

# MAN WHOSE LIFE BOTCHKAREVA SAVED RESCUES HER FROM BLOODTHIRSTY REDS

### Led Away From Place of Execution as Nineteen of Her Companions Are First Shot and Then Bayoneted and Trampled Upon

### Brutal Bolshevik Leader Orders His Soldiers to Fire at the Knees of His Unfortunate Victims to Prolong Their Agony

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This story, told by Maria Botchkareva and translated and transcribed by Isaac Don Edgerly, is published in the "Evening Public Ledger" under the title of "The Girl Who Saved Her Life."

#### 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. This is her story. In earlier installments she told of the hardships of her childhood, of the brutalities of her married life and of the realization of her desire to become a soldier. She told of battles fought and won and of the demoralization of the soldiers following the overthrow of the czar. The battalion was formed for the purpose of saving the lives of the men, but in this was only partially successful and only for a time. The soldiers at last forced the members of the battalion to disband and Botchkareva returned to her home. She was presently summoned to Petrograd by Russian officers who were dissatisfied with the way the Bolsheviks were running the government and was sent on a secret mission to General Kornilov. On her way back to Petrograd, having successfully carried out her mission, she is captured by Reds, who sentence her to die.

#### AND HERE IT CONTINUES

"Don't cry, my child," the general bent over me, patting me. "They are savages. Their hearts are of stone. They would not even let us receive the last sacrament. Let us die like heroes, nevertheless."  
His words gave me strength. I got up, straightened out and said:  
"All right, I will die as a hero."  
Then for about ten minutes I gazed at the faces of our executioners scrutinizing their features. It was hard to distinguish in them signs of humanity. They were Russian soldiers turned inhuman. The lines in their faces were those of brutal apes.

"My God! What hast Thou done to Thy children?" I prayed.

In a long file the numerous events of my life passed before me. My childhood, those years of hard labor in the little grocery store of Nastasia Leontieva; the affair with Lazov; my marriage with the ugly Yashak; the three years of war; they all passed through my imagination some incidents strangely gripping my interest for a moment or two, others flitting by hastily. Somehow that episode of my early life, when I quarreled with the little boy placed in my charge and the undesired spanking I got from his mother stood out very prominently in my mind. It was my first act of self-assertion. I rebelled and escaped. \* \* \* Then there was that jump into the sea. It almost seemed that way not I who sought relief in its cold, deep waters from the ugly Afanas. But I wished that I had been drowned then rather than die such a death.

#### Save By a Miracle

The investigation committee finally appeared in the distance. Petrukhin was leaning toward me. There were twelve members present, the two objects apparently having joined the other ten.

"You see how kind we are," some of the soldiers said. "We are having the committee present at your execution."

None of us answered.

"We were all to see Sablin, the commander-in-chief," Petrukhin announced as soon as he approached near enough to Pugatchov.

"He said that Botchkareva would have to be shot, but not necessarily now and with this group."

A ray of hope was lit in my soul.

"Nothing of the sort!" Pugatchov bawled angrily.

"What is the matter here? Why this postponement? The list is already made up."

The soldiers supported Pugatchov. "Shoot her! Finish her now! What's the use of bothering with her again?" cried the men.

But just as Pugatchov sensed that Petrukhin had obtained the delay hoping to save me, so the latter realized that words would not be sufficient to carry his argument. He had provided himself with a note from Sablin.

"Here is an order from the commander-in-chief," Petrukhin declared, pulling out a paper. "It says that Botchkareva shall be taken to my compartment in the railway carriage and kept there under guard."

Pugatchov jumped up as if bitten. But the committee here rallied to the support of Petrukhin, arguing that orders were orders, and that I would be executed later.

Not the least interested spectator of the heated discussion was myself. The officers followed the argument breathlessly, too. The soldiers grumbled. The forces of life and death struggled within me. Now the first would triumph, now the second, depending on the turn of the quarrel.

"Nothing doing!" shouted Pugatchov, thrusting aside the order of the commander-in-chief. "It's too late for



Trotsky and members of the Bolshevik Government

orders like that! We will shoot her! Enough words!"  
At this moment I became aware of one of the two newly arrived committee-men staring at me intently. He took a couple of steps toward me, bent his head on the side and nailed his eyes on me. There was something about that look that electrified me. As the man, who was a common soldier, craned his neck forward and stepped out of the group a strange silence gripped everybody, so affected were all by the painful expression on his face.

"Are you Yashka?" he sang out slowly.

"How do you know me?" I asked quickly, almost overpowered by a premonition of salvation.

"Don't you remember how you saved my life in that March offensive, when I was wounded in the leg and you dragged me out of the mud under fire?"

"My name is Peter. I would have perished there, in the water, and many others like me, if not for you. Why do they want to shoot you now?"

"Because I am an officer," I replied.

"You are an officer?" he asked.

"Yes," Pugatchov thundered. "She will have to be shot, and no arguments!"

