



In This Issue:



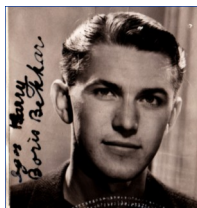
Hoover Tower,
Stanford Univ.

Augmenting the Guins/Gins Archives

Important new material about the Guins/Gins and related families is donated to the Hoover Institute, Stanford University, California in April 2010...

Harry and the Death Ray

Hear how Harry Bekkar, son of Vera Bekkar (nee Gins), ends up back in Asia, where he was born, as a U.S. Army officer assigned to seek out Japanese scientists who were developing a dreaded death ray...



Harry Bekkar, 1942

Icy March, a travelogue by Zoya Pourtova

A chilling first-person tale of travel through Siberia during the winter of 1919-1920 in an effort to escape communist pursuers, told by a brave 15 year-old who was half-sister to Vera Shalabanov (Seva Guins' wife).

Researchers:

*Boris Dralyuk, C. Phil.
Vicky Mlyniec
Sara Guins
Katherine Guins
Kathy Guins
Juliana Marin
Gen Guins*

Susan L. Morris
Gins Research Coordinator
Technical Support
Alexandra Morris

155 Rincon Street
Ventura, California 93001
(805) 746-6432 cell
smorris121@msn.com

Gins Family History

Research News

We're very fortunate to have had conscientious and careful record-keepers among the Guins/Gins and related families — their efforts have enabled us to reconstruct past life-ways and take us back to the 1700s, and in some cases, much, much earlier. While we have definitely added details to our family history by combing through public records in English, Russian and Polish, it is the **Family Records** and **Compiled Records**, in addition to **Vital Records**, that gave us a head start and formed the foundation of our family tree databases.

Family Records are personal documents such as articles, journals, diaries, letters, and photographs that not only present basic facts, but also tell us what our relatives were thinking and feeling, as well as what was important to them during their lifetimes. Compiled Records are those family records assembled into family trees and other databases that are a jumping-off place for continued investigations. A great example of Compiled Records are the Guins family tree charts crafted by Seva and Sergei Guins and shared with family members, near and far. Vital Records, whether private or public, document details about birth, marriage, and death that help us connect the generations.

Tatiana Nikolaevna Gins, (right) daughter of Nikolaj Konstantinovich Gins and Juliya Lvovna Gins (nee Prokhnitskaja) in traditional costume with beaded kokoshnik (Russian head-dress), from Harbin, about 1930.

Below, Tanya and cousin Sergei Gins create an impressive dirt/sand castle, also in Harbin.

Photos courtesy Sara Guins from the Katherine Guins collection.



Augmenting the Guins/Gins Archives:

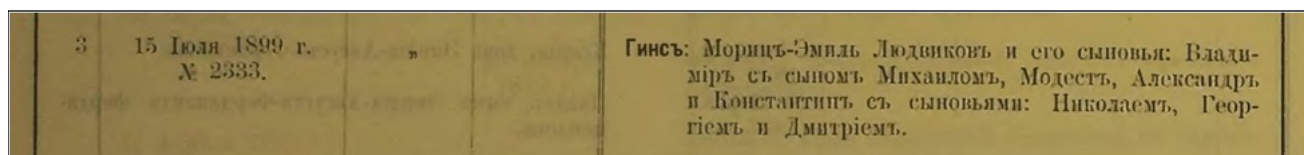
Donation to the Hoover Institute, Stanford University

We're celebrating a milestone this month — our first Guins/Gins and related families donation to the Hoover Institute at Stanford University since George Constantine Guins made his contributions to the Archives. Vicky Mlyniec and I drove to the Stanford campus on Tuesday, April 20th, and met with Anatol Shmelev, Ph.D., the curator for the Russian Archives. He said that he considered our donation very important, mentioned that he would help us find a translator for our remaining documents, and offered to do some translation work for us himself.

