bad. He was suffering from chronic hypertension and was developing slight gangrene in his feet. Also, although few knew it, the first signs of cancer of the esophagus had appeared.

Nonetheless, he refused to be evacuated with his laboratory. Nadezhda Bobrovskaya died September 25, but Ukhtomsky still refused to go. There is not a single notation in his notebooks of any of his physical problems, although by October he could hardly swallow.

An old friend, A. I. Kolotilov, asked him why he did not leave Leningrad.

"I remain in Leningrad," he said, "in order to finish my work. I haven't long to live. I will die here. It's too late to leave."

The university organized a meeting on December 2 to mark the fiftieth anniversary of Lenin's graduation. It was held in the assembly hall. The electricity was working. From somewhere flowers had been produced for the platform. But the windows were broken, icy winds filled the chamber, and there were snowdrifts on the floor. Air-raid sirens sounded during the meeting, and there were occasional explosions of German shells.

Although he was now suffering from emphysema, although his toes were gangrenous and his cancer much worse, Ukhtomsky spoke with such vigor that participants counted his address one of his most striking.

Somehow Ukhtomsky managed to survive the winter, frequently giving lectures in the icebound university halls. He told his friends, "It's gloomy at home. It's more cheerful with people."

By the end of spring he was still alive and on June 27, despite his gangrene, his cancer, his emphysema and his hypertension, made his way on foot from his flat on the 16th Line of Vasilevsky Island to the Zoological Institute, where with half a dozen other academic colleagues he discussed the candidate dissertations of V. V. Kuznetsov and L. K. Mishchenko and acted as the official opponent of N. N. Malyshev, who was defending a doctoral thesis on the subject, "Materials on the Physics of Electrons." The presentation and defense of doctoral dissertations had gone on without pause in Leningrad, all through the terrible winter, in air-raid shelters, in cellars. There had been 847 defenses of dissertations in the first months of the war. In December the Leningrad Party Committee warned the academic community "not to permit any liberalization in evaluating the work of students" just because of the war and its hardships.

So the intellectual life of Leningrad went on; so the intellectuals kept to their laboratories and their libraries, dying by the hundreds but making no concession to the terrible enemies which threatened their existence.

To the end Professor Ukhtomsky continued to make notes, continued to talk with his students. Not until August 31, 1942, did he, like so many of his brave contemporaries, succumb. He was buried in the Volkov Cemetery. By this time Leningrad again observed the amenities. He had a grave and headstone of his own.

45 . *The Ice Road to the Mainland*

AT 3 A.M. ON FEBRUARY 2 PAVEL LUKNITSKY SAT AT THE typewriter in his freezing apartment at No. 9 Griboyedov Canal and tapped away on his diary. He was afraid to go to sleep lest he miss the ring of the telephone or the knock at the door he was expecting. He was waiting for a man named L. S. Shulgin from the Leningrad Tass office who would take him across Lake Ladoga to General Fedyuninsky's Fifty-fourth Army, to which he had just been assigned.

Luknitsky did not know it, but the assignment had been urgently arranged by his colleagues in the Writers Union who were fearful that unless he got out of Leningrad immediately he would die of starvation.[1]

For weeks Luknitsky had exhausted himself trying to help his fellow writers. Being a war correspondent, he was able to go in and out of Leningrad, and he had tried again and again to get permission to take a truck across Lake Ladoga on a foraging expedition to purchase provisions for the Leningrad writers. The difficulties were enormous. He had to get approval from half a dozen officials, and he needed someone to help buy the supplies. Unfortunately, he had become convinced that an honest man couldn't do the job, and he had no desire to go into partnership with a crook.

He had also been trying to persuade Smolny to send out of Leningrad some of the starving writers. And he had been seeking to evacuate his friend Lyudmila Fedorovna, who was at the point of death.

Finally, on January 20 he learned at Smolny of the impending plans for mass evacuation and with great difficulty succeeded in having twelve writers included in the first party to be sent out on January 22. He even got Lyudmila Fedorovna included in the first group of twelve. By this time he was so ill with grippe, so starved, he could hardly walk. But he had to go

[1] Luknitsky's assignment was arranged by Vera Ketlinskaya, secretary of the Writers Union, and N. D. Shumilov, a Party official at Smolny. Luknitsky learned the secret only eighteen years later when he found a notation to this effect in the unpublished papers of Vera Ketlinskaya. (Luknitsky, *op. cit.*, p. 700.)

back and forth between the Writers' House, his own apartment and Smolny to arrange for the evacuation tickets. They were supposed to be issued January 21 at 6 P.M. Some people had been waiting in line for them at Smolny since 2 A.M. At 7 P.M. the tickets still had not been issued because they had not been received from the printers. At 7:30 P.M. it was announced that instead of fifty buses for evacuation there would be only twenty-five. Only half of the people would be taken.

