5

PomGol and Alexandra's First Encounter with Quisling

During Quisling's trial in 1945, his former chief at the Helsinki and Moscow legations, Minister Andreas Urbye, said that it was he who had first suggested that Captain Quisling was particularly well suited to handle Nansen's relief operations in the Ukraine. He reportedly had done so while Nansen visited the Helsinki legation in the fall of 1921.[1] It is certain that on December 31 that same year, Urbye wrote a *pro forma* letter to Nansen saying that he ought to use the young officer in his work in Russia. This would be far better, according to him, than for Quisling to return to his desk at the General Staff.[2] Already a week before he wrote this, he had equipped Quisling with a diplomatic passport (which shows that Quisling returned home to Norway on December 29); his letter was evidently intended as ammunition for Nansen to secure yet another leave of absence for Quisling, which the Norwegian Army granted on January 17.[3]

Quisling's pocket diary for 1922 bears witness to many tasks that he had to attend to before he could telegraph to Nansen on

1. Dahl, *Vidkun Quisling*, p. 81, with reference to "Straffesak," p. 239.
2. NB, Nansen Archive, Ms. fol. 1988 RUO_1.
3. NB, Quisling Archive, Ms. fol. 3920: I; Nansen Archive, Ms. fol. 1988 RUO_1.

February 13 that he had arrived in Kharkov.[4] According to his other notebook for that same year, he had crossed the border between Finland and Russia in a Russian courier rail car on February 2.[5]

Most of the European relief organizations were to do their work under the Nansen organization's private umbrella (Nansen was not serving under the League of Nations in this matter), and the employees of the American relief organization ARA kept their eye on an outfit they clearly regarded as a competitor, judging from telegraphed messages of January 21 and 25. The telegram from January 25 is especially condescending. It notes that Nansen is "welcome to all anxiety and trouble his Homeopathic doses will bring," provided his organization's distribution of parcels within Russia (the Red Cross directives were not valid for the Ukraine) do not carry "names or marks likely to be confused with A.R.A. packages." In the U.S., there was no "strenuous demand," however, for the kinds of small food parcels that Nansen evidently intended to busy himself with.[6]

One would otherwise suppose that who did what under the prevailing conditions was less important than that aid was provided. Quisling reported back to the Nansen organization's headquarters in Geneva that spring that five million people had no food at all. It was reckoned that around ten thousand people died every day from the famine. In the course of the first week of April, 276 corpses had been picked up in the streets of Odessa alone, and aid workers in Zaporózhie told of conditions so terrible that seven to ten percent of the village population there had

4. NB, Nansen Archive, Ms. fol. 1988 A_5A. I read Quisling's pocket diary for 1922 at the Norwegian National Archives, where it was on deposit.

5. NB, Quisling Archive, Ms. fol. 3920: V.

6. H, ARA Russian Section, box 80, folder "Nansen." Both telegrams were sent from New York via London.

died in one day. Cannibalism was becoming ever more common.[7]

Documents in Oslo and California, as well as Alexandra's own account, show that Quisling's responsibility in the Ukraine consisted mainly of ensuring that any food Nansen was able to provide could be *delivered* to the local feeding kitchens—certainly no easy task under the chaotic conditions of that time. Some details from the addendum to the agreement that Nansen and Chicherin made on August 27, 1921 are of special interest in this regard, both because of the light they shed on Quisling's work as Nansen's assistant in the Ukraine and because they provide background to Alexandra's own story of what took place.