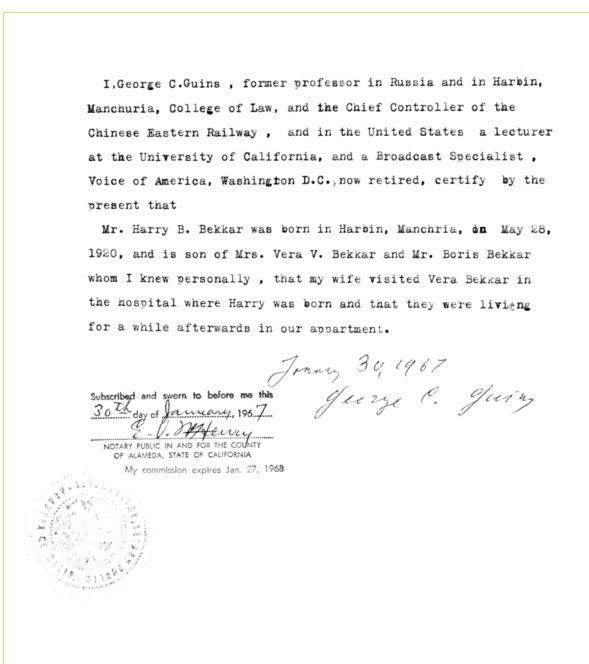
While most of the original documents and photographs that were delivered to the Hoover Institute came from the Bekkar-Guins collection, as part of the Morris home 'archives,' there were significant and substantial contributions from others, such as Vicky's oral history interview with Sergei Guins, Tanya Anderson (nee Guins), and Katherine Guins; Kathy Guins oral history interview with her father, Sergei; and Zoya Pourtova's article on her trek across Siberia, reprinted in this issue.



Vera Vladimirovna Bekkarevich (nee Gins) with son, Igor (Harry), in Shanghai, China, about 1921. Photo courtesy Susan Morris.



Register of Noblemen of the Kiev Gubernija (15 July 1899) when Morits-Emil Ludvigov Gins, with his sons and grandsons, entered the ranks of hereditary nobility, following Morits-Emil's rise to civil service level 4 when he became an Actual State Counselor



George C. Guins' statement to support the claim of his cousin, Vera Bekkar (nee Gins), who said that her son, Igor (Harry), was born in Harbin in 1920. Document copy courtesy of Susan Morris.

A complete list of the donated documents, photographs, books, articles, charts, and reports is available (send me an e-mail at smorris121@msn.com). The original documents consist of Boris Nikolaevich Bekkarevich 1916-1920 military service record, Boris and Vera Bekkarevich 1922 passport, Vera Vladimirovna Gins 1895 baptismal certificate, Igor Borisovich Bekkarevich 1920 baptismal certificate, Vera Gins secondary school records, Boris Bekkarevich 1953 WWI military service award, and certificates of citizenship for Vera Bekkar, Harry Bekkar, and Lydie Gins.

Material that was not donated to the Hoover this month includes the contents (or translations) of the Prokhmitskij portfolio (76 documents); the documents and translations belonging to Vicky Mlyniec (184 letters, telegrams, and business card); translations of the Kalisz birth certificates; and translation of the Polish 1842 conversion reference. These materials may make their way to the Hoover archives with future donations.

For those interested in the previously donated material, here's the finding aid for George's contributions to the Hoover Institute:

<http://www.oac.cdlib.org/data/13030/49/tf9b69p049/files/tf9b69p049.pdf>.



U.S. Army Lt. Harry Bekkar with Japanese scientists in Japan, about 1945-1946. Photo courtesy Susan Morris.

Harry Bekkar: From Siberia to Shanghai to Southern California

Following is a feature on Harry Bekkar that appeared in an Amelco employees newsletter in 1960. This article was donated to the Hoover Institute because it summarizes the story of how Harry and his parents emigrated to the United States from Russia following the revolution and civil war.

"Harrowing as a television adventure was the advent into the world of this month's personality, Harry Bekkar, Amelco's division manager of Handley Products.

Harry was born in Harbin, Manchuria, where his White Russian parents took brief refuge after fleeing their homeland, then in the throes of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. They came close to not making it. Almost half of a party of 200 refugees from the revolt-torn land of the Czars were lost. Harry's mother had a horse shot from under her by pursuing Cossacks firing sled-mounted machine guns. A short time afterwards, Harry was born.

