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Grand Duchess Olga, 21.

1919: A REFUGEE CHRISTMAS

The Unpublished Letters of Grand Duchess Olga Alexandrovna

Not only in Russia was Soviet animosity toward the Romanoffs swallowed wholesale; the Bolshevik rewrite of history influenced the West as well. Too often, even now, the mention of the Russian imperial family to educated westerners brings a guarded look, shrugged shoulders, a murmur of, “Well, of course, it was tragic about the children, but...” and then the pedantic Soviet line of “high-living-and-disdain-for-the-people” tumbles out as assuredly as from any old-guard Party member. Slowly, though, as the archives are opened and personal letters brought to light, both the Bolshevik myth of Romanoff arrogance and apathy is being laid to rest. A candid glimpse of one of the royal family is provided in the following previously unpublished letters of Grand Duchess Olga Alexandrovna, smuggled out of Russia in the winter of 1919 to her mother, Dowager Empress Marie Feodorovna in Denmark.¹

By 1919 Olga Alexandrovna had already spent five years nursing on the Russian front and was awarded the St. George Medal for valour in attending the wounded under fire. (Her sister-in-law, Empress Alexandra Feodorovna, and two of Olga’s nieces had also served as Red Cross nurses throughout the First World War in St. Petersburg.) A few months before the



Grand Duchess Olga and Col. Kulikovsky with sons, a year after their escape from Russia.

¹ With thanks to the Grand Duchess Olga Alexandrovna Foundation, which has given permission to print these letters.

abdication of her brother, Tsar Nicholas II, Olga Alexandrovna celebrated her long-awaited marriage to Colonel Nicholas Kulikovsky in Kiev. Following the 1917 Provisional Government and the 1918 Bolshevik Revolution, those members of the imperial family who had not yet been arrested fled southwards to areas still occupied by the White Army.

In the following months the Bolsheviks gained ground, and after a period of house arrest in Ai-Todor, Olga's mother and her older sister Xenia reluctantly departed into exile in Denmark. Loathe to leave Russia, Grand Duchess Olga and Colonel Kulikovsky stayed on, living anonymously as simple villagers until the winter of 1919, when, with the approach of the Red Army, they fled with their babies, Tihon and Guri, to the Kuban — traditional Cossack lands in the southern Ukraine. Their flight, in the midst of a severe winter, through regions beset by typhus and near starvation is told by Olga herself in the following letters, written in English and smuggled out of Russia to her mother in Denmark; her unembittered charity another spadeful of earth on the grave of Soviet distortion.



Empress Marie and six-year-old Olga.

People and places frequently mentioned:

Mama: Russian Empress Maria Feodorovna, mother of Tsar Nicholas II and Grand Duchess Olga.

Kukushkin, Kuksha, Kuk., K.: Grand Duchess Olga's nicknames for her husband, Col. Nicholas Kulikovsky.

Tihon: G.D. Olga's eldest son, 2 years old at the time of these letters.

Guri: G.D. Olga's second son, seven months old at the time of these letters.

Nicky: Tsar Nicholas II, G.D. Olga's brother. Was murdered with his family in Ekaterinburg in July 1918, but at the time of these letters, Olga still does not know.

Xenia: G.D. Olga's sister, in Hvidore, Denmark with their mother.

Midshipman Rose: A young sailor who had been assigned to help the Kulikovskys evacuate.

A. Alix and Toria: "Aunt Alix," Queen Alexandra of England (Empress Marie's sister and Olga's aunt) and her daughter, Victoria.

C. Majayeva: Friend and nurserymaid/assistant to the family.

Komov, Emily: Other temporary companions of the Kulikovskys.

Youdenich: Russian White Army general.

Gatchina: The royal estate near St. Petersburg where Grand Duchess Olga grew up.

Rostov: A town in southern Russia near the Crimean border.

Novominskaya: A Caucasian village where the Kulikovskys spent the summer and fall of 1919.

Kuban: A Cossack region in southern Ukraine.

Hvidore: The Danish palace, and childhood home of Empress Maria Feodorovna, where she also spent the last years of her life after leaving Russia.

The original letters are written in English, interspersed with Russian words and phrases. The Russian phrases are translated below in brackets.