In this addendum, the Russian authorities promised to give Nansen or his representatives full freedom of, and preferential rights to, gratis use of what remained of internal communications, such as radio, telegraph, postal, and courier services. To the extent that it was possible—and with permission from the local authorities—Nansen's organization would have free disposal of private telephone and telegraph lines. In addition, Nansen or his representatives and couriers would enjoy the usual diplomatic privileges in the matter of border crossings. For his own part, Nansen promised that his employees would not engage in any kind of political or commercial activity without special permission from the authorities.[8]

An internal ARA memorandum shows that the Americans and Russians had signed a similar agreement, and that the Americans were as skeptical as the Russians were considered unpredictable: "According to the agreement, not only the heads of the philanthropic missions, but also the plain technical workers are accorded the rights and privileges ordinarily granted to diplomatic

7. H, ARA Russian Section, "Ukraine—Miscellaneous Clippings," cutting from the London newspaper *Star*.

8. H, ARA Russian Section, box 80, folder "Nansen."

missions. An unintelligent understanding of these rights may always lead to all kinds of misunderstandings in dealing with the different Soviet government institutions."[9]

It is likely that neither Nansen nor Quisling was "unintelligent" when it came to the Russian authorities. How Quisling first experienced Kharkov and the authorities' intention of making good on their promises, we will now learn from Alexandra:

When Captain Vidkun Quisling from the Norwegian General Staff arrived in my hometown of Kharkov in February 1922 to lead Nansen's relief work during the famine in the Ukraine, the city was an apocalyptic caricature of its former self. All schools, banks, businesses, markets, and private offices were closed, and there was no public transportation. We had neither gas nor electricity nor running water; people filled their pails wherever they could find a well. Makeshift hospitals were filled to the bursting point with the victims of epidemic disease, and wherever one looked, there were people hovering on the brink of death from starvation.

With all commercial, agricultural, and industrial life at a standstill, people counted themselves lucky if they had any work at all, so Mama continued her long, exhausting hours as a nurse whenever there was an opportunity. My friends and I also did what we could to help our families earn what might pass for our daily bread. We applied for jobs at the Government Labor Exchange, which entitled us to rationing cards for one-quarter pound of soggy black bread per day. Occasionally, we found part-time work as typists in a government office, and that brought us additional rations, such as a few rusty herrings or a little rancid sunflower oil.

Toward the end of 1921, we learned that a special registration

9. H, ARA Russian Section, box, folder 4.

was in progress for clerks with a knowledge of foreign languages to work in an office coordinating the foreign missions sent to the Ukraine in order to feed victims of the ever-spreading famine. I spoke French quite well and had a working knowledge of German, so I put my name on the list along with Nina Kedrina and her two sisters. Soon afterwards, we all got jobs in a PomGol[10] office located in a luxurious mansion at Sadóvaya-Kulikovskaya No. 2, just a few blocks from where we lived. It had been the residence of the Balabánovs, a wealthy merchant family, before the Bolsheviks confiscated it.

Until Captain Quisling arrived and set up his headquarters on the second floor, the upstairs had been used only for the parcel distribution run by President Hoover's American Relief Administration (ARA) program. We had been given strict orders not to have anything to do with the foreign workers upstairs, but now and then one of the Americans would stop by with some papers or just to say hello, or we would meet them in the hallway when they were on their way up or down the great marble staircase with its ornate railing, colorfully illuminated by the large Art Nouveau stained-glass window above.

In addition to our huge office and the small telephone exchange room, which was the former cloakroom, there was a kitchen and also a dining room of sorts, used by the employees whenever there was food available—a little black bread or *kásha*, or some soup with fish oil. We were never given any of the food supplies that arrived from abroad for distribution in the field, so we were just as hungry as the rest of the population, day after day, month after month. Once or twice, the man running the kitchen managed to get hold of some salted pork fat, which he shared with the rest of us, but we were so unaccustomed to rich food that we all got terrible diarrhea from the treat.

