

DRAFT

CHAPTER IX

ARREST AND IMPRISONMENT

By the beginning of 1914 Dambijantsan's reign of terror had antagonized many of this former supporters in western Mongolia. According to the Diluv Khutagt, "The people of the Banners of that region were unable to sleep in peace, and secretly went to the Russians with a petition of complaint" accusing Dambijantsan of "autocratic and despotic behaviour." The complaint was presented to the Russian consul in late January of 1914 by several western Mongolian princes, including the Baid Noyon, the chieftain of the Baid people who had earlier befriended Dambijantsan. They believed he was a Russian citizen and that therefore it was the responsibility of the Russian authorities to somehow rein him in.

As we have seen, Russia had enjoyed the right of extraterritoriality in Mongolia during the time when the Qing Dynasty controlled the country. It was under the laws of extraterritoriality, which gave Russia authority over its own citizens in Mongolia, that Dambijantsan was arrested and deported back in 1891. It is not clear if these rights of extraterritoriality still pertained in the newly independent Mongolia ruled by the Bogd Gegeen, but in these unsettled times the niceties of international law might well have been overlooked. In western Mongolia Dambijantsan had clearly become a law unto himself and perhaps extra-legal measures were necessary to deal with the extraordinary menace he represented.

In response to the complaint a detachment of eighty Cossack under the command of one Captain Bulatov was dispatched from the Russian border town of of Khöshöö Mod. On February 8, 1914, they suddenly appeared at Muunjig and surrounded Dambijantsan's ger. Apparently he was arrested without a struggle. Searching his ger, the Cossacks discovered two complete human skins of people who had been flayed alive by his orders. One of the skins reportedly was that of Khaisan, the Kazakh

chieftain with whom Dambijantsan had been feuding with earlier. The human skins along with a chest of silver and other items in his ger were confiscated.

Dambijantsan was taken under arrest to Khovd City and hauled up before the Russian consul. The consul recognized Dambijantsan as an "Astrakhan Kalmyk" going by the name of Amar Sanaev. As mentioned before, it is unclear whether this was his real name or if he just had forged documents to this effect. On March 7, 1914 an official connected with the Russian Consulate, A. Ya. Miller, filed a dispatch with the details of Dambijantsan's arrest directly to the attention of the Minister of Foreign Affairs in St. Petersburg, S. D. Sazunov, which one historian claims "testifies to the great importance attached to the arrest of the despotic adventurer by the Russian government." The official charges against Dambijantsan were at this point unclear. Possible charges included complicity in murder, if not murder itself, kidnapping, torture, and theft, to name a few. The first point of business, however, was to deport him in back to Russia.

Under escort he was taken first to the city of Biisk, the first large Russian town northwest of Mongolia. After a short stay in Biisk he was transferred to Tomsk, a major city on the Tom River, a tributary of the Ob, where he was incarcerated for a year. For someone who stood accused, if not convicted, of a host of crimes and misdemeanors he seemed to have a pretty easy regime. As he later wrote to Burdukov, "In the city of Tomsk I lived alone and was in a prison the whole time. But thanks be to God, the chief of the prison was a very kind man. It wasn't that bad for me to live there; indeed it was even good for me."

Then he was transferred to the Aleksandrovsy Central Prison, located on the steppe in the Irkutsk region west of Lake Baikal. This notorious penal colony provided much of the labor for the construction of the difficult Lake Baikal section of the Trans-Siberian Railroad, and also served as a transit point from which prisoners from Russia were sent on to other destinations within the vast prison network of East Siberia. After a brief stay here he sent to the city of Yakutsk, capital of in the immense province of Yakutia (now the Sakha Republic, part of the Russian Federation). Since some sources say he was "exiled" to Yakutsk, it is not clear whether he was actually imprisoned or simply living as an exile in the city. He himself later told Burdukov that he lived in Yakutsk City, with no mention made of prison. Exile in Yakutia, ferociously cold in winter (the coldest temperature ever in the Northern Hemisphere, 90 below F°, was

recorded here), plagued by mosquitoes and flies in summer, and lacking any but the simplest amenities, was considered by many to be just as bad as imprisonment in other parts of the country. But again Dambijantsan did not seem to be suffering greatly, although he claimed that he did mind the cold. He later wrote, "It was not so bad for me there either"—perhaps he found solace in the arms of the legendarily sensuous Yakutian women—"but the weather was really cold—it sometimes got minus 65 degrees of centigrade [-85 F°]" After one winter in Yakutia he had had enough. "Because of the freezing weather," he later wrote in a letter, "I had to ask the appropriate people to transfer me somewhere else where it is warmer. As a result I was transferred to the city of Astrakhan".

