RUSSIAN COUNTESS IN DEATH-DEFYING FLIGHT SEEKS OLD LOVE SHE SPURNED FOR ANOTHER

Anna Behrs Djamgaroff Zarnekau, Moscow Noblewoman, Fled From Bolsheviki, Disguised as Old Beggar Woman Crying for Bread, After Her Second Husband Had Faced One of the Firing Squads

A MAN'S noble sacrifice and a woman's death-defying flight alone across the snow and ice of blood-dripping Russia!

A victim of Bolshevik dragooning, she is now in America hunting her first husband and their little boy.

Beautiful pawn for impersonal Fate, she was magnanimously divorced by the lover of her extreme youth that she might cherish what seemed to her a deeper love.

"If you need us ever, your son and I will be waiting for you," said the man she left. And the nobleman she left him for was soon cruelly snatched out of her life by the Russian revolutionists and murdered.

And the Countess Zarnekau fled red Russia for her life. Disguised as an old beggar woman crying for bread, she suffered her way across Russia, braving the freezing cold, the deadly bullets of her enemy, the hungry wolves and the hungrier, more treacherous peasantry.

Her story is one of the most astounding tales of the aftermath of the great war and the uprising of the Bolsheviki.

Countess Anna Behrs Djamgaroff Zarnekau, formerly of Moscow and St. Petersburg, niece by marriage of the Grand Duke Boris and of Prince Romanovsky, now in Paris, and a niece also of the late Count Tolstoy, free-thinker and writer, herein gives to the public the first authentic and detailed account of her startling experiences.

Alternating between perfect English that was almost guiltless of accent and French, she used both of these tongues with ready fluency. The charming young Countess, beautiful, poised, was dressed in a white Parisian creation, but was innocent of jewels for a reason that became apparent in the course of her conversation.

The dainty noblewoman drank tall glasses of steaming tea and smoked long Russian cigarettes, served to her in the drawing room of the mansion of the Ocean Villa Farm of Mr. and Mrs. J. G. Patterson, near Arrochar Station, adjoining Fort Wadsworth, Staten Island, N. Y.

Countess Zarnekau immediately said it had been the dream of her life, since a child, to come to America as a visitor to see its wonders, but that her present visit was much more purposeful. She hopes in the United States to get some trace of her first husband and her eight-year-old son. Her heart story proved as compelling and unusual as that of her adventures.

Grand Duke Boris to, whom Countess fled after she succeeded in eluding Bolsheviki. He aided her in rescuing mother

Was Nineteen When She Married First Husband

"I was a girl of nineteen," she said, "when I married my first husband, Ruben Djamgaroff, son of the famous and very wealthy banking family of the same in Moscow. He had an income which was the equivalent of $1,500,000 a year in American money and he showered upon me all the luxuries and comforts that money could give in Russia before the war.

"I thought I was in love with him, and there was no doubt that he was deeply in love with me, but perhaps as a young girl I did not quite know my own mind. His love for me was of the self-sacrificing kind, as he eventually proved in a manner that few men of my country would have done.

"After our little boy came and at a time when I was engaged in a round of pleasures and in outdoor sports among my friends at Moscow, I simply and frankly lost my heart to Count Alexis Zarnekau, whose title had descended from his father. The title had been bestowed by the Czar upon the father because of the latter's morganatic marriage to a Georgian lady, the Princess Diani.

"I did not attempt to hide from my husband my love for the Count. Instead I was very frank about it. Stephen came to me one day and said that he would not stand in the way of my happiness—that he loved me enough for that—and that he would divorce me so I could wed Count Alexis. Such things didn't happen often in the old Russia. He said that he would even let me have our little son, whom he worshiped, but even my mother love wouldn't permit me to take the boy away from him.

"We had been the last couple, Stephen and I, of any social prominence, to be wedded under the official orthodox ceremony of the established church before the law was altered calling for a civil as well as religious ceremony. Stephen brought influence to bear with the church and a decree of divorce was granted.

