

Mystery of the Czar's Fate Is Still Unsolved

Carl W. Ackerman, New York Newspaper Man, Who Investigated the Story of the Slaying of the Imperial Family at Ekaterinburg in the Ural, Found Five Varying Accounts.

So many conflicting stories have been told of the fate of Czar Nicholas and his family, all under the vague guise of "authentic secret reports" from this or that quarter, or the statements of one or another obscure official, that serious doubts are beginning to be entertained as to the truth of any of the reports published and predictions are being freely voiced, especially in England, that some if not all of the imperial family will yet be found alive and hidden away in Russian dungeons or monasteries. A recent report that the czarina was still alive was published in the London Telegraph, tracing the rumor to the authority of her brother, the grand duke of Hesse.

At least five different versions of the alleged wholesale slaughter of the family have been put forth from different sources, none of them agreeing in particulars and all of them suggestive of an atmosphere of propaganda. No trace of the bodies or even of the burial place of the slain Romanoffs has ever been found and the latest report, printed in the Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, official organ of the German foreign office, as if to meet this discrepancy, states on the authority of an "authentic Moscow secret report" that the body of the czarina was packed in a case, taken to Moscow, and there burned in a stove. This report also states that the entire family were killed in a submarine, after drinking the czarina, after falling at the first onslaught, arose to her knees, stretched her hands upwards and cried, "God has wrought a miracle and I shall live." Seven bullets, it is said, were required to put an end to the little Czarvitch Alexis. Nothing is said about the disposition of any of the bodies other than that of the czar.

Last in Ipatieff House.
While the German secret service at the time of the alleged killing was undoubtedly possessed of special facilities for ascertaining what was happening in Russia, and might be supposed to have had a special interest in the fate, at least of the czarina, a German princess. It is noticeable that this report, of semi-official German origin, differs in essential particulars from what had previously seemed to be the best authenticated accounts of the murders.

Carl W. Ackerman, special correspondent of the New York Times, who was in Ekaterinburg a short time after the killing was alleged to have taken place, has given in his book, "Trailing the Bolsheviks" (Scribners), a resume of all the facts, rumors and theories that he could gather upon the subject, and leaves it still invested with an atmosphere of mystery and doubt. After setting forth a statement, said to have been made by Parfen Dominin, a body servant of the czar, in which a circumstantial account is given of the last days of the czar in the Ipatieff house at Ekaterinburg, and of the czar's being taken away from his family for a midnight trial before the Ural District Soviet, and of his subsequent execution, "nobody knows where", during the night of July 16, by a squad of Red army soldiers, Ackerman sums the evidence up thus:

"Throughout the time the czar and his family were imprisoned here efforts were being made to release him. On more than one occasion the czar received a message stating that he would soon be freed. General Denikin, who is now commanding the Cossacks near Kieff, an old and intimate friend of Nicholas, was endeavoring in every possible way to save his former imperial master. General Dutoff, another friend of the czar, operating in the Ural, also was seeking to deliver his friend. The Czech-Slovaks, despite their revolutionary tendencies, were bent upon snatching the czar from the bolsheviks.

Many Efforts to Free Czar.
"There were independent Russian and foreign business interests in Ekaterinburg which wanted him released. More money was spent in trying to free Nicholas Romanoff than the bolsheviks ever used in guarding and transporting him or maintaining an organization to prevent his escape. At times he was guarded by only three Red guardsmen.

"Thus in advance of the czar's trial before the secret night session of the Ural district soviet a bitter and ceaseless contest between the friends and enemies of the czar was being waged. Ekaterinburg was the center of intrigue and the czar himself was playing no unimportant part.

"After the trial where the czar is said to have been condemned to death, the Moscow wireless station sent out an official communication addressed, as are all messages under control of the soviet. 'To all, to all, to all,' announcing that the czar had been executed at Ekaterinburg, but that the family had been removed to a place of safety.

"But was Nicholas II killed? If so, how and where? This is where the real mystery of the czar's fate begins. From that date until today the world has speculated. Evidence of all kinds has been published to prove his death and to announce that he is still alive. Weighing the evidence regarding the czar himself, I should say that six-tenths of the weight indicates that he is dead, four-tenths that he may be alive. The czar was tried, condemned to death, and taken from the courtroom back to the Ipatieff residence. Some maintain that he was executed immediately in the basement, or on the first floor of this house. Other citizens declare that he was taken outside the city and shot. Some think that he was murdered in the house without trial.

"To show how the testimony differs, I shall refer to the published statements of Prince Lvoff.

Doubt Prince Lvoff's Account.
"He declared in Vladivostok and in Japan that he and the czar were kept in the same prison and had the same jailers. That cannot be true as far as Ekaterinburg is concerned, because I could not find a man in Ekaterinburg who had heard that Prince Lvoff was in the Ipatieff residence as a prisoner. Prince Lvoff and many others declare that the czar and his whole family were killed in the Ipatieff house, and they point to the bullet holes in the walls of the room.

