

## Diary Entries Final Project – Sergei Pavlovich Suvorov

Property of Sergei Pavlovich Suvorov

April 30<sup>th</sup>, 1878 – Novgorod

The service finished, and the townsfolk all dispersed. I energetically sprung from threshold, and mother and I rushed for the station where Kostya was already waiting. When we arrived at the platform, the train was already in its last stages of being boarded. Hurriedly, my mother had the servant place my bag in my hands, filled with rubles, clothing, my orders, and my journal. Mother embraced me quickly and tearfully told me to make my country proud, and to send her best to her dear Vasya when I arrived in Orenburg. Young Kostya came and hugged me as well, holding back tears. I was glad he came. He was the only one of my nine brothers and sisters that were there to see my off. The other eight were either too young to care or too old to be anywhere but at the centers of political action. They were Suvorovs after all, a name that carries weight, inspiring and casting a shadow on all of us.

My goodbyes finished, I boarded the train, and it rolled out of the station. I found a seat in the quiet back corner of my car and opened my bag. I pulled out my journal. I had it since I was a boy, always looking at the maps in the study room or the Suvorov himself in glory on the canvas over the mantle. I always loved listening to father regale me of stories of his battles for Russia, and of the glory and renown which any many could not help but look at with envy. I opened the journal to the first page. It was poorly done child's drawing of my father on horseback, fighting the British in the Crimea.

As I flipped through the pages and down the years, the drawings and thoughts progressed, but the theme never differed. I stopped on the last picture I sketched during my military training. A map of Europe and Asia. A detailed one at that. I had loved looking at the scale of the great empires of Europe on the map, and all the colors of the empires stood against the other. It was always to the center of the map my eyes drew. Turkey in orange, so large and yet so weak, and Britain its defender in this and the last war. Then India in red, the axle on which the whole British Empire turns, arrayed against a great wall of white to the north, Russia. From this white came broad arrows, into Europe, into Turkey and Persia, into India. I had always dreamed of Russia marching to the ends of the earth, and I had always dreamed of being a part of it. For me, it is to where the white Russia and red Britain meet that I go. I've been assigned to a Cossack Battalion in Russian Turkestan, taking the fight to the Asiatic savages at our borders, and it's there that I will make a Suvorov of myself.

June 18th – Tashkent

After a three and a half day train ride, I finally found myself in Orenburg on May 3rd, the seat of the early Russian conquests of the steppe. There has been so much talk of the war with Turkey of late. Fear that the British will step in to deny us the straits, and word that we too might step in against them. Such was the talk on the train, especially when new word arrived after we stopped in Moscow. When I entered the Governor-General's office there, the hustle and

excitement surely did little but confirm these rumors. When I finally found my brother Vasily, adjutant to the Governor-General himself, he was in a secret and guarded meeting. After an hour wait, my brother emerged confident, the spring in his step bouncing his epaulettes and medals, and upon seeing me his mustached face lit up even more.

“Seryozha! It is good to see you little brother! It has been too long. I regret the general has kept me busy with some confidential goings-on. Rest assured it is a grand time to be a Russian, brother. I have pulled some strings with some comrades of mine in Turkestan, and they have set you up with an adjutant job with a fine cavalry officer down on the farthest frontier!”

I spent the night at Orenburg, bade farewell to Vasily, and joined a caravan of new recruits heading south down the long and winding road to Tashkent. I’d rather not dwell on the journey, as it was as uneventful as it was dry, flat, and agonizingly long. I spent most of the time writing and sketching fictitious battles and conquests in my journal to pass the time. Eventually though, the steppes from Orenburg onwards gave way to the lovely Aral Sea and the road along the Syr Darya, so it became more tolerable. I couldn’t imagine having not have had a horse for the whole month and a half trip though.

June 20<sup>th</sup> – Samarkand

After two days of rest in Tashkent following the journey, I have been summoned to report for duty by the Governor-General’s office. Von Kaufmann is a legend with many Russians, having led the battle against the Bukharans and the Khivans for more than a decade. As I entered the office, I noticed guards posted outside the door. When I told the adjutant that I was here to receive my orders from Von Kaufmann, he informed me that the Governor-General was busy in a secret War Plans meeting. He then told me that he had been given my orders, and that I would be appointed as the second in command of the 46<sup>th</sup> Cossack Battalion. However, he added that the battalion was newly forming for a new function, and that instead of my posting on the frontier, I was supposed to join Colonel Ivanovsky and make for Samarkand immediately.

