

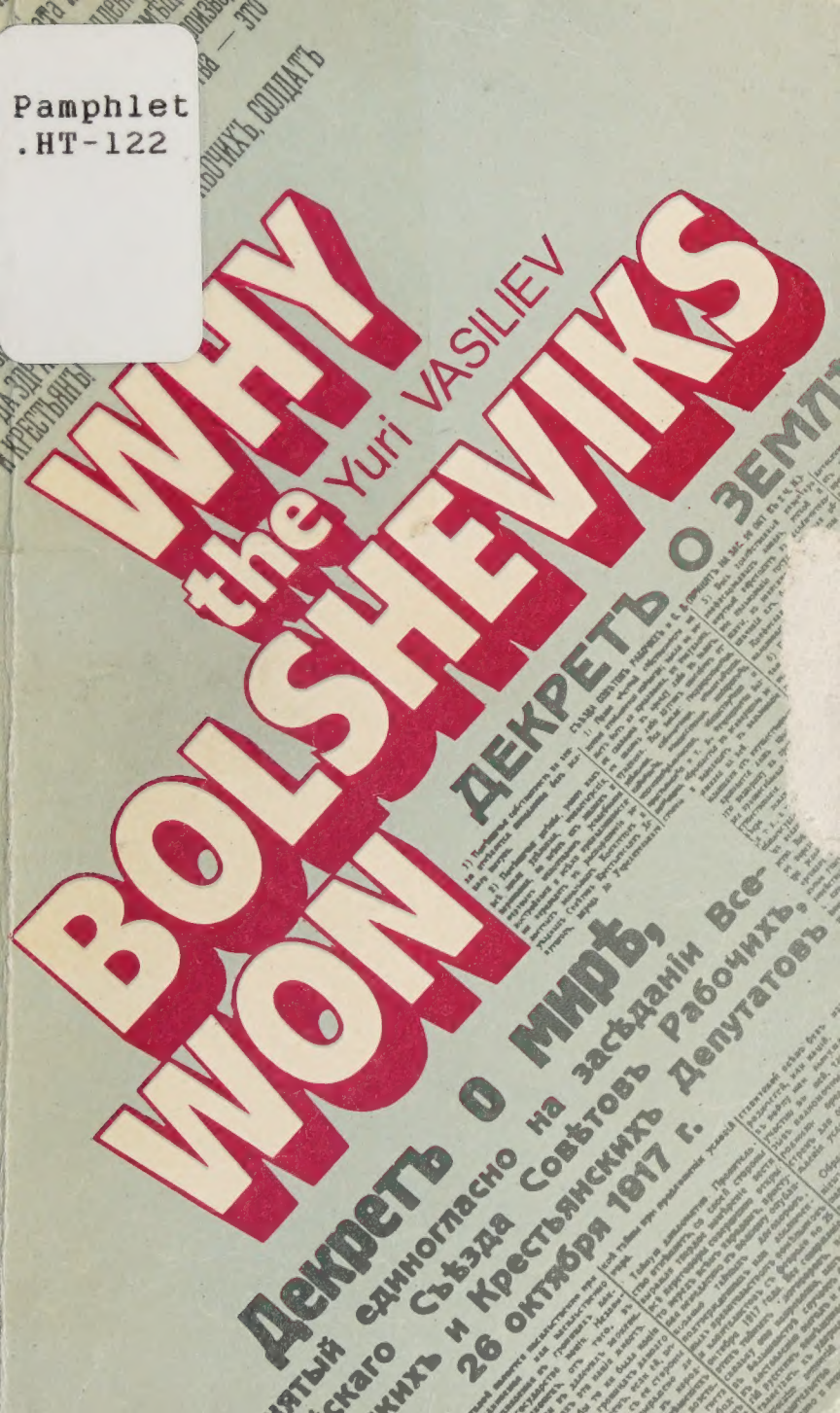
Pamphlet  
.HT-122

# WHY the Yuri VASILIEV BOLSHEVIKS WON

## Декретъ о Мирѣ, Все- единногласно на засѣданіи Все- русскаго Съѣзда Совѣтовъ Рабочихъ и Крестьянскихъ Депутатовъ 26 октября 1917 г.

### ДЕКРЕТЪ О ЗЕМЛѢ

1) Вся земля объявляется общенароднымъ достояніемъ. Земельные участки, принадлежавшие до 1-го января 1918 года частнымъ лицамъ, передаются въ распоряженіе государства. Земельные участки, принадлежавшие до 1-го января 1918 года государственнымъ учреждениямъ, передаются въ распоряженіе государства. Земельные участки, принадлежавшие до 1-го января 1918 года государственнымъ учреждениямъ, передаются въ распоряженіе государства.



Pam-111-122

# WHY the BOLSHEVIKS WON

---

Yuri VASILIEV



Novosti Press Agency Publishing House  
Moscow 1983

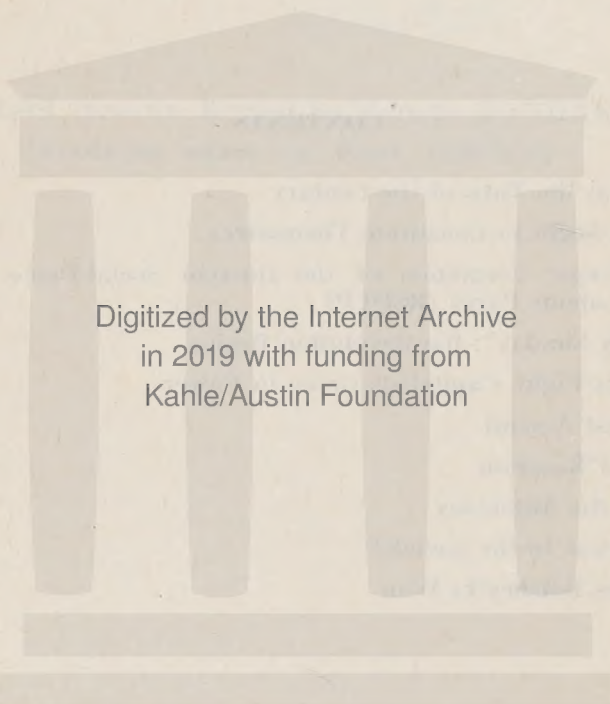
Translated from the Russian by Valentin KOCHETKOV  
Translation edited by Peter TEMPEST

0902020000

© Novosti Press Agency Publishing House 1983

## CONTENTS

Russia at the Turn of the Century	5
Parties Begin to Constitute Themselves	16
First Steps: Formation of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP)	21
“Bloody Sunday”: the Revolution Begins	34
Workers Fight, Capitalists Creep to Power	46
The First Assault	59
Years of Reaction	69
Fall of the Autocracy	74
“All Power to the Soviets!”	90
Why the Bolsheviks Won	101



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2019 with funding from  
Kahle/Austin Foundation

There were many political parties and groups in Russia in the early part of this century. Some managed for a time to take the helm of the ship of state, then others replaced them.

Why did the Bolshevik Party finally prevail? How did it come to be the only party the mass of the people followed in overthrowing the rule of capitalists and landlords in Russia in 1917?

Western "experts" on Soviet affairs offer very different, often contradictory answers to these questions. Some of their answers are only partly true. Most of them bear no relation at all to the facts.

What then was the real reason why the Bolsheviks won?

## Russia at the Turn of the Century

Political struggle, the struggle of political parties to win power in a country, retain and use it, is the clearest reflection of the relations among different classes, nationalities, social groups and individuals. To understand the growth and the meaning of political struggle one must grasp what particular classes and other social groups and strata

there are, how aware they are of their own and others' interests, what role they play and what political weight they have, what form their activities take and how far these activities meet the needs of social advance.

So our account begins with a brief description of the social and economic situation in Russia at the turn of the century.

Capitalism was comparatively late in developing in Russia. Only in 1861 was serfdom abolished, giving the peasants, who formed the bulk of the population, personal freedom. From then on they could not be sold or bought like slaves.

A rapid development of transport, industry, trade and banking began. Fifty-two thousand kilometres of railways were built and there was an ever increasing demand for rails, locomotives, rolling stock and fuel. At first all this was bought abroad, but in the course of time Russia came to have its own coal-mines in the Donets Basin, oilfields in Baku, Transcaucasia, iron ore mines, iron and steel mills and engineering works. Old branches of industry, such as textile, expanded. There was a rapid growth of towns and cities. From an exclusively agrarian country Russia began to become an agrarian-industrial country.

The class structure of the population radically changed. Previously there had been only two main classes—*landlords* and *peasants*. Now the *bourgeoisie*, the *capitalist class*, began to grow vigorously and gather economic strength. Along with it the proletariat, the *working class*, emerged on the social scene.

But Russia remained very backward economically. The country's development was seriously retarded by vestiges of serfdom. In the course of "emancipating" the peasants the landlords had robbed



them of common lands, taking much of the land the peasants had been using before. Usually these were meadows on river banks and lake shores, where hay had been mowed and livestock grazed and watered. These lands came to be called *otrezki* ("cut-off" portions of land). Peasants had also been compelled to pay cash ransoms to the landlords for their freedom<sup>1</sup>: over a period of 45 years more than 1,600 million roubles—a colossal sum at that time—was exacted from the peasants.

There were only 124 million hectares of land for 83 million peasants, who could not freely dispose of it because all land belonged to the *rural commune*, which since medieval times retained the right of regularly redistributing it. Every three or four years each peasant family received a new allotment, the size and location of which depended on the number of male members of the family. Such egalitarian redistribution somewhat hindered stratification of the peasantry into well-to-do and poor peasants. But it also deprived the peasant of any incentive to increase the fertility of the land, because there was no guarantee that the particular plot would not pass to some other peasant in a few years' time. Moreover the allocated land was not all of one piece, but consisted of several scattered narrow strips. As the rural population grew the size of allotments decreased: in the 40 years from the time of the "peasant reform" to the early 20th century their average size shrank from 4.8 to 2.6 hectares.

---

<sup>1</sup> These were *redemption payments*—sums owing to the government from peasants, who after the abolition of serfdom paid landlords for land transferred to the ownership of the rural communes an amount that was two to three times greater than the land's market value.—*Ed.*

Short of land, peasants had to rent it from landlords, paying for it not with money, but by working on the landlords' land in the best months for farm work, and having to plough, sow and reap their own land on much more unfavourable days. This, too, did not promote a rise in yields from the peasant economy.

The bulk of the peasants were entirely at the mercy of epidemics, droughts and fires. There were crop failures and famines every three or four years and these became ever more widespread.

At the same time there was an increasing demand for foodstuffs and agricultural raw materials from the growing cities. It was also becoming increasingly profitable to replace homespun clothes and home-made utensils with more convenient and durable manufactured articles. True, many peasants could not afford them: moreover they were forced to deny themselves necessities in order to pay off enormous debts and redemption charges. So the strong became stronger and the weak—weaker. Some peasants grew rich while others were ruined.

At that time there were about ten million peasant households in Russia. The wealth of some and the poverty of others could not be judged by the size of their allotments which, as has been said, depended on the number of males in the family. So the number of horses (the main traction power) families owned was the main indicator differentiating rich from middle and poor peasants.

At least two horses were needed to cultivate land more or less effectively. About two million households had this minimum. These were called middle peasants and their standard of living was at a medium level: as a rule, they had very little savings or none at all and so they were constantly threatened by poverty. Crop failures spelled the decline

of their farms. They had to borrow both grain and money and, since they could almost never pay off their debts, they had to work on landlords' estates not only to pay off the land rent but also to repay the cost of grain and the sums they borrowed in lean winters.

Three million households had no horses at all. Their owners rented horses on crippling terms from rich neighbours or leased their plots to the latter, becoming farmhands for them or for the landlord or going to the cities in search of work. Three and a half million households had only a single horse, but this was not enough to cultivate all their land. So almost two-thirds of the peasants constituted the *rural poor*.

Lastly, 1,500,000 households had three or more horses—owning altogether half of all the peasants' horses. So they were able to cultivate as much land as the whole of the rest of the peasantry could. They strove to do this, taking land on temporary lease or buying it so it became their private property in perpetuity. Using their draught animals and hired hands, drawn from ruined fellow-villagers working as farmhands and casual labour, the *rich peasants*—called *kulaks* in Russia—produced much more than their families could consume. So they sold large quantities of produce, amassed capital and bought ploughs, reapers and other farm machinery.

Counterposed to peasant farms were *big landowners' estates*. About 70 million hectares were privately owned by two million landlords belonging to the highest social estate, the *nobility*. A few of them reorganized their estates along capitalist lines. But most of them leased part of their land to peasants who, as has been noted, paid off the rent by working on the landlords' land, using their

own draught animals and primitive implements. This method of farming was inefficient. As a rule landowners' lands were farmed at a loss.

Many landowners went bankrupt, mortgaged and remortgaged their estates or auctioned them off. But this process was deliberately restrained by the government.

The point is that at the turn of the century Russia remained Europe's only absolute monarchy in which all the power belonged to one person, the *tsar*.

The tsarist autocracy was essentially a dictatorship of the landowning nobility. The tsar himself was the biggest landowner: he and his family owned eight million hectares of land. Another 155 persons in his entourage—the highest courtiers with the titles of princes, counts and barons—also possessed vast estates of more than 50,000 hectares each. All high-ranking civil servants in the central and provincial administration—governors<sup>1</sup>, ministers and the highest-ranking officers—generals and admirals—were noblemen. So the landowning nobility, who concentrated in their hands not only vast material riches, but also political power, was the main pillar of the Russian autocracy. The tsar, naturally, did everything to strengthen the nobility's economic and political positions.

Noblemen enjoyed special privileges: they had priority in admission to the civil service; their children were educated in private schools giving a general or special military education; they could

---

<sup>1</sup> A *governor* held supreme administrative, judicial and military authority in a province (*guberniya*). A province, the largest administrative-territorial unit, consisted of 7 to 8 *uyezds*, each of which was composed of 15 to 20 *volosts*. --Ed.

receive credits on very easy terms from the Nobiliary Land Bank.

The abolition of serfdom undermined the strength of the landed nobility. While failing to preserve the feudal system intact, the nobility nevertheless managed to amend it with the government's help in such a way that they not only retained their power and land, but even increased their estates with peasants' *otrezki*. They derived their economic strength from large-scale land ownership and the semi-feudal system of farming linked with it. The landed wealth of the noblemen made peasants land-hungry and doomed them to economic dependence on estate-owners. Both the biggest landowner, the tsar, and his courtiers and ministers, all of them big landlords too, were vitally interested in preserving the old order in Russia.

But this old order, which inhibited the growth of capitalism, did not suit the *big industrialists* and *merchants* who, together with their families, numbered about 1,500,000 at the beginning of the century. Closely connected with what was then a progressive way of developing the economy—with new technology, the *bourgeoisie*, or capitalists, were a force with which both the tsar and the landlords had to reckon. But the latter had no intention of ignoring their own interests.

The interests of the landlords and the capitalists were not identical. While rapid growth of capitalism in the countryside profited the bourgeoisie, the bulk of landowners strove, on the contrary, to preserve semi-feudal relations in agriculture. Stratification of the peasantry into rich kulaks and landless proletarians or semi-proletarians who had to sell their labour power eroded the subsistence economy and thus increased the domestic market for manufactured goods. As for the landed estates, based as

they were on the *corvée* system, whereby debts were paid by enforced labour, they were falling into decay: there was no special need for the kulaks, rich peasants, to agree to crippling terms of land lease, and the poor peasants themselves "competed" with the landowners by also renting out their land.

Moreover, lacking horses and farm implements, to most landlords they were of no interest as workers. The number of middle peasants was decreasing, some growing richer and others poorer.

The capitalists were also interested in the colonization of vast, sparsely populated or unpopulated territories in the East—beyond the Volga, in the Urals, in Siberia and the Far East. The landowners, however, feared that mass migration would lessen the land hunger in the European part of the country and thus undermine the basis of their wealth—leasing the land.

The industrialists sought high customs duties to protect the domestic market from the competition of goods from more advanced capitalist countries: the imposition of duties would then raise their prices. But this was not to the advantage of the nobility as customers.

In approaching these and similar problems the tsarist government considered the interests of the landowners and not the capitalists. That is why the latter were discontented with the existing regime and were in *opposition* to the autocracy. Their opposition, was, however, highly relative.

The point is that despite the divergence of their economic interests a certain rapprochement was taking place between the capitalists and the nobility. A section of the landlords began to go over from semi-feudal methods of farming, from *corvée*, to capitalist methods, to the use of hired labour. On some estates a start was made with building

distilleries, wineries, sugar refining, canning and other processing enterprises.

Moreover, the Russian capitalists were closely connected with the tsarist administration. As already noted, intensive railway building was a major stimulus to industrial development: 75 per cent of all railway building was financed by the state and the owners of industrial enterprises largely depended on government orders, subsidies, loans and so on.

Increasingly often, the capitalists had to seek the help of the vast repressive apparatus of tsarism: the *proletariat* was growing and pressing its demands. This was a class of wage labourers who had no property and earned their livelihood by selling their labour power. By the early 20th century they numbered 17 million.

The working class, it is true, was not uniform and was largely disunited. A considerable part of it still had close links with the countryside. It consisted of seasonal farm workers (six million) and building workers (two million). But industrialization led to rapid growth in the number of workers employed full-time in factories, mills and mines and on the railways. These already numbered over eight million, half of them working in large enterprises each employing 500 or more workers. Though many of the workers had not yet severed ties with the countryside—they remained members of rural communes and received land allotments which they often tilled themselves—their links with the land were rapidly weakening.

The workers stood on the lowest rung of the social ladder. Their living standards were exceedingly low: there was often not enough money even to keep and educate children. The cheapest foodstuffs, such as bread, potatoes and cabbage, formed the

basis of their diet. Meat, milk and fish appeared on the table in workers' families only on major holidays. From 10 to 15 per cent of their average earnings went in taxes and fines and deductions for the slightest fault. Only in 1897 did the ruthlessly exploited workers force adoption of a law limiting the working day to 11 and a half hours.

The workers' resistance to capitalist exploitation, their struggle to improve their living and working conditions were complicated by the fact that they were deprived of rights and freedoms which their fellows in Europe and North America had already won. Not only all political, but also all trade union activities in Russia were banned and going on strike was a criminal offence.

At the same time the circumstances of their life taught the workers staunchness, organization, discipline and unity in action. Furthermore the conditions of production required a certain degree of literacy. Two-thirds of the workforce in industry could read and write. The cultural needs of the workers, their outlook and degree of class activity were higher than those of the peasants and members of the middle class or petty bourgeoisie.

