BOTCHKAREVA'S ATTACK ON KERENSKY SECRETLY PLEASES RUSSIAN OFFICERS

Good Feeling, However, Is Not Shared by the Men at the Front, Who Resent the Presence of the Battalion of Death

When They Get the Order to Go Over the Top, an Order the Women Are Anxious to Obey, the Men Hold a Meeting and Vote

(This story, told by Maria Botchkareva and translated and transcribed by Isaac Don Levine, is published by Frederick A. Stokes Company under the title of "Yashka.")

Botchkareva's soldiers do women's work, too

THIS STARTS THE STORY

In the summer of 1917 Maria Botchkareva formed the Battalion of Death, a woman's fighting unit in the Russian army, and a peasant girl thus stepped into the international hall of fame. In earlier installments she told of the hardships of her childhood, the brutalities of her married life, and the realization of her wish to become a soldier. She told of battles fought and won and of the demoralization of the army after the overthrow of the Czar. It was her desire to shame the men into action that prompted her to form the Battalion. Kerensky's desire that she should run the battalion on the committee plan caused her to throw her epaulettes in his face. Angered, he orders her to be shot, but he is reminded that capital punishment has been abandoned in the army.

AND HERE IT CONTINUES

KERENSKY then abandoned the thought of shooting me, but insisted before departing from Molodechno that I be tried and punished. The trial never came off.

The corps commander was wrought up when he discovered that I had disappeared with his car. He had to borrow one to get to Redki, and although glad at heart at my outburst, he decided to give me a scolding and remind me of discipline. I was too excited and nervous to do anything when I returned from Molodechno, and so lay down in my barrack, trying to figure out what would now become of the battalion. I knew I had committed a serious breach of discipline and reproached myself for it.

I was called before the commander late in the afternoon, and he reprimanded me for my unmilitary conduct. The general's rebuff was severe. I acknowledged every point of it without argument, recognizing that my behavior was unpardonable.

The hour for dinner came and I went to headquarters. The scene at the table was one of suppressed merriment. Everybody knew of what had happened at Molodechno. The officers winked knowingly and interchanged smiles. I was the hero of the clandestine celebration. Nobody dared to laugh out loud, for the general at the head of the table had assumed a grave expression, as if struggling not to sanction inadvertently by a smile the illegitimate levity of the staff over my treatment of Kerensky. At the end the general could not maintain his poise and joined in the laughter. The ban was lifted.

"Brave, Botchkareva!" one of the men exclaimed.

"That's the way to treat him," said another.

"As if there weren't enough committees in the army, he wants still more!" spoke a third.

"He had himself abolished capital punishment, and now wants her shot!" laughed a fourth.

The officers were plainly hostile toward Kerensky. Why? Because they saw that Kerensky did not understand the temper of the Russian soldier. His flying trips to the front perhaps made Kerensky and the world think that the army was a living, powerful, intelligent organism. The officers who were with the soldiers day and night knew that the identical crowd which gave an enthusiastic welcome to Kerensky would accord a similar reception to a Bolshevist or anarchist agitator an hour later. Above all, it was Kerensky's development of the committee system in the army that undermined his standing with officers.

After dinner I applied to the general for seven officers and twelve men instructors to accompany the battalion to the trenches. One of the officers, a young lieutenant named Leonid Grigorievitch Filippov, was recommended to me for the post of adjutant in battle. Filippov was known as a brave fellow, as he had escaped from a German prison camp. I addressed to the group of instructors a warning to the effect that if any of them would be unable to consider my soldiers as men it would be better for them not to join the battalion, and thus avoid unpleasantness in the future.

The battalion was assigned to the 172d Division, located within six versts of Redki, in the village of Beloye. We were met by the units in reserve, formed in ranks to greet us, with great enthusiasm.

It was a sunny day in midsummer. We spent little time at division headquarters. After lunching we resumed our march, having been further assigned to the 525th Kurag-Darvinski Regiment, about a verst and a half from Beloye and two versts from the fighting line. We arrived at Senki, regimental headquarters, after sunset and were met by a "shock battalion," formed of volunteer soldiers for offensive warfare. There were many such battalions scattered throughout the army, comprising in their ranks the best elements of the Russian soldiery.

Two barns were placed at the disposal of the battalion and one dugout for the officers. Another dugout was occupied by the instructors and members of the supply detachment. However, as the men in the place began to manifest a certain amount of curiosity in my girls, I decided to sleep in one barn and let Tatuyeva take charge of the second. At night many soldiers surrounded the barns and would not let us sleep. They were inoffensive. They made no threats. But they were simply curious, intensely curious.

"We merely want to see. It is something new," they replied to the remonstrating sentinels; "babas in breeches!" they made merry, "and soldiers to boot! Isn't it outlandish enough to attract attention?"