10. An abbreviation of the Russian words for "Help the Starving."

The remainder of the first floor was used as offices for high Soviet officials, including the chief of the Ukrainian PomGol, who, at the time Captain Quisling came to administer Nansen's relief work, was a prominent Hungarian Communist (said to be one of Béla Kun's men) named Bashkóvich. Among the few people who ranked above Bashkóvich were the members of the SovNarKom (the Cabinet of the Ukrainian Soviet Government), whose president was Rakovsky. Besides being my chief, Bashkóvich was also the person with whom Captain Quisling had to cooperate in order to get his relief work done. Unlike the American Relief Administration, which had insisted on setting up and running its own operations, the Nansen mission depended entirely on Russians to run its field kitchens.

When our supervisors were not around, the atmosphere in our office was informal and friendly. We all did our best to cheer up Nina's eldest sister Mila, who had been married just a few months earlier and whose husband had been arrested by the Cheka shortly after their wedding. Now she was expecting a baby, but it was hard for her to be happy about that when she did not know whether her husband was alive or dead.

An older woman on our staff, who should have been equally dejected, managed somehow to keep smiling. Zimovnova worked to support herself and her younger sister, who had lost her mind as a consequence of their personal misfortune. The two women came from a privileged background and had lived in France for many years when they decided to return to Russia toward the end of World War I. After a difficult and circuitous journey, they had arrived home to utter chaos and found themselves bereft of all their possessions and with no chance of returning to France. While Zimovnova struggled to make ends meet, her sister walked dazedly about in the streets, bowing and crossing herself at all the buildings on her way, not just at churches, as had been the custom of Russian peasants since time immemorial.

Another fellow worker was a good-looking woman in her twenties, Barbara Torichnaya, and I also remember a young Jewish man who was a gifted pianist and a wonderful mimic. He would "play" piano concerts for us on his typewriter, his voice imitating perfectly the sounds of a full orchestra. Fortunately, he was also fluent in German—there was a lot of work to be done.

Even though I put in a full day just like all the others, typing and filing, I didn't hesitate to accept a temporary extra job manning the switchboard for two or three hours every night after our office closed. The additional work meant a small extra bread ration for Mama and me, and the job was very easy. It consisted mostly of handling a few evening calls, such as reports from the famine relief stations and field kitchens scattered over most of the Ukraine, a country the size of Germany or France. The rest of the time, I was free to sit and read in that small, dark telephone room under the stairs. The previous switchboard operator had suddenly disappeared in the mysterious manner so common since the Revolution. She never returned, and I kept her job.

My dear friend Nina always tried to be waiting for me when I left the office after my evening stints at the switchboard. Despite our caution, we landed in a most unpleasant situation the very first evening that I started my job as a telephone operator.

I had been delayed by a long and complicated message, which I had to take down and transmit, and it was close to the curfew hour when Nina and I were hurrying home. A group of drunken soldiers tried to stop us and get acquainted. Feeling very frightened, we asked them to leave us alone and continued on our way, pretending to be calm and aloof. The soldiers followed us, jeering and making all sorts of nasty remarks. One of them, probably angered by our indifference, ran toward me with a savage roar of laughter, lifted the back of my collar, and dropped his burning cigarette down inside my dress, which caught fire. While I was screaming from the searing pain and jumping about trying to dis-

lodge the burning cigarette, the soldiers ran away, laughing coarsely.

Meanwhile, my screams had attracted a militia guard. He asked why we were upset and what we were doing on the street after curfew. Our explanation did not impress him, and he took us to the militia station. He had a rough face, and his attitude was menacing while he walked next to us holding his rifle. Nina and I discussed in whispers what to do. The lightest punishment for being stopped on the street after curfew was detention until morning, and we knew that our mothers would be frantic with worry since there would be no way of letting them know what had happened to us.

The militia station was a dark hole with shuttered windows, empty of furniture and barely lit by a dirty bulb. The guard said we would have to wait until somebody in charge came back and checked our identification cards. He was tired, and he complained that he was out of tobacco. Nina had a little money with her, and when I asked the guard if he would take it and buy himself some tobacco as a gift from us, he took the money without any hesitation and became much nicer. A short while later, he said that since there was nobody at the station to take care of us, we really did not have to stay there any longer. He did not have to say it twice. We were on our way home in no time.