An account of the social and economic structure of Russian society would be incomplete without a description, however brief, of the role of another section of society—the *intelligentsia*, which at the turn of the century numbered about 900,000 people (2.7 per cent of all the gainfully employed population). Intellectuals, as workers by brain, were in a privileged position, performing important functions in administrative bodies and in the field of science, education and the arts. More than 150,000 of them served in civil administration bodies and 44,000 officers and generals served in the army. An



important part of the Russian intelligentsia was composed of teachers, physicians, post office employees, railway and steamship company staff, and so on. There was a great and growing demand for engineers: at that time there were only 4,000 in various branches of industry.

In origin and material status the intelligentsia was not homogeneous: its members came from among the nobility, the middle and lower-middle classes, the clergy and even the working class. While not forming an independent class, it nevertheless played an important role in the social life of Russia; it gave most conscious and accurate expression to the interests of the classes and strata from which its members were drawn. Thus senior officials and army officers closely linked with the state apparatus openly defended the interests of the autocracy and landowners; leading figures in the scientific, technical, medical and artistic world, as well as the majority of lawyers and journalists, who had a material or professional interest in the rapid industrial—and hence cultural—advance of the country, voiced the interests of the big capitalists. The bulk of the toiling intelligentsia (primary school teachers, middle-grade medical staff, rank-and-file white collar workers at enterprises and institutions) were closest to the people. Many of them had the interests of the peasantry and of the urban middle classes at heart. Some of the intelligentsia, who held the most advanced views and had a mature outlook, made common cause with the working class.

This was the position of the different classes and social strata of Russia at the turn of the century. It determined the nature of the political struggle between them and hence the outlook of the respective political parties.

## Parties Begin to Constitute Themselves

While the formation of social classes is an objective process, that is to say, it takes place independently of the will of individuals, political parties are established only after the theorists, or ideologists, of a particular class (and these are, as a rule, educated people, intellectuals) become consciously aware of its fundamental interests and articulate them in the form of a definite concept (that is, a system of views and ideals) and programme (a list of aims and demands). Round the concept and programme the most politically active people group themselves. Joining to constitute a political party, they enlighten and rally the particular class or social group and impart an organized and purposeful character to its actions.

Different people, however, can hold different views on the vital interests of their own class and its true position in society. Some see and voice this position more faithfully, others less faithfully and at times quite wrongly, in a distorted and unreal way.

As a result one and the same class may be offered several rather different concepts and programmes. Moreover, individual members and even whole sections of a particular class often become receptive to the outlook of another class and support its parties while the parties themselves, in order to strengthen the political position of their own class, seek to win allies among other classes and social strata and readily include the most active of them in their own ranks. That is why one can find intellectuals in workers' parties and peasants and workers in the parties of capitalists and landlords.

In Russia political parties were formed later than in more developed capitalist countries. Rus-

sia's social and economic backwardness inhibited the emergence of class consciousness, while the tsarist autocracy suppressed all social activity that did not fit the Procrustean bed of official policy. The very word "politician", that is to say, a person taking an interest in matters regarded as within the competence of the authorities and having his own views on these matters, was synonymous with the word "free thinker" or "suspect".

As in other countries, parties did not spring to life ready-made. At first like-minded people met in study circles and then grouped round particular newspapers or magazines.

In the mid-19th century, for instance, a revolutionary democratic trend of social thought emerged whose members were grouped round the magazine *Sovremennik* (Contemporary). They considered that Russia could avoid developing along capitalist lines. They believed an armed uprising of the peasants would overthrow the autocracy and establish democratic popular government; all the landowners' land would be transferred to the rural commune which, retaining, utilizing and modifying its collectivist traditions, would form the core of the socialist society of the future.

Belief in the special tenor of Russian life and in its communal structure, hence in the possibility of a peasant socialist revolution, inspired hundreds of people; primarily young students, to struggle against the government. In 1875 their circles joined to form the *Zemlya i Volya* (Land and Freedom) secret society. To get the peasants to rise up, revolutionary intellectuals went to the countryside, went "among the people". Hence the name *Narodniks* (after the Russian word *narod*, which means "people"). But the benighted, downtrodden peasantry did not respond to their appeal.

Then a considerable part of the Narodniks joined the *Narodnaya Volya* (People's Will) society and proceeded to engage in direct political action, choosing acts of terrorism against individuals as the main means of struggle. They believed the assassination of individual public figures would intimidate and shake the autocracy. But such essentially conspiratorial tactics could not lead to a people's uprising and were doomed from the outset: the assassinations of high-ranking officials and even of the tsar himself did not bring about change in the order of things. One tsar was replaced by another and assassinated ministers were replaced by others, equally loyal to him. Members of the *Narodnaya Volya* were ruthlessly suppressed. They were imprisoned and sent to the gallows or condemned to penal servitude.

Yet their heroism and selflessness exerted a strong influence on the progressive section of the intelligentsia and the more advanced workers. At the same time an increasing number of Narodniks came to realize the fruitlessness of their theory and practice.

Most of them preferred to confine their activities to "little things" or modest occupations: to work as teachers, doctors, agronomists, veterinary surgeons, and so on. This brought them closer to the peaceful liberal opposition of the capitalists and landowners who had become capitalists; liberals whose field of activity were local self-government bodies called *Zemstvos*.<sup>1</sup> Some remained loyal to

---

<sup>1</sup> The *Zemstvos* were local self-government bodies dominated by landed nobility in the central provinces of tsarist Russia. They had jurisdiction only over local economic matters (hospitals, roads, insurance, statistics and so on) and were under the Governor and the Ministry of the Interior, which could annul any unwelcome decision.—*Ed.*

terrorist tactics. But among the Narodniks appeared some who realized that capitalism in Russia was a fact and the working class was the perspective leader of the future socialist revolution. These people moved from the standpoint of *utopian* socialism to that of *scientific* socialism.

In 1883 several former Narodniks living in exile abroad formed the *Emancipation of Labour Group*, which set itself the aim of radically criticizing the theory and practice of Narodism and of spreading the teaching of Marx and Engels.

Georgi Plekhanov, who headed the group, rejected as erroneous the counterposing—typical of Narodnik theories—of the social and economic development of Russia to that of Western countries. Proving that Russia was taking the same path the European countries had already taken, namely, from feudalism to capitalism, he showed that the theory of “Russian distinctiveness” was becoming a synonym of stagnation and reaction. Plekhanov and his group explained that socialism is not the invention of dreamers, not a utopia, but the necessary result of the growth of capitalism—just as capitalism had in its time emerged within feudalism, and that in the proletariat capitalism creates a force capable not only of sensing its class interests, but also of uniting for resolute struggle against the exploiting class of the bourgeoisie, capable of leading all the working people to storm the citadel of capitalism and capable of building a socialist society when victory is won.

The theory and practice of Narodism was being critically reappraised in Russia too. Revolutionary-minded youth were persistently seeking new paths of struggle. The outcome of these quests was greatly influenced by the growing working-class movement. Here and there *Social-Democratic* groups

and circles appeared which began to study Marxism and spread it among class-conscious workers.

In the 1890s another seemingly quite progressive trend of social thought appeared. Its adherents called on people to "admit our lack of culture and to learn from capitalism". In demonstrating the progressive nature of large-scale production and the necessity of capitalism replacing feudalism they made use of several tenets of Marxism. They set out the tenets, which they misinterpreted, in legal, that is to say, government-sanctioned newspapers and journals, and so they became known as "*legal Marxists*".

Lastly, the outlook of the nobility and landowners remained the dominant ideology, fully supported by tsarism. It was most strikingly expressed in the phrase formulated already in the first half of the 19th century: "*Autocracy, Orthodoxy and national spirit*". The first word of the formula signified the tsar's supreme rights in legislation, government, justice and so on. The second word declared the official religion, Russian Orthodoxy—one of the main trends in Christianity—to be the firm pillar of "the Lord's Anointed", the tsar. The last words were used in actual fact to mask the anti-democratic essence of the regime, trying to present the order of things in the Russian state as evidence of the tsar's "concern" for the people.

This official outlook, preached from church pulpits and spread by the official press and in educational institutions, permeated the whole of public life and strongly influenced not only the landed nobility, but also other classes and sections of the population. The other ideological trends—the *capitalist* one (the liberal *Zemstvo* supporters and the "legal Marxists"), the *petty-bourgeois* one (the Narodniks) and the *proletarian* one (the Marxists,

Social-Democrats)—were of negligible influence so far. They still faced the task of penetrating deep into “their own” classes, enlightening them, providing ideological arguments they could use in their struggle and giving them leadership.

The first steps in this direction were taken by the Marxists.

## First Steps: Formation of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP)

In 1894 the Social-Democrats of St. Petersburg, then the capital of Russia, discussed the idea of starting economic and political agitation among the masses while not lessening the propaganda of scientific socialism in small clandestine circles. The idea was put forward by *Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov*. He was only 24 at that time, but the St. Petersburg Marxists already recognized his outstanding qualities. Even his nickname—“the Old Man”—testified to the great respect he enjoyed, to his all-embracing knowledge and his deep intellect. Before long he became known to the whole world as *Vladimir Ilyich Lenin*.

The question of starting political agitation evoked keen and lively discussion. Some doubted the timeliness and expediency of such a step. Would Social-Democratic agitation meet with a response among poverty-stricken workers, the mass of whom were still almost or wholly illiterate, politically immature and brought up in a spirit of devotion to the tsar? How was one to start to talk politics with those for whom the tsar was like God? The fear was expressed lest public agitation should destroy secrecy and make it easier for the tsarist police to combat the Marxists.

Fully realizing how hard it would be to arouse in the masses a striving for unity as a prerequisite for successful struggle against capitalist exploitation, Lenin took the view that Marxists should start by explaining to workers their immediate needs and by putting forward demands that the most backward of them could grasp. The more easily the first slogans could be grasped, the easier would their implementation be. The initial successes would inspire the workers, make them aware of their strength, of the strength of their unity and solidarity, and further their political education. As a result the Marxists would gain new members and—what was very important—these would be from among the proletarians.

At the same time Lenin stressed that Marxists should not limit themselves to explaining only immediate *economic* needs, that from the very first talks they should begin to develop the workers' *political* awareness. From the very beginning it was important not to let anyone gain the illusion that just by economic struggles against the factory-owners one could get rid of oppression and exploitation.

In the autumn of 1895 Lenin wrote the article "*What Are Our Ministers Thinking About?*" in which he explained what Russian legislation was and whose interests it defended. He wrote only about ministers, about their fear of the enlightenment of the workers, and not about the tsar. But it was essentially a political article. It was to open the first issue of the illegal newspaper *Rabocheye Delo* (Workers' Cause), the organ of the newly-founded *League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class*. The principles and activities of the League distinctly manifested features of a future Marxist party: a revolutionary character,



close links with the working class and leadership of their struggle for democracy and socialism. The League was established on the basis of two or three dozen workers' circles having links with 70 factories and mills. Guidance was provided to them by the central group headed by Lenin. Having established contacts with Marxist circles in Moscow and several other cities, the group began to function as the Social-Democratic centre for the whole country.

The stirring of the working-class movement (in 1895 in St. Petersburg alone there were 15 strikes, nine of which were successful) and the direct participation of the Marxists in it were not disregarded by the authorities, who in this link-up saw the main threat to the existing order. In December 1895 the police managed to arrest four of the five members of the central group, including Lenin, and seized the first issue of *Rabocheye Delo* which had already been printed. Then followed the arrest of another 40 people. But despite this the League survived, because it had already taken root in the working-class movement. Class-conscious and politically-conscious workers it had educated established new links, founded new circles and extended agitation and organizational work among the masses of the people.

Similar organizations were set up in other cities. Many of them also called themselves the League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class. In May 1898 representatives of the *leagues* of St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev and Yekaterinoslav<sup>1</sup>, the editorial board of *Rabochaya Gazeta* (Workers' Newspaper), the organ of the Kiev League of Struggle, and the Bund<sup>2</sup> held a clan-

---

<sup>1</sup> Now Dnepropetrovsk.—*Ed.*

<sup>2</sup> The General Jewish Workers' Union of Lithuania, Poland and Russia.—*Ed.*

destine congress in Minsk, decided to form the *Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP)* and elected a *Central Committee* consisting of three people. Having proclaimed the organization of the RSDLP, the congress nevertheless failed to establish it as an integral centralized organization. Shortly afterwards mass arrests began in 27 cities. Five hundred people, including two members of the Central Committee, were imprisoned. The authorities also seized the printing shop and the issue of *Rabochaya Gazeta* with congress reports. The police again managed to leave the working-class movement leaderless. But it was no longer possible to destroy it.

In the spring of 1900 the *RSDLP committees* (the name assumed by local Marxist organizations) began preparations for the 2nd Congress of the Party. An active part in the talks held by their representatives was taken by Lenin, who had just returned from exile in Siberia, where he had spent four years. But fresh arrests altered the initial plans: if merely preparing for the congress led to such setbacks and resulted in the arrest of leading members of the Party, it meant the convening of a congress in tsarist Russia was an impermissible luxury. New methods of building a unified organization of Russian Social Democracy had to be devised.

In the first place, Lenin firmly believed, one had to reach unity in defining the tasks of the working-class movement and the ways and means of fulfilling them. But organizational fragmentation could be overcome only by overcoming the disagreements within the ranks of the Social-Democrats themselves. The point was that considerable currency in RSDLP committees had been gained by views according to which the tasks of the Social-Democrats

had to be limited to organizing economic struggle (hence the exponents of such views were called "Economists") and one had to leave political struggle against the autocracy to opposition elements among the capitalists and capitalist-landlords.

In the opinion of Lenin (and he gave grounds for and firmly upheld his views), before convening the congress one had to gain complete clarity on its aims and tasks. One had to say openly that there were two different views on this question: that of the "Economists" and that of the revolutionary Social-Democrats. One had to conduct extensive propaganda for the latter view—just as the former had already conducted their own propaganda. This would enable the RSDLP committees to make a conscious choice between the two trends. Only after this work had been done could the Party congress be convened. "Before we can unite," Lenin wrote, "and in order that we may unite, we must first of all draw firm and definite lines of demarcation."<sup>1</sup>

The first thing to do was to organize publication of an all-Russian political newspaper which would summarize the experience of the work of local committees, publish a draft of the *Party Programme* and organize serious discussion of it, thus already drawing local Party members into all-Party work. But such a newspaper could only be published abroad. In order to link it closely with work in Russia one had to organize efficient secret distribution of it.

Having won the support of many prominent Social-Democrats and done a vast amount of organizational work, having set up a whole network of distributors and correspondents of the future news-

---

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, p. 354.

paper, Lenin went abroad where, in January 1901, the first number of the newspaper *Iskra* (Spark) appeared. It resolutely challenged the "Economists" on all the fundamental—theoretical and practical—questions of the working-class movement in Russia, proving the hostility of the "Economists" to revolutionary Marxism. *Iskra* also printed the draft Programme drawn up by Plekhanov and Lenin and opened its pages to discussion of it. The distributors of the newspaper were a constant link connecting the editors of *Iskra* with local Party organizations. This hard and unrelenting work bore fruit: one after another RSDLP committees broke with the "Economists" and declared their acceptance of the programme principles worked out by *Iskra*.

In the meantime yet another attempt to convene a Party congress in Russia itself was undertaken. But only a few delegates gathered and they limited their task to electing an organizing committee for convening the congress. Soon, however, this committee too was arrested.

Nevertheless some time later an organizing committee was established. It granted the right to elect delegates to the forthcoming congress to those Social-Democratic organizations which had functioned for not less than a year, which were in places with a considerable proletarian population and were conducting propaganda, agitation and organizational work among workers. There were 21 such organizations with a total membership of several thousand. The right of representation was also given to several organizations whose activities were not confined to a particular territory. Among them were the *Emancipation of Labour Group*, the *Bund* and the *Russian Organization of "Iskra"*.

Last, the delegates were elected and all of them, with the exception of one who was arrested at the

frontier, arrived in Brussels where on July 30 (17)<sup>1</sup>, 1903, the 2nd Congress began its work, completing it on August 23 (10). In the thoroughness of its preparation, the fullness of representation and the range of questions on the agenda the congress was an outstanding event in the history of the revolutionary movement in Russia.

The Iskraists with 33 votes formed a clear majority at the congress. Their opponents, the "Economists" and the Bundists, had eight votes. Ten more votes belonged to those who voted now for one side and now for another (the congress itself called them the "quagmire"). It would seem that such an alignment of forces would have guaranteed to the Iskraists an easy victory on all questions. But it all proved much more complicated.

The standpoints of the various groupings showed themselves in a particularly striking way during discussion of the *Programme*, the draft of which was submitted by the editorial board of *Iskra*. It consisted of two parts, the *minimum programme* and the *maximum programme*. The first set out with reasons the *immediate tasks* of the proletariat: overthrow of the tsarist autocracy and establishment of a bourgeois-democratic republic, limitation of the working day to eight hours, elimination of the vestiges of feudalism in the countryside, and so on. The second spoke of the *ultimate aim* of the working-class movement: a socialist revolution, signifying the overthrow of the power of the capitalists, abolition of the exploitation of man by man and, as the main condition for accomplishing this aim, the establishment of the rule

---

<sup>1</sup> The dates in brackets are given according to the old Russian calendar, which lagged 13 days behind the revised Gregorian calendar introduced in Europe in the 16th century.  
—Ed.

of the working class and its allies, that is to say, the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Although the draft as a whole was adopted in substance, during the discussion and adoption of every point the Iskraists had to beat off sharp attacks by the opportunist wing of the congress. Every formulation and even particular words were debated. The "Economist" Akimov alone submitted 21 amendments with a view to changing the very spirit of the Programme. With particular fury the opportunists opposed the point about the dictatorship of the proletariat. Proposing that the reference should be deleted, Akimov pointed to the fact that such a view was not to be found in the programmes of the Social-Democratic parties of other countries. That was true, the Iskraists replied, yet it was not in accordance with but against the will of Marx and Engels.

True, not all the Iskraists were unanimous in defending this point. Thus, Trotsky said the proletariat would be able to set about establishing its dictatorship in a particular country only when it would constitute the majority of the population. This understanding of the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat was opposed by Lenin (it was from 1901 that Vladimir Ulyanov began to sign his articles and books by this name). He explained that the dictatorship of the proletariat was inconceivable without reliance on the alliance of the working class with the peasantry and other working people, and that its aim was to suppress the resistance of the *exploiters*, that is to say, the minority, and to uphold the interests of the *exploited*, that is to say, the majority.

Nor were the Iskraists at one in discussing the sections dealing with the agrarian and national

questions. But by a majority of votes the congress endorsed the Programme submitted.

