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"GRANDMOTHER'S GREAT TREK"

An Essay on Tina Lawrenchenkoff's Life

FOR

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PROFESSOR OF ANTHROPOLOGY 202

BY

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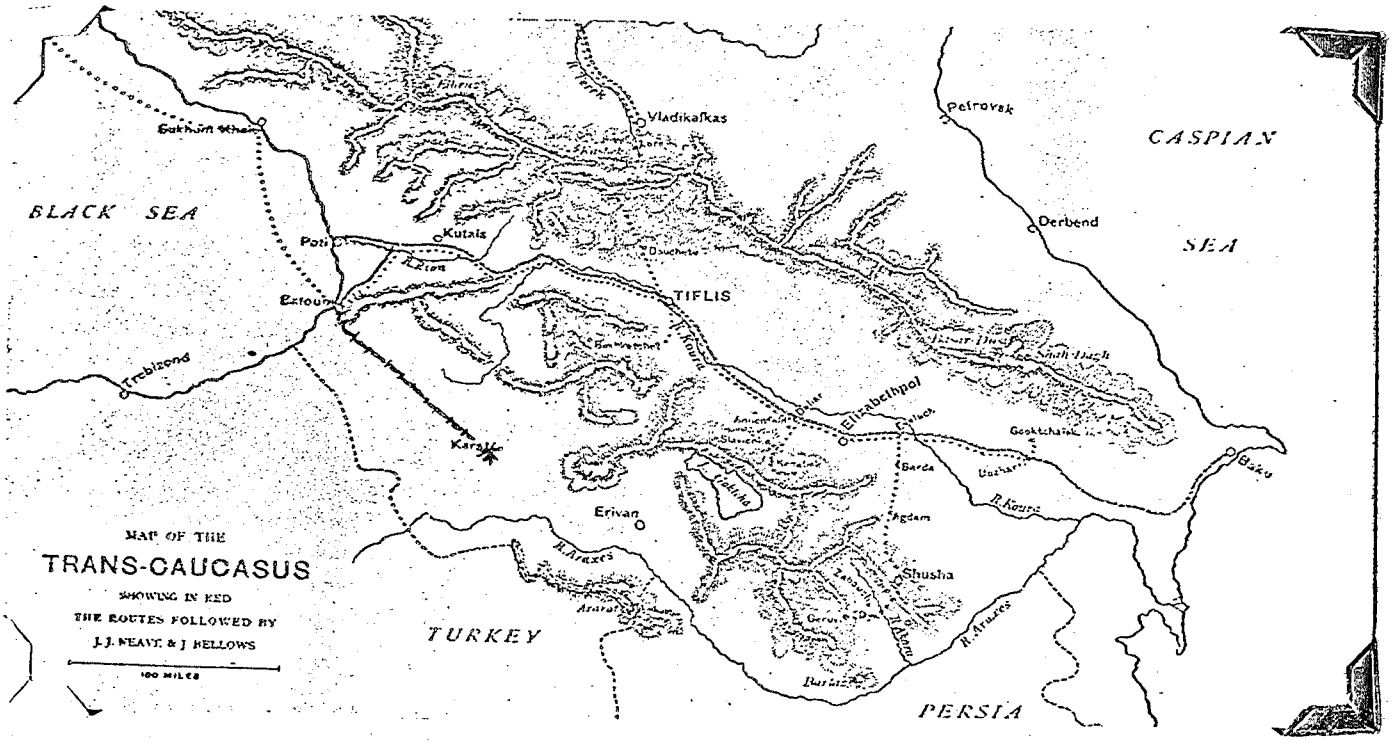
My grandmother, Mrs. Tina Lawrenchenkoff. 80 years old in this photo.

"GRANDMOTHER'S GREAT TREK"

After the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878, the Russian government was indebted to the Doukhobours for services ~~which~~ they had rendered during the war. In payment, they offered the Doukhobours a tract of fertile land in the mild climate of, what was formerly, the Turkish province of Kars. Lukeria Kalmakova, the leader of the Doukhobour people at this time, accepted the offer and moved to Kars, 5000 of her followers, who founded six new villages here. It was to one of these villages, Spasovka, to be exact, that William Tarasoff, who was to be grandmother's father (and who was unmarried at the time), and Mary Pepin, who was to be grandmother's mother, and her husband Nick Pepin, moved in 1879.

Ten years later, Mary's husband, Nick, died of a heat-stroke while driving a 4-horse coach across the steppe surrounding the Kars region. She was still young, only in her late twenties, at this time, and had two daughters to support, they were Mary and Doris and were 7 and 3 years old, respectively. So a year later, in 1890, she married William Tarasoff.

In July of 1891, the exact date is not known, their first child was born. Her name was 'Tanya' and she event-


BLACK SEA
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TIFLIS
Kars
Erivan
Elizabethpol
Baku
Shusha
Ararat
R. Araxes
R. Kour
MAP OF THE
TRANS-CAUCASUS
SHOWING IN RED
THE ROUTES FOLLOWED BY
J. J. WEAVE & J. BELLOWS
100 MILES

The Kars region of Russia, where grandmother was born. (Koozma Tarasoff's, Pictoral History of the Doukhobours. p. 40)

Grandmother's father
William Tarasoff.

Grandmother's parents, William and Mary Tarasoff, with a friend of the family and a great-grand daughter (identity unknown).

Grandmother's half-sister, Mary Pepin.

Grandmother's other half-sister, Doris Pepin, and grandmother.

ually was to become my grandmother and the subject of this paper.

When I asked her, 80 years later, if she had any recollection of her life in Russia, she surprised me by giving me these two vivid accounts. The first one went like this:

> ' I remember my father taking me to the top of a big hill and there were pretty red flowers growing on it. After we sat on top of the hill for awhile, I got very thirsty and Papasha (that's what she called her dad) found me some water in the hollow of a rock, for it had rained the day before and the water had collected in a depression in the rock.'

She also recollected a very momemtous historical event in the annals of Doukhobour history, and this was the June 29th, 1895, burning of the arms. Grandmother was only three years old at the time, but gave a very descriptive account of what occured:

> 'Nobody knew what was going on till the night of the burning of the arms. I remember the people gathering straw and manure bricks, and there was a great big fire. We all went to pray to God by the fire and we stayed up all night doing this.'

