

# MARIA SPIRODONOVA BOLSHEVIK LEADER

### Little Woman in Puritanical Black Attire President of All Russian Congress.

### VAST AUDIENCE SWAYED

### History as Revolutionist Stands Out Even in Minds of Russians Who Are Long Familiar With Great Injustices.

BY LOUISE BRYANT.  
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Maria Spirodonova looks as if she came from New England. Her puritanical plain black clothes, with the chaste little white collar, and a certain air of refinement and severity about her, seem to belong to that region more than to mad, turbulent Russia—yet she is a true daughter of Russia and of the revolution. She is very young, just past 30—and appears exceedingly frail—but she has the wiry, unbreakable strength of many so-called "delicate" people and she has great powers of recuperation.

Her history as a revolutionist stands out even in the minds of the Russians, who are used to great injustices. "Oh! Spirodonova," they will say, "Yes, she is one of our greatest martyrs." Then they will tell you this story: She was 13 when she killed Luptjenovskiy, Governor of Tambov.

Luptjenovskiy had as dark a record as any official ever possessed. He went from village to village, taking an insane, diabolical delight in torturing people.

When peasants were unable to pay their taxes or offended him in any way at all he made them stand in line many hours in the cold and ordered them publicly flogged. He arrested anyone who dared to say that he held a different political view from his own. He incited the Cossacks to all sorts of outrages against the peasants, especially against the women.

**Treatment of Girl Revolting.**  
Spirodonova was a student in Tambov, she was not poor and she suffered no personal discomfort, but she could not bear the misery about her. She decided to kill Luptjenovskiy.

One afternoon she met him in the railway station. The first shot she fired over his head, and she fired the next she aimed straight at his heart, and Spirodonova has a steady hand as well as a clear head. Luptjenovskiy was surrounded by Cossacks at the time. They arrested Spirodonova, then followed as hideous a performance as ever occurred.

First the Cossacks beat her and threw her into a cold cell quite naked. Later they came and commanded her to tell the names of her comrades and accomplices. Spirodonova refused to speak, so she had bunches of her long, beautiful hair pulled out and was burned all over with cigarettes. For two nights she was chained in a cell among the Cossacks and the gendarmes. But there is an end to all things; Spirodonova fell violently ill. When they deserted her, she was carried off to a hospital at all about it and when they changed it to life imprisonment she did not know. They sent her out to Siberia in a half-conscious condition. None of her friends ever expected to see her again. When the February revolution broke out 11 years later she came back from Siberia, ready again to offer her life for freedom.

**Masses Worship Spirodonova.**  
It is hard for us in comfortable America to understand the fervor of people like Spirodonova. It is a great pity that we do not understand it, because it is so fine and unselfish. I once asked her how she managed to keep her mind clear during all the 11 years that she was in Siberia. "I learned languages," she said.

"You see, it is purely a mechanical business and therefore a wonderful soothing of nerves. It is like a game and one gets deeply interested. That is how I learned English and French."

No other woman in Russia has quite the worship from the masses of the people as Spirodonova. She was elected president of both the All-Russian congresses held in Petrograd within the last six months by the Left Social Revolutionary party. Soldiers and sailors address her as "dear comrade" instead of just ordinary "comrade."

The first time I saw Spirodonova was at the Democratic Congress. Orators had been on the platform arguing about coalition for hours. A husky fellow over the place when she walked out on the stage. She spoke for not more than three minutes, giving a short, concise, clear argument against coalition. The audience roared when she ceased and cried "Bravo! Bravo!" In the same way that she can stir up her hearers she can also keep them down. I have seen her keep down the radicals when a conservative speech was being made that she wanted spoken for one reason or another—sometimes because she wanted to see it when it was finished. She will stand exactly like a handmaiden, swinging her arms behind the speaker in gestures you are sure mean "Put on the soft pedal."

**Leadership of Giants Wonderful.**  
If she were not such a clear thinker and so inspired a person her leadership of the physical giants would be ludicrous. Spirodonova is barely five feet tall. She may weigh 100 pounds and she may weigh less. She has big gray eyes circled with blue rings and soft brown hair, which she wears in a coronet braid. She works seven, average hours of about 16 hours a day and everybody in Russia pours into her office at 8

WOMAN PRESIDENT OF ALL-RUSSIAN CONGRESS.



MARIA SPIRODONOVA.