At an age when most children are reading about far-away places in quaint school books, Harry was living in Shanghai, crossroads of the Orient. He later lived successively in Seattle and San Francisco, before coming to Hollywood where he graduated from Hollywood High.

Harry joined Amelco just last year. Only recently appointed to his present position in Amelco plant management and production engineering, he served previously with Mercury Sales. He follows his father's footsteps into an engineering career, although taking a more direct route. The elder Bekkar tried everything from poultry

farming to journalism, and is now an engineer for a Chicago television station, WBKB.

His son, our personality of the month, attended Los Angeles City College for two years, then transferred to the University of California's Berkeley campus where he took his degree in electrical engineering.

Before joining Amelco, Harry worked for Douglas Aircraft where his duties were similar to those of his present position with Handley Products. He served at Douglas in engineering production liaison on missile programs which included the Nike Hercules and Nike Zeus. His work on the Thor took him to Cape Canaveral. He also worked for American Broadcasting Company as an operator and technical supervisor of film sales.

From his post-World War II assignment to Operation Death Ray, he might have supplied his network's scriptwriters with material for a science fiction thriller with an ironic conclusion. As a Signal Corps Officer, Harry took part during the war in the development of military radar at the M.I.T. radiation labs. It was known that the Japanese were attempting to develop a death ray through an application of radar techniques.

Singled out for his special knowledge, Harry was posted to Japan at war's end with instructions to seek out and evaluate this lethal research. In a mountainous section of Japan his quest ended. There he located a scientist who told him that death ray research had, indeed, achieved a measure of success. Headaches could be induced in rabbits at a distance of 50 yards, with death resulting in some cases. But, the scientist observed ruefully, to kill one man, standing still, at 500 yards, would take all the power available in Japan.

We forgot to ask Harry how the scientist knew the rabbits had headaches; but perhaps he had already mastered ESP (extra-sensory perception) which is one of Harry's numerous leisure time interests. Others include photography, fishing, sailing and presiding over the backyard barbecue at his Encino home where he and his wife are raising their two children. Oh, yes! Harry met his wife quite easily...she is his former landlady!"



Harry Boris Bekkar, 1960. Photo courtesy Susan Morris.

Icy March, a travelogue

by Zoya Pourtova

This account, by Vera Shalabanov's 15 year old half-sister, Zoya, was donated to the Hoover Institute this month. A harrowing tale of the hardship émigrés faced while traversing Siberia to escape the Red Army, this story is about determination, cooperation, and the will to survive.

"In 1919 Russia was rifted by Civil War. Since October 1917 the Communists were holding Central Russia, while Siberia, as well as the northern part and the south were in the hands of the oppositionists, who tried to save Russia and the rest of the world from Communism.

In the Fall of 1919, the White Siberian Army was defeated, and it was decided to move the capital of the Government, headed by Admiral Kolchak, to the Eastern part of Siberia, Irkutsk. Omsk, the seat of the Government, was to close to the front lines. Everybody regarded this as a strategic move.

My step-father, the mayor of my native town, Tobolsk, sent my mother and me to Tomsk, another big city in Siberia. Tobolsk was captured by the Red Army, later retrieved by the White Army, and again taken by the Reds. Meanwhile, due to the illness of the Governor, father was appointed as provisional governor of the Tobolsk province. He stayed with the army and we, hopefully believing in the strategic move stayed with my mother in the family of her good friends in Tomsk. My little sister stayed with her grandparents in another town, Kurgan.

I planned to continue my education at the Tomsk gymnasium, when, in November, we got a telegram from father, saying that, since the whole of Tobolsk province was taken by the Reds, he was ordered to go to Krasnoyarsk for further instructions. We had to be ready for a long travel on horses since the railway was at a stand-still. Thousands of cars and locomotives were staying at the stations of the Trans-Siberian Railway unable to go any farther for lack of coal and workmen to clean the tracks. The situation was really tragic.

My mother and I wore long fur coats (tulup) on top of our usual fur coats, high felt boots and white rabbit caps with long hanging flaps over the ears. We made over 2,000 pelmeni (little meat dumplings) easily boiled in hot water, which made a good nutritious soup.