Letter I:

From the Armenian Monastery

My darling Mamma – thank you with all my heart for your dear 2nd letter from Hvidore (5th of Oct.) It took just exactly a month coming. Now I hope you may have by now, received all mine? In any case the one I sent with [Polykov] , so you know where we are at least. It was a great joy hearing from you...And so nothing came of [Youdenich's] campaign & all the poor Petersburg people are still awaiting their delivery. Oh! its awful. In general everything is rather rotten at the present moment, and one feels anxious and sad. I wonder if all the rest of my days I shall feel anxious. Its rather nasty & one feels tired out sometimes. We often sit with [Kukushkin] and remember 'olden days'; Gatchina, the regiment, our rides, the picnics and every detail. In the letter I sent you with the Danish consul, I put 3 photos of the babies and a sketch of [Tihon]. I hoped you might get it for Xmas – but of course you won't...

...It is long since I began this letter and everything seems to have gone "smash" here since! The heads have lost their heads and don't seem even to hide this sad fact. One says that the panic at [Rostov] is great, but here in our lonely monastery² we only from time to time get news through [Midshipman Rose]. And so again we are all packed up & sitting on our boxes in our now empty, sunny rooms waiting for the last news – to dress and drive either to the station (if we can get a wagon) or if we can't we still have our horses and carriages. How everything went smash in such a short time without any notice – is extraordinary. Somehow I can't believe it and don't feel it at all. What an awful impression the evacuation of [Rostov] must make upon every one...

We have all been ill with influenza – even the poor babies. It began with a violent cough, fever and then an awful sort of cold in the head – not being able to breathe. Horrid. My ear began to ache all one night & I was rather miserable – just at such a time when I ought to be well, and up to any emergency. Thank God the children are well again. [Tihon] had fever one day only – & the little one felt sad also one day. He has a second tooth now and only coughs in the morning – of course it is difficult for a baby to cough up the phlem! We had to sell our cows...We kept 2 till now – & I don't know what we shall do – as we don't even know where we are going to... [Lukomskie] wants us to go to the Crimea – of course we don't relish this notion – as there we can't get any-

² "...our lonely monastery": An Armenian Monastery near Rostov in southern Russia where the Kulikovskys were staying towards the end of 1919.

thing again – & we still hope of a chance to get to the [Kuban]... There at least one can earn ones daily bread – & that now a days is all one can wish for... Oh! how glad & thankful I am that my nasty nervous feeling has left me – at least now – when it might be very bad as really the position is rather rotten...

[Tihon] gets sweeter & more companionable every day. He asks an incredible amount of questions and when he doesn't quite understand – he makes a horse face nods his head up & down and says "da da da." He is most careful of his little brother – tells him he must not put this or that into his mouth because it will give him a pain in his stomach – & [Tihon] himself is such a careful little person that we allow him to carry glasses; even knives or forks & our precious few plates – as he is so careful. Any untidiness in the room he at once puts straight – or if he can't – he calls someone to help him. Such a dear. Someone just fled from [Kharkov] & brought an old letter from poor [grandmother Kukushkin] – she sends us her favorite old photos of her children – to keep & some documents – & says that the bolsheviks are upon them. The person who arrives says that this time there are no excesses – as German officers – are at the head of them and don't allow it. What is this still?!... Many surprises are still in store for us and of course disagreeable ones – I should say... Oh! It will be years & years before our poor country recovers from all the blows it has received these last years.

Our companion [Komov] continues to be strange & quite unlike himself. Instead of helping he only gives trouble: Lets [C. Majayeva] clean up his room – which he might do himself, laments all the time that he has to clean his own boots. If we all sat & lamented now a days, –instead of changing our habits & adapting ourselves to the life we lead – nothing would get done at all... I can't say how I admire Emilia ...she is indeed remarkable. Sometimes I feel so ashamed to have dragged her down but she doesn't seem to mind and is always jolly! At the present moment, – she, [Masha] & I are so deaf that we only hear half that one says to us. Rather a bore, but as all three hope it may soon pass – we [don't despair.]

We have heard that we may go to the [Kuban] and of course rejoice.Yesterday afternoon a unit of [Kuban cossacks] took possession of the little Armenian village here and all sorts of [refugees] drive past. To make things look more warlike – officers come here to "choose" the position: quite strange & and incredible – so near to [Rostov]. It will be awful if [Rostov] is taken – but somehow I don't believe it can happen. Today is Monday— & Thursday we think of leaving.