Luknitsky made thirty to forty telephone calls to Mayor Popkov and other officials and finally got the writers included in the smaller evacuation party. He then walked home in 30-below-zero weather, six to eight miles, in order to pack fifty pounds of luggage for Lyudmila Fedorovna and, after two and a half hours' sleep, brought her with the luggage on a sled to the embarkation point in the square opposite Smolny.

After hours of waiting in the cold the writers' group got away at 4 P.M. Luknitsky described eleven of those evacuated, including N. Vagner, S. Spassky and his wife, V. S. Valdman and her husband, as in "such condition that life hardly flickered in their bodies." The husband of Madame Valdman died in the bus. The twelfth person showed up in the cab of a truck overloaded with his possessions. He was healthy, insolent and gnawed unembarrassedly at a chicken bone. He pushed his way onto the bus, impudently stowing his bags and boxes over the heads of the feeble passengers.

As the convoy pulled out, 150 to 200 despairing persons watched. They had been promised places, but there was no room.

Luknitsky was so exhausted that he was hardly able to rise on January 23. But he had again to walk to the ends of the city, wait long hours at the military offices, obtain a new food order, stand in line in an unheated staff building where clerks worked without lights, and walk home skirting an enormous half-frozen lake (a water main had burst) which covered the squares opposite Dobrolyubov Prospekt and Dynamo Stadium, in which trucks were already being frozen for the remainder of winter. The next day he had a temperature of 102. He probably would have died that day had not an old friend, the chief of the regional air service, Korolev, taken him in hand, put him to bed in a warm room, given him a bath, 150 grams of vodka and a meal. He spent three days at the air base, and when he got back to the Writers' House, his associates had obtained his assignment to the Fifty-fourth Army.

It was for this reason that he sat in his freezing fifth-floor apartment, keeping himself awake by typing. He sat and sat. No one came. At 8:30 A.M., deathly tired, he tried to telephone, but the apparatus was not working. He pinned a note on his door saying: "Knock loud." Wrapping himself in his bedclothes, he sank back asleep. He had hardly closed his eyes when the Tass man, Shulgin, appeared. Hiding his typewriter behind the books in his study, and grabbing his knapsack, blanket roll, kettle, hand grenades and a candle stub, Luknitsky locked his apartment and hurried down the ice-treaded staircase to the street.

It was 9 A.M. Across the canal stood a 3-ton AMO truck, covered with a canvas top, camouflaged with white paint. The body was filled with boxes and people. It appeared that Shulgin, under the guise of taking a correspondent to the front, was evacuating from Leningrad all his close —and distant—relatives, including three half-crazy old aunts. There were, in all, fourteen persons in the truck, among them only two or three who were relatives of Tass men other than Shulgin.

It developed that the truck belonged to a tobacco factory where the chauffeur, Aleksandr Yakovlevich, worked. Shulgin had provided himself with a box of cigarettes and vodka and counted on acquiring gasoline en route from drivers of tank trucks coming across the lake. He planned to get his relatives out of Leningrad and return with a truckload of goods for sale in the black market.

The expedition started at 9:30. First, they had to get water for the radiator. Griboyedov Canal was frozen to the bottom, so they went to the Fontanka. While the chauffeur filled the radiator, Shulgin raced to a nearby house and picked up another relative.

The truck made its way through the drifted streets of Leningrad, past the sleds, the corpses, the long bread lines, past women lugging heavy pots and pails of water, and crossed the Neva by the Okhta Bridge, moving out Vsevolozhsky, meeting more and more military traffic, passing dozens of burned-out and abandoned carcasses of trucks. All trucks heading for the lake carried passengers, most of them people who had bribed the drivers. There were heated buses with *burzhuiki* and tin chimneys through the roof, canvas-covered trucks, and open trucks filled with exhausted people trying to keep out of the wind. There were even people clinging to the outside of gasoline tank trucks or lying one atop the other in the open trucks, wrapped like mummies, with telltale red and white frost marks on their cheeks, already half dead. Many refugees would not live to reach Lake Ladoga. There were some people slugging along on foot, pulling sleds with household goods. Here and there Luknitsky saw a man or woman collapsed in a drift, dead or dying while the survivors of the party huddled helpless around. No one had the strength to bury these victims. They simply removed the heavy clothing and any valuables, covered the body with snow and went on. As they neared the lake, they had to avoid the patrols—evacuation on foot was not permitted. Or they bribed the guards with cigarettes and tobacco to look the other way while they persuaded a chauffeur to take them across the lake. Everything depended on the chauffeurs. They were the lords of the lake, gods. They brought the food and fuel to Leningrad. The law was stern. For any kind of speculation or swindling they could be shot. But they had no fear. They demanded from the starving evacuees cigarettes or bread or a handful of flour.