Father came with six beautiful horses, two hitched to a large sleigh for mother and me, with two soldiers and an escort of twenty-five militia men to help us on the way.

We started on Nov. 23rd. The weather was mild, around 18-20 degrees below zero Celsius. There were vast plains covered with white snow, beautiful pine and fir tree woods. The first few days were to me a lovely picnic. At night we stopped in a large village where a billeting soldier would reserve a nice clean house for our stay, and very often we could have plain but good food. We could buy provisions for the horses, soldiers, and ourselves, but after a week, the situation changed drastically. The vanguard of the retreating army was on our heels. First hundreds and then thousands of soldiers were soon ahead of us. The local population tried to save some provisions from the soldiers for their own needs in the future. Sometimes our own efforts to buy food became futile. Our pelmeni became very handy at that time. Instead of oats, our horses could hardly get a sufficient supply of hay. Very soon, even that became impossible. The poor animals were starving. Father bought new horses, but finally, we had to shift to the relay system. We paid to be taken to the next village in our sleigh, then the peasant had to go back home. It was till dangerous: The army needed horses badly and often confiscated them. No more clean, nice houses: every little hut full of soldiers; women were not wanted.



Holy Trinity Church, Tomsk, Siberia. Photo: Wikipedia.org.

"What are you going? Stay home," was often mentioned. Very often there was no shelter for the night, so we stayed in our sleigh, warming ourselves at the bonfire. It was 20-25 degrees below zero.

Partisans were attacking the retreating army and often we had to wait till the road was safe before going on.

I clearly recollect an incident when the village, which we were heading for, proved to be in the hands of the Red partisans. The detachment of the division to which we were finally assigned, tried to attack the village. The commanding officer, our good friend, was killed on the spot, as soon as he entered the village. The soldiers panicked. The cavalry was called to help. Mother and I were staying at the bottom of a hill, awaiting the outcome of the battle. Soon we saw horsemen galloping down the hill, throwing away their rifles. My little frail mother became so indignant that she got up and shouted at the top of her voice: "You dirty cowards!" Then she got out of our sleigh, walked some distance to pick up one of the rifles and proudly put it in the bottom of our sleigh. Of course I followed her example.

We were told to follow the soldiers, since it was decided to go by another road around the unlucky village. The road was on a wide plain, the snow soft, our sleigh would often skid and both of us would go deep into a heap of snow, the pillows on which we had been sitting then would be on top of us, and the rifles on top of the pillows. It was fun for the first time, but it soon became very hard. Then the road changed and we still were very proud of our weapon, though neither mother nor I knew how to use it.

We soon met General B., commander of the Tobolsk regiment, a good friend of our family. He told my father to come to him directly in case of any need. We started to feel a little more secure. To avoid any further confrontations with the partisans and to have better possibility to get provisions, it had been decided to go to the south of the railway track.

We spent Christmas day in a big village. We even went to the church. The peasant woman, originally from Ukraine, treated us with hot soup, cottage cheese and sour cream with good bread. It was a real feast. We slept on the earthen floor, all of us, including the hosts. The other alternative was the top of the big stove in the middle of the hut.



Taiga near Lake Baikal. Photo: Wikipedia.org

Icy March, a travelogue (continued from page 4)

In a few days, we were approaching Krasnoyarsk, the town where we had to stay for a while. Alas! The town was in the hands of left-socialists, who, later on, turned it over to the communists. We had to leave the town after two days. Admiral Kolchak's headquarters were at Irkutsk. We started moving slowly in that direction. After several fatal fights with the partisans we came to a large village, Golopupovo. It was the first crucial moment. It became obvious that the army, as such, barely existed. Munitions were scarce, people tired and desperate. The road ahead uncertain and dangerous. Many soldiers started talking about returning home. It was at night time when two lines were formed: one in one direction, to go on, and the other, much longer, in the other direction, of those who wanted to surrender to the communists.

My father came to us from the meeting with the military command and blankly said that the road ahead is full of insurmountable hardships. Even the officers were warned that, in case of emergency, personal property first, then the women will have to be abandoned. There was no danger for women, as such, to go back to the native town, probably just prison, and certainly loss of all property, but no execution: however the military and administrative persons would be immediately shot. "Stay," said my father, "I cannot take the responsibility for your lives." My mother was 35 at that time. "No," said she, "we all will go together to the very end." So we went.

