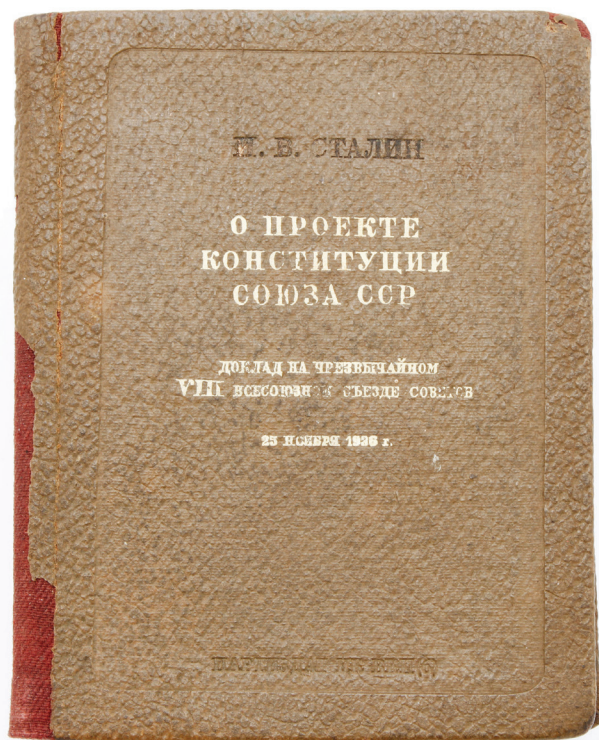


# Vaslav: Captain Tokareff was never heard from again

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Columbia River Maritime Museum  
**ABOVE: The front cover of a pocket-sized Russian Constitution taken from the shipwreck. LEFT: Photographer Lawrence Barber captures a crew member descending from the Vaslav. BELOW: Lifeboats arrive to Vaslav Vorovsky's rescue.**

in between the Vaslav and his lifeboat.

Just as the last crew members were rescued, Captain Tokareff hauled up the Jacob's ladder and refused to get off the ship. It's believed that he was afraid of retribution from Russian dictator Joseph Stalin, who threatened ship captains with the worst should they let anything happen to vessels under their command. By daylight, the Vaslav began to turn sideways. She was hit repeatedly by waves that began to break the vessel into three pieces.

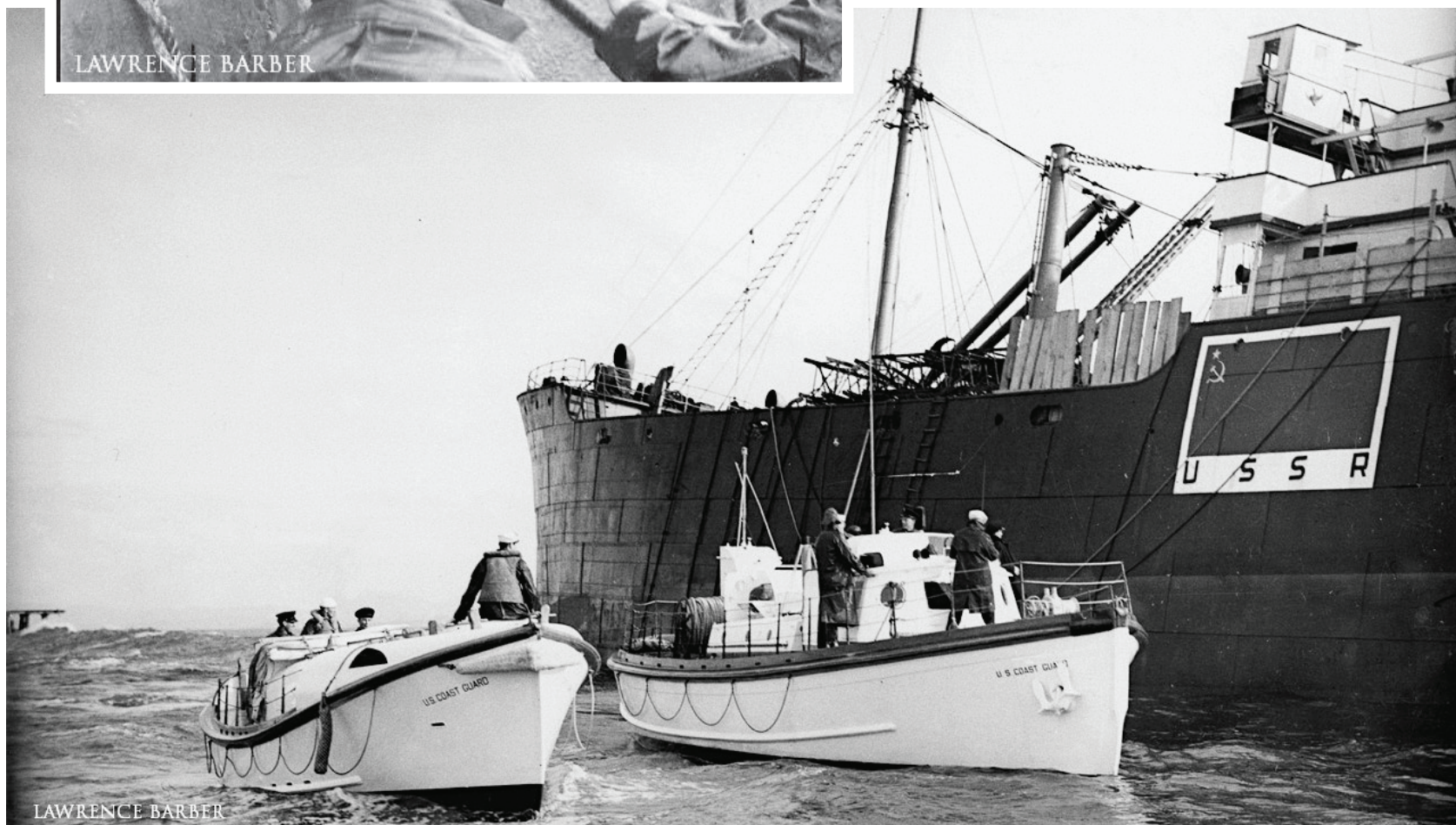
A few tugboats waited on standby to help the ship afloat, but it soon became clear that she was lost.

After another 24 hours onboard the sinking Vaslav, Captain Tokareff signaled that he wanted to be rescued. Although everyone on board the ship was saved, it's rumored that Vaslav Vorovsky had at least one casualty after all. Captain Tokareff and his crew returned to the Soviet Union after the incident, and the captain was never heard from again. It's believed he was killed on Stalin's orders for the accident.

Years after the shipwreck, a woman walked into the Columbia River Maritime Museum and asked to speak with someone about a Russian ship that had sunk on the Columbia River Bar. Her husband to be was one of the Coast Guardsmen who once responded to the Vaslav's distress call. A crew member had gifted him with a handful of spoons from the sinking ship out of gratitude for his rescue.

After keeping the spoons in her family for many years, the woman realized their importance to Columbia River history and donated them to the Maritime Museum's collection.

Julia Triezenberg is an educator at the Columbia River Maritime Museum.



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