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Okhrana Women II

*Paris Okhrana "Dissolved"*

When these arguments proved of no avail, Mme. Le Davadie turned to Bittard-Monin with personal reproaches. No other agent he was dismissing had ever meant anything to him, while she had been his favorite before either of them had ever heard of the Okhrana. She recalled how she had shared with him her apartment and all in those young and idealistic years when he was struggling along as a poorly paid sub-inspector for the *Sûreté*. The ingrate would hear none of it; his heart had turned to stone. Aside from the change of policy, he reminded her coldly, the agents had to be dismissed for the obvious reason that they had all been blown by Burtzev and their names published in all the press of Europe, so they would be entirely useless.

"Why aren't you fired, then?" she came back. "Your name was not only in the newspapers, but proclaimed in parliament."

He said he would be, reiterating that the Okhrana was discontinuing operations and making a public announcement to that effect. He declared that part of the reason for this was to insure the safety of the agents whose names and addresses were now known to the terrorists. But he did not convince her. The argument degenerated into repetition and name-calling.

Finally Mme. Le Davadie saw that it was no use and signed the five papers. First was a receipt for 200 francs, her salary for the last month, and one for expense money and a termination bonus. Then there was the notarized resignation:

The undersigned Madame Richard Le Davadie, residing at 52 rue Jacob, employed by the intelligence service organized and directed by Monsieur Marcel Bittard-Monin, am hereby resigning from said service as a result of its complete dissolution as of 31 October 1913.

I have received as indemnity the sum of 200 francs, the equivalent of one month's salary.

I declare that I am entirely satisfied with the payment of said sum as my final compensation.

Paris, 31 October 1913  
Le Davadie G. Richard

Another paper acknowledged that she had been returned her birth certificate and a court document concerning herself. By her fifth subscription Mme. Le Davadie declared that she no longer had in her possession any notes, letters, ciphers, or photographs belonging to the service.

66

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Okhrana Women II

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

With the termination money in her purse and all the anger in her heart, Mme. Le Davadie went to the nearest bistro. She was a temperate woman and despised excessive drinking, but this time she had to have an outlet. Not from worry about her future but for her wrath toward Monin. She couldn't take her anger out on the faceless Okhrana. If she knew any of its officers, it would be different; but going to the Russian embassy without knowing anyone, as ex-agent Fontana once had done, would be futile and ridiculous. They would say they'd never heard of her or of Bittard-Monin or anyone like that.

Two other agents Monin had dismissed that day were in the bistro—Mme. Drouchet, whom Mme. Le Davadie knew well but disliked, and Auguste Pouchot, with whom she had once served on a surveillance team in Montreux. As an agent she would have never approached them publicly, but now, savoring her new freedom, she joined them at the table. No explanations were necessary; she saw at once that they both had been canned too. The three joined in cursing Bittard-Monin.

"The bastard should not have thrown *you* out," said Mme. Drouchet, meaningfully. Le Davadie felt like grabbing her hair for twisting this one in; then she realized that Mme. Drouchet had already taken more cognac than was needed to drown her bitterness. Pouchot too was nearly drunk. She determined at once not to follow their example. She had only one absinthe and sipped it slowly, thinking. Not really listening to the other two, she heard them naming Burtzev again and again, just as Monin had, it seemed a hundred times. Burtzev's revolutionary intelligence had busted Paris Okhrana. He was powerful, the Sherlock Holmes of the revolution. All the press of Paris was praising him, and the leading politicians were fighting his battles in parliament.

