AWESOME stories

EXECUTIONERS HIDE the ROMANOV BODIES

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After assassinating the Tsar, his family and four of their helpers, the Bolshevik executioners had to hide eleven bodies. They placed the remains of all the murder victims into a Fiat truck, of the type depicted in this image, to move them away from the Ipatiev House. The "Reds" (Bolsheviks) were worried that the "Whites" (loyalists) would break-into the "House of Special Purpose" and find the bodies. Image online via "Photos of the Revolution."

After several aborted efforts to dispose of the bodies, Yurovsky and his detachment finally decided to burn them. But burning a human body takes a long time if the temperature is not hot enough. Once again Yurovsky had to make a different plan.

> *We wanted to burn* [Aleksei] *and Alexandra Fedorovna, but by mistake the lady-in-waiting* [the maid Demidova] *was burnt with Aleksei instead. We then immediately buried the remains under the fire and lit the fire again, which completely covered up traces of the digging. Meanwhile, we dug a common grave for the rest. A pit around 6 feet deep and 8 feet square was ready by around 7 o'clock in the morning.* [That would have been the morning of the 19th.]
>
> *We piled the corpses in the pit, poured sulfuric acid onto their faces and generally over their whole bodies to prevent them both from being recognized and from stinking as a result of decomposition (the pit was not deep). Having thrown dirt and brushwood on top, we put down railroad ties and drove over them a few times - no traces of the pit were left. The secret was completely safe; the Whites didn't find this burial place.* (See "Yurovsky's Account of the Execution of the Imperial Family.")

The Whites had, in fact, found the temporary grave where the bodies had been hastily left after the murders. However, they never found the spot Yurovsky describes as the permanent grave site:

> *Koptiaki is 12 miles from Yekaterinburg.* [Follow this link to view the location of the Koptiaki forest - look at the top left of the map.] *The R.R. crosses mile 6 between Koptiaki and the Upper Isetsk factory to the northwest* [of town]. *The burial place is 700 feet closer to the Upper Isetsk factory from the point of intersection.* ("Yurovsky's Account.")

Yurovsky wrote his account in 1920. By that time, the Bolsheviks had changed the name of Ekaterinburg to Sverdlovsk, in honor of the man who masterminded the execution - Yakov Sverdlov - a member of the Bolshevik Central Committee. (In 1960, the American U-2 pilot, Francis Gary Powers, was shot down over Sverdlovsk.) Today, the town is once again known by its former name.

The bodies remained in their shallow grave, undisturbed, until 1979, when they were apparently found by a

Russian mystery writer, Geli Ryabov, and a geophysicist from Ekaterinburg, Dr. Alexander Avdonin. Ryabov and Avdonin waited ten years before they revealed their find.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:
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Media Stream

Romanov's Temporary Grave Site

Image, part of the Sokolov Archive currently maintained at Harvard University. Online via Wikimedia Commons.
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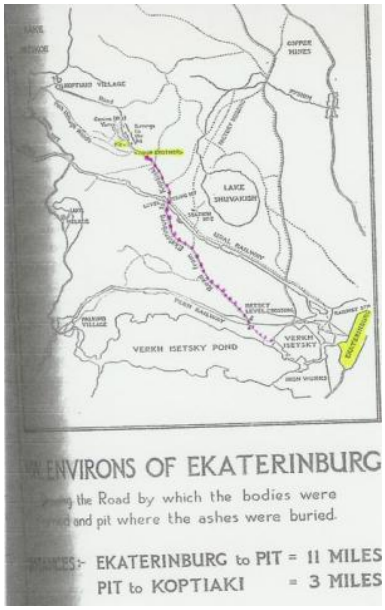

Koptiaki Forest - Map Locator

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Yakov Sverdlov

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Romanov's Shallow Grave Site

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Dr. Alexander Avdonin

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