"With tears in his eyes he told me that if I ever wished to come back to him that I would at any time be welcomed—that he was still my husband and the father of my child, and that he would rewed me."

The Countess then narrated how she had searched all Europe for her first husband. She believes he has lost all his wealth, and her present duty, as she sees it, is to him and her boy.

Has Written to Many Cities to Learn His Whereabouts

She said she had written to Constantinople and to various other cities in the Near East and Southeast of Europe where he might have sought a haven. She learned he had escaped from Russia with the boy, probably through Odessa, where her mother emerged into the world of "outside." She has also sought him in Germany, Belgium, Holland, England, the Scandinavian countries and in Italy and France, but without result.

There is a possibility he is in America, where so many fugitives from the wrath of the Communists have fled. In whatever part of the world he is, she would like to find him.

The Countess next related how she had married Count Zarnekau and of their short-lived happiness of six months until in 1918 the Bolshevik uprising and revolution took place. One night a detachment of Red soldiers came to their town residence and took her husband away. To her protests and entreaties they paid no attention, but seeing a threatening look in the eyes of the officer in charge of the soldiers, she took the hint and slipped out of the house by a rear exit and went into hiding.

Count Zarnekau was placed first in prison, but was soon afterward lined up against a wall, because of the accident of birth which classed him as of the aristocracy, and was shot to death.

For another six months, not knowing his fate, she tried to find him in the prisons until her friend, Maxim Gorky, told her the quest was hopeless, since he had learned the Count was dead. He also advised her to escape herself from the country, if it were possible, as the Communists would get her next. The Countess continued:

"I wanted to keep up the search and could not credit what Gorky had told me, but I learned from indisputably correct inside sources, in fact, from a Bolshevik commissar who had once been under a great debt of gratitude to my father, that three of my cousins had been buried alive.

Learned Many of Her Friends Met Horrible Deaths

"He also told me how some of the friends of my girlhood, young men who had become officers in the Czar's navy, had met dreadful deaths by being boiled alive in caldrons of water at Kronstadt, because they had refused to join the revolution. Finally, and worst of all to my personal sensibilities, he confirmed Gorky's report of my husband's death, but added that it had been preceded by torture.

"I then determined to hesitate no longer about escaping from Russia, if that were a possible thing. I did not dare to confide my plans or intentions to those about me, for the rewards of treachery were too great. I had to go outside of Russia for aid to win my freedom.

"I could never have escaped if it had not been for my life of outdoor sports as a horsewoman and the endurance I had gained from hunting wild game over the snows of winter. I had been trained to shoot wolves, bear, deer and wildcats and was out often with the dogs and horses for several days at a time in rough country, and sometimes had only a little tea to sustain me.

"I sent out into the country to get a moujik who had been a servant of my parents and who loved them with a lifelong devotion. I knew if I could get him to come to me that I could trust him with my life. He came and I talked with him in an open square, dressed as a servant myself, so that we would neither be suspected nor overheard. He swore to serve me and in doing so he well knew he risked his own life. After a hazardous experience he succeeded in getting through as my courier to Helsingfors in Finland to my kinsman and friend, the Prince of Oldenburg, cousin of the Czar.

"The Prince immediately organized a rescue expedition of a sleigh and swift horses with two men, to alternate as drivers, and a supply of food. Where and how I met that sleigh and how I got north to the border country I do not dare reveal in detail even now. Before leaving I mentioned to my friend the commissar that I expected to get away, but I did not let him know the date set for me to leave Moscow.

"He told me that he had much money that he had made out of his government position, that he had been making all he could like many of the others, and that he wanted to get out of Russia with his wealth. He begged me to take him along, but I was afraid in those days of desperate peril to trust my life even in his hands. Some one might be watching him and we would both be caught and killed.

"Keeping my own counsel, therefore, I prepared for the dangerous trip and once things were in readiness I became quite calm about it. I was so inured to suffering, the horrors of the war and the things I had seen and known since the revolution that there was not much left in the world to affect my emotions.

