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HIST 329

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### Yashka, Motives for the State and Personhood

Political ideologies as are well represented in the memoir of Maria Botchkareva by her accounts of statements and events in her experiences through the Russian revolutions. Through the work, Botchkareva's ideologies shift as they are relevant to her. Her placement in the peasant-class takes precedence in the way she conducted herself by carrying on traditional values that preserve her sense of dignity. Her sense of self surfaces through her determination to lead as well within her leadership methods. Inasmuch, her leadership methods reflected the power balance of her political ideology. Botchkareva's upbringing as a peasant defined her political success, definition of Russian collectivist identity, all the while loyally contributing to the progressive ideology of Russia.

Throughout Botchkareva's memoir, she claims to be illiterate (83,162). Despite this, she had a grasp of social-political literacy because she received an early intelligentsia education. She was made aware of her status as a peasant and the limitations of being in that caste. Her acquaintances, as most of Russia, were in the same economic status. Those who advantaged her provided opportunities that would teach her how she was limited in the lifestyle of a peasant with minimal social mobility. The power structure of the peasants were top down; people are led with a single actor, and ultimately led by the tsar. Botchkareva confronted the illegitimacy and corruption of social contracts

found within the peasant class when she built up her own butcher shop, emigrates, and returns to find that she cannot reap the benefit she believed to be contractually due (52).

Her political structure she was raised into during her early life taught her that positions in the hierarchy held absolute power over others. There is no hierarchy to enforce and deliver what was due to Botchkareva in the rural community, and she sought out an environment with the intent to give another means of fiscal support. Her nation called to her in the urbanized community of Yakutsk (64). She was unable to find stability in the class that she was in, so she sought a means of legitimate superiority that could meet her needs.

The hierarchies present in the state power are representative in the military and local peasant regimes. Insofar that there are no committees to check superior powers and discipline was absolute (70, 188). By the same method of social mobilization that she experienced as a rural peasant in Tomsk, Botchkareva petitioned to the tsar to permit her into joining the military. However, this was after she was denied a position within her initial social status. Ranks in the military that differentiated between officers and enlisted were representative of the state's style of absolute concentrated political power of the elite.

Following the shift from concentrated power of the tsarist Russian Empire through the abolition of Dumas and Provisional Government, Botchkareva had successfully been promoted from a corporal and Non-commissioned officer (NCO) with experience in leading effectively with absolute power. She persisted in her position that discipline is mandatory and absolutely necessary. She was subject to a regime of

proximal absolute power during basic training and in the field where she took on her initial role as a medic and soldier.

In Botchkareva's position as an NCO, and in the front where she took on the autonomous role over a unit of men; there she was able to reinforce the top-down style of leadership built into the military hierarchy. However, in her growth, her sacrifice to save men under fire, aside from the language she uses that separates unified "Russia" against "Germany," despite that the opposing state represents a similar concentration of political power. Her differentiation of states by political pride and territory supports her political ideology of nationalism despite exerting her dominant belief of concentrated power. Her nationalist ideology coincides with the ideology of Russian collectivism, exhibited by her dedication to saving Russian soldiers and her organizational preferences after she is promoted to Lieutenant.

Once Botchkareva organizes the 1<sup>st</sup> Women's Battalion of Death, utilizes the same high power distance and structure of the previous military organizations, similar to the government of the Russian Empire. However, since the Battalion was organized after the rise of the Bolshevik revolutions, the power structure of the battalion was not representative of the present political structure. Contrastive opinions developed within the battalion and from the Bolshevik party because the battalion did not represent the new desired devolution of power. Botchkareva explained that her interest was aligned to that of the Bolshevik party in that Russia belonged to the people of the state collectively, and her motives for not having a committee for her battalion were based on the efficiency of defending the state for the people.

Because of the opposing opinions of ideal structure, the Bolsheviks and Botchkareva ran into conflict of interest that stems from the rise of political devolution to the people. Botchkareva states that her interest of having a battalion without a committee was because it wasted time to come to decisions and the task cannot be completed efficiently (187). In her eyes, war was a simple task to remove annexing Germans from Russian land and the purpose was aligned with the Bolsheviks in that the war needed to end under the idea that Russia, its territory and politics, belonged to all its people collectively. The Bolsheviks and superiors did reluctantly permit her to lead without a committee. However, the Bolshevik party still claimed dissidence that she was from the “old regime,” (276) to the extent that she was convicted of crimes based on similar suspicious threats of the rising Soviet regime (286-288).

The utilitarian nature to execute a few to maintain the stability for the whole was consequentially effective, provided that allowing harm coaxed a sense of determinism. Botchkareva presents herself in a light that means to be peaceful in transition of the political regime with a sole interest of the collective Russian People. “Kill and be done,” is a phrase used both by Botchkareva and the Bolshevik participants (188); whereas Bolshevik attacks are intended to secure the fate of the party and the sacrifices of soldiers secure discipline--both are intended to preserve the Russian state. Although the political perspectives within Russia has shifted before and after the 1917 revolutions, some underlying philosophies behind the have remained consistent.

Reference

Botchkareva, M. (1919). ed. Isaac Don Levine. *Yashka, My Life as a Peasant, Officer, and Exile*. Forgotten Books, London.

[How does Botchkareva portray soldiers' political thinking during the war both before and after the revolutions of 1917, and how does that compare to her own political thinking?]