Letter II:

From the Armenian Monastery (2)

19th of December. I continue my letter. Very cold and lots of snow & we didn't send our horses and things to town & await the morrow! [Kukushkin] has frozen one ear – & it is enormous & hurts him. Any amount of [refugees], deserters etc... swarm here on their way they know not themselves whither. We have pulled all our last things into two rooms & left our other two to the disposition of heaps of poor people – [An officer] (from Kharkov) with all his staff's some ladies & children – 12 in our two rooms. All round our house – poor miserable horses tied to carts & sledges – and still more miserable drivers thereof – who have been taken – and so many have dreadful frozen feet & hands! No one feeds them or thinks of them & they slept all night out in the frost. – That is the way to make the last people [bolsheviks], as they are of course furious & say that they are treated like dogs while the gentlemen arrange themselves warm rooms...

All the splendid remains of the [horse farms] – of which there were many just [in the town of Kharkov] (Ribeaupierre etc.) have run here and also all the poor stallions & mares stand about in corridors & out in the snow – having walked 500 versts...[Kukushkin] went half mad – looking at them – and now all these poor people of course took up the rest of his thoughts. He gives away all the remains of our potatoes & corn (one can't not feed famished half frozen people!) saying that its too difficult to take the sacks with us... Well –[in Kuban] one can probably buy things cheaper. I feel so well off & ashamed of it – when I look at all these poor people – quite ruined and torn away from their homes and children.

And so tomorrow we are to leave – so I hurry to end my letter to you Mamadear and send it before we leave – one never knows when one will again have a chance of writing. Perhaps we'll spend Xmas in the wagon somewhere along the line as one says its awfully blocked & trains stand for days and days. All the time poor people open our door & come in and beg for a piece of bread – even the [head transport driver] (a kind of officer) just came & looking at me begged, – [“Maybe the colonel's wife] (me!) [will give me a piece of bread. I am also hungry.”] Its awful as we have left only enough for ourselves & our journey – & one can't say no to hungry people. [Tihon] is most astonished & even laughs to see such things.

Outside the snow lies like pillows on every branch & tree – & all this in the brilliant sunshine – really lovely – no wind at least, tho' about 18° of frost... Kuksh. has gone to town with our things tied on a cart & a sledge. I bound up

his ear which is all cracked and big [blisters] with water – like a burn, and he looks as if he was wounded in the head. [Tihon] is amusing himself – playing with a piece of string. Poor “Lock” [*a small dog*] has just been bitten in the head by the collie –“Milord” & feels bad & trembles. [C. Majaeyeva] & I ran out & kicked the collie until we got him off poor little “Lock.” He has a big & deep hole in his head. The little baby is asleep – as he was awoken in his sleep when our soldiers came to carry out the things & was sleepy and ramolie all the time – till at last he went to sleep again at about 10 o. this morning.

It is now afternoon. I have just been out with the dogs for a walk to visit for the last time the pretty old park. All under snow – so quiet & beautiful – the sun was setting & all was yellow & orange – ever so pretty. Next door our new neighbours are most noisy & one hears every word. The horses are so tired that they lie about on the snow & sleep. Our kitchen was besieged & taken possession of completely... By the by yesterday the quartermasters wanted to kick out the family [Kukushkin] – but of course we wouldn't budge! In two days it will be the new year abroad. What will this new year bring us all I wonder? *Happily one* doesn't know beforehand... [Tihon] has been most loving with me all this day – the sweetums. He has a good kind character and lots of good in him thank God – he is all the time full of attentions & tries to help wherever he can – & makes us laugh often – especially if one is carrying something heavy & he runs up and catches hold of it too with a most serious face – thinking he is of great importance & help. He doesn't think of forgetting you & yesterday again spoke of you & remembered something in the Crimea. Do you think he will really remember things before he was 2 years old? There are people who do – but of course most rare are such people. I haven't time to write to Xenia so please give the dear my best love & kiss her. [Guri] is preparing himself for more teeth & felt sad today & kept his head on my shoulder & a finger in his mouth. Probably the top ones coming this time. The front is going down. I am glad as the drive to town with my babies rather frightens me – but again – when I look all round & see that other people have to do the same & much worse even & God helps them... & I get quiet & always hope for the best.

[C. Majayeva] just made me laugh. She looked at the 2 children & most seriously remarked: [How are we going to take you, you stuffed dolls?] In the evening suddenly again the door opened & while we were at supper & with great excuses an [engineering] officer came in – he & his companions were sent to make – trenches & so on – further on but stopped here for the night

and begged us to let them sleep in a corner! We fed them & they were very nice – drank about 4 glasses of tea & talked lots. They slept on the floor in our little kitchen on some hay. By the by – we also sleep two nights on hay – & it is quite comfy & soft. We sent our beds on as they are very heavy & one never knows the last moment if one can take them. 2 of these officers came back from Siberia and [Kolchak] after he was smashed this spring. One – tho' he is quite young – has quite snow white hair & such an old face – been through lots – poor thing.

