

# The Crimson Wizard—Atlantic Flight



(Tribune Studio photo.)  
"Moscow! The whole force of the situation struck Maida at a blow."

## A Forced Landing—Pursuit in the Air— Maida Is Drawn Toward Moscow

**M**AIDA TRAVERS' face was pressed hard against the window of the trans-Atlantic airplane, which now was hovering five thousand feet above the North Atlantic. Twenty-four hours has passed since that same plane had leaped from the deck of the liner Gigantic, which had been left crippled and compelled to stay in New York harbor for repairs.

In the twinkling of an eye the plane began to settle. One of the motors sputtered dangerously. Maida's startled eyes turned upon Michael Raclov, who sat at the controls.

"Raclov," she called fearfully, "are we lost?"

Raclov had not left the controls in all the long flight. "We were lost," he answered. "Look again."

Maida again fixed her eyes upon the sea below. The moon illuminated brightly the foam-capped waves. Maida continued to study the water. Then a cry of pleasure. "Islands!" she called.

Raclov nodded. "The Hebrides," he said. There was a series of explosions.

"The motor!" Maida called. "The motor! Has something happened to it?"

Raclov was taking the plane in great, wide circles. "It couldn't have happened at a more convenient time," he shouted over his shoulder. "I was off the compass. Yes, the motor is missing. If you could manage the controls I might mend it. But you can't."

"Can we make land?" Maida again peered through the window.

"No," Raclov kept a close

By SPECIAL AGENT

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eye on his instrument board. "No, we can't make land. But we can make an island if I find one with a decent place to land." The plane continued in its sweeping circles.

The night before and all this day had been fleeting hours of melancholy and horror for Maida



It was to be an all-night and then an all-day flight through an unknown sky.

Travers. With the swiftness of the wind the airplane had shot from the deck of the Gigantic. This was consternation to Maida. She clung to her seat as one who is confronting eternity. Long Island slid under them. They crossed the sound, always going higher and higher.

"There is land under us," she called to Raclov. "Go down!"

Raclov said nothing. He clung

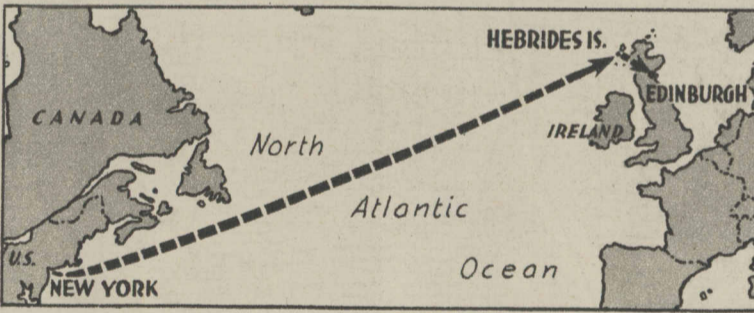
to the controls and at quick intervals studied the instrument board, studded with its clocks and dials and meters. Finally he called over his shoulder: "Europe. I have always wanted to do it."

"No! No!" Maida leaned forward in her chair and formed the words with her lips, but the sounds she made were strangely unsuited to her fears.

"Plenty of gas," called Raclov. "Plenty of food, and a couple of fine motors. Rest easy. We'll make it."

### II.

There was nothing else for it. Maida spent her emotions and then thrust out her pretty chin to accept the inevitable. It was to be an all-night and then an all-day flight through an unknown sky and over a bleak ocean. In spite of her anxiety she was able to catch some mo-



Map of the flight made by Raclov and Maida Travers.

ments of sleep. When morning came they were far out over the Newfoundland banks and swinging out over the Atlantic. Raclov had learned the lesson of his instrument board, but he had discovered that navigation was not the simplest of occupations.

Maida had long since given over any idea of changing the course of events with conversation. Necessity compelled her to rummage the lockers for food and to serve Raclov. When they had eaten there was silence between them again. This went on until their watches told them they must be near the end of their journey. Night had fallen again. But there was a bold moon by whose light Maida was able to gaze endlessly at the sea. Then came the downward lurch of the plane and the sputtering motor.

Raclov had said he would land on an island! That was something to consider in this night of dreary hopelessness. An island in the Hebrides group. Where are the Hebrides Islands? Maida searched her schoolgirl memory and then recalled that the Hebrides lie off the west coast of Scotland. This caused Maida to call to Raclov.

