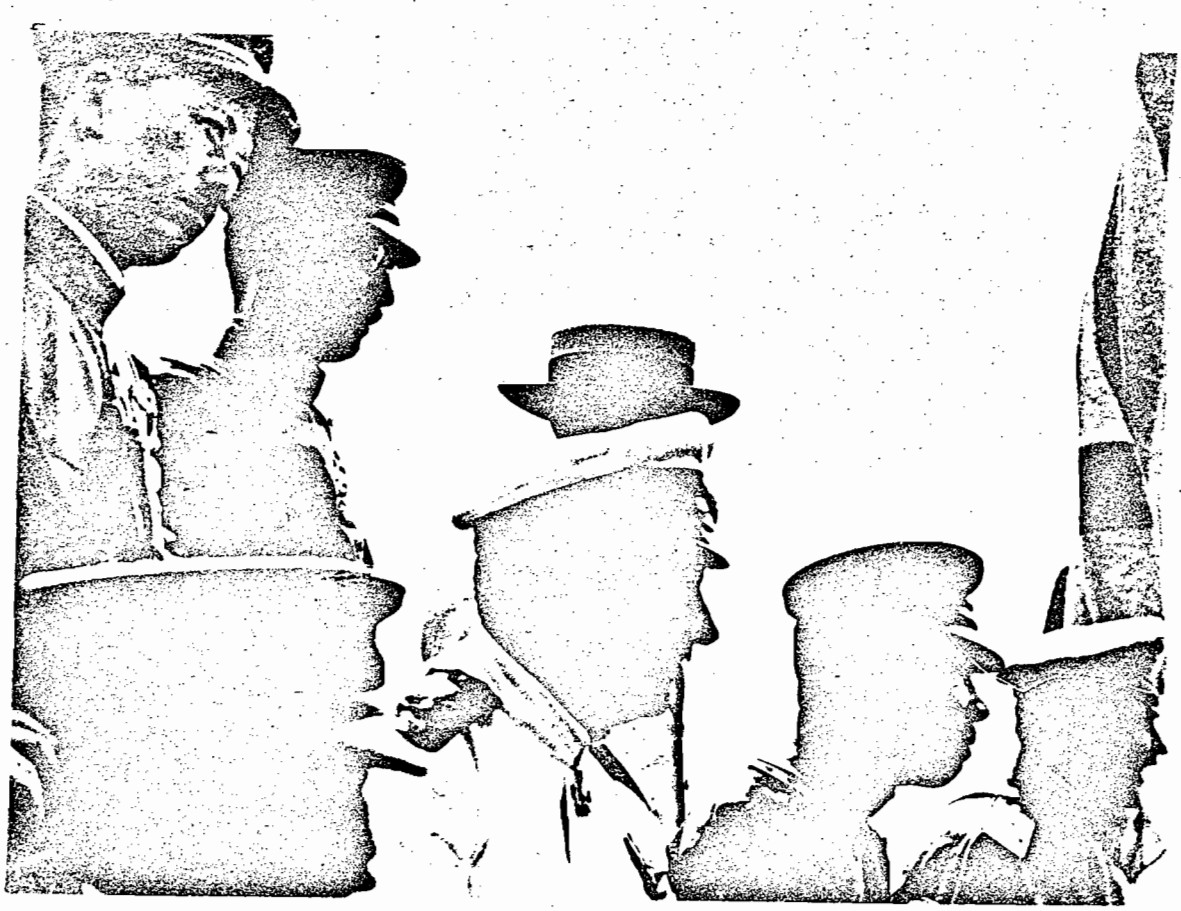
Pierce: They were in the middle, then, while the Whites and Reds were campaigning.

Shebeko: But in Transbaikalia there was no question that the situation was actually created by Semenov, because those

Shebeko: people were far from the center of the revolution and they didn't know what the revolution was and what were the slogans of the revolution...it was simply the atrocious way Semenov dealt with those peasants.

Pierce: You mentioned that there were some difficulties with Semenov's people when you first arrived at Vladivostok.

Shebeko: There were always difficulties while we were there. First of all, we were not at all welcome in Transbaikalia. Semenov was naturally under the impression that he was the successor of Kolchak, and, on the other hand, our generals didn't want to have anything to do with him. They were more or less independent. The relations between our troops and Semenov's troops were always very bad. As a matter of fact, when we were in Transbaikalia the burden of fighting the partisans fell on our shoulders. We had to make an expedition to drive out the partisans. We didn't succeed because they simply moved away as we advanced. When the Bolsheviks advanced toward Chita I don't think Semenov's troops ever took part. We bore the whole burden. Later, when we were in Vladivostok and Semenov was in Japan, [In May 1922?] he made an attempt to overthrow our government but didn't succeed.



Admiral Stark, General Tachibana
and General Dietrichs

Shebeko: These things always happened very suddenly. The first I knew of it was when I was told by my general that if I saw Nicholas Merkulov I should arrest him. That was all...the whole affair about the overthrow of the government was kept in the upper spheres. General Petrov, in his book, took some pains to explain how this happened, but he was a general; he knew what was going on behind the scenes. All that we knew was that Semenov was there, on a boat which was anchored in the Golden Horn. The navy men were all for Semenov, and there was some kind of fight. And then Semenov left again.

Pierce: Did you see any of the Allied representatives or troops in the Maritime Province?

Shebeko: No, only the Japanese. The American troops [March 1920] and others had already moved out by the time we arrived.

The Japanese had a hard time fighting the partisans in the Maritime Province for the simple reason that they first sent their Fifth Army recruited from the southern part of Japan, and consequently not adapted to a cold climate. On several occasions I saw these Japanese standing sentry duty all wrapped up in fur coats, looking like bundles of fur and, of course, absolutely useless. They couldn't even reach

Shebako: for their guns. There was a place called Anuchino, which was the headquarters of all the partisans. The Japanese on two occasions tried to capture this place, but, unfortunately, they attempted it in the wintertime. Both times the battalions sent to take Anuchino did not reach their destination because they froze on the way. Later the Japanese took those troops away and sent in troops from the northern part of Japan, and it was quite remarkable to see the difference in physical and facial features. They are an entirely different people. First of all the Japanese from the northern part are quite a mixture -- I think they have a great deal of white blood in them; their skin is not yellow but white; they have hooked instead of flat noses; and they are more proportionate in build. The typical Japanese is of about the same height whether standing or sitting--long body and short legs. Of course these troops from the Northern part were much hardier than those from the southern part. They stayed there to the very end.

The commander of the Japanese troops was General Tachibana. He was a typical Japanese, while his aide-de-camp, Captain Kurasiva, a good friend of mine, was a typicalIy Caucasian type. I met him later in Tokyo and stayed in his home.

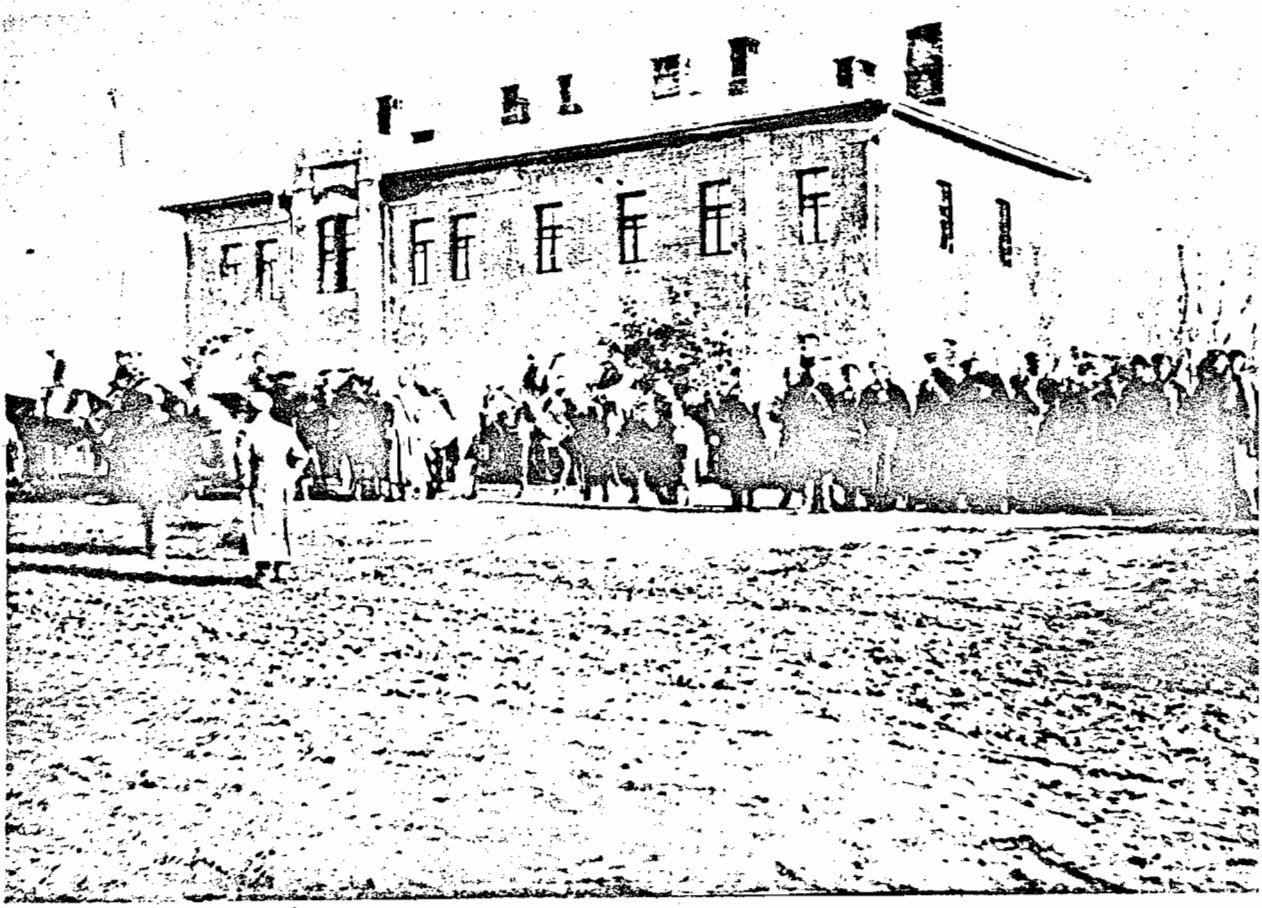
Surrendering Guns at the Chinese Border

Shebeko: The Japanese couldn't do anything against the partisans because they were everywhere. The Japanese were effective against a town, such as Nikolaevsk; but whereas the partisans could be driven out of a town, they couldn't be driven out of the small villages.

