



**The Mysterious Case of the Brilliant Young Russian Orientalist... – part 3 and finish**  
**by John Barlow**

At this point in the work on the case, it seemed time to take stock. The evidence appeared to be fairly clear that Rosenberg and Liebenthal could not have been the same person, and the available evidence suggested that the two Elisabeth Rosenbergs were not the same person. However, the mystery of the fate of Otto Rosenberg (the several possibilities for his death), and the fate of his widow, Elisabeth, still remained. That Elisabeth was indeed the first name of Rosenberg's widow, it will be recalled, was Prof. Poppe's recollection; that her first initial was E. was in little doubt, since it appeared on the title page of the German translation of Rosenberg's thesis. (That is, assuming that the E. Rosenberg of the translation was indeed Rosenberg's widow.)

Even with the absence of confirmation of the "double-identity" hypothesis, it is perhaps of interest to make some brief comparisons between the philosophical outlooks of the two, Otto Rosenberg and Walter Liebenthal, as expressed in respective quotations from their writings. First, from Rosenberg:

Perhaps the chasm that separates the soul of the West from the soul of the East is not so deep — perhaps Buddhism, which has united India and the Far East on a religious basis, has already built a bridge over this chasm. For that which we find in the best and most profound creations in the literature and art of the Far East is Buddhist thought or its echo, that is, the Indian thought which in many respects is so close to us and familiar to us. It is the thought which returns from the Far East to the West. It will show us the way to understand that which is really new, which is not to be found in marvelous India nor with us. There is also

no doubt that in due time, when the cultural wealth of the East becomes better known, much of that which now seems strange and unfathomable to us will become understandable, transform itself into the near and familiar, in a word, become our own. (From: Rosenberg: "The Weltanschauung of Modern Buddhism in the Far East" (concluding paragraph), Lecture at the First Buddhist Exposition at St. Petersburg, 1919.

Or the following two selections, quoted from the Rosenberg Archives by Yulia Mikhailova in "Outstanding Russian Buddhologist Otton Rosenberg (1888–1919)," *Far Eastern Affairs* (Moscow), 1987, No. 4, 76–84):

[In understanding the "soul of the East"] it is not sufficient to take into account and memorize certain phenomena. It is necessary to experience them the way they are experienced by the eastern man. This calls for two rules. First, it is necessary in each phenomenon to experience that very chain of associations with which this phenomenon is connected, say, for a Japanese. This is quite feasible. What is needed here is just a knowledge of everyday life in Japan and a knowledge of Japanese literature... The second rule is the reverse of the first, it requires no new knowledge, but only efforts to prevent European associations in connection with this or that eastern phenomenon... Both rules can be put in even simpler language. To understand an eastern phenomenon, religious or some other sentiment, it is necessary to be a bit of an actor; it is not enough to study, it is necessary to feel, to take to heart what is studied... It is not enough to read how Buddhists of the mystic sect practice

meditation. It is necessary in conditions of a mountain monastery after certain theoretical training under the guidance of a guru, to plunge oneself into meditation, to experience a mood that comes when you lose the feeling of corporal gravity and directly experience the unity with Buddha the way it is experienced by all those present at meditation.

In connection with the above-quoted passage, Prof. Shcherbatskoi (Rosenberg's primary professor at St. Petersburg) included the following in a footnote (on p. 15) of his book, *The Conception of Buddhist Nirvana*, "The late Prof. O. Rosenberg has himself practised some yoga-meditation in a Zen Monastery in Japan. He used to compare the agreeable feeling of ease which he then experienced to the effect produced by music, especially when executed personally. Attention is then fixed and a light feeling of ecstasy makes you forget all troubles of life....." (The available information does not indicate which, if any, musical instruments Rosenberg himself played.)

Mikhailova, in her article about Rosenberg which was quoted above, also drew attention to his use of vivid metaphorical language to help make Buddhism comprehensible to a wider audience. For example, she quotes Rosenberg, in speaking of the Buddhist concept of reincarnation:

Thus, according to the Buddhist teachings, every person, with all what he or she thinks, with all his or her internal and external world, is just a temporary condition of beginningless and endless integral parts, a sort of band woven of a certain length of beginningless and endless threads. When what we call death comes, the fabric of a certain design becomes unwoven, so to speak, but the same unbroken threads join together again, forming a new band, with a new design.

Innumerable threads, of which a given person is woven, form a kind of bundle of threads, that "warp" of the fabric, those warp threads which are connected in a fabric in

this or that design; no single thread can be included in another warp, in a different person, which is another individual combination of threads.

Consequently, an individual ... is, in fact, a patterned band made of warp threads. The same threads that call themselves Ivan were once Peter, and one day will be Alexei... Such is the meaning of the Buddhist teaching of reincarnation.

These lines lend substance to Prof. Piatigorsky's characterization of Rosenberg as a Buddhist philosopher (one might add, perhaps, even a mystic), as contrasted with a philosopher of Buddhism. The latter characterization, on the other hand, might more aptly be applied to Liebenthal, who perhaps considered himself to be a philosopher of broad scope, (and certainly not a mystic) as reflected in the title of his opus magnum, "World-Views," or, *World-Interpretations*, which he reworked a number of times after its original publication in 1956, according to his daughter, Frau Kohlberger. Indeed, it was her view that Liebenthal's chief interest in the last 30 years of his life was in philosophy more than Buddhism. She provided me with a copy of the brief essay that follows. (Frau Kohlberger believes that her father had chosen "Weltauslegungen," meaning interpretation or explanation of the world, implying objectivity, as the German equivalent word of "World-Interpretations," rather than "Weltanschauung," meaning philosophy of life or outlook on life, implying subjectivity, as the latter word was used in the title of Rosenberg's Buddhist Exposition lecture, "The Weltanschauung of Modern Buddhism in the Far East.")

I introduced the expression *World-Interpretations* as a substitute, in essays, for "religion," which has a historical connotation rather than a systematic one as does world-interpretation. Religions become inherited, transformed, adapted to new needs. Conventional pictures are fashioned by the theologians: Godly hierarchies of the highest, second, and third highest Beings, Trinities, their royal court —

families, angels, saints — events in heavens, hells, their functions (creation of the world, of mankind). Magical means, players and sacrifices, and morals become recommended so as to have a place in the other world — that sphere which is the other side of death, sickness, chance, guilt. *World-Interpretations*, in contrast, defines the attitude of an individual toward his own existence as it arises from his situation in becoming, or his chance of becoming.

The future is closed to us, it is dark and creates anxiety for us (Kierkegaard), we hesitate to entrust ourselves to it, to make a leap into the unknown (Heidegger), to take upon ourselves the responsibility for our own fate, where no benevolent God will remove it from us. The world then becomes a prison (Gnosis) into which the demigod has banished us (Mani), into which we are "flung." Under these "hopeless" conditions, to persevere is difficult. The fatalist goes beyond it, in that he clings to magical means, magical knowledge (almanac learning, I-Ching, astrology of mid-East cultures). He takes on a timid expression because he seeks to duck the storm, and so becomes inferior to the true believer, who relies on his God, if only he fulfills the conditions that are laid upon him, his "commandments." He lives for one hope, follows one Way.

It is otherwise for modern Man, quite taken up with the inner world (after he had Calvin legitimize his behavior as God's will). He lets himself become fascinated by narrow chances for his future, and plunges into battle with it (Tennyson). This battle is not the good old one against the neighbor whom he robs, whose property he has taken as his own, but rather as a fight represented as noble with Nature, with which he battles. It is a close combat, which only now, a hundred years later, becomes perceived as suicide; it becomes legitimate, where the *placet* or common consent of the Calvinist notion of God is lacking, through pseudowisdom or ideology.

That the battle with nature — not its fathoming — has limits, which lie in the narrowness of the site of the battle, becomes realized only today. (From an unpublished essay by Walter Liebenthal (translated from the German).

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As the year 1995 began, my work of preparing the camera-ready copy of the Chinese-Russian-English Dictionary using Rosenberg's system for ordering the Chinese characters was nearing completion (I hand-delivered the 860 12x12-inch sheets of films for each page to the publisher in Michigan), and so at last I was able to begin work on the manuscript of the present mysterious case. Organizing the not inconsiderable amount of material that had accumulated over nearly 10 years was already well under way when a new element supervened.

In all of my investigations into this case, I had never gone directly to the primary source, namely, the Rosenberg archives in St. Petersburg. First, it had appeared at an earlier stage of work on the case that the materials there would already have been well represented in the various obituaries and articles about Rosenberg which I have already mentioned. Further, it seemed rather unlikely that there would be any additional material relating to the fate of Otto and Elisabeth Rosenberg after they had left the St. Petersburg area for Estonia. Nonetheless, I had explored the possibility of examining the Rosenberg archives in September 1994 when I was in Russia, as I have already mentioned, but I decided not to pursue the matter upon learning that Yulia Mikhailova, whom I knew to be familiar with the Rosenberg archives, was abroad.

As it so happened, I learned, in late January, 1995, that there would be a lecture at Harvard University by an orientalist from St. Petersburg. Immediately, I had the idea to ask him whether Yulia Mikhailova had returned to the Institute. (As noted earlier, I was told, at the time of my September 1994 visit to Moscow, that she was abroad.) It turned out, however, that the orientalist did not know of Mikhailova.

The following day, the question became moot: Finnish Airlines had an advertisement in The New York Times of appreciably reduced air fares, for a very limited time (four days, through January 31), for travel to St. Petersburg (and other cities in the Baltic region) to be completed by the end of March. Mikhailova or no Mikhailova in St. Petersburg, the temptation proved too great, and so I ordered the Finnair ticket. Only then did I begin exploring matters about permission to have access to the archives as well as about a visa for Russian.

A telephone call to a colleague in Moscow (Prof. Grigori A. Tkachenko) for suggestions about gaining access to the Rosenberg archives at the Oriental Institute, St. Petersburg Branch, yielded two names: Prof. Lev Menshikov (whom I had met during my brief visit to the Institute in the summer of 1988) and Dr. Tatiana Yermakova, who was said to have been working recently with the Rosenberg archives. Prof. Menshikov, it turned out, was away in Japan, to return only in early April, after my visit to St. Petersburg would have had to have been completed. However, his daughter, Maria, was most helpful in telephone calls, as was Dr. Yermakova. Archives relating to Rosenberg were said to be at more than one location in St. Petersburg: in addition to the Oriental Institute, there were apparently relevant archives at the Ethnographic Museum (where Rosenberg did some of his work). Further, archives of Rosenberg's professor, Prof. Shcherbatskoi were said to be at the Russian Academy of Sciences.

*Of very considerable interest to me was Dr. Yermakova's remark, in one telephone conversation, that among the Shcherbatskoi archives, there were letters from Rosenberg's wife written from Helsinki. "Do you recall what was her first name?" I asked Dr. Yermakova. After a few moments off the telephone line to check her notes, she answered: "Elfrida."*

If correct, this bit of information would make the whole of the approach of the two Elisabeth Rosenbergs (recall that Prof. Poppe's memory of Rosenberg's widow's name was Elisabeth) collapse in an instant, and it would open up an entirely new direction in the mystery.

Preparations for my St. Petersburg visit intensified. There were the usual contacts with the Academies of Sciences of the USA and the Russian Academy of Science, arrangements for access to the Rosenberg Archives in St. Petersburg, including of course those at the Oriental Institute, arrangements for issuance of the necessary Russian visa, and so on. At virtually the same time that a letter of invitation for the visit was arriving from the East, the first set of printed pages of my trilingual dictionary was arriving from the West (i.e., from the printer in Michigan). The month of March, 1995, promised to be an interesting one.

### **St. Petersburg, March 21–28, 1995**

Since the Finnair plane to Helsinki left from John F. Kennedy (JFK) Airport in New York rather than from Boston, I elected to go by train to New York, which entailed a somewhat tortuous and extended van trip from Pennsylvania Station to the airport. The departure of the plane was close to on-time. As usual on eastbound trans-Atlantic flights, I slept poorly during the foreshortened night. (Helsinki time is one hour ahead of western European time, and one hour behind Russian time — 7 hours ahead of Boston time. After a change of planes in Helsinki, the arrival in St. Petersburg, on Tuesday, 21 March, 1995, was almost on time.