Grandmother, and the rest of the people of the Kars region, did not suffer the persecution that the Doukhobours of two other settlements, that staged a similiar event, received. The people in Sloveyanka, in Yelizavetpol, and in Orlovka, in the Wet Mountains, suffered dearly for this act of defiance against the Russian

state. Especially harsh was the treatment of the Doukhobours in the Wet Mountain village of Orlovka, where mounted Cossacks galloped upon the worshipping crowd, and beat men, women and children alike, with lead-tipped whips.

Ironically, the official in charge of the Kars region, sympathized with the Doukhobours, and when the men handed in their military reserve papers, expecting immediate punishment for doing so, he accepted the papers and promised to pass them on to a higher official.[1]

The unfavourable attitude of the autocratic Russian state towards pacifists in the 1890's, forced the Doukhobours to seriously consider emigrating from Russia. With the help of powerful allies, like Lev Tolstoy and the Society of Friends (Quakers), the Doukhobours were given and they accepted, the oppurtunity to migrate to Canada.

The Kars Doukhobours, unlike other Doukhobour settlements, did not rely on outside help to enable them to leave Russia. They had been quite free from state persecution, and had amassed enough wealth to pay their fares from their villages to the Canadian prairies.[2]

It was in May of 1899, that Grandmother and her family began their journey to this 'New World'. They went by

train, to the Black Sea port of Batoum, and later in the month, boarded the Lake Huron, along with 2,300 other Kars settlement sectarians, for the long voyage to Canada. On board the ship were several prominent individuals, among these were, Anastasia Verigina (Peter Lordly Verigin's mother, who grandmother called 'Babushka Verigina'), Vladimir Bonch-Bruevich and several others.

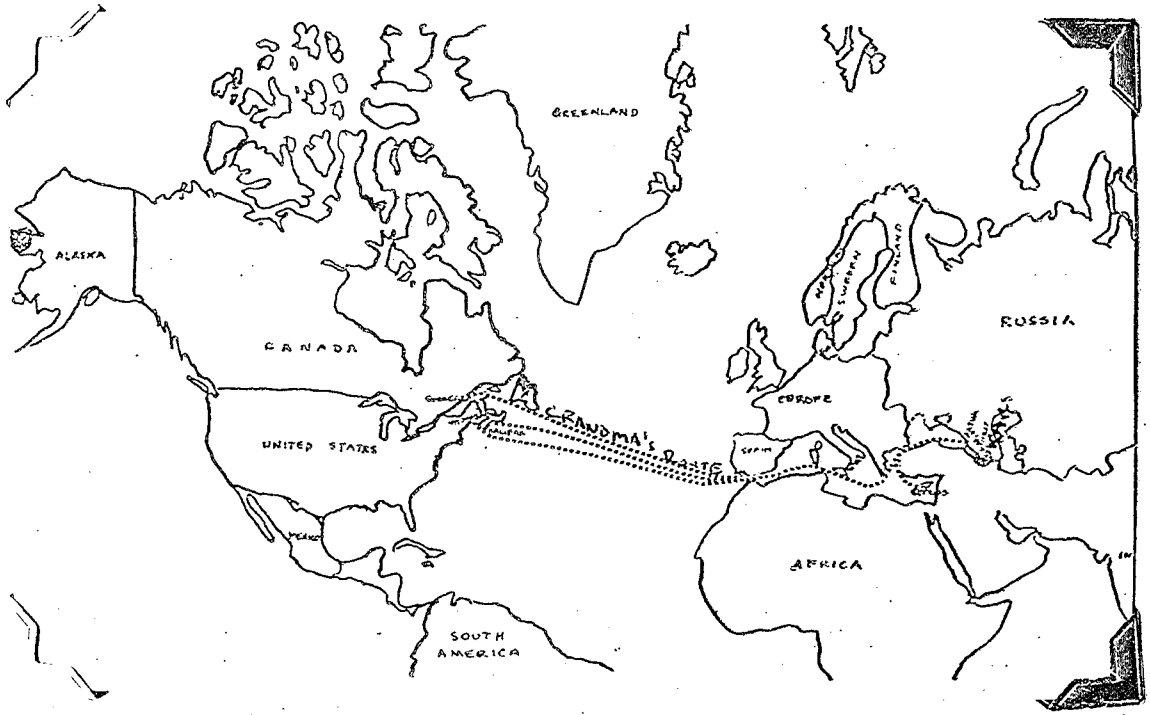
Grandmother did not remember much about the sea voyage, but did recall the following:

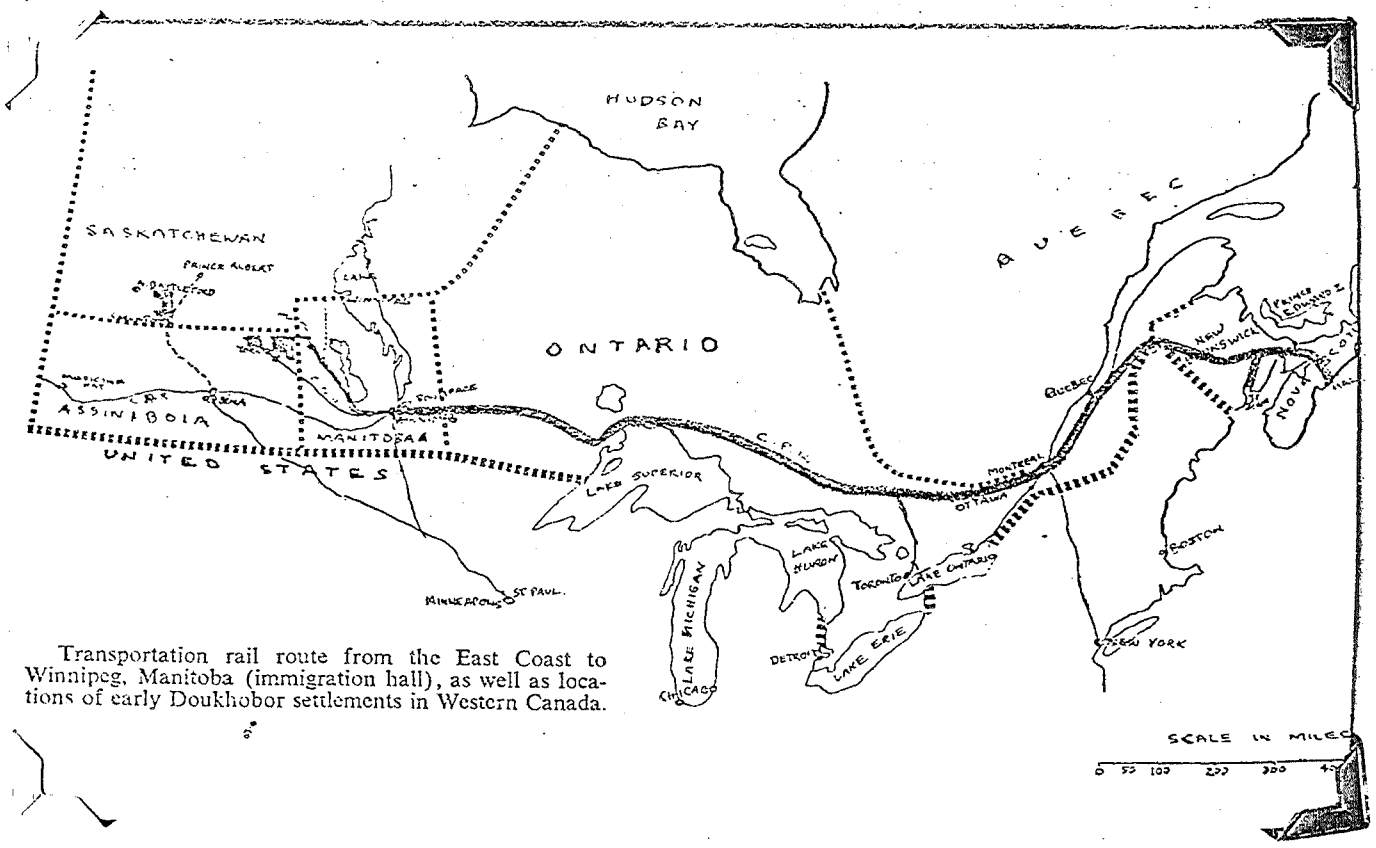
> 'A lot of people were sick on the ship, because it was heaving and rolling so much. The trip was very long, at least three months at sea(in actuality it had been one month). One time I saw these great big monsters ('Bulbushki', she called them, probably whales) surfacing real close to the ship, and I was really scared of them, I thought that they were going to eat the whole ship.'