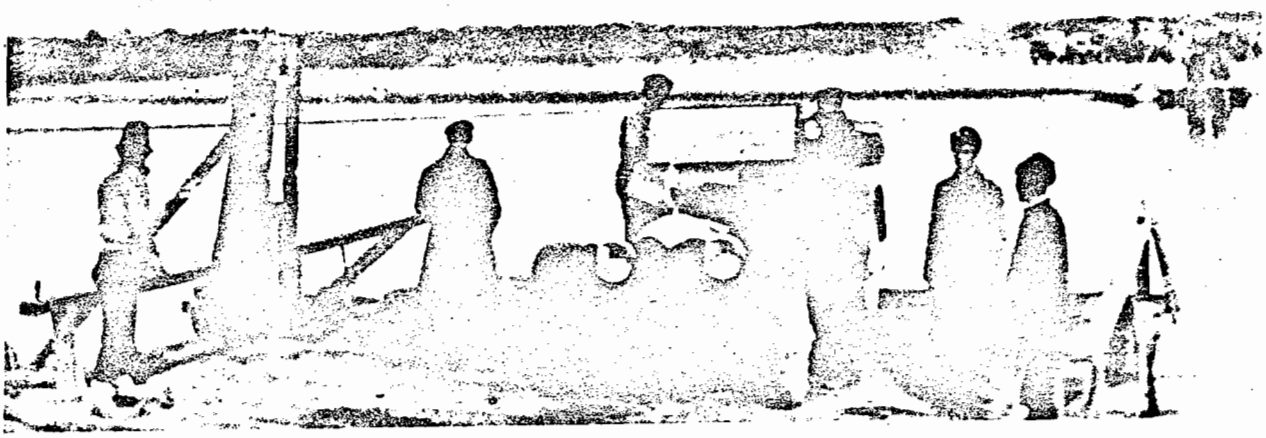
RETREAT TO CHINA

Shebeko: In Vladivostok everything was quiet again for some time. Then in 1922 the Reds began to advance again. We had several engagements with them, but there were very few of us left at that time; less than three or four hundred. So of course we were no match for them.

Finally [20 October 1922] the Japanese moved out of Vladivostok, and a few days later we did too. The flotilla of Admiral Stark, which consisted of a few destroyers, moved out to sea, taking along some civilians. Most of the ships ran aground during a typhoon near Formosa and were battered to pieces. A friend of mine spent two days tied to a chimney stack of one of these vessels. The ship was already down, but it was a shallow place and the stack alone was out of water. This experience affected him so much that he was not quite the same for a long time afterwards. A large number of people drowned during that typhoon, including women and children who had been evacuated from Vladivostok. Some American ships rescued the rest.



[Above] Custom House on Russian-Chinese Border
[Below] Retreat to China



Shebeko: The army moved out on foot, going through Korea to China. In China we stayed first at a small town called Hunchung. When we crossed the border we were surrounded by Chinese soldiers and ordered to disarm. Our soldiers didn't like the idea of being disarmed, and as they surrendered their guns an idea came to some of them: they began to drop the hand grenades that we all carried at our sides, and in a second the Chinese army disappeared.

In Hunchung, by the way, quite an interesting incident occurred. Hunchung was the capital of that particular province. Each province in China at that time had a governor or lord, usually a wealthy merchant who had bought the province for himself. Each province was constantly at war with the neighboring provinces, although there was hardly any actual fighting. For instance, if a fight were scheduled on a day that it rained, the fight would be called off. These governors were not military men themselves, but when they became governors, they automatically became generals and put on generals' uniforms and so forth. General Dietrichs, who was head of the Vladivostok government until the evacuation, was also at Hunchung. He had generals' trousers with red stripes on the sides. They were

Shebeko: a bit worn out, and as he couldn't wear them any more he gave them to his orderly. Next day the governor of that province held a big banquet in honor of General Dietrichs. My general was invited and since I was his aide-de-camp I had to go too. Quite a few officers had also been invited. We arrived at the banquet hall and soon the governor appeared--in Dietrichs's pants. The orderly had sold those pants somewhere and apparently the governor saw them, took a great liking to those red stripes, and bought them. I looked at General Dietrichs; he was most uncomfortable. He didn't know what to do. And some of the officers were ready to burst out laughing.

After we had been in Hunchung about a month, we were told that we should go to Kirin, the capital of Manchuria. It is quite a stretch from Hunchung to Kirin. As I mentioned before, we had been disarmed. So they gave us an army escort, a whole Chinese battalion. From a distance it seemed as if we were prisoners under convoy. All along side of us were the Chinese soldiers, very businesslike, with their rifles. Then one day all the Chinese soldiers to a single man disappeared. Apparently someone had spread a rumor that the Hunghuzes were close. There we were, without arms or anything. And then a few days later

Shebeko: all of a sudden from nowhere all the Chinese soldiers reappeared. Evidently the rumor had been proven false. Then as we approached a village someone spread a rumor that the village was occupied by Hunghuzes. Again there were no Chinese soldiers; each time they disappeared as if they had fallen through the ground.

We marched into that village. There were no Hunghuzes. Apparently the Hunghuzes saw that a considerable body of men were coming and they had run away. The Chinese soldiers appeared again. We found out later that they had been hiding in sleighs under the straw. So finally we said, "No. If you don't know how to guard us, we are going to guard ourselves!" We disarmed the Chinese army, and the shoe was on the other foot; the Chinese were in the middle and we were on the sides.

Pierce: There was no difficulty in disarming them?

Shebeko: No difficulty at all. Now it is probably different, but in those days the Chinese couldn't really be called soldiers at all.

We hit upon a profitable business. We had surrendered quite a few of our machine guns and were asked to provide instructors to show how to operate them. I was one of the instructors myself and was well paid for that too. What we did was to show the Chinese how to work the machine guns and when the lecture

[Above] Quarters in Kirin, China
[Below] Shoeing a Cow

Shebeko: was over we would secretly remove the lock or the pin. When the Chinese tried to work the machine guns themselves of course nothing would happen, so they would need instructors again. We fooled them that way for quite a while until finally they realized what was going on.

At Kirin we were interned in camps and had a Chinese governor over us, with a company of Chinese soldiers. The food was very bad and the living quarters were terrible. I don't know how we ever survived.

We lived in so-called Chinese fanzas, houses made of adobe or mud. For windows they had thin paper instead of glass, their floor was of earth, and there was an exceptionally heavy roof made of tiles. Each spring when the snow began to melt the roofs collapsed. They actually lost three horses that way when we were there; the roofs collapsed and killed them. And every year they put on those heavy roofs again, with enormous tiles and no supports whatsoever. While it is cold and everything is frozen they hold, but as soon as it begins to thaw they collapse.

One day the Chinese company disappeared. Only the officer was left; the men had all gone to join the Hunghuzes! A new company was assigned. Later the deserters were captured, and I saw the punishment which

Shebeko: was inflicted on them. They were stripped of all their clothes and put face down on a long narrow bench. They were tied to the bench by their feet and neck. Then two Chinese soldiers came with two small bamboo sticks. One started at the feet and the other at the head and they began hitting with very light strokes. In a very short time the two men were reduced to bloody hamburger, and, of course, they died.

Their punishments are cruel. Instead of hanging a man, they slowly suffocate him. He is placed on a chair and a rope is tied around his neck. The ends of the rope are wound around a stick, which when turned acts like a garrote. When the man loses consciousness they release the rope.

I also saw another form of punishment. A man is placed in a cage so narrow that he cannot sit. They stand him on bricks. Each day they remove one brick and the rope around his neck gets tighter, tighter, tighter until at last the man is hung.

Another form of punishment, for stealing, was to stick the end of a hook attached to a chain with a flat piece of iron at the end under the muscles in the back and then make the man walk around with the flat piece of iron dragging on the ground. Anyone who

Shebeko: wished could step on the piece of iron, and quite a few Chinese did that. Now what really surprised me was that the hook would eventually begin to rust, but somehow those punished in this way did not suffer from infection. You would think that gangrene would set it, but it doesn't.

Another thing that surprised me in the Chinese is their cruelty toward animals. You know the Chinese two-wheeled carriage? I don't know why, but it always seemed to me that each of those wheels weighs a ton. They are about four feet in diameter. The carriage itself weighs a ton and it is always loaded to the top. Usually it is drawn by six or eight horses. And all those horses are blinded. The Chinese walks behind with a big whip saying, "haup, haup, haup, haup." The horses understand him and move to the right and to the left, as directed. I asked the Chinese interpreter the reason for blinding the horses. He told me that the roads there are very bad and that sometimes the horses must go along the side of a mountain on a narrow road full of boulders with a precipice on the other side. If the horses were not blind they would be frightened and fall off. At least that was the explanation.

And then, of course, all along the road on trees there are small pieces of rags hanging in all colors,

Shebeko: red, green, etcetera. The trunks of the trees are usually smeared with tar. As each Chinese comes to a tree he hangs a piece of cloth on it. Also he takes some tar from his wheel axle and smears it on the tree. That is to keep the devil away during his journey.

Another thing is that in the cities in the interior of China the streets are always crowded with men, but no women are to be seen. There are sidewalks all right, but no one walks on the sidewalks; everyone walks in the middle of the street.

A real mystery to me is that a Chinese town seems to consist only of shops and stores. Apparently all their trade is with each other. But where are the houses? Apparently everyone in town is a merchant. How they exist I don't know...but they do.

And of course in any town the most respected person is the postmaster. Everyone goes to him with his troubles. First of all, he is a learned man; he knows how to read. I met two of those postmasters and found them in truth to be very, very intelligent and highly cultured people.

Graft in China is legalized. In other words, you cannot do anything without giving somebody a bribe. For instance, when I was trying to obtain my passport

