

WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!

HISTORY **OF THE** **COMMUNIST PARTY** **OF THE** **SOVIET UNION** **/BOLSHEVIKS/**

S H O R T C O U R S E

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Capitalism in Russia, Lenin cited significant figures from the general census of the population of 1897 which showed that about five-sixths of the total population were engaged in agriculture, and only about one-sixth in large and small industry, trade, on the railways and waterways, in building work, lumbering, and so on.

This shows that although capitalism was developing in Russia, she was still an agrarian, economically backward country, a petty-bourgeois country, that is, a country in which low-productive individual peasant farming based on small ownership still predominated.

Capitalism was developing not only in the towns but also in the countryside. The peasantry, the most numerous class in pre-revolutionary Russia, was undergoing a process of disintegration, of cleavage. From among the more well-to-do peasants there was emerging an upper layer of kulaks, the rural bourgeoisie, while on the other hand many peasants were becoming ruined, and the number of poor peasants, rural proletarians and semi-proletarians, was on the increase. As to the middle peasants, their number decreased from year to year.

In 1903 there were about ten million peasant households in Russia. In his pamphlet entitled *To the Village Poor*, Lenin calculated that of this total not less than three and a half million households consisted of peasants *possessing no horses*. These were the poorest peasants who usually sowed only a small part of their land, leased the rest to the kulaks, and themselves left to seek other sources of livelihood. The position of these peasants came nearest to that of the proletariat. Lenin called them rural proletarians or semi-proletarians.

On the other hand, one and a half million rich, kulak households (out of a total of ten million peasant households) concentrated in their hands half the total sown

In the earlier strikes, the workers, driven to despair, would sometimes smash machinery, break factory windows and wreck factory-owned shops and factory offices.

The more advanced workers began to realize that if they were to be successful in their struggle against the capitalists, they needed organization. Workers' unions began to arise.

In 1875 the South Russian Workers' Union was formed in Odessa. This first workers' organization lasted eight or nine months and was then smashed by the tsarist government.

In 1878 the Northern Union of Russian Workers was formed in St. Petersburg, headed by Khalturin, a carpenter, and Obnorsky, a fitter. The programme of the Union stated that its aims and objects were similar to those of the Social-Democratic labour parties of the West. The ultimate aim of the Union was to bring about a Socialist revolution—"the overthrow of the existing political and economic system, as an extremely unjust system." Obnorsky, one of the founders of the Union, had lived abroad for some time and had there acquainted himself with the activities of the Marxist Social-Democratic parties and of the First International, which was directed by Marx. This circumstance left its impress on the programme of the Northern Union of Russian Workers. The immediate aim of the Union was to win political liberty and political rights for the people (freedom of speech, press, assembly, etc.). The immediate demands also included a reduction of the working day.

The membership of the Union reached 200, and it had about as many sympathizers. It began to take part in workers' strikes, to lead them. The tsarist government smashed this workers' union too.

But the working-class movement continued to grow, spreading from district to district. The eighties were marked by a large number of strikes. In the space of five years (1881-86) there were as many as 48 strikes involving 80,000 workers.

An exceptional part in the history of the revolutionary movement was played by the big strike that broke out at the Morozov mill in Orekhovo-Zuyevo in 1885.

About 8,000 workers were employed at this mill. Working conditions grew worse from day to day: there were five wage cuts between 1882 and 1884, and in the latter year rates were reduced by 25 per cent at one blow. In addition, Morozov, the manufacturer, tormented the workers with fines. It was revealed at the trial which followed the strike that of every ruble earned by the workers, from 30 to 50 kopeks went into the pocket of the manufacturer in the form of fines. The workers could not stand this robbery any longer and in January 1885 went out on strike. The strike had been organized beforehand. It was led by a politically advanced worker, Pyotr Moiseyenko, who had been a member of the Northern Union of Russian Workers and already had some revolutionary experience. On the eve of the strike Moiseyenko and others of the more class-conscious weavers drew up a number of demands for presentation to the mill owner; they were endorsed at a secret meeting of the workers. The chief demand was the abolition of the rapacious fines.

This strike was suppressed by armed force. Over 600 workers were arrested and scores of them committed for trial.

Similar strikes broke out in the mills of Ivanovo-Voznesensk in 1885.

In the following year the tsarist government was compelled by its fear of the growth of the working-class movement to promulgate a law on fines which provided that the proceeds from fines were not to go into the pockets of the manufacturers but were to be used for the needs of the workers themselves.

The Morozov and other strikes taught the workers that a great deal could be gained by organized struggle. The working-class movement began to produce capable leaders and organizers who staunchly championed the interests of the working class.

At the same time, on the basis of the growth of the working-class movement and under the influence of the working-class movement of Western Europe, the first Marxist organizations began to arise in Russia.

2. NARODISM (POPULISM) AND MARXISM IN RUSSIA. PLEKHANOV AND HIS "EMANCIPATION OF LABOUR" GROUP. PLEKHANOV'S FIGHT AGAINST NARODISM. SPREAD OF MARXISM IN RUSSIA

Prior to the appearance of the Marxist groups revolutionary work in Russia was carried on by the Narodniks (Populists), who were opponents of Marxism.

The first Russian Marxist group arose in 1883. This was the "Emancipation of Labour" group formed by G. V. Plekhanov abroad, in Geneva, where he had been obliged to take refuge from the persecution of the tsarist government for his revolutionary activities.

Previously Plekhanov had himself been a Narodnik. But having studied Marxism while abroad, he broke with Narodism and became an outstanding propagandist of Marxism.

The "Emancipation of Labour" group did a great deal to disseminate Marxism in Russia. They translated works

without an alliance with the working class and without its guidance. The Narodniks did not understand that the working class was the most revolutionary and the most advanced class of society.

The Narodniks first endeavoured to rouse the peasants for a struggle against the tsarist government. With this purpose in view, young revolutionary intellectuals donned peasant garb and flocked to the countryside—"to the people," as it used to be called. Hence the term "Narodnik," from the word *narod*, the people. But they found no backing among the peasantry, for they did not have a proper knowledge or understanding of the peasants either. The majority of them were arrested by the police. Thereupon the Narodniks decided to continue the struggle against the tsarist autocracy single-handed, without the people, and this led to even more serious mistakes.

A secret Narodnik society known as "Narodnaya Volya" ("People's Will") began to plot the assassination of the tsar. On March 1, 1881, members of the "Narodnaya Volya" succeeded in killing Tsar Alexander II with a bomb. But the people did not benefit from this in any way. The assassination of individuals could not bring about the overthrow of the tsarist autocracy or the abolition of the landlord class. The assassinated tsar was replaced by another, Alexander III, under whom the conditions of the workers and peasants became still worse.

The method of combating tsardom chosen by the Narodniks, namely, by the assassination of individuals, by individual terrorism, was wrong and detrimental to the revolution. The policy of individual terrorism was based on the erroneous Narodnik theory of active "heroes" and a passive "mob," which awaited exploits from the "heroes." This false theory maintained that it is only outstanding individuals who make history, while