On June 5, 1899, grandmother arrived in Canada, but because there were several cases of smallpox on board the ship, she and the rest of the passengers had to spend 27 days on Grosse Island, in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. She did not recall staying on the Island, but she did tell me a very interesting story about their ship the 'Lake Huron':

> 'After we got off the ship, the bottom fell out of it and it sank.. If it weren't for Babushka Verigina accompanying us on the voyage, this would have happened at sea and we all would have surely perished.'

I could not find any documented evidence to back up her





Transportation rail route from the East Coast to Winnipeg, Manitoba (immigration hall), as well as locations of early Doukhobor settlements in Western Canada.

Her voyage on the 'Lake Huron (Koozma Tarasoff's, A Pictoral History)

Her train trip to Prince Albert (Tarasoff's Pictoral History).

story and can only speculate as to the meaning of her statement. Perhaps she might have meant the ship to be Russia and that Babushka Verigina saved them from destruction in this country, when it was ravaged by revolution, (when its bottom fell out from under it).

After the 27 days on Grosse Island, grandmother and her family boarded a train to Prince Albert, and a few days later, after having passed through the immigration centre at Winnipeg, arrived there. Grandmother told me this, about the train trip across the country:

> 'It was a long and tiring journey, we slept in very uncomfortable positions on the train and were only to glad to be able to get off and stretch our legs once in awhile.'

From here, she and her family, moved to the village of 'Kirilovka', which was one of the many villages in the Prince Albert Colony. Here is her recollection of life in the village:

> 'We lived in a small, long, house. The floors were the ground, and the beds were boards fastened to the walls. I remember taking the cows and horses to the river in the wintertime to water them. We had to break the ice on the river, and it was very thick, just so that the animals could get a drink.'

Grandmother spent her girlhood in this village, and as a neice of hers (who was a few years younger than grandmother), Mrs. Mary Koftinoff, recalls:

'She was a very good singer and was also very active in community affairs. She was also very beautiful and a lot of boys were after her.'

Her girlhood charm is evident in a photograph taken of here when she was fourteen. When I showed her the picture she told me this story:

'A man came to our village, he was a photographer, he walked up to me and said something, I couldn't understand him, for he spoke in English, someone told me that he wanted to take my picture. I wasn't so sure that I wanted him to take one of me, but he kept on insisting, so I asked my parent's permission to go through with it, and they agreed so the man took my picture.'

When she was sixteen, she was courted by a Pete Esovoloff. Grandmother's father was dead-set against her going out with the man because the Esovoloff family did not support Peter Lordly Verigin.

The Esovoloff family were not the only ones who did not support Verigin's ideals for a communal way of life. The Kars Doukhobours in the Prince Albert colony were used to a fairly individualistic style of life, to which they had gotten used to in Russia. They believed more in the success of the individual, than the success of a communal group. Because they had brought a fairly large sum of money and saleable goods, such as oriental rugs and the like from Russia, they enjoyed a more prosperous start than their brethren in the other colonies, who lacked these things. It was because of their prosperity that most of

Grandmother, 14 years old.

Grandmother, on right, 18 years old, and a friend, Vera Popoff.

the richer settlers in the Prince Albert colony were inclined to lapse from the religious communism enjoined by Verigin.[3]

It was at this time that the Canadian government was pressuring harassing the Doukhobours in Saskatchewan, to take the Oath of Allegiance as a stipulation in claiming land titles to their homesteads. Verigin and his followers disagreed with the government and refused to take the oath, on the grounds that it conflicted with their pacifistic ideals. The more individualistically- minded Doukhobours, a great majority being from the Prince Albert colony, Esovoloff's among them, agreed to take the oath, but only after they crossed out the 'Oath' clause and replaced it with the word 'affirm'. By taking the oath they held on to their lands and further benefited their well-being and self-interest.

Pete Esovoloff had been courting grandmother, unsuccessfully though, for 2 years, when he finally got the lucky break he wanted.

In 1907-1910, Peter Verigin withdrew his Community followers from the Prince Albert colony and other settlements in Saskatchewan, for a move to the Kootenay area of British Columbia, where he had purchased lands on their behalf. Among those that left the Prince Albert colony

were grandmother's parents, for her father was a devout follower of Verigin and a firm believer in the communal way of life.

