

## The Assassination attempt on Lenin 1918

Fanya Kaplan was born into a poor peasant family and her four brothers and two sisters were all educated at home. Her parents both emigrated to the United States. Kaplan became involved in radical politics and joined the Socialist Revolutionary Party. In 1906 she took part in a plot to kill a Tsarist official in Kiev. Kaplan was caught and sentenced to a life of hard labour in Siberia.

After eleven years in Siberia she was released after the February Revolution. Like many Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries, Kaplan was furious when the Bolsheviks closed down the Constituent Assembly. On 30<sup>th</sup> August, 1918, Vladimir Lenin spoke at a meeting in Moscow. As he left the building Kaplan tried to ask Lenin some questions about the way he was running the country. Just before he got into his car Lenin turned to answer the woman. At that moment Kaplan fired three shots at him. Two bullets entered his body and it was considered too dangerous to remove them.

Kaplan was soon captured and in a statement she made to Cheka that night, she explained that she had attempted to kill him because he had closed down the Constituent Assembly and was a "*traitor to the revolution.*" Fanya Kaplan was shot by Pavel Malkov, a Baltic Fleet sailor, on 3<sup>rd</sup> September, 1918. Yakov Sverdlov, who organized the execution, gave instructions that she was not to be buried. He told Malkov: "*her remains are to be destroyed so that not a trace remains.*"

The attempt on Lenin's life and the assassination of Moisei Uritsky, chief of the Petrograd Secret Police, marked the beginning of the Red Terror. It is estimated that in the next few months 800 socialists were arrested and shot without trial. In the first year the official figure, almost certainly an underestimate, suggested 6,300 people were executed without trial.



**P. P. Baloyusov, painted a picture of Fanya Kaplan's attempt to kill Lenin.**

**(1) Victor Serge, *Year One of the Revolution* (1930)**

Lenin arrived alone; no one escorted him and no one formed a reception party. When he came out, workers surrounded him for a moment a few paces from his car. It was at this moment Kaplan fired at him, three times, wounding him seriously in the neck and shoulder. Lenin was driven back to the Kremlin by his chauffeur, and just had the strength to walk upstairs in silence to the second floor: then he fell in pain. There was great anxiety for him: the wound in the neck could have proved extremely serious; for a while it was thought that he was dying. The wounded man's own strength carried him through. Lenin was back on his feet in around ten days.

**(2) Fanya Kaplan, statement made to Cheka before being executed (30th August, 1918)**

My name is Fanya Kaplan. Today I shot at Lenin. I did it on my own. I will not say whom I obtained my revolver. I will give no details. I had resolved to kill Lenin long ago. I consider him a traitor to the Revolution. I was exiled to Akatoi for participating in an assassination attempt against a Tsarist official in Kiev. I spent eleven years at hard labour. After the Revolution I was freed. I favoured the Constituent Assembly and am still for it.

**Source:** <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/RUSkaplan.htm>