*On the Victor's Bandwagon*

Mme. Le Davadie made up her mind. Without even finishing her drink, she left her companions and went straight to the rue de La Glacière. She knew Burtzev's office well from having done surveillance on it. She would get even with Monin. She would join the revolutionary service; and Burtzev, now so strong and successful, would pay her just as he was paying Leroi, who had defected as Okhrana agent at about the time she had formally signed on in 1911. She would even be paid for her revenge.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

67

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

*Okhrana Women II*

The office at 53 rue de la Glacière was a noisier place than Monin's bureau. It was not large, but some half dozen people were engaged in heated discussions. Burtzev was not there; his assistant Leroi received her. This was well. She knew how much influence he had with Burtzev, and she thought he would help her. Back in 1908 he had been one of her more persistent admirers among the investigation agents. True that his awkwardly long figure, frequently unstable because of too much alcohol, had not attracted her even to the point of the camaraderie usual among fellow agents; but when he was sober and alone with her, he used to flatter her with attentions. Now he showed his surprise and joy at seeing her. He moved as though to kiss her in front of everyone but settled for kissing her hand. He took her to Burtzev's private office.

When the pleasantries were over, she described how she had quit Monin and the Okhrana, and much of what she said was quite untrue. They wanted her to stay, she said, but she was fed up with them all and wanted to get even, particularly with Monin and his net. She finally recognized, she said, that Burtzev was doing the right thing, and she would be glad to join him even at a small salary, just enough to keep her alive. She would help to the best of her ability to fight and expose the entire Russian service. Leroi was pleased, and they worked out a preliminary plan of employment that he thought would be acceptable to Burtzev. She also was pleased, and she forgot all her past antipathy for Leroi. He took her to dinner and she took him to her apartment.

The following day, on 1 November 1913, Mme. Richard Le Davadie was hired as agent of the revolutionary intelligence service. Leroi spoke enthusiastically to Burtzev about her exceptional qualities and vast knowledge of the personnel and activities of the Okhrana's non-Russian networks in France, Switzerland, and Italy, as well as her excellent current motivation. Burtzev was not opposed; but, seasoned as he was in the game and not sharing Leroi's personal reasons for enthusiasm, he wanted first to determine how much she knew and to make sure she was not a plant of some kind. She had to be interrogated in detail, be kept under surveillance for several days, and in the meantime be given no chance to learn anything about his service.

The first interrogation satisfied Burtzev about her knowledge, and the many questions about Okhrana targets, methods of surveillance, timing and location of operations, reporting procedures in clear and in code, and cooperation with local security organs convinced Le

68

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

*Okhrana Women II*

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Davadie that she was dealing with just as professional a service as the one she had left. She knew enough to fill a book, and since it would take forever to get this in debriefings, Burtzev told her to put in writing a full account of every surveillance job she had done since February 1911, when she formally became a salaried Okhrana agent. She could write this in the quiet of her own apartment.

Burtzev gave her 40 francs and the promise of a better monthly salary than that. All she had to do for the time being was write this report and keep in daily touch with Leroi or with Burtzev if Leroi was away. Leroi accompanied her home. Pleased as Punch, he wanted to celebrate right away, and on her 40 francs. But she was not in the mood. She was disturbed by his assurances of how they would have a secure job together and he would look after her, and especially by his remark that he personally would take care of the surveillance Burtzev wanted her kept under. She talked him out of coming up to her apartment this time.

*Second Thoughts*

Alone, it took her but little thinking to decide that she could never serve Leroi; that was about what this job would mean. And although Burtzev made a pleasant impression on her—the kindly, soft-spoken, bearded, scholarly gentleman knew how to treat a lady—those 40 francs of salary advance perturbed her. The appearance of the people in Burtzev's office, too, like Leroi's shabbiness, gave her shivers. They looked intellectual all right, but all haggard and undernourished. She understood no Russian, and their speaking it made her feel strange. No, she couldn't bring herself to associate with Leroi and those sallow-faced conspirators, even if the prospects of remuneration had been brighter than they were.

Late the same evening, after she had made up her mind not to go through with it, she had a visitor. Thinking it might be Leroi, she was not going to answer the door, but the knocking persisted and the caller spoke her last name. She opened to find Henri Bint there. She had met Bint on two occasions, but he had never been in her apartment. She liked the old reprobate. "Henri!" she called him by his first name as in the days when he organized her surveillance team. "I'm so pleased to see you. What a surprise!"