Dr. Tatiana Emil'evna Yermakova (hereafter, Tatiana or Tatiana Emil'evna) had suggested that she meet me at the St. Petersburg International Airport (Pulkovo-2); she would have red hair, wearing glasses, and a green coat. At the Institute for Oriental Studies, St. Petersburg Branch, she had earlier been in charge of the archives and was now with the Research Section of the Institute, I learned. I spotted her immediately after I had cleared immigration and customs uneventfully. After the various troubles entering and exiting Russia during my last visit in September of 1988, I took great care in filling out, and putting safely away the customs/currency declaration form after it had been duly stamped. I converted only a small amount of dollars in cash to rubles at the airport,

since it turned out to be impossible to convert travellers checks to rubles there.

We took the No. 13 bus (very crowded indeed, like most busses in St. Petersburg) into town to the Moskovskaya Metro (subway) stop, and thence to the Nevskii Prospekt stop. From there we walked to the Hotel of the Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg Branch. Tatiana had already checked out to see that everything was in order for my arrival, having been previously contacted by telephone by Dr. Yuri Shiyan of the Foreign Affairs Department of the Academy in Moscow. I had expected a relatively simple room, comparable to those at the Academy's Hotel in Moscow (the Akademicheskaja); instead, I found myself in an apartment complete with not one but two sitting rooms, bedroom, combination kitchen and shower, and bathroom. Everything was very satisfactory indeed, although in managing the somewhat temperamental gas hot-water heater in such a way that the shower water would be neither too hot nor too cold, I was fortunate to have had advanced courses in fluid dynamics and in thermodynamics during my early days in physics.

Tatiana saw to a traditionally warm Russian welcome to the apartment by having brought along dark (as well as light) Russian bread, together with cheese. Thanks to the gas kitchen stove, she made tea, over which we talked together about Otto Rosenberg, continuing our non-stop conversation about him that had begun at the airport. She had worked out a detailed schedule for me for the rest of the week. The next day (Wednesday) a review of the 1923 letters from Elfrida Rosenberg to Prof. Shcherbatskoi, on Thursday, a visit to the Archives of the Russian Museum, and on Friday, to the Archives of the Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg Branch.

Afterwards, we walked the short distance to the location of the Institute of Oriental Studies, which faces the Neva River, a prime landmark of St. Petersburg, and thence to a nearby grocery and a bakery that were quite close to the Academy Hotel. We parted at the bakery; where I bought some Danish pastries, returned to the hotel, napped a few hours, and then went out to

dinner at a restaurant, the "Thousand and One Nights," half a block away.

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In my first visit to St. Petersburg (then Leningrad) in 1961, I had been lodged at the turn-of-the-century Hotel Europa, on Nevski Prospekt; my main recollection was that the plumbing there ran — all the time. During subsequent visits, in 1981 and 1988, I was lodged at hotels on the outskirts of the city, so that appreciable time was consumed coming and going, by trolley and bus. In connection with my present visit, Dr. Shiyan of the Academy in Moscow had told me on the telephone (while I was still in Boston) that the hotel would be conveniently located for my purposes, but I was hardly prepared for how convenient the location would actually be. My principal base of operations, the Institute of Oriental Studies, was, as already mentioned, on the banks of the Neva (River), a mere five-minutes walk away, the Hermitage Museum (the former Winter Palace) was about 10-minutes away at the end of my street (Millionskaia Street, presumably named after the moneyed class of earlier residents), the Marble Palace (about which more later) a lesser distance in the opposite direction, and finally, both the Philharmonia (concert hall) and the Russian Museum were just slightly more than 10 minutes walk in another direction. How fantastic to be so centrally located!

In the course of the long initial conversation between Tatiana and myself about Otto Rosenberg, the following points emerged, among others:

(1) The reason that I had not been able to reach Yulia Mikhailova (whom I had met at the Institute of Oriental Studies in 1988 and who had given me at that time a copy of her article about Rosenberg) during my visit to Russia in September of 1994 was that she was then in Japan, and evidently expected to remain there for an indefinite period.

(2) At a meeting of Russian Buddhologists in 1989, Lennart Mäll, evidently taking a page from Buddhist philosophy, had suggested that

Walter Liebenthal might have been a kind of reincarnation of Otto Rosenberg. Mäll also mentioned, at that meeting, his intention of publishing a biography about Rosenberg, as indeed, he had indicated to me when we met in Moscow in the summer of the preceding year, 1988; Tatiana had awaited its publication for a time afterwards (just as I had also), but it had not appeared. (One of the casualties of the independence of Estonia, in 1994, was that the journal in question, *Acta et Commentationes Universitatis Tartuensis*, was no longer received in the library at the Institute of Oriental Studies in St. Petersburg.

(3) Tatiana, who, as I have previously mentioned, had been working with the various Rosenberg archives in St. Petersburg, had found, in the archives of Prof. Theodore Shcherbatsky, letters from Rosenberg's widow, who indeed had the first name Elfrida, not Elisabeth. Hence, Elisabeth Rosenberg #1 was actually Elfrida Rosenberg. There was, therefore, no longer a role in the present story for Elisabeth Rosenberg #2, the physician, originally from Cracow, whom I had last traced to Heidelberg, via Odessa, Tübingen, and Munich, and whose father had returned from Odessa to Blankenburg/Harz in Germany. End of that pursuit!

(4) Tatiana showed me her hand-copies of the letters Elfrida Rosenberg, Otto Rosenberg's widow, had written to Prof. Shcherbatskoi, of whom, as previously mentioned, Rosenberg was a student.

(5) We agreed that Rosenberg was an exceedingly brilliant individual.

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On the morning of the next day, (Wednesday, 22 March), Tatiana came to the hotel with a younger scholar at the Institute of Oriental Studies, Dr. Yelena Ostrovskaiia, Jr., (her mother was a scholar in much the same field) who was quite familiar with English (as well as with Sanskrit and Tibetan), to go over with me the four handwritten letters from Elfrida Rosenberg to Rosenberg's professor, Theodore

Shcherbatskoi. The letters, which Tatiana had hand-copied from the Archives at the Russian Museum, had been written from Helsinki (then, Helsingfors), Finland, in the period 25 April, 1923 to 28 May, 1923, the year prior to the publication in Heidelberg, of Elfrida Rosenberg's German translation of Rosenberg's Russian book — his doctoral dissertation — *Problems of Buddhist Philosophy*. I rapidly found, however, that the oral translation of the letters was not fully satisfactory, as I would have no written record of their content (the handwriting in Russian, though clear, was beyond me) which I felt to be essential, so as to be fully aware of not only the factual content but also the nuances, while I was still in St. Petersburg. Accordingly, I asked Dr. Ostrovskaiia to prepare a written translation of them, an appropriate fee for preparation of the translations being understood. Afterwards, Tatiana and I went to the Institute of Oriental Studies to examine the Rosenberg archives there.

From the various obituaries and articles about him, I was already familiar with the main points about Rosenberg's life up until the time he left St. Petersburg in the fall of 1919, and hence my viewing of the archives at the Institute of Oriental Studies was essentially confined to examining his draft for a Japanese-English dictionary in which the characters would be ordered according to his "alphabetical" system. The manuscript for the dictionary consisted of cut-outs of characters with their English equivalents from an existing Japanese-English dictionary, with the order of the characters appropriately rearranged, together with hand-written additions. There was nothing in the Institute archives about Rosenberg's fate.

After we had surveyed the Rosenberg archives at the Institute of Oriental Studies, Tatiana introduced me to her husband, Dr. Mikhael Yermakov, who is a sinologist and a scholar of Buddhism. Tatiana also introduced me to the head of the Buddhist Studies group at the Institute, Dr. Valery Isaevich Roudoy. I also met Dr. Isolda Emil'evna Tsiperovich, who had been a student of Prof. V. M. Alekseev, a sinologist and lexicographer from St.

Petersburg. (At one point, when Isolda did not have the dates of Rosenberg's visit to Japan quite right, I ventured a correction. "Are you sure?" she said. "Yes," interjected Tatiana (with some exaggeration, considering her own close familiarity with Rosenberg's life), "He knows more about Rosenberg than anyone else." In any event, during these conversations, I was unable to clarify whether Rosenberg had left St. Petersburg of his own initiative, or, had been compelled to leave. Roudoy suggested that perhaps Rosenberg had confided, very confidentially, about his plans to Shcherbatskoi.

The visit to the Institute was altogether as warm a gathering as one could imagine. Isolda Emil'evna invited Tatiana and me to visit her at her apartment, on the other side of the Neva, up-river a bit, two days hence (Friday), after Tatiana and I had visited the Archives at the Russian Academy of Sciences.

As I had still not been able to convert travellers checks to rubles, Tatiana and her husband Mikhael went with me to a bank opposite the Grand Hotel Europe (where I had stayed, in its much less elegant days, in 1961, as already mentioned). The bank was kind enough to point out that the American Express office at the Hotel would take a much smaller commission — 1% instead of 4% (as I later confirmed), but at the time, the American Express Office was closed, which settled the matter.

The Yermakovas and I then parted. By a fortunate coincidence, as I was setting out in the direction of the Academy Hotel, I found myself just outside the ticket office for the St. Petersburg Philharmonic Hall. Upon discovering that a concert of Mozart (two symphonias, two piano concertos and a divertissement) was to take place the same evening, I promptly bought a ticket, at an absolutely exhorbitant price of about US \$.75 [sic]! Not for the last time, as it turned out, I had to rush back to the Philharmonia in time for the concert at 7 PM. (That evening, I slept poorly, because of a repeated silly error in my international direct dialing for my wife at home: I kept waiting for a third dial tone after accessing the international telephone network

but before dialing the country code — for the USA it is 1. When finally a busy signal instead would come on, I assumed that the international circuits were all busy. On a last try, I impatiently did not wait for the third dial tone, and as a result the call went right through!)

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The next morning (Thursday, 23 March), Tatiana and Yelena arrived at the Hotel with Yelena's handwritten English translation of Elfrida Rosenberg's letters to Shcherbatskoi. My decision to obtain the written version turned out to be quite worthwhile, as I learned when we went over some specific points in some detail. (After my return to Boston, I arranged for the original letters to be typed in Russian (by Sonia Ketchian) because I could not read the Russian script, and, after comparing Yelena's translations with the typed originals, I made some minor changes in the translations for clarity.)

The texts of the letters in English translation, which are reproduced by permission of the Archives of The Russian Academy of Science in St. Petersburg, are as follows (The archival references are: the Collection of Shcherbatskoi (#725), Subdivision 3, Item 185.):

### **Letter No. 1**

Helsingfors [Helsinki] 25/IV/23

Dear Theodore Ippolitovich,

I was very glad to receive your letter. I have also received your letter from Upsala [Sweden], which, because a strange misunderstanding, was kept by Andrei Dmitrievich for six months. At that time you had intended to go to France, but I didn't know where to send my reply.

I began translating "Problems [of Buddhist Philosophy]" already in 1920, but always in the homes of others, and there was neither time nor peace that was necessary, and so progress has been very difficult. I have no

reference books, and for the most part, there is no one with whom I could consult.

More than half of the work is already finished; now I'm working on the chapter, "Objective and So-Called Organs (*Vishaya* and *Indriya*)". Having said that more than half of the work is already done, I shall still not publish it before someone competent reads and checks it.

I have not undertaken any steps to publish it, and I shall be very grateful if you, Theodore Ippolitovich, would help me with your good advice.

Are you not going back to Russia? If you are not going, perhaps you will agree to read my translation? If you do agree, I will send it to you. I have been unsuccessful in my attempts to find someone here who knows the Russian and the German languages and who is interested in Buddhist philosophy. Andrei Dmitrievich [a musician] has no interest in philosophy and besides he is very busy.

I shall spend the summer in Ingå skaargård, but I shall be back in Helsingfors in the autumn. I sent your book, "Sphutartha Abhidharmakosavyakhya," which Otto Ottonovich took along, to Prof. Lévi in Paris in 1920, as Otto had asked, but I don't know whether Prof. Lévi received it or not.

I received your letter yesterday, the 24th (via Berlin). It was difficult for me to make it out, although I had already become accustomed to your handwriting in Japan.

