

DANGER LURKS BENEATH THE SEA

Daphne Athas

A Poem Recognized

THE SUBMARINE KURSK

The Russian nuclear submarine, Kursk, blew up beneath the Baltic Sea in the summer of 2000. The crew, more than a hundred men, was trapped inside as the submarine came to rest on the sand bottom. The Russians blamed an American missile gone awry. They tried to lift the boat to surface but it was too deep. America denied the charges. England and Norway offered help. The Russians refused, said they could engineer it up themselves and maintained silence. More than a week passed.

Most of the crew came from a town called Vidyayevo. Another week passed. Hope that any of the crew could be alive was abandoned. In August, mortified by his own silence and world accusations of state indifference, President Putin offered payments and apologies to relatives. More than a year passed before Norwegian engineers were able to lift the Kursk to dock.

Direct quotation from the *New York Times*, August 25, 2000:

“Vidyayevo is a dead town right now.
 The houses are standing like after a war.
 All of the windows are empty.
 Everything is robbed.
 The mothers are walking like shadows
 through the town.
 People are crying
 and the men don't raise their eyes.”