"I had conducted a hospital during the war, having 200 beds in it, and as I am a trained nurse and have seen things most women and men could not endure, I had become stoical to my own sufferings.

"I crossed the great White Sea, the Gulf of Finland, with my escort on a big Russian sleigh, robed in bear rugs. My principal sufferings, of course, had been in reaching the point of rendezvous where the sleigh was to be in waiting. I went alone, disguised as an old and dirty peasant woman clamoring for food from any one I met in a cracked high voice. Somehow I got through exhausted from lack of food and sleep. Once I was aboard that sleigh, wrapped warmly in the bear rugs, I am afraid I slept peacefully.

"Through all of the dangers of discovery and horrors of famine we passed as we sped across the icy wastes through winter gales and snowstorms, I remained quiet and self-possessed. I am a fatalist, like so many Russians, and I was convinced that whatever was in store for me would come to pass anyway, so why distress myself. On the coast, I should mention, we struck a terrible little settlement where the starving inhabitants begged us for a little food or tea.

"One man tried to kill our horses, and as I think of it now I shudder to think what would have happened to us if he had succeeded. He was caught just in time by one of our men who lashed him with a whip.

"The desperate people in this settlement were subsisting on dead bodies. The frozen bodies each bore a stamp on the shoulder. Those marked 'dead of disease' were placed under the ice along shore. Those stamped 'dead of starvation' were laid aside as a store of food. It was all these miserable and hopeless beings had."

"We had to watch them every second, as one would starving wild beasts, before we could get away from them, promising that we would send aid. We did send help later, but when the rescuers arrived from Finland there was no one left alive in the little settlement of which the wolves had left few human traces."

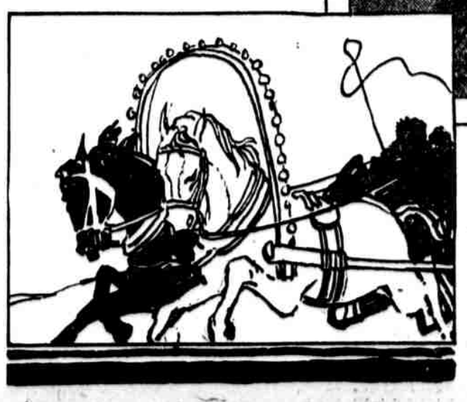
The Countess said she had stayed five months at Helsingfors until navigation opened in the spring, when she took steamship for London and joined her sister there, Mrs. Cazalet, wife of an Englishman, who had lost his entire fortune in Russia. Later she crossed to Paris, where she found her uncles, Grand Duke Boris and his brother, the Duke of Leuchtenberg.

"I succeeded in getting my mother, Mme. Behrs, and my sisters out of Moscow alive and to Paris. To get word to them and show them the way required a long time. It then took them eighteen months to make the journey. It also required the greatest exercise of patience and cleverness to elude the alert Bolshevik agents. My mother and sisters walked at night across country to the south and hid and slept in the daytime. They could not ride on trains, of course, nor could they hire vehicles, even if they had been available, and they had had the money to pay for them.

Got Through Odessa Worked Way to France

"They got out through Odessa finally, where they caught a ship, and by degrees worked their way to France from one port to another. When they dared to get in touch with us by cable, we sent money to them."

Countess and her two uncles, Prince Romanovsky, Duke of Leuchtenberg (left) and Grand Duke Boris (right)



The Countess has located her cousin, the Count Ilya Tolstoy. He is the son of the late Count Leo, whose teachings and philosophy he frequently heard from his own lips, but which he never absorbed, because of the warnings of her parents, who feared the effects of his philosophical views on her young mind. Count Ilya is at Waterbury, Conn. He has telegraphed her and she is very soon to visit him, she said.

