

Chapter V111

The Bellebey House

Zuka Ossinin went ashore in Simbrisk to visit some friends. Most of them were uneasy due to the civil war. The Red terror of the previous winter, the carnage and loss of life, was still fresh in their minds. Zuka received only vague news of his family. As far as he knew, they were still alive. Lenin's Bolsheviks had developed a clever plan to fight the nobility and landed gentry; in fact, any class that possessed some form of wealth. The Communists expected to neutralize all classes commencing with the nobility proceeding downward and monopolize power. Many of the wealthy noblemen were arrested. Some were shot, others were stripped of their property.

The communists exploited all classes pitting one against the other. The outcome was disintegration of nobility leadership and chaos enabling communist assumption of power. Arriving in Simirsky, Zuka found people cautious. They began to realize what was happening and no longer trusted the Reds. Those who had spoken against the imperial regime now learned to keep their mouths shut and their opinions to themselves.

That evening Zuka went to the railway station and to his delight found that his father was still on the railway's board of directors which entitled Zuka to a first class compartment. The porter was an old friend of the family. He opened a vacant compartment and closed it after Zuka went in. Then he hung an "official" sign on the knob. Soon the crowd would storm into the train but Zuka was safe in an "official" compartment and would not have to share his accommodations. Only then did he realize how tired he was. He stretched out luxuriously on the soft berth and immediately fell into a deep and dreamless sleep.



(Peter Matthew Belov, pictured left, participated in the development and funding of a railway bridge which spanned a large river in Samara province. Consequently the family were afforded many railway privileges.)

Bougoulma

The train was not in a hurry; it arrived at Bougoulma in the afternoon of the next day. Zuka got off the train to look around, hoping to see some familiar faces. He could not identify a soul.

He decided to be on the safe side and make a call home before the train left the station. He asked for No. 7, his home number. An aggressive voice, the voice of an angry sergeant answered his call. Zuka became wary. He asked for his father and the gruff voice answered, "Not here," so he asked for his mother.

“Who is talking?” impatiently the voice asked. Zuka quietly hung up. Something was amiss at home. It was possible that his house was occupied by the communists. As the train was still at the station, Zuka decided to board once again. He would disembark at Tuimaza, the next station, and proceed home under the protection of the his father’s faithful Tartars.

As he walked along the platform he bumped into a wide-eyed girl who was so astonished to see him that she dropped all her parcels and lost her power of speech. She was not a beautiful girl, just a plain, ordinary country girl. Zuka would not have traded her for the most beautiful creature in the whole world.

Her name was Masha and she was the daughter of his mother’s chambermaid and the grand-daughter of a former Ossinin housekeeper. She and Zuka were the same age had grown up together. They had been great pals and still addressed each other affectionately as “thou.”

“Masha what are you doing here and where are you going?”

At last Masha was able to produce an articulate sound. “Zuka, is it really you?” in order to be sure she squeezed his hand. “We were all so worried about you. We did not have any news about you and the Barina is frantic.”

“I am alright, Masha, but what has happened at home? How is everything?”

“All aboard. The third bell!” the Porter called out.

“Come on, let us get on the train.” Masha picked up her packages and she and Zuka dashed into the already moving car.

In his compartment Zuka was brought up to date with what had happened during his absence. Father was arrested during the purge of dirty bourgeois, but was released under pressure from the Tartars. The Bolsheviks were rather leery about the Tartars and so far had avoided any open quarrel with them.

Matthew, having escaped the officers’ massacre in Kazan, suddenly appeared at home in Bougoulma where he tried to raise a local battalion against the communists. He had escaped at night to the estate. The estate was peaceful as the Tartars had been protecting the family during the dangerous months.