Respectfully yours,

Elfrida Ulyevna Rosenberg

My address: Finland, Helsingfors

**Letter No. 2**

Helsingfors 3/V/23

Dear Theodore Ippolitovich,

Today I received your letter and I'm hurrying to send you my answer by today's steamer. I was very happy to hear that there are people who are interested in the book and are awaiting the translation, as I had not known this. I do really thank you for wanting to take steps toward the publication of the second Russian edition and translations. Mainly, I would be satisfied if you, Theodore Ippolitovich, could make an English translation, since Otton Ottonovich had intended to translate the work into English himself. But my English is insufficient, without assistance, for accomplishing this task. I fully understand that the English translation is much more important than the German one. Now I shall work assiduously on the translation, and then I shall turn to H. v. Glasenapp, as you suggested.

Unfortunately, I have no extra copy of "The Problems" — when we fled, we took only two. The Chinese translation of "AbhidharmaRosa" in a yellow silk binding was left at Pavlovsk. I regret terribly that this book, so loved by Otto Ottonovich, was lost. I have none of the works that he had started on.

I gladly give you complete authority in all that you want to undertake about this matter. I only want you to know that for me the most important of all is that the book be translated and published. The royalties are not important for me; I can always find a possibility to earn a living.

If you intend to go to Russia, then probably you will pass through Finland? Maybe it will be possible for us to see one other? In any case, let me know about your departure beforehand so that I can send by you some money to Otton Ottonovich's mother. She is now in Petrograd.

Andrei Dmitrievich is evidently occupied mainly with music. He gives music lessons and sometimes accompanies at concerts. He is working, successfully, on harmonizing Mongolian melodies. Recently I heard his music here in Helsingfors. He has charming children.

Greetings from your grateful



Elfrida Ul. Rosenberg.

**Letter No. 3**

Helsingfors 22/V/23

Dear Theodore Ippolitovich,

I am very grateful to you for your arranging everything so well for me! I received your two letters and the "edict from Bhabra Walleser." At the same time, I am sending you the part of "The Problems" which I have translated with the corresponding part of the original, for your examination. But as you will see the translation is not yet ready for publication. I have to look through it again and then to make a clean copy. So, after reading it, please send it back to me, or, bring it with you if you pass through Finland. If only you write me beforehand, I could be in Helsinki or in Abo, whichever would be the more convenient for you. Next week I have to go to the summer house.

If it had been possible to be free during all of these years, everything would be ready. But the only time I can work on my translation is one or two hours in the evening and at that not every day, or so it seems.

I send you also some facts concerning O. O. which I wrote earlier in the German language. I don't remember when he was appointed a professor. In November of 1918?

O.O. had no full translation of *Vijnanamatrasastra*, but he had some parts of it and also some works dealing with iconography. Probably these were left in his office in the Museum or even in Pavlovsk; in any case, he did not take them with him.

In case we don't meet, I am sending you 100 marks for Otto Ottonovich's mother; please see to it that it reaches her. Her address: Petrograd, 10 rota, No. 24-30, at Margarita Emilyanovna Ludvig's. I shall be very grateful to you.

Now I am hurrying so that this letter will be on the train before it leaves.

Your Elfrida Ulyevna R.

**Letter No. 4**

Helsingfors 28/V/23

Dear Theodore Ippolitovich,

Thank you for your postcard! If at all possible, I'd like to prepare the manuscript for publication, i.e., to make it readable. But if Prof. Walleser is in a great hurry, then as a last resort I would agree to let him copy it. Or, I can give him only the first three chapters. I would like to copy the other chapters myself, and I promise to send them three times a week one by one to Prof. Walleser.

I have been terribly busy with all sorts of things because Madame Christerson has been abroad. I am awaiting her return on Friday. Then I shall be free of responsibilities and so I'll be able to go to the summer house. My summer address from 1 June: Finland, Raseborg Vårudd (c/o Fru A. v. Christerson).

Otto Ottonovich wanted to recast "The Problems" in the German language, such that he wanted to omit the more specialized portions, comments, lists of dharmas, etc. But on this question, Prof. Walleser can proceed according to his own discretion.

Thank you for everything

E. Rosenberg

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These four letters constitute the entire collection of correspondence from Elfrida Rosenberg to Prof. Shcherbatskoi in the latter's archives in St. Petersburg; they cover the period of barely more than a month, from 25 April to 28 May, 1993. They go a long way, however, toward eliminating uncertainties about how the German translation of Rosenberg's book came about, and how it came to be published, evidently with very

strong encouragement from Prof. Walleser in Heidelberg (i.e., the "edict" from him mentioned in letter No. 3). Also, it is clear that, at the time, Shcherbatskoi had been travelling in western Europe, where he had been in contact with Walleser in Heidelberg about the publication of Elfrida's German translation of Rosenberg's book, which indeed occurred the next year, 1924. Considering the geographical situation of Helsinki, Elfrida's dispatch of letters to Prof. Shcherbatskoi by steamer (as in letter No. 2) may be taken to indicate that Shcherbatskoi was in (Western) Europe, whereas dispatch by train would indicate dispatch of her letters to him in Russia (as in letter No. 3).

As to Rosenberg's plans after having left St. Petersburg in 1919, Tatiana expressed surprise that Prof. Shcherbatskoi had made known so openly, even in 1924 in Shcherbatskoi's biographical sketch about Rosenberg (which accompanied the publication in Heidelberg of Rosenberg's St. Petersburg Buddhist Exposition lecture), Rosenberg's intention to go to Japan (via the United States), to continue his work there.

The letters also reveal that Rosenberg himself had intended that there be an English translation of his book. As previously noted, Shcherbatskoi's own preferred language for publication was English, but, as also previously noted, he had the expert assistance of his mother in this respect, whereas Elfrida Rosenberg indicated that her own English was limited. (No evidence of the existence of such an English translation has emerged, although I heard a rumor, in St. Petersburg in 1988, that one existed in Sweden — a check subsequently with a likely knowledgeable source in Sweden yielded nothing positive.)

Of particular note also from the letters (No. 3) is the reference to "fleeing (Russian: *ybezhat*) (i.e. Russia, in 1919), indicating that the Rosenbergs left Russia voluntarily. In the first letter, Elfrida Rosenberg indicates that she found Shcherbatskoi's handwriting difficult, although she had become accustomed to it "in Japan." This remark appeared to be the first and perhaps

only indication that the Rosenbergs had been married before his years in Japan (1912–1916). Prof. Poppe's recollection of Prof. Shcherbatskoi's having identified Rosenberg's wife for him (Poppe) at some event in Petrograd in the late 1910's is consistent with this conclusion. There were no envelopes accompanying these letters in the Shcherbatskoi Archives, so that his whereabouts in Europe at the time were not indicated.

As indicated above, these letters constitute the only existing correspondence between Elfrida Rosenberg and Shcherbatskoi in the various archives in St. Petersburg. And yet there was presumably additional correspondence, or contacts, or communication, between Elfrida Rosenberg and Prof. Shcherbatskoi; for example, for his biographical sketch of Rosenberg published in Heidelberg in 1924, in which he described in detail, as previously noted, the very last days of Otto Rosenberg's fatal illness, on the basis of information from Elfrida Rosenberg. There was nothing in the archives to indicate whether Elfrida Rosenberg and Prof. Shcherbatskoi had actually met in Helsinki or not. Nor do the letters indicate how the manuscript for the German Edition of Rosenberg's book reached Prof. Walleser in Heidelberg.

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After the detailed review of Yelena's translations of the letters from Elfrida Rosenberg, Tatiana and I went for coffee and "keks" (cakes) and then to the Archives (more exactly, the Manuscript Division) of the Russian Museum, where the archival holdings of the Ethnographic Section of the Museum for the period before the Ethnographic Museum became a separate entity are located.

Among these archives, there were only a very few items from or about Otto Rosenberg; they included the following (the documents, which cover the period 14 September 1918 to 12 January 1920, are from Collection No. 10, Folder No. 389, and are numbered here in chronological order, which is not strictly the case for the originals) :

[Document #1] A letter of appointment, dated 13 September, 1918, of Rosenberg as Curator of the Siberian Collection of the Ethnographic Section of the Russian Museum, signed by the Head of the Ethnographic Section. (As noted above, The Ethnographic Section subsequently became separate from the Russian Museum, as the Ethnographic Museum.)

[Document #2] The date of the above is changed from 13 to 11 September, 1918.

[Document #3] A letter of professional identification of Rosenberg as a worker at the Russian Museum, dated 12 February, 1919, (intended for identifying the bearer to the civil authorities).

[Document #4] A note, dated 4 October, 1919, indicating that Rosenberg had returned from a vacation of about two weeks.

[Document #5] A handwritten letter from Rosenberg with his signature, dated 16 October, 1919, to the Head of the Ethnographic Museum, requesting a replacement for his personal identification document, which, he wrote, had been stolen.

[Document #6] A note to the effect that a notice of this theft should be published in the newspapers.

[Document #7] A document to stop payment of salary to Rosenberg as curator of the Ethnographic Section, from 20 October, 1919.

[Document #8] A notice of termination of Rosenberg's employment at the Ethnographic Museum, dated 25 October, 1919, effective as of 20 October, 1919.

[Document #9] A note, dated 12 November, 1919, that Rosenberg, without explanation, had ceased to appear at the Ethnographic Museum, and therefore he had been relieved of service from 20 October, 1919.

From the above, it is clear that the critical period concerning the whereabouts of the Rosenbergs occurred soon after his (their) return from

vacation on 4 October, a time when the disturbances of the Russian Civil war were at or approaching their height.

In view of information from other archival material, one wonders whether the request (of 16 October) for a replacement personal identification document might have been in connection with possible (secret) preparation for leaving Russia, since the note of cessation of payment of Rosenberg's salary followed on 20 October, and the termination of his employment on 25 October. The note of 12 November indicates the reason, namely, that Rosenberg had ceased to come to the Museum.

In passing, it is evident that the sometimes mentioned date of death for Rosenberg of September 26 1919 is clearly in error.

The whole situation of this short period appears to be surrounded by an air of mystery.

Had the Rosenbergs already been making plans to leave the country, in the face of the confusion and chaos of the civil war and an uncertain future in its wake, and took advantage of the opportunity of doing so with the retreating White Russian Army? (Tatiana thought that such might be the case.) Or was it a spur-of-the moment

decision? Or even an involuntary one? And how was it, amid all of the evident confusion at the time, that the decision was arrived at within such a short interval of time — between 20 and 25 October — to terminate Rosenberg's employment at the Ethnographic Museum, a decision to be reiterated on 12 November? Perhaps some archival material yet to emerge from other sources would provide some clues?

After more coffee and keks at a coffee-shop, Tatiana saw me back to the hotel. A little shopping followed, after which I hurried of to the Philharmonia, where the evening's program included Dvorak's Eighth Symphony and Shostakovich's Tenth Symphony.

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On the next day (Friday, 24 March), Tatiana came to the Hotel, where we had tea. Afterwards, we went to the Archives of the

Russian Academy of Sciences, where the originals of the letters from Elfrida Rosenberg to Shcherbatskoi, which Tatiana had earlier hand-copied for me, were kept. Photocopies of the letters were made for me, 9 pages at \$1.00 a page; in turn I returned to Tatiana the copy she had made by hand.

The latter Rosenberg archives also included a letter by Sergei Ol'denburg, then head of the Academy of Sciences, dated 1 March, 1924, concerning a pension for Otto Rosenberg's mother, Augusta Fedorovna Rosenberg [Collection 2, Subdivision 1-1924 item 8].

After our visit to the Archives of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Tatiana and I went for a visit as planned earlier with Isolda Tsiperovich of the Institute of Oriental Studies, who served us a delicious lunch. After once again admiring my dictionary (the very first printed copy, with a temporary soft-cover binding that included the jacket of the book), Isolda expressed disbelief that I could have done it all by myself (except for the proofing by my wife, Sibylle). Then she remarked that, after our meeting two days earlier at the Institute, she had recalled that some possibly relevant information concerning the fate of Otto Rosenberg had been attributed to Sergei Eliseev, a sometime colleague of Rosenberg's in St. Petersburg and also in Japan. (Eliseev later, in Paris and in the USA, used the French transliteration of his name: Elisséeff.) Not having found a copy of the reference in the library of the Institute of Oriental Studies, she had tracked down a copy from among her friends and had taken the passage down by telephone and then typed it up (in Russian) for me. The passage, in translation, is as follows:

In a letter from S. G. Eliseev to one of his relatives (in 1919), in which he told of the situation in Petrograd in the fall of 1919, approximately the following was stated: "The second offensive of [General] Yudenich was underway. The city was under siege, there were searches, arrests. [At this point, there was a footnote by Eliseev: 'The Whites were retreating from Pavlovsk and Tsarskoie Selo. With them, with the Whites, Otton Ottonovich

Rosenberg left. *He was immediately set up in Yudenich's Ministry of People's Education* [italics added]. After the rout of Yudenich, he escaped to Reval [Tallinn] and had intended to go on to Finland, but he fell ill from scarlet fever and died. His wife escaped to Finland, where she became governess with some family.']