When I asked where I should find this Colonel, the adjutant pointed across the room towards a tall, and well-mustached figure with several medals and hair that was graying slightly at the edges. I went over and introduced myself, and was heartily impressed when I mentioned my last name. “Suvorov?” He remarked. “How appropriate that we have another Suvorov to gloriously carry us to victory one more time”. I was puzzled. “Gloriously, sir? Is it this glorious thing that lies in Samarkand?” Ivanovsky raised a bushy eyebrow and brought a grim bemused look. “No, Captain. Our glory does not lie in Samarkand. That is merely our staging area. Have you not heard the orders? The whole Russian army in Turkestan heads south. Our glory, Sergei Pavlovich, lies in India.”

The road south the Samarkand was relatively short, but was filled with excitement. I had always dreamed of living up to or maybe surpassing my brothers, and dreamed of revenging Russia against Britain for the Crimean War and its other intrigues. The contents of my journal can testify to that. When we arrived in the city, Ivanovsky and I encountered a military sendoff

for a great party. Several hundred Cossacks and several hundred diplomats, led by a man named Stolietov on an embassy to the Afghan Emir in Kabul. I could not help but be moved by the procession and inspired by the vigor and boldness of bringing an embassy to a nation to British considered their vassal. Ivanovsky disliked the move and called it too risky, but I must admit I have truly been swept up with the “war fever” that everyone says is sweeping the country here. For posterity, I drew up the route of the delegation to Kabul, and the routes of my forces when they came through. This truly is the opportunity I’ve sought all my life.

August 1<sup>st</sup> - Samarkand

All this long waiting. And for naught. My first few days in the city were filled with inspiration, for I was anxious to go to battle in such a historic expedition. Troops gradually streamed into the city, and raised up massive camps outside when the city became full. More and more troops gradually arrived though to join the main force under the command of Major-General Mikhail Trotsky. We would depart Samarkand for Kabul, which would hopefully have been made friendly to us by Stolietov’s expedition, and then pour over the Khyber Pass into the ripe and poorly defended lands beyond. This was the plan. And I had sketched it a dozen times already, picturing a thousand scenarios in arrows of battle maneuvers and how I could show my quality as a Suvorov. And all for naught.

However, by late July, little news had come to us from Stolietov’s expedition to Kabul. A peace treaty between us and Turkey (backed by the British) in Berlin had lowered tensions and decreased the need for this great campaign against India. Finally, when only 70% of expected forces arrived at the staging area, Chancellor Gorchakov got cold feet and ordered Von Kaufmann to abort the campaign before it began. I am in a furor. This was kind of campaign I have wanted to be a part of all my life, and my hopes are dashed. With the expedition scrapped, Ivanovsky and I have been ordered to our unit’s normal position on the frontier, a small fort on the Amu Darya called Termez.

November 28<sup>th</sup> – Termez

Winter is beginning to set in here, though it is a mockery of winter back in Novgorod. It has certainly been better than the summer, which was oppressively hot. Termez has not been the worst posting, overlooking a great bend in the river, but I have been dying of boredom. There has been little to do in this garrison but to sit and watch the river and patrol the countryside. I have spent dozens of hours just sitting in Ivanovsky’s office and looking at the grand imperial map on the wall, harboring hopes of expanding Russia’s great white border. There is only so much staring across the river at Afghanistan you can do before you desperately seek to cross it. I have spent the last few months hanging on every scrap of news from Kabul. The embassy has gone remarkably well, which was brought me much hope in this boring little backwater fort. I considered Russian ascendancy in Afghanistan at hand, as the Emir – Sher Ali Khan - pledged to make his state a vassal to Russia in exchange for Russia’s protection against British intrigues.