The Raid

Masha, excitedly narrated the story of a raid. It was early spring and Zuka’s mother was staying at the manor with Nastia, Masha’s mother, for company. All the rest of the family were gone. A couple of men and a few women folk were also living at the estate. One fine morning the place was invaded by two hundred Russian peasants from far off villages. They came in

force, with wagons, bags and ropes. They rode into the yard and began removing horses and cattle from the barns. Their leader came to the broad veranda where the Barina was sitting with two other very frightened women.

“Well Barina,” he began with the well known Bolshevik battle speech: “The time is over when you can suck the people’s blood and get fatter and fatter on the bread that you take from the mouth’s of our children!” (The speech was inappropriate as the Barina was small slim lady and had never been fattened on anybody’s blood.)

“Now Barina,” continued the leader, “all this belongs to the people and we come here today to divide your ill-gotten goods. We are in charge now. Comrade Lenin says so!”

Nastia and Masha desperately clung to their Barina. They were local villagers still faithful to their Barina.

Barina looked at the leader fixedly. “It seems I know you. Are you not Vasily Anickkov?”

The man shuffled his feet uneasily.

“And how is Daria?” The man turned his head away.

He remembered too well that for years, when his family were in trouble, they would come to the Barin and Barina for help; for medicine when there was sickness; for bread when there was a shortage of food. It was not the bread of their children that the Ossinins were eating, but rather they were eating Ossinin’s bread. But that was all forgotten now. It was only a few years ago when Vasily had come at night to the Barina. His mother-in-law was delivering a baby and she was in trouble. Would the gracious Barina come and give her medicine and help with the delivery? As there were few doctors in this district, Barina often served as doctor, nurse, and midwife all rolled in one.

Naturally it was useless to argue with these peasants as it could only bring more trouble. At least the men were intent on looting and showed no violence. Vasily left to take his share of the loot. Barina sat looking out at the cheerful birch grove and the road running into it, and at the hill that rose behind the grove. She suddenly noticed a big cloud of dust rising along the road. It could be bad if the Red Cavalry decided to pay them a visit today. As she watched she saw a company of horseman riding full speed down the hill. They disappeared into the woods and reappeared on the near side of the estate. They rode back around on the straight road leading up to the house. Barina realized that a large company of Tartars were quickly approaching. In a few moments all hell broke loose in the yards. The whole place was filled with a mighty angry group of Tartar ex-servicemen.

As it turned out, a Mullah (priest) in the nearest village got word of the Ossinin raid and

immediately sent riders to other Mullahs in the district with instruction to send any young ex-servicemen post haste to take care of the situation. While the Russian peasants were quarreling among themselves over who would get every item or animal the Ossinins owned, the Mullahs were active as well. The result was a company of two hundred Tartar horsemen rushing in, some with saddles but most without. Tahir Bey, the leader of this improvised cavalry, jumped off his mount and walked over to Vasily. He grabbed him by his shirt and started to shake him as if he were young pup.

“Get out of here you son of a dog and grand-son of pigs. Ossinin Abzi (Barin) is a good man. We Tartars respect him and protect his property against you dirty thieves.” Poor Vasily could not hear or see anything except millions of bright stars. In a few moments the fight was over, if it could be called a fight.

The situation had changed as if a fairy had waved a magic wand over the estate. Bare headed, the peasants approached Barina and humbly asked her pardon assuring her that they would never attempt to molest her again. They had learned their lesson. All the looted articles and livestock were returned. The looters retreated faster than they had come. That was why the Reds were treating Ossinin with kid gloves. The Red Army understood force. Though they might not like it in someone else, still they feared and respected it in others. That was the big news of the past months.

Mother was at the estate and father was else where. Masha hinted that father was among the Tartars, busy trying to organize them against the Reds. The Czech army was now in Samara and so the whole province was now in turmoil. Zuka’s brother, Matthew, a Captain Beresnev and a Lieutenant Boorenin, were also staying at the estate.

Both Zuka and Masha got off the train at Tuimaza. It was quite late at night. After an hour’s drive they arrived safely at home. It was so late that Zuka did not want to awaken his mother. He went straight to his room and went to bed.