The next day we entered taiga. Taiga means dense forest. It has some similarity to redwoods: growing for centuries the trees, mostly pine and fir of all kinds, are so high that even in the day it is dark in these woods. One can hardly see a little part of the sky far above the trees. The road we entered was made about 25 years ago and never had been used by the peasants. To make it accessible, cavalry was ordered to go first to press down the deep snow that covered the road. It was really so deep that when I got off the sleigh to help our horse climb up the hill, I got stuck knee deep in the snow. I could not move in my heavy clothes and I saw in despair that my mother continued to move on alone. She noticed it too, but the line of horses was moving on and on. I was lost. After a while, one of the soldiers noticed me standing by the road, he shouted to me, came up and helped me climb into his sleigh. I do not remember

how he managed, but in a few hours I was back with my mother.

We were moving the whole day. The command was to stop for the night and make bonfires. Again, I remember mother boiling hot water on the fire and giving me a drink of it to make me warm. Our horse was completely worn out. The burden of two people was too much for it. One of the officers in our detachment had an excellent horse, but he could not manage it. He was sick with typhus. Would I help him by going in his sleigh and thus help our horse to go on, asked one of the commanding officers. "Of course," I replied.

It was the next night that I was sitting in a narrow sleigh, close to a man, who was unconscious. Sometimes I was not sure that he was not already dead. He did not move, nor hear what I was asking. Full of terror, I was holding the reins directing the horse in the dark forest. We were moving on and on.

In the morning we came to an open plain with a small village in the middle. As I remember, I entered the hut, saw a heap of straw on the earthen floor and tumbled down on it in all my coats and boots. I slept about 3 to 4 hours before I could realize where I was. Forty-eight hours without rest, sleep or food. We were told that now the worst was over. (The officer proved to be alive. I met him in Harbin several years later).

We had one day of full rest, some food and hay for the horses. We were told that now we will be back in civilization. In fact, in two days we came to the railway station in Zima. The railway in that part was guarded by Czech soldiers who, being in the process of repatriation, kept the railway track from attacks of the communists. My father immediately went to the commandant of the station, showed his documents and asked for a place in the train. "No, only Czechs and their families," said the Czech officer. Besides there was no guarantee that in case of a demand from the communists, the commandant would be obliged to hand father over to the Reds. No way out.

When entering the town Zima, we noticed high piles of some kind of material on the outskirts. What were they? Dead bodies! There was serious fighting before we came. Hundreds were killed on both sides. They were piled up outside the town.

In the evening of the same day, I got very sick. My mother looked at the thermometer. 104 degrees. There was a sanitary train at the station. I cried bitterly, demanding to be placed in a hospital. Father took us both to the station and asked for help. A doctor came out of the railway car, opened my coat, looked briefly and said, "Typhus. Okay. We'll take her." "Thanks," said mother. "I will help take care of her and others." "Oh, no," the doctor objected, "we do not take any but sick people." "But I cannot let a 15 year old girl go alone." "What nonsense," he scoffed. "We will take her to Vladivostok and there she will find someone." "No," said mother. "Well," he dismissed us, "it is up to you. She will probably die very soon. Good bye." We came back to the little room we rented from the railway employee. Next day my temperature was back to normal, but my nose and lips were covered with large blisters. Probably I simply had a bad cold. The soldier, who was with us, brought me a broken piece of looking glass to tease me about how pretty I was looking.

So, we were on the move again. Now, instead of going to the South of the railway tracks, as we did before, we went to the north. It was the end of January, 1920. January is the coldest period of time in Siberia. The temperature was 35-50 degrees below zero Celsius, not Fahrenheit. We passed through hills populated by Buriats and their region was untouched by the passing army. We could buy provisions for ourselves and horses; we could sleep in warm houses.

Icy March, a travelogue (continued from page 5)

We finally had some good breaks and some kind of comfort. This bliss continued for about two weeks. Our destination was Irkutsk, where the head of the White Government, Admiral Kolchak, supposedly had his quarters.