Again we must ask just what were the terms of Dambijantsan's confinement and exile. The very mention of prison and exile in Siberia under the Czars conjures up visions of the knout, of cracking whips and clanking chains, of endless toil under the most brutal and degrading conditions—the world so evocatively called up in Dostoevsky's *The House of Dead*—yet by his own admission Dambijantsan was not treated badly and most astonishingly seems capable of arranging his own transfers when he doesn't find the weather to his liking. Clearly Dambijantsan was no ordinary prisoner destined to rot in the wastes of Siberia.

In any case, according to Lattimore "Here he met some the revolutionary intelligentsia among the Russian exiles, and is said to have improved his education, learned some political ideas, and even to have played a part in the revolutionary events of 1917–18."

So he arrived in Astrakhan, the ancient city on the east bank of the Volga near where the river debouches into the Caspian Sea. Although Astrakhan itself is on the well-watered delta of the Volga River, the adjacent areas are arid steppes and deserts of scant grass and gravel flats dotted with wormwood and camel thorn. In the summer temperature can reach 100° F and like Yakutsk the city of Astrakhan was in summer infested by plagues of gnats, mosquitoes and flies. Here the recent arrival from Siberia found that it was too hot.

While traveling in Gov-Altai Aimag of Mongolia, which as we shall soon see was a major staging ground for Dambijantsan's next appearance in Mongolia and where still live the children and grandchildren of people who actually knew the monk-adventurer, I heard a curious legend stating that in cold places Dambijantsan always felt uncomfortably hot, while in

hot places he always suffered from chills. This legend referred specifically to his time under arrest and in exile. Thus, according to this legend, in Yakutia he was actually too hot and in Astrakhan he was too cold, and not vice-versa. Supposedly Dambijantsan himself had made this claim. Perhaps this was just one more attempt to create an air of mystery about himself, or perhaps others just wanted to further embroider the host of myths about the man.

In a letter to Burdukov in far-off Mongolia dated March 18, 1917, Dambijantsan wrote, "It was also not miserable to live in Astrakhan, but anyway I couldn't stay there for long: the weather was humid and I couldn't drink the water. Therefore I asked the chief of the province to transfer me to a distant town of the province, and I was sent to Tsarev town, where I am staying now."

Tsarev is the current-day town of Akhtubinsk, 145 miles up the Volga River from Astrakhan, near the current city of Volgograd (Stalingrad). Tsarev—located near one of the capitals of the Golden Horde, founded by Chingis Khan's grandson Batu—was on the Pontic-Caspian Steppe, north of the Caspian Lowland Desert, and was slightly milder in temperature and considerably less humid.

So yet again Dambijantsan was able to arrange his transfer to more hospitable climes. And there was no more question of confinement in prison. He was apparently required to register with the local authorities and may not have been free to leave the Astrakhan gubernaria, in which Tsarev was located, but otherwise he was free to come and go as he pleased. Renting lodging from a "very kind and pleasant person" named Zlobinov, he quickly settled in and was soon writing to Burdukov "I really like life here."

Curiously, he admits that he had trouble speaking Russian. This admission only deepens the mystery about Dambijantsan's linguistic abilities. He was born (apparently) on Russian territory but was not ethnically Russian, and may have left Russia to become a monk when he was a small boy, so he can perhaps be excused for not learning Russian as a child. But later he worked for Russian expeditions, traveled extensively through areas where Russian was a lingua franca, came into contact with many Russians, not the least of which was Burdukov, while in Mongolia, and had just spent over two years in the Russian prison system, and yet by his own admission he had trouble communicating in Russian with the people of Tsarev, where he was now living. Although he is now in his fifties he even engages Zlobinov to give him lessons in reading and writing Russian.