The call was not a social one. Bint said he was sorry about her dismissal from the Okhrana service but it was unavoidable for everyone, even for him after 35 years of service. She started talking about

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

69

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

*Okhrana Women II*

the ingrates and was going to indulge in some more scolding, but Bint stopped her:

"You shouldn't feel bad. You got yourself another job."

"What job?" She looked puzzled.

"With Burtzev's service. I know it all."

How could Bint, a mortal enemy of Leroi, know? He knew just when she had made the two visits to Burtzev's office, what she had said to Leroi and Burtzev, what they said to her, and what was decided. He even knew about the 40 francs and her assignment to write about the Okhrana. He did not tell her that Jollivet, another "dismissed" Okhrana agent whom Mme. Le Davadie had never known, had recently been employed by Burtzev and had been in the office both times.

Mme. Le Davadie was not at all embarrassed. She told Bint she had just decided not to work for Burtzev after all. But Bint had a different idea, and that was the reason for his visit. He had a simple plan: she should not only go ahead with Burtzev but perform so well as to make herself indispensable in the office on the rue de la Glacière. She needed persuading. They talked until after midnight. She warned him that Leroi might come around, for she was to be under his surveillance for some time. Bint knew all that; he had disposed of Leroi by seeing to it that he had a drinking partner at a cabaret.

Le Davadie insisted that under no circumstances would she ever work again with Bittard-Monin.

"Of course not," Bint said. "Your position will be completely changed. You will no longer be a detective conducting surveillance and investigating through local security offices. That is a thing of the past for you. You will no longer be an overt agent for anyone. Your position will be that of a secret agent reporting to the Okhrana the inside story of revolutionary espionage and propaganda." She liked the secrecy and the adventurousness of the proposal. "But it would be dangerous! To whom would I be reporting? You?"

"Maybe to me at times, but the Russians prefer to handle the secret agents themselves. All important dealings would be with them."

"How much will they pay?"

Bint did not know exactly, but he was sure that as secret agent she would be getting much higher pay than ever before, depending partly upon herself. As for the dangers, he said that the Okhrana people knew how to play it safe; she would only have to follow their

70

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

*Okhrana Women II*

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

instructions. He told her he would visit her once more and then arrange a meeting with a Russian for further instructions. He promised to help her write the long story of her agent career that Burtzev required.

Leroi, showing the signs of his night of drinking, called in the middle of the afternoon. He found her at the table, in cheerful spirits, writing her report. He went on to the office to tell Burtzev that he had had the new recruit under surveillance and that she was now at home doing the required writing.

On 4 November Le Davadie went to Burtzev's office again. She brought a sheaf of papers in her own handwriting, done hastily and without much concern for tidiness. They listed in simple chronological order, from 15 February 1911 to 29 October 1913, her singleton and team assignments—dates, locations, targets, where and how picked up, whom with, where followed. In several instances the assistance of local security organs was noted. The story was impressive in the quantity of data recalled but not so elaborate as to suggest reference to contemporary records. It had of course been prepared by Bint, from the records in Bittard-Monin's office. Before giving it to Le Davadie to copy he had also consulted Sushkov, assistant to Krassilnikov.

*New Jane at Work*

It is not known what code name Burtzev gave Le Davadie, who now became an operative in the revolutionary service. Krassilnikov and all the Okhrana office thenceforth referred to her as Jane. A great pile of reports from December 1913 to late summer 1914, when Burtzev folded up his office and returned to Russia, attests that she knew and reported every move made by the revolutionaries. The records indicate that all her reports were in writing, urgent ones in the convenient *enveloppes pneumatiques* which were handled like telegrams, others in ordinary registered mail, often addressed to Bint's cover firm. At no time, it appears, did she arouse suspicion in Burtzev or his staff.

She reported first on several French and Italian agents Monin had dismissed who came to Burtzev in search of employment. In an effort to ingratiate themselves, these would all disparage Le Davadie's reputation as a person or an agent. A Mme. Tiercelin, in particular, made vitriolic attacks on her as Monin's and other agents' mistress; but Burtzev and Leroi did not care. Le Davadie did not hide any-

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

71

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

*Okhrana Women II*

thing—like that—from them, and she proved to be a good agent. They never suspected that all her reporting to them actually came from 79 rue de la Grenelle or was at least approved there.