"And I won't allow her to be shot!" my God-appointed savior answered back firmly, and walked up to me, seized my arm, pulled me out of my place, occupied by myself.

"You will shoot me first!" he exclaimed.

"She saved my life. She saved many of our lives. The entire Fifth Corps knows Yashka. She is a peasant like ourselves," they argued.

"And she does not understand politics. Perhaps she really was going to seek a cure. She was not captured, but came to us herself, we must not forget."

For some time the place turned into a meeting ground. It was a weird situation for a delirious, scattered crowd. There were the twenty of us in our undergarments awaiting death. Of the twenty only I had a chance of life. The remaining nineteen stoically kept themselves on their feet. No hope heaved their breasts. No miracle could save them. And amidst all this a hundred Russian soldiers, a quarter of an hour before all savages, now half of them with a spark of humanity in their veins, were deliberating.

The committee finally found their wits and took charge of the situation. Turning to Pugatchov, they declared: "Now, we have an order here from the commander-in-chief, and it shall be obeyed. We will take her away."

"They closed about me and I was marched out of the line and off the field. Pugatchov was in a white rage, raving like a madman, grinding his teeth. As we walked away, his inhuman voice roared:

"Fire at the knees!"

A volley rang out. Immediately cries and groans filled the air. Turning my head about, I saw the savages rush to the help of victims with their bayonets, digging them deep into the bodies of my companions of a few minutes previous and, crushing the last signs of life out of them with their heels.

It was frightful, indescribably frightful. The moans were penetrating, blood-curdling. I staggered, fell to ground, around my full length and swooned.

For four hours I remained unconscious. When I came to I was in a compartment of a railway coach. Petrukhin sat near me holding my hands and weeping.

As I thought of the circumstances that led to my fainting the figure of Pugatchov swam up before my eyes, and I took an oath there and then to kill him at the first opportunity, if I escaped from the Bolshevik trap.

Petrukhin then told me that Peter had aroused the investigation committee to such a state of compassion for me that the members agreed to go

with him to Sablin and petition the commander-in-chief to send me to Moscow for trial by a military tribunal. About fifty soldiers were also won over to my side by Peter's accounts of Yashka's work in the trenches and No Man's Land, and my reputation among all men. Petrukhin had remained at my bedside till I recovered consciousness, but he now desired to join the detachment. I gratefully thanked him for his humane attitude toward me and his desperate efforts to save my life.

Before he left word reached him that Pugatchov had incited some of the men against me, threatening to kidnap me from my friends and lynch me. Petrukhin placed five of his loyal friends at my compartment, with orders not to surrender me at any cost.

I prayed to God for Petrukhin, and hearing my prayer, he said:

"Now, I, too, believe in God. The

appearance of this man Peter was truly miraculous. In spite of all my efforts, you would have been executed but for him."

"And how are my chances of escaping death now?" I asked.

"They are still very small," he answered. "Your record is against you. You do not deny being a friend of Kornilov's. Your strict discipline in the battalion and your fighting the Germans at a time when the whole front was fraternizing are known here. Besides, the death penalty has become so customary here that it would be very hard for one to escape it. Only the other day a physician and his wife, on their way to Kislovodak to the springs, somehow landed in Zverev's. They were arrested, attached to a party ready for shooting and without any investigation were executed. Afterward there were found in their clothes papers from their local Soviet, certifying that they were actually ill, the physician suffering from a cancer and requesting that they be passed to Kislovodak."

Petrukhin kissed my hand and left, warning me:

"Wait here till I return. Nobody will harm you in my absence."

He locked the door behind him. I took out the little bottle of holy water, given to me by my youngest sister, Nadia, and drank it. On my knees before the little icon I prayed long and devoutly to God, Jesus, and the Holy Mother. My ears caught a noise outside the car: it came from several menacing soldiers, who wanted to get in and kill me on the spot. I prayed with greater fervor than before, begging for my life in the name of my mother, my father and my little sister. My heart was heavy with sorrow and despair.

As I was hugging the little icon, tears streaming from my eyes, I suddenly heard a voice, a very tender voice, say to me:

"Your life will be saved."

I was alone in the compartment. I realize that it is an audacious statement to make. I do not seek to make any one believe it. One may accept it or not. But I am satisfied that I did hear the voice of a divine messenger, and was nothing else. Suddenly I felt happy and calm. I thanked

the Almighty for his boundless kindness and vowed to have a public prayer offered at the Moscow Cathedral of Christ the Savior at the first opportunity, in commemoration of His merciful message to me.

Then I fell asleep, and rested calmly till the arrival of Petrukhin. His face was wreathed in smiles, he clasped my hand joyously, saying:

"Thank God! Thank God! You are at least saved from the mob. Sablin ordered you sent to Moscow. The necessary papers are being prepared now."

At this point Peter came in, followed by some members of the investigation committee. All were happy. It was such a wonderful moment. How an act of humanity does transform men's countenances! Peter and his comrades congratulated me, and I was too overcome to express all the gratefulness that I felt toward these men.