Dambijantsan also admitted that "I am having a little problem with money. . ." This is understandable, since he had apparently been hauled out of Mongolia with only the shirt on the back and had spent the last two years in prison. What was he living on in Tsarav? All of his property at Munjaviin Ulaan had been supposedly been confiscated, including livestock, gers, considerable amounts of silver, and other personal possessions. Dambijantsan had also loaned out large amounts of silver to local officials and individuals. After his arrest local officials apparently tried to collect these loans. But what had happened to the wealth he had gathered during his years in Mongolia? Had the Russian consul seized them, or the Mongolian government? It would appear that the Russian consul seized at least some of his possessions. On March 18, 1917 we see Dambijantsan writing to Burkudov that he "was very pleased with the Consul for his efforts in sending me money." Why was the Russian consul sending him money? Had some of the property which had seen seized at the time of his arrest been sold and the proceeds returned to him? If he was a criminal why was he entitled to his ill-gotten gains? And Burdukov too appeared to be forwarding money to him, apparently the proceeds from some unspecified business deals. Even in far-off Astrakhan province Dambijantsan seems to have kept his fingers in various pies in Mongolia.

Meanwhile the February Revolution of 1917 had erupted. Imperial Russia collapsed, Tsar Nicholas abdicated, ending the Romanov Dynasty, and as provisional government headed by Prince Georgi Lvov was sworn in. The Revolution soon made itself felt in Tsarev. Under the new Provisional Government the governor of the region, the chief of police, and various military leaders had been arrested. "As you know," he tells Burdukov, "I was a criminal under the old regime. But now I am supposed to get a pardon. As soon as my pardon comes through I will come and visit you." He also asks Burdukov to send him some photos of himself dressed in traditional Mongolian clothing. "That would be very interesting for me," he notes. He also asks the whereabouts of Zorigt Khan, the chieftain of the Zorigt Khan Aimag in western Mongolia, one of his former allies.

But the situation in Tsarev kept deteriorating. The government was in chaos and Inflation had gone through the roof. Although apparently still under police supervision, Dambijantsan was not longer obliged to stay to stay in Tsarev. He does not give the exact reasons for his move, but in early May he traveled down the Volga, arriving in Astrakhan on May 12, 1917. Here he took lodging in District #4, on Sado-Aptekar Street, at the house

of a man named Verenin.

Astrakhan, located near the mouth of the Volga, Europe's largest river by length, volume of water, and area of watershed and the main artery leading into the very heart of Russia, is a city seeped in history. The lower Volga, straddled by the Lowland Caspian Desert, and Volga Delta were inhabited by wandering nomadic tribes for thousands of years. From the 6th to 11th a. d. the area was home to the Turkic Khazars, notable for adopting Judaism as their state religion. Their capital was near the current city of Astrakhan. In the 11th, 12th, and early 13th centuries Kipchaks and Cumans nomadized in the area. In the middle of the 13th century on the Golden Horde, founded by Chingis's Khan's grandson Batu, seized control of the region. Around this time a city known as Xacitarxan sprang up about seven miles upstream from the current city. In 1395 Tamurlane stormed through and burned the city of Xacitarxan to the ground. With the collapse of the Golden Horde in the mid-1400s the Astrakhan Khanate, founded by Qasim I and consisting of Tatar, Nogai, and other tribesmen, was established on the lower Volga and the steppes to the west, the purported home of Dambijantsan and now the Republic of Kalmykia, with the rebuilt city of Xacitarxan as its capital. In 1556 Ivan the Terrible of Russia conquered the lower Volga valley and established a fortress, or kremlin, at the current site of Astrakhan city. Ottoman armies invaded the lower Volga in the 1560s and in 1569 invested the city of Astrakhan. They were soon forced to retreat, and in 1670 the Ottoman Sultan acknowledged Russian control of the lower Volga River. From then on the Volga, the longest river in Europe, became an entirely Russian river.

Astrakhan quickly became a major Russian entrepôt for trade, linking the interior of Russian with other lands bordering the Caspian Sea, including what is now Iran and the countries of the Caucasus. In the early eighteenth century the city served as a staging ground for Russia's advance into Central Asia, including what are now the countries of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The city soon assumed a distinctly multinational flavor, its streets teeming with Russians, Tartars, Turks, Chechens, Azerbaijanis, Caucasian mountain men, Armenians, Iranians, Kazakhs, Uzbeks, and even a sizable contingent of Indians from the Subcontinent, to say nothing of the Kalmyks who from the 1630s on had nomadized on the steppes to the east and west. In the 1830s the city boasted of thirty-seven Orthodox churches, fifteen mosques, and an opera house. Its more cosmopolitan residents subscribed to European magazines, read

the latest novels from France, drank champagne and danced the Quadrille. Yet the deserts and steppes to the east, west, and north were still inhabited by nomadic tribesmen, many of whom, like Dambijantsan himself, spoke little if any Russian.

