

IS THE CZAR DEAD?

Six Chances in Ten That He Was Executed by the Bolsheviki— Fate of His Family Also Doubtful

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from Siberia and Russia.

THE greatest mystery of the war is the fate of the former imperial family of Russia. No one in Ekaterinburg, the city where the house of Romanoff was last imprisoned by the Bolsheviki, knows definitely where the Czar was executed, if he was executed; no one possesses absolute evidence as to how he was done away with.

Testimony of residents is very conflicting and contradictory. How and when and where the Czarina and her children were killed, if they were killed, are questions which divide the populace of the beautiful and charming Russian city, which was named for Catherine the Great, who more than three centuries ago ruled Russia.

I have just returned to the United States, after a tour of investigation, with all of the facts and testimony I was able to obtain in Siberia and Russia about the last known days of the Romanoffs. After weighing this evidence carefully I am inclined to think, although I cannot prove it, that the Czar is dead, but that his family still lives somewhere in Russia.

During both the revolution and the counter-revolution of Russia the Czar and his family were taken from pillar to post by the various revolutionary governments,

sometimes for the purpose of "safety" and again as a part of punishment for the imperial régime, which the people as a whole believed was responsible for their suffering and discontent.

In the Spring of 1918 Nikolai, his wife, the former Czarevitch and the four daughters, together with two physicians, one maid and a valet, were in the hands of the Bolsheviki in Tobolsk, a Russian city three hundred miles from the nearest railroad station. They had been taken there, upon orders from Petrograd and Moscow, in droshkies because the Bolsheviki believed, as the Czar did before, that the strongest political prisons were those far removed from the railroad.

During the latter part of April the former imperial family was removed to Ekaterinburg, which was one of the biggest cities in the Ural Mountains, on the direct line of the Trans-Siberian Railroad, so that they could be quickly shifted from city to city by the Bolshevik Government in case the Czechoslovak echelons, which were moving throughout Central Russia, should turn against the Moscow Soviet. About the 25th of that month one Ural District Soviet of Workmen, Cossacks, Soldiers and Sailors' Union, sent a committee of soldiers to the home of Professor Ipatieff, to demand that he give up his residence immediately. They did not state their reasons, but ordered him out.

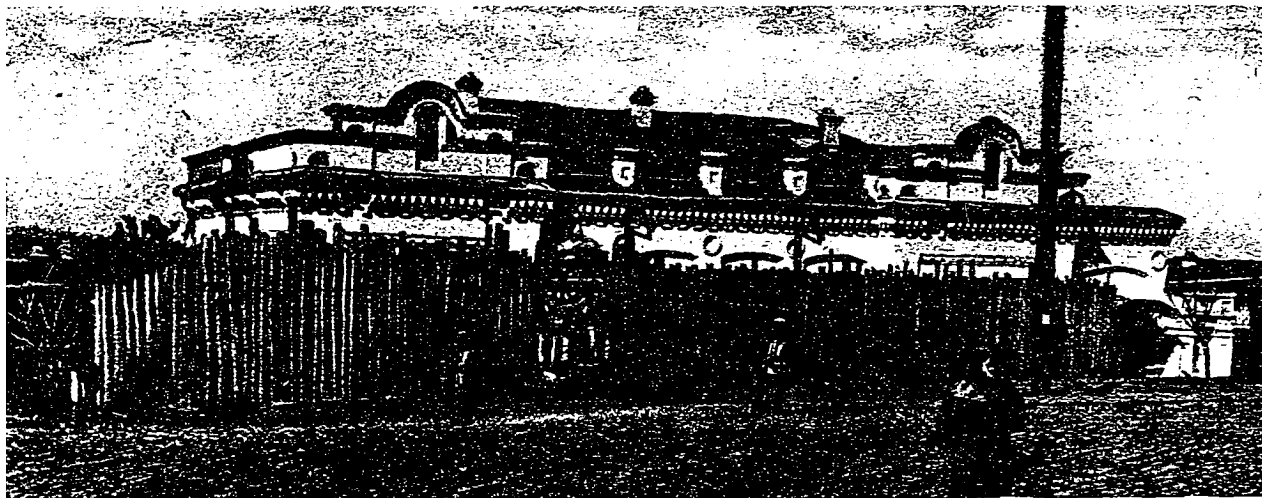
Professor Ipatieff's home is one of the most beautiful in Ekaterinburg. It was built on a hill in one of the main thoroughfares of the city, not far from the palace of the "Platinum King" of the world. Mr. Ipatieff, an engineer, was one of the leading citizens, ranking with the great engineers and industrial leaders who were responsible for the production of wealth in that community and in Russia, following the discovery of the rich platinum and gold mines in the

Urals. His house was of cement and brick construction, painted white, and two stories high.