Then the congress proceeded to discuss the draft *Rules* of the Party, written by Lenin. On the whole it was approved by 42 votes. But the first paragraph, on membership of the Party, caused sharp differences among the Iskraists which led to a split.

Lenin regarded the Party as not only the *most advanced*, but also as the *best organized* contingent of the working class. People did not simply join a list of members, but were admitted to it by one of its organizations and submitted to its discipline. Therefore Lenin proposed a formulation according to which a Party member was one who recognized its Programme, supported it financially and personally participated in the work of one of its organizations.

Martov, the leader of the opportunist section of the Iskraists, agreed that recognition of the Programme and material support for the Party were indispensable conditions of membership. But he proposed that the reference to personal participation in the work of one of its organizations be replaced by a phrase about "regular personal assistance" under the guidance of one of the Party organizations. The difference in wording might seem insignificant. But only at a first glance. Martov himself admitted that his formulation, reflecting the "open doors" policy of the European legal Social-Democratic parties, made it possible to admit to the Party all who wished to join, without submitting them to Party discipline.

At that time there were many members of the intelligentsia who were expecting a revolution. Some even rendered small service to the RSDLP. But the majority would not join an illegal Party

organization and thus expose themselves to the dangers connected with this. How could such people be regarded as Party members? How was it possible to give them the right and the possibility of influencing Party affairs? Lenin and his supporters (who were called "firm" Iskraists) could on no account agree to this.

Lenin said: "It would be better if ten who do work should not call themselves Party members (real workers don't hunt after titles!) than that one who only talks should have the right and opportunity to be a Party member."<sup>1</sup>

Lenin was supported by Plekhanov and other consistent Iskraists (24 votes). Martov had the support of nine vacillating "mild" Iskraists. But at a plenary session of the congress this minority of Iskraists was supported by the open opportunists (the Bundists and the "Economists") and the "quagmire" and secured adoption of the first paragraph in Martov's formulation.

As the work of the congress was drawing to an end the acuteness of the struggle at it increased. The congress had still to elect the central institutions of the Party—the *Central Committee* and the editorial board of the *Central Organ* of the Party (*Iskra* was recognized as such). Martov proposed that the Central Committee be composed only of his supporters and that on the editorial board it should have a 4:2 representation.

But two events took place which changed the balance of forces. The Bundists demanded that Martov and his followers support the proposal that their union be recognized as the sole representative of Jewish workers in Russia. When their demand was rejected they left the congress, followed by the

---

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 6, p. 501.



two representatives of the organization of the "Economists" abroad, who did so because the congress refused to recognize the latter as official representative of the "Economists" abroad.

As a result the minority of Iskraists became the majority. Leading bodies were elected in which consistent Iskraists prevailed over the inconsistent ones.

*The 2nd Congress of the RSDLP became a turning-point not only in the Russian working-class movement but also in the international workers' movement.* At it not only was the unification of the revolutionary Marxist organization virtually completed, but a *party of a new type* was formed, a revolutionary party which set itself not only an immediate task, that of toppling tsarism and establishing a republic, but also an ultimate objective, that of accomplishing a socialist revolution signifying the replacement of the power of the capitalists with the power of the working class and its allies; a party irreconcilable to opportunism; a party based on the principle of democratic centralism; a party of internationalists.

But this gigantic step forward was accompanied by a certain retrogressive movement, by "two steps back" as Lenin said. The first of these steps back was made immediately after the congress, when its minority (Martov's *Mensheviks*, from the Russian word *menshinstvo*—"minority") refused to recognize the results of the elections and started a veritable "war of nerves" against the majority (called *Bolsheviks*, from the Russian word *bolshinstvo*—"majority"). The second step was made somewhat later by Plekhanov. Failing to display consistency in that "war", he went over to the side of the opportunists and thereby helped them achieve dominance on the editorial board of *Iskra*

and in the Central Committee. This led the Bolsheviks to begin struggle for convening a new Party congress, the 3rd Congress. This was also demanded by the extraordinary situation in Russia: a people's revolution was in the offing and thorough preparations had to be made for it.

The approach of this revolution compelled the theorists of other classes and parties too to accelerate the drafting of their programmes and the formation of their own political parties. Having lost the initiative and time, they were now compelled to reckon with the RSDLP, with its political demands and practical actions.

In 1900 the Left wing of the Narodniks calling themselves *Socialist-Revolutionaries*, founded an illegal newspaper, *Revolutsionnaya Rossiya* (Revolutionary Russia). From the third issue its publication was transferred abroad. At the end of 1901, also abroad, representatives of several secret organizations which regarded themselves as the successors to Narodnaya Volya held talks on uniting and forming a single Left-Narodist Party of Socialist-Revolutionaries (*SRs*). As they themselves admitted, their talks took place "at a time when politically the revolutionary arena was almost exclusively occupied by another faction of Russian socialism", namely, Social-Democrats. This, of course, could not but influence the programme statements of the *SRs*.

They did not now deny that Russia had embarked on the capitalist road and that "class antagonism" existed there; they also recognized the importance of revolutionary propaganda and agitation and of mass revolutionary actions. Some of them even acknowledged that only the urban industrial proletariat could be the main motive force of the revolution. The majority, however, continued to regard the peasantry as the class most receptive to

revolutionary propaganda and the peasant commune as the core of the socialist society of the future.

Thus, the unification of the SRs took place virtually under the slogan "back to the 1870s". Like its ideological predecessors, the members of *Narodnaya Volya*, the new SR Party saw the basis of its political activity to be acts of terrorism against individuals, a campaign which in their view was to be discontinued only after the overthrow of the autocracy and the winning of political freedom. It was precisely in such activities that the SRs saw their special "revolutionary" and "Leftist" spirit.

The *Beseda* (Discussion) circle became the father of bourgeois parties. Some of its members were ready to reconcile themselves with the establishment of a legislative-deliberative organ under the tsar, while others insisted on limiting the power of the tsar by a Constitution. In November 1903 they set up an illegal organization, the *Union of Zemstvo Constitutionalists*, which had neither a definite programme nor a definite structure, because it consisted of groups differing from one another in the degree of their opposition to the autocracy.

The political awakening of the Russian capitalist class (in the first place the bourgeois intelligentsia and the Zemstvo supporters) was furthered by the illegal journal *Osvobozhdeniye* (Emancipation), which began to be published abroad in 1902 by Pyotr Struve, a former "legal Marxist". Soon afterwards circles of readers of this journal were set up in 22 of the largest cities. At a congress held in St. Petersburg in January 1904 their representatives founded an illegal *Emancipation League*. Its programme was limitation of the autocracy by a Constitution and the holding of general elections.

Lastly, as early as in 1901 a theoretical club, *Russkoye Sobraniye* (Russian Society), composed for the most part of landowners of reactionary views was formed. Its Rules, endorsed, incidentally, by the Ministry of the Interior, explained the society's aims as follows: to strengthen in the public mind and in every way support the "primordially creative abilities and traditional way of life of the Russian people"—which boiled down to the same old ideas of "autocracy, Orthodoxy and national spirit". At first this club consisted of 120 people—prominent nobles, high-ranking officials and several rich intellectuals. It was headed by Prince Dmitri Golitsyn.

## "Bloody Sunday": the Revolution Begins

In this way the principal classes in Russia had more or less clarified their ideological and political standpoint.

The proletariat was the vanguard of the revolutionary forces. Not only its allies, but also its adversaries had to reckon with it. Extensive propaganda and agitation was conducted among workers by middle-class revolutionaries—the SRs; the "Emancipationists" sought to use the political struggle of the proletariat against the autocracy in the interests of the capitalists.

Some members of the tsarist administration, on the other hand, tried to divert the workers from political struggle, to direct their movement into the channel of purely economic demands. In 1901 Colonel Sergei Zubatov, chief of Moscow's Secret Political Police Department, initiated the establishment of a legal *Mutual Help Society of Workers in Mechanical Production*. Similar organizations

arose in other cities. In "tea-houses" financed by the police they organized libraries, lectures and talks on the economic position of the workers (wages, the duration of the working day, fines, and so on). All this work, of course, was conducted in a direction suiting the authorities, in the spirit of devotion to the tsar and the church. The revolutionary press called it "police socialism".

On March 3 (February 19), 1902, Zubatov succeeded in organizing in Moscow a demonstration of many thousands of workers in a spirit of loyalty to the tsar. His zeal was noted, and he was transferred to the capital as the chief of the Special Section of the Police Department. There in St. Petersburg a priest by the name of Georgi Gapon set up an *Organization of St. Petersburg Russian Factory Workers*, which had more than 10,000 members a year later.

What accounted for such, at first glance, strange popularity? In the previous ten years the working-class movement had produced thousands of advanced proletarians—Social-Democrats who had quite deliberately ceased to have faith in the tsar. It had educated tens of thousands of workers whose strike struggle engendering a sense of solidarity with their class brothers, and political agitation by Social-Democratic workers had also undermined the basis of belief in a "good" tsar. But millions of proletarians and semi-proletarians retained such faith. They were still incapable of demanding, and could only plead. Gapon expressed their feelings and sentiments, the degree of their political awareness and experience.

The revolutionary Social-Democrats tried and explained the provocative essence of "police socialism" to workers, but many were alarmed by the rapid growth of the organization Gapon headed and

of his personal influence on workers. As for Lenin, he was convinced that "Zubatovism" was bound to turn against the authorities themselves, because it would draw the attention of even the most backward strata of workers to social and political issues.

In January 1905 a general strike broke out in St. Petersburg. To prevent the growing revolutionary sentiments from slipping out of his control Gapon proposed that the workers should march to the Winter Palace and present a petition to the tsar. The Social-Democrats, who resolutely opposed Gapon, stated outright that the demands included in the petition—an eight-hour working day, freedom of speech, assembly and associations, equality of all before the law and the accountability of ministers to elected representatives of the people—could be won only in a revolutionary way.

But it proved impossible to prevent the demonstration. On Sunday, January 22 (9), 1905, more than 140,000 people took to the streets of St. Petersburg. Workers marched with their whole families, with wives, children and old folk, carrying portraits of the tsar and icons. They sang prayers, but they were met with rifle fire, sabres and whips. More than 1,000 people were killed and about 5,000 wounded. A storm of indignation swept the working people in the capital. "We no longer have a tsar," shouted the stunned people.

Towards evening the first barricades appeared in some districts of the city. The workers who erected them said: "The tsar has given us a thrashing, so we will give him a thrashing!"

So even the most backward sections of the working class, who had until now naively believed in the tsar and sincerely wanted to hand the requests of the suffering people "personally to him", learned an unforgettable lesson from the massacre.

Events bore out the correctness of the views and tactics of the Social-Democrats. "The logic of the proletariat's class position proved stronger than Gapon's mistakes, naïvetés, and illusions."<sup>1</sup>

The terrible news of the massacre swept the country, arousing the wrath of the entire working class. On the day following "Bloody Sunday" a general strike broke out in Moscow. Three days later a strike was declared and a political demonstration was held by the proletariat of Riga. There was not a single town where workers did not strike or put forward political demands. Their main slogan was "Down with the autocracy!" The number of strikers in January-March 1905 alone was 810,000, which was double the number during the previous ten years. The countryside was also in revolt. There were peasant disturbances in one out of every seven *uyezds*. This is how revolution was beginning in Russia.

The political parties faced the task of taking a stand in the incipient revolution, working out their tactics and determining methods of struggle to attain their class objectives.

Military and police terror was stepped up, but at the same time the government began to manoeuvre. Nicholas II instructed Bulygin, Minister of the Interior, to set up a commission to draft a law on convening a *State Duma*, a kind of Parliament.

The reactionary landowners sent a servile address to the tsar urging him "to safeguard primordial Russian ideas". To combat the revolutionary movement they began to organize what were called Black Hundreds into which they recruited very

---

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 8, p. 113. After the January events the government dissolved the organization headed by Gapon and Gapon himself was exposed a little over a year later as an agent provocateur. -Ed.

varied elements—landowners, clergymen, tradesmen, artisans, the most backward workers and declassed elements, including former criminals. Their counter-revolutionary assemblies and demonstrations, which kindled pro-monarchy and chauvinistic sentiments and sowed hatred for revolutionaries and progressive public figures, culminated, as a rule, in acts of outright terrorism.

A different stand was taken by the capitalist landlords who even at the cost of certain concessions sought to prevent a real revolution. Prince Pyotr Dolgorukov, a prominent Zemstvo leader, proposed that the noblemen should calculate how much land they could “cede” to the peasants because “if they do not cede it themselves it will all the same be taken from them from below”.

Under the pressure of such feelings the 4th Congress of the *Union of Zemstvo Constitutionalists* requested the tsar not only to include “representatives of the public” in Bulygin’s commission, but also to “regularize” the terms of lease of landowners’ land and even to allot part of it to land-hungry peasants. Compulsory alienation of part of the landowners’ land and its allocation to land-hungry peasants were favoured also by the 3rd Congress of the *Emancipation League*. Recognizing the strength and leading role of the proletariat in the revolution that had begun, and trying to win it over to their side, the “Emancipationists” included in their slogans such points from the RSDLP’s minimum programme as the convocation, on the basis of universal suffrage, of a Constituent Assembly representing the whole people and the establishment of an eight-hour working day.<sup>1</sup> One

---

<sup>1</sup> How demagogic and fraudulent the bourgeois liberals’ slogan of an eight-hour working day was is shown by the following fact. In the spring of 1905 Savva Morozov, owner



of their leaders, former "Economist" Sergei Prokovich attempted to set up, on the ruins of Gapon's organization, a *Workers' Union* as a non-party organization, that is to say, one free from the influence of the Social-Democrats.

At the same time the Emancipation League put forward a doctrine of "consensus" between the people and the tsar. That doctrine reflected the real political position of the capitalists, their striving to drive a secret bargain with the autocracy on a paltry, truncated Constitution.

Although the revolution in the country was a bourgeois one, aimed at clearing the ground for the extensive and rapid development of capitalism and seemingly needed, above all, by the bourgeoisie, the latter, as an irreconcilable adversary of the proletariat, was quite willing to rely on some vestiges of the past—in this particular instance, the monarchy. That is why it did not want the revolution to develop consistently, resolutely and uncompromisingly and to be brought to its conclusion. Moreover, it wanted the necessary transformations to be effected slowly and gradually, through reform and not revolution, so as to affect the old repressive institutions (the army, police and judiciary) as little as possible and to promote as little as possible the revolutionary independent action, initiative and energy of the people and, especially, the workers.

In fact, the universal suffrage, Constituent Assembly and eight-hour working day demanded by

---

of the Nikolskaya Mill, Russia's biggest textile enterprise in Orekhovo-Zuyevo, decided to limit the working day to eight hours and to establish profit-sharing for the workers. His family declared him to be insane and, hounded by other mill-owners, he committed suicide.—*Ed.*

the capitalist liberals were in reality regarded as bargaining chips, or more precisely as an increased stake with which to begin bargaining with the tsar. The same stand was taken by the liberal legal newspapers and the illegal journal *Osvobozhdeniye*.

Its editor, Struve, declared outright that it was necessary "to create Russian democracy by relying on the co-operation of classes and not on their struggle". He justified the liberals' refusal to call for a republic by alleging that such a slogan was "unintelligible and alien to the masses of the people". He opposed the view that insurrection was "the inevitable consummation of the present struggle for emancipation".<sup>1</sup>

What was the Socialist-Revolutionaries' attitude to the beginning of the revolution? In the first place they called on the peasants to seize and plough up landowners' fields. That was the recommendation of the SRs' newspaper *Revolutsionnaya Rossiya* in May 1905. But at the same time the *Combat Organization* of their party stepped up acts of terrorism against individuals. It killed Moscow's Governor-General, Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich, the tsar's uncle. More than 30 attempts on the lives of provincial and city governors and chiefs of secret police departments were made by local combat squads of the Socialist-Revolutionaries. Counting on acts of terrorism against individuals as a means of "awakening the people" reflected the weakness of the SRs' links with the masses. In actual fact the organization of acts of terrorism drew the most active members of the party away from propaganda and agitation work. As a result the SRs remained not a political party in the true meaning of the word but a small group of conspirators.

---

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 9, p. 68.

In those months, especially after "Bloody Sunday", the authority and influence of the RSDLP among the proletarian masses grew considerably. The proportion of workers in it rapidly began to increase. Now the workers saw their real leader in the Party.

In view of this the Social-Democrats had as quickly as possible to determine their tactics in relation to the drastically changed conditions of the struggle of the working class in order to give leadership to this struggle. In order to discuss all the urgent problems it was decided to convene a *3rd Congress of the RSDLP*. Twenty-one committees (among them those of St. Petersburg and Moscow) elected supporters of Lenin as delegates and eight—supporters of Martov and Plekhanov. But the Mensheviks refused to join the majority of delegates and decided to hold their own conference.

The 3rd Congress met in London from April 12 to 27, 1905. Simultaneously the Mensheviks' conference was held in Geneva. Added to the old disagreements were new ones—those on questions of strategy and tactics.

Martov and Plekhanov believed the Russian revolution was an exact copy of "classic" West European bourgeois revolutions at the end of the 18th and in the middle of the 19th centuries. From this they concluded that the bourgeoisie should be its main motive force, its leader. The proletariat, in their opinion, should not display greater zeal than the bourgeoisie: it should only support (as a last resort to prod) the bourgeoisie and not frighten it away by outstripping developments.

Lenin argued that the revolution in Russia, though it was a bourgeois one, was taking place at a time when capitalism had already entered its last stage, imperialism, and that the question of

a socialist revolution was already on the agenda, put there objectively, by the logic of historical development. So, he concluded, "*in a certain sense a bourgeois revolution is more advantageous to the proletariat than to the bourgeoisie*".<sup>1</sup>

It was in the interests of the working class that bourgeois-democratic transformations should be as extensive and swift as possible. In other words, it was interested in the *revolutionary* and *not* the *reformist* path.

Besides, the more consistent a bourgeois revolution was and the farther it went in its democratic transformations, the more advantageous the positions that could be secured for the working class in its further struggle against the bourgeoisie and capitalist exploitation, for socialism. "We cannot get out of the bourgeois-democratic boundaries of the Russian revolution," Lenin noted, "but we can vastly extend these boundaries, and within these boundaries we can and must fight for the interests of the proletariat, for its immediate needs and for conditions that will make it possible to prepare its forces for the future complete victory."<sup>2</sup>

As for the Mensheviks, they feared that the excessive revolutionarism of the proletariat would frighten the bourgeoisie away and then it would be left single-handed face to face with the counter-revolution and would be doomed to defeat. The Bolsheviks were confident this would not happen if the working class succeeded in entering into an *alliance with the peasantry*. If the contrary happened the bourgeoisie would become the leader of the revolution and make it an inconsistent and selfish one.