While in America the Countess hopes to arrange for the sale of a big Polish estate of 5000 acres of oak and pine lands near Grodno, on which there is a huge house of eighty rooms. This property belongs to her and her two brothers-in-law and was valued before the war at more than a million dollars. She said she would be glad to get a fifth of that sum for the estate, which is traversed by a railroad.

Most of her valuables were requisitioned by the Communists, she said, who visited her home in Moscow twenty-six times in a score years, taking paintings, tapestries, silverware, furniture, bronzes and jewels. Many of her jewels, however, she was able to save and took to Finland and these, in addition to an income from England, have been her principal source of subsistence since. Her wandering existence of safety and peril, she said, had been left behind in cold storage when she had fled to Finland. She said she supposed that now adorned some commissar's wife.

Asked if she believed any of the Czar's immediate family were still alive, she said:

"That question is frequently asked in Europe, but after exhaustive investigations by members of the Czar's former court, his own relatives, by a careful inquiry made in Russia by correspondents of the London Times in 1920 at the request of the late Viscount Northcliffe, every one is convinced that the Czar and Czarina and their children are unquestionably dead.

"There have been rumors that they were in various parts of the world. Siberia, China and Japan, but these have always been proved to be merely rumors. After four years it does not seem possible that if any of them were alive in the world that their existence could be hidden.

Russian Peasants Demand Republic With Czar at Head

"The peasantry of Russia, the bulk of the population, in their ignorance and simplicity are now demanding a republic with a czar. That may sound rather funny to you, but you see the Czar was more than an Emperor; he was the head of the Church. He was a god to the common people of Russia.

"I think that the Bolshevik Government, as such, will not continue for a long period. It will gradually change and take on the aspect of a republic, but if the present heads succeed in maintaining themselves that long in power, I think they are destined one day to be hanged also. The people know they have been deceived in the course of this experiment by the sincere fanatics and those who for gain pretend to be Communists or at least adherents of the Soviet system of government. They know that communism will not work on economical lines and that it fails to take human nature into account.

Countess Anna Zarnekau, who defied deadly bullets of enemy in her mad dash across frozen Russia. She suffered many hardships

"They (the peasant class) see no need for suffering endlessly now in maintaining out of the nation's slender present resources a great army to keep them under submission of the Communists. It will all work out some day, I feel quite sure. The people will then demand a strong and liberal central government with a constitutional figure at its head. They might even elect a Romanoff as president of a republic.

"What the most intelligent Russians would like to see, for they know their countrymen, would be a constitutional monarchy with one of the best of the old blood of the Romanoffs at the head, for it would be up to such a man that the common people would be able to look with trust and faith. It is hard to change the feelings and thoughts of centuries.

"As a matter of fact, the best and mostly cultivated class Russians who escaped and are now in other countries do not care much what kind of government is established so long as it is stable and recognizes property rights and international obligations. It may be a limited monarchy or a republic. It seems to me, however, that the Russian people are scarcely ready for a republic and that a liberal monarchy, like that in England, would suit them best, with a kingly individual and head of the Church as the central figure, whether he had much political power or not.

Thinks Bolsheviki Will Be Overthrown Eventually

"I was told by Duke Dmitry and others before I left Paris that my uncles, Prince Romanovsky and Grand Duke Boris, whom I visited frequently for war alone I did not discuss politics, would help them. Duke Dmitry became head of a non-Russian army when Bolshevism overthrown, if that day comes. A counter is now busily going on to that end right now.

"Personally, I believe that the people against in Russia to bring about a change in government that will have the confidence of the United States and the whole world will take a year or two to accomplish. But no one can be sure it will be successful. The Grand Duke Cyril, it is said, is helping the movement. He now has his headquarters in Paris. He is the male who would be raised to the throne if a monarchy were established.

"Prince Romanovsky and Grand Duke Boris, the last grandsons of Emperor Nicholas to your country, believe in the future of Russia. Some of his beautiful estates and good times over there and in various parts of the world, will be the anything in their power to help restore Russia, if the opportunity ever comes, but to me, to be real honest about it, the future looks very dark. I am afraid the old days will never come back.