In the end I had to go out and talk with the soldiers. I sat down and argued it out. Didn't they think it right for the girls to want a rest after a day of marching? Yes, they did. Wouldn't they admit that recuperation was necessary before taking the offensive? Yes, they would. Then why not suppress their curiosity and give the fatigued women a chance to collect new strength? The men agreed and dispersed.

The girls were in high spirits the following day. The Russian artillery had opened up early and poured a stream of fire into the enemy positions. Of course, that meant an offensive. The commander of the regiment came out to review us and made a warm speech to the battalion, calling me their mother and expressing his hope that the girls would love me as such. The cannonade grew in violence on the 6th of July, 1917, was declining. The German artillery did not remain silent long. Shells began to fall here and there.

The night was passed in the same barns at Senki. How many of the girls slept, I do not know. Certainly most of them must have been awed in the presence of war itself. The guns were booming incessantly, but my brave little soldiers, whatever their hearts felt, behaved with fortitude. Weren't they going to lead in a general attack against the foe that would set the entire Russian front ablaze? Weren't they sacrificing their lives for beloved Russia, who would surely remember with pride this gallant group of 300 girls? Death was dreadful. But a hundred times more dreadful was the ruin of Mother Russia. Besides, their Natchalnik would lead them over the top, and with her they would go anywhere.

And what was the Natchalnik thinking about? I had a vision. I saw millions of Russian soldiers rise in an invincible advance after I and my 300 women had disappeared in No Man's Land on the way to the German trenches. Surely the men would be shamed at the sight of their sisters going into battle. Surely the front would awake and rush forward like one man, to be followed by the powerful armies of the rear. No force on earth could withstand the irresistible momentum of 14,000,000 Russian soldiers. Then there would be peace.

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An Errand From Kerensky to Korniloy

IN THE dusk of July the 7th we made our last preparations before going into the trenches. The battalion was provided with a detachment of eight machine guns and a crew to man them. A wagon load of small ammunition was also put in my possession.

I addressed my girls, telling them that the whole regiment would participate in an offensive the coming night.

"Don't be cowards! Don't be traitors! Remember that you volunteered to set an example to the laggards of the army. I know that you are of the stuff to win glory. The country is watching you set the stride for the entire front. Place your trust in God, and He will help us save the motherland."

To the men who were standing by I spoke of the necessity of co-operation. As Kerensky had just completed a tour of this section the soldiers were still under the influence of his passionate appeals to defend the country and freedom. The men responded to my call, promising to join us in the expected attack.

Darkness settled on earth, interrupted now and then by the flare of explosions. This was to be the night of nights. The artillery roared louder than ever as we stealthily entered a communication trench and filed singly into the front line. The rest of the regiment was pouring in the same direction through other communication trenches. There were casualties during the proceeding. Some soldiers were killed and many were wounded, among the latter being several of my girls.

The order from General Valuyev, commander of the Tenth Army, was for our whole corps to go over the top at 3 a. m. July 8. The battalion occupied a section of the front trench flanked on both sides by other companies. I was at the extreme right of the line held by the battalion. At the extreme left was Captain Petrov, one of the instructors. My adjutant, Lieutenant Filippov, was in the center of the line. Between him and me two officers were stationed among the girls at equal distances. Between him and Captain Petrov another two officers occupied similar positions. We waited for the signal to advance.

The night was passed in great tension. As the hour set for the beginning of the attack approached strange reports reached me. The officers were uneasy. They scented a certain restlessness among the men and began to wonder if they would advance after all.

The hour struck three. The colonel gave the signal. But the men on my right and to the left of Captain Petrov would not move. They replied to the colonel's order with questions and expressions of doubt as to the wisdom of advancing. The cowards!

"What for should we die?" asked some.

"What's the use of advancing?" joined others.

"Perhaps it would be better not to attack," vacillated many more.

"True, let us see first if an offensive is necessary," debated the remaining companies.

The colonel, the company commanders and some of the brave soldiers tried to persuade the regiment to go over the top. Meanwhile day was breaking. Time did not wait. The other regiments of the corp were also vacillating. The men, raised to a high pitch of courage by Kerensky's oratory, lost heart when the advance became imminent. My battalion was kept in the trench by the pusillanimous conduct of the men on both flanks. It was an intolerable situation, unthinkable, grotesque.

(CONTINUED TOMORROW)

TAKES MINER'S $2500

Affluent Coal Digger's $500, Sewed in, Escaped, However

Cleveland, March 20.—(By A. P.)—Anton Kresal, a miner in the Pennsylvania coal fields, is short $2000 on checks and $540 cash as the result of making friends with a stranger on a train coming to Cleveland. Kresal told the police he became dazed shortly after taking several drinks after his arrival.

The stranger overlooked $500 sewed in Kresal's clothing.