Oh! yesterday we got the news that [Kuk.'s] poor father died this March – in Germany – and all this time we knew nothing. An officer returned and met K. yesterday & told him this sad news – and that he was eat up by insects – just he who liked to be ever so clean. Poor old man – he got weaker & weaker till he died... Now I must really stop. God bless you Mamadarling. Write again soon – write often – what does it matter if I get several at once – at least I'll know what you are doing.

Much love & kisses to A. Alix & Toria (Xenia of course!)

I hug & kiss you dear old thing – I mean Mamadear! Do write soon to your loving old daughter Olga.

[Rostov] 19* [Dec.] 1919 [g.] [Armenian Monastery]

Write through British Mission Novorossisk Capt'n Basilevitch

For O. A. Koulik.....

(they'll send it on to me.)

I think we shall be at a [Cossack village] called [Temizhbejskaya] but I'm not quite sure.



23rd of December. [Stanitza Bataysk Donskaya Region] The day after I have ended my letter – [Kukushkin] had gone to town to find out what news – at 1 he returned & announced that we were to pack and be ready at 3 o. to start as [Taganrog] was already left & the staff and everything was at [Rostov] station waiting for the last news too... We packed full speed – happily it was a lovely quiet sunny afternoon and for the children nothing to be feared. We got into a sledge: [Kuk & Dm. Iv.] in front – [C. Mojayeve], [Tihon] – [Guri] & I – behind them and off we drove. The poor Armenian priest & the [man-

ager] nearly cried with despair when we drove away. They are so frightened.. As we got nearer town & the big road – you can't imagine the terrific amount of carts, sledges, cossacks, soldiers, [convoy], wounded – all hurrying in one direction – all running away!.. As we drove through the bye streets to the station we saw scenes of plunder: soldiers breaking windows, cossacks stealing hay etc... Nasty sights. (Next day near the station – one soldier hung – as a scare for the rest – not to steal.) With some difficulty we found our wagon as it was on a side line & it was growing dusk too. We climbed in – thank God it was warm – (but full of bugs) and today is already 3rd [full day and night] that we live in it.

We hardly got out of [Rostov] – such was the squash & tremendous muddle going on at the stations.³ The [former administrators] gave orders to send us off by the very first train – & instead – we were kept in a corner for over 48 hours – & other trains left – even a whole circus – but not us. The small [staff] are all [bolsheviks] in their souls & glad to do one a bad turn. At last, last night we got moved onto one of the first lines – and actually came to [Bataysk] – 10 [versts]⁴ from [Rostov]. Fancy how far!!

Our wagon is over filled – as of course we picked up anyone who asked. 4 officers, ill after typhus with spots, our friend [Ozharovsky] – one of them with his nice little wife – the ex- [governor Koshkorev] , his wife, daughter & husband, 6 soldiers, all of us, [Rose, Komov] – & behind our horses & cows – & with the cows a nice old general quite pleased & thankful to have found this comfortable abode – (he loves cows & had 3 of his own) He is more comfy there – than would have been in the corridor of our wagon!.... One says we may be over a week on the way. We have some bread with us – & milk (the cows) for [Tihon] so its alright. The bugs are horrid & a great bore at night. I sit up, light a candle, and catch them by the dozen several times during the night... [Tihon] and [Guri] are quite happy & jolly.

[Tkachev] & his pretty wife (whom you blessed at [Kiev]) are also here with us as their place by the station [Millerevo] has been taken. She plays with [Guri] & is sympathetic. This angelic baby grows sweeter daily – his

³ Olga here doesn't tell her mother the worst. The "muddle" in Rostov was retold by her biographer Ian Vorres; "Rostov was still nominally in the hands of the Whites, but Communists were already converging on it and the station master threatened to have the train blown up. One of the four Cossacks pulled out a revolver and shouted: "If this train does not leave in five minutes, I mean to blow your brains out!" Earlier, the same Cossacks, "hearing that the next station was held by the Reds... lifted the Grand Duchess and her little sons out of the moving train. They crawled across some frozen fields to get into a temporarily safe area... nearer Rostov.