"Grand Duke Boris has changed a good deal since his marriage three years ago. The Romanoffs, you know, are always faithful to their women after marriage, no matter what their escapades before marriage. Nothing worries him even now. He sold part of the jewels of the Empress Catherine II for the paltry sum of 1,000,000 francs and he is living on that. He has some magnificent paintings to sell, but he finds them a drug on the market. He says that as long as he can have a good dinner and a bottle of wine he should worry, as you say in this country. He is certainly a jolly fat, uncle Boris.

"Boris is living in a house at Bellevue on the suburbs of Paris with his wife, where I saw him just before I left for America. Prince Romanovsky was with us and we three had our pictures taken together one evening at his house, an amateur flashlight. I had a spat with him just before I left Paris, but it didn't amount to much. None of them would actually believe that I was coming to America until I was on board the steamship."

In Paris the Countess Zarnekau said, she had encountered her old-time friend, the Countess Olga Yurievitch, formerly lady-in-waiting to the Czarina. Mme. Yurievitch had succeeded in escaping from Russia with her children and mother through the Crimea to Constantinople, where she had received funds by cable from her beautiful American cousin, Miss Jeannette Cowell, of Washington and New York.

Mme. Yurievitch and her family were in rags when she met Marseilles by Miss Cowell on board a Red Cross steamship. Mme. Yurievitch had been confined in two prisons and thought that death was only a question of time, since she had been a friend of the Czar and Czarina, who were both very fond of her, and an official member of their court.

"She told me the most dreadful account of the slaughter of innocent garrison troops and officers stationed near Yalta on the Black Sea," said Mme. Zarnekau. "She was an actual eyewitness to the incarceration of the infamous 'Forest of Standing Corpses' in the Black Sea, off Yalta. The Bolsheviki, after shooting down their poor prisoners on the piers at Yalta, threw the bodies, with stones weighted to the feet, into comparatively shallow water, and at low tide the hundreds of victims could be seen in the water, bowing back and forth with the action of the water.

"The details of what those fiends did to thousands of innocent folk throughout Russia, in what they thought were moves any steps to crush their power, are too fearful to bear repetition. In my estimation the eastern part of Europe, in many places, especially along the borders of Asia, is just as barbarous as it was 2000 years ago.

"You have no idea how peaceful and calm and contented I feel in America. I feel as though it were home to me already. I suppose it is an old story to you, but you Americans are really the most wonderful people in all the world. You are the kindest, the most generous and the most truly humane and unselfish of all nations.

"Russians of the aristocratic and cultivated classes all love you instinctively, for we are the two peoples in the world that are the most alike. Russians and Americans always understand one another at once. Be Americans I mean principally your old native-stock Anglo Saxon Americans, or those who have been in our country a sufficient number of generations to acquire the true American feeling and national characteristics.

"New York is populous and not truly American, except as to the part of its population that is of actual American origin. I have learned already that New York is by no means America, although most all foreigners, I am told, seem to think that it is.

"I am very anxious to visit Philadelphia. I have already been up to Boston for a brief visit, finding it much like London or Paris, for I was told in Boston that Philadelphia was the one other city in the United States that could be classed as truly American by heritage and in fact. The other big cities, excepting Washington, which I do not class as a big city, have either sectional or no-right distinctions.

"Philadelphia spreads to me as the cradle of American liberty. I want to see the Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell and all the trophies of the revolutionary heroes who made your great nation and set it upon its path. Oh, if we had only had that kind of men among our Bolsheviks! But even the most sincere of the fanatics who are the heads of the Soviet government now are misled and intoxicated, hare-brained fools! That is all that describes them.

"I expect to visit the Pacific Coast and see the far-famed California, and to visit the wonderful Rocky Mountains and Niagara Falls and the Great Lakes. I am particularly anxious to see Lake Superior, your greatest of fresh-water inland seas, which is one of the seven wonders of the world. I have read so much about it and its marvelous marine phenomena."