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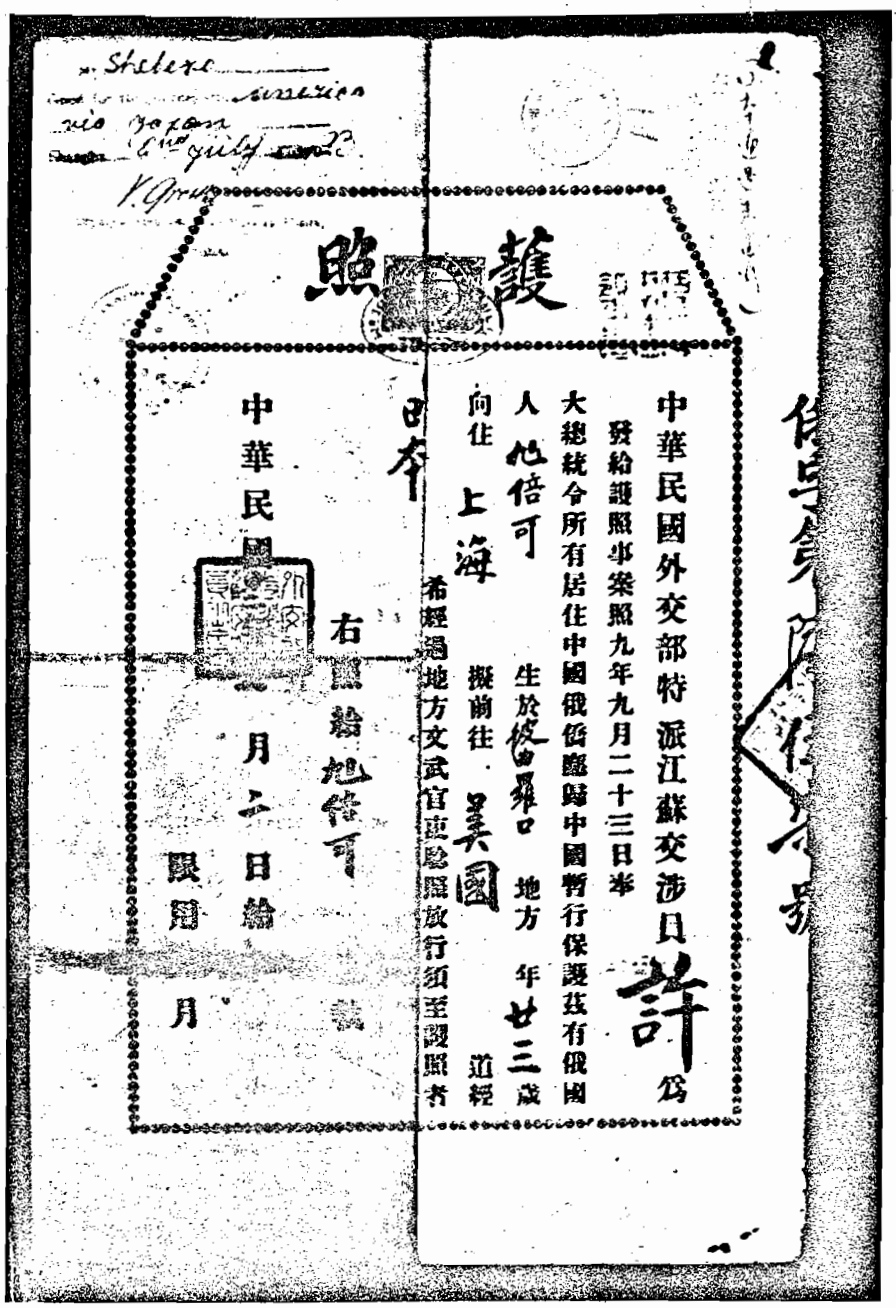


護照

中華民國外交部特派江蘇交涉員許爲
發給護照事案照九年九月二十三日奉
大總統令所有居住中國俄僑應歸中國暫行保護茲有俄國
人旭倍可 生於彼由羅口 地方 年廿三歲
向住 上海 擬前往 美國 道經
日本 希經過地方文武官吏驗照放行須至護照者

右照給旭倍可 執
中華民國 月 二 日給
限用 月

Shebeko: to go to Shanghai I came to a chief of police, a wealthy man, and asked for my passport. I was told to come the next day and the next day and the next day. Each time there was something wrong. I didn't understand why. Finally I asked my interpreter.

"Why don't they give me the passport?"

"Did you pay him?" he asked.

"No, I didn't pay him."

"Well, you should."

I said, "I haven't any money."

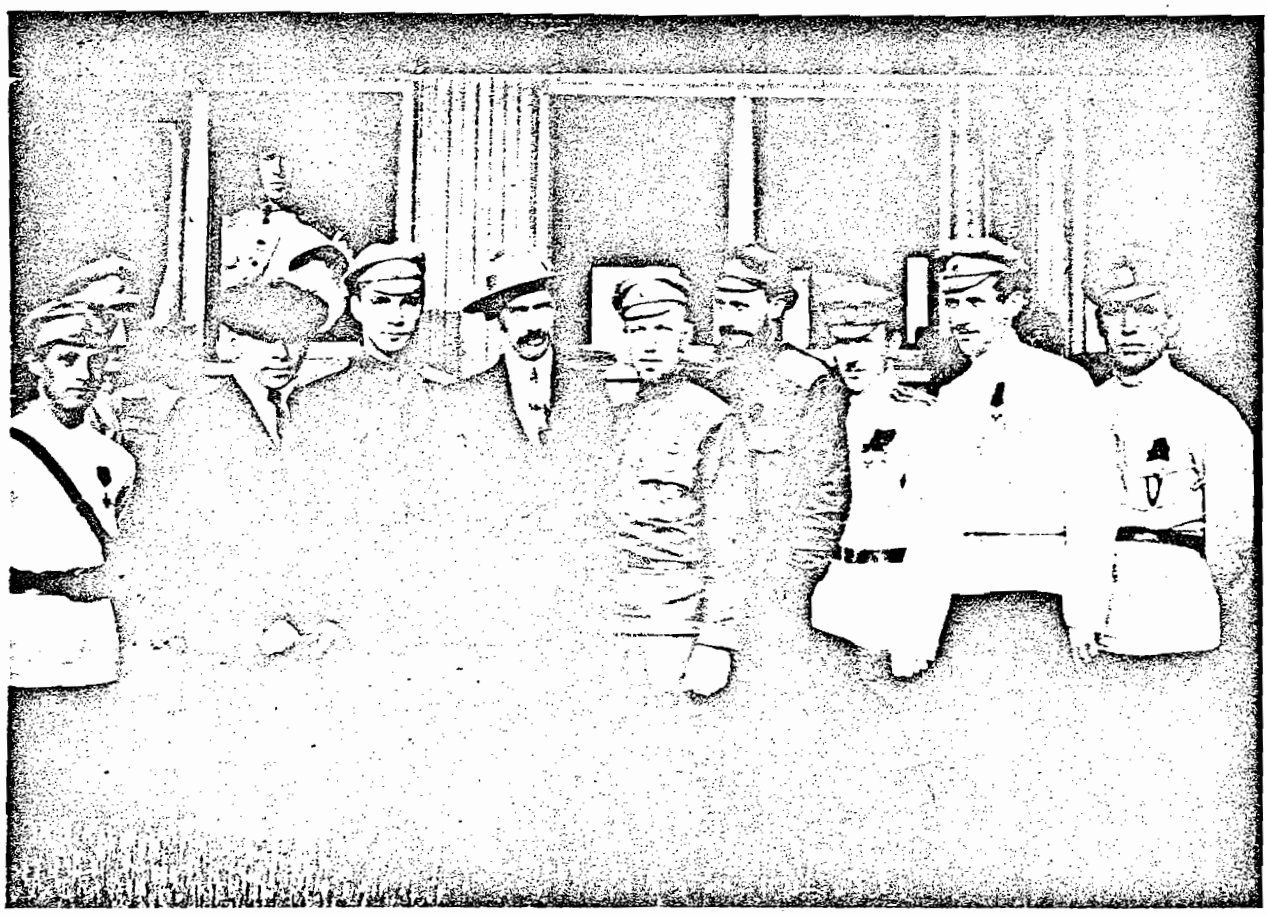
He said, "Pay him what you can."

"All I have is ten cents."

"That ten cents will do."

Ten cents was equivalent to a penny in American money. I didn't feel right in doing this, but I was told to do it, so I gave the chief of police that ten cents, and I had my passport in five minutes. In other words, bribery is an institution. It is very bad manners to ignore it.

The Chinese have another very interesting custom. In Kirin a Russian lady came to shop at one of the open Chinese stores. A Chinese who was passing by snatched her purse and ran away with it. We saw this, pursued him, and succeeded in catching him. Immediately the Chinese police appeared from nowhere. The man was



General Molchanov [left of center, in suit] departs for the United States. On his left is Colonel Efimov; on his right B. Shebeko.

Shebeko: arrested, but the woman was arrested too, and was also taken to jail. Of course we all went to see the chief of police to protest.

"We arrested her because she has to support him while he is in jail," he explained.

It was with great difficulty that we were able to persuade this chief of police to release the woman.

"If I release this woman, I have to release this man," he argued.

"All right, then, release him too!" we told him.

In the end we had to pay the chief of police. The woman had to give all the money she had in order to be released. So she was robbed anyway. They have strange, strange customs.

I suppose it's different now, at least in the big cities, but in the interior it is probably very nearly the same. The Chinese soldiers when they come to the city are the biggest thieves of all. They pick up everything in sight and no one can tell them anything. Whenever a group of Chinese soldiers enters a town all the shops are closed.

An every-day scene is a Chinese two-wheeled carriage with a Hunghuz sitting in it all bound hands and feet being taken to the place of execution. And, of course, a big crowd following behind.

Shebeko: I saw several of these executions, and I always marvelled at the stoicism of the Chinese. There was no noticeable change of expression on the faces of the condemned men. They would obey the order to kneel and to place their heads on the block without protest. Chinese soldiers would chop their heads off all as a matter of course.

Pierce: How about the people you saw who were captured during the Civil War and executed? Were they largely fatalistic about it too, or was there an effort to escape or protest or fight?

Shebeko: There were cases when some tried to escape. On the other hand, I saw some who were led to execution in groups of perhaps five or seven, and they could easily have disarmed the three or four soldiers who were in charge of them. But apparently they were in a stupor. In other words, they went meekly and were executed.

Apparently something happens to a man at such a time. He either doesn't care, or he is so frightened that he is paralyzed. So it is probably true of not only the Chinese, but of everyone.

Pierce: I suppose so. I've heard the same about the Jews who were taken to be executed by the Nazis. They took it as if resigned to it.

Shebeko: Apparently this is very human. At the beginning of the revolution quite a number of Hungarians were taken

Shebeko: prisoners of war and they all became Communists. The Reds used them primarily as punitive troops, and they were extremely cruel. Probably the cruellest were the Finns and the Hungarians. The Hungarians put down the uprising in Iaroslavl and in so doing they wiped out the whole population. So whenever we captured either Letts, Estonians, Finns, or Hungarians we showed them no mercy. When they were led to execution they lost their spirit, just like anyone else.

The Cheka, the secret police, was made up primarily of Letts. As a matter of fact, with the exception of Ezhov, I don't think there were any Russians in it at all in the beginning. Yagoda was a Lett. Dzherzinsky, of course, was a Pole. The personnel at the very beginning of the Revolution was primarily either Hungarian or Lett.

Pierce: Yes, I've read that in Turkestan, for instance, the Hungarians were the backbone of the Communist forces, and there were many Letts who were quite prominent among the Communists.

Shebeko: At the very beginning of Bolshevism they played a considerable role. As a matter of fact, they were probably the only ones on whom the Bolsheviks could depend. The Czechs were on our side.

Pierce: The Czechs had already gone, hadn't they, by the time you were there?

Shebeko: No, they were there all the time. They were moving a little bit ahead of us... There was a stable of thoroughbred horses and, of course, the Czech cavalry requisitioned all those horses. You can imagine what happened; it was all very fine for a few miles, but throughbred horses are not very strong, and, of course, in a very short time the Czechs were all on foot.

At the beginning the Czechs were fine, but when the retreat started they thought only of self-preservation; it was they who surrendered Kolchak. They committed many atrocities too, but it was to save themselves. The Letts and Hungarians, however, were naturally cruel. Now, when they say that they are the ones who were persecuted, I always remember how they behaved then.