⁴ 10 versts: A little less than seven miles.

hair has grown, his eyelashes are long & is all smiles. [Tihon] is ever so sweet and kind. These 3 days in the wagon he really helps: he washes up the cups & spoons without breaking them – if he hears his little brother cry – he comes running up with a toy of some kind – to pacify him & if this doesn't help – he kisses him & hugs him. We have a stove & in it we all by turns boil our kettles & drink tea. That is the only hot food we can procure. Of course [Tihon] gets boiled milk, compote & things he is fond of – also cold chicken – which we took with us for him. When we get into the [Kuban] – we can get food – here the stations are completely devoid of any food – and those people who have no bread with them – have to do without food for a few days. Happily the weather is warm.

Nearly all the remains of the big stables (Ribeaupierre etc.) which ran away & came to [Rostov] – I think I already wrote that there were heaps of splendid horses near us – well – these poor horses were stolen daily by cossacks – during daylight quite quietly 4 or 5 would ride up – armed of course – choose the best horses which pleased them & rode off. The poor owners cried to see all their last hope – go like that... The demoralization is quite awful and makes one sad & sick at heart. All this panic caused by the staff itself – shows how people lose their heads – rather too incredible isn't it? [Rostov] these days was a nightmare of a place & the one bridge across the street leading to the station was crowded by all the panic stricken inhabitants – trying to leave the town. I wonder how it will all end...

Xmas-eve. We are now on the [Kuban] and may get to our [Stanitzka Temizhbejskaya] in a day or two – and we may also stick for a week at one of the stations. One stands for hours & hours. One meets many acquaintances – officers only. One told us the sad news that our friends the [Golostenov's] (of whom I told & you often wrote this spring) are both dead! He was killed by peasants somewhere near his estate (He was named not long ago [regional administrator] and she, poor little thing died of typhoid – soon after. They never found their 2 little boys – whom they hadn't seen 2 years. Such awfully sad things crush one little by little and I shan't write any more as I feel sad & my letter will be morbid – just at Xmas too! [Tihon] asked for a Xmas-tree this morning – he pretends to remember last year's. Now how can he?! He speaks about many candles – so I believe he really does remember – fancy not even 3 years old... He is a phenomenal child.

Christmas Day. We spent it at the station [Kavkazskaya] – only 20 versts from our destination – but no trains went all day. Last night one of the offi-

cers bought some cooked lamb & some dry old [spice cookies] & made me eat some – which was very kind of him –but it wasn't as good as plum-pudding used to be in the good old days! 3 years already I haven't tasted any plum pudding or mince pies... Nanadear made such good ones! How awfully cosy & nice Xmas eve used to be at Gatchina! And Xmas day – I loved going to Y.C. to the cossacks & soldiers' tree – with the dear sweet nieces... and to think that all that will never never return again. Poor [Rose] has an awful tooth ache & abscess forming – & a fat cheek – he also has heart beatings (nervous like Misha & I used to have) and feels most miserable poor boy. He is such a dear boy & its thanks to him that we got this wagon & got away from [Rostov]. [Tihon] says that he is so happy in this wagon that he doesn't want to go & live in a house again. What a blessing that this life pleases him! Crowded trains pass us or stop near us – soldiers hanging all over the engines – even in front between the lanterns – also on the roofs of the wagons.

27th Dec. [Stanitzka Temizhbejskaya] And so yesterday we got here and oh! how well we were received by the [ataman] [*Cossack elder of the village.*] The whole day was unexpected & more like a dream... Early in the morning he came into our wagon – a very sympathetic officer – about our own age ([from the Cossacks]) told us he was ready to do anything for us & would arrange a house etc. and invited us to lunch at once. He brought sledges (tho' there is hardly a bit of snow) & off we drove to his house. The [Cossack village] is pretty out all in gardens – the houses are much like the [Novominskaya] houses – but there are woods across the [Kuban] river & one says that one can see the chain of mountains (but I didn't see this yet) beyond.

His house is clean, cosy & has 4 or 5 rooms. His spouse is big, fat, red cheeks & most motherly & jolly. We were seated at once at a long table with a cloth & spread with awfully good things to eat & in came any amount of cossacks both officers & simple ones – we were all presented to each other and then the feast began & since I was in my [Ahktyrsky Regiment] – I hadn't lived through such feelings, (3 years ago.) Very soon every one became more or less "echauffe" and tongues loosened & they sang old songs – so that I nearly cried – & all spoke of Nicky & said kind things to me... It was like old times. The whole table sang – & the women too. Then every now & then – the fat [ataman's wife] jumped up & danced & the young ones also. – They hugged me now & then & were ever so sweet. Outside the sun shone & it was quite spring & we went out as we were & walked about in the air. I can't explain all the different nice feelings but it was all so unexpected &

touching. With difficulty I returned to the wagon to feed my baby – as some of the kind cossacks proposed to go & fetch him!... as every one was “much the worse” after this [feast] they didn’t find [housing] that day – & [Rose] had a nervous “crise” & knocked us all about & then cried floods – that I would never forgive him & would not esteem him any more. He is but a baby after all – not older than [Nikita!] He was awfully afraid he wouldn’t be able to get us out of [Rostov] and his nerves gave way!



