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The Czar's Secret

By J Schipper

One enduring mystery that is now at least partly solved thanks to forensic DNA evidence is the 80 year-old mystery surrounding the fate of Russia's royal family.

In the summer of 1918, Russia was engaged in a civil war between the communist revolutionaries, called the Reds or Bolsheviks, and opponents who either supported the monarchy or some form of democratic government, the White Russians.

The foremost symbol of the old regime was the tsar of Russia, Nicholas II, and his family, who was forced to abdicate the throne after the February Revolution of 1917. After the Bolshevik revolutionaries led by Vladimir Lenin seized power, they intended to put the Czar on trial, and moved the entire Russian royal family to the town of Ekaterinburg on the slopes of the Ural Mountains. With the czar were his wife, the Tsarina Alexandra; four young daughters, the Grand Duchesses Olga, Tatiana, Marie and Anastasia; and the tsar's son and heir, 13-year-old, Alexei.

The Romanovs were imprisoned in a two-story mansion appropriated from a rich engineer named Ipatiev. The royal family was kept on the top floor with their physician, Dr. Botkin, and three servants. Armed guards prevented them from leaving, and they were confined to their rooms except for meals and brief periods of exercise.

In the countryside around the house, the battle for Russia raged on. When White Russian forces were closing around Ekaterinburg, the Bolsheviks feared they would free the Czar, a potent figurehead to rally the Whites. This led the Bolsheviks to kill the tsar and his entire household in the early morning hours of July 17, 1918.

For political reasons, the Bolshevik government in Moscow decided against publicly revealing the fate of the royal family. They admitted that the tsar had been executed for crimes against the Russian people, but claimed that the rest of the family had been removed to safety. Many people, including relatives of the royal family, believed these reports and held out hope that the tsarina and her five children had survived. This started the spread of the persistent rumors which were to last for more than half a century.

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On July 25, 1918, the White army entered Ekaterinburg and rushed to the Ipatiev house, but could find no trace of the Czar. The Whites began an immediate inquiry, and appointed investigator Nikolai Solokov to lead it. He had only five months to complete the investigation before Ekaterinburg again fell to the Bolsheviks, but he published his findings in 1924 and concluded that all the Romanovs, plus their doctor and three servants, had been herded into a small basement room, shot, bayoneted, then doused with acid to disguise their identities before being thrown into an old mine shaft. However, the bodies were never located.

After the civil war ended in Russia, many people came forward in Europe claiming to be members of Tsar Nicholas's immediate family. Most of the pretenders to the Romanov legacy were quickly exposed as frauds, but one was extremely convincing.

In 1920, an anonymous woman tried to commit suicide by jumping off a bridge into a canal in Berlin,

Germany. She was rescued, and was admitted to a clinic in a dazed and confused state. At first, she had a complete loss of memory, but slowly she began to recover. She claimed her name was Anna Anderson. However, one day, she saw a picture of the tsar's family and became quite excited. Soon she claimed to be one of the grand duchesses.

Claiming that her memory had recovered, she told a remarkable story of how she, as Anastasia, had survived the mass murder of the Romanovs. According to her story, Anastasia had survived the massacre because one of her sisters shielded her from the bullets. Though seriously wounded, she awoke at night and was discovered by a soldier named Tchaikovsky who smuggled her into Romania. There she bore him a son, but the soldier was soon killed, whereupon she fled to Berlin to try to find her relatives. Depressed at her lack of success, she became desperate and attempted suicide.

In a court case that dragged on for 30 years, Anderson attempted to get legal backing for her claim to be the heir to the Romanov dynasty. Some remaining Romanov relatives supported her, but most viewed her as merely and unusually clever imposter. Without conclusive forensic evidence such as fingerprints or dental records, both sides relied on less conclusive proof.

Anderson provided many convincing details about the Romanov family's life in pre-revolutionary Russia, and she had scars on her body consistent with pistol and bayonet wounds. Photos of the Anastasia and Anderson and claimed great similarity, and handwriting experts argued that Anderson's penmanship matched that of Anastacia.

Experts opposing Anderson's claim stated that she was a Polish woman named Franzisca Schanzkowska who had disappeared from a Berlin boarding house shortly before Anderson was rescued from the canal. Photos of the woman did resemble Anderson, and her purported gun and bayonet wounds were attributed to injuries Schanzkowska had sustained from an explosion in a munitions factory.

The case ended in 1970 with the conclusion by the German court that Anderson's claim could not be conclusively substantiated, and Anderson moved to the United States where she died in 1984.

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In 1989, the advent of glasnost brought the startling news from the Soviet Union that the bodies of the Romanovs had in fact been discovered in 1979 by an amateur historical team led by Alexander Avdonin and Geli Ryabov. Fearing reprisals from the the previously repressive Soviet government, they had hidden the information for a decade. In 1991, a modern forensic team was sent to examine the site. The scientists concluded without any doubt that the remains were those of the Romanovs; however, two bodies, those of Alexei and one of the grand duchesses, were missing.

To reconfirm the findings, the Soviets invited several American forensic scientists, including Dr. William Maples of the University of Florida, to conduct their own study. They reached similar conclusions, but believed that the missing bodies were those of Alexei and Anastasia, not Marie. It was speculated that she was simply buried elsewhere, but the two remaining bodies were never found.

Anderson's claim to be Anastacia was revived. In 1992, the Soviets conducted DNA decided to conduct DNA testing on the remains of the Romanovs. A living relative of the missing Polish woman Schanzkowska, also provided a blood sample. Anderson's body had been cremated in 1984, but amazingly, a tissue sample was still in existence.

The test results were a grave disappointment for those who believed in Anderson's story. Tests

showed that she was related not to the Romanovs, but to the Schanskowskas.

While Anderson's claim was thoroughly debunked, the mystery of two missing Romanovs continues. Some believe they were burned and buried somewhere in the Koptyaki Forest and someday may be discovered, while others hold out hope that one or more of the children may have survived.

However, if any claimants to the Romanov throne ever again emerge, modern DNA testing will quickly resolve the matter.

J Schipper is very interested in the Czar

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3 Secret Selling Blueprints!

By Larry Dotson

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1. Allow your prospects imagine you both have a strong bond. A powerful way to bond with your prospects is to tell them a secret in your ad copy. Tell them the only people who are learning the secret are the people who read the ad. This will make them feel like they're included in a special group of people. When you tell people a secret, it makes them feel important and creates a strong bond. It will also create trust and rapport. Example: Please don't let anyone know I'm releasing this top secret information to you...

2. Have your prospects to imagine that you believe in them. People want other people to believe in them. You should write your ad copy in a way that shows you believe in your prospects to solve their own problems. Example: I know you have the courage to change your life using our product.

3. Allow your prospects imagine that you're leading them to a better life. Most people like to be lead. They often choose to be followers rather than leaders. That is why it is important to use action commands in your ad copy. Your copy words must become the leader to get them to take action. Examples of action commands: Order Now! Improve Your Business!

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