The road was narrow, with hardly room to pass, and if a car got off the ruts, it was likely to land upside down in a ditch and the passengers would be left to try to make their way forward on foot with failing strength.

Luknitsky's truck moved slowly and finally halted altogether when a tie-up brought the column to a halt. They started again and arrived at Borisova Griva, the railroad station. Everywhere lay abandoned and broken-down trucks. At the station there were thousands of boxes of flour and a chain of hundreds, possibly thousands, of trucks, like a conveyor belt, bringing new loads to the station, unloading and then turning about for the return trip across the Ladoga to Zhikharevo. To the right of the road was a sign: "Bor. Griva from Leningrad—50 kilometers. From Lake 18." Luknitsky's truck halted for nearly two hours at Borisova Griva while the traffic was untangled. Luknitsky was fiercely hungry. A traffic officer took a quarter-loaf of bread from his pocket and held it ostentatiously in his hands, obviously wanting to trade it for a pack of cigarettes. Shulgin finally gave him twenty cigarettes and took the bread. He gave a piece to a three-year-old girl in the truck who was crying with hunger. Luknitsky got a morsel, and Shulgin ate the rest himself. Shulgin had a bottle of vodka, which he shared with the chauffeur and a friend. He did not offer a drink to Luknitsky. But Luknitsky had his own flask, so he took a slug without offering it to the others.

Finally, the column moved on, and Shulgin went to present a letter to the commissar of a truck company who was supposed to give them fuel and dinner. The commissar provided some cigarettes but refused to supply dinner. Instead, he offered four pieces of bread, about 350 grams. Shulgin took one piece and gave the others to Luknitsky, the chauffeur and his friend. One of Shulgin's aunts traded twenty cigarettes for a half-kettle of hot cereal. The truck went on. They reached Ladoga and saw ahead endless columns of trucks. Beside the road were antiaircraft batteries in shelters made of ice blocks. At 5:12 P.M. they started out on the ice, going full speed. The road was wide enough so that trucks could pass on either side. Everyone went full speed and the road extended into white infinity, a bit, thought Luknitsky, like the steppes of Kazakhstan. On either side there were high snow walls thrown up by the snow scrapers. At each kilometer stood a traffic officer in white camouflage cape with white and red traffic flags. The officers were protected from the wind by half-shelters made of ice blocks. Some had fires inside their ice blocks, stacks of wood and barrels of gasoline. At greater intervals there were repair shops, traffic centers and white-camouflaged antiaircraft posts. Here and there, half covered with ice and snow, lay the carcasses of broken or burned trucks.

As darkness fell, the traffic officers brought into play tiny green and white signal lights. Many trucks did not dim their lights, and the flash of headlights played over the snow and ice. Luknitsky's truck ran swiftly without lights and within an hour and a half had reached the eastern shore. The radiator was steaming, and Shulgin's friend got some water to fill it. The friend proudly showed Shulgin a small package. "Sweet butter!" he said. "I got it for five cigarettes." But it turned out to be a bar of household soap.

They had arrived at Lavrovo, but their goal was Zhikharevo. This took another hour and a half by moonlight. At Zhikharevo they expected a warm room, food and rest. They found chaos. There were thousands of persons wandering about the tiny war-beaten village. No one knew where there was a lunchroom, where documents could be obtained for the evacuation trains, when the train might be leaving, where you could stay overnight or even where to get warm.

Luknitsky finally located the evacuation office in a broken-down barracks. A long line waited while three men checked documents and issued coupons for the dining room.

Luknitsky discovered, however, that the coupons were only for those being officially evacuated. No provision for persons on military orders like himself or for Shulgin or the chauffeur or Shulgin's relatives. Somehow Shulgin got a meal ticket and then took his relatives to the station. A train was being loaded, but there was no room for the relatives, who became hysterical. They had no place to stay the night. The moon shone down and the thermometer stood at 20 below zero. Luknitsky eventually met the military commandant and got some dry rations for two days—750 grams of hardtack, 70 grams of granulated sugar and a packet of concentrated pea soup. But he needed hot food. Eventually, he stumbled on a kitchen where he could trade some dry rations for a bowl of hot wheat cereal. But there was no place to eat. The cereal was ladled out in an outdoor booth. So he sat down on the icy step of a barn and, half frozen, ate his cereal, holding his spoon with numb fingers, and downed the hot kasha with gulps of the icy wind. If only there had been some tea!