At this point a footnote was added at the end of the publication of the letter: "This note by Eliseev explains convincingly for the first time the circumstances of the death of Otton Ottonovich Rosenberg (1888 – 1919), an outstanding Japanologist and historian of Buddhist philosophy. For a long time, there have been contradictory rumors about the cause and place of his death. Only recently was it established that Otton Ottonovich Rosenberg died in Reval, but even so, it remained unknown how he came to Reval from Pavlovsk, where he lived, and what became of his library. The illness that took O.O. Rosenberg's was exanthemous fever. He evidently very rapidly became a victim of the typhus epidemic which at the end of 1919 and the beginning of 1920 was fatal to three thousand soldiers and officers of the White Northwest Army. (See: Levitskii, D. "Recollections of Soldiers of Yudenich", *Izvestiia*, 2 November, 1992.)"

From the collection: *Lessons of Anger and Love*, Issue No. 4, St. Petersburg, 1993.

Although the passage adds some details to the mystery surrounding Rosenberg's death and is in effect confirmatory of the account given by Shcherbatskoi in the latter's 1924 biographical sketch of Rosenberg (based on information provided at some point by Elfrida Rosenberg), its most important addition is that of indicating that the brilliant scholar, Otto Rosenberg, was appointed to the Ministry of Education of the formative Yudenich government. Was there a connection between the possible publicizing of this appointment, and Rosenberg's summary dismissal from the Ethnographic Museum? (I was unable to find the "Recollections..." article in the cited issue of *Izvestiia*.)

Recall that the events summarized above took place in a very short period: Rosenberg had been dismissed from the Ethnographic Museum on 25

October, had left St. Petersburg for Reval (Tallinn), a distance of 368 km (225 miles) with the retreating Yudenich Army, became caught in the typhus epidemic raging among the Yudenich Army, and very soon died, on 26 November, scarcely a month later.

As to the origin of the confusion about the exact nature of the disease that took Rosenberg's life, i.e., scarlet fever (according to Shcherbatskoi) or typhus (according to the account just cited), it seems possible that there was an ambiguity of translation: the term used in the above account can be rendered as "exanthemous fever." Dorland's Medical Dictionary (21st edition) defines "exanthematous fever" as any fever accompanied by an eruption on the skin, and can include scarlet fever as well as typhus. However, under the circumstances, it would seem that there was little doubt that it was typhus that was fatal to Otto Rosenberg.

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During the visit of Tatiana and myself at Isolda Tsiperovich's apartment, she also showed us her copy of the large Chinese-Russian dictionary published by the Russian Orthodox Mission in Peking in 1909; the dictionary had been compiled under the editorship of Bishop Innokentius from the dictionaries of Giles, Palladia/Popov and was arranged alphabetically according to the Giles romanization, but the main and the sub-entries, as well as the meanings, were rendered in Cyrillic (Russian). (By coincidence, the title page together with a sample page of this very same dictionary, previously unknown to me, had been sent to me shortly before my departure for St. Petersburg by a colleague, Dr. Victor H. Mair, at the University of Pennsylvania.) Isolda Tsiperovich also showed me a very well worn volume (one of the four) from her set of the *Great Chinese-Russian Dictionary* published by the USSR Academy of Sciences in 1972–1974. (I myself had purchased two sets of the dictionary, the second as "insurance" for the first, and had used it extensively in the preparation of my own dictionary.) As previously mentioned, Isolda Tsiperovich had been a student of the famous Russian sinologist, Alekseev (the name not to be

confused with the name, Eliseev, mentioned above), whose Chinese-Russian dictionary project of the late 1940's never came to light of day.

Isolda Tsiperovich said that she was currently editing, with commentary, the correspondence between Alekseev and a French sinologist who was a contemporary of his. (I strongly encouraged her to move forward with the completion of this undertaking.) In turn, she urged me to see to it, somehow, that a copy of my dictionary be added to the holdings of the library of the Institute of Oriental Studies, St. Petersburg Branch. (In a letter following my return to the USA, she suggested a review of the dictionary in a Russian publication.) At the same time, I was charged, upon my return to Boston, to try to reactivate the exchange copies of the *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* which came, until 1992, from the Harvard-Yenching Institute at Harvard University to the Library of the Institute of Oriental Studies in St. Petersburg. Toward this end, Isolda Tsiperovich gave me a copy of a book, published from the Institute, on the Pali Language for transmittal to the Harvard-Yenching Institute. She also made it clear that the Library would be very glad indeed if it could receive a copy of *Reminiscences* (1983) by Professor Nicholas Poppe, who has been mentioned several times in this account. Prof. Poppe was attached to the Institute of Oriental Studies in St. Petersburg from about 1917 (when he knew Otto Rosenberg) until the period of the Second World War. Copies of Poppe's early publications are among the holdings of the Library, Isolda told me. She also gave me the reference for the memorial tributes to Poppe (*Central Asiatic Journal* (Wiesbaden) v. 31, No. 3–4 (1992)). In addition she told me that a biography of the career of Sergei Eliseev appeared in the *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* Vol. 20 (1957), pp. 1–35, and that a memorial tribute appeared in the same journal, Vol. 35 (1975), p. 12–13. Clearly, Isolda Tsiperovich and I learned much from one another!

After the visit with Isolda, Tatiana and I went to the hotel, where we continued talking intensively, over a wide range of topics, until we

became aware of the lateness of the hour (i.e., after 6 PM), whereupon she rushed off to an appointment at the University of St. Petersburg, and, after a brief evening snack, I hurried once again to the Philharmonia just in time for the beginning of the evening program of Haydn (Symphony No., 84), Bach (Suite No. 2 for Flute and Chamber Orchestra), Handel (Concerto Grosso Opus 6 No. 10), and Grieg's delightful "Holberg" Suite.

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For the weekend (Saturday and Sunday, 25 and 26 March), I had originally considered going down to Moscow, overnight by train in both directions, to look up old friends and colleagues. To do so, however, would have been to pass an opportunity of seeing, once again, something of St. Petersburg on my own. (The last visit during which time had permitted my going about on my own was the one in 1961.) It was a wise decision. On Saturday, I explored the area of Nenski Prospekt (Avenue), the principal street and shopping district of St. Petersburg, and I reconverted rubles that would not be needed to dollars (at the American Express office at the Grand Hotel Europe, where, long before its renovation, I had stayed in 1969). While there picked up some free English-language newspapers.

The afternoon was taken up with the exhibit of French Impressionists at the Hermitage (I fell completely for Monet's "Waterloo Bridge (London) in the Mist"). I would miss by just a few days the new exhibit of French Impressionists that was to open on 1 April; I had purchased my plane ticket prior to the announcement of the new exhibit. In any event, my visa would expire on March 28. There were also not a few Picassos at the Hermitage. The evening I spent, as had now become custom, at the Philharmonia: (Vivaldi's Gloria, for soloists, chorus, and orchestra, and The Seasons).

After the concert, I had a closer look at the pipe organ, movable on the stage, of Czech manufacture (I had learned earlier from the Philharmonia ticket-office attendant), of some 80 stops or sets of pipes, larger than the one of

East-German manufacture at the Small Auditorium at the Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Moscow, but smaller than the venerable Cavaille-Coll at the Large Hall there.

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Sunday morning (26 March), over breakfast in my apartment at the Academy Hotel, I chanced across an announcement, in one of the English-language tabloid newspapers I had picked up on the previous day, a feature article about an exhibit of the largest private collection anywhere of Picassos, belonging to a German Collector (Ludwig). After a bit of shopping, I went to the exhibit, at the Marble Palace (a branch of the Russian Museum), barely five minutes away on my street in the opposite direction from that of the Hermitage, as I have already mentioned. Covering every period and every medium (oil on canvas, gouache, watercolor, chalk, pencil, copper engravings, wood, plastic) of Picasso, the exhibit was simply fantastic! The exhibit of loan Picassos from the Ludwigs had only opened on 15 March, and was scheduled until 15 June. Such luck!

The evening at the Philharmonia included Shostakovich's Second Concerto for Violin and Orchestra, and Mahler's First Symphony. I gained a bit of practice in Russian at the intermission by writing down the names of all the famous Russian composers whose portraits hang in the large room at the Philharmonic Hall where refreshments are served during the intermission. (Using the Cyrillic alphabet has certain advantages for this purpose: the unhandy first three letters of (the German rendition of) Tchaikowsky collapses to a single Cyrillic letter; the four letters of Bach condenses to three. Speaking of which, I dined afterwards at a German restaurant on Nevsky Prospekt, rapidly finding that prices on the Nevsky are appreciably higher than off it. With a give-away newspaper in Russian for those of German extraction, one had the distinct impression of a cultural mix.

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At Tatiana's suggestion, Yelena Ostrovskaia (the translator of Elfrida's letters to Shcherbatskoi) had alerted me over the weekend to the one-hour's time change, and so it was still dark at 7 AM on Monday (27 March) — I thought it would be generous to allow the day to dawn, at least, before venturing forth, an hour later. After breakfast, I went for another stroll on Nevski Prospekt; busses were filled to more than capacity, and people were scurrying on the sidewalks toward their place of work (it appeared that 10 AM was a frequent opening time for various businesses).

On to the Russian Museum, which is just a stone's throw from the Philharmonic Hall, where I mostly viewed the extensive exhibition of the works of the famous (Russian) painter, Repin (1844-1919), who had been in Paris for a time, during the period of the French Impressionists.

Thence to the Institute of Oriental Studies, where I once again saw Yelena Ostrovskaia, and then Isolda Tsiperovich. Lunch followed with the Buddhist studies group, including the Yermakovas (Tatiana and Mikhail) and Valery Roudoy, the conversation (virtually always only in English, as my Russian has suffered much the same fate as my skiing — progressively poorer with the passing years) covering a wide range of topics, including the the political and economic prospects for Russia. Valery mentioned that he had heard that one of Eliseev's sons, Vadim, had retired from Paris (Musée Cernuschi) to Berkeley, California; a matter of interest to me because of the supposed existence, as previously mentioned, of a photograph taken (in Japan, perhaps) of Eliseev, Rosenberg, and one or two other young orientologists from St. Petersburg. (As previously mentioned, no photograph of Rosenberg was known to exist in St. Petersburg.)

Afterwards, I accompanied the Yermakovas to the Nevsky subway (Metro) stop, from which I proceeded to the apartment at the Academy hotel. Some additional shopping (including for my hosts) followed, and a last dinner in St. Petersburg, at the now familiar Thousand and One Nights Restaurant.

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I had learned from the Buddhist Study group earlier during my stay, and particularly during this last session at the Institute of Oriental Studies, of the resurgence of interest in recent years in Rosenberg and his works. Thus, Rosenberg's *Problems of Buddhist Philosophy* together with his lecture at the 1919 Buddhist Exposition in St. Petersburg ("The Current Weltanschauung (World-View) of Buddhist Philosophy in the Far East" had been reprinted in Russian in 1991 (Rosenberg, O.O.: *Works on Buddhism*, Nauka (The press of the Academy of Sciences in Moscow). Unfortunately, the book was already out of print in Russia, and, I found upon my return to Boston, it was also not available in the United States. (Copies were, however in certain US university libraries, not including Harvard.)

Tatiana Yermakova herself had authored a chapter entitled "The Scholarly-Theoretical Legacy of O.O. Rosenberg: Toward a Critique of the Europe-centric Approach" in the Transactions of the All-Union Conference: *Buddhism: Problems of History, Culture, Contemporaneity* (Moscow, Central Editorial Office of Oriental Literature, 1990). To Tatiana's chapter was appended a list of the unpublished works of Rosenberg. And in the book, *Buddhism in Translation —An Almanac* (St. Petersburg, Andreev and Sons, 1993), Tatiana had a chapter: "The Forms of Buddhist World-Views in the Conception of O.O. Rosenberg." I was presented with inscribed copies of these works as well as two books of translations from the Chinese by Mikhael Yermakov (*News from the Beyond/Other World: Buddhist Short Stories of the Fifth Century; Biographies of Worthy Monks*, St. Petersburg, Andreev and Sons, 1993).