When her parents left, grandmother stayed in Prince Albert despite her father's pleading that she go with them, and in 1911, aged 19, she married Pete Esovoloff. She told me this about her parting with her parents:

> 'When Mamasha and Papasha left Prince Albert, I was very sad, but I knew where I had to stay. The only bad thing was that Peter Lordly had said that the Independents were not worthwhile Doukhobours and that there would be no communication between the Community Doukhobours and the Independents. This statement of his troubled me, for it meant that I might never see my parents again and I did everything I could to get my husband to see that the communal way of life was a better way, but he did not listen to me for a long time.'

Grandmother's religious conviction lay with Verigin, but her heart lay with Esovoloff, and there seemed to be no means of compromise between the two.

In 1912, grandmother's first daughter, Polly, was born, and a year later her second daughter, Mary, was born. The exact dates of their births are not known, as at this time no official record was kept of Doukhobours births ~~and~~ of deaths.

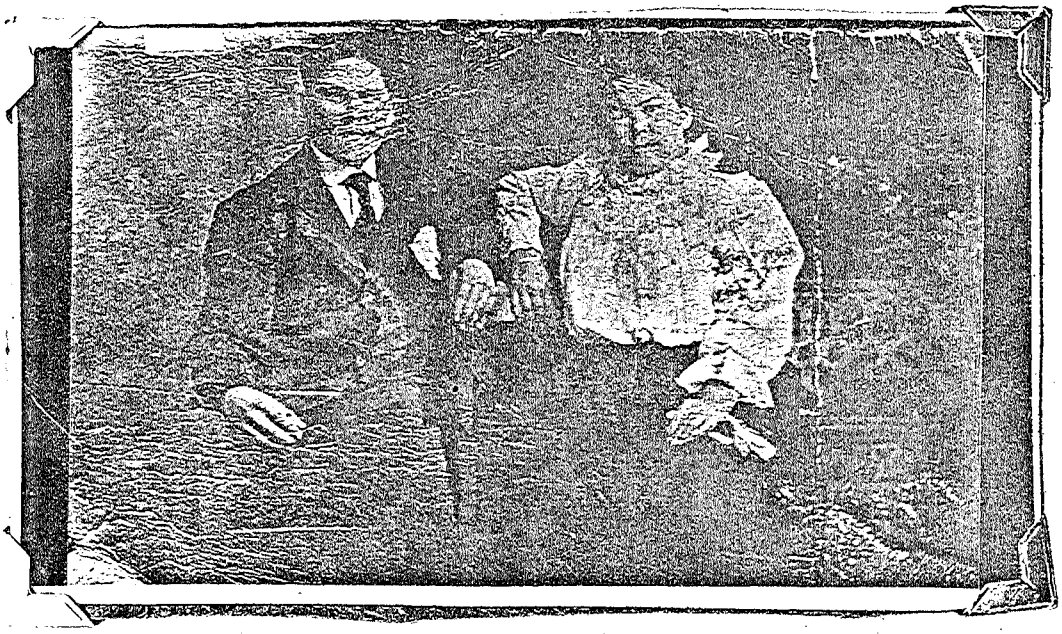
In 1913, grandmother's husband, Pete, was stricken with rheumatoid-arthritis. She recalled how this happened:

> 'One day, after haying, Pete lay down on the ground to take a rest. The ground was still moist from a shower the day before. He fell asleep for a while and after he woke up he didn't feel to well. He caught a bad cold and his legs and lower back ached and it was hard for him to move around without the use of crutches. After a few years he couldn't hardly walk at all and was almost permanently confined to a bed.'

As if this trajedy wasn't bad enough, in 1915 her second born daughter, Mary, died of whooping cough. Grandmother was very heartbroken by her daughter's death, but was not as heartbroken as when she realized that she didn't even have a picture to remember her by. For years she felt guilty that she didn't have someone take a picture of her daughter, and one day, out of desperation, she cut out a picture of a child's face, off a cereal box, and kept that ever since, as a reminder of her second-born.

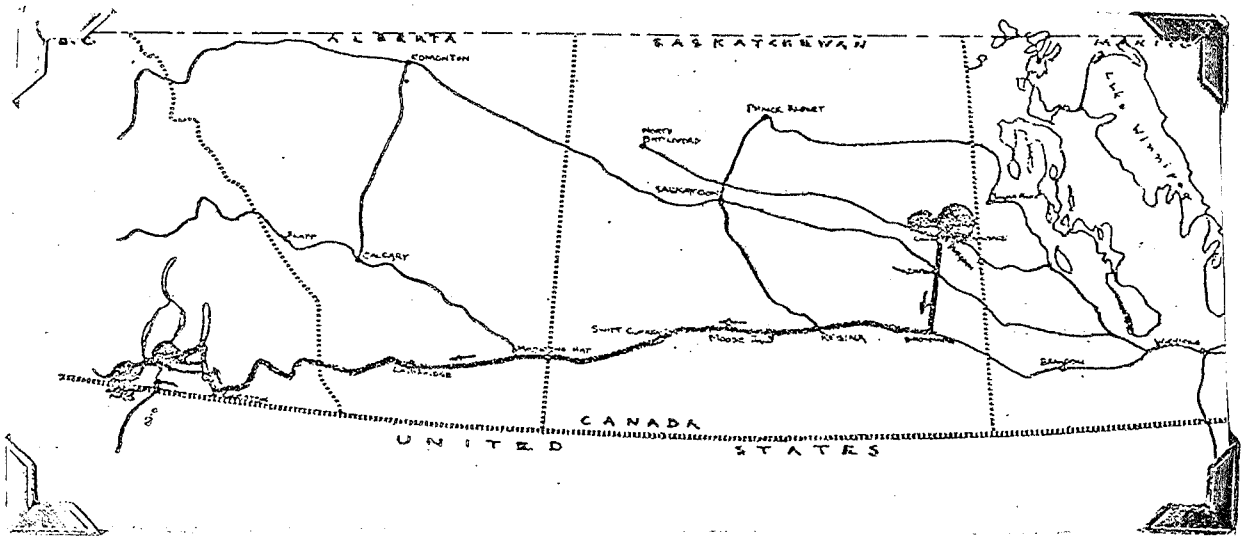
All the time that grandmother's father, William Tarasoff had been in B.C., he was negotiating with Peter Lordly so that she and her family could come to the Kootenays. Finally in 1916, Verigin agreed to forgive grandmother and her husband for turning to the Independents, and allowed them to come to the Kootenays.