In the middle of February, we finally descended from the mountains and came to the railway again. In a few days, we arrived at the last station, Cheremhovo, with the hope of being in Irkutsk by tomorrow. We learned that Kolchak was shot the day before and Irkutsk was in the hands of the communists. All our sufferings were in vain! We had lost our cause.

Again, as one month before, soldiers and officers gathered in the streets and discussed the possibility of surrendering and going home. The situation was even more tragic than before. By the evening two lines of sleighs were on the main road. One of those who wanted to go farther around Irkutsk heading for Chita, the other, four times longer, of those who decided to go to Irkutsk and plead guilty. Soviet planes were flying over our heads and we could expect at any moment either bombs or machine guns aiming at our line. Instead, artillery from the hills sent us rounds of shrapnel. Some people in our line were killed and some wounded. We came off safe and sound.

The night fell. As usually, when the danger was too close, father, who had his own horse, took a seat in front of our sleigh and managed the two horses. We were followed by an old soldier, who had a sleigh full of provisions purchased at Buriats, then a sleigh with a young boy who carried our small trunks. We had to cross the railway tracks on the hill. One of our horses slipped on the rail and stumbled. While father tried to straighten out the situation, everyone passed ahead of us. We came down and found ourselves in the middle of a vast plain covered with snow. The full moon was shining and we found three roads leading in three different directions. Which one should we take? After 10-15 minutes of real agony, we saw another pair of sleighs rushing at full speed and turning to the left. We followed them as fast as we could. Probably one hour later we were again in the middle of sleighs and horses, all moving up the mountains encircling Irkutsk. The road was steep and we walked the horses to help them pull the weight of the sleigh and some baggage therein.



Frozen surface of Lake Baikal. Photo: Wikipedia.org.

The morning came, we were still moving up and down steep roads on the hills. There was not a sign of the two soldiers with our provisions and our trunks. All of a sudden my mother started to cry bitterly. "We are no more than poor beggars," she repeated. "All we have is a loaf of stale bread in our sleigh." It was true, but nevertheless, father and I tried to console her by saying that at least all three of us were alive and together. In the afternoon, we saw on the other side of the hill the young soldier with our trunks. The old one went to Irkutsk with all the provisions. It was a blow. The horses were badly in need of good fodder. What is going to happen to us next?

Yet with the trunks retrieved, the mood was a little better. We even tried to see Irkutsk from the top of the hill, but a shrapnel that hit an officer standing not far from me cut his throat and that horror prevented my further observations.

Hurry on, hurry on! Became the motto of the whole epopee [sic].

By night we came to a small village for some rest. No fodder for the poor animals! Next morning we moved slowly along the Angara River. Its source is from the Baikal Lake and its current is so rapid in that part that the water never freezes. Clouds of vapor were hanging over the river in the bright sunny day. An amazing and rather strange sight!

By night the first stop was on the banks of the Baikal Lake. Every house was taken by soldiers. Mother was extremely tired after those strenuous days. She suggested that we try the house with the red cross banner. "They should permit us to come in," she said. We opened the door and saw dozens of sick men sleeping on the floor. We were kindly granted permission to share the shelter, and we both happily settled on the floor in a little corner by the door.

Next day we can to Listvenichnoe, the point from which it was planned to cross the lake. This place (about 50 kilometers) is the shortest distance between the two shores. Baikal is the deepest lake on earth and one of the longest, 670 kilometers. As we were talking to the aborigines, we learned several peculiarities about this beautiful but treacherous lake. Sometimes there are snow storms with strong winds and it happened several times that a whole caravan of sleighs was carried away, and the people were found later frozen under big heaps of snow. Another thing is the beautiful transparent ice of deep blue-emerald color. It is very thick but fragile. Due to extreme depth, the water is constantly turbulent underneath. Sometimes there is a kind of explosion with a rumbling sound. The ice has broken apart through the whole length of the lake. Whatever is on the surface in that particular part, goes immediately under the ice and then the rift is slowly sealed again. Someone made a joke, "It sounds like a water-spirit."

We got up at 5 in the morning. The day was gloomy and it soon began to snow, the wind howling and drifting the snow in large heaps. "Bad weather," said the owner of the house where we stayed.