By Dambijantsan's time the city was still dominated by the Kremlin, located on a low hill a quarter of a mile from the east bank of the Volga. Above the walls of the Kremlin soared the green and gold onion-shaped domes of the Ascension Cathedral and the Trinity Cathedral, both built around the beginning of the 18th century. About a third of a mile north of the Kremlin a narrow canal runs east from the Volga, eventually connecting with another canal which branches off from the Volga south of the Kremlin. Sado-Aptekar Street, where Dambijantsan lived, is one block beyond the northern canal. It was probably not one of the best neighborhoods. Although close to downtown, it was on the other side of the canal, the Astrakhanian equivalent to the wrong side of the tracks. It was a neighborhood where a man in exile and still technically under police supervision could find lodging without attracting too much attention.

In 2009 I traveled to Astrakhan to see the street where Dambijantsan lived. Along the southern embankment of the canal dozens of fisherpersons (the majority were women) were angling for their evening supper. I crossed one of the footbridges across the canal and followed the northern embankment to Kalinin Street. The embankment here is lined with new and restored commercial buildings and up-scale apartment houses. I turned right on Kalinin Street and walked two blocks north to Pestelya Street, the current name of Sado-Aptekar Street, which runs parallel to the canal. Pestelya Street is only four blocks long. To the south of Pestelya Street is the embankment, and to the east, west, and north are Soviet-era and later, more up-scale high-rise apartments buildings.

Turning off Kalinin Street I am surprised to see that Pestelya Street, completely unlike the surrounding area, is lined with very old two-story wooden houses. I am seized by the uncanny feeling that I have stepped through a time warp and emerged into the nineteenth century. The street is like a time capsule embedded in modern Astrakhan. Many of the buildings are dilapidated, but still clearly lived in, although at the moment the street is eerily deserted. The only hints of modernity are a few rusty air-conditioner units hanging out of second-story windows. There is now no way to determine which was the house of Verenin where Dambijantsan

lived. In his letters from here he does not give a house number and in any case the house numbering system may have changed since then. Still I walk the entire four-block length of the street, peering through ancient wooden gates into courtyards, some with tiny kitchen gardens, and stopping to photograph the more unusual buildings. Dambijantsan had lived in one of the buildings on this street and it was no doubt here that he plotted his final return to Mongolia. Eventually I do pass a few people, shabbily dressed Russians, but they pay not the slightest attention to me, as if they do not even see me.

During my travels in Mongolia I met many people who believed that the spirit of Dambijantsan continues to haunt his former hangouts. Preposterous as it may sound, I could not shake the feeling that Dambijantsan, in one form or another, had cast a spell over this odd, anachronistic street. Turning south on Kalinin Street I am suddenly back in modern-day Astrakhan. The shade of Dambijantsan was hopefully left behind.

On June 20, 1917, while lived on what is now Pestelya Street, Dambijantsan received a letter from Burdukov which included the photos of himself he had requested earlier. On the same day he sat down and wrote a reply to Burdukov. "I am extremely delighted by the warm greetings from you and your wife and by your kind and sincere wishes for me," gushed the one-time torturer, always a gentlemen in his letters. He mentions that he would be released from police supervision sometime in 1917 but added that he had no plans to return to Mongolia, contrary to what he had written before. Indeed, he now complains that the Mongol people had never properly appreciated the efforts he made on their behalf:

... trying to free Mongolia from the Chinese yoke, I have gained nothing for myself except a lot of psychological and physical problems ... as a result of my kind efforts toward the well-being of the Mongolia nation I have only suffered ..."

He is still involved with some kind of unspecified business affairs with Burdukov and asks about the money that was supposed to be forwarded to him via Russian consulate in Khovd. Meanwhile inflation is running wild, the prices of all commodities, including mutton, bread, butter, are soaring. "Nothing is reasonable," he grouses, and boots are altogether unavailable. He also asks for photos of Mongolian noblemen he knew and a copy of a magazine article about his exploits during the Siege of Khovd in 1912. He may have claimed that he had no intention of returning to

Mongolia but his thoughts were clearly turning there.

On June 30 he wrote again in reply to a letter of Burdukov's:

I am safe and sound, thanks the Lord. I would like to thank you for your kindness and sincerity to me. You were the first among my friends whom I met in Mongolia, and now the one who writes a letter with kind and faithful regards to me. I am extremely happy to receive your letter, I will never forget your kindness and friendly treatment to me. Could you please send my best regard to your wife?