[Above] Leaving Kirin for Shanghai
[Below] Chinese Ferry

## SHANGHAI

Shebeko: We stayed in Kirin for six or seven months. Finally the Chinese decided that they couldn't afford to feed us any longer, so they told us that effective such and such a date we were free to go anyplace we wanted.

I was in the somewhat privileged position of being, as I mentioned before, the personal aide-de-camp of General Molchanov at that time. He gave me a hundred gold rubles. But I had four or five friends and, as they didn't have a penny, we decided to divide the money between ourselves and to go to Shanghai. As it happened, our money only lasted until we got to Yingkow. However, our destination was still Shanghai, for in Shanghai there were some Russians and in Yingkow there were none. We boarded a Chinese boat with the promise that we would pay, and the captain believed us. The trip from Yingkow to Shanghai lasted three days, and we were fed very well. As we approached Shanghai, we didn't know what to do; we didn't have a penny between us.

The captain, meantime, began to sense that there

Shebeko: was something wrong, so he took all our luggage, which didn't amount to anything, and followed us continually. When we reached Shanghai the ship anchored in the port and by prearranged signal we all jumped off and climbed into rickshas. The Chinese captain ran after us, but the rickshas were faster. So we escaped.

However, we still didn't know what to do, so we went to a Russian officers' association there (a few Russians had formed an association). The officers there collected money -- the fare was only about five cents -- and paid off the rickshas. But then they told us that they couldn't do anything for us; they didn't have any money or influence at all. So we applied to the Salvation Army. There was some kind of Salvation Army mission there. They told us that they could feed us, but that they couldn't provide us with money or with lodgings. We were grateful for that much help. We received a bowl of soup and half a loaf of French bread every day, and that was all the food we had. Meantime we slept in a French park on benches. Except for the mosquitoes, all was going well until one fine day one of my friends decided that the light was bothering him, so he climbed up on the pole and unscrewed the lamp. That, of course, was against the regulations,

Shebeko: so the next day the French police came and told us not to sleep there any more, and we had to find another place.

We finally found a place for a dollar a month -- we were able to get a dollar from somewhere. There was one small room, and we slept in that small room. This was right on the border between the French concession and the Chinese city, and there was a narrow canal which divided those two cities. The Chinese threw all their refuse into the canal. It stank terribly, and of course it was a breeding place for mosquitoes. Shanghai is built on marshlands and mosquitoes are the scourge of that city. In this particular place the mosquitoes were in thick clouds.

Just before going to bed we burned so-called Chinese candles for protection against mosquitoes; they had two kinds of candles in Shanghai, one which was more or less expensive -- a green spiral (I don't know what it consisted of) -- and the other one was a Chinese candle which was nothing but a piece of paper rolled up and dipped in wax, and that paper was permeated with some dreadful-smelling substance. We burned those sticks; they didn't bother the mosquitoes, but they certainly bothered us!

A month went by; our dollar was gone, and we

Shebeko: couldn't pay the landlord another. He asked us if we could pay fifty cents. We were able to collect fifty cents, and he put us in what was formerly a laundry, with four walls and no roof, and we slept there. It was all right sleeping in the fresh air, but there was only one small hole in the floor to let the water out, and when it rained (especially if it was one of those tropical rains), we would wake up actually swimming in the water because the one-inch hole was not a sufficient drain. By this time we were so weak that before getting up we had to sit down for a while and wait for the dizziness to disappear.

One day by a lucky chance I met a Russian who owned a perfume shop. He was going to Tientsin on his vacation and he asked me whether I would consider taking care of that perfume shop while he was away, for fifteen dollars a month. Of course I was willing. That fifteen dollars was like a million dollars to us. But as soon as other Russian refugees found out about my being there they decided to take advantage of it; they brought me all kinds of stuff to put in the window on a commission -- old shoes, old broken balalaikas, instruments and goodness knows what not, which I put on display in the window. And that, of course, killed the perfume business. When the owner came back he found out

Shebeko: that in his absence I had sold only eight dollars worth of perfume, whereas he had been making something like six or eight hundred or maybe a thousand dollars a month. I had killed the business. Of course I was fired, and we were out on the street again.

One day I met General Ivanov-Mumzhiev, whom I knew. Now General Ivanov-Mumzhiev was somewhat indebted to me. When I was aide-de-camp in Vladivostok my rank was very low, but my social position was high because I was so close to the general. I lived in the same house with him, and at dinner I could discuss different matters with him. Several generals asked for favors through me; one of these was General Mumzhiev. General Mumzhiev had wanted to go to Kamchatka, to assume the position of governor. Hardly anyone wanted to go to Kamchatka, but apparently he did. He asked me to help persuade General Molchanov to give him an appointment to go to Kamchatka. When I talked to General Molchanov about this, he said, "Oh, he wants that job, does he? Good riddance! Let's send him there!" [Ivanov-Mumzhiev sent to replace Ilin in Petropavlovsk in October 1922.] The next day General Mumzhiev came in again and I had the papers all ready for him. He was very grateful to me for that. General Mumzhiev was no fool. Apparently when he was in Vladivostok he had heard about the good fur business in

Shebeko: Kamchatka and apparently he had already made some contacts, so when he went to Kamchatka he became rich in no time. After the collapse of the White armies he moved to Shanghai and the first thing he did was to open a very fashionable boarding house on Avenue Joffre. It was on Avenue Joffre that I met him. He recognized me and stopped, and he didn't know what to say.

You can imagine how I was dressed by that time. He was dressed like a gentleman, and I looked like a bum. He didn't even want to talk to me on the street. After all, there were people walking by who knew him, and if they saw him talking to a "bum" it probably wouldn't be too good for his business. He asked me to come to see him that night at his boarding house, and I came that very night. He was very nice, and he said, "Fine, I know what...you can come and eat in my boarding house."

"That's very nice," I said, "but I have four friends; how about them?"

But he said, "Sorry, sorry, sorry. I know you, but I don't know them at all; that can't be done."

So I said, "All right, I'll be coming to see you."

Evidently he had decided to teach me not to come more than once. I came at dinner time the next day, and in the dining room I saw men in evening clothes, ladies in evening gowns, and there I was--and there was a place set

Shebeko: for me. He hoped that I would feel so out of place that I wouldn't come again. After dinner I went to the kitchen and talked to the Chinese cook. I told him the position I was in, and he was very sympathetic.

"You have a lot of leftovers, and I have four hungry friends," I told him.

The Chinese said, "Tell them to come every day with their kettles."

I decided to sacrifice myself; I went there every day and sat at the dinner table while my friends ate in the kitchen.

I saw that Ivanov-Mumzhiev was getting more and more impatient, but I continued to come. Finally he called me one day and asked, "What would you say if I should pay you $35 a month not to come here any more?"

That, of course, was what I wanted. So he paid me $35 a month just to keep me away. He had also found out that my friends had been coming to the kitchen, and, I am afraid, he had begun to lose clientele.

From then on the four of us lived on $35 a month. However, the situation looked hopeless, because for a white person to obtain work as a laborer in Shanghai was virtually impossible; all labor was done by the Chinese. For a white person to do <u>any</u> manual work was considered degrading to the white race, and neither the French

Shebeko: municipality nor the English would permit that. Many Russians with university educations came there and soon found good positions, but neither I nor my friends had professions, experience, or, consequently, any hopes of getting anywhere.

Pierce: How about language? For instance, did you speak anything but Russian?

Shebeko: I spoke French. But that did not help me. Finally one of my friends and I decided that it was time for us to do something. Why not go to the United States? Why not sneak on a boat? Many American boats came into the harbor there. So one day when the "President Jackson" was in port, we mixed among the Chinese who were doing loading and, unobserved, we went into a hold and hid.

There was enough air, of course, but nothing to eat and no water. After three days we couldn't stand anymore, so we raised a dreadful racket until they opened up the hold and we emerged. We were taken to the captain's cabin. The captain was very polite. When we told him that we wished to go to America he said, "All right, but you will have to work; scrub the decks, for instance. You will get rations, but, of course, you will not get paid." We thought everything was fine. Then one day we heard a whistle; the "President Madison" was passing us on its way to the Orient. Our boat stopped;

Shebeko: they put us on a small boat and took us to the "President Madison" and we went back. But not to Shanghai--to Hong Kong, the ship's destination. And there we were even worse off than in Shanghai because in Hong Kong we didn't know anyone at all. We didn't stay there very long. That very night we sneaked onto a Chinese boat which was going to Shanghai, and a couple of days later we landed in Shanghai.

Next, we decided to go to Germany. So we went to the Dutsch-Holland line--I don't remember the exact name--where we were met by a red-haired Dutchman. We told him we should like to take a job on one of their boats. The pay was 100 marks a month, which, at that time, amounted to about a dollar a month.

"What are your intentions?" he asked.

We told him that we wanted to go to Germany.

"Do you know that in Germany they have the hauskrisis right now, and that you will only be allowed to stay there for two weeks, after which you must move on?" he asked.

"We know that," we said, "but we figured that we would go anywhere as long as we can leave Shanghai."

And that day the boat was ready to sail. I remembered that I had left some of my documents in the Russian officers' association, so I asked the captain whether I could go and

Shebeko: get my papers.

"Impossible," he said, "no one is allowed to leave the boat within eight hours of sailing time." (The boat was to leave in about three hours.) Nevertheless I sneaked out, hoping that no one would find out about it. At the association there was a telegram waiting for me, a telegram from General Molchanov, in which he asked me if I should like to go to the United States. He offered to send me money and an assurance. He was already in Berkeley. I was in seventh heaven! I borrowed money somewhere, enough to send a telegram. And in a very short time I received 110 yen, exactly the cost of the ticket, and an assurance.

I went to the American consul, showed him the assurance, and told him that I should like to obtain a visa. In those days visas were easy to obtain, and I was told to come back the next day. But then, as I was going out, I met face to face with Nikolai Merkulov. (I was the one who had arrested him in Vladivostok.) He looked at me and didn't say a word, but the next day when I came I was told, "Sorry, but you don't have any recommendations."

There was an American there named Mr. Stone, a very kind person, who would give a recommendation to anybody. I went to him, but by that time a recommendation from Stone meant nothing because he had been giving them right and

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# PASSPORT.

No. 657

In accordance with the Presidential Mandate of September 23rd, 1920 whereby the Russian Citizens, residing in China are temporarily under the protection of the Chinese Government, the Special Commissioner for Foreign Affairs, Shanghai, hereby issues the passport to Mr. G. K. Shebeko a Russian Citizen born on the 6th April 1880 at Petrovsk Province and residing at Shanghai proceeding to America via Japan and requests all the friendly civil and military authorities, whom it may concern, to permit the holder of this passport (Mr. Shebeko) to pass freely without let or hindrance and to afford him all friendly aid and protection which he may stand in need of.

Given at Shanghai, on the 2nd day of the 7th month of the 12th year of the Republic of China (2-7-1923). Valid for six months.

C. T. Wang

Special Commissioner for Foreign Affairs, Kiangsu.

