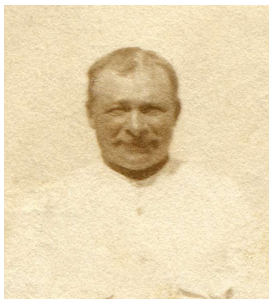


SS Vneshtorg
Petrograd
22/2/22



My dearest May,

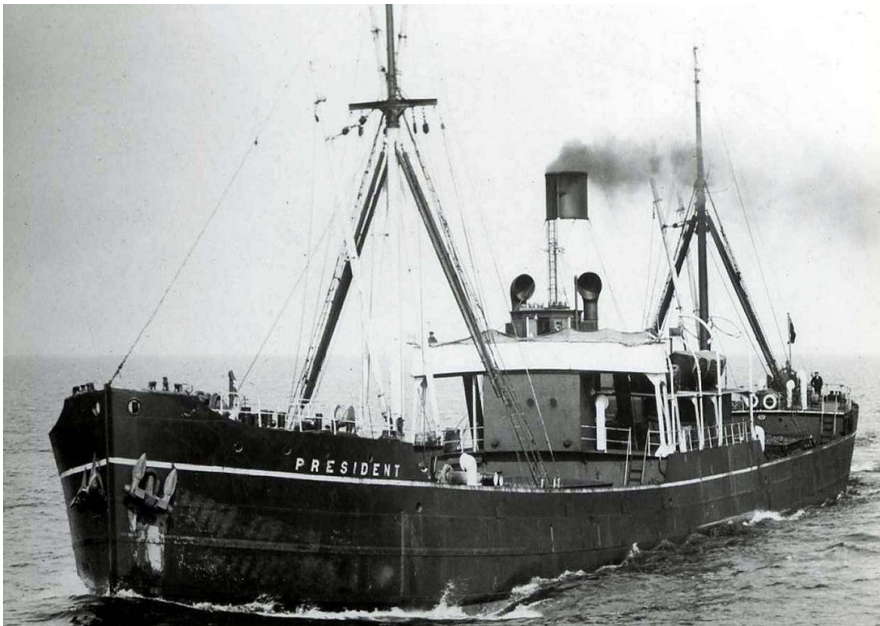


I am writing you a few lines, wondering whether you will ever get them. Things are very uncertain out here, especially in the Winter time while the snow and the ice is about.

Well, May dear, how are you keeping? I do hope that you are keeping tip top, and that the youngster is the same. If he is anything like a Roper he will never be ill, although I am not feeling quite fit myself, been eating something that I should not have eaten, but I suppose that I will be alright in a day or two.

Well I have seen enough ice and snow to last me for the rest of my life. You go to bed at night time looking at the ice and snow, and you turn out in the morning and you still look at the same material, and of course we have tons of the same material on our decks. Oh, I am downright sick of the lot of it. We have been up here 5 weeks and we have only got half of our cargo out so far, but we will finish this week, and then we have got to load here, a cargo of flax, but I do not know where we are going to take it yet, and do not suppose we shall know until the very last minute.

The worst of it is that we cannot leave here by ourselves. We have to have



an icebreaker with us. He cuts the way through the ice and we follow in his tracks. Coming up, we had 2 of them, one ahead of us and the other astern. It was a job getting up here. We were continually sticking in the ice. The breakers had to come time after time and cut us out. Sometimes they

towed us. We were the first cargo steamer in the history of Petrograd to come up here in the Winter time. I told the Authorities in this place that they ought to give me a special medal for the work. Nothing doing May, but it was really hard work getting up here. Once I was on the bridge for 17 hours. The ice was so thick and I knew that we were damaging ourselves with it, through forcing our way through it. The blessed stuff used to freeze up as fast as we could cut it. You must remember, that the ice was from 2 to 5 feet in thickness, and then there is usually about 2 feet of snow on top of it, and this, when it is knocked into the water with the ice, is really worse to get through than the ice. It is like wading through gum.

Well ,do you ever see anything of Queenie or Bruce? I am writing to them after I have finished this letter May, but I am not certain about the address you know. Bruce is always so vague, but I am going to have a go at it at any rate How am I getting on with my typing? I fancy that I could earn my living at it, if I were put to it, but it really is a good job that I have this machine, or else I would never have been able to have written all the letters I have done. The cold would not have allowed you to hold a pen so long in your hands. In fact the ink has been frozen up ever since we have been here, so the steward tells me, so there you are.



Do you ever hear about Aunt Julia? I suppose that she is beyond reclaiming now. I really must go and see Aunt Lilly the very first opportunity that I get. When that will be, goodness only knows.

Well, I will just finish off this little lot and then start another one. We have only 2 mails a week here, and all letters censored,

Please remember me to your husband, hoping that he is quite well. Kiss the boy for me and my very best love and kisses to your dear self.

From your loving Father.

SS Vneshtorg



Captain Roper's ship has an interesting history:

A collier, built in 1907 It was 85.3 metres long, had a speed of 9 1/2 knots and the signal letters HKJN. It was built at a cost of £24,000 for James Westoll Line, of Sunderland, which company carried coal on the E. coast of the U.K. & was involved also in the Black Sea grain trade. The company later became 'James Westoll (London) Ltd.', in 1917. She was neither the biggest nor fastest ship afloat but she was typical of the coastal workhorses plying the North Sea at that time.

On Aug. 4, 1914, the vessel was detained in Germany at the outbreak of WW1. It was later returned to the U.K., 'claimed by the War Risk Association', & sold in 1919 to Abbey Line Ltd., of Cardiff, Frederick Jones & Co. the managers, also of Cardiff, & renamed Neath Abbey.

It was sold again, in 1921, to 'All-Russian Co-operative Society Ltd.' (in Russian, 'Vneshtorg'), of London, & renamed Vneshtorg. The All-Russian Co-operative Society began operations in London in October 1920. It was the principal body responsible for the orchestration of Anglo-Russian trade in the early days of Soviet Russia, following the development of Lenin's New Economic Policy.

In 1923, the vessel was repurchased by Westoll & renamed President. On April 24, 1928, while en route from Hamburg, Germany to Methil, Fife, the vessel sank near St. Abbs, Berwickshire, Scotland, specifically at Whapness, near Eyemouth, on the East coast of Scotland, 5 miles North of the England/Scotland border. The ship sank in thick fog. There was no loss of life. The crew scrambled ashore.

The wreck lies today at 55.52.185N/ 02.04.400W. The wreck is spread over a large area, in 6 to 14 metres of water, with 'two huge boilers' still remaining.