---

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 9, p. 50.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

The Mensheviks did not see that the revolution had sharpened and brought into the open the antagonism between the peasantry and the big capitalists. At that time the peasantry was interested not so much in the absolute preservation of private property as in the confiscation of the landed estates, one of the principal forms of private property. Without thereby becoming socialist, or ceasing to be petty-bourgeois, the peasantry was capable of becoming a wholehearted and most radical adherent of the democratic revolution.<sup>1</sup>

The positions of the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks differed also on the question of an *armed uprising*. Without fully denying its significance for the victory of the revolution, the Mensheviks, like the liberals, strove to avoid recognizing it as necessary and urgent—this at a time when the government had to all intents and purposes already started a civil war with its mass shooting of peaceful and unarmed citizens and when the Black Hundreds, formed by landowners and the reactionary clergy and protected by the police, were on the rampage.

The Mensheviks spoke of the possibility and even desirability of an exclusively peaceful way of transformations, contending that a frightened tsar could and should convene a Parliament (or some semblance of one) and that the latter would proclaim itself a Constituent Assembly empowered to adopt any laws.

The Bolsheviks opposed this view. Who would hold elections to such a Parliament? Where were the guarantees that the authorities, relying on bayonets, would not interfere in the conduct of the elections and the counting of votes? Even if

---

<sup>1</sup> See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 9, p. 98.

they did not succeed in doing this, would not they be able with the same bayonets to disband a Parliament not to their liking? No, the armed force of the counter-revolution could be defeated only by the armed force of the revolution. Only a government born of armed insurrection and relying on it (Lenin called it the *revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry*) would be able to suppress all attempts by the forces of counter-revolution to resist the revolution and then be able to hold genuinely democratic and free elections. "Those who have eyes to see," Lenin declared categorically, "can have no doubts as to how the question of an insurrection must now be presented. . ." <sup>1</sup> For this reason the 3rd Congress of the RSDLP instructed all Social-Democratic organizations "to take the most energetic steps towards arming the proletariat, as well as drawing up a plan of the armed uprising and of direct leadership thereof" <sup>2</sup>. In order to lead the masses of the people to insurrection and make it an insurrection of the whole people the congress put forward tactical slogans which were to help to organize the masses for resolute action against the power of the tsar and simultaneously to disorganize the repressive apparatus of the latter. The slogans were: (1) immediate establishment in a revolutionary way of an eight-hour working day and the carrying out of all democratic changes in the countryside (in the first place, confiscation of the landed estates), (2) mass political strikes, and (3) the arming of the workers.

Let us dwell on two points.

What is meant by establishing in a *revolutionary* way an eight-hour working day and the carrying

---

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 9, p. 72.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

out of agrarian transformations? It means only one thing: not reckoning with the authorities and their laws and establishing a new order. This was bound to lead to a direct clash between the workers and peasants on the one hand and tsarism on the other, to an understanding of the need for armed struggle against tsarism.

Furthermore, the Bolsheviks urged the workers to use such a tested means as strikes not only in economic, but also in *political* struggle, in the revolution.

As we can see, the contrary nature of the two principled assessments of the character, motive forces and prospects of the revolution developed into deep tactical differences between the two factions of the RSDLP. In his book *Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution*, which appeared in the summer of 1905, Lenin critically analyzed the Menshevik tactics and argued a case for the tactics of the Bolsheviks. At the same time he posed for the first time the question of working out, after the victory of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, the means and methods of struggle of the proletariat in a future *socialist* revolution.

In his book Lenin showed that the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry was called upon not only to ensure victory over tsarism, but also to give the proletariat time to organize itself into a great army capable of starting the transition to a socialist revolution. This transition, Lenin explained, would be accompanied by changes in the *motive forces* of the revolution. The big capitalists would be all in the camp of its open enemies. The peasantry would split: one section of it—the kulaks, or the rural capitalists—would side with the counter-revolution; another—

the poorest, semi-proletarian section—would become a natural ally of the working class; the middle peasants would hesitate and vacillate. If the proletariat succeeded in winning over the middle peasants and the middle classes as a whole, it would be victorious.

This new theoretical view of the correlation between bourgeois and socialist revolutions, of a regrouping of forces round the proletariat during the transition from the former to the latter constituted the basis of Lenin's teaching on the bourgeois-democratic revolution *growing over* into a socialist one.

## Workers Fight, Capitalists Creep to Power

Ever new sections of the working class were drawn into the revolutionary movement.

On May 1 (April 18), 1905, the day of solidarity of the workers of the world, 220,000 workers in 177 towns and factory settlements responded to a call from the Social-Democrats and went on strike.

On May 25 (12) a strike of 70,000 textile workers began in Ivanovo-Voznesensk<sup>1</sup>. The strike committee they elected, the first ever *Soviet (Council) of Workers' Deputies*<sup>2</sup>, two-thirds of whose members were Bolsheviks, organized workers' militia and instructed it to guard not only enterprises, but also meetings, that is to say, it introduced, without preliminary permission, freedom of assembly and speech. The strike lasted 72 days.

---

<sup>1</sup> Now Ivanovo.—*Ed.*

<sup>2</sup> The establishment of this body, which in fact wielded revolutionary power, was an outstanding event. Soviets of Workers' Deputies began to be formed in other industrial centres.—*Ed.*



On July 22 (9), in response to a call from the Bolsheviks, 100,000 workers stayed away from work in St. Petersburg, thereby marking the half-year anniversary of "Bloody Sunday". On the same day similar strikes took place in other industrial centres in Russia.

Peasants joined the struggle on an ever greater scale. In the Baltic area and Transcaucasia strikes by agricultural workers, headed by Social-Democrats, developed into a veritable guerilla war against the landowners and the government. Hundreds of thousands of peasants returning, as usual, for seasonal field work from towns and cities, where they earned their living in winter, told their fellow-villagers about the workers' struggle against the employers and the tsar. These accounts did a great deal to awaken the political consciousness of the peasant masses. Now they often described as "strikes" their actions against the landowners and authorities.

In August 1905 an illegal *All-Russian Peasant Union* was founded. The Zemstvo (mostly Narodist) intelligentsia predominated in its leadership, but its mass basis consisted of politically-aware peasants. The union's Programme contained a demand for the abolition of private landownership (nationalization of the land), for confiscation of landed estates (large estates without compensation and others with partial indemnity) and for their distribution among those "who will till the land with their families, without hired labour" (and this was to be done by elected representatives of the peasants and not government officials).

The armed pillar of the tsarist regime—the army—also began to waver. It was becoming ever more difficult for the government to use troops against the people. In June 1905 the red flag of

revolt was hoisted over the battleship *Potemkin* in the Black Sea. The squadron of ships dispatched to sink it refused to fire at the mutinous battleship. Only the lack of political leadership<sup>1</sup> and a shortage of fuel compelled the rebels to discontinue their actions and to sail to neighbouring Romania, where the crew surrendered to the authorities there.

The new blows of the revolution caused fresh waverings among the capitalists. Their fear of storms ahead kept on growing. Increasingly often they applied to the tsarist authorities for armed help against striking workers (this was precisely the case in Ivanovo-Voznesensk).

A conference of representatives of the Zemstvos held in Moscow in June adopted a petition requesting the earliest possible gathering of "people's representatives" so as to establish "a renovated state system in agreement with the sovereign". In July, also in Moscow, a congress of merchants and industrialists (that is to say, representatives of big business) also spoke in favour of convening a legislative-deliberative "representative institution" under the absolute monarch.

At the same time the early prospect of their admission to power compelled the liberals to hasten the final founding of a political party representing the interests of the capitalists. In July the Emancipation League and the Union of Zemstvo Constitutionalists formed the Organizing Committee of the party, which it was decided to call the *Constitutional-Democratic Party* (the *Cadets*—from the Russian initials K-D).

The pressure of the revolution shook and weakened the old rule. By means of sheer repression the

---

<sup>1</sup> Grigori Vakulenchuk, the Bolshevik who headed the sailors, was killed during the mutiny.—*Ed.*

autocracy could not crush the forces of revolution. The tsar was compelled to manoeuvre. In a solemn manifesto on August 19 (6) he declared his agreement to the setting up of a "people's representative institution"—the *State Duma*. According to the project drawn up by Minister of Interior Bulygin, the State Duma was to be a deliberative body constituted through elections held in several stages. The project envisaged several electoral limitations, so that the landowners and capitalists were assured beforehand of an absolute majority in the Duma. Franchise was denied to workers, students, servicemen and women. Thus the tsar's manifesto was merely a manoeuvre to deceive the masses of the people with fictitious "people's representation", to divert them from the revolutionary struggle against the autocracy and for a republic, and to make them "switch" to struggle for reforms on the basis of the existing system, the monarchy. Thereby they would help lay the foundations for agreement with the bourgeoisie.

The Duma, which lacked rights, had limited powers and changed virtually nothing in the existing order, did not satisfy even the capitalists. But fearing that a boycott of the new "institution" might lead to a further growth of the revolutionary movement, the liberals generally supported this manoeuvre of the government. The Emancipation League and, following it and under its influence, a congress of representatives of the Zemstvos decided to take part in the forthcoming elections. A few of them called for a boycott of the Duma and demanded the convocation of a *Constituent Assembly*, to be elected on the basis of equal and direct suffrage by secret ballot.

It would seem that the mere fact that the proletariat was denied any representation in the "Buly-

gin Duma" should have antagonized all Social-Democrats without exception. But the Mensheviks, blindly following the liberals, believed that the workers should take part in elections, forming their agitation committees and electing their own electors (in the view of the Mensheviks, by acting outside the Duma they would be able at a favourable moment to "dictate their demand for a Constituent Assembly to all other progressive groups"). All this, they thought, could turn the Duma into a Constituent Assembly and thereby ensure the peaceful triumph of the revolution, without an armed uprising.

The Bolsheviks could not agree, of course, with such a far-fetched, abstract scheme having nothing in common with the revolutionary reality and assigning to the proletariat the role of an auxiliary force of the liberal bourgeoisie. They opposed this scheme with the slogan of an *active boycott* and the foiling of the elections to the "Bulygin Duma"<sup>1</sup>.

This slogan was the only one which matched the sentiments of the masses at that time. It did not "invent" anything but correctly and precisely formulated the masses' striving to step up direct and firm pressure on the autocracy. In Lenin's words, it was "a natural *supplement* to the electrically charged atmosphere"<sup>2</sup>. The same position was adhered to at that moment by the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the All-Russian Peasant Union. This enabled Lenin to state that actually a "Left bloc"

---

<sup>1</sup> Lenin wrote that the Manifesto of August 19 and the law on elections to the Duma "ought now to become a *vademecum* to every political agitator, every class-conscious worker, for it faithfully reflects all the infamy, viciousness, Asiatic barbarity, violence, and exploitation that pervade the whole social and political system of Russia". (V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 9, p. 192.)

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 13, p. 26.

of revolutionary forces had taken shape in the country.<sup>1</sup>

In the beginning of October printing workers in Moscow came out on strike. Before long workers of other industries joined them. At their meetings they put forward not only economic, but also political demands. Then workers' demonstrations began. The attempts by police and troops to dispel them proved unsuccessful. At meetings throughout the country workers hailed the revolutionary initiative of their Moscow comrades and expressed readiness to act together with them.

In October the Moscow Committee of the RSDLP, after hearing reports on the workers' feelings, called on them to extend their strike of solidarity with the printing workers and to turn it into a city-wide political strike. The appeal was responded to by the workers at the majority of industrial enterprises, in city transport and on the railways.

Following the Moscow Committee of the RSDLP a call for a general political strike was issued by the St. Petersburg Committee. On the next day the workers at the largest metal-working and engineering enterprises in the capital downed tools and a day later so did the railwaymen and the textile workers. On the third day the strike spread not only to industrial enterprises, but also to all trading and educational establishments and to the majority of private and government institutions.

The fresh surge of revolution compelled the liberals to move somewhat to the Left. In October the first founding congress of the Constitutional-Democratic Party opened in Moscow. It is true that the party programme it adopted by-passed the question of what the state system should be—a mon-

---

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 17, p. 418.

archy or a republic. It only said that the country should have a Constitution and that the executive authority should be accountable to a people's representative institution.

The leftward shift of the liberals manifested itself also in the fact that the principal report was made at the congress by Pavel Milyukov, leader of the Left wing of the Cadets, who was also elected Central Committee Chairman. He declared emphatically: "Working for our objective, we cannot count on any agreements and compromises; we must hold aloft the flag which has already been hoisted by the Russian liberation movement as a whole, that is, to strive for the convocation of a Constituent Assembly to be elected on the basis of universal, direct and equal suffrage by secret ballot."

In the meantime the general political strike spread from Moscow and St. Petersburg to other major industrial centres and embraced almost all the railways. Taking part in it were 518,000 industrial workers, 700,000 railway workers and office employees, 200,000 workers in small workshops, 150,000 employees of trading enterprises—altogether up to two million people. Their common slogans were: "Down with the 'Bulygin Duma!'" and "Long live a democratic republic!" Trade unions were formed in many cities and *Soviets of Workers' Deputies* were established in St. Petersburg, Yekaterinoslav and Kiev. Emerging from the general revolutionary strike, as leading bodies elected by the workers themselves, in the course of the strike the Soviets became bodies of leadership of the struggle of the working class against the government and, to a lesser or greater extent, depending on the pitch of the movement they assumed the functions of the latter.

Tsarism made an attempt to crush the general strike by repression. Dmitri Trepov, Governor-General of St. Petersburg and Deputy Minister of the Interior, ordered troops and the police "not to fire blank shots and not to spare bullets". But reliable troops at the disposal of the government proved insufficient. Where they tried to "regain" streets and squares from the revolutionary people they met with stiff armed resistance.

In such circumstances the view that new concessions were needed came to prevail even in the highest government spheres and court circles. Count Sergei Witte, Chairman of the Committee of Ministers, at that time the highest legislative-deliberative body under the tsar, was the main spokesman of this view. This diehard monarchist proved to the tsar that only two possibilities remained to him: either to invest some resolute military man with unlimited dictatorial powers, in order to "suppress sedition in all its manifestations", doing this resolutely and drastically, even at the cost of massive bloodshed, or to continue to grant concessions and embark on a constitutional road, involving a certain limitation of the supreme rights of the monarch.<sup>1</sup> Witte himself doubted the possibility of crushing the revolutionary people by military means, and the majority of ministers and courtiers agreed with him: troops were either lacking or not reliable.<sup>2</sup> Baron von Frideriks, Minister of the

---

<sup>1</sup> S. Y. Witte, *Reminiscences*, Vol. 2, Moscow, 1960, pp. 11, 25 (Russian edition).

<sup>2</sup> Lenin noted that "the revolutionary proletariat has succeeded in neutralizing the army, after paralyzing it in the great days of the general strike", resulting in a "fluctuation of almost evenly balanced forces", and that "the revolution was not yet strong enough to crush tsarism". (*Collected Works*, Vol. 9, pp. 423-33, 394, 428.)

Court, who had great influence with the royal family, suggested the candidature of Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolayevich, the tsar's uncle and Commander of the Guards, for the military dictator. But the latter, drawing a pistol from his pocket, began to implore his regal nephew: "Either you accept Count Witte's programme or I shall kill myself right here!"<sup>1</sup>

As Baron Frideriks was compelled to admit: "Everybody shuns dictatorship and power, everyone has lost his head. . ."<sup>2</sup>

On October 30 (17) an utterly confused tsar signed a new manifesto entitled *On Improving the State Order*. In it he promised: (1) to "grant" the people "firm foundations of civil freedom based on the principles of genuine personal immunity, freedom of conscience, speech, assembly and association"; (2) to secure ("as far as possible") the participation in elections to the State Duma of those who were totally disfranchised; (3) to recognize the Duma's right to endorse laws and to exercise control "over the legitimacy of actions of the authorities established by us"<sup>3</sup>.

The overwhelming majority of the capitalists and capitalist landowners received the manifesto with exultation. They declared that the objectives of the revolution had been achieved and that from now on one should turn only to legislative activity in the Duma. These sentiments were most clearly formulated by Alexander Guchkov, a major Moscow property owner and industrialist. Witte, who knew

---

<sup>1</sup> S. Y. Witte, *Reminiscences*, Vol. 3, Moscow, 1960, pp. 41-42. Witte noted in this connection that "at that time even clever people who had lived a useful life lost their heads. . ."

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.



him well, wrote about him: "...As soon as he sensed that the people would understand the playing at 'freedom' in their own way and would in the first place desire freedom not to die of starvation, not to be flogged and to have equal justice for all, he began to preach: 'Power of the sovereign must be restricted, not for the sake of the people, but for our own sake, for a mere handful of Russian nobles and bourgeois'..."<sup>1</sup>

In November 1905 Guchkov announced the formation of a new political party, the *Union of October 17*. Its very name showed it was based on articles of the tsar's manifesto of October 17.

The Octobrists declared that their organization would unite all who were far from wishing to take a leap into the unknown future and to expose Russia to the danger of social upheavals.

The revolutionary events forced the extreme Right-wingers, too, to identify themselves politically and to organize. Their theoretical club, the Russian Assembly, declared that the tsarist autocracy had in no way been abolished by the manifesto and that it continued to exist under the new order: "The State Duma is not called upon to change anything in the fundamental laws and can on no account do so."<sup>2</sup>

At approximately the same time the main landowners' monarchist counter-revolutionary party appeared—the *Union of the Russian People*. It united all the Black Hundreds existing in the country. It was patronized by Minister of the Interior Durnovo. The chairman of the union, Alexander Dubrovin, a physician by profession, was supported by members of the tsar's closest entourage.

---

<sup>1</sup> S. Y. Witte, *Reminiscences*, Vol. 3, p. 77.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110.

The "Left bloc" was unanimous in its critical attitude towards the manifesto. In his article "*The First Victory of the Revolution*" Lenin wrote: "The concession made by the tsar is indeed a great victory for the revolution, but this victory is still a long way from deciding the fate of the entire cause of liberty."<sup>1</sup>

Already on October 31(18), 1905, the Central Committee of the RSDLP issued an appeal to the Russian people exposing the manoeuvres of the autocracy: "The tsar and the ministers are telling lies and playing the hypocrite, and they are not to be trusted. They are out to placate the people with a paper constitution and to take away from them, on the sly, everything they have promised to them. They want to make a deal with the higher classes and to keep hold of military power in order to conjointly suppress the people."