The British, however, seem to have other plans. Word has arrived here that last week the British, finding their demand for an embassy in Kabul rejected, invaded Afghanistan with 40,000 men. The Emir could do little but to be routed by their forces. As I hear that the Emir is begging for Russian help, I find it hard to suppress the urge of riding to the nearest ford and intervene against the British myself. I desperately hope Kaufmann and Gorchakov can live up to their agreements with the Emir and send our forces against the invaders. I cannot stand the thought of looking across the Amu Darya and seeing British soldiers on the far shore, unless that sighting of the soldier is followed by a shot from my rifle.

January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1879 - Termez

The news from Afghanistan has grown bleaker by the day. First the British crush the Emir's armies, then they inflict several defeats on them again before besieging Kabul. Then two or so weeks ago, they took the city. What remained of our delegation – awaiting Russian relief forces I might add – departed the city in the middle of the night. Sher Ali Khan, in desperation and with his forces incapable of saving his capital from the British, fled. The British found themselves a puppet to put on the throne in the noble Emir's place. They fled from Kabul to Mazari-Sharif, perhaps thirty miles north of my station.

Last night, our battalion was dispatched across the river in a secret mission to shield the retreating delegation's trip back across the river. We rode out for the nearest ford, crossing under cover of darkness, save for the light of a full moon. Ivanovsky and I rode up to the company when we saw it approaching, spoke with the leaders the delegation, and beckoned them towards the ford. Next came a group we did not expect following behind them: The fleeing Emir and his allies. Getting over my shock, I rode up to greet them and direct them across. Grunts of thanks emanated from the group, but that couldn't make up for the sheer look of humiliation and fear upon each one of their faces. The Emir looked despairing, haggard even. Never when Ivanovsky and I saw this delegation leave would I have expected this as its result. Perhaps I was wrong to have been swept up by the same war fever and bellicose optimism that seized these men. Perhaps this was not boldness, but ill-advised hubris. That night I pulled out the map of the delegation's route to Kabul and added arrows in the opposite direction for their ignominious retreat.

January 14<sup>th</sup> – Termez

The recent snow has melted off last week, and my company was sent to patrol the Surkhand Valley to the north of Termez towards the Pamirs. The past few days have been uneventful, but it's been refreshing to get out of the small fortress. If I had to spend one more day on the ramparts watching the frontier and hoping for some semblance of action, I would go mad. Today, however, was a momentous day. As we went farther down the valley, towards Tajik country, one of our scouts spotted a strange party of Afghan travelers on a hill above the road. Suspicious, but also curious, I sent my men to cut them off and surround them. Upon further inspection, this party of "Afghans" was made up of an impertinent British officer, a bookish-

looking Indian cartographer, two disguised Sepoys, and several Indian servants. I ordered them seized and brought to Termez for interrogation. I cannot risk British spies in our midst.

January 17<sup>th</sup> – Termez

We arrived back at Termez this morning with our captives in tow. Immediately upon arrival, I brought the British officer – a major I soon learned – to Ivanovsky's office to be interrogated. It was in vain, however, as the officer was stubborn and inordinately rude, refusing to divulge his mission or give us the information we sought. Frustrated and offended at his demeanor, I wished to pry the answers from him more forcefully before Ivanovsky demurred at the notion. Instead, Ivanovsky told me to bring in the Indian cartographer from his jail cell.

As the cartographer entered, I couldn't help but notice he appeared to be the most educated non-white man I had ever encountered, dressed as I remember my professors at university appearing. One of my men poured out the contents of his bag. Among them were a few compasses, some ink, and maps, dozens of them. Except in this case, it was the cartographer who had drawing them. Among them were fords of the river and routes in the Pamirs and Hindu Kush. But a mapping expedition considering the tumult on the other side of the border simply was not plausible. He must be a spy. I pressed the cartographer for answers. Then I pressed him again. I wanted answers, but he just looked down at the chess set on the desk and was unresponsive. Eventually I lost my temper, yelling "Damn it you Hindu rat, what are you?"