This house, which was destined to be the last known prison for the Romanoffs, is within a stone's throw of both the British and French Consulates. In front there is a wide, open square, in the centre of which stands one of the numerous cathedrals of the city. To the left, as neighbors, the Czar had some of the poorest citizens. They lived in uninviting log or frame huts. To the right, across the side street, was a large two-story red brick residence, surrounded by a brick wall. From the upper windows

Czarina, and their daughter, Mary, arrived, accompanied by the physician who attended the Empress, who suffered from heart trouble and rheumatism. The Czarevitch and the other daughters were delayed because of the illness of the Czarina, but within a week the family was united inside the white house and board fence, which was guarded by some twenty Bolsheviki soldiers, said to have been recruited especially from the mines and factories, because Ekaterinburg was also a large industrial city. A group of the largest factories employed more than 25,000 workmen and women.

The former royal family entered the



Residence of Professor Ipatieff, Ekaterinburg, in Which the Former Czar and His Family Were Imprisoned. The Board Fence Was Erected by the Bolsheviki to Guard Their Prisoners.

of this house one could see into the small garden in the rear of the Ipatieff residence, even after the Bolsheviki built a twenty-foot board fence around Ipatieff's house. It was in this garden that the imperial family was permitted its only recreation and fresh air during the eighty days the members were imprisoned there.

Ekaterinburg does not resemble any American city I know because the streets are at least twice as wide as any of our broadest thoroughfares. The buildings differ in architecture from ours and none of them is more than two or three stories high. Often, in riding about the city one finds beautiful modern buildings and residences next door to frame huts. Timber is plentiful, because the city is in the centre of a vast forest, and, until the Urals gave up their century-old wealth of precious metals and fine stones, such as emeralds, rubies, alexandrites, topaz, &c., all of the buildings were of frame construction. But as the mines were developed the city prospered and magnificent residences were built. Before the revolution 90 per cent. of the platinum of the world came from this city, and at least 90 per cent. of the women of the world who wear platinum jewelry owe their beautiful ornaments to the Ekaterinburg mines. Even the platinum jewels which the Czarina herself possessed were mined originally in the Urals. The alexandrites, one of the rarest stones, which is a greenish blue by day and a ruby red by night light, was discovered here and named after one of the Czar's relatives.

Following the Bolsheviki orders, Professor Ipatieff moved without delay. He was an intellectual, an aristocrat, and "user of the tooth brush," to borrow Paderewski's description of those who were persecuted by the Bolsheviki. He realized that the quicker he left the safer he was. Within a few days the Czar, the

house, under heavy guard, of course, by none too kindly soldiers of the Red Army, through the main entrance, on the public square, which led directly into the rooms on the second floor. Professor Ipatieff had been living in these rooms, while on the first floor lived his servants, who used the entrance on the side street.

The testimony of all witnesses is the same as to the main events which followed the crossing of this threshold by the former rulers of Russia until the night of the 15th and 16th of July. It is only the evidence which follows the events of those dates which is confusing.

Entering the house the Czar and his wife were "escorted," if not ordered, through the reception hall and past one of the private rooms, already filled with soldiers, to the large drawing room which Professor Ipatieff used when receiving guests. All of the furniture and carpets remained as he had left it. Hanging from the ceiling was a big crystal electric chandelier imported from France, and on the walls hung valuable oil paintings. The furniture was modern, expensive and comfortable, of carved oak. To the left, as the Czar entered, he saw another room the other side of an arch. This room was assigned to him as a study. The Czarina's wheel chair, which had been brought from Tobolsk, was placed near the wide plate glass windows looking out upon the inside of the board fence through heavy iron bars which had been fastened in the walls outside of all the windows. Directly in front of the former imperial leaders as they stood at the entrance to the reception room were two large oak doors leading into the dining room. To their left were the kitchen, pantry, bathroom, (one of the very few private bathrooms in the city,) and another room which was later used by the Czarina's maid.