Fontanka to ask advice. I used to go there and sit and watch her and she would tell me interesting stories. One day I took in a Russian girl who belonged to the Menshevik party and who, therefore, was opposed to Spirodonova. She sat silent and listened to her for two hours. When we came out on the street the girl stopped and her eyes were full of tears. "To think," she said, "that with such eyes and such a face she should ever kill a man! I always until I saw her I was opposed to her, but now I know she is the greatest woman in Russia! I believe that, too, and I have great respect for Madame Kollental. The Bolsheviki Minister of Welfare; for Countess Panina, whom Lenin speaks of as 'one of the cleverest defenders of the capitalist class'; for 'Babushka,' Madame Stahl, who manages the violent Cronstadt sailors; and for many others."

**"Socialist Army" in View.**  
The last time I saw Spirodonova she talked to me about the war and the possibility of a decent peace being secured at Brest-Litovsk. She did not have any faith in the success of the negotiations and she was seriously working on the organization of what she called a "socialist army." "We have made secret inquiries," she went on, "and we know we will have enough men; they will all be volunteers; there must be no conscription."

She spoke sadly of the saboteurs, especially of the intellectuals. "They consider the Russian revolution an adventure and they hold aloof, but the Russian revolution is much more than that, even if it fails for the present. It is the beginning of social revolution all over the world; it is social revolution here in full swing. The whole country is taking part in it now. My reports come in from the remotest districts. The peasants are very conscious and are making social changes everywhere."

We talked about women and I wanted to know why more of them did not have any faith in the success of the negotiations. She was elected president of both the All-Russian congresses held in Petrograd within the last six months by the Left Social Revolutionary party. Soldiers and sailors address her as "dear comrade" instead of just ordinary "comrade."

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Roberson, in Federal Court today, declared that leaders in the alleged anti-raft meeting at Topeka last Spring directed the distribution of literature similar to that prepared by Emma Goldman and Alex Berkman.

**CHICAGO, April 11.**—Mayor William Hale Thompson, whose war attitude has subjected him to much criticism, gave a written pledge today that he would cause the arrest of any person making seditious or treasonable statements.

**Protests Force Pledge.**  
The pledge was given as the result of protests against a meeting of the Banker Singing Society scheduled to give a program in German.

**CLEVELAND, O., April 11.**—The Waechter Und Anzeiger, a Cleveland German daily, according to Attorney Harold T. Clark, chairman of the city war board Americanization committee, may soon be converted into a United States Government publication, working for the Americanization of Germans in this country.

Mr. Clark said today he is writing a letter to A. Mitchell Palmer, custodian of enemy alien property, suggesting such a plan.

Mr. Clark has written court officials in Cleveland asking them to compile lists of all enemy property on record. His letter indicates this property will be taken over for the period of the war.

**WASHINGTON, April 11.**—Further disclosures of German propaganda in the United States were made today before the Senate Judiciary committee investigating the German-American Alliance.

Senator King, the chairman, read a letter from John F. Coar, in which Coar said that in 1912 on a visit to Germany he was informed by no less than 35 German agents had been sent to the United States annually for the six years preceding his visit. The duties of the agents were not mentioned.

While he was in Germany, Coar said, representatives of German organizations asked him to aid in furthering a law in the United States which would enable German immigrants "to retain their supreme allegiance to the German Empire."

**MINNEAPOLIS, April 11.**—J. O. Bentall, Socialist candidate for Governor, was found guilty on two counts of violating the espionage act by a jury in Federal Court here today.

The maximum penalty provided for violation of this act is 30 years' imprisonment and a fine of \$10,000. He will be sentenced next Friday.

Bentall now is under one-year sentence in the Crow Wing County jail for obstructing the draft.

Ball was fined \$10,000. Bentall was charged with obstructing enlistments through an address he delivered last July in Hutchinson, Minn.

**PARIS, April 11.**—Bolo Pasha, condemned to death for treason but granted a reprieve of indefinite duration on his plea that he had important revelations to make to the military judicial authorities, entertains no doubt as to what his ultimate fate will be, according to the Petit Journal today.

It quotes him as saying to his keeper on Monday:

"I will go to Vincennes, but others will surely follow." (It is at Vin-

**TOPEKA, Kan., April 11.**—At the trial of Dr. Eva Harding, the Gilbert, Ernest Newman and Professor George W. Kleig, all charged with conspiracy to defeat the selective service act, United States District Attorney Fred

## ALLIANCE WILL QUIT German-American Body Decides to Dissolve at Once.

**BENTHALL FOUND GUILTY**  
Socialist Candidate for Governor of Minnesota Faces Severe Sentence  
Penalty — Bolo Pasha Still Informing on Associates.

**PHILADELPHIA, Pa., April 11.**—The executive committee of the National German-American Alliance at a special meeting here today decided to dissolve the organization immediately and instructed the officers to turn over at once to the American Red Cross the \$20,000 in the treasury.