He then reiterates his complaints about the ingrate Mongolians:

I am really disappointed that my efforts done for the welfare of Mongolia were not valued. I fought with China for two years in order to release my fatherland from the Chinese yoke. I was wounded twice during the war, I didn't try to spare my; I risked with my life for Mongolia. This year I am going to be released from police supervision, but anyway I am not going to Mongolia this year. I didn't do or even think to do anything bad for my Fatherland, but my Fatherland didn't try to save and protect me when I was in a disastrous circumstances . . .

Oddly, he mentions a college he claims to have founded in the "Altai Region." He wanted only that the people there should be "literate and intelligent" but for this act of magnanimity the Mongols were also ungrateful. There is no other mention of this college anywhere by Dambijantsan or anyone else and it might well have been the product of his imagination.

By then situation had deteriorated even further. Bread was valuable only with a ration card. One person was permitted to buy only two pounds of flour and five pounds of rice a month. New boots were a staggering 120 rubles.

The good news was that the Astrakhan officials had been informed by telegram that the money Burdukov had given to the Russian consul in Khovd was on the way by post. He expected to receive it in a few days. He also notes in passing that on June 28, two days before, he had met with the academician B. Ya. Vladimirtsov, who had early recorded the epic poetry about Dambijantsan's role in the siege of Khovd. For a more substantial account of this encounter we have to turn to Vladimirtsov's own letter to Burdukov, dated Sept. 12, 1917. Dambijantsan, Vladimirtsov discovered, had changed considerably:

When he first entered the room I did not recognize him. Nothing was left of the previous Ja Lama. Try to picture a thin, gaunt man, dressed in a suit and lacquered books. He made a low bow and with great effort I finally

recognized him. Once he was the formidable and awe-inspiring Dambijantsan! Such is Fate!

Dambijantsan told Vladimirtsov that he living fairly well in Astrakhan and that he was pretty much free to come and go as he pleased, although technically he had not been released from police supervision. No one was really interested in him. No one in Astrakhan knew that he had once been a monk (and apparently no one knew about his dubious past in Mongolia). He repeated his gripe that the Mongols did not appreciate his efforts to regain their freedom. He claimed that he suffered greatly in his attempts to help his own people, the Dörböts, but they too did not believe in him. Now, he claimed, he wanted to live among Russians and not Kalmyks or Buryats. He was, so Vladimirtsov thought, renouncing his whole past. "Who is this character, who is this person?" wondered Vladimirtsov, "I couldn't manage to understand this man. In most ways, he now makes a pitiful impression."

Dambijantsan appeared to be at loose ends. "To my mind, if he wanted, he could go anywhere. And despite what Dambijantsan said, Vladimirtsov could not shake the idea that he had "some special plans" up his sleeve.

On August 1 Dambijantsan replied to Burdukov's letter of June 3, which he had received that very day. Apparently Burdukov had send him some khadags and fabric by separate mail but he had not received these yet. He says that very soon now he will be released from police supervision but that he still has no plans to return to Mongolia. "I want to live in Russia for now, maybe forever," he writes. But his interest in Mongolia has not died out completely. He asks Burdukov to send photos of prominent princes and lamas, including the Sartuul Tsetsen Van, Jalchiggombodorj, who ruled over the Sarts who lived in what is now northwest Zavkhan Aimag and eastern Uvs Aimag and who earlier had been a partisan of Dambijantsan's. Was Dambijantsan just getting nostalgic, or was he actually trying to keep up his links with his former followers in Mongolia. In most of his letters he states that he has not intention of returning to Mongolia but could this have been for the benefit of the police, who might well have been reading his correspondence?

Every day he went to the post office checking for the money which the Russian consul in Khovd had supposedly sent him. Thus he was in the uncomfortable position of having to wait for the proverbial check in the mail. By mid-September he was even more desperate for funds. On September 18, 1917, he wrote to Burdukov that he would like to borrow

14,000 rubles from him. Apparently permission from the Mongolian government is needed to transfer the money out of the country, and he planned to make a formal request to the Russian Consulate in Örgöö, asking that they acquire the proper authorization from the Mongolian authorities. He states again, this time emphatically, that he has no intention of returning to Mongolia. Why would Burdukov be willingly to loan what was then a considerable sum of money to a man with no apparent source of livelihood, who lived thousands of miles away, and who had no intention of returning to Mongolia? Why would the Mongolian government, which had been only too happy to be rid of Dambijantsan, be willing to authorize such a loan?