28th of Dec. And now we are at last in a house again. The joy & comfort were enormous to sleep in my bed again – after 8 nights in the train among bugs... The rooms are very small but still very clean & the house belongs to the [ataman’s] brother-in-law – nice kind people. Happily here every one speaks real Russian & not little Russian. We made friends with such a nice young officer...he is adopted son of the [ataman] here (since 3 years) the poor poor’s parents were killed in [Smolensk Region]. Strange that we met – he was in the [Akhtyrsky Regiment] ... at the beginning of the war & knew me, [Kuk.] & [Komov] at once & was ever so pleased. He has been wounded 8 times!

This morning we said goodbye to our dear soldiers – who, having guarded us & brought us safely so far – have to leave, also [Rose] and [Komov]... By the by, their [troop] is full of old [escorts] and 2 came to see me. One dear old police-man [Pereverzev] (he was cossack in ’84 first) surely you remember him well – very tall – quite small beard & was at [Kiev] to the last with you. They asked after you & cried and he said he loved me like his own child – & was awfully touching. Now he also does all he can for us to find different things we need. We want to find another house as here we squash our host & hostesses big family too much. The place is very pretty & the view from this high hill across the [Kuban] river reminds me of [Ramon’s] view. Its not quite as big as [Novominskaya] but still there are about 15 thousand inhabitants.

There is a dear old grandmother who lives in our kitchen & she comes & sits with us often & converses & plays with [Guri]. [Tihon] is already quite pleased with his new abode & plays & climbs all over the beds & boxes. I’ll soon have to begin to feed [Guri] with “foods” – & I have so little – but [Tihon] who has left off already since he turned two – & refuses to eat porridges of any kind – seems to flourish upon the same food as we eat & any amount of milk – seems

to keep well & fat – without it, any case he ate “foods” till he was two – & [Guri] won’t have enough to go on with as long... Here I must at last stop. [Rose] leaves tonight and will take this to [Novorossiysk] from where I hope it can be sent. Odessa is also being evacuated. Since we are here we know nothing that is going on at [Rostov] & the front...Both children got colds in the wagon of course, but they don’t seem to feel bad thank God.

Well Mamadarling with a hug & lots of kisses I must stop & leave you. I often dream of you ... My eyes repose looking out of the bedroom window into a thick tangle of young cherry trees & garden – everything is so quiet & ones ears rest after the stations. [Tihon] just announced that you had gold fish on your Xmas tree last year (he just saw one hanging under the Images in the corner of this room) the sun is shining & it looks & is quite like spring here. Goodbye and God bless you MamaDearest. I’ll soon write to Xenia – this time have no leisure time.

From your loving old child, [Olga]

I am glad to be here on the [Kuban] again – dear place after all.

The respite was short-lived. Within weeks they were again in danger, and the Grand Duchess, her husband and companions arrived at the port of Novorossiysk, where, between them, they didn’t have enough money to pay for a bottle of milk. Olga’s babies were dangerously undernourished and the group finally found shelter at the Danish Consulate, already overcrowded with refugees, some with typhus. Olga told her biographer, “We, who were all right, gave up our beds to the sick and slept on the floor. I was terribly worried about my husband and babies. I didn’t care about my own life. I had seen such horrors that something seemed dead within me. But I had to get through somehow.”

In February 1920, the Kulikovskys boarded a merchant ship to Turkish Prinkipio in the Sea of Marmora. The Grand Duchess later said, “I could not believe I was leaving my country forever. I was certain I would return. I felt that my escape was cowardly, though I had reached the decision for the sake of my small sons. Still, a feeling of shame nagged at me all the time....”⁵ From Prinkipio they went to Denmark and later emigrated to Canada. Olga never saw Russia again. †

⁵ Vorres, Ian, *The Last Grand Duchess*, Charles Scribner’s Sons, NY, 1964.