"There are hundreds of these islands," she said. "How can you know where to go?"

The one failing motor had stopped sputtering, had stopped running. Raclov was intent upon his descending plane. "There are five hundred of these islands," he called back. "Most of them are uninhabited. I must try one of them."

At first the whole group of dots in the sea rose to meet them. Then as the dots increased swiftly in size they seemed to scatter away from a common center. Finally a single island seemed abruptly to appear immediately below them but also to spin slowly round and round under Maida's apprehensive stare. In another moment the plane was bumping over the uneven ground and then came to rest with a jolt that shattered one of the windows.

"We're safe," said Raclov.

"And probably out of reach of human help," said Maida. For the first time she felt that she could speak and unleash her gathering anger upon this Russian who had so serenely carried her off. Yet she could not deny that he had saved her life.

### III.

Both were exhausted; and, since there seemed no other course, they silently withdrew to sleep. The morning brought its problems, but also sunshine and rest. Raclov had already discovered and mended a broken gas line. Both motors were now in order. He was now intent upon the broken window. In addition there was a burst tire. The plane could not take off until it was mended.

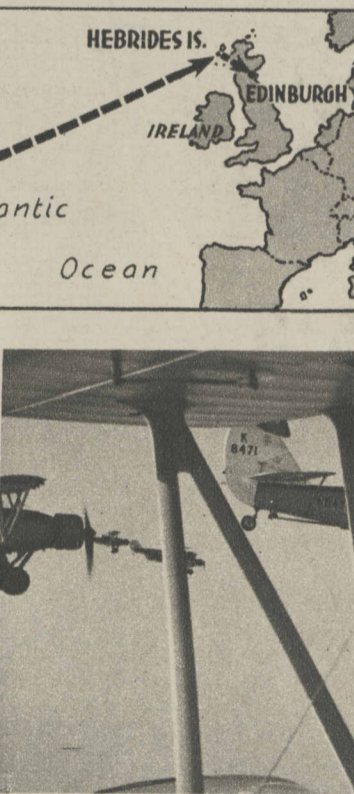
"We are going to be a few days in getting out of here," Raclov observed. "But we shall make it."

"Make it?" asked Maida. "To where?"

Raclov became serious. "If I can get gas after we leave here," he said, "I shall try for Moscow."

"Moscow!" The whole force of the situation struck Maida at a blow. It was as if a chapter in her book of life had been lifted from it without her knowledge and then had suddenly been replaced. In swift succession there shot through her mind a host of pungent recollections. Peter Quill. The Red Circle of spies. The theft of Eric Lambert's battleship plans. Her own courageous rescue of Peter Quill. The killing of Ivan Molokoff.

All of these things she had permitted to slip out of her conscious mind while she was on tiptoe with happiness and exhilaration over her voyage to Europe. Indeed, the very circumstances of her wild flight



Raclov was hemmed in by a semicircle of planes . . . as helpless as if he had been bound hand and foot.

over the sea should have warned her as Eric Lambert had warned her. And here she was, marooned on a Scottish island and at the bidding of a member of the Red Circle, without the least doubt in the world.

"I don't understand," she said. "I shall explain," said Raclov. "I am under orders from Moscow to take you there."

"How can you do that?"

"By telling you that we have only one means of transportation. It is this airplane. First I must repair it."

"I shall find help."

"Not on this island. It is un-

### CHARACTERS OF THE DRAMA

PETER QUILL, a hunchback, inventor of invisible lightning with affinity for explosives and capable of destroying battleships.  
ALLAN TYLER, chief of secret bureau.  
ERIC LAMBERT, designer of super-battleships.  
MAIDA TRAVERS, radio singer, beloved by Lambert.

IVAN MOLOKOFF, assistant engineer of radio station.  
PETROVICH, embassy attaché.  
SONYA DANILO, beautiful and mysterious figure in plot against Peter Quill and his invisible lightning.  
MICHAEL RACLOV, assistant of Sonya.  
VASILY, another assistant.

### SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING INSTALMENTS

● Eric Lambert's plan for superbattleships stolen by spies of Red Circle. Allan Tyler, told to beware the Firefly, beautiful and dangerous agent of Red Circle, decides to hold public inquiry. Just before inquiry an attempt to kidnap Peter Quill from taxicab in which he is riding is thwarted by Maida Travers. As Ivan Molokoff is being questioned at inquiry the lights suddenly go out. When they go on Molokoff is dead. At the door stands Peter Quill. A woman's sardonic laugh is heard, and Chief Tyler finds a bit of paper fashioned in the shape of a firefly. Sonya eludes a police cordon by provoking a riot of pick-and-shovel men. Joining Petrovich, she admits to him that she was at the secret bureau when Molokoff was slain. Sonya discovers that Maida is about to sail for Europe on the steamship Gigantic. When the liner sails not only Maida is aboard but also Sonya, Petrovich, and Raclov. Sonya causes a blast to rock the vessel. In the excitement Maida obeys Raclov's command and enters a plane resting on a catapult on the ship's deck. Petrovich releases the catapult lever and the plane takes off with the two aboard. Back on land at an isolated spot on the Jersey flats near New York, Peter Quill tests the power of his invisible lightning. Watching him from behind a clump of bushes is Sonya Danilo.

inhabited. I discovered that before you were awake. Of the five hundred islands only one hundred are peopled."

Maida had long ago resolved not to burst into tears. A better thought came to her. "Of course, we are missed," she said. "There will be a search for us."

"True," said Raclov. "I have thought of that. It is possible we shall meet patrol squadrons. If we are captured we shall be accused of stealing this airplane."

"We?"

"Why not? We are together. If you complain I shall be com-

needlessly. "I apologize," he said.

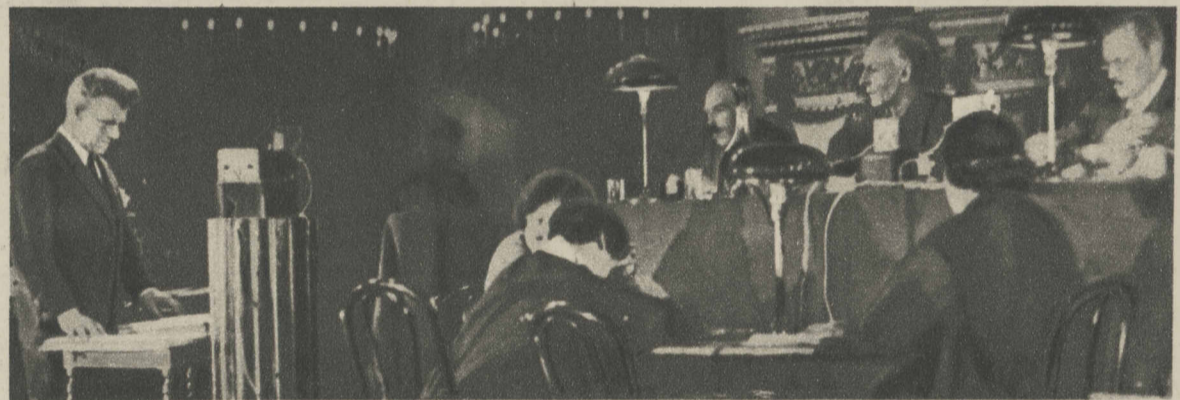
"O," said Maida, "the pistol—"

"I regret it. It was a bit of play."

"To gain my confidence?"

"Your pardon, Miss Travers."

They spoke no more than was needed after that. Raclov set about his repairs with vast diligence. The burst tire was the most difficult. This he laboriously stuffed with tough sea grass. Nearly a week passed before he reached the end of his labors. The last two days he used in clearing a path for the takeoff.



On this night, then, the Red Circle in Moscow was holding a session of that savage tribunal from which defendants rarely emerge save to face the rifles of the Red squads. (Acme photo.)

pelled to say that we stole the plane together."

"What a pleasant rescuer you have become!"

"These are orders. But I can also help you. You are in Europe to attend to your music. You want to go to Berlin. I shall take you there."

"Thank you. It is better than Moscow."

"But Moscow also. I shall introduce you to Herr Kalmitz, who is the conductor of the greatest radio orchestra in Berlin. That will be to your advantage."

Maida's tension gave way to laughter. "And if I don't like your Herr Kalmitz?"