Petrukhin then narrated how he had disposed of the incited soldiers who clamored for my life. He told them that I was being led away to Moscow in the hope that I would deliver there several counter-revolutionary generals, associated with Kornilov.

"Will she be shot afterward?" they inquired.

"Sure," Petrukhin declared. The lynchers went away satisfied.

I was curious to know what would be done to me in Moscow. Petrukhin, in reply to my inquiries, said that among the papers relating to my case, which my convicts would take to Moscow, the chief document was the protocol. That protocol had been drawn up by himself, in the capacity of chairman of the investigation committee. He described in it how I had led my way while going to Kislovodak, getting stranded at Zverev and how I had reported of my own free will to the authorities, adding that I had with me a ticket to Kislovodak, an invitation from Princess Tatuyeva to come to the Caucasus, and a statement from a physician certifying to my ill health. The latter was, of course, an invention. Petrukhin sent along the ticket and the letter from Tiflis, adding that he had misplaced the physician's certificate and would send it at later.

"It is unlikely," he said to me, that you would be punished with death on the strength of such evidence. I should expect your release sooner or later. But in any event, here is a poison pill. I prepared it for you originally to take in case the mob

got the upper hand, so that you could escape torture at the hands of these savages. I hope you will not have to resort to it in Moscow."

"I still carry with me that pill of poison wherever I go."

(CONTINUED TOMORROW)

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## Actual Experiences of Successful Men

### Making Borrowed Ideas Work

**READY-TO-WEAR** plans that can be applied to your business just as they are don't grow on every bush. But wherever you go, each experience you have contains the germ of an idea you could very likely use.

### Is This the Best Management Policy?

**HOW** would Jesus run my business? An odd question for a successful business man to ask, you'll agree. But Harry N. Clarke insisted upon getting an answer in the two businesses he is operating, and tells about his success in his article, "Is This the Best Management Policy?" in the April SYSTEM.

### England—Our Customer and Competitor

**WHAT'S** what commercially in the British Isles these days? SYSTEM wanted to know, so sent its financial editor straight to London to get the facts. Is England a market for us? What will British firms buy? And do we need to fear them in the race for world wide commerce? In the first of a series of articles appearing in the April SYSTEM you'll find the answers to these and a dozen other questions. Just remember this: English business is neither to be feared nor despised. There is a big opportunity here for hands across the sea if you'll make the effort.

### How the Other Fellow Got There

**HOLD** a mirror to your own policies as you read the April SYSTEM. For instance, stand yourself up beside Frank M. Wicks. He will remind you of a powerful, noiseless dynamo. He is the personification of speed without waste. Starting as an electrician in the Washington rank and file, he has remodeled every plant his firm owns along the lines that he originated and developed. A method can be applied to your business.

### Make Your Competitors Boost Your Sales

**CERTAINLY** it can be done. It has been done! A salesman of a hustling young company turned the trick, with the result that in two years the firm's business doubled and in the third year topped the million mark.

### Wong Methods Made Right

**EVERY** business has its wrong methods. How to find them and fix them is the everlasting job of the business man. The purchasing agent of a mail order house discovered that the combination envelope order blanks they had sent out were not being used. He investigated, and "boxed" out a plan that resulted in a tidy increase in sales.

### Make Friends With the Trade Acceptance

**MOST** of us have only shaken hands with the Trade Acceptance card. We ought to take it into the front office and make a friend of it.

### Putting the Handclasp in Your Letters

**THE** Ingersoll Watch folks have a way of making letters bring home the bacon.

### "The Listening Post"

**THE** veteran realty man admitted that it was "bad business" not to pension off old Otis. "But I just haven't the heart to do it," he declared, and his decision won him the biggest deal he had swung in years.

## Quick Answers to your own problems

How to Keep Up with Rising Costs	How to Get Quick Long-Distance Connections	How to Train Salespeople
How to Speed Deliveries	How a Printer Judges Paper	How a Man-to-Man Talk Saved Labor Trouble
How to Locate Stocks Cheaply	How to Pick the Mailing	How Square Dealing Methods Win Out
How to Trade with China	How to Kick Executives from the Ranks	How to Keep "Caught Up On Work"
How to Find Jobs for the Fighters	How to Give the Salesman More Time to Sell	How to Cut Down "Dealer Literature" Waste
How to Buy and What to Buy	How to Simplify the Office Memo	How to Check on Your Third-Class Mail
How to Write a Friendly Sales Letter	How a Removal Was Capitalized	How to Beat Old Man Schedule
How to Invest Your Surplus	How to Apply Other Men's Ideas	How to Encourage Saving Among Your Employees
How to Enlarge Your Trading Capacity	How to Gain the Farmer's Interest	How to Cure Bad Temper
How to Use the Trade Acceptance	How to Boost Your Town	How to Meet the Reconstruction Period
How Statistics Can Be Put to Work	How to Get In To See The Right Man	
How a New House Policy Was Started	How to Save the President's Time	
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