Announcement of the dissolution was made by K. A. M. Schultz, of Baltimore, attorney for the National body, after an all-day meeting behind closed doors.

It was also stated that dissolution will become effective tomorrow, when the executive committee will meet again to act on certain financial matters and obligations that will have to be adjusted.

The \$20,000 which was by resolution contributed to the Red Cross was the nucleus of a fund of \$100,000 that was to have been raised, the income of which was to have been used to defray the expenses of the business administration of the alliance, it was announced.

**Kaiser Will Have Colossal Task.**  
I remembered something Angelica had said when we were discussing the same thing. "Women," she said, "have to go through a tremendous struggle before they are free at all, so that they take their freedom very seriously, because they sacrifice so many precious things to obtain it."

When the Bolsheviki came into power they took over the famous old and programs of the Social Revolutionists. This brought about great turmoil in that party. The Right maintained that it was their programme and that they had the right to steal it, but Spirodonova and all her wing only laughed. "What difference does it make," she wanted to know, "who gives the peasants their land—the principal thing is that they get it?" This was one of the reasons that the Social Revolutionists split and the greater left wing joined the Bolsheviki. The Left Social Revolutionists are the only party in Russia who rise above party and, personally, I have more admiration for them than any party in Russia. They are bound to play a large part when the first wildness of the revolution begins to settle down, because they are a reasonable, intellectual party, and by some of the purest idealists of all Russia.

I was not at all surprised today when I read they have decided not to accept the disgraceful German demands, no matter what other party signs them. The Kaiser will have a colossal task to subdue their unconquerable spirit. I would not be surprised either, if Spirodonova should become the Joan of Arc of Russia, leading her soldiers to battle as well as through the difficult mazes of politics.

The day I left Russia Spirodonova gave me her picture. She hates publicity and has stubbornly refused to have a photograph taken. This one she took off her passport. When she was signing her name on the back she looked up and said: "Never mind saying anything good about me, but do say something about the revolution. Try to make them understand in great America how hard we over here are striving to maintain our ideal."

(Continued tomorrow.)

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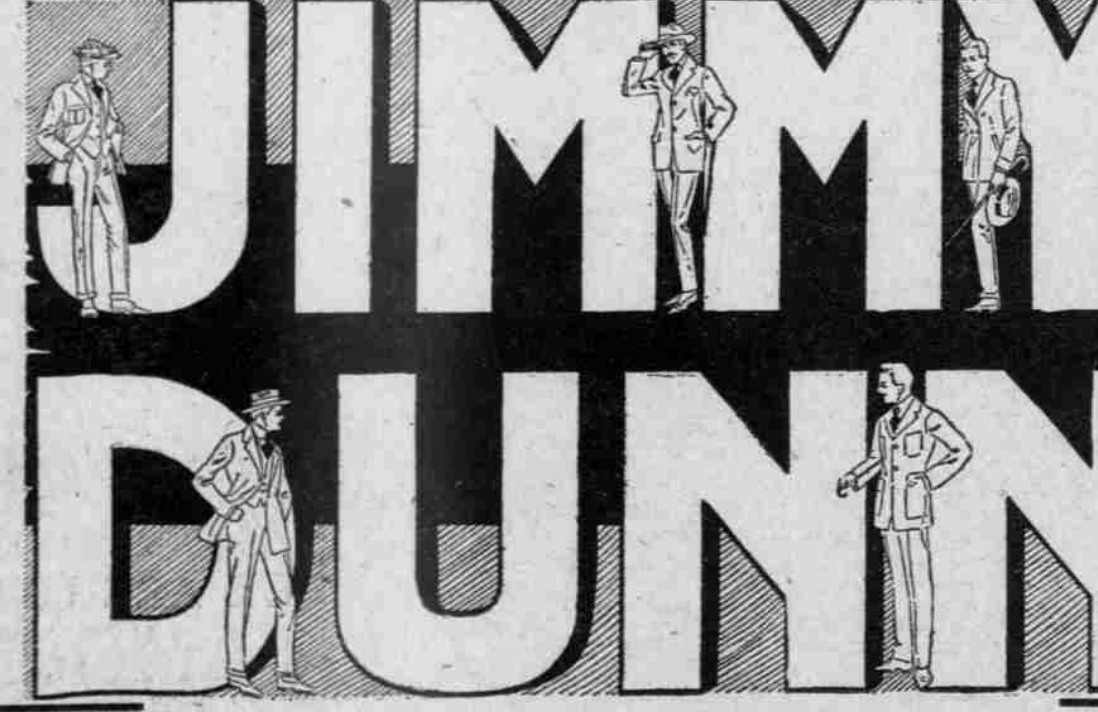
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