Somehow Shulgin got food for his relatives and, using the food coupons of two persons who had died, he got bread and dinner for himself. It was now almost 1 A.M., and Luknitsky had no place to sleep and had yet to find a place to get warm. There were hundreds like himself, wandering the wet, slippery, icy, rutted streets of the village—women and children, weak, collapsing, frozen.

There were, Luknitsky discovered, two persons in charge of the refugees —the commandant of the evacuation center, Semenov, and the chief of transfer, Streltsov. Both had been sent out by the Leningrad City Party, and they lived in room No. 6 of one of the barracks. Luknitsky spent the night on the floor of room No. 6, sleeping on a piece of plywood. The two men were working themselves to the bone. They slept two or three hours a night, on a wooden bench in their clothes, never undressing, trying to cope with the torrent of people who poured from the trucks day and night. They had no means of looking after the refugees. There was no hot water for tea, no plank beds, no mattresses, no lights, nothing but bare barracks with dirty floors. No doctors, no cleaning women, no personnel of any kind. All that was being done was to put people into trucks and deliver them to Zhikharevo.

That night the three-year-old girl who had come in Luknitsky's truck died. The wails of her mother filled the barracks. Then an engineer died, and his wife, composed and quiet, came to room No. 6 to find out what the formalities were. None, Semenov said. The body should be taken out of the barracks and put on the street with the other bodies. The wife didn't think she could move it. Perhaps, Semenov said, some of those in the barracks would help. If she wished, she could report the death to the police, giving them the name, the date and the address. The woman went back to the barracks, woke up some of those sleeping there and moved the corpse. Then another man died in the corridor. People just stepped over the body in the darkness.

Streltsov and Semenov had been sent out with the first evacuees January 22. The only word they had from Leningrad so far was that thirty cleaning women were being sent on foot. Why on foot and why from Leningrad there was no explanation. Nothing had been done to provide the evacuees with food for their trip.

Shulgin managed to get his relatives onto a warm, clean evacuation train, and the journey to take Luknitsky to the Fifty-fourth Army headquarters resumed. They drove through Voibokalo and Shum, only to find that General Fedyuninsky's headquarters were at Gorokhovets, twenty-two miles distant. Shulgin refused to take Luknitsky any further. However, after much argument Luknitsky managed to get to the village of Vloya, within Fifty-fourth Army territory. There he parted with Shulgin, who was in a feverish hurry to go to Volkhov, where he had "business" to transact before going back to Leningrad.

He told Luknitsky that he had never gone hungry during the blockade, that he had always managed to feed his relatives and that he looked forward to a time at the end of the war when the government would "re-examine its attitude toward private property and private trade." Never before or after, during the war did Luknitsky meet such a man.

There was little that was unusual about Luknitsky's trip across Ladoga. Not even the presence of Shulgin. The road attracted profiteers and black market operators. Sometimes speculators from Leningrad offered as much as 25,000 rubles a box for flour. Usually, the drivers refused the offers angrily. Sometimes the speculators were arrested and shot. Other drivers, however, engaged in black market dealings. A driver named Sergei Loginov found a friend and fellow Young Communist chauffeur who had turned off the ice road and was burying boxes of provisions in the snow. After an argument Loginov shot and killed the man.

Madame Skryabina made the Ladoga trip four days after Luknitsky. She took her seventy-four-year-old mother, so weak it did not seem possible that she would survive; a sixty-year-old nurse, with swollen feet, hardly able to walk; her son Dima, sixteen years old and suffering from an advanced case of dysentery, and her youngest child, Yuri, five years old.

Madame Skryabina rose early on February 6. She went to the bakery, got the day's rations, and when she got back to the communal flat, she found the former mistress of the apartment, Anastasiya Vladimirovna, had just died. There was nothing to do but to leave as planned. There were three trucks in the convoy and thirty people in the three cars. They waited three hours in the cold for one family, that of a hospital manager. Madame Skryabina was shocked at the appearance of this family—a wife, dressed as if for a ball, two healthy teen-age girls and another girl with a governess. Obviously, they had suffered little.