The experience left me with a life-long disgust for drunks, especially if in uniform.

One evening while I sat quietly reading in my telephone exchange cubbyhole, I heard the sound of approaching footsteps outside and looked up from my book. The door opened, and a man came in, a very tall man, especially to someone barely five feet tall like myself. He was very well dressed in an excellent dark blue suit unlike anything I had seen in Russia for many years. His hair was

so blond as to appear white, and he had protuberant blue eyes that looked as if they were kept wide open on purpose.

I instantly knew who he was: Captain Quisling from Norway, who had come to us on Nansen's behalf in our hour of need. Our office had been buzzing with excitement ever since it became known that the mysterious stranger from the Far North had moved in upstairs. The Russians had a great deal of interest in Norway at that time. Educated people of all ages had read Ibsen's plays and were familiar with Grieg's music, as well as with Nansen's polar exploits and humanitarian work. Being sixteen-and-a-half at the time, I naturally had my own romantic notions about the Norwegians, but all that my friends and I knew about Quisling himself was that he was an ambitious young officer of unblemished reputation.

The man stopped in front of me, and when he glanced at me I could see surprise in his face, too. He started to say something, but then he faltered, turning his eyes away from mine. I was not too young to realize that something about me had caught his attention, and now I think that for him, that moment was one of those romantic explosions the French call a *coup de foudre*.

After a while, he gave me another stare. In command of himself at last, he said in a perfectly dry and businesslike tone:

"Are you, young lady, in charge of the telephone here?"

"Yes," I said. "I stay here every day until nine. I was substituting for another girl, but now I've taken over her job because she's not coming back. Can I do something for you?"

"Yes, could you please send a telegram for me?"

I did not even ask him where he wanted to send his telegram because our office had no such facilities. I just said:

"No, I can't do that; I don't even know how it's done. You probably have to take your telegram to the Post Office."

"What Post Office? There is no Post Office in the vicinity, and everything is closed by now, anyway. It's impossible to get

anything done around here. Perhaps you can arrange it by telephone, as is done all over the world?" he said with some irritation.

"No, it cannot be done by telephone. You had better consult the office manager."

"What office manager? Don't you know you are the only one here?" he asked.

"Well, I know absolutely nothing. I'm afraid even to say anything. I'm sorry, but I have no idea what needs to be done."

"What a pity. In that case, excuse me for disturbing you." He bowed very politely and was gone.

I was left to wonder if perhaps he had been an hallucination, this man who had been such a powerful, sudden reminder that normal life still existed somewhere—this well-groomed man, all pink-and-white, self-assured and complacent, with nothing threatening his comfortable existence. He appeared to be afraid of nothing. It had been a long time since I had seen a man like that. He certainly looked like someone who intended to create a semblance of order in the chaos surrounding us.

Naturally, the next day I told everybody in my office about having met the mysterious foreigner at last, and they wanted to know all about him—what he looked like, how he was dressed, what kind of tie he was wearing, and so on.

I readily answered all my friends' questions and also told them that Captain Quisling spoke very correct Russian without an accent, but in a somewhat mechanical way, like an automaton.

Then I put the whole incident out of my mind and concentrated on my work. There was no time to think about my Norwegian visitor outside of office hours, either, with all the other things that had to be done just to make daily life hang together.

A few days later, I was again at my switchboard after office hours when my door opened and the Captain walked in, greeted me, and said:

"I see you're here again?"

"Of course, don't you remember? I told you I'm here every evening."

"Yes, I do remember. But I don't remember if I've introduced myself. I'm Captain Quisling."

"I know that, and I'm very glad to meet you. And my name is Acia Voronina. Have you been able to send off your telegram?" I said.

"Well, that's of no importance now. I made the necessary arrangements later. I've come here tonight because I would like to have a chance to speak Russian. I need practice."