Reunited with the Family

The morning was beautiful. The sparrows were chirping gayly. Zuka, infected by their cheerfulness, ran to the “Big House” where mother was having her morning tea. He ran up the stairs of the veranda and entered the dining room. Mother was busy over the tea table but turned her head to see who had come in. She froze, took one look at Zuka, and promptly fainted.

For a few days Zuka had a glorious time at home. The fishing was good; so was the hunting. There were plenty of fat wild ducks in the river. Zuka’s family gave him the red carpet treatment for they thought he was lost and never expected to see him again. They believed his chances of traveling through hundreds of miles of revolutionary chaos and arriving home safely were nil.

One day father came back with news. Samara had been freed and an anti-Bolshevik government had been formed. It was called the “People’s Government” and a “People’s Army” had also been formed under the command of Colonel Kappel. The war council immediately went to work in an effort to decide what course of action to take next. But the council did not last very long for a young Tartar rider galloped into the estate with both good and bad news:

“My Mullah sent me to tell you that Bellebey is free of the Red Dogs, freed by Russians and Czech forces. But he wants me to warn Ossinin Abzi that the Reds are retreating from Bellebey toward Bougoulma and that Ossinin Abzi may be in grave danger.”

The conversation was in Tartar as the youngster spoke no Russian. Bellebey was a neighboring town the same size and shape of Bougoulma. It lay sixty miles to the east, was comparable, but had no rail road.

“Thanks for the news and tell your Mullah that my sons will be go to Bellebey immediately and join the “People’s Army.”

The messenger gratefully accepted a bottle of Koomis, fermented mare’s milk. A mysterious drink, the cork pops like champagne and it may intoxicate you as does champagne, but at the same time, it is an honest to goodness non-alcoholic drink, and one of the healthiest. The young Tartar finished his bottle, mounted his horse, and with traditional “Allah Akbar”, was off again.

Treck to Bellebey

No time was lost in preparations. A simple and sturdy cart was harnessed and a heap of fresh hay thrown in to cover the rifles. Then Zuka, Matthew, Lieutenant Boorenin, and Captain Bersenev marched out of the Ossinie’s estate. Mother and father watched the four figures in Khaki uniforms from the veranda until they disappeared among the green leaves and white trunks of the hundred-year-old birch trees.

The Ossinin youth had a definite advantage over the Red Army for they knew this locality inside and out as they were born and raised there. They chose a narrow, dusty and little known path. If they were to meet the Red Army, they would try to pretend to be part of the Army and if that did not work, they would have to fight their way out, if at all possible. By following some of these little known paths through the forests, rivers and swamps, they reached the railway tracks in the middle of the night. They sneaked through the wide-mouthed water duct to the other side of the rail road track and melted into the night.

The Mullah of one big Tartar village was an old friend of the Ossinins. Although it was late at night, he received Ossinin’s party and welcomed them into his house. He smiled warmly at Zuka who he still remembered as a two-year-old valiantly trying to oppose a big hissing goose. Soon the samovar was ordered and tea prepared by a few sleepy girls. Honey, bread and eggs

were served to the hungry travelers along with expertly fried chicken.

“I am happy to have you here tonight with me,” the Mullah was speaking perfect Russian. He was a graduate of a Moslem Academy in Ufa.

“I know you are going to join the White Army in Bellebey.”

“Yes, I know Bellebey is free now, but I am sad that this Civil War happened to us, to Russia, our Russia. We are Muslims but we are all Russians just the same. We have been Russians for the last six hundred years and that is a long time.”

Lieutenant Boorenin, with a chicken drum in his hand, eagerly asked, “Why is there such a difference between you and us Christians? In this revolution I have seen hundreds of Russian Orthodox churches debased and turned into toilet rooms. I have seen many Russian women raped and tortured, priests and bishops not only molested, but actually clubbed to death by their own congregations. But here, among the Tartars and Mohammedans, I have never seen or heard of a single Mosque being debased or destroyed, nor any Tartar girl being raped by Tartar men.”

