

Little is known about the participation of women in the Russian-American anarchist movement, which reached a peak membership of 12,000 in 1919. The following obituary from the New York weekly *Amerikan-skiye Izvestiya* [American News] tells of the life of one such woman.

## Death of a Comrade

At midday on the 16<sup>th</sup> of July, 1924, on the tenth day after an operation, comrade **Anastasia Ryzhukova** passed away. A dedicated activist, she devoted her best years to serving the cause of the liberation of humanity from oppression and enslavement.

Death carried away Ryzhukova in the 31<sup>st</sup> year of her life. She was born in Galicia,<sup>[1]</sup> arrived in America in 1910, and immediately, with firm resolve, joined the revolutionary movement. For all the remaining years of her life, she carried on a tenacious struggle for the liberation of workers from the fetters of capitalism.

In 1912 Ryzhukova married, but her family life did not last long: the Palmer goons<sup>[2]</sup> broke into the Ryzhukovs' apartment in the middle of the night, and arrested her husband — the family's breadwinner — who was then deported to Russia along with dozens of others on the Buford.<sup>[3]</sup> This gratuitous violence on the part of the government was such a shock to this sensitive woman that she was

<sup>1</sup> Ukrainian province of Austria-Hungary prior to World War I.

<sup>2</sup> In the autumn of 1919, raids authorized by U. S. Attorney General Mitchell Palmer targeted the properties of Russian-American anarchist organizations in many cities, destroying schools and libraries. Hundreds of activists were arrested, beaten, and deported.

<sup>3</sup> The S. S. Buford, a former military transport ship, carried 249 political radical deportees to the Russian Soviet Republic, leaving the US on December 21, 1919. There is no record of Ryzhukova's husband being on this voyage, unless he was traveling under a different name, so perhaps he was deported at a different time. Victor Serge, in a memoir of 1921, mentions a "Ryoukov" who belonged to a group in Petrograd calling themselves "Russian Americans Repatriated from America." Of the seven members of this group, four are known to have been deported on the Buford. [Thanks to Kenyon Zimmer for pointing out Serge's remarks.]



seriously ill and bedridden for some time. In fact she never completely recovered from this traumatic event.

It's heart-wrenching to recall the sacrifices of this comrade, who, despite working in a factory under harsh conditions, was still able to devote all her free time to the cause of the common worker.

The deceased belonged to the ranks of those worker-revolutionaries who serve as models. Their faith in a better future gives courage to the weak and the waverers, inspiring them to believe in victory over the oppressors. Compassionate and selfless, ready to help wherever help was needed, comrade Ryzhukova left an indelible impression on everyone who knew her.

Recently, finding herself in the hospital, her thoughts were focused on how she might render as much assistance as possible to those martyrs of the Russian Revolution, who, under a cover of darkness, are in the grips of the Bolshevik butchers on the Solovetsky Islands.<sup>[4]</sup> But fate destroyed all these noble plans and dreams. Death crept upon her unawares, and her eager heart, so full of love for everything beautiful and sublime, ceased to beat.

The deceased took an active part in staging amateur performances by fulfilling various tasks and often personally recruiting the performing artists. Such events were in support of organizing efforts.

She leaves an 11-year-old son. As a mother, she served as a role model for many. She did not spare

<sup>4</sup> The remote and inaccessible Solovetsky Islands, located in an arm of the White Sea, were used to house political prisoners, including anarchists, in the early Russian Soviet Republic.

any effort so that her beloved Georgie would be educated in the spirit of freedom, and she tried to develop in him an aesthetic taste, sending him for lessons in music and drawing.

The funeral took place on July 19. The weather was sunny and clear. Many people gathered at the grave. Comrades from nearby cities were present to say a last goodbye. A group photo was taken of all those present at the burial.

At the graveside brief speeches were delivered and the "Funeral March"<sup>[5]</sup> was sung. Then the coffin was slowly lowered into the grave and everyone,

<sup>5</sup> There are many variations of this song. The first stanza goes something like:

*You fell victim in the fatal combat  
out of altruistic love toward the people.  
You gave whatever you could  
to their honour, life and freedom.*

with pain in their hearts and tears in their eyes, cast a last glance at the dear comrade leaving us forever.

Wreathes from local Russian organizations were laid at the grave.

May you rest in peace, dear and unforgettable comrade!

— Union of Russian Toilers of Newark, N. J.

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*Translated and annotated by Malcolm Archibald.*