"Why, there's lots of practice for you all around here! Everybody here speaks nothing but Russian," I replied.

"That's true, but with the people I meet, representatives of your Soviet government, I have to speak my own language through interpreters. They don't even recognize that I speak Russian." He paused, then repeated: "They don't like my speaking and understanding Russian. They talk to me only through interpreters, and I get no practice whatever, except for small-talk with my servants. May I stop by here every day, even for just a few minutes?"

"Certainly you may. I shall be very glad. I'm not too busy here—I spend most of my time just reading."

"Very well, then," he said. "Every evening, as soon as I'm done with my dinner, I take an after-dinner walk. If you'll allow me, I'll come here at your quitting time and accompany you home. We'll walk together and talk."

While he was speaking, I could not help thinking: "My God, he even dines every day; every day he has food for a whole dinner. And he still has servants!" Out loud I said:

"That's fine with me, if you really will be in the mood to come over and see me and walk me home. Yes, I'll be very pleased."

I think he realized that I was quite sincere. I was intrigued that this grown and interesting man chose to spend time in my

company, and the thought of having a male escort home was very appealing. Ever since the episode with the drunken soldiers, I was afraid of the walk home after I was done at the PomGol for the night. We still had a strict curfew, and our streets continued to be unsafe, regardless of the hour.

Now, however, every day at quitting time the Captain was at my office door to escort me the three or four blocks to my home, unless he was away on an inspection trip in the field or otherwise occupied with official business. Soon, the days and our walks grew longer, and we found ourselves walking together all over the city. We walked and talked for hours on end. He told me about Norway and about himself, and I was genuinely interested. He described his country in glowing terms, and it was obvious that he was an ardent patriot.

He was quite surprised that I already knew quite a lot about Norway, at least as much as one could learn from books and plays. I explained that my friends and I were expected to know several foreign languages and to be acquainted not only with Norwegian literature and music, but also with the classics in French, German, English and Russian literature, and that I was far from the most knowledgeable person in my circle. Certainly my general knowledge could bear no comparison with the encyclopedic erudition of Captain Quisling.

He clearly enjoyed our conversations just the same, and our long walks continued. Sometimes, abandoned children, homeless and desperate bands of *besprizorniki*, would interfere with our conversation. Hungry, dirty, ragged, and fearless, they were attracted by the well-dressed foreigner. They would surround us and follow us with their hands outstretched for alms, harassing us with their loud and woeful cries for help: "*Dai! Dai! Dai!*" Pronounced 'Die,' their plea meant 'give' or 'help.'

On several such occasions, I was embarrassed to see the exasperated Captain Quisling lose his patience and calm. With

flushed face and eyes bulging even more than usual, he would turn upon the wretched, chanting little beggars and angrily yell back at them in English: "Die yourselves, die yourselves!" At such times, something like fear would flicker across his face.

Being not much older than some of those abandoned children, I felt overwhelmed with pity for them, but at the same time I felt sorry for the Captain because of the frustration and impotence he must have felt as the man who was supposed to bring relief to the starving masses of the Ukraine. Here, at the very heart of the Republic, he could do absolutely nothing to save even a few of those pitiful creatures right in front of him. He was driven beside himself by the knowledge that they were probably all destined to die soon—a knowledge they shared. It made them determined to survive, by hook or by crook, long enough to graduate into full-fledged bandits. One of their favorite tricks was to accost better-dressed pedestrians:

"Look here—I've got syphilis—very infectious. If you won't give me what I want, I'll spit in your face and bite you!"

As the Captain's and my walks grew longer, our friendship deepened into a relationship of trust and confidence. He felt increasingly free to talk to me about the frustrations he encountered every day. As he saw it, his work was made needlessly complicated by the Soviet authorities through which he had to operate. Unlike the other foreign relief administrators active in the Ukraine at the time, who ran their own distribution networks, Captain Quisling had to maintain a close relationship with high government officials in order to distribute the food equitably through the various field kitchens manned by the Russians themselves. He also had to organize the transportation of food that had already arrived at various ports but had got no farther because the same chaos reigned in the railway system as in the rest of the communications network.