The cartographer looked up at last, with a fire in his eyes the likes of which I had never seen. He stood up and spat, and in flawless Russian like any educated man. He yelled, "Curse you Russian scum! I never wanted to be here in the first place. I was forced into doing this by the Viceroy's Office! You want to know what I am?" He reached down to the desk and picked up one of the pawn pieces from the chess set. "THIS is what I am!" He pointed at the Major in the corner. "This is what he is! This is what YOU ALL are!" In his anger he threw the piece at the great imperial map on Ivanovsky's wall. I was so angry at this impudent little brown man that I struck him. He was surprised, but looked at me and continued in a slower, more deliberate tone. "We do not matter in the slightest to those who make these decisions, thousands of miles away in offices and palaces, looking at maps on a wall very much like this one here. They toy with the attacks of thousands of soldiers as if they were nothing but the small arrow used to represent them. Those men matter little, and the peoples of these lands, even less. All that matters to these generals and politicians is which flag flies over those lands and which color those lands appear on their maps! And to them, if it takes a glorious and blood-soaked war to achieve it, so much the better!" His voice grew quiet, almost sad. "This is not a game, and yet we are still playing it."

Ivanovsky's bushy eyebrows rose, but instead of anger at the outburst, a touch of understanding could be seen on his face. Ivanovsky dismissed the cartographer, telling the guard to find him a proper room. I sat quietly for a while in my anger, and then departed for one of my favorite spots, a rock along the riverbank. I sat there until sunset thinking about what the cartographer said, clutching my old beloved journal, with all its invasion routes and maps. No matter what, I could not shake the feeling that every word of what he said, as much as I loathed

it, was true. I got angry, but in a different way than before. I took my old journal and chucked it into the river, watching as it and my foolish ambitions sank beneath the waves. Part of me felt like I had just thrown away the Suvorov legacy, but the other part of me did not care. What good comes of glory if it only ends in needless death, and what can a man derive from power if it only ends in desolation for the innocent? I looked up and down the river, remarking upon the utter calm and peace of it all. I pray to God that it may stay this way, and that this game can finally stop being played.

**Bibliography for BMBD Final Project:**

Becker, Seymour. 1968. *Russia's Protectorates in Central Asia: Bukhara and Khiva, 1865-1924*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

- Mostly primer material. Provides interesting insight (in English) into the reasoning behind the final Russian push into Central Asia. Talks about the dichotomy between Russian diplomats in St. Petersburg and the annexationist desires of the Russian commanders on the ground. Also sheds light on Russian dealings with the tribes and khanates of the Steppe, as well as their competitive tensions with the British.

Bekmakhanova, N.E. 2008. *Prisoyedineniye kazakhstana i srednyey azii k rossii*. Moscow.

- Collection of Russian primary source documents, including essays, letters, tables, and cables from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (bulk between 1830 and 1890) in Russian from Russian diplomats, bureaucrats, and military officers in Central Asia. Early on, several writings are about the history of the cities and peoples of the region. Later, there are descriptions of the campaigns against Bukhara, Khiva, and Kokand, and then tables concerning the demographic composition of the territories of Turkestan and Siberia, as well as records of agricultural and mineral production in various districts.

Rizhenkov, M.R. 2005. <<*Bolshaya igra*>> v tsentralnoy azii: <<*indiyskiy pokhod*>> russkoy armii. Moscow.

- Collection of Russian primary source documents, being orders, notes, reports, and telegrams from diplomats in St. Petersburg, military governors in Turkestan and the Caucasus, and military officers about the state of Central Asia. Often focuses on the tense rivalry with Great Britain, with many reports focusing on the disposition of British troops and the potential for military victory in a conflict. All documents range from March of 1878 to May of 1880. This is a valuable insight into the Great Eastern Crisis beginning in 1878, when a Russian embassy to Kabul provokes a British war against Afghanistan.

Sergeev, Evgeny. 2013. *The Great Game 1856-1907: Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia*. Washington, D.C. : Woodrow Wilson Center Press.

- Primarily checked out as primer material. Although not yet deeply examined, the book opens with the Russian and British motivations for Central Asian expansion, ranging from ideas of “White Man’s Burden” to geopolitical rivalry and material wealth.

Tomohiko, Uyama. 2012. *Asiatic Russia: Imperial power in regional and international contexts*. New York.

- Interesting specific piece for understanding. Investigates the Russian imperial system in Central Asia, from governor-generals to Orthodox views of non-believers.