Meanwhile, on October 25 (Julian Calendar) Bolshevik Red Guards seized the headquarters of the Provincial Government in the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg, triggering the Second Revolution setting in motion a civil war which was to last until 1922 when the Soviet Union was created. In his next letter, dated December 23, Dambijantsan makes no direct mention of the October Revolution, noting only that "it is still quiet and peaceful in Astrakhan city, as well as the whole province," and that prices of mutton, beef, butter, and flour have soared even higher since he last wrote. The main reason for this letter is to thank Burdukov for forwarding via the Russian Consul in Örgöö 1000 rubles, apparently an advance on the 14,000 ruble loan he had requested. Gushed the Two White Camel Lama:

I am grateful to you," and I am really delighted to hear about your good health and the friendly efforts you have made on my behalf. I had been worrying about you and your health since I hadn't heard from you for so long. There is no one dearer than you for me in this world, you are my only faithful friend forever.

He also has nothing but kind words for the Russian Consul in Mongolia. It is not clear if this is the same official who had earlier arrested him; if so, all is now forgotten:

Could you pass my regards and gratitude to Mr. [Russian] Consul for his help to me in difficult time, he was the one who pitied me when I was in difficult condition, sending the money he . . . please tell Mr. Consul that I would be grateful to him till the end of my life, that I would never forget his kindness and could you also ask him if he could send me the rest of the money.

As soon as he gets the entire 14,000 rubles, he goes on, he intends to

buy a house near the Kalmyk Bazaar about seven miles from Astrakhan. Here, he claims, he intends to “settle down.” The Bolshevik Revolution does not seem to be worrying him unduly at this point, and he once again makes it clear—at least in writing—that he has no intention of returning to Mongolia. Intriguingly he adds: “As you suggested, I have started taking notes and writing down my life experiences up until now. I will I will be able to send these to you in the spring, as soon I finish them.” Was the mysterious badarchin finally going to lift the veil from his myth-strewn life? Would his memoirs shed light on his past, or would they, like the self-serving accounts of maguses like Madame Blavatsky and George Gurdjieff, simply add another layer to the obfuscation? If he did start his memoirs they have not survived.

On December 23 Dambijantsan writes again to Burdukov in much the same vein. He has received another 1000 rubles and is waiting for the remaining 12,000. Here he says, confusingly, that the money is not a loan from Burdukov but instead funds owed to him by the Mongolian government. “Transfer the money as quickly as possible,” he pleads, “as I would like to stay forever in Astrakhan, living among the Kalmyks. I would like to buy a house for 4000 rubles near the Kalmyk Bazaar, seven miles from Astrakhan town; flats are very expensive here in the city.”

Dambijantsan’s final letter from Astrakhan is dated February 5, 1918. Civil war has broken out in Astrakhan. On one side are Astrakhan Cossacks, with whom most and the Kalmyks have sided, and on the other is a garrison of soldiers and local workers loyal to the Bolsheviks. The soldiers and workers barricaded themselves in building in the middle of the city and fighting raged for eighteen days. Dambijantsan:

There were almost 800 Cossacks, with 200 officers . . . and about 1200 soldiers and workers. The Cossacks were armed with twelve field guns, thirteen machine guns and many rifles. The soldiers were armed with rifles and machine guns. The soldiers won the fight. The best part of the center of Astrakhan town has been burnt. Many shops and stores have been robbed by looters. There has been a loss of several millions of rubles. Lots of people—fighters and peaceful citizen alike—died, about two and a half thousand people. . . Everywhere there is huge unemployment. The capital of all the merchants and the rich have been confiscated.

He has not received the 1200 rubles he was expecting and is in dire straits. Prices of all commodities are now outrageous. “Everything is so expensive I cannot afford anything,” he moans.

Finally he did receive at least some of the money owned him, but here was no longer any question of buying a house and settling down in Astrakhan. The soldiers and workers had established a Soviet and taken tentative control of the region but the civil war was far from over. Astrakhan was no longer a safe haven. Dambijantsan gathered up what money he had and sometime March took the Trans-Siberian Railroad east. Somewhere near Lake Baikal he bought a horse and headed south along the Selenge Valley into Mongolia.

The descendant/reincarnation of Amarsanaa had returned and the last and most dramatic chapter of Dambijantsan's life was about to begin.