"You will. He is, like me, a member of the Red Circle. Wherever we go we shall meet people of the Red Circle. They

It was studded with stones. These he painstakingly carried away. The head wind came the next evening.

Maida found the broken window repaired. "It is nothing," Raclov explained. "These islands are rich in deposits of gneiss. Odd name, isn't it? In Russia we call it Muscovy glass. When I was a boy I used to hear that it was used as window panes in the ships of war. I think you call it mica and isinglass. I split off some beautiful sheets of it. That's the new window. It will keep the wind out."

Maida was interested but silent. Raclov was unquestionably a villain, but also an ingenious and tolerable villain. They took their places with the motors warming up. The takeoff was swift and without incident.

### IV.

Raclov would have been keenly interested had he been in Moscow on this night. He might have changed his course and his destination. Or he might not have. Loyalty to the Red Circle is as strange as the Red Circle itself. On this night, then, the Red Circle in Moscow was holding a session of that savage tribunal from which defendants rarely emerge save to face the rifles of the Red squads.

It was such a scene as confronted the admirals and other high officers of the Red fleet last summer; such a scene as swept them before the firing squads to their deaths. It was such a scene as awaited Gen. Vasily Bluecher, commander of the Red troops in eastern Siberia. General Bluecher faced the charge of treason, the common accusation against all of those men whose leadership might endanger the Red autocracy.

The scene was always the same. The room was bare and forbidding. In one end there was a plain table. Behind it sat three men. These men were dressed alike in smocks buttoned to their unshaven chins. Their faces were cold and expressionless. Their eyes were half closed. From out the lids of

these eyes there came a stolid and merciless gaze. These men did not move. They did not glance from one to another. They understood each other's thoughts. There was only one thought. That thought was death. These men were the judges.

Before the judges there sat a man. Little beads of foam gathered at his thick lips. Veins stood out in his forehead. His eyes were bloodshot. He licked his lips with a nervous tongue. His hands were clutching nervously. He was waiting for the next victim. This man was the prosecutor of the Red Circle.

Back from this altar of justice were a few rough benches. Here were seated some soldiers with their fixed bayonets.

The door opened. Three entered. Two were soldiers. Between them walked the prisoner. He was Casimir Raclov. He was the brother of Michael Raclov. The Red Circle was about to place Casimir on trial for his life. There was no attorney for the defense. The attorneys for the defense had been shot long ago.

The prosecutor sprang to his feet like a beast of prey whose reeking meat is about to be thrown before him. His blood-shot eyes narrowed. His clutching hands increased their nervous clenching. Foam sputtered from his bulbous lips. The prisoner was given a chair. The soldiers stood at his sides. Their bayonets were lowered.

The prosecutor screamed, "You are Casimir Raclov!"

It could not be denied. The very scream of the name was an accusation. The judges sat

like blocks of stone. The prisoner confessed the horrible indictment with a sad nod of his young head.

The prosecutor seemed almost to strangle in the haste of his questioning. You have read books that are forbidden? Yes, he had read a book. You have a brother? Yes, a brother. That brother has failed in his duty? He could not know this. Do you not know that he has deserted from his duty? Have you not failed in your respect to the state? Have you not been heard to say that you would prefer to live in America? Have you not made preparations to leave the territory of the soviets?

The prisoner had hardly time to reply to all. To some of the questions he was able to confess that he had hoped to live elsewhere. The prosecutor halted with a toss of his mass of uncombed hair. He turned to the judges.

"Judges," he cried, "what is your verdict?"

The faces behind the table remained chill and unmoved.

"Guilty!"

"Guilty!"

"Guilty!"

Each judge spoke one word.

Each word was spoken in precisely the same manner. Each pair of expressionless eyes gazed straight ahead. There was no movement. The verdict of each sprang through half-closed lips.

The prosecutor waited through this formality with only slight patience. When the three words had been uttered he again screamed:

"Judges! What is your sentence?"

Again one word. Each word alike. There was no other sound. The soldiers who sprawled on the benches looked at the prisoner with unseeing eyes.

"Death!"

"Death!"

"Death!"

The two guards took Casimir Raclov by the arms and led him from the room. The prosecutor sat upon the edge of his chair and eagerly awaited the next

(Continued on page nine.)

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