Icy March, a travelogue (continued from page 6)

We descended to the ice and waited for the command to move on, when we heard a kind of thunder in the lake and then a boom as if several cannons were fired. That was it! We had to wait for two hours before we were permitted to move on. Probably about two miles from the shore, we had to cross a little bridge made by planks laid from one side of the rift to the other side. I saw a sleigh and two horses in the water, partly covered by ice.

Keep a distance of 25 feet between the sleighs was the command. The danger was that the accumulation of too many people and horses might cause too much pressure on the ice. In fact, some kinds of cracking sounds continued.

The snow was falling and the wind howling. In the early afternoon it became absolutely dark. We could hardly see the road or the sleigh moving ahead of us. The horses moved on with great difficulty. We were walking by their sides. Poorly shod and without food for two days, the poor animals were on the verge of collapse. "Move on, keep the distance," continued the command. Well, at least we were not alone. Once again, a draft on the road. Are we out of the trek? Are we lost? No, there is a dead or dying horse on the side. That means other people were going the same way. Soon we found more and more of these landmarks. Most of the horses had worn-out shoes, or no shoes at all. They slipped on the ice, fell down and could not get up again. Trying their best, they were settling deeper in the snow with ice melting around them from the warmth of their bodies. The sight of these innocent creatures was unbearable. Enormous pitiful eyes were looking, as if asking, "Why are we suffering?" There were hundreds of them on both sides of the road. Once in a while we heard a shot. Someone of the owners could no longer see those sufferings, so he ended them by killing his long-time companion.

The night fell, we still continued to move, stopping once in a while for rest. At about 3 o'clock in the morning, we heard far away shouting. "Earth, ground, we are safe!" I saw some light, torches, some figures moving, a search light. Again the command: "Keep the distance, the ice is fragile, do not gather at one spot! Water is already over the ice!" Of no avail, people were madly rushing to the ground. Shall we now go under the water. Some more steps, and I definitely felt firm ground under my feet.

We came to a warm hut, after almost 24 hours of walking. We had some tea and bread; the poor horses were fed by potato peelings. They were absolutely unable to be of any more service to us, beside there is no snow in that part of Siberia. The frozen ground was bare. People used carts, or were riding on horseback. Neither mother nor I could make it.

After some rest, we slowly came to Ulan Ude (Verhne Udinsk) a small town where we could rent a room. Father went to consult

with the military authorities and came back with terrible news: partisans were close to the city. The Japanese who guarded the railway were moving out of the region in a few days. The only solution for him was to go with the rest of the army on horseback to Chita. He would immediately make all possible efforts to rescue us from this city. The railway between Ulan Ude and Chita was active, but no passengers were accepted at that moment. The decision made, we parted. Never have I cried so desperately in my life as at that moment. After three months of constant privations in this journey of over 4,000 kilometers, we two frail women had to stay in uncertainty in the midst of a hostile population. A time of fear and bitterness!

In one hour, father was again at the door. There was a cargo car provided for the sick and they were willing to take us. Would we go with the typhus sick people? But we were all of the time among them. There were some more conditions: no trunks, a minimum of personal belongings, there were already 45 persons in the car, and we had to be ready in two hours. The owner of the house sold us some jute bags and we put in whatever was possible, then our poor animals did us a last service: slowly step by step we were approaching the railway. We could not see the track which was hidden by long lines of planks stored at the side. We had to cross the track, but when the horses were just ready to step on, we heard a wild whistle, shouts and screams. We saw a locomotive ten meters distance from us. In fact, one of the horses was struck by the side of the locomotive and could not move any more. People rushed to help us. We were placed in a cargo car with the rest. There was a cast iron stove in the middle, and a lot of people on the floor and on plank-beds around it. Out of 50, only three of us and one colonel, our good friend and his wife, were not sick. Most of the rest were delirious. It took us 10 days to come to Chita. (Usually it takes less than a day.) We descended from the train on March 5 safe and sound. All three of us became ill later on, but not from typhus, probably from exhaustion.

We stayed six months in Chita, where my parents found some jobs, and in August, 1920, we came to Harbin, China.



Peninsula at Lake Baikal. Photo: Wikipedia.org.