Amid this renaissance of interest in Russia in the philosophical-Buddhological works of Otto Rosenberg, my own efforts at promotion of his brilliant lexicographical triumph of perfecting the graphical system for Chinese characters, in the form of the trilingual Chinese-Russian-English dictionary, just then in the final states of publication, seemed singularly timely.

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For my last morning (Tuesday, 28 March), I had originally planned to be up at 7 AM, to go for a last stroll along the Neva (Tatiana, later: "How romantic!"), but my wristwatch alarm failed to go off (confused by the time change?), and so I slept until nearly 8 AM when I was awakened by what I took to be a knock at the door to the apartment. My first thought was that I had overslept and the knock was by Tatiana, come to accompany me to the airport for my departure. But as I came more fully to my senses, I realized it was too early for her arrival. In fact, upon checking, I found no one at the door—in any case, there was a doorbell button. But it was also too late for the stroll — apart from which it was snowing lightly outside. So, up for breakfast and some last-minute final packing. As no lunch was scheduled on the 1-hour flight to Helsinki, I stashed away a light snack, which cleared out my remaining stock of food.

Soon after 9 AM, the doorbell rang; it was indeed Tatiana. We had a last tea, I turned in the key to the hotel desk, and we set out, our baggage divided between us (I had a small two-wheel luggage-carrying device) at about 9:30 by foot for the Nevsky Metro stop, from whence we would go to the Moskovskaia stop, and thence to the airport. Even a day or two earlier, I had already started to become homesick for St. Petersburg, not even yet having left, and so I was discussing with Tatiana some very very tentative plans for a possible return visit sometime, perhaps in 1996, perhaps having to do with Rosenberg's works on Buddhism, which had attracted attention in Russia in the last few years, as indicated above..

The conversation between Tatiana and myself came to an abrupt halt hardly two short blocks from the Academy Hotel, when, on the sidewalk made slippery by the still falling snow, my left leg proceeded rapidly in an unplanned direction (sideways) with the result that I fell, partly on my luggage. A very sharp but short-lasting pain in the right side of my back suggested that it might be more than a matter of having had my breath knocked out, and that something might be amiss with one or another rib. (X-rays following

my return home were to confirm this supposition.) Tatiana, alarmed, instructed me to rest for a few moments before attempting to get up. Nonetheless, after a few seconds, I stood up, declared myself effectively intact, and we proceeded on the way. At the same time, the small group of onlookers and sympathizers that had gathered dispersed. Even with the baggage (mostly pulled along on a small two-wheeled baggage carrier) I found that the pain was now minimal, provided that I did not attempt certain movements, particularly sudden ones. After we emerged from the Moskovskaia Metro stop, Tatiana wisely decided that we would take a van to the airport rather than a (probably very crowded) bus.

We arrived at the airport uneventfully, and Tatiana, who had given up an entire working week to this foreign visitor, and I continued talking until passport, customs, and currency check for my particular flight were called. These were accomplished with dispatch and without a hitch (currency/customs declaration in perfect order, thank you!), and Tatiana and I took leave of one another. Actually, the flight itself was delayed for about half an hour; during this time I took a couple of aspirin that I had put away in my shirt pocket, against occasional aching joints, little suspecting that I would have occasion to use them against something more significant.

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Although still some mysteries remained after the week in St. Petersburg, the visit had been successful beyond my wildest expectations. This was the case primarily because Dr. Tatiana Emil'evna Yermakova had devoted nearly all of her time during the working week (it was, in fact, a vacation week for the Yermakovs' teenage daughter, who must have been less than completely pleased about the situation). Without Tatiana, I would have been completely at sea in trying to decipher the various handwritings—including Rosenberg's own—in the various archives. Credit also goes to Dr. Yuri Shiyan of the Foreign Relations Department of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow, who had arranged for me to be



lodged at the centrally-located Hotel of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, and had supplemented my telephone calls beforehand to Tatiana to arrange for the visit with his own telephone calls to her. And, finally, it had been Grigory Tkachenko, my sinologist colleague of more than ten years acquaintance in Moscow, who, after some telephone calls to the Institute of Oriental Studies, St. Petersburg Branch, had originally suggested Dr. Tatiana Yermakova as someone knowledgeable about the Rosenberg archives. Indeed!

It should be indicated in passing that Dr. Shiyani's help was particularly notable, for, as previously noted, I had requested that the visit be under the provisions of Paragraph 17 of the Exchange Agreement between the Russian Academy of Sciences and the National Academy of Sciences of the USA (whereby the Academy of the country being visited agreed to "facilitate" a visit, but the visitor's expenses were to be his/her own). For its part, the respective office of the US National Academy of Sciences in Washington informed me that the Exchange Agreement had lapsed, and therefore passed my request on to Moscow informally (i.e., by telephone, in the course of other business) but not formally (i.e., by fax). The Russian Academy of Sciences, for its part, simply assumed that the Agreement was still in effect, and went ahead and made all the necessary arrangements for me, in contacting Dr. Yermakova, and in arranging for the Hotel.

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That Rosenberg's widow, Elfrida, had indeed gone from Estonia on to Finland sometime between November of 1919 and the time of her four letters from Helsingfors (Helsinki) to Shcherbatskoi in 1923 (the year before the publication in Heidelberg, Germany of her German translation of Rosenberg's *Problems of Buddhist Philosophy* in 1924) was now no longer in doubt. But what happened to her after the last letter, of 28 May, 1923? Did she live out the rest of her life in Finland? Go to another country (Germany, for example)? Or return to the USSR?

I had already begun pursuing this question while I was still in St. Petersburg (in March of 1995) by a telephone call to the Finnish Consulate. It was suggested that I contact the head of the Finnish National Archives, for which I was given a telephone number in Helsinki.

While waiting at the Helsinki Airport for the connecting Finnair plane for New York, I rang up the number, but there had been an error somewhere, as the number I dialed was said not to be a working number. Fortunately, there is a telephone bureau in the international section of the airport; I posed my question of tracing down a resident of Helsinki of many years earlier (i.e., the 1920's). The attendant asked about the individual's religion. Lutheran, I supposed, if any (the first name, Elfrida, was obviously a name indicating German extraction). It was then suggested that I might try the central offices of the Lutheran Church in Helsinki. I was given the number and promptly rang up; I indicated that the religion itself was not certain, but I gave the name and address as of May of 1923 (as given in Elfrida Rosenberg's letters to Prof. Shcherbatskoi). I was told that the person at the central offices most knowledgeable about such matters was not in the office at the moment, but would be in the next day (Wednesday, March 29) between 10 and 11 AM. I took down the name and telephone number; I would necessarily call again at a later date, since at that time I would barely have arrived back in Boston. (To have postponed my departure from Helsinki would not have been possible on my excursion ticket.)

In the meantime, I thought it would be well to have on hand some aspirin or the like for the long (8-hour) return plane trip to New York. A fellow-passenger, who was also waiting for the flight, generously gave me some Tylenol (anti-pain) tablets, upon hearing of my encounter with the force of gravity on the sidewalk in St. Petersburg. Remarkably enough, however, the trip itself proved not to be problematic, provided (as earlier) that I avoided certain movements, particularly, abrupt ones.

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In addition to the question of the fate of Elfrida Rosenberg after 1924, there were two items that had arisen during my St. Petersburg visit, as well as one other unresolved matter. The first was the recollection, by Valery Roudoy (the head of the Buddhist Study Group at the Institute), that one of the sons of Sergei Eliseev, namely Vadim, had retired from the Musée Cernuschi, in Paris, to Berkeley, California; might he have a copy of the reported photograph from Japan of his father with Rosenberg? For that matter, might there be archives at Harvard University of Sergei Eliseev himself which might include the photograph. (The answer to the latter turned out to be no. Nor was an acquaintance of Vadim Eliseev aware of his retirement to Berkeley, I established via a "sino-slavic" scholarly connection, Mrs. Nancy Deptula, at Harvard University.)

A second left-over item was the information from Isolda Tsiperovich that Eliseev had indicated that Rosenberg had been named to the Ministry of Education in the Yudenich Government. If so, there might be a record of such in the still-incompletely catalogued Yudenich Archives at the Hoover Institution of War, Revolution, and Peace at Stanford, California. (Recall that I had been unable to find, in a search in November of 1988 of the Yudenich Archives, any mention of the Rosenbergs.)

Finally, there was the question of the notices in the Reval (Tallinn) newspapers of November 1919 about Rosenberg's death, which, in the German tradition, would logically have been placed by his widow, Elfrida, as well as the question of an official record of his death.

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On the question of possible information from the Lutheran Central Offices in Helsinki concerning Elfrida Rosenberg in Helsinki (Helsingfors) after 1924, for various reasons, I was not to telephone until three weeks later (Friday, April 21, at 3 AM Boston time — corresponding to 10 AM in Helsinki), and reached the individual to whom I had been directed, Mr. Erkki Huhta. He took down the information but of course could

not promise success. I was to call back in a few days.

From my return call (the calls had to be placed at 3 AM, because of the time difference, and Mr. Huhta's schedule), I learned that no record had been found about Elfrida Rosenberg, but Mr. Huhta gave me the telephone number of the Helsinki City Archives, which, he thought, might be helpful. I immediately rang up the latter; Mrs. Sari Starr took the call, and made note on my inquiry; I was to telephone again, in two days..

When I called Mrs. Starr back after the two days (i.e., on April 27); I learned that *she had struck a gold mine!* I rapidly took notes: Elfrida Rosenberg's maiden name was Wegener (a German name); she had been born in Pavlovsk, just south of St. Petersburg, on October 15, 1888. (Otto Rosenberg's birthdate was 8 July, 1888, just a few months earlier). Pavlovsk, of course, had been the Rosenbergs' last residence in Russia before they left the country. The Rosenbergs had been married on April 5, 1912, and her husband's date of death she had given as 26 November, 1919. No children were mentioned. Elfrida Rosenberg had moved to Helsinki from a small Finnish town on September 5, 1922. Initially, she listed her occupation as a professor's wife, but later, as a widow. In 1922, she lived with Fru A. v. Christierson, but no record of the latter could be found in the Helsinki Archives. Elfrida Rosenberg listed her nationality as German, and she was a member of a Helsinki Lutheran Parish. She moved within Helsinki several times, and for a time, lived outside Helsinki, but returned in 1942, and lived in Helsinki until she died in 1953; she was cremated. There was no information to indicate what her work was during her later years, and there was no information to indicate that she had been engaged in scholarly activities after she translated her husband's book from Russian into German, as described above. Finally, there was no indication that she might have travelled to Germany (Heidelberg), in connection with the publication of her German translation of Otto Rosenberg's book. Mrs. Starr concluded by

saying that she would send me a letter with this information.

It is clear that this wealth of information from the Helsinki City Archives about Elfrida Rosenberg is complementary to her four letters of the spring of 1923 to Prof. Shcherbatskoi. It offers corroborative evidence that both the Rosenbergs were in Japan in the period 1912–1916, during which time Elfrida would have become familiar (as she mentioned in one of her letters) with Prof. Shcherbatskoi's evidently difficult handwriting. No further information about the Rosenbergs' last days in Russia, or about their flight to Estonia in late 1919, though the date of Otto's death as 26 November, 1919 was confirmed. Finally, it seems evident that the arrangements for publication of Elfrida's German translation of her husband's book had been carried out by Shcherbatskoi in the period 1920–1923. (Recall the mention of such travels by Elfrida Rosenberg in her letters to Scherbatskoi.) It seems likely that Shcherbatskoi included Heidelberg in his travels in Europe during this period, in order to discuss the publication of the German translation of Rosenberg's book with Prof. Walleser in the latter's journal on Buddhism.