"The nun from the monastery who took eggs and milk to the czarvitch told me that she positive none of them was executed in this house, and that the czarina, the czarvitch and the daughters were taken away in a motor truck which she saw standing in the grounds of the Ipatieff residence July 15. She believes the czar is dead, but that the family is still alive. On the other hand, one of the priests from the same monastery, who held short services upon a few occasions in the house for the imperial family, assured me that 'the whole family is alive and well.' "While I was in Tumen, the chief city between Omsk and Ekaterinburg, one of the members of the Russian nobility, who was an intimate friend of

the czarina, received a message from the interior of Russia by courier, saying, 'Your friends are well.' When I questioned the American, British and French consuls, who were in the city during the Bolshevik occupation, as to their opinions, they stated frankly that they did not know whether the czar was dead or alive, and they were still conducting their investigations. Professor Ipatieff, who is now living on the first floor of his house, surrounded by most of the furniture used by the imperial family, showed me thru the house on two occasions and described in details how the whole family was brought from the second floor to the main floor by way of the servants' stairs, lined up against the wall and shot.

Bullet Holes Only Evidence.

"A number of the judicial investigating committee believes the family was killed in this house, but the only evidence any of them possesses is the bullet holes in the walls and floors and the finding of certain property of the czar and czarina in the ashes or the stoves. I saw the room in which they were supposed to have been killed en masse, but I was not convinced by the evidence presented there for these reasons:

"If the whole family was executed in this room, then seven persons were killed. The bullet holes were in the walls and some 'blood clots.' There were no pools of blood and it seemed doubtful to me that seven persons should die a horrible death and leave only small blood clots in the bullet holes and small stains on the floor.

"If killed here the bodies must have been removed, because they were not found in this room nor in the house. By removing seven bodies from such a room, in midsummer, when it was hot and sultry and the members of the family did not wear heavy clothing, it seems that bloodstains should have been found in other parts of the house, but none were found.

"It is stated that the bodies were burned in the house after the execution. This I believe impossible because none of the stoves in the house are large enough. The opening to such stove is not more than a foot wide or deep. Still, in one of these stoves the investigating committee found a military cross which the czar once wore, corset stays and a large diamond belonging to the czarina. The stove in which these things were found was in the bedroom of the czar's daughters. This stove was never used by the Bolshevik guard, and it is plausible that the czar and czarina burned these things themselves at the last hour so that the soviet would not find them. The committee failed to find any trace of human bodies in the ashes.

The Five Varying Stories.

"After examining all the evidence presented by Professor Ipatieff I made an investigation of the testimony that the czar was taken away and executed. The Bolshevik claim that this is what happened before a firing squad. But was he? Is it not possible that the czar was kidnapped after he left the house, surrounded by only the three Red Army soldiers? Considering all the efforts which were being made in and about Ekaterinburg to save the czar, does it seem possible that his friends, who were numerous in the city and watchful, should permit three soldiers to take him away? Is it not possible that some of the disloyal bolshevik soldiers, who were accepting bribes and transmitting secret messages to and from the czar, were among that guard?

"I asked these questions of many Ekaterinburg citizens. In reply I received all varieties of answers. The fact is that no one knows, but all have their opinions. Professor Ipatieff thinks the questions are without justification. The priest thinks that the czar was saved. The nun thinks he was killed afterward, but the family saved. The investigating committee is divided. The Allied consuls don't know. And still there is the testimony of a prominent Russian merchant of Ekaterinburg that he saw the czar and his family in the private office of the railroad depot master July 20, four days after the alleged killing. 'Ekaterinburg is divided. Since the latter part of July, for seven months the city and surrounding country has been searched, and no remains of the bodies, no authentic traces of the family, have been found. Some day when it is possible to go into European Russia and question other witnesses the puzzle may be solved. Nicholas II, the former czar of all the Russians, and his family may be dead. They may still live. Who knows?'

PEARLS INCREASE IN VALUE.

Necklace Which Sold for \$500 in 1824 Now Worth \$50,000.

Diamonds and pearls, especially pearls, according to some authorities are becoming in practice the real international money. Thousands of Russians since their escape from Bolshevism are living on their jewels, who would starve if they depended on landed estates or stock exchange securities.

As showing the enormous rise in the value of pearls the Martin has traced the history of a fine necklace which in 1824 cost \$500. In 1850 it changed hands for three times that sum; in 1890 it was sold for \$5,000, in 1900 for \$7,000 and in 1914 for \$22,500. Today its value is \$50,000. Increased demand and smaller production are the explanation.

At any social gathering today in Paris, London, Rome, New York and Buenos Aires there is scarcely a woman of any pretensions to elegance, as the newspapers point out, who has not a pearl necklace. In the meanwhile the pearl fisheries, partly from exhaustion and partly from lack of suitable labor, are producing less and less.—London Mail.

CIVIL ACTION FILED IN COURT AT SHELBY

Special to The Daily Tribune. Shelby, July 26.—The following civil actions were filed the past week in the district court:

American Banker Incorporations company. Apary vs. Charles Kitcher, Maude Kitcher, Abbie Wadsworth and Western Mortgage Loan company, foreclosure of real estate mortgage.

T. E. McClintock vs. Jonas L. Artz, et al, foreclosure of real estate mortgage.

Ida M. Dickinson vs. Charles H. Farrell and Helen Farrell, suit on deed.

A SURGICAL TRIUMPH

"And shall I be able to play the piano when my hands heal?" asked the wounded soldier.

"Certainly, you will," said the doctor. "Gee, that's great! I never could be fore."

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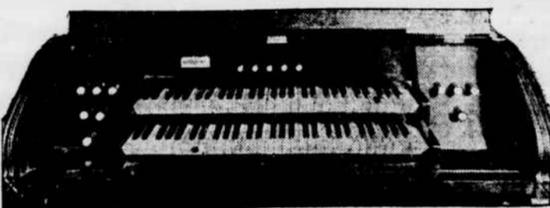
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Literary Digest, Latest Jokes