

## IN MEMORIAM

**Nikolai V. Pervushin**  
(1899–1993)

Nikolai Vsevolodovich Pervushin, who died at the age of 94, was probably the last representative in Canada of the pre-revolutionary *intelligentsia*.

He grew up in Kazan, the son of a physician and assistant director of the University clinic. On his mother's side he was related—a nephew twice removed—of V.I. Ulianov-Lenin. He completed his postgraduate studies at the faculty of law of Kazan University in 1919, and two years later, at the very young age of 22, he was appointed assistant professor at the university's Faculty of Social Sciences. Still as a student, he published a number of newspaper articles, and later, as a university staff member, a number of economic studies which brought him into conflict with the local Bolshevik authorities. He was arrested by the Kazan Cheka and released only in response to a telegram from Lenin. Pervushin longed to go abroad to continue his studies and do research for a thesis and finally managed to secure a *komandirovka* to Germany. This time, Lenin's sister Anna Il'inichna Yelizarova helped him to outwit the Kazan Cheka by arranging with her younger brother Dmitrii to send a telegram signed, quite properly, Ulianov. Having secured the passport and arranged for his wife Xenia L'vovna to follow him, Pervushin left for Germany in March 1923, never to return to Russia.

In order to get his wife who, by then, was pregnant, to join him legally, Pervushin entered into the services of the Soviet Trade Delegation in Berlin as an economist and editor of the Trade Bulletin. He also published two books on German industry and articles on oil economics, while attending lectures by prominent German economists at the university. His papers on oil industry, as well as the fact that he was Lenin's relative, secured him the position of an economics advisor at the Paris office of the Société des produits du naphte russe. He moved with his wife and daughter to Paris in 1927 and worked at this Soviet institution until 1930 when, having been offered what he knew to be a fictitious position of chief economist with the Administration of Oil Trade in Moscow, he refused to return to the Soviet Union and became a *nevozvrashchenets*.

The pre-war and World War Two years in France were very difficult. Pervushin free-lanced as a journalist in Russian émigré and French newspapers and journals, tried unsuccessfully to "switch over" to literary criticism and, after 1939, worked as a translator. In early 1946, on the advice of a friend, he applied for work as a translator and interpreter at the United Nations, moved to the United States in March of 1946, and in October of that year started his career as a U.N. employee. His services as interpreter were often used at special conferences on all five continents, and he used to tell stories how he interpreted for Hammarskjöld, U Thant and Waldheim; for Eden, Dulles, Molotov, Bulganin, Khrushchev, Vyshinsky, Mendes France, Shumann, Ho Chi Minh, Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Eleanor Roosevelt; for scientists like Niels Bohr, Robert Oppenheimer, Academician Sedov; as well as for Kissinger, whom he held in rather low esteem.

In 1962, having reached the mandatory retirement age, Pervushin left the U.N. and moved to Montreal where he helped his recently widowed daughter

Natalie bring up her two sons. There he started on his last career, that of teacher. He taught as a visiting professor at McGill University, l'Université de Montréal and the University of Ottawa, and was also often called by the Canadian authorities to interpret at meetings and conferences involving Soviet visitors. He interpreted during Gorbachev's first visit to Canada in 1983. In 1960, he co-founded with Dr. Marianna Poltoratsky the Russian Summer School at Putney, Vermont, moved it to Norwich University, Northfield, Vermont, in 1968 and became its director. The school grew rapidly, and numbered around 300 students and 50 staff every summer. He retired as director in 1980 but continued to teach there until 1992. He received an honorary doctorate from Norwich University.

In 1989, Pervushin published a book of memoirs, *Between Lenin and Gorbachev*, in which he tells about his encounters with a great number of writers, scientists, scholars and politicians: truly, one could say that between 1918 and 1990 he saw, heard or spoke to the majority of prominent personalities in this century. He leaves manuscripts of books and essays on humanism, the Cold War, Marxism and Leo Tolstoy. His collections of essays, "Pages from History" and "The Epilogues," still in manuscript form, deserve to be known.

Nikolai Vsevolodovich's keen interest in people around him translated itself into the willingness to help, to advise, and to support his colleagues and numerous students who will remember his friendliness and warmth with gratitude and respect.

Gleb Žekulin, *University of Toronto*