

Bolshevist Atrocities in Siberia

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Mr. Embry, for eight months the American Consul at Omsk, the capital city of the Kolchak Government, returned to the United States in July, 1919, and told the following official story of atrocities in Siberia and Eastern Russia, proofs of which he had obtained during his term as Consul:

I HAVE the photographs to prove what I am about to say concerning Bolshevism as it is enforced by Lenin and Trotzky and those under them. They are pictures taken by myself or by responsible American Red Cross officials. The horrors these pictures reveal came to light following the advance of the Kolchak forces, an advance that liberated from Bolshevist domination a strip of territory as long as the whole Atlantic seaboard of the United States.

At Ufa I made my own investigation as to what had happened during the period (November, 1918, to March, 1919,) that the Bolsheviki were in control. My first stop was at the County Court House, as we would call it here at home. There I talked with the people and learned that at sunset on the day that the Kolchak forces withdrew, back in November, the Bolsheviki had entered the city. The occupying force numbered about 1,500 men, a half-regiment in other words, of criminals, mercenaries, and riff-raff, some in uniform and some in civilian clothes.

The first thing the Bolsheviki did was to loot the town, and then the leaders met in the Court House and organized their Government, as they called it. At the head of this Government they placed the most cruel and outspoken of their leaders. They then appointed committees, one of them the so-called Extraordinary Committee on Investigation, a better name for which would have been the Committee on Executions. At the head of this committee they appointed a Lett, and this committee was given the power to put to death any man, woman or child suspected of being opposed to Bolshevism. Sentence could be and was pronounced without formality of trial.

That very night the Extraordinary

Committee issued an order that all persons who had held office were to be rounded up immediately, arrested, and brought before the committee. The Judges, the Aldermen, the Councilmen, and other leading citizens—that is, those who had not been able to escape—were promptly arrested, and all those who were known to be against Bolshevism or were suspected of being against it were taken that night into the public square and executed. In every instance the condemned were denied trial of any sort.

The President of the Ufa Council, or Local Government, at the time was seriously ill and in hospital. The Extraordinary Committee ordered him brought to the City Hall. He was hauled down in an invalid chair, sentence pronounced, and then the chair was wheeled out into the public square, and in order to show the people the extent of his power, the head of the committee, the Lett, whose name is Belt, himself fired the shot that ended the life of the former head of the Ufa Government.

MURDERED IN THE WOODS

A day or two after we arrived at Ufa our attention was attracted by crowds of people journeying in the direction of a large patch of woods. These persons, I discovered, were the relatives and friends of scores of men, women, and children who had met death, or had disappeared during the Bolshevist control. The snows which had covered the ground during the Winter had begun to melt, and melting disclosed the secret of the disappearance of scores of innocent people, among them women and girls, the latter of tender years. The Bolsheviki had taken these people from their homes and then driven them into the woods and murdered them. They were executed at short range, their

bodies being horribly mangled, and in some instances their skulls were crushed in with clubs. I have a photograph that shows twenty of these corpses, among them that of a 17-year-old girl. This picture I myself took in the woods near Ufa. Another picture shows another batch of unfortunates whose only offense was anti-Bolshevism and whose death sentences were executed in the woods on the Ufa front.

At what was once the Ufa High School I talked with a woman who had been a teacher there when the Bolsheviki entered. When the Bolsheviki came they lined up all the boys, the little ones as well as the big ones, and questioned them as to their sympathies. All who were not killed were put to work of the most menial kind, and the larger boys, against whom there was suspicion that they might be anti-Bolshevist, and therefore soon eligible for service under Admirable Kolchak, were taken out and shot.

The girls in the school were ordered to serve in the barracks of the Bolshevist soldiers, their taskmasters cursing and beating those who were not blessed with good looks. As for the good-looking girls, to use the words of their former teacher, they "suffered insults of the most horrible nature." She was too modest to go into details, but we who heard understood.