Grandmother and her family settled in the last village up Pass Creek, 'Kartoshnaya Village' it was called (potatoes were grown around this village), and it was here



Grandmother and her husband
Pete Esovoloff.

Picture that she had cut out
from a cereal box, that reminded
her of her dead child, Mary.


B.C.
ALBERTA
SASKATCHEWAN
EDMONTON
PRINCE ALBERT
CALGARY
REGINA
CANADA
UNITED STATES

Her trip(by train) to the Kootenays (Tarasoff's, Pictoral History).

Her mother, Mary and her half-sister, Mary and her kids.

that their third daughter, Mabel, was born, in 1917.

Again they reverted to a communal way of life and ~~this~~ it was a good thing for them that they did. Her husband was totally unable to do any work on his own, and the family would not have been able to survive an Independent existence. The community helped grandmother's family a great deal and in return, she worked doubly hard in community endeavours such as gardening, cooking in the community kitchen, white-washing walls, making yarn on a spinning-wheel, etc.

In 1918, her family moved to Ootischenia, to a village that was situated where the Doukhobour Museum is presently standing. Here they lived till Pete Esovoloff's death in 1923.

A year later, the spiritual leader of the Doukhobours, Peter Lorldly Verigin, was killed in a bomb-blast aboard a train taking him to Grand Forks.

Grandmother remembered Peter Lordly's death and she voiced her opinion as to who she thought had killed him:

> 'It was those Sons of Freedom devils working with the government that killed Peter Lordly, that's who did it. They put a bomb under his seat and blew the poor man to bits. I wish they all go to hell, those devils.'

She was to voice similar opinions many times, upon learning of any terrorist activities by the Sons of Freedom

faction, and did so in a very outspoken manner. This view re-affirmed her devotion to the spiritual leaders of the Doukhobours and this devotion never faltered in the least, after her move from Prince Albert.

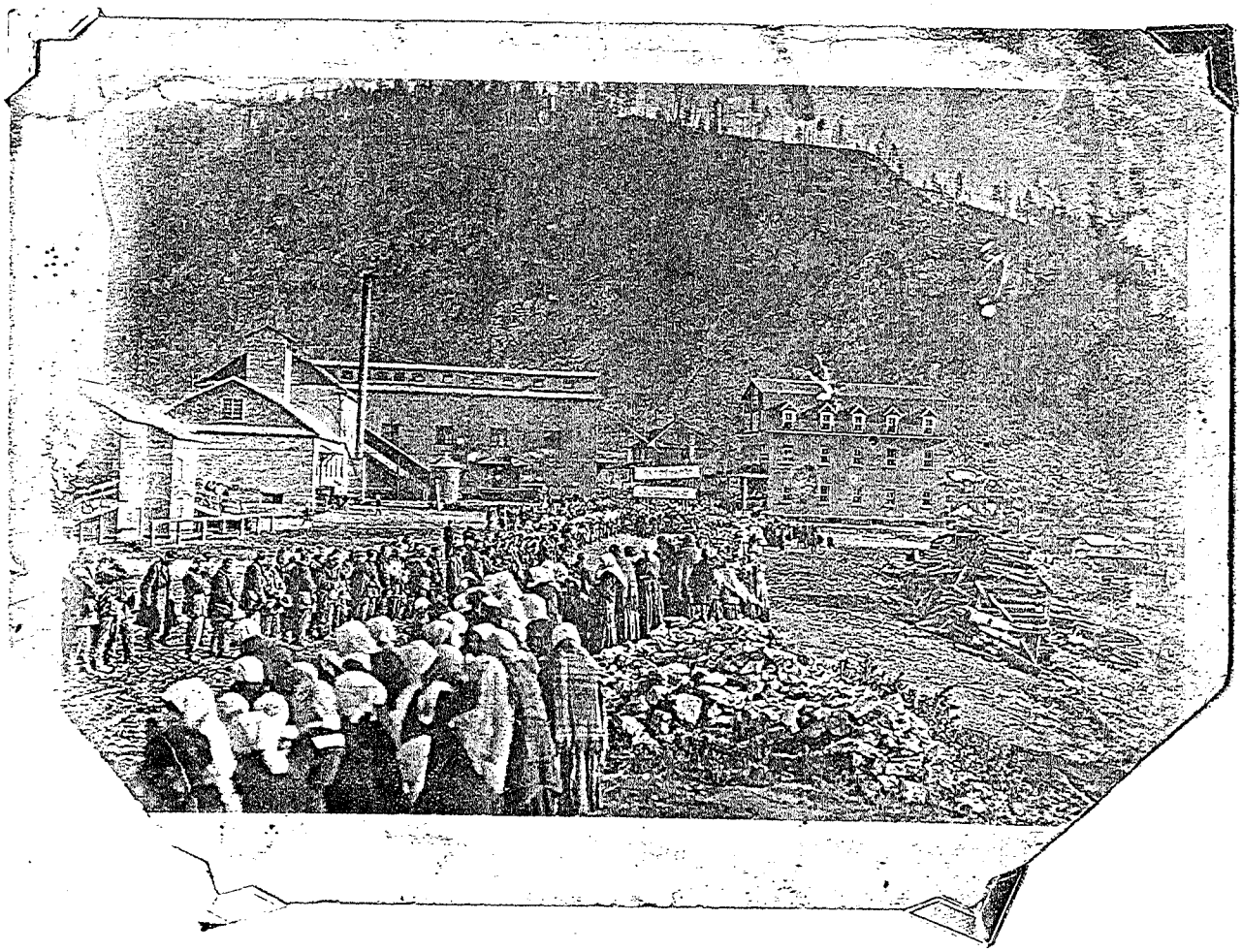
She also remembered Peter Lordly's funeral and had to this to say about it:

> 'There were thousands of people at the funeral and everyone was sad and praying to God, that the killers would be found. The funeral lasted several days and every day more and more people came to pay their last respects.'

Grandmother had a very sorrowful look on her face when she told me about the funeral, and I could sense the bitterness she felt towards anyone who might have performed this dastardly deed.

Grandmother had received a great deal of help from her parents, while living with her crippled husband, but now they were getting on in years and she had to support her family on her own. This was no easy task, for there were no welfare schemes or other social assistance schemes at the time, so she married again, in 1925. Her second husband, William Lawrenchenkoff, was a widower with 4 children of his own. It was he who was to be my mother's father, and my grandfather in the near future.