The Bolsheviks urged the people to prepare for a decisive assault on tsarism, for an armed uprising. The surge of the revolutionary wave compelled even the Mensheviks to recognize (mainly in words, of course) militant tactics. One of their leaders, Fyodor Dan, even declared that in the event of victory over tsarism "bourgeois democracy, which has disgraced itself by its betrayal of the cause of liberty, will be precipitated into the same abyss".

Not stinting high-sounding phrases, the Mensheviks continued to deny the necessity of military preparation for an insurrection, preferring fundamentally different, peaceful means of struggle, such as "strike-demonstrations". They also disagreed with the Bolsheviks in assessing the role of the Soviets, which in the course of the October general

---

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 9, p. 427.

strike had sprung up everywhere. The Mensheviks regarded the Soviets as centres of the purely economic struggle of the workers as members of particular trades and professions. Lenin and the Bolsheviks were of a different opinion. Without denying such a role to the Soviets,<sup>1</sup> they regarded them also as organs of preparation for an uprising and as the embryo of a provisional revolutionary government. Lenin wrote: "I think the Soviet should proclaim itself the provisional revolutionary government of the whole of Russia as early as possible, or should *set up* a provisional revolutionary government (which would amount to the same thing, only in another form)."<sup>2</sup>

The idea of an armed insurrection was supported also by the SRs, although some of their leaders, in particular Viktor Chernov, were against it.

"My word," Lenin wrote, "our revolution in Russia is a fine one! We hope to return there soon—things are heading that way with remarkable speed."<sup>3</sup> He longed to return home. In November 1905, taking advantage of the amnesty that had been proclaimed, many political emigres, including Lenin and his closest associates, returned to Russia. The legal Social-Democratic newspaper *Novaya Zhizn* (New Life), the circulation of which in those days reached 80,000 copies, published his

---

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 10, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 10, p. 21. It is noteworthy that what escaped the notice of the Mensheviks (or what they did not want to notice) was clearly seen by the Black Hundreds. Their newspaper *Novoye Vremya* (New Times) admitted that there were two governments—one, the official one, the Council of Ministers, and the other, the revolutionary one, the Soviet of Workers' Deputies.—*Ed.*

<sup>3</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 34, p. 360.

article "*The Reorganization of the Party*" in which the leader of the Bolsheviks explained that in the new circumstances one should not work in the old way and he called for more actively recruiting new Party members (particularly from among the workers) and for setting up, alongside the illegal apparatus, semi-legal and even legal Party bodies and a network of organizations close to them.

The political freedoms—freedom of speech, assembly and demonstrations—won through direct action by the proletariat—made it possible not only vastly to extend agitation and propaganda work among the masses, but also to conduct on a greater scale the technical work of preparing for an uprising. Workers' fighting squads trained almost openly.

The October general strike gave rise to a new upsurge of peasant unrest. In the autumn of 1905 unrest spread to 261 *uyezds*, that is to say, more than half the territory of Russia, reaching particular intensity in the middle of November. There was an increase in the number of farmhands' strikes. In clashes with government troops dispatched to put down the unrest, peasants learned from their own experience that the landowners they hated and the "Father-Tsar" stood as one. In some localities peasants removed village headmen appointed by the authorities, elected their own headmen and boycotted the *Zemstvo* authorities. The guerilla war of peasants in Transcaucasia and the Baltic area continued to spread.

Revolutionary moods were rapidly increasing in the army. In the latter half of November and the first half of December soldiers' mutinies accompanied by meetings took place in 31 regiments. In five cities these developed into armed demonstra-

tions by soldiers and sailors and there were armed mutinies in the military fortresses of Kronstadt and Sevastopol. In Sevastopol the rebels were joined by a section of the officers.<sup>1</sup>

All this showed that the revolution had reached a very high pitch, that it was on the point of developing into an armed uprising of the whole people.

## The First Assault

Yet the forces of counter-revolution were the first to mobilize. This was understandable: they relied on the state apparatus, which had been shaken but not broken, on a considerable part of the army, which had not been neutralized, and on the numerous Black Hundreds.

The latter, acting with police protection, and often at the bidding of the police and with its financial backing, unleashed a veritable campaign of terror. They assassinated Nikolai Bauman, the leader of the Bolsheviks in Moscow. In the first three weeks of November 1905 they killed up to 4,000 and maimed about 10,000 people in more than 100 towns.

Together with this wave of Black Hundred pogroms, the government dared to deal its first blow. At the end of November it arrested the leaders of the All-Russian Peasant Union. On December 4 the same fate befell the leaders of the Post and

---

<sup>1</sup> This is how Lenin assessed the situation in the army: "They have not yet become wholly revolutionary. The political consciousness of the soldiers and sailors is still at a very low level. But the important thing is that it has already awakened, that the soldiers have started a movement of *their own*, that the spirit of liberty has penetrated into the barracks everywhere." (*Collected Works*, Vol. 10, pp. 54-55.)

Telegraph Workers' Union and on December 9 — the chairman of the St. Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies. Prime Minister Witte ordered the arrest of all the members of the Soviet. This was a direct challenge to the revolutionary forces.

The "Left bloc" faced a choice: either to take up the challenge or to retreat without a fight until more favourable conditions presented themselves, when mass action by the workers, acts of protest by soldiers and sailors and peasant revolts would merge together. Lenin considered that "the success of an all-Russian uprising probably depends most of all on the fusion of these three streams"<sup>1</sup>.

Was there a chance of victory then? Yes, there was. But for this the proletariat had to act simultaneously throughout the country and to win over the army. Joint action by the proletariat and the army would lead to a fresh and even greater upsurge of the peasant rebellion. By joint efforts they would sweep away the autocracy.

On December 15 (2), 1905, a mutiny of well armed soldiers of one of the regiments started in Moscow. In another regiment soldiers declared their readiness to supply the workers, if they rebelled, with weapons from the arsenal they were guarding. Feeling was running high in other units. As the authorities themselves admitted, they had at their disposal a little over 2,000 policemen and gendarmes.

On December 16 (3) the Central and St. Petersburg committees of the RSDLP had a joint sitting with the Executive Committee of the St. Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies. Lenin took part in it. A decision was taken urgently to convene a plenary meeting of the Soviet and at it to call for an all-

---

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 11, p. 122.

Russian political strike which would become the prologue to an uprising.<sup>1</sup>

But the government succeeded in delivering a preventive blow. When almost all members of the St. Petersburg Soviet gathered, numbering 180, they were arrested by the police. Thus even before it could begin the uprising was deprived of its leadership.

On December 17 (4) the situation was discussed at a sitting of the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies. The Soviet decided to be ready "at any moment for a general political strike and an armed uprising".

On December 18 (5) meetings were held at all the industrial enterprises in Moscow at which workers discussed ways of voicing their protest against the government's provocative actions in St. Petersburg. The discussion demonstrated the determination and courage of the Moscow workers. The printing-house workers decided: "We are ready to reply to the challenge of the government with a general strike in the hope that it can and must grow into an armed uprising." A conference of representatives of the workers of 29 railway lines, held in Moscow on the same day, also decided to call on the railwaymen for a new all-Russian political strike. In the evening an enlarged conference of the Moscow organization of the RSDLP took place, which decided to begin a general strike in Moscow and on adjacent railways on December 20 (7) and to develop it into an armed insurrection.

---

<sup>1</sup> While not "in principle" objecting to an armed uprising, the Mensheviks considered that at the given moment it would be better to retreat without a fight. But knowing the frame of mind of the workers they did not venture to come out openly against the proposal for a general political strike.—*Ed.*

This decision had been sanctioned by the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies on the previous day. True, at meetings of their factions the Mensheviks and SRs said it would be better to remove the call for an uprising from the appeal of the Soviet. But at the plenary meeting they did not risk presenting this demand in view of the obvious determination of the proletarian masses to go the whole way.

On December 20 (7) all the workers of Moscow downed tools and went out into the streets with red flags. The strikers numbered up to 100,000 that day and 150,000 on the next day. There was no traffic on all the railway lines starting in Moscow. True, government troops managed to occupy the highly important Moscow-St. Petersburg railway line. Another telling blow was delivered by the gendarmes, who arrested the bureau formed by the Soviet to lead the strike and uprising.

On December 21 (8) the strike spread to St. Petersburg<sup>1</sup> and Yekaterinoslav and on the following day to Rostov-on-Don and Perm.

On December 23 (10) barricades were put up in the working-class suburbs of Moscow.

The news of the armed uprising in Moscow roused all the proletariat of Russia. On December 24 (11) a political strike was begun by the workers of Odessa and on the next day by workers in Kharkov, Kiev, Sormovo, Saratov and the majority of the country's railways. On that day, however, a crisis began in the development of the mass political strike. It was particularly manifest in St. Petersburg, where the workers did not receive the signal for the uprising because of the arrest of the

---

<sup>1</sup> On December 22 altogether 110,000 workers at 200 enterprises were on strike in St. Petersburg. But there too the government managed to prevent the stoppage of traffic by filling railway terminals and stations with troops.—*Ed.*



Soviet. As a result the number of strikers decreased.

In the meantime, seeing that the immediate danger of an uprising in the capital had past, the government transferred to Moscow a considerable number of troops loyal to it. On December 28 (15), 11 infantry and five cavalry regiments as well as 12 artillery batteries were concentrated in Moscow. They launched a counter-offensive and on December 30 (17) seized the Presnya district of Moscow, the last bulwark of the rebels.<sup>1</sup>

After this punitive detachments suppressed the armed actions of workers in Novorossiisk, Krasnoyarsk, Chita and other "republics" (the name given then to many districts of the country where the proletariat together with revolutionary soldiers had succeeded in temporarily seizing power).

The tsarist authorities mounted an offensive. Punitive groups committed atrocities all over the country. More than 14,000 people were executed, only 400 of them by court sentences, the rest without trial. The number of political prisoners rose to 75,000.

The main blow was struck at revolutionary parties and organizations. Leaders of the proletariat were arrested with particular thoroughness. In St. Petersburg alone the police seized up to 1,000 Social-Democratic activists.

Every worker known as a member of the RSDLP was arrested, exiled from the city or placed under administrative surveillance.

At the same time the Witte government made special efforts to split and weaken the popular movement, to turn the lower middle classes from a revolutionary path, to strengthen its own alliance with the capitalists and to calm "public opinion".

---

<sup>1</sup> Now it is called the *Krasnaya* (Red) *Presnya* district.—Ed.

On December 24 (11), 1905, at the very height of the Moscow uprising, a new electoral law was published. It retained the system of elections according to *curias*<sup>1</sup> established by the law on elections to the "Bulygin Duma", but somewhat increased the number of voters from the urban curia—adding to it persons of the free, that is to say, intellectual, professions, and well-to-do tenants—and introduced a new, workers' curia.

The elections were not universal (women, young men aged below 25, servicemen and several national minorities were excluded), not equal (one elector per 2,000 landowners, 4,000 city dwellers, 30,000 peasants or 90,000 workers), and not direct (a two-stage system for landowners and city dwellers and a three- or four-stage system for peasants and workers).

After the defeat of the revolution conditions greatly changed for the conduct of political activity by the Social-Democrats. They were again forced to act only illegally. But the workers were still powerfully drawn towards their Party. Its ranks were augmented with the finest members of the working class, which also supported the Party materially. All this enabled it to withstand the hail of blows struck by the police. In Moscow, for instance, four months after the uprising the RSDLP organization had 5,500 members in industrial enterprises (100 cells were headed by Bolsheviki and 40 by Mensheviki)—this was more than double the number on the eve of the uprising.

But the Party itself remained split into two wings. The Mensheviki, who had always been against an armed uprising, now began loudly to

---

<sup>1</sup> Categories of voters according to the property or estate status.—*Ed.*

regret it. "We should not have taken up arms," Plekhanov declared. Martov echoed him, claiming the workers had found themselves in a political blind alley and so the very idea of revolution had to be abandoned and one had to "concentrate entirely on the present, on consolidating of ground won". For this reason the Mensheviks favoured participating in the forthcoming elections to the State Duma.

In contrast the Bolsheviks highly rated the December uprising. Analyzing its positive aspects (exceptional heroism and staunchness) and the reasons for its defeat (lack of experience of armed struggle, shortage of arms and the inadequate contact with the army), Lenin called upon politically-conscious workers to study the lessons of the uprising and to prepare for new battles. Replying to Plekhanov, he stressed: "...we should have taken to arms more resolutely, energetically and aggressively; we should have explained to the masses that it was impossible to confine things to a peaceful strike and that a fearless and relentless armed fight was necessary."<sup>1</sup> At the same time Lenin pointed out that the December uprising had confirmed the truth that to achieve victory an uprising of workers alone was not sufficient. It had to be directly supported by the peasants and the army. The proletariat too had to learn this highly important lesson.

The idea of a new and this time truly nationwide uprising was emerging among the workers. This could be seen from their response to the call of the Social-Democrats to mark the anniversary of "Bloody Sunday" with a one-day political strike. Understandably, exhausted as they were to the ex-

---

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 11, p. 173.

treme by the struggle in December (only three weeks had passed since the day when the last barricade in Moscow was abandoned by its defenders), the Muscovites and railwaymen could not take part in it. But 168,000 people did not report for work in St. Petersburg and many other cities on January 22 (9), 1906. It was the third all-Russian political strike since October 1905. It quite clearly demonstrated the intentions and aspirations of the working class.

The determination of the proletariat to continue the revolution was manifested particularly vividly in its active boycott of elections to the State Duma.

At the January 1906 congress of the Party of Socialist-Revolutionaries a decision was taken not to call for an armed uprising but to boycott the State Duma and at the same time to step up acts of terrorism against tsarist high officials and to attack police spies, gendarmes, policemen, *Zemstvo* leaders, and so on.

The congress also adopted the Programme of the party, the main points of which had been drafted by Chernov. Like the Social-Democratic Programme, it consisted of minimum and maximum demands. The former was almost an exact copy of the minimum programme of the RSDLP, while the latter insisted on the "socialization of land" (abolition of landlord landownership, the transfer of all land to the peasant communes and its egalitarian cultivation by all members of the commune).

The Socialist-Revolutionaries regarded themselves as a primarily peasant party, to which their Programme testified. But they did not yet have any appreciable influence among the peasantry. The campaign of terror they advocated not only diverted the best forces of the party from agitation and propaganda work among the masses but also, contra-

ry to expectations, had no "activating" influence on these masses. The drawing together of the SRs and the peasantry, as a class, was also impeded by the latter's constitutional illusions. The forthcoming convocation of the State Duma aroused hopes among the peasants that they would be able to solve their problems with its help. Despite the appeals of the SRs the peasants took an active part in elections to the State Duma.

Constitutional illusions were also entertained by other middle sections, while the parties representing them and "Left bloc" organizations continued to adhere to the tactics of a boycott. The Cadets lost no time in taking advantage of this. They now pinned all their hopes on the Duma. As early as in December 1905, at the height of the Moscow uprising, their Central Committee declared that the Cadets "do not share the aims inscribed on the banners of the organizations directing the armed uprising".

The shift of the Cadets to the Right, however, did not keep pace with that of the big capitalists. That is why there were few capitalists in their party. But the bulk of its members (about 100,000 in April 1906, including 9,000 in St. Petersburg and 8,500 in Moscow) consisted of intellectuals and medium and lower-grade employees of state, public and private institutions and trading establishments.

Not connected with any definite class but quite bourgeois in its aims and nature, the Cadet party vacillated between the democratic trend of the middle sections and the counter-revolutionary aspirations of the big capitalists, between striving to rely on the people and fear of their independent revolutionary action. Lenin noted: "...the dual and vacillating class basis of their party inevitably engenders their double-faced policy, their fallacies,

and their hypocrisy.”<sup>4</sup> This double-faced policy was most strikingly manifested in Cadets’ activities in the Duma.

As distinct from the Cadets, the other major capitalist party, the openly counter-revolutionary Union of October 17 (the Octobrists), was much more consistent. While the former only disassociated themselves from the Moscow uprising, Guchkov, the leader of the Octobrists, urged citizens “to support the administration and the police with their moral authority”.

The Programme adopted at the congress of the Union in February 1906 defined its main objective thus: “to render assistance to the government advancing along the road of salutary reforms”. It was stressed that restrictions on “freedom of industry and trade” and “freedom of acquisition and disposal of property” were no longer tolerable. “The typical Octobrist,” Lenin aptly noted, “is not a bourgeois intellectual, but a big bourgeois. He is not the ideologist of bourgeois society, he is its real master. Being directly interested in capitalist exploitation, he has a contempt for all theories, despises the intelligentsia, and unlike the Cadets, repudiates all claims to ‘democracy’. He is a bourgeois businessman.”<sup>2</sup>

The Octobrists visualized Russia’s state system only as a constitutional monarchy with the State Duma. There could be no question of a Constituent Assembly.

Feeling that the danger of the revolution they so dreaded had receded, the reactionary landed nobility and court circles began efforts to restore the old order.

On January 5, 1906, Nicholas II met representa-

---

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 10, p. 215.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 11, p. 229.

tives of these circles. During their meeting he said: "I count on you. I trust that with your help I and the Russian people will defeat the enemies of Russia."

## Years of Reaction

On May 10, 1906, the State Duma opened. Its 478 Deputies included 179 Cadets. A separate group was formed by 100 peasant Deputies. Sixty-three seats belonged to the "autonomists"—members of various bourgeois-nationalist parties and groups. The Octobrists held 16 seats.

Such a "Left" composition of the Duma greatly worried government circles. The experienced and shrewd politician Witte, being fully aware that the stand taken on the agrarian question, one of the most burning issues clamouring for solution, would to a large degree determine the activities of the Duma, considered that "the government's activities should be directed towards agreement with it".<sup>1</sup> But he also very well realized that neither the tsar, nor the reactionary landlords standing behind him would agree to a just solution of the peasant question.

Shortly afterwards Witte retired and the post of head of the government went to Ivan Goremykin, a determined opponent of the alienation of land in favour of the peasants. He declared that the Duma would be immediately dissolved if it raised this question. The vital post of Minister of the Interior was assigned to Pyotr Stolypin, who had recently been thanked by the tsar for suppressing a peasant revolt in one of the provinces of the Volga region.

---

<sup>1</sup> S. Y. Witte, *Reminiscences*, Vol. 3, p. 339.

As was to be expected, the agrarian issue became a central one in the Duma. The peasant Deputies submitted their own draft in which they demanded that all landlord and other privately owned lands exceeding the "labour norm"<sup>1</sup> (labour is *trud* in Russian; hence the name of their group—*Trudoviks*) should be alienated and turned over to a "national land fund". They also demanded the introduction of egalitarian land tenure according to the same "labour norm".