The Mullah thoughtfully stroked his rather sparse beard. “The morals of the people, any people, are in the hands of their priests. They are not in the hands of their school teachers. In school they teach science, but morals are taught at home and by the priests. Actually all religions are good, as they build high moral standards; but it is the responsibility of the religious leaders to preach love, compassion, and respect for one another and for property. Spiritual leaders must teach by example. They must demonstrate by the purity of their lives and the selfless dedication of their service. They should not be looking to make a profitable profession out of service to God. To sell God or to use Him as an instrument for personal ambition or gain is a grievous sin. You never know when God will punish you.

Moral disorder and decline are the result of bad management by the church. It is bad when the members of any church begin to deplore the moral decline of the country. In so doing, they are publically admitting their own incompetence and inability to direct and lead the people. No one else is to blame.”

Zuka Ossinin, who was raised among the Mohammedans, watched Boorenin, who came from the old Russian city of Novogord. Boorenin had practically no contact with Tartars until this night.

“Well, now,” Captain Bersenkev broke in, “This is a big village, and by now, nearly all the people know we are here but we feel safe among you knowing that no one will report us to the Reds. I must admit that you Mullahs do a very good job of teaching and encouraging high standards among your people.”

The weary travelers spent the rest of the night with the Mullah. In the morning the news

was good. The Reds were retreating and the roads to Bellebey were finally safe to travel.

July 15, 1918

This momentous day was much too hot, even for July. The sun was mercilessly baking the weary travelers. A dense cloud of flies was attacking both horses and men and some of these flies had very nasty tempers. Another cloud, a cloud of dust, was just as torturous.

At long last the journey was over. A beautiful valley slumbered peacefully under the glare of the hot summer sun. The white houses of Belleby shone among green poplars. From the top of the hill Belleby looked like an enchanted village.

“Halt, who goes there?” The challenge was unexpected, rough, loud and fierce.

“Officers proceeding to Bellebey!” answered Matthew Ossinin.

“Stand where you are,” the command came from the nearest bushes. One figure emerged from the bushes with his rifle covering the group. Another advanced slowly. His hands holding his rifle seemed a bit too nervous. The one at the rear was wearing a Czech uniform; the other was definitely Russian infantry.

“Who are you?”

“I am Captain Bersenev. Conduct us to the Military Commander in Bellebey.” Captain Bersenev talked to the soldier in a crisp, stern military manner.

The long habit of obeying an order given by an officer registered in the mind of the soldier,

“Yes, Captain, Sir, “ he turned to the Czech.

“Bring them to the Czech commander” ordered the Czech soldier.

“To hell with the Czech commander, this is Russia!” flared Matthew Ossinin. “We will see the Russian Commander.”

Slightly abashed, the Czech soldier did not insist. “Alright, we will take you to the Russian Commander. Do you have any arms?”

“We sure do, four rifles, four pistols and a Mauser.”

“You have to give them up to me.”

“The hell we will. Since when are Russian officers asked to surrender their arms to a Goddamn Czech soldier?” Matthew Ossinin’s temper flared. It was a novelty that a foreign soldier could ask a Russian Officer of the Guards to hand over his arms.

“This is up to the Russian Commander to decide and not for you.”

“Let us go.” and Matthew Ossinin calmly took the reins, and the cart and the party moved on, with the two soldiers behind, still covering them with rifles.

In Bellebey they were soon surrounded by a number of Czech soldiers. They were unfriendly, but refrained from open hostility after the first Czech babbled excitedly to them in Czech that these were new recruits. Soon idle sightseers increased the crowd. At last a Czech officer turned up and instructed them to move to the Russian commander’s office.

Nearly all official buildings in Russia have some kind of character and are easily recognized. So Ossinin recognized the brick house that served as the Military Commander’s office. A few Czech soldiers loafed around the building. A Russian soldier came out with an invitation from the Russian Commander.