# ПАСПОРТЪ.

№657

На основаніи декрета Президента Китайской Республики отъ 23-го Сентября 1920 года, въ силу коего русскіе граждане, проживающіе въ Китаѣ, временно находятся подъ защитой Китайскаго Правительства, я, Спеціальный Комиссаръ по Иностраннымъ Дѣламъ въ Шанхаѣ, выдалъ настоящій паспортъ русскому гражданину Георгію Константиновичу Шебеко родившемуся 6-го апрѣля мѣсяца 1880 года въ Петровской губерніи и проживающему въ Шанхаѣ которому отправляется въ Америку черезъ Японію, прося всѣхъ дружественныя гражданскія и военныя власти оказывать показателю сего паспорта законное содѣйствіе.

Выданъ въ Шанхаѣ 2-го іюля мѣсяца 2 дня 1923 года.

Дѣйствителенъ въ теченіе шести мѣсяцевъ.

C. T. Wang

Shebeko: left. So when I presented the one he gave me they said, "You have to have a recommendation from Harbin."

"Wait a moment," I said, "I have not been in Harbin in my life!"

"Well, that's the place where you'll need a recommendation from."

I went to General Dietrichs, and he gave me a letter in which he said he recommended me for a visa to the United States, that I was anti-Communist, that I had been in the army, and that he knew me very well. General Dietrichs was a very well-known man in Shanghai, and highly respected by everybody. When I came with this letter, the consul said, "I'm sorry, we want a recommendation from someone who knew you in Harbin."

"But," I said, "I have not been in Harbin."

He said, "Sorry, that is the only thing that you can do."

So apparently they didn't want to give me a visa, and that was Merkulov's doing. I went back to General Dietrichs and told him my plight.

"Wait a minute," he said, "we will arrange something."

He wrote a letter to Ostroumov. He was the chief of the Chinese Eastern Railway, probably the first man in Manchuria, occupying one of the highest positions there, higher than even the governor. And then he wrote also to the French consul at Harbin, Monsieur Pirenne. And shortly

Shebeko: I received two of the most excellent recommendations; one from Ostroumov and the other from Pierenne, both from Harbin, neither of whom knew me, but both of whom were friends of General Dietrichs.

When I came with these two recommendations to the consul general he couldn't refuse any longer; I had complied with all their requests, besides presenting recommendations from two such well-known people.

So I got the visa, but a month had passed. Fortunately for me I had bought the ticket, because otherwise I probably wouldn't have had any money left. When I was given the visa I stepped out of the consulate dignified, and walking very slowly, but as soon as I came to the corner I started to run like hell because I was so afraid they might change their minds.

That evening I went to a French park for a stroll. And there in the park I saw Merkulov sitting on a bench. I couldn't resist going up to him, calling him a couple of names and holding the visa up in front of his nose. He recoiled, red in the face. And then I was sorry I had done it because I thought, 'Good heavens, he will go back and try to spoil everything for me.'

Then another difficulty arose: I was told that before being allowed to land in the United States one had to show that he had $60. I didn't have $60 and I didn't know

Shebeko: how to get it. General Dietrichs advised me to see General Petrov, when I arrived in Tokyo. He was military attache for Admiral Kolchak's government. "He still has money," General Dietrichs said, "which he uses for helping people like you. He'll give you $60 so you can go to the United States, and when you get there you can return the money so that he can help someone else." But when we came to Japan there was an epidemic scare, and since the Japanese are very careful not to bring diseases into their country, before being let ashore everyone had to be examined by a doctor. Stool samples were required. But during the passage between Valdivostok and Yokohama the sea had been rather rough and quite a few of us had been seasick and could not produce the samples.

However, there were quite a few Chinese on our boat who immediately sensed that they could do business. They sold samples for ten cents a small can. I bought one. Then after three hours--the examination was very quick--two Japanese in white coats came on board and grabbed me and a friend of mine. We had dysentery! We were taken immediately to their hospital, but as our boat had to leave the very same evening for Kobe we didn't know what to do. We thought about explaining to the Japanese that those were not our samples, but that amounted to something like a forgery. So we had

Shebeko: quite a time. The boat had already left and we were still kept in isolation. But soon we were examined by the doctors and they found out there was nothing wrong with us and released us, promising to put us on a train that night to Kobe where the boat was going to make another stop. I had been about half-crazy because there I was in Tokyo, I had to find General Petrov and instead I was in the hospital, being kept under observation, and my ship leaving.

It was four o'clock when they let me out. I went to General Petrov--by the way, he is now in Los Angeles, a very old man. But he said, "Sorry, I haven't a penny; two weeks ago I gave out my last money and I still haven't received any from the United States. My purse is absolutely empty. However, I advise you to go and see the French consul. The French consul is a very nice man and he may help you.

By that time it was five o'clock, and I rushed to the French consulate where they told me that the French consul had already left.

I said, "For goodness sake, tell me where he lives!"

So they gave me his address and I ran to his house.

Of course I didn't go to the front door, but went around to the back. A Japanese boy opened the door. I told him that General Petrov had told me to see the consul

Shebeko: general.

"He is at a meeting somewhere. He won't be home until late."

That was the last straw. In desperation I said, "May I speak to his wife?" He was ready to close the door in my face, but I put my foot in. "I want to see his wife!" I insisted. Of course I was very badly dressed. He asked me to give him my card. I didn't have any card; I asked him to give me a pencil and a piece of paper. He brought them and I wrote my name. He closed the door--he wouldn't even let me in the kitchen, probably for fear I would steal something--and went out with the note. Soon he came rushing back, and he opened the door and said, "hsuh hsuh hsuh hsuh hsuh--please come in!" He brought me into the living room and then disappeared. The door opened and a woman walked in. She walked up to me, gave me a warm embrace and started to kiss me. She had been my governess in Vilno when I was nine or ten years old. She had fallen in love with one of the clerks in the French consulate and when he was recalled to France, the poor woman had been disconsolate. My father gave her a thousand rubles and sent her back to France. There she had married this man who later had become a consul in Tokyo. She told me all about it, and then, of course, I recognized her too.

Shebeko: First of all, she bought me a good suit and then she gave me the necessary money to present when I arrived in the United States. When we parted she was in tears. We corresponded for quite a long time, but finally her letters stopped coming. I don't know what happened; that was the end of it. It was just one of those coincidences which occur sometimes when everything is hanging in the balance.

## THE U.S.A.

Shebeko: I left Tokyo in August 1923, just a few days before the big earthquake [1 September 1923], bound for Seattle. At that time there was quite a boom in the United States. Before we had even landed people from various companies were on the boat trying to engage labor, so there was no difficulty at all in finding a job.

When we landed I had my $60, but quite a few of the others didn't have any money at all. So we devised a scheme: I was to come ashore, present the $60, and then pretend that I had forgotten something on the boat, go back on, give the $60 to someone else, and he would do the same thing. Five or six men showed the same $60.

In Seattle the first thing that struck me was the millions of lights. In Europe at that time there was no advertising of that kind. All those electric bulbs, going on and off, making pictures, made a scene which struck me as being quite unusual.

Shebeko: I stayed in Seattle for two days and then took a boat for San Francisco. I had a place to stay in Berkeley; General Molchanov had a room for me in his house.

I was greatly impressed by the Golden Gate and by San Francisco so beautifully situated on the hills. Its whiteness reminded me of the only other city with which, to some extent, it can be compared: Constantinople. I was also impressed by the number of people, all hurrying on the streets--their tempo so much faster than anything I had seen in Europe.

General Molchanov met me, and the Key System ferry took us across the Bay. We then took the Key System train to Berkeley, where General Molchanov lived on Parker Street near the School for the Blind. I had, however, left all my things at the Ferry Building and that very same day I decided to go and pick them up. I returned to San Francisco and collected my few bundles. By mistake I took not the Key System, but the Southern Pacific train. (At that time both the Key System and the Southern Pacific trains ran in Berkeley.) The Key System train went to Claremont by way of the Berkeley Station, where Berkeley Square is now, whereas the Southern Pacific train stopped there.

Shebeko: When the train stopped at Berkeley Station, I knew that I was not home yet, so I did not get off until the conductor made me understand that that was the end of the line. I got out and saw strange surroundings; I didn't know where to go. Of course I didn't speak any English at all, so I stopped passers-by and tried to explain that I was lost and that I was looking for a house in front of which grew two big palm trees. I thought that palm trees, being rare, were a good landmark. Palm trees were quite new to me. So I said, "palm, palm, palm" and of course no one understood me. Someone said something about "several blocks." I didn't know what "several" meant, but I thought that "block" meant the color, "black." It was getting late, and I was still there when night fell. I sat on a bench in the station hoping that someone would find me. Finally I laid down on the bench and went to sleep. A policeman woke me up and asked me questions. I couldn't understand what he was saying, so he beckoned to me, took me to his car, drove me to the police station, and that was where I spent my first night in the United States: in jail! The next morning, of course, my general was quite anxious. He inquired everywhere and finally called the police station. He had to pay five dollars to bail me out.

Shebeko: In those days, 1923, there were very few Russians in California. Of course there was an old colony of Molokans [a religious group] in San Francisco, but they had come to the United States years ago and lived their own life. They were quite strange to us even though they spoke Russian. There were, however, many Jews who spoke Russian. Most of them came from Poland and spoke broken Russian. We made all our purchases in the Jewish stores on Fillmore Street. At the very beginning of the immigration most of the Russians settled close to Fillmore Street for that reason.

Since most of us, including myself, did not speak any English at all, we didn't have much contact with Americans although those we did meet were very sympathetic towards us. The Jews, at that time, were quite pro-Soviet, and when we came to their stores they called us White bandits. However, little by little, we began to come into contact with Americans. Most Americans at that time did not distinguish between Jews and Russians and were surprised when we told them that we didn't follow the Hebrew religion. This is understandable because many Jews who came here from Russia called themselves Russians. They were also responsible for spreading wild stories about the old regime. It is amazing how little the people here knew about conditions in Russia. Many

Shebeko: thought that wolves roamed the streets and that there were no streetcars. Knowledge of Russia was so distorted that no matter how we tried to correct some misconceptions, no one believed us because of the propaganda that had already been spread.

Many amusing things happened due to our poor knowledge of the language. One evening a friend and I decided to go to a show because we had seen on the theatre marquee what we thought was the title, "Sun and Moon." We saw a very dull picture in which there was no reference to anything astronomical. It was later that we learned that our "Sun and Moon" were merely the abbreviations Sun. and Mon.