The Bolsheviki Commissars of Eka-

terinburg led the royal couple through the dining room into two smaller rooms facing the side street. One of these rooms was assigned to the Czar, his wife, and the Czarevitch as a bedroom. The other was designated as the bedroom for the four daughters, although no beds or cots were provided. Alone for a few brief moments in these two rooms the Czarina walked to the window, drew aside the heavy portières, and looked with a fainting heart through iron bars upon the rough interior of the board fence which obstructed entirely what was once a beautiful view of the cathedral and square and the "Platinum King's" palace not more than 200 feet away. But these the Empress could not see. Above the fence were visible only the vast, free, pale blue heavens. Turning to the Czar and asking for a pencil she again drew

the curtains aside and wrote on the frame of the window, "April 30, 1918," the day of her arrival, the first day of their eighty days of suffering and anguish in Ekaterinburg, prisoners of their former subjects.

During my recent sojourn in that city I had an opportunity on several occasions of going through the house which has been used by General Gaida ever since the Czechoslovaks forced the Bolshe-

viki to evacuate the city. The Czar's bedroom is now the private office of this 28-year-old Czech General. The bars still cover one of the windows and the Czarina's handwriting is still to be seen on the window frame.

I have several sources of information as to what transpired in this house between the 30th of April and the 15th of July, 1918, but I doubt whether even the details which these witnesses give fully describe the terrible torture which the Romanoffs were forced to endure. The names of some of the witnesses I can give, others are confidential, but their statements, unabridged and uncensored, are the greatest possible indictments of so-called "revolutionary-red justice."

Although the Czar, his wife and son were provided with beds and were supposed to have the private use of the room, it frequently happened that the Czarina's physician was forced to sleep in the same room. In the adjoining room the four daughters slept on the floor, with scarcely any bedding. At times the Czar was forbidden to see his wife and they were seldom permitted to talk except in the presence of a soldier. Although the family ate in the spacious dining room of the Ipatieff home food was prepared and served by the Red Army and was very meagre. For the family only five knives, forks, spoons, and plates were provided and on more than one occasion the rude soldiers would help themselves by hand from the erstwhile imperial table. When any member of the family bathed it was forbidden to close the bathroom door, and in the frame of the door both at the top and sides are literally hundreds of bayonet marks showing that on many occasions soldiers stood on guard at the door with drawn bayonets. In fact, so many bayonet jabs are still visible in the walls and ceilings of some of the rooms that it seems certain beyond a

doubt that the guard in the house always had bayonets attached to their loaded rifles.

After examining the walls of the house I concluded that the soldiers must have tried bayonet practice from time to time in the various rooms, but whether this was done when members of the Czar's family were there one cannot say. Whenever any member of the family walked in the garden soldiers stood on the balcony, leading from the dining room and looking out over the garden. Professor Ipatieff, who was in Ekaterinburg, living nearby throughout the Czar's imprisonment, stated that the soldiers often aimed their rifles at the Czar while he was walking. With their finger on the trigger of their rifles and eyes on the sight-points they would follow his movements.

The Czar was not permitted to receive any newspapers, and many of the letters which he wrote and which were sent to him were never delivered. Nicholas himself wrote scores of letters to his friends, but they were usually simple statements about the health of the family. The day before his trial for participation in an alleged counterplot against the Bolsheviks he was permitted to write letters to his relatives and friends, but as far as known none of these was sent by the Ural District Soviet.

That the Czar, however, was in communication with the outside world through various secret channels is quite certain. One of the nuns in the monastery of Ekaterinburg, for instance, informed me that one day she received word from Odessa saying that the Czarevitch was ill, and asking her, in behalf of "friends of the Czar," to take milk, eggs, and butter to the Czar's house. By this name the Ipatieff residence became known as soon as the Czar arrived, and today any one in Ekaterinburg can tell you where the "Czar's house" is. All of the drosky drivers know, as the taxi drivers in Paris know the location of Napoleon's tomb.