All of Ossinin’s group filed in. The Czech officer brought up the rear. There was only one Russian officer in the big, gloomy, bare room.

He turned to the newcomers. He was tall and slim in the uniform of the Hussars of the Guard. He had lazy or dreamy eyes which Zuka could not quite decide. His clear grey eyes were veiled as if it was too difficult for him to keep them wide open. With his thumbs in his pockets and slightly rocking on the ball of his feet he amusingly inspected the motley group. Then he softly drawled:

“And who in the hell might you be?”

Again Zuka had an impression that the apparent laziness of his eyes was very deceptive. Behind the indifference was a very active and an alert mind. He did not miss the slightest detail. Zuka would not like to have this man for an enemy. It would be very unhealthy.

“I am Captain Bersenev, Infantry.”

“I am Lieutenant Boorenin, Artillery.”

“I am Matthew Ossinin of Imperial Guards.”

“I am Sergei Ossinin, General Kornilov’s Caucasian Unit.” That meant that Sergei Ossini was one of the first three thousand who answered General Kornilov’s call to rise up against the inhuman terror of the communist government.

With the same half-amused smile the officer continued to look at the disheveled, unshaven characters before him. “Is it not something? I nearly arrested you as dangerous and suspicious characters and court-martial my own second cousins. Well, I am Staff Captain Alexis Lessin. My mother is Varvara Pavlovna, nee Ossinin, the daughter of Pavel Ossinin, while you are the sons of Peter Ossinin, and the grandsons of Matthew Ossinin Sr. Naturally I know all about you, but until now, we have never met.”

He suddenly turned to the Czech captain. “One moment please. Well captain, your dangerous desperados turned out to be Russian officers and on top of that, my own cousins from an influential family in these parts. I do not like these kinds of mistakes. This is war, captain and one has to keep his wits about him and not act like as jittery and nervous girl who expects to be raped by a black monk.” And he disdainfully turned his back on the Czech officer.

“Well, I am glad to see you all!” His hand shake was surprisingly strong for his soft and well manicured hands.

“It seems that you gentlemen are tired, dusty and want to wash off the dust of the road. Matthew, you go with Zuka to my house and see my mother. She will be very happy to see both of you. I will take care of Captain Bersenev and Lieutenant Boorenin. We have to talk about the whereabouts of the Reds.”

Aunty Babs

“Thanks for the invitation. Where is your house and how do we find it?” Matthew asked.

“Oh, but everybody knows the Lessin’ house. It’s the big white house on Main Street, with poplars. You cannot miss it.” He was right. One cannot miss an imposing house built according to the tradition of the last century with white colonnade, and bas-reliefs. Matthew gave a resounding knock with the traditional bronze lion head. After a pause the door was cautiously opened, but not too wide. An old servant with gray sideburns looked myopically at the grimy figures in soldier uniforms.

“Is Mrs. Lessin at home” asked Matthew.

“Her Excellency is not at home. Her Excellency is at her hospital.” And the door was resolutely closed. At first Matthew was cross, then he laughed.

“I don’t blame the old blighter. We are a sight!” And they were. Finding the hospital was even easier. It was at the end of the same street. Aunty Babs was the uncrowned queen of the hospital for the very strong reason she built it with her own money and was supporting it by herself.

They were received at the hospital by an extraordinarily pretty and pert nurse with

mischievous blue eyes, a turned up nose and a figure that even a drab nurse's uniform could not hide.

The young nurse was wary. It was uneasy times they were living in, revolutionary times, so naturally she had to be careful. She decided not to show them to the regular reception room but to a long gloomy corridor with gray walls which made everything even more dark and gloomy. A few small dusty windows failed to provide adequate light.