The Extraordinary Committee also named a great number of hostages, and after subjecting them to the most horrible treatment ended their sufferings by killing them and throwing the bodies into the river. When I was told the story of what happened to these hostages it was so terrible that I could not bring myself to believe, and then the snows melted and I saw the people searching among the bodies in the woods for relatives and friends, and then I knew that there was nothing too horrible to be true so far as the Bolsheviki who had control there were concerned.

That is, in brief, the story of some of the horrors that were perpetrated in Ufa. It is a story that is paralleled in practically every detail by what happened in other cities and towns in the liberated areas, the worst atrocities, as

the evidence shows, being committed just before the Bolsheviki evacuated at the time of the Kolchak advance.

Another town that suffered in a degree that no words can describe was Ossa, a city of about 30,000 inhabitants. Ossa was also in the territory liberated from Lenin-Trotzky domination by Kolchak. There again the melting snows disclosed a heart-breaking story. In Ufa the number of murdered people, whose fate was established when the snows melted, was not more than 200, but in Ossa the number was more than 2,000 and a photographic record of this atrocity was made by Colonel Teusler of the American Red Cross Mission to Siberia and has now reached the files of the Government in Washington.

SHOT WITHOUT TRIAL

Ossa, as did Ufa and all the other liberated towns, had during Bolshevist domination its own Extraordinary Committee for Investigation, which judged men and women without trial and shot them in the streets or woods like so many wild animals. The stories of cold-blooded murders and of the outrages to which women and girls were subjected are without number. Just substitute the name Ossa for Ufa and you will know what happened in the former city before Kolchak reclaimed it for civilized law and order.

Kurgan is a city of perhaps 35,000 people. It, too, was one of the cities liberated by the Kolchak advance. I officially know it to be a fact that while in control of that city the Bolsheviki murdered at one time—that is, at a single wholesale execution—more than 1,500 citizens of that place. In our American Consulate at Omsk we have employed a young woman of the finest character, who is a native of Kurgan and who was there during the period that the Bolsheviki were in control.

This young woman was engaged to marry a young Russian, a splendid fellow, who had worked hard all his life and had never harmed a human being. This young man came under the suspicion of the Extraordinary Committee for Investigation and was ordered ex-

ecuted. In his case they shot him and then severed the head from the body. The head was found by a friend, who took it to the girl, who is now in the American Consulate at Omsk. She buried it in the back yard of what was once her home.

The offenses against God and man committed in the City of Ossa were so numerous and so correspondingly terrible that the man or woman who has been so fortunate as not to see what I have seen must find it almost impossible to believe, but the story is true and the facts will in due time—very soon, I hope—be matters of official verification.

Bugulma is another of the liberated cities, and in that city the record of the Bolsheviki is more than 1,200 persons murdered and no man knows how many others subjected to cruelties and outrages, beside which execution, even in the Bolshevist manner of doing things, would be merciful. I might also tell you of the terrible sufferings, of the executions that took place in Petro-pavlovsk and scores of other cities and towns rescued from "the terror" by the forces under Kolchak.

The Province of Ufa had in normal times a population of more than 2,200,000 people. One of the best-known Judges as well as one of the most respected citizens of the province was Justice Kratkoff. His home was in the town of Belebei. The day that place was taken the Bolsheviki came to the home of the Judge and broke in with their bayonets, subjecting Mme. Kratkoff—the Judge was away at the time—to shocking insults. Most of the raiding soldiers were drunk and they appropriated everything in the house. All the criminals in the jail were released and told to do as they pleased. The Bolshevist leaders issued orders that the people were not to attend church, and in order to show their contempt for God and religion they desecrated icons and other religious symbols, in one instance placing on top of an altar a gramophone which was made to play non-religious tunes.

In the Belebei district there lived a man named Bickermeriff, who was the

manager of a printing office and who was as pacific a person as one could meet in a voyage around the world. When the Bolsheviki came to his home and said they intended to search it for firearms Bickermeriff smiled at the suggestion that he might be the owner of a deadly weapon, and that smile cost him his life. For, smiling, he was dragged before the Extraordinary Committee and then, without formality of trial or even taking time to tell him what his offense was, Belt, the Lett, ordered him to the public square to be shot.