This nun—a simple, kindly faced, quiet, and patient old woman—related to me one afternoon her experiences in delivering fresh eggs and milk. She would not tell me how she received word from Odessa, nor why any one in Odessa should know quicker than the people of Ekaterinburg that the Czarevitch was ill—that he was so ill that he often spat blood.

At the beginning of July, however, when she began to take food to the Czarevitch, the Bolshevik Commissar permitted her to take butter, eggs, and milk to the Czarina personally. Often, she said, she would take a bottle of cream, sugar, and sweets to the house, but it was not long until the Bolsheviks either became suspicious or were revengeful. One day they seized everything she had for their own use, telling her to get out and never return. The following morning she appeared as usual and was permitted to send in the eggs and milk.

On several occasions during these visits she had very brief "audiences" with the members of the family. Naturally she would not tell me whether she carried news to the Romanoffs, but from other sources I learned that it was through this monastery that some of the Czar's friends in Crimea were able to "keep in touch" with the Czar.

It is known, also, that the former Emperor on a few occasions received letters and news through a member of the Soviet guard, who, despite his position, was still loyal to the "Little White Father." Another route by which news traveled to and from the Czar was through signals from the attic of the brick house across the street from the Ipatieff residence, which I have described. A private telephone in this house was connected with the office of a certain prominent business man. The man in the attic and this merchant communicated with each other day and night, and I remember learning from one of them some of the secret phrases they used in talking, so that if any one should by chance overhear them the Bolsheviks could not understand. When the

observer under the roof of the house across the street saw the Czar in the garden he would phone, "The baggage is at the station," and then messages would be communicated to the Czar.

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 Denikine, who is now commanding the Cossacks near Kiev, 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 Urals, was seeking to deliver his friend. The Czechoslovaks, despite their revolutionary tendencies, were bent upon snatching the Czar from the Bolsheviks. There were independent Russian and foreign business interests in Ekaterinburg which wanted him released. More money was spent trying to free Nicholas Romanoff than the Bolsheviks ever used in guarding and transporting him or maintaining an organization to prevent his escape.

Thus, in advance of the Czar's trial before the secret night session of the Ural District Soviet, there was being waged in Russia and Siberia a bitter and ceaseless contest between the friends and enemies of the Czar. Ekaterinburg was the centre of the intrigue and the Czar himself was playing no unimportant part.

After the trial, when the Czar was

the same jailers. That cannot be true, as far as Ekaterinburg is concerned, because I could not find a person in Ekaterinburg who had heard that Prince Lvoff was in the Ipatieff residence as a prisoner. He was confined for four months in the prison of Ekaterinburg, but the Czar was never there. Prince Lvoff and many others declare 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 Czarevitch told me that she is positive none of them was executed in this house, and that the Czarina, the Czarevitch, and the daughters were taken away in a motor truck which she saw standing in the grounds of the Ipatieff residence on 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 Tuimen, 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 all well.'" When I questioned the American, British and French Consuls, who were in the city throughout the Bolshevik occupation, as to their opinions, they stated frankly

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 mid-summer, when it was very hot and sultry, the members of the family surely did not wear very heavy clothing, and it seems that bloodstains should have been found in other parts of the house, but none was found.

3. It is stated that the bodies were burned after execution in this house. This I believe is impossible, because none of the stoves in the house is large enough. The house was heated, as are most Russian houses, by Russian stoves built in the walls, and the opening to each stove is not more than a foot wide or deep. Still, in one of these stoves the investigating commission found a military cross which the Czar once wore, corset staves 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 or Czarina burned these things themselves at the last hour so that the Soviet would not find them. This might be substantiated by the fact that the investigating commission, after having the ashes examined, failed to find traces of any human bodies.

I do not believe the evidence that the whole family was executed here is convincing. I think the Czar may have been shot in this room, but, on the other hand, there is the testimony of the Czar's personal valet, Parfin Dominin, that the Czar was taken away from the house early in the morning of July 16 by a small Soviet guard. Dominin himself remained in the house until the morning of the seventeenth. If any one was shot in that house that night; if twenty shots were fired on the first floor, the valet would have heard them, because he was in the living room of the Ipatieff residence, which was almost directly above the room where the bullet-holed wall stands today, and no Russian house is sound-proof.