The pretty nurse gave them a searching look and disappeared. A couple of husky hospital attendants appeared at the other end, as if they had something to do about the hall. Matthew chuckled. He was enjoying himself and decided to play along. A little gruffly he asked to see Mrs. Lenin and not Her Excellency. The nurse returned with reinforcements seemingly uncertain. She gave him a searching look, turned around and was gone again. After a long wait, the door at the other end opened and a regal lady, who would out-dignify Empress Maria Theresa of Hapsburg, sailed into the corridor. Behind her was the same pretty nurse and two attendants closing rank. At ten feet she squinted to try and discern the faces of the two characters but it was too dark to identify them.

“Well, what do you want, my men?”

“My mother sent me to you,” Matthew humbly shuffled his feet.

“But who is your mother and why did she send you to me?”

“Oh she has not seen you for a very long time and sends you her love and best wishes.”

Empress Maria Theresa took a few steps forward. Now she could see clearly not only the dusty figures but the faces as well. She looked intently for a few seconds and then exploded.

“Oh My, it's Matthew and Zuka,” and then she gathered Matthew, dust and all, into her embrace and then Zuka was enshrouded in fragrant perfume. He felt the soft touch of her lips on his cheeks.

“Well, how are Kate and Pierre? I am glad that all of you are still alive. We were cut off here by these unspeakable Bolsheviks and seldom get news.”

She laughed good naturedly and then, turning to the pretty nurse, she said: “Vera, these are your cousins, Matthew and Zuka Ossinin. This is Vera Streshneva, the granddaughter of Andrew Ossinin.”

Zuka thought that Matthew kind of abused the right to a cousinly kiss. Matthew always had a soft spot in his heart for cousins, particularly when they were as beautiful as Vera.

Vera's eyes were dancing. The miraculous appearance of a guardsman cousin was no every day occurrence in sleepy Bellebey, particularly a good-looking cousin. On the way back home Zuka walked with Aunty Babs and answered question rather mechanically, but politely about his family. Matthew had appropriated his newly found cousin and was already turning on the charm.

"How strange," Zuka thought as an uneasy premonition gave him a vague feeling that this would be the last time all the descendants of Barin Konrad Ossinin would spend time together. Their common ancestor Conrad was born on "All Saints Day," a day set aside for about ten thousand saints of the Russian Orthodox Church. His mother had promised to name the child for the saint the church honored on the day of his birth. As it happened, all the names of the other saints were worse than Conrad so that name was chosen. Now the children of Conrad's three sons Matthew, Paul and Andrew were thrown together from the first, and perhaps the last time. It was as if Conrad wanted them to get to know each other, even if they would be together only for a short time. Zuka felt this might be the last reunion of the younger set.

The door to Aunty Babs house was opened by the same old butler who was visibly shaken by the sight of Her Excellency in company with the riff-raff.

"Savey" Aunt Babs addressed him in a slightly reproachful tone, "Here are Matthew and Zuka Ossinin." The faithful butler was shaken a second time.

"Please Barin Matthew Petrovich forgive an old man. I recognize you now. The last time I saw you you were only that big," gesturing a couple of feet above the ground. Matthew laughed gaily and patted the old man on the shoulder. "Don't worry, Savey, times change and so do we."

Another old lady entered the big living room where the boys were comfortably stretching their tired feet. "Oh my God do I really see Matthew and Zuka?" She was rather light; her blue eyes were bright, and if possible, slightly mischievous for an old lady. This had to be Vera's mother.

"I am Aunty Olga, the daughter of Andrew Ossinin. I naturally heard about you but we have never met. I and my husband, General Streshnev, were living in Poland but had to evacuate during the war. Babs invited us to stay here with her. Anyway the house is too big for her. Alex was in the war. You have already met Vera."

Soon the room was crowded with old servants and retainers; some of them still faithful to the old traditions. They came to kiss the hands of the young masters. It was just as in the good old days, as if the revolution had never happened. Aunty Barbara soon put all in order. "Samovar is to be made ready! Water for the bath must be heated and rooms prepared for four," she commanded.