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As for my attempt via the Estonian Embassy in Washington to obtain information concerning Rosenberg's fate in Estonia, there had been no response to my letter of inquiry of 8 February, 1955, concerning the death notices in the Russian and German newspapers in Reval (Tallinn) prior to my departure for St. Petersburg, despite several follow-up telephone calls to the Estonian Embassy in Washington. (Recall that, Prof. Mäll, of Tartu, Estonia, had told me, in Moscow in the summer of 1988, that he had not been able to find an official indication of Rosenberg's death (on 26 November, 1919) in the Tallinn city records, although there were death notices in the newspapers. (I had originally considered the possibility of including Tallinn on my itinerary for the St. Petersburg visit and had even taken train schedules with me, but the complexities of so doing would have been formidable — a double-entry Russian visa if a side trip from St.

Petersburg; an inflexible air ticket — and hence I gave up the idea.) A telephone call to the Estonian Embassy in Washington after my return from St. Petersburg was still unavailing; there had been no response from Tallinn.

Although no further first-hand details of the Rosenbergs' experiences during the period of late 1919 had emerged, some of the experiences of Otto Rosenberg's colleague, Sergei Eliseev (or the French form, Elisséeff, which he later adopted) at almost the same time, are relevant. Eliseev's experiences at the time were related in an article by E.O. Reischauer on the occasion of Eliseev's retirement from Harvard University; and the report was undoubtedly based on conversations Reischauer had with Eliseev himself (*Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, **20** (1957): 1– 29). (An obituary for Elisséeff appeared later in the same journal: **35** (1975): 12–13; see also *Harvard Gazette* for May 27, 1977.) The article, which is quoted in part, complements that given in the short excerpt already quoted in which Eliseev wrote about the fate of Otto Rosenberg. As noted previously, the citations for these articles had been given me in St. Petersburg by Isolda Tsiperovich.

Elisséeff's most important activity during these years, however, was the preparation of his thesis on Basho for the Ph.D. degree, for which he spent the summers of 1916 and 1917 in Japan. [Recall that the Rosenbergs were in Japan 1912–1916.] It was in this connection that fate delivered him its first hard blow. When returning from Japan in 1917, he was persuaded by the chaotic conditions in Russia to entrust his almost completed manuscript to the diplomatic pouch. Unfortunately, the Bolsheviks had taken over before the pouch arrived, and they burned the thesis together with all the other non-official documents that had come by pouch...

In the spring of 1920, when the Faculty of Oriental Languages at the University was merged with the Faculty of Philology and History, Elisséeff was elected secretary of the new body under the deanship of Dmitri Petrov, a specialist in Romance languages. In this new post, he was plunged into the University's fight to protect itself from the Bolsheviks. On the

other hand, he did benefit from the latter in one small way, because they automatically gave him a promotion to Assistant Professor when they abolished the rank of *Privat-Dozent*.

Life in Petrograd, however became increasingly difficult for a scholar like Serge Elisséeff. The pressure to make his teaching conform with Marxist dogma was intolerable to him, and persons with his social background were constantly subjected to sudden searches and arrests. During the first two winters after the Revolution [i.e., until the spring of 1920, just a few months after Rosenberg's death in November of 1919], he and his family were never far from starvation, and some of their closest relatives did literally starve to death. The Elisséeffs survived the extreme winter cold only by sacrificing to the stove the less essential pieces of furniture in their apartment and portions of their library. A large but somewhat outdated encyclopedia proved particularly useful for this purpose. Eventually they decided to flee, even though they lacked passports or any legal permits. Late in the summer of 1920, Elisséeff made contact with a band of smugglers operating in the Gulf of Finland. After a harrowing period of concealment in the attic of a house in a fishing village and a long, tortured day lying beneath the floor boards of a small fishing vessel becalmed in sight of the Russian coastal fortifications, the family finally reached freedom and safety in Finland. Ironically enough, Bolshevik starvation aided them in their escape, for, if the two infant boys had not been so enfeebled from malnutrition that they lay quiet and motionless for hours at a time, the Elisséeffs probably would not have succeeded in escaping the vigilance of the authorities during their flight to freedom.

After a month in Finland, Serge Elisséeff took his family to Stockholm... In January, 1921, the Elisséeffs moved to Paris, joining the thousands of White Russian refugees in that city... In 1934, Professor Elisséeff was appointed Director of the Harvard-Yenching Institute and Professor of Far Eastern Languages at Harvard University.

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In the absence of any information from the Estonian State Archives about Rosenberg (via the Embassy in Washington), but with a lingering hope of finding out more information about his last days in Estonia (i.e., the newspaper death notices), I decided to pursue another approach. It happened that, at the Symposium on "Alpha Mechanisms in the Electroencephalogram" which I had attended in Lübeck, Germany at the end of August of 1994 (just prior to my visit in September of that year to Moscow, as described earlier), Prof. Ants Meister, of the Tallinn Technical University, was also present; he had asked me a question about a program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and had given me his card with a fax and telephone number. I sent him a fax (on 26 April, 1995) which included the available relevant background information about Rosenberg, including his date of death, and inquired specifically about the death notices in the Tallinn newspapers, and about the existence or not of an official certification of death in the Tallinn (Reval) city records. Just afterwards, I learned that he was away for some days in Germany, but by the time he would have returned, I would myself be away.

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#### **The Hoover Institution (Stanford, California): Second Visit (May 8, 1995)**

A three-week trip (of nearly 11,000 miles — more than the roundtrip distance between Boston and St. Petersburg, via New York) by train around the United States beginning on the last day of April, 1995, which included a stop in San Francisco, afforded an opportunity for a second look at the Archives of General Yudenich at the Hoover Institution in Stanford, California, thanks to Olga Dunlop of the Archives Department. (Recall that the Rosenbergs left Russia with the retreating White Russian Armies.) On this visit, of particular interest would be any corroborative evidence for the above-cited remark by Sergei Eliseev in his letter to a family member that Otto Rosenberg had been appointed to the new Northwest Government as its Minister of Public Education. The cataloging of the Yudenich Archives, which would have greatly facilitated such a search, had

only begun in recent months and some time would be required for its completion. Accordingly, in the absence of a name index for the archives, I searched those portions that seemed to be the most promising in this connection. However, no mention of Otto Rosenberg was to be found; this had of course also been the case in my earlier search of the same Yudenich Archives in the fall of 1988. Indeed, according to one source (Shchegoleva, see below<sup>1</sup>), the family name of the Minister of Education was Ern.

Fortunately, and thanks to Reference Librarian Molly Malloy, I was able to consult several books (see appendix) at the Hoover Institution and one at the adjacent Stanford University Library which clarified the details of the Petrograd campaign of the Northwest Army (i.e., of General Yudenich) by date and by cities and towns; especially useful was the doctoral dissertation of Drujina, who had made extensive use of the Yudenich Archives. (A few days after my visit, Ms. Malloy was good enough to send me photocopies of selected pages of the Drujina dissertation from which I had made interim notes.) The details available from these sources could then be compared with the information I had obtained during my March, 1995, visit to St. Petersburg, concerning Rosenberg's last days in the vicinity of that city in the latter part of 1919.

In summary, the progress of the military campaign (in 1919), as given in the above sources, was as follows (the previously cited relevant items from the Rosenberg archives in St. Petersburg are given in italics):

*Oct. 4: Rosenberg returns from a 2-week vacation.*

Oct. 9. The advance of the Yudenich Army against Petrograd from Narva (some 40 miles away, just inside the Estonian border) begins.

Oct. 11. Yamburg (about 35 miles from Petrograd) is occupied.

Oct. 15. Krasnoie Selo (some 15 miles southwest of Petrograd) is captured.

Oct. 16. Gatchina and Luga (some 26 miles and 85 miles, respectively, south by southwest of Petrograd, and 15 miles and 70 miles, respectively, southwest of Tsarskoe Selo and Pavlovsk, which are themselves about 18 miles south of Petrograd) are occupied.

*Oct. 16. Rosenberg requests, at the Ethnographic Museum, a replacement for his personal identification document which, he reported, had been stolen.*

Oct. 20. Tsarskoie Selo [now Pushkin] and Pavlovsk fall; the Reds (Bolsheviks) are pushed back to the Pulkovo Heights, the last line of defense on the outskirts of Petrograd and within sight of it. [The Northwest (White) Army offensive immediately south of Petrograd, which was originally intended to cut off the Petrograd-to-Moscow rail link and thus prevent the arrival in Petrograd of Red reinforcements, was not carried through to its conclusion; this turned out to be a fateful turning point for the offensive. Ironically, from the standpoint of the present account, Pulkovo Heights is the site of the St. Petersburg International Airport, the gateway for my March, 1995 visit to the city.]

*Oct. 20. Payment of salary to Rosenberg from the Ethnographic Museum in Petrograd is stopped.*

Oct. 23. The Reds begin their counterattack.

Oct. 23 (or 25). Tsarskoie Selo [now Pushkin] and Pavlovsk are reoccupied.

*Oct. 25 Rosenberg's employment at the Ethnographic Museum in Petrograd is terminated, as of Oct. 20.*

Nov. 3. The Whites are forced to retreat from Gachina

Nov. 6. The general retreat of the Whites begins.

Nov. 14. Yamburg [near the Estonian border] is evacuated.

*Nov. 12. It is recorded, at the Ethnographic Museum, that Rosenberg, without explanation,*

*had ceased to appear at the Museum, and therefore he has been relieved of his position at the Museum from Oct. 20.*

Nov. 23. The Whites reached the Estonian border.

From the above comparison of information from the Rosenberg archives in St. Petersburg with that from the Yudenich Archives at the Hoover Institution Library in California, it is clear that Rosenberg's salary from the Ethnographic Museum in Petrograd was cut off on the very day (October 20) that the Yudenich Army occupied Pavlovsk, where the Rosenberg lived at the time. Further, the date on which the termination of his services at the Museum appears to have been made was the same date (October 25) as that on which Pavlovsk was reoccupied by the Red Army, the date made retroactive to October 20.

During the retreat, the above-cited references record that a terrible epidemic (of typhoid, Spanish influenza, and spotted fever) broke out among the army and the fleeing refugees. It was, then, just during this period that Rosenberg, but not his wife, contracted his fatal illness, leading to his death on November 26, in Estonia. (Note that the retreating North-West Army had reached the border only on Nov 23, so that the Rosenbergs would barely have had time to reach Tallinn before he died, if indeed they did.)

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Upon my return to Boston, on May 22, 1995, from the extensive trip by train around the United States, there still remained a few questions.

In connection with the attempt to obtain a photograph of Rosenberg — recall that there was none in St. Petersburg — the possibility of running down one that might have shown Rosenberg and Eliseev together in their time in Japan (in the 1910's), the trail via Eliseev's son, Vadim, had faded. There was no current telephone listing for him in Berkeley, California (where Dr. Rudnoy in St. Petersburg thought that he might be.) A colleague of mine in Paris,

Dr. Robert Naquet, had made inquiries on my behalf of the Musée Cernuchi and had been informed that Vadim Eliseev had retired from the Museum in 1982; his present address could not be given out, but my letter of inquiry would be forwarded to him.

There was also still the matter of the official certification of Rosenberg's death in the Tallinn city records, and of the death notices concerning him in the Tallinn newspapers. It turned out that, because of a serious illness in his family, my colleague, Prof. Ants Meister, of the Technical University of Tallinn (whom I had met, as previously mentioned, at the scientific meeting on brain waves in Lübeck, Germany, in late August, 1994), had so far been able to pursue only to a limited extent my inquiry on these points, as sketched out in my fax to him of April 26, 1995. This I learned from him in a follow-up telephone call on May 26. In the conversation, he informed me that the relevant Tallinn city archives (of death certifications) had been destroyed in 1944 when the Soviets bombed Tallinn, then occupied by the Germans. Prof. Meister had just finished mentioning that the relevant newspapers should still be available, when the telephone line went dead. Despite several attempts, I was not able to renew the connection. I wondered whether it were once again, perhaps, a matter of "stirring up old ghosts," as at the border incident between Estonia and Russia during my trip from Tartu (Estonia) to Moscow in early September of 1994, at which time, as mentioned earlier, I was removed from the train for a time by the Russian border authorities.

That, fortunately was not the case, or perhaps I should say, not entirely. For on May 31 I received a fax (which I have edited slightly) from Prof. Meister:

Dear Professor Barlow:

I am happy that I could at last find something for you. As I told you already by phone, the Estonian state archives for 1919–1920 were destroyed during the Russian bombardment of Tallinn in March 1944. So the single information that I was able to find

was printed in the Russian-language Tallinn (Reval) newspaper "Freedom of Russia". Nothing exists in German.