Upon marrying Lawrenchenkoff, grandmother moved to another village in Ootischenia known as the 'Big Sawmill



Peter Lordly Verigin's funeral
in Brilliant.

Grandmother and her second husband ~~husband~~, William Lawrenchenkoff.

Village'. It was called this, because near the village there was a big sawmill, and this was where her husband, William worked as an edgerman.

Theirs was a fairly large family, so in 1927, they moved to larger living quarters just outside 'Makeiff's' village, one mile S.W. of the 'Big Sawmill' village.

It was also in this same year that Peter Verigin II came to Canada from Russia. I asked grandmother what she remembered about his arrival and she told me this:

> 'There were just as many people at Peter Chistiakov's arrival to Canada, as there were at Peter Lordly's funeral. Everyone was happy to see that our leader had come at last and he was met with great enthusiasm.'

Grandmother's devotion to Peter Lordly was simply transferred to Chistiakov, and she felt as close to him as she had felt towards Peter Lordly.

On May 5th, 1928, grandmother gave birth to a son, Alex, and 5 years later on October 23rd, 1933, a daughter Molly (who was to become my mother) was born. The family was now quite large, with 8 kids to take care of, and grandmother's hands were quite full. Luckily for her, most of the kids were out working by now, some at the Jam factory, and some were to be married in a short while, so life wasn't that unbearable for her.

I asked her how she managed to keep her kids in line

with such a large family. She told me that she hardly ever hit ~~her kids~~ them (my mother verified this), and disciplined them mostly by verbal scolding. She did hit my mother one time and she told me why:

> 'I had just finished making a full canner of borscht, when Molly, while playing by the bench where the canner was standing on, knocked the whole thing over, I got really mad and hit her on the back with a head of cabbage. I felt bad after that though, I shouldn't have hit her.'

Another instance of punishing her children that she told me about, was when she caught her son Alex, and a couple of other boys throwing rocks at an old man. Here's what she told me she did about it:

> 'I went and told the other boy's mothers about what they had done, and then severely scolded Alex for doing such a cruel thing. I told him that if he ever did anything like this again God would punish him severely for his acts.
>
> Later, I heard from the old man at whom the boys were throwing rocks and he told me this: 'I was walking down the road when I happened to meet Alex, he said 'Slava Gosnadoo' (good-day) and bowed very low to me. Alex was one of the best behaved Doukhobour youths that I have ever met.'
>
> I was sure surprised by that.'

Grandmother's husband, William, was a sick man in the 30's, for he had had appendicitis which had been left untreated and this caused severe damage to his internal organs. Because of this he had to have many operations, and these were costly. To help pay for these operations, grandmother made woolen socks and mittens, wove rugs on a loom,

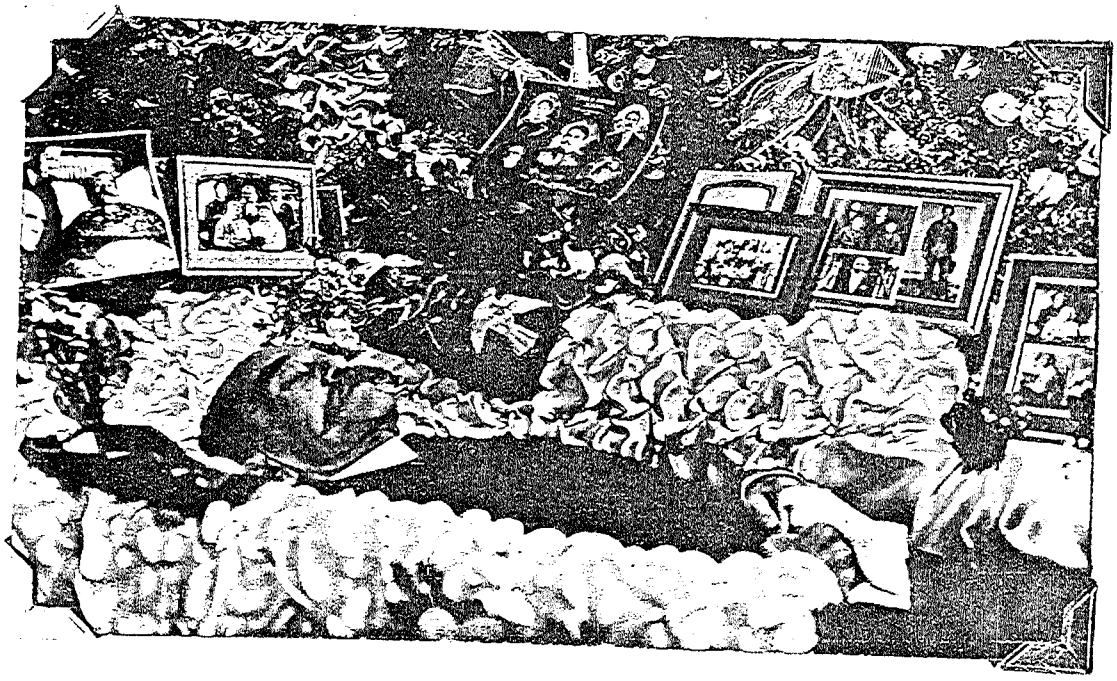
and white-washed homes, all for small amounts of money, for these were the Depression years and money was hard to come by. She worked very hard to support her family, for by this time the Community was not as strong as it had been in earlier years, and could not help out families in need as generously as it had before.

In 1935 grandmother's father, William Tarasoff died and 3 years later her mother, Mary, passed away. Both died in their late sixties after having lived a very hard and fruitful life.