Alesha returned with the rest of the party and after a bath, clean shaven with uniforms

cleaned and pressed, the visitors were seated behind a table loaded with food. As the news spread over Bellebay, some of the distant relatives filled the room. Everyone was in high spirits as the political news of the day was good. The People's Army lead by Colonel Kappel, was having one victory after another as the Red Army was driven out like a bunch of sheep. The name People's Army was very popular and had support of the common country folk.

During the time the Ossinis were in Bellebey, invitations for dinner and games of Preference (similar to American Bridge) were accepted according to seniority of kinship. A couple of days later, in one of the unavoidable dinner and Preference parties, Zuka was having bad luck at cards. It was getting late. So he handed his "hand" to Uncle Volodia, who promised to get him out of this mess. He walked slowly home. The night was quiet, even the dogs refrained from barking. Zuka wandered aimlessly about the sleepy streets and finally found himself at the back of the big mansion. Instead of going around to the front door, he stepped over a low fence and walked toward the rear of the house through the vegetable gardens and the back yard. The house was drowned in deep shadows of the trees. A lilac alley ran along side of the house. Zuka sauntered slowly in the dark when he ran into a bright spot of light that shone through the surrounding gloom. Instinctively he turned his head and looked up. The shades of a room were not drawn and he could plainly see into the room. It happened to be Vera's room. She was preparing for bed.

She was seated before her dressing table ready to change into her night shift. She was not looking into the mirror but staring abstractly, evidently thinking about something very important. She slowly removed her day chemise and stood up with the other in her hand. She was truly beautiful. Every line of her body was perfect. As a rule girls are conscious of their bodies but Vera was not. She seemed indifferent to her physical beauty. She took it for granted and was neither ashamed of it nor did she gloat. Zuka looked at her as he would look at the best work of Praxiteles, or of a living Galatea. There was no desire only admiration and reverence in his gaze. Zuka was not a gawky country bumpkin. He had served his apprenticeship in Sochi and had been instructed by a real expert. But now he understood the power of real beauty; the story of Frina who conquered a whole body of hostile judges with the beauty of her body. At that moment Zuka acquired a new philosophy, a new concept of women. He realized that they could be admired as the acme of God's creation. Vera unhurriedly donned her chemise, lightly walked over to the bed and turned out the lights.

A few days later news arrived that Bougoulma had been liberated. Bersenev and Bourenin had already left to join the White Army in Ufa. Matthew and Zuka had to go home first and then to Bougoulma where they too would join the White Army.

Alesha Lessin accompanied his cousins along the dusty main street and out into the fields and out of town. He walked as nonchalantly as ever with a stiff cavalry, slightly rolling gait. They talked about nearly everything, but the present situation. Way out in the field Alesha suddenly stopped. "Well cousins, here we part." And they shook hands.

“Inshallah” was his final farewell. Yes, “Inshallah” (*As God wills*) as the Tartars say.

The Ossinin brothers slowly ascended a sloping hill and stopped at the summit to look back at “White Bellebey.” The town was just as beautiful and peaceful as it had been when they arrived. But Zuka sixth sense told him he would never see Bellebey again. The old pure, quiet country life was at an end. Revolution was destroying the old ways. A new terrifying future loomed before Russia. Old Russia was dying before their very eyes. Perhaps a new Russia would arise from the ashes of fire and revolution. It might an even be a stronger Russian, but it would never again be a holy Russia.

In the end God willed that Captain Lessin would organize, drill and command a squadron of semi-nomadic Kirgize horsemen— the tireless wolves of the desert – who hardly reached his shoulder, but who idolized and obeyed him to the end. And God willed that Captain Lessin’s troupes would take their last stand in Bellebey against the Red Army in the fall of 1919. Only after six all out attacks were the Reds finally able to finally occupy Bellebey when there was not a single man left alive in Captain Lessin’s squadron to answer their fire.