In many ways, he found this close contact with high officials very useful and interesting because it gave him a unique opportunity to observe how the system worked, but more often than not he was bewildered and exasperated by what he learned. He constantly complained about how those officials were invariably late for appointments, or sometimes even failed to show up for very important meetings without taking the trouble to give advance notice. They were, he said, poorly informed about the actions taken by their subordinates; they usually avoided giving direct and honest answers; and they often broke their promises. He found it hard to cope with an atmosphere of distrust and irresolution that seemed designed only to interfere with his important work.

Some peculiarities of what he regarded as the Russian national character infuriated him to such a degree that he would reproach me as if I alone were responsible for my people's shortcomings. I had come to realize that he probably had nobody else to sound off to, so in the beginning I would just listen and not argue with him, but on one occasion I smiled at him and said:

"But why do you blame me for all the faults of the Russian nation?"

He looked at me in genuine amazement and assured me he had long since realized that I was different from all the other Russians he had met. That was very flattering, of course, but it did not prevent him from continuing his tirades about the instability, insecurity, and inefficiency of Russian life, and about the lack of comfort and order with which the Russian people lived and worked. He cited the Norwegians as an example of a people who had created a safe and prosperous life for themselves, despite a severe climate and foreign oppression.

Sometimes I had to agree with what he was saying, but at other times I argued with him, which was not easy for me when my opponent was a grown man of great erudition and much ex-

perience. One day, during a conversation of this kind, such a feeling of bitterness came over me that I could stand it no longer. Hardly able to repress my tears, I blurted out without looking at the Captain:

"Well, it seems as if we shall again be forced to tell you foreigners, "OUR LAND IS VAST AND FERTILE, BUT THERE IS NO ORDER IN IT. COME TO RULE AND REIGN OVER US." My voice trembled.

The Captain was startled and looked at me with surprise and attention. "What do you mean, Acia?[11] What are you trying to say?"

I repeated what I had said and then added that it was a well-known quote from our school textbooks on Russian history.

"But you surely know, Acia dear, that I had not the slightest intention of hurting you, don't you? Now, now, calm yourself and tell me that story just the way you learned it in school!"

As if reciting a lesson in front of a teacher, I told him the story of how, some twelve or thirteen hundred years ago, Varangian Vikings had been trading with Byzantium, far away from their Scandinavian countries. To insure safe passage for their merchants when they traveled through the lands of several large Slavic tribes, Varangian troops subdued those tribes and demanded regular tribute from them, until one day, the Slavs refused to pay further tribute and set out to govern themselves, driving the Varangians back beyond the seas. However, these Slavic tribes were unable to agree among themselves, which made them vulnerable to the constant raids of Khazars, Petchenegs, Magyars, and other savage, nomadic tribes.

I grew more confident: "Finally, they said to themselves: 'Let us seek a prince who may rule over us and judge us according to

11. Note by Alexandra A. Voronine: He always preferred my nickname "Acia" to the more formal Alexandra, or "Sandra."

the law.' They accordingly went overseas to the Varangian Rus, who were a Swedish or Danish tribe, and they said to them: 'Our land is vast and fertile, but there is no order in it. Come to rule and reign over us.' The Slavic delegates selected and invited a Viking king named Rörek and his brothers to be their rulers. That was the beginning of the Russian state and of the first Russian dynasty."

"And can you tell me when all that happened?" asked the Captain, who had been watching me attentively while he listened.

"Yes, it was some time in the second half of the ninth century. There are still some people around who remember the erection of a monument to commemorate the thousandth anniversary of Russia. I think it is in Kiev."