On February 11th, 1939, Peter Chistakov died of a cancer in his stomache and liver. Grandmother remembered his leadership and had these views on it:

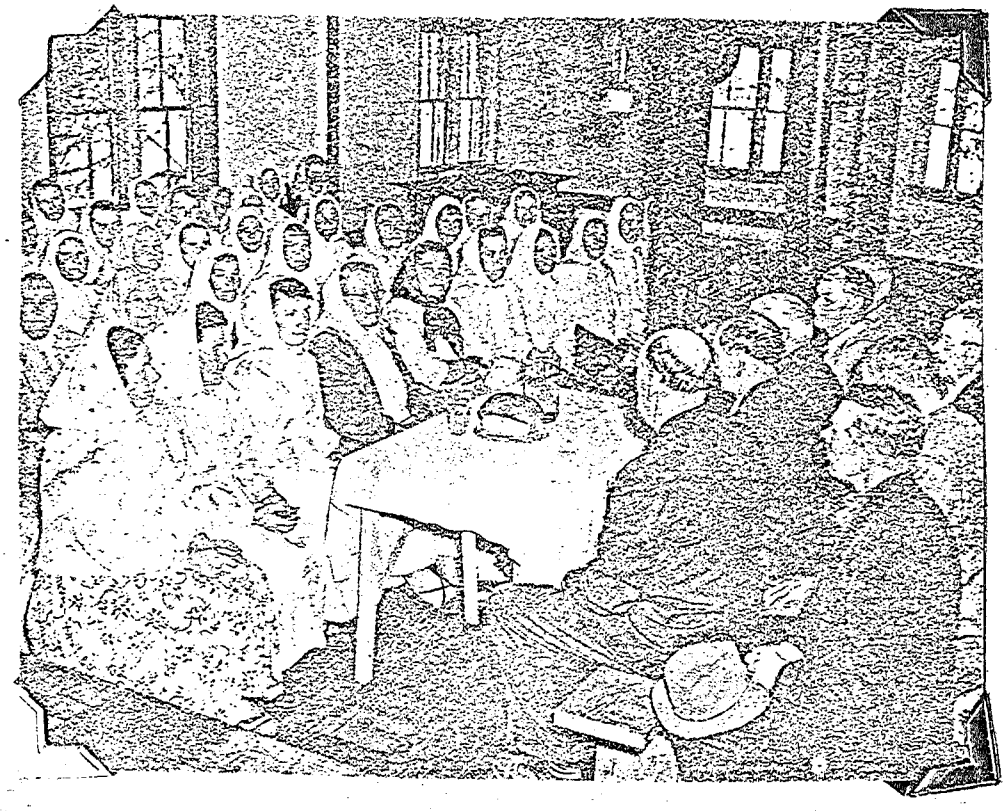
> 'Peter Chistiakov was a very hard-driving leader who was not scared of anyone. He did not like people who didn't listen to him and because of this a lot of people got the wrong impression of him. He was a great spiritual leader, and the things that he developed for the Doukhobours, like Union of Youth and the Declaration are very important to us. I remember his funeral and it was as sad an affair as Peter lordly's was.'

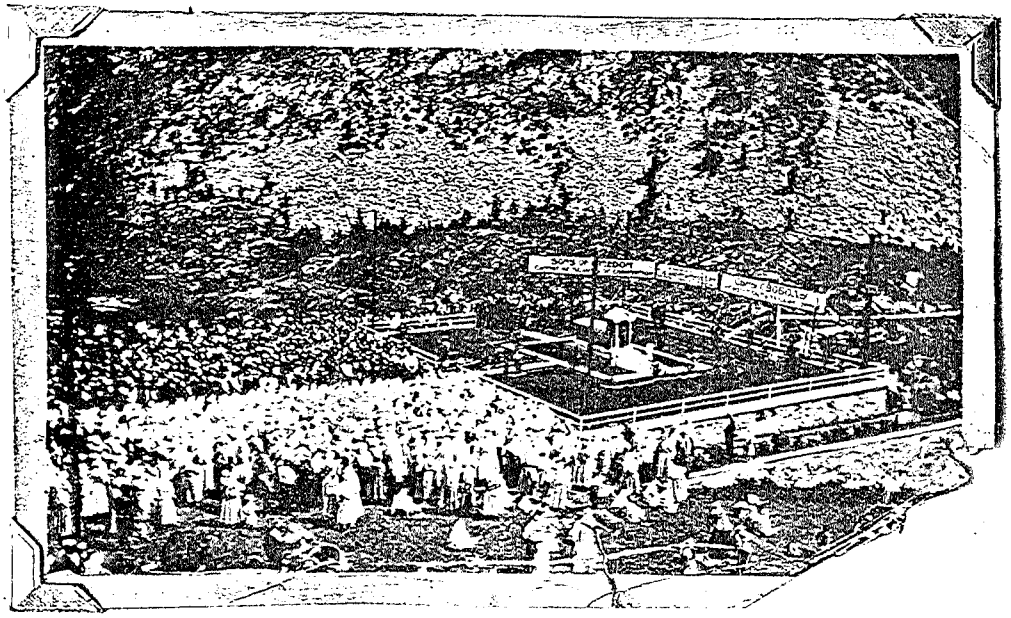
1939 also marked the start of the second World War. For the Doukhobours, this year and the early and mid-40's, marked a period of weeding out the dissenters amongst their ranks. The true believers didn't get involved in the war overseas, but some men went to fight in the Canadian Armed forces. Grandmother had this to say about those who went to fight:



At grandmother's mother's funeral. Grandmother in front row, 4th from left. To her right, is her daughter Molly (my mother), and son Alex is looking towards camera. In background is her husband William (holding casket top).

Peter Chistiakov's funeral.





Grandmother at meeting in Brilliant Hall, 1952 (Hawthorn's Doukhobours of B.C.).

Peter Lordly's yearly commemoration.

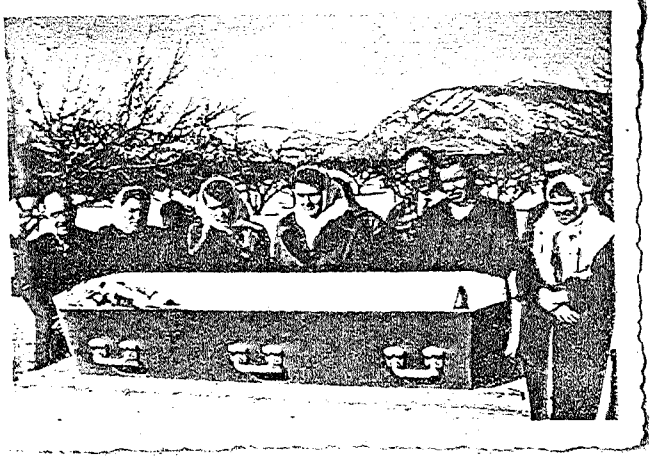
'Some stupid people joined up to go and fight in the war. After all the suffering the Doukhobours went through in Russia to stay away from wars, they still went. They were stupid and they didn't care a at all for Doukhobourism. Those that went to fight were fanatics. The Doukhobours who stayed away from the war were doing what they were supposed to, what our leaders taught us to do. They were making use of what our leaders gave us when they brought us to Canada, and that was freedom from all wars. We shall never go to war, never.'