The information about Otto Rosenberg was found on a card in the Estonian National Library, Department of Information, where they have a catalogue of personalia. The card states about him:

Rosenberg, Otto, died in Tallinn (Reval) on 26 XI 1919, the Russian orientalist, born 1888; taken from the newspaper Svob. Ross. (Svoboda Rossii), 1920, 28th of May, no. 116, page 3.

It seems that Otto Rosenberg lived in Pavlovsk - a western [southern] suburb of St. Petersburg, and left for Estonia with the retreating White Russian (Yudenich) Army. He fell ill with scarlet fever (not typhus) in Narva. He was very exhausted, and after he had recovered from the main disease he got a heart paralysis (attack?) and died in Tallinn on 26th of November, 1919. The article about him in "Russkaja Nauka (Russian Science) - O.O. Rosenberg", written by one of his students, A.A. Raiov, was printed in the Russian-language Tallinn newspaper "Svoboda Rossii" - Russian Freedom (the literature and political newspaper of free democratic thought) on 28th of May, 1920, no. 116, page 3, and is available in the Estonian National Library, ESTONIA, EE0100 Tallinn, Tõnismägi 2, phone +372 2 452 527, fax no. +372 2 453 334.

The copy of the article mentioned is appended - 2 partly overlapping pages. Unfortunately it was printed on very bad yellow paper and it is difficult to get a high-quality copy of it. If a photocopy is needed I could also send it by mail. I hope that the Russian text of those years is understandable, so I did not try to give a full translation here. Anyway, if you would like to have my translation I can add it later.

There exists a short notice about the family Rosenberg (Rozenberg) in a book, Russkii

Entsiklopedicheskii Slovar - Russian Encyclopedic Dictionary, St. Petersburg, 1900, vol. XXVII, which may also be of interest to you. It says (in Russian):

Rosenberg - a noble family that came from Moravia to Curland [now in Latvia] in the beginning of the XVI century and is included in the Register of Curland Nobility and also in the Vth part of the Nobility Register of Novgorod province. Notices about Johan Karl Ferdinand R. (born 1845) and Otto August R. (1800-1890) follow.

Prof. Meister added another short paragraph related to our common interest in electroencephalography, but in the middle of the paragraph, and before the copy of the article about Rosenberg appeared on the incoming fax in Boston, some problem developed about the transmission, and the article itself did not appear. ("Long arm of the Bolsheviks reaching across the decades" again??) And, for several days, attempts to reach Prof. Meister by telephone were not successful. Nonetheless, he had summarized the article in the portion of the fax that did come through. In the meantime, he sent a fax of the newspaper article again, but because of imperfections in the transmission, I was unable to make out the text. Another transmission had the same problem. So I sent Prof. Meister a fax requesting, as he had suggested, that a photocopy of the newspaper article be sent me.

At last! To be sure, the originally-sought Tallinn newspaper notices immediately following Rosenberg's death, and the official record of his death, did not turn up. (In the case of Prof. Liebenthal, the newspaper death notice, placed by his daughter, Frau Johanna Kohlberger, appeared on the third day after his death.) To be sure, the collapse of the "double-identity" hypothesis, that Rosenberg disappeared in Tallinn and reappeared in Berlin later, obviated the importance of the official certification of his death. Nonetheless, Prof. Meister's fax confirmed and clarified several points, about Rosenberg's final illness (as scarlet fever) and his date of death as November 26,

1919, in agreement with the information from the Helsinki city archives originally given by Elfrida Rosenberg.

Elfrida Rosenberg had described her husband's last hours as follows: "He was quite convinced that he would regain his health. He sat up, mostly, in bed, and wrote letters to Tokyo, and read foreign newspapers when the physician had already given him up. To the last, he had not suffered at all." (The characterization was quoted by Shcherbatskoi in his biographical sketch of Rosenberg.). Evidently, Rosenberg was alert to the very last. This picture would appear to be consistent with a catastrophic event such as could be associated with a cardiac complication of scarlet fever (e.g., a blood clot in the heart that broke off and went to the lungs), as opposed to the other possibilities that had been mentioned, i.e., typhus, or typhoid fever, in the end-stages of which a patient would have been expected to be much sicker.

The political orientation of the Tallinn newspaper in which the article about him appeared is consistent with the supposition that the Rosenbergs did indeed flee Russia with the retreating White Russian Army, rather than that they had become trapped during the St. Petersburg offensive of the latter.

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At almost the same time that this information from Tallinn arrived, I learned, from a telephone call to her on June 1, that Mrs. Sari Starr at the Helsinki Central Archives, barely 60 miles to the north of Tallinn across the narrow Gulf of Finland, was still pursuing the matter of how Elfrida Rosenberg might have supported herself for the almost 30 years that she lived in Helsinki after 1923 (the year of her letters to Prof. Shcherbatskoi), as reflected in reports of her income. But, at most, this would be a small detail in this perhaps rather remarkable story from the Finnish capital.

In the meantime, Prof. Meister had in fact gone ahead and sent the photocopy by mail; it arrived within five days. The text (in translation) was as follows:

From: *Svoboda Rossii* (Freedom of Russia), Tallinn, 28 May, 1920

### **Russian Scholarly Activities**

On the 26th of November 1919 in the city of Reval [Tallinn] , one of the outstanding philosophers and orientalists, not only in Russia but in the entire civilized world, a professor of the Faculty of Oriental Languages at the University of Petrograd, Otton Ottonovich Rosenberg, died of paralysis of the heart.

Half a year has passed from the day of his death, but his works, both in the field of philosophy and in the field of philology, still remain altogether unknown, not only in the wide circle of the reading public, but even among European scholars. This is understandable, for in the last few years, the work of Rosenberg went on in the all-encompassing chains of Soviet Russia, deprived of every means of intercourse with the outside world.

Rosenberg was born in Friedrichstadt in 1888. Graduating in 1905 with a gold medal from the St. Catherine School in St. Petersburg, he entered the Faculty of Oriental Languages at St. Petersburg University, where he studied Chinese and Japanese under Prof. Ivanov, Tibetan and Sanskrit under Prof. Shcherbatskoi, and Mongolian under Prof. Rudnev. Although he focussed on oriental languages, he did not neglect western culture; he studied the culture of ancient Greece, and western philosophy. Already from the first year at the University, he became primarily attracted to that field in which he was subsequently considered to have created a revolution, namely, the field of oriental philosophy.

Studying the classics of Indian philosophy under the guidance of Prof. Shcherbatskoi, it immediately became clear to him that even a full understanding of the most important problems of Indian philosophy in general, and of Buddhism in particular, could not suffice for the ultimate truth. And so, he decided to devote his life to the discovering of the truth of Buddhist thought.



In 1910, he finished at St. Petersburg University and went to Bonn, where he studied Mogikani Sanskrit under Prof. Jacobi. After returning to Russia, he received a fellowship to Tibet, which, because of circumstances beyond his control, he could not undertake; the assignment was then changed to Japan, where he remained until 1917 [1916].

While still at the University, it became clear to him that the study of Buddhism could not be limited to only Indian sources. Following in the footsteps his predecessor, Academician Vasil'ev, he decided to undertake the study of Chinese and Japanese sources. His subsequent work showed how correct this decision was.

During his stay in Japan, Rosenberg did not limit himself to purely academic work. His deep conviction led him to the conclusion that it is not only from books that knowledge of Buddhism can be derived, but also from the oral tradition still preserved in Buddhist monasteries.

He became acquainted with scholars of an important sect of Japanese Buddhism at a Zen monastery so as to gain practical experience in mysticism. In a Shinto monastery, he studied dogma and symbolism under the guidance of a learned elder.

However, Rosenberg's apprenticeship with Buddhist scholars still did not direct him to the true path, for, although the oral tradition preserved the basic conclusions of the problem of symbolism, it could not preserve the true understanding of the problems of philosophy. Accordingly, he began to study ancient philosophical texts alone, without the assistance of Japanese Buddhists. From this, he came to understand that Buddhist philosophy is a powerful system that could resolve all of the problems of contemporary philosophy and philology, which is of very great interest and significance for the current period, which is already at the threshold of the destruction of the old Weltanschauung (world-understanding).

Rosenberg had to study texts that were quite unknown to European scholars as well as those that had already been translated by their

protégés, but translated incorrectly, purely philologically, in a dictionary-like manner — i.e., by just the method that he always opposed.

While studying Buddhist philosophy, Rosenberg also did purely philological work.

During his stay in Japan, he compiled and published two dictionaries. The first was a brilliant arrangement for complex Chinese characters not by the 214 radicals, according to which they had been arranged up to that time, but according to a quite different system that was simpler and significantly better.

By this method, the search for any given character out of 48,000 characters becomes a very brief matter. This dictionary, published in Tokyo in 1916, established a new epoch not only in European philology in the sense of study of the Chinese language, but also in the philology of Japanese in Japan, significantly simplifying, for the Chinese and Japanese themselves, the study of their own language and handwriting.

Rosenberg's second dictionary brought together philosophical, religious, and religious-historical terms in literature that had been translated. It embraced the Chinese, Japanese, Sanskrit, and Pali — the language of ancient Buddhist books. This dictionary is of fundamental importance in the advanced study of the teachings of Buddhism. A second work in this direction was the masterly dissertation of Rosenberg under the title, "Problems of Buddhist Philosophy" (Petrograd, 1918), in which the principles of a new study of Eastern philosophy and the most important stages of the development of Buddhist thought are depicted. Subsequent works in this series were to include: "A Historical Survey of Buddhism and its Literature," and "Buddhist Dogma, Symbolism, and Mysticism," — works which, after Rosenberg's death, were fated never to appear.

Absorbed in philosophy, Rosenberg very well recognized that rectifying an erroneous comprehension of oriental philosophy required preparation of the soil for a correct

understanding, that is a, correct translation of oriental texts. This explains his intensive work toward compilation of Japanese, Chinese, Tibetan, and Korean dictionaries, drafts of which are presently at the Asiatic Museum of The Russian Academy of Sciences in Petrograd.

To give a conception of this work, suffice it to say that the Japanese-European dictionary comprises 250,000 file cards.

Rosenberg's last works were "Introduction to Oriental Philosophy" (Petrograd, 1919) (in which he endeavored, through western philosophy, to give an approach to the philosophy of the East), and a lecture he read at the First Buddhist Exposition in Petrograd (in the autumn of 1919), which was devoted to Buddhist world view in the contemporary Far East. But more about this another time.

The offensive of Yudenich on Petrograd disrupted Rosenberg's usual arrangements for work. Living in Pavlovsk, he had to leave with the retreating army — but he had hardly left when, at the very moment of flowering of his scholarly activities, and unknown to anyone, he died. In Narva, he fell ill with scarlet fever. His exhausted body could endure no more, and soon after that illness had run its course, paralysis of the heart befell him.

Not only Russia but also the entire world of scholarship has sustained a great loss in the death of Prof. Rosenberg. He had only one pupil — a pupil who presently considers it his duty to continue the great work begun by Rosenberg, of not only restoring a brilliant philosophical system, but also of bringing this system into contact with the philosophical systems of the West.

A. A. Baiev

In his letter of 9 June that accompanied the photocopy of Baiev's article about his mentor, Rosenberg, Prof. Meister wrote:

"Unfortunately, nothing was found in the Russian, Estonian, or German newspapers

[about Rosenberg] from November and December 1919. They all had a pause at this time (war, the front very near to Tallinn?), or at least, the National Library does not have them."

Together with the photocopy of the article by Rosenberg's student, A.A. Baiev, Prof. Meister also enclosed two additional publications about Rosenberg that had been found by a librarian at the National Library of Estonia, Reference and Information Analysis Center. These included the paper by Yu. D. Mikhailova, "Outstanding Buddhist O. O. Rosenberg," *Far Eastern Affairs* (Moscow), 1987, No. 3), the original Russian of which I had already been given by the author herself in St. Petersburg in 1988 (and in English translation by Dr. Peter Kuhfus of the Tübingen University the same year), as mentioned earlier in this account. Of particular interest, however, was the introductory chapter to the 1991 Moscow reprint (now already out of print) of the second part of Rosenberg's 1918 doctoral dissertation ("Problems of Buddhist Philosophy") together with his lecture of 1919 at the First Buddhist Exposition in St. Petersburg. In view of its inclusion of a few points of information that were not in other accounts about the life of Rosenberg, the biographical portion of the Introductory Chapter is included here, in English translation. It is noteworthy that, as late as 1991, the date of Rosenberg's death (and by inference, his whereabouts at his death) was still being reported erroneously as September 26 instead of November 26, 1919.