"Well, the official dates on that memorial are 862–1862," said the Captain, who, I had long since learned, was much better informed even about Russian history than I was myself.

He ran his hands through his hair, making it even more disheveled than usual. After a short pause, he went on:

"According to recent research, your story, which comes from the *Russian Primary Chronicle*, is far from exact, although close to the truth in its general outline. The Slavs invited Varangian Vikings with their military detachments to serve as something like mercenaries in guarding their frontiers, but it was not right away that they became Russian princes. I believe it was a very fortunate deal for Russia. Perhaps without it there would have been no Russia. And it was a good chance for the Russians to acquire knowledge from the West. There is nothing degrading in that. It's just that way now—Russia has a lot to gain by learning from Europe and America."

"No, in my opinion it would have been better for the Slavic tribes to have united without foreign help. Even if it may have

been useful for us to learn from foreigners, there was and is no need to go under somebody's yoke again. Most of Russia's leaders have been of foreign origin, and you can see for yourself that not much good came of it!" I replied.

"Well, politically, Russia did not do too badly, but it could have been better as far as the welfare of the whole people was concerned. Social strife, war, and famine might have been avoided. But you also know that your best tsar, Peter the Great, who was a pure and true Russian, was neither too proud nor afraid to learn from foreigners. He did not disdain going off to live in Holland and other foreign countries under an assumed name, working hard with his hands as a common craftsman just to learn new ways and skills. Isn't that so?"

"That's true. But it's also true that some of his foreign "teachers," like Charles XII of Sweden, liked teaching us so much that he came all the way here without an invitation. Why, it was precisely Peter the Great who defeated him in the great battle at Poltáva!" I exclaimed, in a rather flip manner.

"Bravo, bravo, Acia! That was a good thrust. *Touché*!" he said, pretending to clap his hands. "But think about it, you're helping me win my argument. Point one, that it's useful to learn new ways even from foreigners, and, point two, that Peter the Great was a smart man who understood that. And, being a good student, he knew how to use his new skills to his country's advantage."

A short while later, he stopped walking and turned to me again. "Perhaps it might make you feel better if I remind you that only seventeen years ago, we Norwegians did exactly what you Russians did more than a thousand years ago. I was older than you are now when Norway separated from Sweden. We decided it would be useful to have a king or a president of our own, and consideration was given to one or two outstanding Norwegians,

but we finally decided it would be better to get a neutral foreigner. We elected a suitable young man, Prince Carl of Denmark, to be our King. He's our present King Haakon VII. He took that name because it's the name of several ancient Norwegian kings. Of course, he's only the titular head of our country, which has a government elected by the people."

I felt rather tired of this conversation, and to give it a different direction I was tempted to let the Captain know that I was myself a direct descendant of Rörek the Viking king, but then I remembered that I had promised Mama never to tell anyone the secret of my descent. Revealing our family connections to anyone, even to this man whom I had grown to respect and trust, might be fatal, so I held my tongue both then and during all the years that followed.

Countless small signs indicated that the Captain was becoming seriously attracted to me. It was evident from the way he had begun to look at me and from his eagerness not to miss any chance of meeting me.

If it was a romance in the making, it was a platonic one, however. Our relationship contained none of the ordinary elements of flirting, and Captain Quisling was so much the perfect gentleman that it seemed unreal. He never expressed his feelings in plain words, never attempted even to hold my hand, and he never gave me flowers or other tokens of affection.

He may just have wanted to avoid being conspicuous, knowing himself to be continuously observed by the authorities. His continual complaints about being supervised certainly fit what I already knew of how foreigners were regarded in our society at that time, so I was quite surprised that nobody seemed to mind my being seen so much with the Captain.

Now I realize that, of course, the authorities knew all about

us since they kept close track of the activities of every foreigner and of every Russian who associated with foreigners. But, at the time, I saw no relationship between my friendship with Captain Quisling and a couple of baffling events that took place soon after he and I had started taking our walks together.