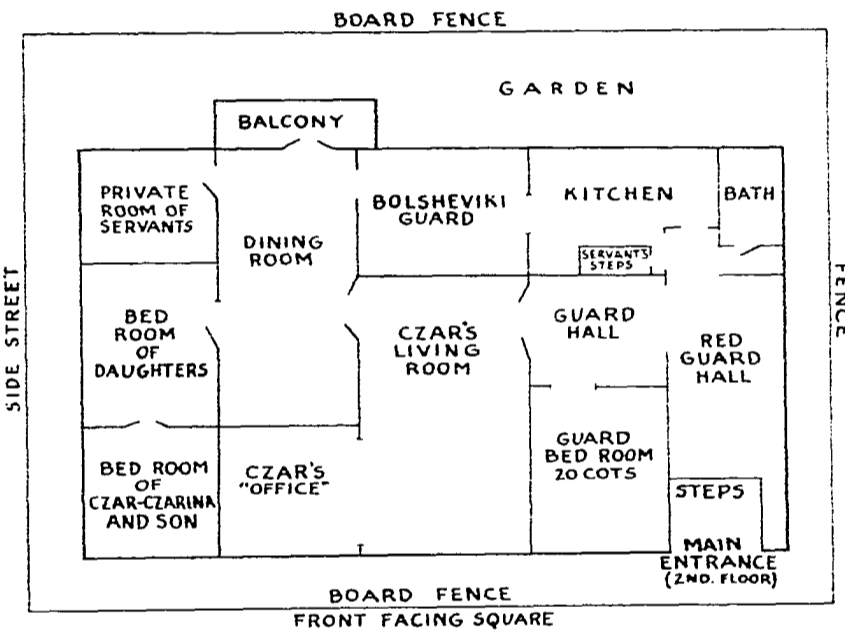
After examining carefully all of the evidence presented by Professor Ipatieff I made an investigation of the testimony that the Czar was taken away and executed. The Bolshevik claim that this is what happened. They maintained he was executed outside the city, before a firing squad. But was he? Is it not possible that the Czar was kidnapped after he left the house, surrounded by only three Red Army soldiers? Considering all of 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 because they came into my mind while I was in Ekaterinburg, and because I asked many Ekaterinburg citizens the same. In reply I received all varieties of answers and various degrees of speculations. The fact is that no one knows, but all have their opinions. Professor Ipatieff maintains that the questions are without justification. The priest thinks that the Czar was "saved." The nun thinks he was killed afterward. The valet states the same. The investigation commission 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 on July 20!

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 traces of the family have been found.

Some day, when it is possible for investigators to go into European Russia and question other witnesses, the puzzle may be solved.

Nicholas II., former Czar of all the Russias, and his family may be dead. They may still live. Who knows?



Plan of the Main Floor of Professor Ipatieff's House, Ekaterinburg, Russia. Where the Russian Imperial Family Were Prisoners.

condemned to death, the Moscow wireless station sent out an official communication addressed, as are all messages from wireless towers under control of the Soviet, "To all, to all, to all," announcing that the Czar had been executed in Ekaterinburg, but that the family had been removed from the city to a place of safety.

But was Nicholas II. killed? If so, how and where? This is where the real mystery of the Czar begins. From this 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.

It has been said that "votes should be weighed and not counted." So is it with regard to facts. 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 witnesses maintain that he was executed immediately in the basement or the first floor of this house. Other citizens declare that he was taken outside the city and shot. Some think he was murdered in the house without trial.

To show how the testimony differs I shall refer to the published statements of Prince Lvoff. He declared in Vladivostok and Japan that he and the Czar were kept in the same prison and had

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 which was used by the former imperial family, showed me through the house on two occasions and described in detail 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. A member of the Judicial Investigating Commission believes the family was killed in this house, but the only evidence any of them possess is the bullet holes in the walls and floors and the finding of certain property of the Czar and Czarina in the ashes of one of 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:

1. 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 bloodstains on the floor.

2. If they were executed in this room, then the soldiers' rifles could not have been more than five feet from the victims, because the room is very small. If