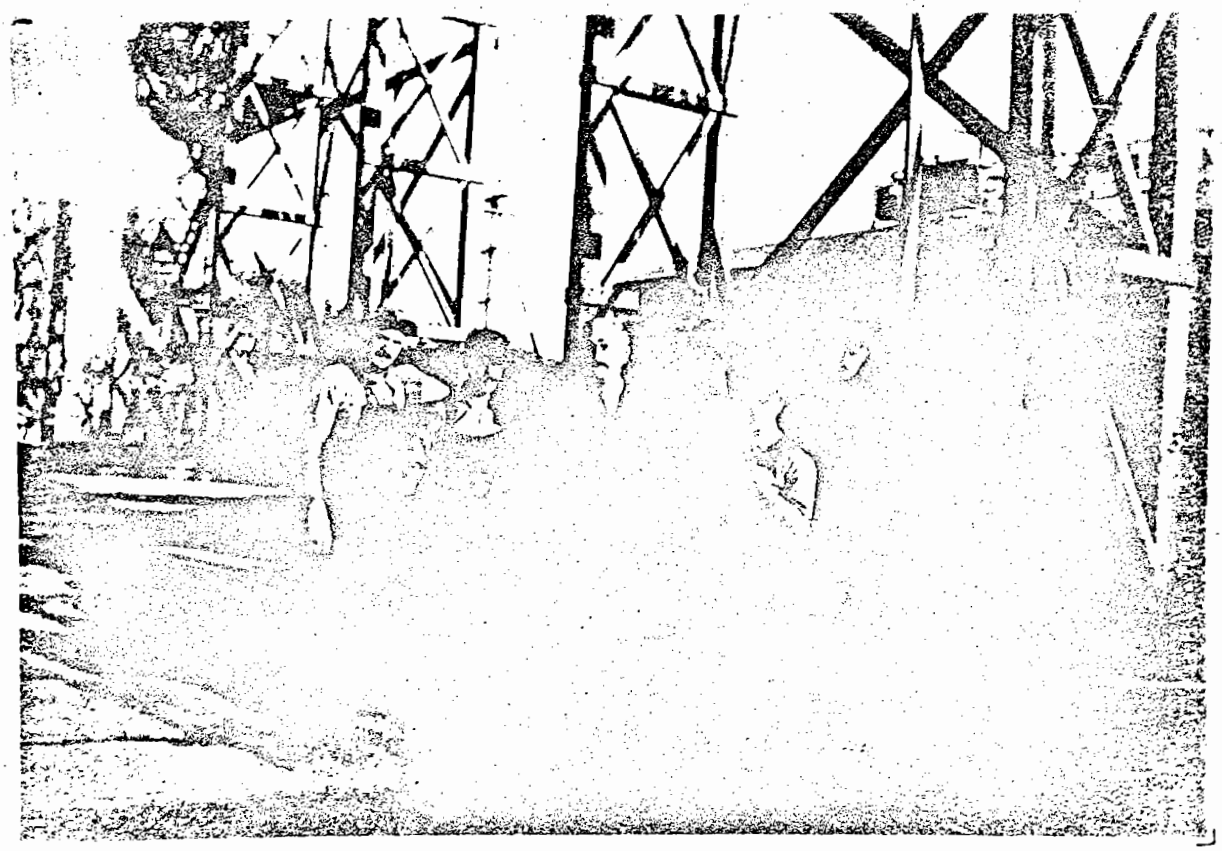
As I have mentioned, most Russians at that time lived in clusters close to the Jewish stores, but as they learned to speak English they moved out of the Fillmore district and spread all over San Francisco. So in actuality there is no such thing as a Russian colony in the sense that there is an Italian colony, which is centered on Columbus Avenue, or the Chinese colony in Chinatown.

Russians, it has been my observation, assimilate much better than people of other nationalities; the children of Russian parents seldom retained a knowledge of the Russian language when they grew older. Many

Shebeko: Russians made a point of living apart from other Russians so that they would have to use the English language. An Estonian whom I knew carried this policy too far. He spoke Russian and Estonian when he came to this country. He decided to work in mines where he would hear only English and thus learn the language. But the poor man didn't have any talent for languages; when he came back he could not speak any language at all. He had forgotten Russian and Estonian, and had not acquired English! He became a man without any language whatsoever.

Not knowing English, it was difficult to look for a job, but finally I found one at the Del Monte Packing Corporation which at that time was at the foot of Dwight Way.

They put me to work in front of a machine that opened cans of pineapple. The fruit was received raw from Hawaii in five-gallon cans. Here these cans had to be opened and the raw fruit placed in a big kettle and boiled to make preserves. My job consisted of lifting onto a movable belt the cans, then opening the lids and throwing the juice out. After I had worked for what seemed a long time, the muscles at my elbows began to ache, but when I looked at the clock I saw that only two hours had gone by. No matter how fast I worked, new loads



Shebeko: of pineapple kept coming, truck after truck.

Then suddenly the machine stopped. Some of the cans had jammed inside. It happened that that particular machine was working on the same shaft where the girls were working on the assembly line, so that whenever it stopped the whole assembly line stopped too. Of course the mechanic came in immediately and put the belt back on--it had slipped off the pulley--and off we went again. I picked up one can that was slightly dented and put it in the machine and the machine stopped. After that whenever I was really tired, I would knock a can over the steel plate, put it in, and the machine would stop. However, I did that once too often, because once as I was in the process of denting a can, I felt a hand on my shoulder. I turned around and there was the boss. He didn't say a thing, but just motioned to me. I followed him to the office, and there was a pink slip already written for me. I was fired after only seven hours of work. But I didn't mind, because I was completely exhausted. When I came out I sat on the curb and three streetcars went by before I could even get up. Finally I managed to board the fourth streetcar. I could not sleep at all that night; every bone in my body ached. It was terrible!

The next day I went looking for another job. My second job was with the California Steel Corporation,

Shebeko: which was then on Sixth or Seventh Street in Berkeley. There I worked with General Molchanov, General Sakharov, Prince Kropotkin, Colonel Efimov, and Colonel Von Vaht. I was the youngest one of the group and the only one who could say a few words in English so I was more or less the spokesman. We loaded steel, long sheets of it which had to be transported from one place to another. All we had to do was to put a couple of hooks under the plates, balance them, and, when the crane lifted them up, guide them. Of course thatw as rather a dangerous job, and once I was almost crushed to death. Iw as trying to maneuver a large pile of steel by means of a crane to another pile. I was careless and stepped in between this big pile and that heavy load --many tons of steel. The craneman saw that and stopped the crane, but when he stopped the crane the whole thing swung and pressed me against the other pile. Fortunately another man saw this and threw his weight against the load, but the side of my chest was pretty badly bruised. Iw as almost fired from that job for being so careless. It was toward the end of the day when this happened and I was tired, and, consequently, careless. Another time Iwas also fortunate-- one of the hooks somehow jumped out and a large load of steel slipped. Fortunately it stopped right at my feet, otherwise my feet would have been cut off.

Shebeko: This job lasted for only two or three months. While we were working there most of us realized our situation very well, and we didn't talk to the workers there about our former experiences. But General Sakharov went to work wearing his general's pants with stripes down the sides and would tell them at every opportunity that he had been a general. This irritated some of them. At the same time Prince Alexis Kropotkin, a cousin of the famous Prince P. A. Kropotkin, held himself with such dignity and good humor that the workers respected him and tried to help him. There was a great contrast between Kropotkin and Sakharov. I liked Sakharov very much, but he couldn't forget that he had been a man of importance. One day the workers played a cruel joke on him. They asked, "General, did you ever have your portrait painted?"

"Yes," he said.

"Do you have a frame for it?"

"No."

"Then here is a frame for it," one of them said, and gave him a toilet seat.

Sakharov didn't say a word. He quit the job immediately, and two or three weeks later went back to Shanghai.

My next job was in a tannery. There I dipped hides in a big tank filled with acid. The odor was absolutely

Shebeko: terrific, and when I rode home on the streetcar I noticed that people turned away from me. When I came home I took a bath, of course, but apparently it didn't help much because all my clothing was saturated with this smell. I worked in that place for only four or five days and then decided that I couldn't stand any more. The smell was killing me. I quit the job.

My next job was at an ink factory. I worked in the basement where they prepared the ingredients for ink, very finely crushed powder in various colors--red, green, blue. There were clouds and clouds of dust, so fine that it penetrated my pores. The first day I worked with red powder, and at the end of the day I was red from head to foot. The next day I was blue, then green, and yellow, and so forth. The powder would not wash off.

It was at that time that I began to feel sorry that I had ever come to the United States. "As bad as it was in Shanghai," I thought, "I'm going back!" I went to see the Chinese consul who barely persuaded me to stay here.

"You'll get used to it," he said.

I didn't work very long at the ink company; there was a big layoff. I looked for a job for a week or so without finding any. Finally I came to a small cement plant which was operated by only two men and I asked for a job.

Shebeko: "Here is a car," one of the men said. It was a loading car full of sand. "If you take a contract to unload by car you'll get seven dollars for each car. Or you can work by the hour for fifty cents an hour." I made a mental computation: 50¢ an hour--$4.00 a day. Surely I should be able to empty a car in one day, so what was the sense of working for $4.00 when I could work for $7.00? Therefore, I signed the contract to unload the car. He gave me a shovel and I started to work. At first it was quite easy. The sand was dry and I tossed it far enough. But soon I came to wet sand and they began to yell to me to "Throw farther! Throw farther!" because the sand was landing on the box. At the end of the day I found that I had accomplished practically nothing; the car was just as full as it was before. I came the next day and worked all day and still I got nowhere; three quarters of the car was still full. I realized that I was working for nothing! So the third day I didn't go. When I told a Russian friend of mine about it he asked me if I had signed a contract.

"Yes," I said.

"You didn't fulfill that contract?"

"No."

"You know that you're liable to be arrested for it?" Then he explained that according to rules, the one who

Shebeko: breaks a contract must pay or be arrested. I stayed at home two days, afraid that at any moment there would be a knock on the door and a policeman would come to arrest me. When nothing happened, I saw that all I had done was to lose two days of pay.

Finally I found a job in San Leandro in an assembly plant for Durant cars. I worked on the assembly line painting cars. I was given a hose and a nozzle for spraying fenders. Each time a car passed by all I had to do was to rest the nozzle on the fender and the finely pulverized paint would spread over its fender. On the side opposite me was a Negro who was doing the same thing. I found this terribly monotonous. The cars kept passing by and I kept pressing the nozzle and spraying fenders. By the middle of the day I would get so sleepy that I would be doing the job mechanically, without looking at what I was doing--just pressing the trigger at regular intervals. Once I must have got off beat because when I pressed the trigger the car was not there, and I sprayed the Negro who was opposite me with green paint. Never have I seen a man so angry. He took his hose and sprayed me and there we were, spraying each other until the boss appeared and we were both fired.

I thought, "Life is impossible, absolutely impossible. I'm not going to stay in this country." And then an idea

Looking for a job in San Francisco
Boris Shebeko and V. Stankeeff

Shebeko: occurred to me. Why not enroll in the University? Thus it was in a moment of despair that I got an application for admission to the University of California. I sent it in the mail and then forgot all about it, because I didn't think there was any hope. Although by now I could read and write, I still had difficulty in understanding and speaking English.