Finally, the caravan started out the Znamenskaya, past Kirochnaya, the Tauride Gardens, the Pedagogical Institute, Smolny, and through the suburban summer resort country toward Ladoga. Then the trouble started. Something went wrong with the truck. It halted on the ice, and dusk began to fall. The chauffeur worked for hours over the machine. Fortunately, there was a big drum of gasoline in the truck. They drew off some gas, lighted a fire and warmed themselves. But it was 10 P.M. when they got to the opposite shore. No one knew where to go, where the train was, when it would leave. The night was one long torment. The chauffeur found lodging in a peasant hut, but the evacuees stayed in the truck. By this time Dima was so weak that Madame Skryabina had to leave him in the hospital at Voibokalo. She took her two elderly companions and Yuri and tried to find a place in the crowded evacuation train. There were no seats, and they had to sit on their suitcases. As they sat, weary and forlorn, the hospital manager's wife brought out fried chicken, chocolate and powdered milk and fed her girls. Madame Skryabina had nothing but ersatz bread to give Yuri. She felt spasms in her throat, but not, she noted, "from hunger."

The train moved slowly through the night, stopping occasionally. At each stop someone would come along, knocking on the door with a hammer: "Have you any dead? Throw them out here!" But there was food at some of the long station stops—soup and cereal. The evacuees developed stomach complaints, probably because they were not used to eating. This went on for four days. Madame Skryabina decided she could go no farther. She would have to take her group from the train. They got off at Cherepovets. Her mother had collapsed. Also, Madame Skryabina hoped that she might get word from here of Dima in the hospital at Voibokalo. They got off and found themselves surrounded by snowdrifts. The townsfolk expressed surprise they had gotten off the train. Cherepovets was suffering a terrible food shortage. Madame Skryabina finally found a dirty little room, but it was not easy. Everyone was frightened of Leningraders. They were so hungry and so ill. She put her mother and the old nurse in a cold, filthy hospital. The women grew worse and worse. One day they told Madame Skryabina of the death during the night of a young engineer and his wife. The same day four students who had been brought in late at night were found dead in the hospital corridors where they had been laid. There was no food in the local

market except *klukva* (cranberries) picked in the local bogs. Madame Skryabina was able to obtain some potatoes from a peasant by trading a piece of wool. On February 27 she found her mother dead in the hospital. She could not get the body buried. No one bothered with that any more. They simply piled the corpses at the cemetery gates.

In mid-March by a stroke of sheer luck (a tearful conversation at the station with a soldier on a hospital train) she was reunited with her son Dima and managed to join him on the train with Yuri and the old nurse and leave Cherepovets. The family was saved. The train took them out beyond Vologda and eventually to Gorky.

Slowly the evacuation improved as February progressed. The elapsed time between Leningrad and Borisova Griva was cut to five or six hours, the transfer from train to trucks and buses to one and a half to two hours, the crossing of Ladoga to two to two and a half hours (although during snowstorms it sometimes took seven hours). From January 22 to April 15, a total of 554,186 persons were removed over Ladoga, including 35,713 wounded Red Army men.

Late in February Vera Inber made the trip over Ladoga to General Fedyuninsky's headquarters with a delegation. They rode in a truck which had panel sides, a canvas top and an open end. They sat on wooden benches, very uncomfortable, very cold, very exhausting. She hardly had the strength to survive. A few days before in trying to walk across Leningrad to a poetry reading before a naval detachment she had collapsed.

It took them only an hour and a half to cross Ladoga, but the whole trip from Leningrad to Fedyuninsky's headquarters at Gorokhovets took thirteen hours. On the eastern shore she saw goats, dogs and live chickens for the first time in months. It was like a miracle. And she heard people singing. No one in Leningrad had sung since the start of winter. People walked briskly, breathed the sharp air deeply and blew out their frosty breaths. Their cheeks were ruddy and glowing. Vera Inber and her companions looked like pale, slow, whispering shadows.

At Zhikharevo she saw a terrible fire. Nazi bombers were attacking the supply dumps and had hit a great kerosene tank and a train of coal cars. She had never seen such flames—purple, crimson, yellow, and smoke so black it weighted down the air.

To Vera Inber the Ladoga seemed a vast plain of ice, as covered with snow as the North Pole—ice fences, ice enclosures, circular ice Eskimo huts for the antiaircraft crews, ice bases on which the antiaircraft guns were installed. Everything was snow. Everything was white.

Along the route were the skeletons of dead cars, the wrecked trucks and machines sacrificed to the ceaseless flow of supplies. Day and night the movement never halted, swift, ordered, relentless, despite Nazi planes, despite the terrible *burya*, the Ladoga blizzards, despite the temperature which fell to 30 and 40 below zero.

The Ladoga route had been brought into order. It was in constant flow, food and fuel pouring into Leningrad, people pouring out.

In a dugout Vera Inber sat with a division commander. It was so warm near the little iron stove that two or three birch shoots had pushed through the earthen walls and begun to sprout a few tender leaves. They drank a toast to the liberation of Leningrad, and the commissar said, "To live or not live—that is not the question. Our life belongs to Leningrad."