On July 22, 1906, the enraged tsar dissolved the Duma, appointed new elections and once again reshuffled the government. This time the post of Chairman of the Council of Ministers went to Pyotr Stolypin, who in his two and a half months as Minister of the Interior had proved to be, on the one hand, a resolute "eradicator of sedition" and, on the other, an artful politician successfully flirting with the Right wing of the Duma.

A new wave of repression swept the country. On September 1, 1906, drumhead courts martial were instituted. In the six months of their existence they sentenced about 1,000 people to death.

At the same time the government tried to calm the peasants and create a new social basis for itself in the kulaks—rich farmers. It permitted the sale to peasants of a part of crown land and encouraged the migration of peasants to the eastern regions of the country—Siberia, the Far East, Kazakhstan and Central Asia. An edict was issued allowing peasants to leave the communes and to sell and buy their land freely.

This reform pursued several objectives at once. The first was to preserve landlord ownership of the

---

<sup>1</sup> The "*labour norm*"—the amount of land which could be cultivated without the use of hired labour.—*Ed.*



land by removing such a survival of serfdom as peasant strip allotments. The second was to extend private land ownership at the expense of communally owned land and thereby to create a strong section of landowners (landlords and rich peasants) in the countryside who would firmly support the government. Finally, it sought to create the prerequisites for a political alliance with the big capitalists: the Stolypin reform almost fully coincided with the agrarian part of the Octobrists' programme.

The new elections to the State Duma, however, gave the Octobrists and other Right-wing parties only 54 seats out of 518. The vote for the Cadets also dropped nearly 50 per cent (98 seats). There was a slight increase in the number of "autonomist" Deputies (76 seats). The number of peasant Trudoviks remained unchanged (104). In addition to them, 65 Social-Democrats and 37 Socialist-Revolutionaries were elected to the Duma.<sup>1</sup>

Then the government decided upon a kind of *coup d'état*. On June 16, 1907, accusing the Social-Democratic Deputies of being engaged in an armed conspiracy, it arrested and brought them to court, and again dissolved the Duma. Important amendments were included in the electoral law, sharply reducing the norm for representation of peasants and workers. Instead, the landlords and the big capitalists together received now 65 per cent of all electors.

---

<sup>1</sup> In May 1906 the 4th (Unity) Congress of the RSDLP, at which the all-Russian Party was joined by the Polish-Lithuanian and Latvian Social-Democrats and the Bund, accepted Lenin's formulation of Paragraph 1 of the Rules and adopted a decision on ending the tactics of boycotting the Duma at a time of a low ebb of the revolutionary movement. A similar decision was taken shortly afterwards by the Socialist-Revolutionaries.—*Ed.*

At the same time the government stepped up repression, resorting to a ruthless campaign of terror to intimidate the people and to crush and physically destroy the revolutionary forces. Another 26,000 persons were sentenced to death, penal servitude and imprisonment. About 33,000 were exiled to remote regions. Close to 500 trade unions were disbanded and in two years the number of members of legal workers' unions dropped from 250,000 to 13,000.

Mass arrests of Party members began. Many prominent RSDLP functionaries were sentenced to imprisonment or internal exile.

A period of widespread disillusionment began, of renunciations and betrayals among both the middle class and certain sections of the intelligentsia. A state of mental concussion, confusion and bewilderment reigned among Socialist-Revolutionaries, their leader Chernov admitted. The SR Party virtually disintegrated into small scattered groups. The position of the Mensheviks was no better. "There is total disarray and demoralization among us," wrote Potresov, a Menshevik leader. "I do not think this disintegration and demoralization are anywhere as marked as among us Mensheviks."

Not believing there could be a fresh revolutionary upsurge, thinking the revolution completely crushed and illegal clandestine activities pointless, many SRs and Mensheviks called for acceptance of the reactionary order and tsarist arbitrary rule. The Mensheviks, for example, hoped to obtain permission for the Party to exist legally and "within the framework of legality" to continue to press for reforms and a moderate constitution. But to obtain such permission they had to throw overboard the Party Programme and disband illegal

Party organizations. Among the Mensheviks Martov, Dan and Potresov were particularly active.

As distinct from the Menshevik-liquidationists, the Bolsheviki firmly believed a new revolutionary upsurge would begin within the next few years. This was because the main tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution remained unaccomplished: the peasants remained without land and the workers without an eight-hour day; the autocratic regime which the people hated remained intact; the few liberties the people had won through struggle had been taken away from them.

Lenin and the Bolsheviki headed by him based their confidence that a new upsurge of the revolution was bound to come on the fact that the events of 1905 had made the proletariat aware of its strength and taught it to win its rights through revolutionary struggle.

At the same time Lenin explained to the Party that its tactics could not remain unchanged. One had to take account of the fact that the revolutionary movement had been bled white and the forces of counter-revolution were on the upswing. In the changed circumstances it would be senseless to call, for instance, for a general political strike. Offensive tactics had to be replaced by defensive tactics, the mustering of strength. For this Party cadres had to go into hiding, the main work had to be done in illegal organizations but at the same time one had to use every legal opportunity for maintaining links with the masses.

At that time Lenin regarded one of the main tasks to be to sum up the results of the first Russian revolution, to draw lessons from them and to spread knowledge of them among the working class and the masses of the people. Compelled to emigrate once more, Lenin took up this theme again

and again in speeches and reports delivered in Geneva, Paris and London. What were the lessons he thought had to be learned?

In the first place, major changes in the position of the people and in the state system could be achieved only through mass revolutionary struggle. Moreover, it was not enough to undermine and restrict tsarist rule, it had to be abolished. Finally, the proletariat's alliance with the peasantry would be able to ensure victory only if the proletarians were free of bourgeois influence and played the leading role in the revolution.

Lenin saw one of the causes of the 1905 defeat to lie in a certain discord and distrust among workers and working people of different nationalities. On the one hand, tsarism hoisted the banner of Great-Russian chauvinism; on the other hand, the workers of non-Russian nationality were considerably influenced by their own national capitalists and their parties, because they felt oppression by the Russian autocracy more keenly than oppression by "their own" bosses.

All these circumstances explained why at that time Lenin was paying such great attention to defending the programme of the RSDLP on the *national question* (equality of nations and languages, the right of nations to self-determination, and so on), and to adherence to internationalist principles in building up all proletarian organizations.

## Fall of the Autocracy

The Bolsheviks' forecast of the inevitability of a new revolutionary upswing proved a true one. In 1910 strikes began in Moscow and St. Petersburg. There were again demonstrations, meetings and

other political actions. No amount of reprisals and persecution could stop the incipient revolutionary upsurge.

The revitalizing of the working-class movement in Russia posed the urgent question of strengthening Party organizations and improving their work. But for already two years the RSDLP Central Committee had not been able to meet because of intra-party struggle (between the Bolsheviki and the Mensheviki-liquidationists).

In early 1912 the *6th All-Russian Conference of the RSDLP in Prague*, at which more than twenty large Party organizations were represented (the overwhelming majority of the delegates were Bolsheviki), resolved to expel the liquidationists from the Party and elected a Central Committee headed by Lenin.

On May 5 (April 22), 1912, the workers' daily newspaper *Pravda* began to appear in St. Petersburg as all-Russian legal organ of the RSDLP Central Committee. It was published with money donated by workers.<sup>1</sup>

The Bolsheviki's group of Deputies in the State Duma was another legal platform from which they could address the working people. The Duma was elected in the autumn of 1912. The electoral law provided for the election of only six Deputies from

---

<sup>1</sup> Without this help the paper could not have existed for long: it was persecuted by the imposition of fines. Thirty-six legal actions were begun against its editors, who in the course of about two years had spent a total of almost 48 months in prison. During the same period the paper was banned by the government eight times but continued to appear under other titles. Forty-one of its 638 issues were confiscated. The publication of *Pravda* in such conditions was outstanding proof of the high degree of political awareness, energy and cohesion of the workers of Russia.—*Ed.*

the workers' curia in the most important industrial provinces.<sup>1</sup>

Using this pseudo-Parliament for purposes of revolutionary propaganda, Grigori Petrovsky, Nikolai Shagov and other Bolshevik workers' Deputies from the Duma rostrum constantly reminded people that the working class was strong and powerful and that the day was not far off when the revolution would sweep away the old system. Contributing to *Pravda*, organizing assistance to strikers, addressing workers' audiences at factories and mills, helping to restore underground organizations broken up by the police and to form new ones, and carrying out other Party assignments, the Bolshevik Deputies were strong not in rhetoric, not in being admitted to bourgeois and intellectual salons, but in their links with the masses of workers.

Relying on *Pravda* and on their Duma Deputies, the Bolsheviks secured the ousting of Mensheviks-liquidationists from legal workers' organizations. This happened, for instance, in May 1913 in the metal workers' union. Its newly elected board consisted of 13 Bolsheviks, five Mensheviks and one SR. By the summer of 1914 a Bolshevik stand had been taken by 16 of the 20 trade unions in St. Petersburg and by all 13 trade unions in Moscow. This testified to the fact that the majority of politically conscious and active workers were supporting the Bolsheviks.

No amount of repression could prevent the proletariat rallying round Bolshevik slogans. In 1913 on the anniversary of "Bloody Sunday" 200,000 peo-

---

<sup>1</sup> The overall composition of the 4th Duma was little changed. The Right-wing Octobrists and the Cadets continued to constitute majorities in it. The extreme Left wing remained composed of ten Trudoviks, seven Mensheviks elected not from the workers' curia, and six Bolsheviks.—*Ed.*

ple were on strike and a year later—250,000. On May 1 (April 18), 1914 more than half a million people did not report for work. Two hundred thousand workers went on strike in St. Petersburg alone. Barricades were put up there. News of the strikes reached villages and soldiers' barracks, where there was growing ferment. A new revolutionary upsurge began. But this time it was not destined to grow into a revolution: *on August 1* (July 19), 1914, a war broke out.

The war was unleashed by two groups of imperialist powers—the Central Powers headed by Germany and Austria-Hungary and the Entente Cordiale headed by Britain and France. Russia sided with the latter. The armies and navies of 38 states fought on the fields of Europe, Asia and Africa and in the waters of the Atlantic, Indian and Pacific oceans. Flaring up in Europe, the war soon became a world war. Describing it, Lenin wrote that it had “the clearly defined character of a bourgeois, imperialist and dynastic war. A struggle for markets and for freedom to loot foreign countries, a striving to suppress the revolutionary movement of the proletariat and democracy in the individual countries, a desire to deceive, disunite and slaughter the proletarians of all countries. . . . These are the only real content and significance of the war.”<sup>1</sup>

All the landlord and capitalist parties of Russia urged the people to support the war, claiming it was being waged to save the country from a German invasion. On August 8 (July 26) the State Duma approved the granting of credits to the government for waging hostilities, thus demonstrating the “national unity” of the capitalists and the landlords on issues of imperialist foreign policy.

---

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 21, pp. 15, 16.

"In this struggle we are all at one," said the Cadet leader Milyukov. "We do not lay down conditions and demands."

The granting of credits was opposed by the Social-Democratic Deputies. At that moment it was already known that the German Social-Democrats had voted for war credits, joining the capitalist Deputies, and that on the following day their example had been followed by the Social-Democrats in the Parliaments of France, Britain and Belgium. So at a time when the majority of the Socialist and Social-Democratic parties of Europe had abandoned the stand of internationalist class solidarity and taken the position of a "class truce" and unconditional support for "their own" capitalists, the RSDLP remained loyal to the banner of proletarian internationalism.

On November 1 (October 19), 1914, the RSDLP Central Committee published a manifesto, *War and Russian Social-Democracy*, in which the war was described as an imperialist one, a war of conquest, a predatory war unjust on both sides, and a clear-cut programme of struggle against that war was proclaimed. The opportunist calls for "defence of the fatherland" and "a truce on the home front" were opposed by the Bolsheviks with calls for defeating the Russian government and turning the imperialist war into a civil one.

The Bolshevik Deputies to the State Duma toured the country, speaking at many workers' meetings where they explained the aims and meaning of what was taking place. As might have been expected, they were arrested, brought to trial, found guilty of high treason and condemned to life banishment in Siberia.

The overwhelming majority of the working class supported the Bolsheviks and held firmly to inter-



nationalist positions. But a considerable part of the middle-class sections of the population fell for the chauvinistic propaganda conducted by the landlord and capitalist parties. This could not but influence the positions of the Mensheviks and SRs. The majority of them supported the call for "defence of the fatherland".

Not only the Russian, but also the British and French jingoist, social-chauvinist press launched a slanderous campaign against the Bolsheviki, accusing them of "indifference to the interests of their homeland" and a "lack of patriotism". Rejecting these accusations, Lenin explained how a real socialist should understand patriotism and combine it with internationalism: "Is a sense of national pride alien to us...? Certainly not! We love our language and our country... To us it is most painful to see and feel the outrages, the oppression and the humiliation our fair country suffers at the hands of the tsar's butchers, the nobles and the capitalists. We take pride in the resistance to these outrages put up from our midst, from the Great Russians... We are full of national pride because the Great-Russian nation, *too*, has created a revolutionary class, because it, *too*, has proved capable of providing mankind with great models of the struggle for freedom and socialism..."<sup>1</sup> The Bolsheviki came out, not "against the fatherland" but against the striving to pass off as the fatherland a tsarist Russia, the "prison of nations" in which landlords and capitalists oppressed the working people.

The chauvinist elation in Russia did not last long. In the spring and summer of 1915 tsarist troops suffered a series of defeats and were compel-

---

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 21, p. 103.

led to abandon to the enemy large territories in the west of the country. The heroism of the soldiers could not compensate for the shortage of arms and ammunition and the ineptness of the high command. The defeats shook the machinery of government and the whole of the old order, rousing all classes of the population against it.

In this situation the liberal parties resumed their criticism of the government, demanding the establishment of a cabinet enjoying the "confidence of the country". This time they were better prepared to pursue such a course than ten years before, because the capitalists were now stronger not only economically, but also politically. Their representatives had been admitted to various deliberative bodies and commissions attached to ministries. They dominated various public bodies which had been set up to help the government supply the army and the navy and which to all intents and purposes tried to take over management of the whole national economy.<sup>1</sup>

In June 1915, voicing "patriotic alarm" at the course of the war, the Cadets demanded the formation of a government which "in co-operation with the public" would be capable of ensuring observance of "domestic peace". This demand was supported not only by the other capitalist parties, but also by outspokenly Right-wing ones—some monarchist and bourgeois-nationalist organizations. For the first time since the establishment of political parties in Russia, the more far-sighted of the

---

<sup>1</sup> For instance, the Octobrist leader Alexander Guchkov became Chairman of the *Central Military-Industrial Committee*, Prince Georgi Lvov was appointed head authorized agent of the *All-Russian Zemstvo Union of Assistance to Sick and Wounded Combatants* and the Cadet Andrei Shingaryov became Chairman of the *Naval Commission of the Special Conference on the Defence of the State*.—Ed.

monarchists came out against the policy of the government.<sup>1</sup>

In September 1915 all these groups of Deputies to the State Duma announced the formation of a *Progressive Bloc*. It embraced an absolute majority of the Deputies. They declared they would insist on a modification of the methods of governing the country and, above all, on debarring military men from deciding questions not directly related to the conduct of hostilities.<sup>2</sup> "The country's frame of mind is such that it is terrible to contemplate the immediate future," said the Cadet, Shingaryov. By "the immediate future" he, of course, meant the fate of the autocracy. Thus a paradoxical situation arose in which the capitalists felt cramped by the tsar and yet were afraid to be left without him.

In the meanwhile the autocracy was heading to its downfall: the war had exposed its utter worthlessness. The army and navy were consuming two-thirds of the metal, textiles and bread produced in the country. One-third of the rolling stock, almost all motor vehicles and all the aircraft were working for war needs, which were swallowing up nearly half the national income. The technically backward economy of Russia could not stand this burden.

---

<sup>1</sup> Many years later Vasili Shulgin was to recall: "The terrible sum according to which every enemy put out of action cost us the lives of two soldiers shows how lavishly Russian cannon fodder was expended. This sum alone was an indictment of the government. . ."

<sup>2</sup> Back in 1905 the Cadets have thought it necessary to demand the formation of a government accountable to Parliament. Now they took a step back, agreeing to limit themselves to "forming a united government from persons who enjoy the confidence of the country and who have agreed with the legislative institutions on the earliest possible implementation of a definite programme".

The railways proved to be particularly vulnerable. They were quite unable to cope with transportation of the wounded, food supplies, fuel and raw material. There was a sharp decrease in the mining of coal and the output of pig iron and steel.

The proletariat of Russia was ever more actively voicing its protest against the autocracy and the oppression of capitalists and landlords, opposing tsarism immeasurably more resolutely and consistently than all the other classes did. In 1916 the number of strikers reached an impressive figure of more than a million.

All this could not but affect the mood of the more than 8-million-strong Russian army. The military defeats, the vast loss of human lives (no fewer than three million), the acute shortage of armaments (the Russian army had half as many field guns and two-thirds fewer heavy guns than the German army), ammunition, equipment and food-stuffs had strongly undermined its fighting ability and morale. Its commanding officers had also considerably changed. The officer corps, in the past almost exclusively composed of members of the nobility, and now decimated in battle, was increasingly diluted with young people from capitalist and middle-class sections and the intelligentsia.

Tsarism attempted to save the situation. But the methods it resorted to were primitive and senseless: suppression by the military and the police of all manifestations of the revolutionary and democratic movement.

The increasingly rapid change of governments was a sure sign of the autocracy's incapacity. Each new government was even more impotent than the previous one.

"We have reached the limit," Shulgin exclaimed,

“and so we will fight the government until it goes... This struggle is the only means of preventing what perhaps should be feared most of all—preventing anarchy and lack of government.”<sup>1</sup>

But now nothing and nobody could prevent a new revolution. In January 1917 some 250,000 workers were on strike in the country and in February already 400,000. The situation became extremely tense. Any outbreak of discontent by the masses could grow into open action against the government.

March 8 (February 23) was *International Women's Day*. Responding to the call of the Social-Democrats, Russian women workers had already twice observed it before the war. Now too the St. Petersburg Committee of the Bolsheviks called for the day to be marked by political meetings. The call fell on fertile soil: 128,000 people downed tools at 49 factories and mills in Petrograd,<sup>2</sup> and 22,000 of them took part in mass street meetings which developed into demonstrations. They were joined by 8,000 women. Posters appeared demanding “We want bread!”, “Down with war!”, “Down with the autocracy!”