"O.O. Rosenberg and his Works on Buddhism," A. N. Ignatovich In: *O.O. Rosenberg: Works on Buddhism* (Moscow, "Nauka" (Glavnaia Redaktsiia Vostochnoi Literatury), 1991, pp. 6–13)

Buddhism — the first world religion — long ago attracted the attention of numerous investigators. The beginnings of Buddhology as an independent field of oriental studies arose from the contacts of European scholars with Indian religious and philosophical systems; the field began to take on a systematic character at the beginning of the 19th century. In the

middle of that century in Western Europe and in Russia (where, to be sure, a principal role was played not by Indian but rather by Chinese and Tibetan material), sketches of the history of Buddhism and its dogma appeared which had a conceptual character. In the first decades of the 20th century, a "new" Buddhology arose, which very radically revised the study of this extremely complex ideological and cultural phenomenon. One of the fathers of Buddhological research of this new type was O. O. Rosenberg. His investigation of Buddhist texts and familiarity with the then contemporary Buddhist literature convinced him of the necessity of a reconsideration, or at least a correction, of both the methods of investigation of Buddhism and of the interpretation of categories of Buddhist philosophy.

To the reader familiar with the classical works of F. I. Shcherbatskoi of the 20's and 30's and the more recent literature, much of that which O.O. Rosenberg wrote about may appear as generally well known, but somewhat dated. In scholarly activities, it not uncommonly happens that subsequent works "obscure" their predecessors. However, the "well known" material in the works of O.O. Rosenberg indicates that the latest Buddhological studies developed in the riverbed of concepts proposed by this outstanding scholar.

Otton Ottonovich (Julius Karl Otto) Rosenberg was born in Friedrichstadt (now Jaunjelgava, Latvia) on 7 July, 1888<sup>1</sup>. His father served as archivist in the city government. The family Rosenberg moved to the imperial capital while the future scholar was still in his childhood years, and the boy received an education at a gymnasium [classical school] in St. Petersburg.

Rosenberg showed an early interest in the study of foreign languages. From childhood he knew German, Greek and Latin. He was admitted in 1906 to the Oriental Faculty of St. Petersburg University, and studied Sanskrit, Prakrit, Pali, Tibetan, Mongolian, and Chinese, and in his third year began the study of Japanese. After finishing the third year, Rosenberg was sent for the summer semester to Bonn University for

perfection of his Sanskrit under Prof. Jakobi, an outstanding Sanskritologist and Indologist of his time. In the Philological Faculty of St. Petersburg University, Rosenberg studied English, French, and Italian. Subsequently, his excellent language preparation enabled the scholar to pursue the entire literature concerning Buddhism on his own — both in original Buddhist texts and in works by western and eastern Buddhologists.

Rosenberg's mentor in his school days was the very outstanding Russian specialist in Buddhism and Indian philosophy, F. I. Shcherbatskoi (1866–1942), who was made an academician [member of the Academy of Sciences] already in the Soviet times. Shcherbatskoi, rightly considered a classicist not only in Russian but also in world Buddhology, rendered a deciding influence on the subsequent specialisation of the young scholar in the field of Buddhist philosophy. Always backing Rosenberg was another notable scholar and organizer of scholarly undertakings, Academician S. F. Ol'denburg (1863–1934), an expert on India, who did much for the development of Russian and Soviet oriental studies, and of Buddhism, in particular.

Rosenberg's philological preparation continued after he graduated from St. Petersburg University. In 1911, as a research worker of the Department of Sanskrit Literature of the Oriental Faculty, he was sent to Berlin for six months, where he studied Japanese and attended lectures on the culture of Japan in a department of oriental languages.

His period in Berlin, judged by everything, significantly defined Rosenberg's professional orientation as an orientalist. Upon his return to St. Petersburg, he transferred to the Department of Japanese Philology, for preparation for a professorship. Intensive pursuit of the Japanese language and basic knowledge of Japanese literature made Rosenberg a suitable candidate to be sent for a long-term period in Japan. In 1912, by direction of the Oriental Faculty, he left for Tokyo, where he was admitted to Tonkii University as a post-graduate student. Rosenberg began the study of Buddhist literature

and tradition<sup>2</sup>, in complete conformity with the purpose of his training.

In the four years that he lived in Tokyo, Rosenberg devoted himself mainly to the study of Buddhist dogma and philosophy, both according to original sources and also with the help of training manuals intended for students of Japanese Buddhist seminaries. Very useful were the contacts between young scholars who had been sent from Russia and Buddhist monks — living bearers of the tradition, and acquaintances with Japanese educational Buddhologist of that time (Ormkhara Unrai, Takanusu Yunitiro, and others). As a result, a rich trove of materials and ideas of Buddhist literature that was practically unknown in Europe opened up before Rosenberg<sup>3</sup>. In Japan, for once and for all, Rosenberg became a Buddhologist scholar: there he published the first part of his principal work, "Introduction to the Study of Buddhism According to Japanese and Chinese Sources" and began to prepare the second part, and also wrote and published some articles on Buddhism.

Returning to Russia in the summer of 1916, Rosenberg continued work at his "alma mater." Having become a privat-dozent [university lecturer] from 1 January, 1917, he conducted classes in Japanese literature of various genres, discussing the original texts, among them religious and philosophical works, with students. In the autumn of 1918, Rosenberg defended as his master's dissertation the first and second parts of his "Introduction to the Study of Buddhism According to Japanese and Chinese Sources." In the same year, 1918, he became a member of the staff of the Asiatic Museum, and also assistant curator of the Ethnographic Department of the Russian Museum. In addition, he was named a corresponding member of the Geographical Society. The last year of his life was filled with many activities: scholarly work combined with activities with students, public lecturing, participation in the preparation for and carrying through of the First Buddhist Exposition at the Asiatic Museum. Rosenberg had intended to participate in the work of the Oriental

Department of the unfortunately ill-fated publishing house, "World Literature," organized at the initiative of A. M. Gor'ki. Death from spotted typhus on 26 September, 1919, cut short Rosenberg's life and his brilliant scholarly activities.

## Notes

1. Bibliographical data on Rosenberg, drawn from the article by Yu. D. Mikhailova, "Outstanding Buddhologist O.O. Rosenberg (1888–1919), *Problemy Dal'nego Vostoka*, 63 (1987), No. 3, p. 87–95. [English translation in *Far Eastern Affairs* (Moscow) 1987, No. 4, 76–86.]

2. TsGIA, f. 733, op. 155, No. 387, l. 397. See: Mikhailova, Yu. D. op. cit., p. 89.

3. "In Europe," Rosenberg wrote, "the idea is prevalent that in Japan there is no literature except poetry, novels, and history. Buddhist literature in extent (not to speak of content) is not less than all so-called classical literature, in significance, it is incomparably greater. My training gave me the possibility of opening not only the Japanese but also the great part of the Chinese Buddhist literature, an almost unknown field until now." (Archives of the USSR Academy of Sciences, f. 725, op. 3, No. 147, l. 90. See: Mikhailova, Yu. D., opus cit., p.91.)

How successful were Professor Meister's probings on my behalf at the Estonian National Library in Tallinn for material about Rosenberg!

**Appendix** (books consulted at the Hoover Institution):

**William H. Chamberlain:** *The Russian Revolution 1917–1921* (2 vols.) New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1935.

**Drujina, Gleb.** *The History of the North-West Army of General Yudenich*, Doctoral Dissertation (History), Stanford University, June, 1950.

**Luckett, Richard:** *The White Generals: An Account of the White Movement and the Russian Civil War*, New York: Viking, 1971.

**Steward, George:** *The White Armies of Russia*,  
New York: MacMillan, 1933.

**Shchegoleva, P. E.** (ed.) *Yudenich pod  
Petrogradom*. Leningrad, "Krasnaia Gazeta", 1927

## EPILOGUE

And so, with a few remaining relatively minor details, this account of the brilliant young Russian Orientalist, almost ten years in the making, draws to a close. The remaining unsettled details concern Elfrida Rosenberg's whereabouts between the time of Rosenberg's death in Tallinn in November of 1919 until her letters from Helsinki to Prof. Shcherbatskoi in 1923, and her work in Helsinki thereafter until her death there in 1956. There is also the question of whether Rosenberg held (for a brief time) the post of Minister of Public Education in the Northwest (White) Government, as had been suggested by Sergei Eliseev, information concerning which may still lie somewhere in the Yudenich Archives at the Hoover Institution, awaiting completion of cataloging.

As was indicated in the Prologue, this account has been written in such a way that the reader is "looking over the shoulders" of the author as the story evolves, and learns of each new development in the same sequence as did the author at the corresponding stage. The detective work entailed has been truly an adventure for the author, for whom the successive significant developments had been quite unforeseen. Hopefully, something of this flavor, at times, even of high adventure, has been captured for the reader.

At the same time, the several "dead-ends" that were encountered in pursuing the various speculations that had accumulated about the Rosenbergs have perhaps enriched the story rather than diminished it. Among these speculations were:

That the notorious Nazi philosopher, Alfred Rosenberg (who received a death sentence at the post World War 2 trials at Nürnberg, for his part in the Nazi race laws), was a brother of Otto Rosenberg. It turned out that they had absolutely nothing in common, save for the same last name, and the same area of birth, i.e.,

the Baltic countries (Estonia and Latvia, respectively, at the time — the latter 19th century — both were a part of the Russian Empire).

That Otto Rosenberg and Walter Liebenthal were the same person. That both were internationally known orientalists and had a remarkable similarity of interests is indisputable, which made the hypothesis all the more attractive. But that they were the same individual quite failed to hold up under close scrutiny.

That the second Elisabeth Rosenberg, of Heidelberg (and earlier, Krakow, Odessa, Tübingen), was the widow of Otto Rosenberg, and that she had translated his Russian book into German and arranged for its publication in Heidelberg. This was also a very attractive hypothesis — especially since Elisabeth Rosenberg No. 2 had been bilingual in Russian and German. But then it developed that the name of Rosenberg's widow was Elfrida, not Elisabeth, and hence the hypothesis was fatally undermined.

The real Rosenbergs, Otto and Elfrida, left an enormous and enduring legacy, separately and conjointly. As the several obituaries included in this account indicate, the importance of Otto Rosenberg's studies of Buddhist philosophy was recognized very early in St. Petersburg (then Petrograd). And, after his death, Elfrida's translation of his book, *Problems of Buddhist Philosophy*, into German (evidently in part at the urging of Shcherbatskoi and also Prof. Walleser of Heidelberg, in whose journal the German edition was published), made this important work available to a much wider audience, so that even today, the German edition remains in print, from Taiwan, not to mention the Russian-language reprint of Rosenberg's works in 1991, unfortunately already out of print.

In the realm of sinology, Rosenberg left a quite separate and enduring legacy, his 1916 "alphabetical" (or graphical) system for ordering Chinese characters. His system, which built on the work of his predecessors, rapidly became the standard for Chinese-Russian dictionaries published in Russia. Finally, it had been one of

Rosenberg's dreams to produce, in collaboration with his colleagues, a four-language Chinese-Japanese-Russian-English dictionary, using his system for ordering the Chinese characters. Perhaps the present author's recently published trilingual Chinese-Russian-English dictionary will contribute toward making Rosenberg's dream be realized.

### **Acknowledgments**

It will be evident that I am greatly indebted to a very large number of people in connection with my work on this case, most of whom have been mentioned at the appropriate point in the narrative. To them I owe my deep appreciation. There are others who, by carelessness on my part in not keeping adequate notes, or by oversight, are not mentioned. To them I owe my apologies. To those who have been kind enough to read the manuscript and comment on it, I am also grateful. My wife, Sibylle, has acted in that capacity as well as made many editorial suggestions. And finally, for all the time she devoted to pursuing this project with me on the archives in St. Petersburg, I owe a special debt of gratitude to Dr. Tatiana Vladimirovna Yermakova.

**END**