Thanks to Jane, the Okhrana was able to forstall a number of terrorist attempts during this period. It was she who led Krassilnikov onto the trail of a certain Bessel as he left Brindisi for Macedonia to pick up a load of bombs for assassins in Russia. He was arrested in Belgrade and his shipment confiscated on a train in Serbia. By a curious coincidence, Jane was also assigned to help Burtzev prepare evidence of Bessel's innocence for the revolutionary press to use in showing that the charges for the arrest in Belgrade had been trumped up by the Okhrana.

Jane reported on the speeches Burtzev prepared for Jaurez to deliver in the French parliament attacking the Okhrana. In some instances the Okhrana thus had Jaurez's speeches before he himself had seen them. During the first half of 1914, when Burtzev exposed a considerable bag of Okhrana agents, both Russian and non-Russian, Jane could at least warn when and how they would be exposed. She became so important to Burtzev that he wanted to take her with him early in 1914 on a campaign to expose the activities of the Russian secret service in the Italian parliament. She consulted Krassilnikov, who actually approved the trip, but she preferred to develop an acute migraine: she was afraid that it might bring to light discrepancies in her first report to Burtzev with respect to cooperation with Italian security personnel.

It is evident from Okhrana records that Jane ceased to be an agent after Burtzev's departure and the closing of his service. She apparently located some war-related employment; in August and September 1914 at least half the personnel of the Okhrana abroad were drafted into military services.

Soon after the outbreak of the revolution a number of writers began competing in their efforts to expose all Okhrana secret agents. Jane's role was somehow never exposed, even by writer Agafonov, who as a member of the commission investigating the Okhrana had full access to her papers. It is possible that he was unable to detect her identity behind the cover name. Several writers named Le Davadie among the non-Russian investigation agents belonging to the Bittard-Monin network, but all ignore not only her services for Burtzev but her double role for the Okhrana.

72

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Okhrana Women II

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

### La Petite

Three intelligence services used "the little one"—the revolutionaries when she was a child, the Austrians against Russia, and the Russians against Austria. The files of Paris Okhrana contained only 3 x 5 cards on the activities of her parents, but Pavel Zavarzin, Warsaw Okhrana chief at the time of the childhood episode, has told her story.

#### *Living Doll*

The Warsaw Okhrana office was located in the Hôtel de Ville, a large building which also provided living quarters for Zavarzin and his subordinates with their families. Beginning in 1904, milk was delivered in a large can to the Zavarzin apartment by an eleven-year-old girl. It came from a dairy where her mother was also employed. The girl was diminutive and charming. She had light, fluffy blond hair and brilliant blue eyes, like a doll. Everybody called her La Petite. Pleased by her promptness and friendliness, the occupants of the Hôtel de Ville spoiled her with gifts of all sorts. A particular attachment was formed between her and the children of Yan, Zavarzin's coachman.

This pleasant association flourished for two years. Then one day a surveillance team was tailing a female terrorist named Rotte. She was accompanied by a young girl carrying a milk can, apparently full. They both went into a house in the Warsaw suburb Praga; within five minutes the girl came out alone and without the can. The detectives now recognized her as La Petite. One of them followed to see where she would go next. Surveilling a child proved to be a difficult game: she often stopped and played at corners or wandered down side streets looking in the windows. After two hours she was back at home.

A penetration of a terrorist group reported at about this time that groups preparing assassinations and robberies were using children to deliver arms, one piece at a time, to the perpetrators. A child carrying a package or container with a small gun or bomb inside would be followed by a terrorist at some distance, then overtaken at the place of action. The investigation of a number of terrorist acts confirmed that this was indeed the practice. Penetrations reported also that the conspirators maintained surveillance of the Okhrana premises in a way that would never be detected. The conspirators knew the tag numbers of Okhrana carriages and the names of officers

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

73