On the same day Duma Deputies, while accusing the government of the “insane destruction of state power”, at the same time begged it “not to quarrel with the people” and with “legislative institutions” and “to pursue a sound, statesmanlike and sensible policy”.

Late in the evening the events of the day were discussed by representatives of the *Russian Bureau of the Central Committee*<sup>3</sup>, the *St. Petersburg*

---

<sup>1</sup> By “anarchy and lack of government” Shulgin meant revolution.—*Ed.*

<sup>2</sup> In 1915 St. Petersburg was renamed Petrograd.—*Ed.*

<sup>3</sup> Members of the CC RSDLP who stayed in Russia.—*Ed.*

*Committee*<sup>1</sup> and some *district committees of the Bolsheviks* (the *Bolshevik Directing Centre*.) It was decided to urge the workers of enterprises still operating to join the strike and to call an anti-war demonstration in the centre of Petrograd, in its main thoroughfare, Nevski Prospekt. They also asked members of the Bolshevik Party to strengthen contacts with the soldiers of the Petrograd garrison.

On March 9 (February 24) already 214,000 employees at 224 enterprises—more than half the workers in the capital—were on strike. Breaking through police cordons, about 28,000 of them marched in 13 columns from the suburbs to Nevski Prospekt, where troops and police posses met them. It proved impossible to organize a mass procession to the building where the Duma was in session.

On March 10 (February 25) the strike became virtually a general one—305,000 workers from 421 enterprises, or 78 per cent of all the city's workers, took part in it. Twelve mass columns (a total of about 100,000 people), headed by Bolsheviks<sup>2</sup>, again went to the centre of the city, being joined on the way by a 3,000-strong column of students. There were fierce clashes with police and troops, leading to the first casualties. In the evening Nicholas II wired from General Headquarters: "I command that the disorders in the capital be stopped not later than tomorrow." At that time reports came to the St. Petersburg Committee from the city districts that the workers were resolved to end the

---

<sup>1</sup> The Petrograd Committee since November 1917.—*Ed.*

<sup>2</sup> The Mensheviks limited themselves to the role of passive onlookers and did not take the risk of heading even one column of workers. They declared themselves in favour of ending the general strike.—*Ed.*

general strike "only upon achieving victory over the tsarist government".

On March 11 (February 26) demonstrations and clashes with the troops were resumed with renewed force. The number of killed and wounded exceeded 200. At the same time hundreds of soldiers were already refusing to fire at demonstrators. Duma Chairman Mikhail Rodzyanko, an Octobrist, wired to the tsar: "The situation is serious. There is anarchy in the capital. It is necessary immediately to instruct a person enjoying the confidence of the country to form a new government." There was an unbridgeable gulf between the political manoeuvres of the capitalists and the consistent revolutionary struggle of the proletariat.

Late in the evening the Bolshevik Directing Centre decided to turn the general strike into an armed uprising, disarming the police, seizing arms depots and acting jointly with insurgent soldiers.

On March 12 (February 27) the armed uprising began. The workers seized arms depots and began to arm themselves. They were joined by soldiers. In the morning there were 10,000 of them, in the afternoon—25,000 and towards evening—67,000.<sup>1</sup> Almost the entire city found itself in their hands. At many enterprises elections to a *Soviet of Workers' Deputies* began.

On the morning of that day the "representatives of the people", the Duma Deputies, having learned that the tsar had ordered Duma sessions to end, rejected a proposal that they disobey the tsar's orders and adopted a wait-and-see attitude. But the news that workers' Deputies had begun to assemble in the other wing of the same building in-

---

<sup>1</sup> All in all more than 20 army units consisting of 100,000 soldiers were in Petrograd at that time. — *Ed.*

duced them to elect a *Provisional Committee of Members of the State Duma* "for restoring order and for contacts with officials and institutions". In their view "this step had the advantage of satisfying the requirements of the moment without deciding anything for the future".

The request to the tsar to cancel his order dissolving the Duma and to appoint a responsible government was supported by the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Prince Nikolai Golitsyn, who declared the government could not cope with the situation. But the tsar rejected all these "encroachments" on his autocratic rights, deciding to deal with the revolutionary people and the opposition summarily.

On the same day the first meeting of the *Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies* began. It was attended by representatives of factories, mills and regiments. There were few Bolsheviks among them, which was explained, above all, by the fact that on that day they were not at enterprises and in barracks but heading workers and soldiers engaged in street fighting, while electoral meetings were being addressed by Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries who were elected Deputies, because the majority of the soldiers were peasants, only wearing greatcoats, and the majority of the peasants at that time supported the "peasant" parties and, above all, the SRs. These Deputies were elected by the mass of workers and peasants who were not yet taking part in direct armed actions. Such a political composition of the Soviet could not but influence its further activities.

Nevertheless, its first resolutions<sup>1</sup> already show-

---

<sup>1</sup> The first meeting elected an *Executive Committee* and *military* and *food commissions*, and supported the workers' initiative for forming a militia (the *Red Guards*).—Ed.



ed that, because it enjoyed the support of the insurgent workers and soldiers and concentrated real power in its hands, the Petrograd Soviet could become the revolutionary organ of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry, it could become their government.

To cramp the Soviet, the Duma Deputies formed their own military commission and attempted to make the corresponding commission of the Soviet subordinate to it.

On the very next morning they declared: "At the present moment there is a sole authority which all should obey. It is the Provisional Committee of the State Duma."

On that day Petrograd passed completely into the hands of the insurgents. Ministers of the tsarist government were arrested. The revolution in the capital won in every respect. The Provisional Committee immediately issued an order demanding that the soldiers return to their barracks forthwith and obey the orders of their officers. This order roused deep indignation among the garrison. In reply the Petrograd Soviet issued its own orders giving elected soldiers' committees powers of political control over their commanding officers. So it came about that in its bid to throw back the revolution the Duma achieved the opposite—consolidation of the authority of the Petrograd Soviet.

Yet the leaders of the capitalists still tried to wrest victory from the people, persuade the tsar to preserve the monarchy by abdicating in favour of his son. But the Petrograd Soviet prevented their going to the tsar by refusing to provide them with a train to take them to General Headquarters.

Then the Central Committee of the Cadet Party found it necessary urgently to go over the tsar's

head and settle the question of power by getting the Provisional Committee of the Duma to form a *Provisional Government*. But the Provisional Committee, which had no real power, was compelled to enter into negotiations with the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet. The latter, while possessing real power and a real possibility of becoming the sole effective government, consented to the formation of a Provisional Government by the Duma. In other words, it ceded official state power to the capitalists and their parties. This happened because the Petrograd Soviet was headed by Mensheviks and SRs.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, it became a peculiar feature of the second Russian Revolution, the February<sup>2</sup> Revolution, that after overthrowing the autocracy<sup>3</sup> it gave power at once to *two dictatorships*—that of the *workers and peasants* and that of the *capitalists*. Official state power passed to the hands of the capitalist Provisional Government, but the latter had to coordinate its decisions with the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.

---

<sup>1</sup> Two weeks later, addressing the Deputies of the Petrograd Soviet, Menshevik leader Irakli Tsereteli justified this anti-democratic decision thus: "You have realized that a bourgeois revolution is being accomplished, that it constitutes a stage of the social revolution, that it must in the first place consolidate itself at this stage. You have realized that the time is not yet ripe for accomplishing the ultimate tasks of the proletariat, the class tasks, which have not yet been accomplished anywhere."

<sup>2</sup> It was called the February Revolution because according to the old calendar the day of the armed uprising, March 12, 1917, was February 27.—*Ed.*

<sup>3</sup> Late in the evening of March 15 Nicholas II signed his abdication in favour of his younger brother Mikhail, who the next day refused to accept the crown "pending the decision of a Constituent Assembly".—*Ed.*

The capitalists strove to get rid of this control and to take all power into their own hands. But the workers' and peasants' trust in the capitalists could not last long. Having accomplished a revolution, they hoped to obtain *peace, land, bread and freedom*, but the capitalists had no intention of satisfying these demands. On the contrary, they wanted to continue the war not only in order to realize their aggressive plans but also in order to put an end to *dual power*. Nor did they want to settle the agrarian question. It would have been unprofitable for them to hand over the land to the peasants free of charge, because by that time most of the landowners' lands had been mortgaged at banks and confiscation of the land would mean the capitalists' losing many billion roubles. The capitalist monopolies did not want to give up the benefits accruing to them from the unchallenged sway of the Russian administration in the outlying colonial regions of the country.

At the same time, it had become much more difficult for the capitalists to pursue their policy. The February Revolution had abolished the system of tsarist arbitrary rule and had given the people hard-won political freedom. Moreover, it had given them weapons. The capitalists could not as yet resort to violence. But they still had another method of nullifying the conquests of the people and taking all power for themselves. This method had been best worked out by the capitalists in Western Europe and North America who had been "taught lessons" by several revolutions and mass revolutionary movements. It was the method of deception, flattery, phrasemongering, countless promises, paltry handouts, concessions on unimportant issues and the preservation of what was really important.

This was the method the Russian bourgeoisie tried to adopt.<sup>1</sup>

Did favourable conditions for this exist? Yes, they did. Tens of millions of people with absolutely no experience of politics had suddenly been drawn into political activity. They were, in the main, the lower middle class and peasants, who formed the bulk of the population. For some time a gigantic wave of political activity by the middle class literally overwhelmed the proletariat not only numerically, but also ideologically. Middle-class (petty-bourgeois) views on politics infected and carried away masses of workers.

All this determined the party composition of the Petrograd and most other Soviets, the predominance of Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries in them.

## **"All Power to the Soviets!"**

On April 16 (3), 1917, Lenin returned home from living abroad, together with a group of other Bolsheviks. At the very first station after crossing the border—Beloostrov—he was met by representatives of the RSDLP Petrograd Committee and workers of the nearby Sestroretsk plant. There was a meeting at which Lenin made a short speech, describing the importance of the February bourgeois-

---

<sup>1</sup> The downfall of the autocracy also spelled the demise not only of the extreme Right-wing landlords' parties but also of more moderate ones. The policy of the capitalists to come to terms with tsarism and the landlords also fell through. Hence the break-up of the Union of the October 17, which represented such a policy. The Cadets, who had proved to be more flexible in defending the interests of the capitalists, declared themselves to be republicans. At that time they became the main party of the Russian capitalists. *Ed.*

democratic revolution as a stepping-stone to the socialist revolution. An hour later the train carrying the leader of the working class arrived at the Finland Railway Station in Petrograd. On the platform Lenin was greeted by a guard of honour of soldiers and sailors and a military band played the *Marseillaise*. After hearing the guard report he addressed them with a call: "*Long live the socialist revolution!*"

In the square in front of the station, floodlit by searchlights lighting up hundreds of banners and tens of thousands of people who had come to meet the leader of the Bolsheviks, Lenin mounted an armoured car which started to move and made a short speech ending with the same call: "Long live the socialist revolution!"

On the next day, April 17 (4), Lenin addressed Bolshevik activists with the points of a programme in which he set out his strategic course for the bourgeois-democratic revolution passing into a socialist one. These came to be called the *April Theses*. "The specific feature of the present situation in Russia," Lenin noted, "is that the country is *passing* from the first stage of the revolution—which, owing to the insufficient class-consciousness and organization of the proletariat, placed power in the hands of the bourgeoisie—to its *second* stage, which must place power in the hands of the proletariat and the poorest sections of the peasants."<sup>1</sup>

But this transition could not be accomplished by the immediate overthrow of the capitalist Provisional Government. At a time when the latter was unable to resort to violence and could govern only by relying on the Soviets, that is to say, on the trust the masses placed in them, any call for its

---

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 24, p. 22.

immediate overthrow would be just an empty phrase or a gamble. "We must base ourselves only on the political consciousness of the masses,"<sup>1</sup> the leader of the Bolsheviks stressed.

By putting forward the slogan "*All power to the Soviets!*" Lenin set the Party and the working class on a course of peaceful development of the revolution, of propaganda and agitation, the need patiently, systematically and persistently to explain the erroneousness of the tactics of the middle-class Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks. This slogan meant the masses had to be convinced of the correctness of the case of the Bolsheviks and it envisaged the peaceful transition of all power to the Soviets after the masses had ceased to trust the Provisional Government and said: "Enough!"

Subsequent events showed how correctly Lenin assessed the situation and the likely further course of the revolution.

On May 1 (April 18) the Cadet leader Milyukov, Minister for Foreign Affairs in the Provisional Government, sent a Note to the Western Allies in which he declared Russia would wage the war "to a victorious conclusion" and would honour all the obligations the tsar had assumed in his time. This step by the capitalists made many people re-assess the calls for "revolutionary" defence and shed their illusions that the overthrow of tsarism had radically altered the nature of the war, making it a war in defence of the revolution.

Indignant workers and soldiers spontaneously took to the streets with slogans: "Down with the war! All power to the Soviets! Down with the bourgeoisie!" A 100,000-strong demonstration headed by Bolsheviks clashed with a counter-demonstration

---

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 36, p. 436.

organized by the Cadets to manifest the capitalists' support for the Provisional Government. Class rose against a class.

A political crisis erupted, revealing the bankruptcy of the policy of the Petrograd Soviet exercising "control" over the Provisional Government. The Soviet could—and Lenin and the Bolsheviks considered that it must—take power into its own hands. But it failed to do so. Contenting itself with the resignation of Milyukov, it delegated two SR leaders (Chernov and Kerensky) and two Menshevik leaders (Tsereteli and Skobelev) <sup>1</sup>.

The RSDLP Central Committee denounced the tactics of coming to terms with the capitalists and called on the workers and peasants to re-elect their Deputies, to recall the Menshevik and SR "conciliationists" from the Soviets.

In June 1917 the *First All-Russia Congress of Soviets* was held. The Bolsheviks were still in a minority in it—there were just over 100 of them as against 280 Mensheviks and 285 SRs. But they persistently exposed the imperialist character of the war and the peril of coming to terms with the capitalists. Justifying the entry of Mensheviks and SRs into the coalition government, Tsereteli, just appointed minister in the Provisional Government, declared: "At the present moment there is no political party in Russia which would say: 'Give us power, go away, we shall take your place.'" To this Lenin replied from his seat in the hall: "There is

---

<sup>1</sup> This tactic was called by Lenin "a great withdrawal of the Menshevik and Narodnik leaders *from* the revolution". (*Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 60.) With the greatest perspicacity Lenin divined the role to be played in the further destiny of these parties by their becoming hostages of capitalism: "Chernov, Tsereteli and Co. have killed themselves and their parties—the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries—politically." (*Collected Works*, Vol. 24, p. 91.)

such a party!" Taking the floor, he continued: "I reply: 'Yes, there is... Our Party certainly... is ready to take over full power at any moment.'" <sup>1</sup>

Lenin stressed that the issue posed itself only in this way: to go forward or to go back. One should not stay out at a revolutionary time, especially when such a favourable situation for the transition of power to the Soviets had arisen. <sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile the continuance of the war, economic dislocation and the rise in the cost of living increased dissatisfaction with the policy of the Provisional Government. This dissatisfaction manifested itself most vividly during the demonstration called by the congress for July 1. Its organizers—the conciliatory parties—intended it to become a demonstration of support for the Provisional Government. Up to 500,000 people took to the streets of Petrograd. The overwhelming majority—400,000—marched behind banners and posters with Bolshevik slogans: "Down with the war!", "Down with the capitalist-ministers!", "All power to the Soviets!"

A new—the second—political crisis began. But its development was hindered by the military offensive at the front launched on the order of the Provisional Government. The offensive was begun to buttress the government's position and to satisfy the Allies' demands that the Russian forces should step up its activities. In the event of success the capitalists hoped to take all power into their own

---

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> "You have gone through 1905 and 1917", he said. "You know that revolution is not made to order, that revolutions in other countries were made by the hard and bloody method of insurrection, and in Russia there is no group, no class, that would resist the power of the Soviets. In Russia, this revolution can, by way of exception, be a peaceful one." (*Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 23.)



hands, in the event of failure—to heap all the blame for the collapse of the army onto the revolutionary activities of the Bolsheviks and to demand repressive measures against them. The weariness of the soldiers, their failure to see any point in continuing the slaughter, the shortage of ammunition and guns—all this predetermined the failure of the offensive.

A third political crisis erupted. Then the forces of counter-revolution began to implement the plan they had prepared for such an occasion: to put blame on the Bolsheviks for the setbacks at the front. On July 15 (2) the Cadets announced their withdrawal from the Provisional Government. They calculated that the middle-class parties would be afraid to remain in power alone and would accept the terms of the capitalists, namely, to disarm the revolutionary troops (the soldiers of the Petrograd garrison and the sailors of the Baltic Fleet) and the workers, to deprive the Soviets of the right of control over the government, and to introduce capital punishment for troops on active service.

But this manoeuvre fell through: the soldiers of the seven regiments billeted in Petrograd began a spontaneous armed demonstration under the slogan "Down with the capitalist ministers!" They were joined by revolutionary sailors and workers from many factories.

The Bolsheviks warned against such a premature step: it was now possible to take power in Petrograd, but it would prove impossible to keep holding on to it, because the army and the provinces still backed the conciliators (the Mensheviks and SRs) and would not support the overthrow of the Provisional Government. Therefore an isolated action in the capital would only make it easier for the forces of reaction to crush the revolutionary

vanguard. But it proved impossible to hold back the masses. So the RSDLP Central Committee decided to lead the movement so as to give it a peaceful and organized character.

On July 17 (4), 1917 half a million workers, soldiers and sailors took part in a huge procession through the streets of Petrograd. Its representatives came to the *Central Executive Committee (CEC)* which had just been elected at the All-Russia Congress of Soviets and invited it to take all power, declaring: "We trust the Soviet, but not those whom the Soviet trusts."

There was hesitation in the SR-Menshevik leadership of the CEC. Not only the Bolsheviks, but also some representatives of middle-class parties (for instance, the groups of Menshevik-Internationalists and the Left wing of the SRs) spoke in favour of taking power, but the majority rejected the demand of the masses and called the demonstration itself a "Bolshevik conspiracy". With CEC approval martial law was declared in Petrograd and troops loyal to the government were hastily recalled from the front. With the connivance of the SR-Menshevik leadership of the Soviet, the government raided the premises of the RSDLP Central Committee and the editorial office and printshop of the Bolshevik newspaper *Pravda*.