Another instance which sheds light on the true conditions in those parts of Russia where Bolshevism holds sway is the case of Mme. Barbara Pavlovna Andreovna, the wife of a prominent physician of Bugulma. Mme. Andreovna, who has four sons fighting under Kolchak, was the librarian at Bugulma, a modest position that made it possible for her to eke out a fairly decent existence. When Bugulma was taken by the Bolsheviki the Red Guards came to her home and, showing an order from the Extraordinary Committee, began a search of her home. Practically everything of value was taken, and when the looting was ended the unfortunate woman, without being told why, was arrested and brought before the Extraordinary Committee.

The Extraordinary Committee, after looking her over, and without giving any reason for its action, ordered Mme. Andreovna locked up in the Bugulma jail. She was thrown into a cell crowded with other innocent people, where she was kept two days before she was informed of the charge against her. At the end of two days she was told that the crime she had committed was the alleged rebuking of two women who sympathized with the Bolshevist cause. The third day after her arrest she was taken from her first cell and placed in another cell with two men of the lowest type. For five weeks she was kept in prison, and of the sixty persons who were in prison with her, twenty were taken out and murdered, among them being the former President of the Zemstvo Uprava, a beloved and highly respected priest of the Russian Church, the President of the

Council of Professional Unions, and two prominent citizens whose only offense appears to have been the fact that they were landowners.

SHOT TO FALL INTO GRAVES

Another woman I know who was also in jail during the Bolshevist occupation of Ufa Province was a Mme. Demetriev. She saw six men lashed together in pairs and then hauled off to the cemetery, where they were backed up against their already dug graves and then shot down into the holes.

Those who were in jail and who escaped execution were continually informed of what happened to their comrades, whom they knew to be innocent of wrongdoing, and whose only crime was counter-revolution, which under the Bolshevist definition consists of anything and everything that is opposed to Bolshevism. Mr. Demetriev, the husband of my informer, was executed for having on his person a map or plan of his farm, which is sixteen miles distant from Bugulma.

Again, there is the fate of a boy who was the son of a farmer. The Bolshevist firing squad did not always cover up their victims after executions. Often the bodies were left unprotected and uncovered in the open graves. The boy I have in mind had been shot and left for dead. The father went to the grave and found him still alive. While he was trying to rescue the lad a squad of Red Guards happened along, and, going to the grave, discovered the boy was still alive. They immediately fired another volley into the wounded body of the boy, and this time the execution was a success.

In various places and at frequent intervals the Bolshevist authorities would publish the names of their victims for the purpose of terrifying the remainder of the population. There is the case of a man named Vornikoff, who was executed in the most torturing fashion imaginable. He was shot in the leg, in the

arm, in the head, and finally bayoneted in the stomach.

This is the story of M. Kaminski, a notary of Ufa. He was seated one afternoon, during the Bolshevist control of his town, on the porch of his home, conversing with Bishop Andreeff, when Red Guards came and informed him that they intended to search the house. After the search they carried Mr. Kaminski to the Court House and arraigned him before the Extraordinary Committee, preferring no charges. He was ordered locked up, and in the small room into which he was thrown he found many other resident citizens of Ufa, among them one of the Tolstoys, and E. B. Blumenthal, a Russian artist of national reputation.

Those men were thrown into prison and subsequently informed that they were under arrest for sabotage, counter-revolution, and speculation. They were kept in jail two days and were then, in the dead of night, taken to the river and thrown into the hold of a barge. There were ninety persons in the hold, among them Mme. Sophia Hedrofskaka, the principal of the famous Girls' High School of Ufa. The prisoners on the barge were searched and their money and valuables appropriated. The barge was towed a long distance down the river and during the voyage nine of the prisoners were ordered to the deck and none ever returned, nor had any of them been heard from up to the time I left for America.

Another instance, officially verifiable, is that of several girls who were arrested and charged with taking walks with officers of the Czechoslovak forces. All these girls were murdered in the regulation Bolshevist manner without trial and without a chance to say a word in their own behalf.

What I have told is the merest outline of the story. It would take a book to tell it in all its horrible details. It is a story the truth of which the American people are entitled to know.