Meanwhile, Colonel Efimov and I began to work for the Southern Pacific washing cars. Once, on our way to work we were crossing Seventh Street when an old Ford came by at about thirty miles per hour and hit Efimov, throwing him to the street. The Ford stopped, and the driver rushed over to Efimov. Efimov was hurt considerably. However, he was so afraid that he might have committed some crime like obstructing traffic that he got up and said, "Excuse me!" Whereupon the man said, "Oh, that's all right," and got back into his car and drove away. That is how unsure of ourselves we were in those first days in a new country.

Most of our fellow workers at the Southern Pacific were Greeks. They all lived close to the place of work. We had hardly any days off, but whenever one of the Greeks did get a day off, instead of coming at seven o'clock in the morning, he would come at eight-thirty, all dressed up, and he would sit on an orange crate and watch the rest of us

Shebeko: work. He would sit there all day long and then at the end of the day he would leave half an hour earlier. That was his day off.

There were a couple of former generals working there, and it was rather amusing at lunch time to listen to them sitting there with their lunch boxes and addressing each other. "Your Excellency, would you like to have a sandwich?"

"No, no, Your Excellency."

"Then how about an apple?"

"Thank you, Your Excellency."...until the whistle blew and they would both get up, get their equipment, and start washing cars again.

That was not a difficult job, but later I was given the night shift, and I found this so unpleasant that I quit.

Next I went to work for the Key System, sweeping cars again. This was during prohibition, and half the people coming from San Francisco late at night would be drunk and would often lose money and other valuables. Every time the passengers left a car the employees, mostly mechanics, would be waiting with brooms and pans to rush in and look for money. Some of them actually worked without pay; there was such a good chance to find money.

Smebeko: I had a strawboss named Rossi, a very unpleasant person. He disliked me intensely and I disliked him too. One day we were sweeping cars out on the long pier, and I swept a dollar into my pan. I didn't see it in time and dumped the pan into the Bay. And when Rossi saw that dollar floating on the water he dove right into the water after it. They had to drag him out.

Later I was assigned to another job. The Sacramento Northern Railroad had a dormitory for Negro porters at the Key System pier. I was told that I would have to work on Sundays and my job was to make their beds.

## AT THE UNIVERSITY

Shebeko: A letter from the University of California finally came. It informed me that my credentials were satisfactory and invited me to take the examination for foreigners. The examination for foreigners was not as difficult as subject A; it was simply an examination to test the prospective student's ability to understand something read from a newspaper or from a book. The examination was held in Wheeler Auditorium. There were quite a few of us, of various nationalities. The professor came, opened a book and started to read something. I tried to understand but I couldn't. Try as I would, the only word that I understood was 'fish.' When he was through reading I wrote everything I knew about fishing. As I was leaving I asked a friend of mine, "What was he reading?" And he said, "Something from the biography of Lord Fisher." That was a complete failure, of course. However, next day I received another letter instructing me to come to an oral examination. At the oral examination I was asked questions to which I was to answer yes or no.

Shebeko: It was obvious to the two professors who examined me that I didn't understand them at all.

In those days, however, the enrollment was not so large and as I wished to enter engineering college, I could get along with knowing less English than if I were in the humanities. Therefore I was admitted to the University for which I was very grateful.

I entered the University in September 1925. The first semester I sat like a dumbbell understanding mighty little. And to make matters worse, for analytical geometry, I had a mathematics professor who told us that he would not use books and that we would study from his own notes. All I was able to do was to copy what he wrote on the blackboard, and when I came home I didn't know what it was all about. I failed analytical geometry that semester. I also failed mechanics, not because I didn't understand the subject, but because we were given certain assignments in the machine shop and when I had finished my assignments I thought that I needn't come any more. Later I learned that I hadn't completed the course. In physics and in chemistry I got D's. Subject A, of course, I failed.

I took analytical geometry again in the next semester. Just before the midterm examination I went to a bookstore and found Analytical Geometry by Low. I opened this book

Shebeko: and recognized the professor's "notes." It was an old, old book. Of course I had had some analytical geometry before in school and with the help of that book I got an A on the midterm. However, unfortunately, when the final examination came, I thought it was scheduled at one o'clock instead of at eight-ten. I stayed in bed until about nine-thirty, reading the analytical geometry book. Then I happened to look at the schedule and found that my examination was at eight-ten. I rushed as fast as I could, but by the time I got there it was already eleven and the professor didn't want to give me the examination, but finally he agreed to let me try. Of course I was only able to do half of the problems and I got an E which was conditional. I also got an E in mechanics and my other grades were all straight D's. I had to have reexaminations, and I took them during the Christmas vacation.

My first year was a nightmare. The next year was easier. I could understand English better and I was able to get a B average. An organization in New York gave me financial aid. I became a reader in mathematics for Professor Bock.

But subject A was still a stumbling block. I failed it regularly. Year after year I tried to pass it so that when I was already a senior, I was still taking subject A.

Shebeko: Therefore when one day a friend told me that he had seen the posted grades and that I had received a D I rushed to the instructor's office. There, as sure as day, was my name and after it a D. I couldn't believe it, so I went to the instructor to be sure. I asked him, "Is it true that I got a D?"

He grinned from ear to ear and said, "You are so hopeless that you could never pass the examination. How much did it cost you?" he asked.

"Eighty dollars," I told him. The ten dollar fees had added up.

"You could very well spend another eighty dollars on that, but I have decided to let you go," he said. This made it possible for me to graduate from the University.

Of course while I was studying I had to work. I worked in fraternities, waiting on tables and washing dishes. I began work at six o'clock in the morning; at eight o'clock I went to my lectures and at twelve o'clock I had to rush back again to the fraternity to serve lunch and then rush back again to lectures. At six o'clock I served dinner and washed dishes. I would come home at about eight. I was a reader in mathematics, so I had to correct papers, usually until eleven o'clock. After eleven I would study until about two. And at five-thirty

Shebeko: I had to get up to be ready for work at six o'clock. It was not easy.

I also worked for the Key System on and off; especially during summer vacations. There was a big difference in the attitude of my fellow workers before I was a student and after I became one. Before, they had accepted me as one of them, but after I became a student, they made my life absolutely miserable; they played jokes on me and insulted me at every opportunity. Of course there was also a group of pleasant fellows there, mostly mechanics, who tried to help me. I worked under Rossi again, and he had become almost unbearable. For instance, when we washed cars we had to use sulphuric acid. We were given gloves to wear which could not last very long since the acid dissolved them. Rossi used all sorts of pretexts to not keep me supplied with gloves, so that my hands were all burned.

Yes, getting through the University was rough. And it was like that not only for me, but for practically all the Russians who attended the University at that time.

Pierce: Were there many others at the University?

Shebeko: There were quite a few at that time, at least a hundred. Some of them didn't graduate, but the majority did.

After graduation I got a job with the Standard Oil Company at the Richmond refinery. But until the first

Shebeko: check would come, I needed money badly. Professor Derlith kindly arranged a loan of thirty dollars for me through the University. I spent most of it on clothes. I received the first check in two weeks, but until then I walked to and from work; I had to leave at four o'clock in the morning to be in Richmond by seven-thirty. When I received my pay I felt so rich that I was a bit reckless with it, but I was careful to save enough for bus fare.

There was a training course for engineers at the refinery. Starting engineers had to get experience working as laborers in various shops. There I also encountered workers who didn't like university graduates. This was quite a problem in those days. It was wiser not to mention the university to fellow-workers or to bosses who did not have college educations and who were afraid that some day the college graduates would be their bosses. The situation has changed now, but at that time it <u>was</u> a problem.

Another problem for me was that in those days many people here still considered the Bolsheviks liberators. Even newspapers like the <u>Examiner</u> published articles in praise of the Red Army. This was when Arthur Brisbane was the editor. Later he turned against them, but at the beginning some of his articles made me boil. Admiration

Shebeko: for Communism here in the United States lasted for a long time.

Pierce: What finally happened to some of the people you have mentioned? What happened to the various leaders of the White movement in Siberia?

Shebeko: General Sakharov came to the United States and later went back to Shanghai, as I have mentioned before. He bought a bee farm there, I believe. He did very well until the Japanese came. Then he went to Hong Kong and from there he came back to the United States about three years ago. He died very shortly thereafter.

General Molchanov and Colonel Efimov are both here in San Francisco. Baron Boodberg was in San Francisco; he died some years ago. General Verzhbitskii stayed in Manchuria and was killed in an accident; run over by a car, I believe. Pepeliaev was captured by the Reds and executed. Simonosidze and Rozhdestvenskii are in Australia now. General Voytsekovskii became minister of war in Estonia. Lovtsevich, I think, went back to Poland. Nechaev, who was on the Khabarovsk expedition, entered the service of Marshal Chang Tso-Lin together with his troops. He became quite prominent in the campaigns in Manchuria and was finally killed there. General Ivanov-Mumzhiev died in Shanghai. Prince Kropotkin retired after

Shebeko: working in the steel mill. He and his wife went to live with their daughter and son-in-law who had a farm in Fallon, near Bodega Bay. He lived to be eighty-six. He was an extremely interesting person; he had a fine mind and was, to the very end, a brilliant conversation - alist.

When we retreated into China from Vladivostok Shiraev stayed behind and continued his activities. We heard later that he was captured and killed by the Reds.

Pierce: Did any others try to go back?

Shebeko: Colonel Karlov, who had commanded the expedition behind the Red lines during the Khabarovsk campaign, returned only a short time after we entered China, with a few men. His idea was to cause an uprising among the population. By that time there was quite a rumbling against the Bolsheviks, so he felt that he would be able to recruit a considerable number. However, he was killed while swimming across the Amur River. This was while we were still in Manchuria. He was not in Kirin with us; I think he went to Harbin and from there he started working his way toward the border of the Maritime Province.

And there were also several other attempts. I think Nechaev tried. Colonel Sotnikev, commander of the Ufimskoe

Shebeko: regiment, tried to start an uprising. At any rate, that is what we thought, but later I wasn't sure whether it was true or not, we were told that he had surrendered to the Reds and joined their service.

After leading the White troops into China, General Dietrichs left for Shanghai. During the First World War Dietrichs was the commander of the Allied troops in Saloniki, so he was very highly thought of by both French and English commands. When he came to Shanghai he became a shoemaker. I came to the United States in shoes he made for us. Later, the French offered him a job in one of their banks. From general to shoemaker and then to a clerk in a bank. He died in Shanghai shortly after I came to the United States.

Both of the Merkulovs came to the United States, and the last I heard of Nikolai Merkulov was that he was in Washington. What he was doing there I do not know.

Pierce: And what became of Chernegin? You told of his arrival and arrest before the Khabarovsk campaign and his appoaching trial.

Shebeko: There were enough supporting witnesses so that the verdict would unquestionably have been "guilty." However, just before the trial there was an uprising in Vladivostok [May 1922?] and he was released by some

Shebeko: of our marine officers. He had joined the marine group before we captured Vladivostok. They didn't know his background. When the uprising occurred, they released him and took him with them to Shanghai.