By the early 50's, grandmother's husband's condition had steadily worsened, and on March 8th, 1955, a year after my mother married my dad and when I was 11 months old, he died of a gastric disorder.

By now grandmother was getting on in years, she was 64 years old and had a heart condition that wasn't getting any better. She was living with her son Alex and his family, in the house where she had spent a quarter of a century with her husband William, and she was very lonely without him. She was being visited by a Harry Saliken, after her husband's death, and a year later she went to live with him in Thrums.

Saliken was a pensioner, like grandmother, but also had a small fruit and vegetable farm, that supplemented his pension checks.

Even though grandmother was 64and had a weak heart, she still worked like a mule on their farm, and this severely undermined her health and worsened her heart con-



At husband William's funeral, grandmother far right, daughter Mabel 2nd from left, daughter Molly third from left.

My mom's and dad's wedding day. Dad, Mike Davidoff and mother Molly in back. Grandmother's daughter Mabel and her husband, Lawrence Makieff, in foreground.

Grandmother and her third husband, Harry Saliken.

dition.

On December 10th, 1964, her husband, Harry, died of a stroke, and in February of the following year, grandmother came to live with ourfamily. This was to be her last place of residence.

It was grandmother, that taught me the meaning of the word, Doukhobour, not by preaching doctrine, but by her example as as a Doukhobour. She had been a devout follower of the Doukhobour leaders all her life and had this to say about them:

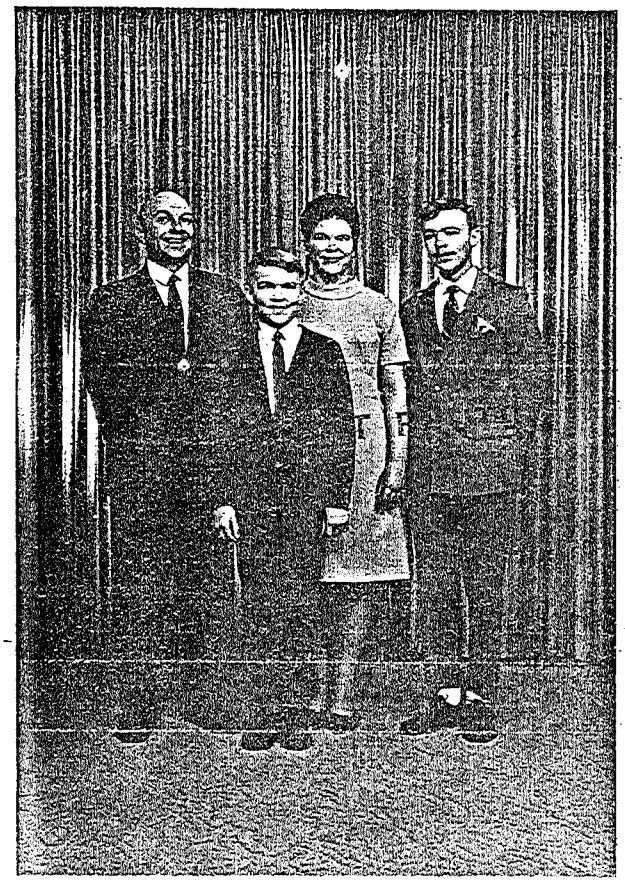
> 'It is only through our leaders advice, that we will be saved from the evils of the world. We must devote all our spiritual and physical strenghts to them.'

She had never eaten a piece of meat, because she believed in the sactity of life for all living things, or smoked a cigarette,'the filthiest habit there is' she exclaimed once, in her whole life. However, she did partake,occasionally,of one 'evil', and that was a small glass of wine for what she claimed were 'medicinal' purposes.

Her life-style provided an example, for me, as to how a Doukhobour should live and what he should do,to earn that ultimate reward, a spot in heaven.

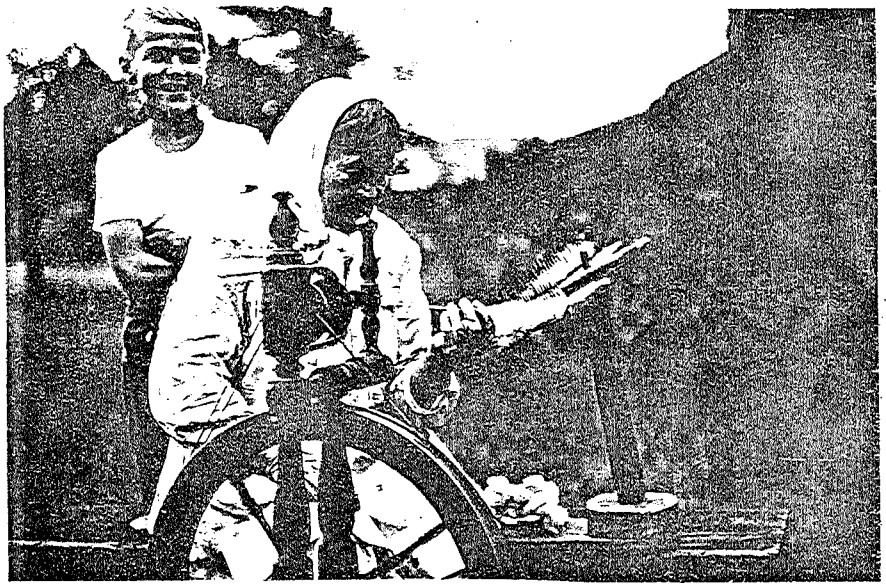
Grandmother quietly passed away, of a heart attack, on ~~November 9th~~ October 11th, 1975, and by now I'm sure that she has

reached her well-earned spot in heaven, and finally completed her great trek.



Grandmother at husband Harry's funeral.

Our family, which she came to live with after Harry Saliken's death. In back, my dad Mike, my mother, Molly and myself. In foreground my brother Michael.



Grandmother working on spinning-wheel. Grandson, Michael Davidoff in back.

Babushka Markova(lady with cane) pays her last respect at grandmother's funeral. She is the mother of the honorary chairman of the U.S.C.C., John J. Verigin.

My brother Michael and myself at her funeral.

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FOOTNOTES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1. Woodcock and Avakumovic. The Doukhobours. p.100.
2. Ibid., p.146.
3. Ibid., p.158.

I would like at this point, to thank my mother Mrs. Molly Davidoff and my grandmother's neices, Mrs. Mary Koftinoff and Mrs. Helen Cheveldave, for all the invaluable help that they gave all through the preparation of this work. Thank you.

A+