While I was in Shanghai I met him again the day after he had killed a policeman who was on duty. He was in hiding, but at that time I didn't know what had happened. He seemed upset, but he was still very friendly. Later he hid in one of the boats of Admiral Stark's flotilla and made his way to Manila. And that was the last I heard of him for a long time.

After World War II, I received a letter from him in which he wrote that although he liked me very much he felt compelled to kill me. A friend from the Philippines was here at that time. I mentioned Chernegin to him. "I know him very well," he said. And then he told me about him. Chernegin, it seems, had taken to drink. He married a native girl; they had a child whom he beat to death. Somehow he escaped arrest and got a job as a foreman on one of the plantations. While there he killed one of the other foremen. He was sent to prison and tried, but because of lack of evidence was released, since then he went from house to house begging. He became obese and was constantly drunk, and

the last our friend heard about him was that he had had a stroke and was in the hospital; whether he recovered after that stroke or not he did not know.

## THE RUSSIANS IN CALIFORNIA

Pierce: Now could you please tell something about the Russians here in California in general. How well have they adapted to life here? What have they contributed?

Stebeko: Well, we might say that quite a few Russians made a name for themselves here. Professor Bakhmetev, for instance, who for a long time occupied the post of Russian ambassador in Washington after 1917, became one of the greatest authorities on fluid dynamics. Professor Ignat'ev, a chemist, is one who produced high octane. Professor Timoshenko contributed a great deal to structural engineering and theory of vibration, and his brother was a well-known economist. Uspensky was probably one of the greatest mathematicians of his time. There were many who were sucessful. Zworykin is the inventor of the kinescope, which developed into the iconoscope used for television.

Some, of course, couldn't stand the rigors of this life and ended on Third Street, on Skid Row. I knew one man who decided that he would make one thousand dollars. In order to save that much he

hebeko: denied himself everything but the barest necessities. He lived in a basement and ate very sparingly. He finally made the one thousand dollars. Then he decided to make two thousand dollars and then stop. When he had made the second thousand, saving had already become a habit with him and he turned into a miser. He had several thousand dollars when he became ill. He did not keep his money in a bank; it was probably sewn in his mattress. He was admitted into a county general hospital. The day he was to leave the hospital it was raining. The doctor advised him to take a taxi. Rather than pay taxi fare, he walked home. In his weakened condition he caught a cold which developed into pneumonia and he died. His money went to the state.

erce: And what about community activities?

ebeko: There is the Russian Center in San Francisco and the Russian Veteran's Association. The Russian Veteran's Association was originally organized by former officers of the White or Tsarist armies. Their main aim is to help Russian invalid veterans who are in Bulgaria, France and Serbia. Although the governments concerned, especially the Serbian government, contribute towards their support, still their situation is deplorable. The Russian veterans here collect money to help their brothers over there; each year they have a so-called

Shebeko: Invalid Ball during which considerable sums of money are collected. Almost ninety percent of this money is sent to the Russian veterans in France, Bulgaria and Servia. Of course, most of the originating members have died, but new members from among the more recent emigration fill in the ranks.

There are, of course, other organizations organizations such as the Kaiut Kompanica which is composed of former navy officers. The name comes from the term given the living quarters on a ship. And then there is also an organization of Cossacks. The largest organization, and probably the most lasting one, is the Russian Center. Then there is a Russian school.

Pierce: Is that for the entire day?

Shebeko: It meets only twice a week. After the regular public school hours the children go there to study Russian history, geography, arithmetic and the Russian language. They have very good teachers and the children who go to that school usually do well in the public schools. The school system in Russia was entirely different from what it is over here. It was much more thorough, especially in the lower grades. Of course the people who teach there taught in Russian schools, and they know how to teach. The European method of teaching mathematics is much more effective than the way it is taught here. I

Shebeko: have had the opportunity to compare results. The children who attend the Russian school are usually at the head of their class in the public school.

Pierce: How many attend?

Shebeko: Quite a few.

This school is under the auspices of the Russian Church, which is on Fulton Street. There are two main churches in San Francisco. One is on Green Street and the other is on Fulton Street. There has been a separation of churches here. One recognizes the head of the European church, and the other recognizes the head of the American church.

As I have pointed out before, I think Russians assimilate quite readily, much more readily, for instance, than the Italians or Mexicans, who tend to stay in groups. The greatest concentration of Russians is on the Atlantic and the Pacific Coasts. There are very few Russians in the Mid-West.

Pierce: And what political views are held? There are two newspapers in this area now, aren't there?

Shebeko: Yes. One, Russkaia Zhizn', published by the Russian Center, and another called Zaria, which is more or less a scandal sheet. In New York there is Novoe Russkee Slovo and Rossiia. Rossiia, you might say, is influenced by the older conservative monarchist tendencies.

Pierce: How many of the Russian community would you say are pro-Soviet?

Shebeko: Very few. I don't think even one percent. There was a Communist bookstore in San Francisco and very few Russians went to it. If they did, it was simply because it had a wider selection than did the several other bookstores that carried Russian books.

Pierce: Is there one in the Russian Center building?

Shebeko: No, but there is a good lending library that has quite a few old books. When I take my daughter to meetings of the Razvedchiki at the center, I wait for her in the library.

Pierce: What is the Razvedchiki?

Shebeko: Something like the Boy Scouts and the Girl Scouts. Razvedchik means "scout."

There are quite a few Russians in Berkeley, but there is not as much community organization as in San Francisco. In San Francisco there are balls, concerts, and theatrical performances. Recently there was a very good performance of an operetta. There are also schools of ballet and the theater. (There are quite a few American pupils in the ballet schools.)

Pierce: This, then, can be considered as a specific Russian cultural contribution to the community...

Shebeko: As a matter of fact, the Russians have even undertaken the difficult task of presenting operas. Two performances I remember. One was Evgenii Onegin at the Geary Theater, which was given before a capacity audience. The other was Sneugurochka. The Russian colony may boast of having a number of excellent artists. The two large churches, one on Green Street and one on Fulton, have marvelous choirs. Both choir leaders are men with a good musical education and both had conducted choirs in pre-revolutionary Russia. I think that for a comparatively small colony the Russians have contributed quite a lot with their culture.

Pierce: Most of the people who were artists in Harbin and elsewhere have taken other professions or jobs here, haven't they?

Shebeko: It's very difficult here to break into the profession. A friend of ours, for instance, who has an excellent baritone, was an opera singer in Europe. For several seasons he sang leading roles such as Rigoletto, and Valentine in Faust with the San Francisco Opera Company. But the seasons are short and so he earns his living as a house painter. It seems that one has to have money to make a beginning. I understand there is a tight corporation in Los Angeles in which in order to get a chance to become an artist you have to put up something like a thousand dollars; only then will they consider promoting you.

Pierce: Yes, that isn't a very thriving field. Well, even for people born here.

Shebeko: No, not for anyone. It's a pity because so much great talent is wasted in this country. Take the young pianist, Van Cliburn for example. He was recognized in this country only after he had played in Russia. Then suddenly he became quite famous. Why wasn't he recognized before? He was here all the time. Yes, great talents are lost here because this particular field is in the hands of a few people who can dictate.

Pierce: Don't you think it is a matter of popular interest as well? People just aren't geared to that sort of thing.

Shebeko: Well, I don't know. Whenever performers of some foreign groups such as the Moiseyev troupe, for example, come here, they are assured of a large audience.

Pierce: Yes, there is an interest, but somehow...

Shebeko: Or how about musicals like Oklahoma!, for instance? How long did it play? Or South Pacific? There is an interest. Of course there is. The Metropolitan Opera Company is always sold out. Sure there is an interest here. The sad part is that it is all in the hands of a few people whose main interest is to make money, not to promote art. In Europe there was greater opportunity for talent.

Pierce: There is no state opera or state theater here.

Shebeko: Well, it is not necessarily that. Chaliapin, for instance, was an unknown peasant whose talent was discovered when he sang in a church choir. He was given the opportunity to study and it was only later, when he was already famous, that he sang in the state theater.

Pierce: I heard some time ago that there was a so-called "revolution" in the management or in the direction of the Russian Center. I never got it quite straight.

Shebeko: I frankly don't know much about it, but I think it was simply that the older group was supplanted by a newer group composed mostly of recent immigrants from Shanghai. You see, those who came from Shanghai had money and were very well organized, while those of the older immigration had had to struggle to create and maintain the center and were getting weary. The second-generation Russians are Americanized and have no need of a Russian center. In general, Russians who lived in countries where they were not allowed to become citizens kept together better.

Pierce: Have many of the escapees from the Soviet Union, the ones that came out during the war, settled in this area?

Shebeko: Not too many...

Pierce: Have they mixed readily with the older immigrants?

Shebeko: Quite readily. At first, of course, there was more or less a strain because they had been brought up in the Soviet Union and it required time to readjust to different conditions--to forget and lose old fears and suspicions.

Pierce: And then you think that these attitudes which grew up in Soviet society gradually...

Shebeko: ...disappeared. After all, the present regime is so foreign to the Russian character that it didn't take long for whatever influence it had on their characters to erase itself. First of all, of course, they were still under the former strain; they were afraid to express themselves; they were constantly afraid that somebody was watching them, and they were quite restrained. But gradually this fear disappeared.

Pierce: Have you heard anything of the Soviet campaign to encourage recent émigrés to return? I know they have pursued this in other parts of the world, especially in Europe.

Shebeko: Not so much in this country, I understand. Personally, I did not hear of any cases here in San Francisco of intimidation, although I understand there were some cases in New York. New York is the point of debarkation. The West Coast is too far away. Very few

Shebeko: people come now to San Francisco from Siberia. Most of them--from Germany or elsewhere in Europe--come to New York.

Pierce: Have all the people who were in the camps in the Philippines left there?

Shebeko: Yes, I understand that they have all left.

Pierce: And Japan?

Shebeko: I do not know, but I do know that some still are in Hong Kong waiting for visas. But they are from Harbin and are of the old immigration.

## EPILOGUE

The most memorable day in my life was New Year's Eve of 1929. I was invited to a party at the house of an acquaintance. There I met a girl and when I saw her my heart told me, "this is it." And that is when I tried the old proven trick of playing on a woman's sympathy. I told her how my finger had once been caught between the sides of two boats and almost crushed and what unbearable pain that was. It worked.

I soon became a regular visitor in her house and coached her in algebra and physics, with the result that her grades began to go down. However, there was an apparent gain in the other direction, with the result that in 1932 we were married. I am afriad that at the beginning of our married life I was not a very attentive husband, because at that time I was working on one of my inventions and consequently did not provide her with the entertainment to which each young girl is entitled. And it is to her credit that she did not hold that against me but encouraged me.

Now after twenty-nine years of marriage we are just as close to each other as we ever were. Our daughter, Natalie, made her appearance in 1944. She is a teenager now and we are waiting impatiently for this stage to pass.

My wife, Nina, is the secretary of the Department of Slavic Languages of the University of California and through her I still maintain contact with my old Alma Mater. As a result of this contact I am presenting this narrative, which I would like to dedicate to her.

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