At the end of July a new coalition Provisional Government was formed. It was headed by the SR, Alexander Kerensky, but the decisive role was played in it by the Cadets. The frightened leaders of the CEC of the Soviet declared it to be the "government of salvation of the revolution" and recognized its "unlimited powers and unlimited authority". Using its powers, the government disbanded all the regiments of the Petrograd garrison, introduced capital punishment at the front, began to

disarm Petrograd workers and issued an order for the arrest of the leaders of the Bolshevik Party<sup>1</sup>. "The counter-revolution has become organized and consolidated," Lenin stated, "and has actually taken state power into its own hands."<sup>2</sup> Dual power was over. By legalizing the disarming of revolutionary regiments and workers the Soviets had deprived themselves of any real power. So there was now no hope for the peaceful course of the revolution. It was already impossible to take power by peaceful means, Lenin explained. Power could only be won through resolute struggle. But this was on condition the masses of the people turned their backs on the SR and Menshevik parties which had betrayed the cause of the revolution.<sup>3</sup> For this reason he thought immediate action against the government would be premature. A resolute assault would be possible only if there was a fresh revolutionary upsurge among the broadest sections of the people.

In accordance with the changed circumstances the *6th Congress of the RSDLP (Bolsheviks)*<sup>4</sup>, held semi-legally under the protection of armed workers in Petrograd in August 1917, worked out new tactics. It set the course of strengthening the alliance between the proletariat and the poorest peasants and of preparing an armed uprising. In this connection it became a top-priority task to expose the middle-

---

<sup>1</sup> An order was issued to find and detain Lenin at all costs. A special detachment was organized for this purpose and its commander was instructed to shoot the leader of the Bolsheviks on the spot. Taking all this into account, the RSDLP Central Committee instructed Lenin to go into hiding, to go underground.—*Ed.*

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 178.

<sup>3</sup> See *Ibid.*, p. 188.

<sup>4</sup> At that time the Bolshevik Party had 240,000 members.—*Ed.*

class parties of the SRs and Mensheviks, which had played and were continuing to play the role of accomplices of the capitalist forces of counter-revolution.

Meanwhile there was growing economic dislocation in the country, the cost of living continued to rise and famine was imminent. Talk began in capitalist circles of the need to strangle the revolution with the "gaunt hand of hunger" and an open military dictatorship. The Cadets demanded the establishment of a "strong government". Within the government they put pressure on the Socialist ministers, accusing them of spinelessness. In fact it was a course heading for a *coup d'etat*. Milyukov, for instance, at a meeting of the Cadet Central Committee spoke of the inevitability of a "surgical operation". The headquarters of General Lavr Kornilov, Supreme Commander-in-Chief, in the city of Mogilev became the centre for preparing a revolt.

On September 3 (August 21) Russian troops had to leave Riga in the Baltic region, a major industrial centre. Taking advantage of this, Kornilov demanded that all military and civilian power be transferred to him and he moved a cavalry corps towards Petrograd. The Cadet ministers resigned on September 9 (August 27) as a token of solidarity with him.<sup>1</sup>

On the same day the Bolsheviks called on the workers and soldiers of Petrograd to rebuff Kornilov. Altogether 15,000 workers joined detachments of workers' militia—the Red Guards. Together with revolutionary soldiers and sailors they moved to meet the rebel troops, explained the situation to them and halted their advance.

---

<sup>1</sup> One of them, Fyodor Kokoshkin, unequivocally declared: "In our opinion a coalition government cannot exist at present."

On September 13 (August 31) the Kornilov revolt was crushed and the general himself was arrested. The influence of the Cadets plummeted. Their open collusion with Kornilov also discredited in the eyes of the masses the idea of an agreement between middle-class and capitalist parties, an idea which the Bolsheviks had opposed from the very beginning. This drastically changed the balance of forces in the Soviets.<sup>1</sup> The Petrograd Soviet immediately passed a resolution moved by the Bolsheviks condemning the coalition with the capitalist parties and demanding the formation of a government of representatives of the revolutionary proletariat and peasantry. The Mensheviks were compelled to declare that "participation of members of the Cadet Party in the Provisional Government is at present on no account permissible". Despite the opposition of Kerensky, who pressed for a new agreement with the Cadets, a similar decision was taken by the SRs too.

All this enabled Lenin to draw the conclusion that the possibility of a peaceful transition of power to the Soviets had again presented itself. He suggested a voluntary compromise with the Mensheviks and SRs, calling upon them to form a government, accountable to the Soviets, to implement the programme which the latter had promised, but not implemented—peace, land to peasants, bread, freedom, an eight-hour day, control over the capitalists, and so on. For the sake of the peaceful course of the revolution (an opportunity that is extremely rare in history and therefore an exceptionally valuable one), and only for the sake of it, Lenin con-

---

<sup>1</sup> Milyukov later admitted: "Now the trumps were in the hands of the Bolsheviks, and the political pendulum swung sharply to the Left."

sidered the Bolsheviks, who supported revolutionary methods, could and should agree to such a compromise. "Perhaps this is *already* impossible? Perhaps. But if there is even one chance in a hundred, the attempt at realizing this opportunity is still worth while."<sup>1</sup>

Subsequent developments showed that his doubts were well-founded. Vacillating constantly between the proletariat and the big capitalists, the political leaders of the middle class were more afraid of the revolutionary consistency of the former than the counter-revolutionary consistency of the latter. So they again swung to the Right. By the votes of the Mensheviks and SRs the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets rejected the suggestion made by the Bolsheviks.<sup>2</sup>

But whereas in July the sharp turn of the Mensheviks and SRs to the Right reflected a corresponding turn in the attitude of the lower middle class, now this was not the case. The latter was increasingly turning to the Left. As a result a political vacuum arose between it and its parties. The political sympathies of the mass of the lower middle class (in the first place the soldiers and, consequently, the peasants) gradually shifted to the proletariat and its Party, the Bolsheviks. This found expression in the fact that on September 18 the Moscow Soviet and in the next two weeks another 80 Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies adopted *Bolshevik resolutions on the issue of state power. A campaign for new elections to the Soviets*

---

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 307.

<sup>2</sup> This compelled Lenin to write: "...Perhaps it is already too late to offer a compromise... Yes, to all appearances, the days when by chance the path of peaceful development became possible have *already* passed." (*Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 310.)

began in the provinces. As a result the Bolsheviks won the majority of Soviets, including those of Petrograd and Moscow. The slogan "All power to the Soviets!" became the slogan of the overwhelming majority of the population of Russia.

## Why the Bolsheviks Won

The marked shift of the support of the broad masses of working people from the Mensheviks and SRs to the Bolsheviks radically changed the relative strength of these parties. The superiority of the Bolsheviks in the ideological field had been obvious even before this: they had remained true to the ideas of socialism and fought persistently for the interests of the working people. At the same time the unity and cohesion of their ranks was growing.

As for the Mensheviks and SRs, they had betrayed socialism. There was a tremendous gap between their words and deeds. But in one respect they had initially enjoyed a certain advantage, being supported by the peasants, the majority of soldiers and a considerable part of the workers. In September 1917, however, this advantage evaporated.<sup>1</sup>

The country was experiencing a general crisis. The economy was in decline. The ruling circles could not prevent imminent catastrophe. On the contrary, they were rapidly bringing it nearer by their

---

<sup>1</sup> Being unable to question the correctness of the theory and policy of the Bolsheviks or to justify their own conciliatory line, the Mensheviks and SRs adduced what seemed the most convincing argument: their mass support. For instance, the Menshevik Minister of Labour said: "We shall prefer to err together with revolutionary democracy than to be right, but without it."

policy. The masses of the people did not want to live in the old way and to tolerate the rule of the capitalists any longer.

Workers began to oust the managements at industrial enterprises, to arrest directors and managers. Ever more persistently they demanded that the Soviets take power into their own hands. Lenin noted: "We have the following of the majority of a *class*, the vanguard of the revolution, the vanguard of the people, which is capable of carrying the masses with it."<sup>1</sup>

Soldiers refused to continue the war. They ousted reactionary officers and elected in their place others who enjoyed their confidence. On two of the three fronts—those nearest to Petrograd (the Northern) and to Moscow (the Western), the majority of the soldiers followed the Bolsheviks. The Bolsheviks also had the full support of the sailors of the Baltic Fleet and the overwhelming majority of the garrisons in the rear.

Having waited in vain for their SR party to carry out an agrarian reform, peasants drove away landowners, seized land and implements, divided them among themselves and burned down manor-houses. In this way the peasant movement was developing into a rebellion which spread to half the provinces in Russia.

There was also a change in the nature of the movement of the oppressed nations. Despite the resistance of the local capitalist and nationalist parties and organizations, their struggle merged into a single front with the movement of the Russian workers, soldiers and peasants.

The general crisis intensified disagreements, discord and confusion at the top. Victor Chernov, who

---

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 24.



in his four months as Minister of Agriculture had been unable to do anything to implement the agrarian part of the SR's programme, and War Minister General Alexander Verkhovsky, an advocate of Russia's withdrawal from the war and of the demobilization of the "sick" army, had to leave the Provisional Government. The Cadets continued to demand an open military dictatorship.

Thus there arose exceptionally favourable conditions for the working class to take power into its own hands. At the end of September 1917 Lenin, who was living illegally in Finland, hiding from the sleuths of the Provisional Government, wrote a letter to the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party in which he posed very firmly the question of an uprising and the overthrow of the Provisional Government.

At the same time he sent the Central Committee another letter, "*Marxism and Insurrection*", restating the three indispensable conditions for the success of an uprising: (1) it had to rely, not upon conspiracy or on a party, but on the advanced class; (2) it had to rely upon a revolutionary upsurge of the people; (3) it had to take place at a turning-point when the activity of the advanced ranks of the people was at its height and when the vacillations in the ranks of the enemy and in the ranks of the weak, half-hearted and irresolute friends of the revolution were greatest. All these conditions were present. It was now necessary, without losing any time, to organize a headquarters, to distribute forces and, correctly choosing the moment for the start of the uprising, move the most reliable of the forces to the most important points.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, pp. 22-27.

On October 14 (1) Lenin wrote and sent for publication the article "*Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?*" The issue of power was being actively discussed at the time in the capitalist and middle-class press. Some authors contended that the Bolsheviks would not "dare" to take power alone, without the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries. Others admitted that power was actually on the point of passing into the hands of the Bolsheviks. But in their view workers would not be able to govern the country or run public life without the capitalists, let alone against the capitalists.

Such discussions pursued a very precise aim, that of intimidating the proletariat and its vanguard. Replying to these points Lenin refuted the inventions of the scaremongers and inspired with confidence those whom the latter wanted to scare. Analyzing the balance of class forces in the country, he stressed that the lasting victory of the working class was now assured by the fact that all the honest and vital elements of all classes of society were on its side, that it had the sympathy and support of an absolute majority of the people and above all of the lower middle-class, the peasantry.<sup>1</sup>

True, Lenin realized that alone the workers would be unable to take over and make the state administrative machinery function. The old state machinery had to be smashed completely and replaced by a new one, all the more because the revolutionary creative work of the masses had brought to life embryos of the new machinery in the shape of the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants'

---

<sup>1</sup> "It is difficult to imagine that in a capitalist country the proletariat should be so little isolated from the petty bourgeoisie—and, mark you, in a revolution *against the bourgeoisie*—as the proletariat now is in Russia," Lenin noted. (*Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 97.)

Deputies. "...Russia has been governed by 130,000 landowners, who have perpetrated endless violence against 150,000,000 people... Yet we are told that the 240,000 members of the Bolshevik Party will not be able to govern Russia, govern her in the interests of the poor and against the rich."<sup>1</sup> Behind these 240,000 Bolsheviks stood millions, from whom a state apparatus devoted ideologically to socialism would be created.<sup>2</sup>

He said it would be much more difficult for the victorious proletariat to conduct very accurate and honest nationwide stocktaking of products and control over their production and distribution. But the existing apparatus of economic stocktaking and regulation (banks, syndicates, trusts, and so on) would help overcome this difficulty. There the actual work of registering, calculating, stocktaking and control was done by office workers the position of most of whom differed little from that of proletarians and semi-proletarians. Such were the main propositions of Lenin's article "Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?"

On October 23 (10), 1917, Lenin who was still working in hiding, but already now in Petrograd, took part in a meeting of the RSDLP Central Committee for the first time since the July events, and addressed it: "Politically, the situation is fully ripe for taking power... We must speak of the technical aspect. That is the crux of the matter."<sup>3</sup> It was this spirit which pervaded the resolution he draft-

---

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 111.

<sup>2</sup> Lenin agreed that far from everybody was capable of joining immediately in governing the state. Yet it was necessary to be rid of the prejudice that governing the state was the privilege of an elite. (See, for instance, V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 101.)

<sup>3</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, pp. 188-189.

ed: "Considering... that an armed uprising is inevitable, and that the time for it is fully ripe, the Central Committee instructs all Party organizations to be guided accordingly, and to discuss and decide all practical questions... from this point of view." <sup>1</sup>

Lenin read out this resolution again at an enlarged meeting of the Central Committee on October 29 (16), 1917. This is how he explained it: "If the Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary parties were to break with their policy of conciliation, a compromise with them could be proposed. The proposal had been made but those parties had... rejected the compromise. On the other hand, by that time it had become definitely clear that the masses were following the Bolsheviks... The position was clear—either Kornilov's dictatorship or the dictatorship of the proletariat and the poorer strata of the peasantry... The masses had their trust in the Bolsheviks and demanded deeds from them and not words, a decisive policy both in the struggle against the war and in the struggle against economic ruin." <sup>2</sup>

The majority agreed with Lenin. On his proposal a decision was taken fully to support the Central Committee resolution and to call on all Party organizations and all workers and soldiers "to make all-round, energetic preparations for an armed uprising and to support the centre set up for that purpose by the Central Committee; the meeting expresses its complete confidence that the Central Committee and the Soviet will indicate in good time the favourable moment and the most appropriate methods of attack" <sup>3</sup>.

Then the members of the Central Committee

---

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 190.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 191-92.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 193-94.

elected a *Military Revolutionary Party Centre* (Yakov Sverdlov, Joseph Stalin, Andrei Bubnov, Moisei Uritsky and Felix Dzerzhinsky) which became a part and the leading core of the *Military Revolutionary Committee* under the Petrograd Soviet and made it the headquarters of the uprising.

Although the uprising was prepared in secrecy, the Provisional Government was forewarned and immediately took appropriate measures.<sup>1</sup> All street meetings and demonstrations were prohibited. The Commander of the Petrograd Military District ordered all army unit commanders to arrest persons coming to the barracks and calling for an armed uprising. The Minister of Justice again ordered Lenin's arrest. Kerensky, the head of the Provisional Government, summoned counter-revolutionary troops to Petrograd (it was the very same cavalry corps which Kornilov had sent to Petrograd two months ago to depose Kerensky himself). Finally, in order to give the Provisional Government time to make better preparations for crushing a possible uprising, the SR-Menshevik CEC of the Soviets postponed the next regular convocation of the All-Russia Congress of Soviets from November 2 to 7 (from October 20 to 25).

In reply the Military Revolutionary Committee (MRC) of the Petrograd Soviet resolved that all units of the capital's garrison obey only those orders which bore its signature and seal. At the same time

---

<sup>1</sup> On October 30 a Menshevik newspaper printed the text of an interview with Central Committee member Lev Kamenev, who disclosed the plan of the Central Committee and declared that he and another member, Grigori Zinovyev, disagreed with this plan. By making it public they gave away to the enemies the secret decision. Demanding the expulsion of both from the Party, Lenin wrote to the Central Committee about "the utter baseness, the real treachery of these two individuals". (*Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 225.)

it appointed commissars to all barracks, to the headquarters of the Petrograd Military District and to all communication centres and railway stations.

Seeking to forestall the uprising, the Provisional Government passed to the offensive: it decided to ban Bolshevik newspapers and to close their printshop. Early in the morning of November 6 (October 24) a detachment of officer cadets arrived at the printshop and sealed it. On instructions from the MRC, however, revolutionary soldiers and members of the workers' Red Guards drove the cadets away. In the late afternoon of the same day the cadets again tried to attack the printshop and to raise the bridges linking the centre of the city with the working-class suburbs. On learning about this, Lenin, who was at that time staying at a secret address in one of these suburbs, wrote a note to the Central Committee asking permission to come to the Smolny Institute, the residence of the Petrograd Soviet and its MRC, where the RSDLP (B) Central Committee was then meeting.

On the evening of the same day he wrote to Central Committee members: "The situation is critical in the extreme. In fact it is now absolutely clear that to delay the uprising would be fatal. With all my might I urge comrades to realize that everything now hangs by a thread; that we are confronted by problems which are not to be solved by conferences or congresses (even congresses of Soviets), but exclusively by peoples, by the masses, by the struggle of the armed people." And Lenin concluded: "History will not forgive revolutionaries for procrastinating when they could be victorious today (and they certainly will be victorious today), while they risk losing much tomorrow, in fact, they risk losing everything."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, pp. 234-235.

The night was drawing near and there was still no news from the Smolny Institute. So Lenin went there and took direct guidance of the uprising into his own hands.

By the morning of November 7 (October 25), the Red Guards, sailors and soldiers had seized the bridges across the Neva, the telegraph office, the central telephone exchange, the radio station and the railway stations, had confined the officer cadets to most of the military schools and had surrounded the Winter Palace with the Provisional Government inside it.<sup>1</sup>

At 10 a.m. the address "*To the Citizens of Russia!*" was transmitted by radio and telegraph. It stated that the Provisional Government had been deposed and that state power had passed into the hands of the Military Revolutionary Committee. "The cause for which the people have fought, namely, the immediate offer of a democratic peace, the abolition of landed proprietorship, workers' control over production, and the establishment of Soviet power—this cause has been secured."<sup>2</sup>

On the evening of the same day the *Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets* opened in the Smolny Institute. Its 649 delegates representing 400 Soviets included 390 Bolsheviks, 160 SRs and 92 Mensheviks.

The first session lasted long into the night. In the early hours of October 26 the news came that the Winter Palace had been taken and the ministers of the Provisional Government had been arrested. The news was received with a thunderous "Hur-

---

<sup>1</sup> Its leader, Kerensky, managed to slip through the cordon of revolutionary troops in the US Ambassador's car and went in the direction of the cavalry corps he had summoned.—*Ed.*

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 236.

ray!" To stormy applause an address "*To Workers, Soldiers and Peasants!*" was adopted. It stated: "Backed by the will of the vast majority of the workers, soldiers and peasants, backed by the victorious uprising of the workers and the garrison which has taken place in Petrograd, the Congress takes power into its own hands... The Congress decrees: all power in the localities shall pass to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies..."<sup>1</sup>

The second session of the Congress began on the evening of November 8 (October 26). It heard, discussed and adopted a *Decree on Peace*, on which Lenin made the report. This first foreign-policy act of the Soviet state declared war to be the gravest crime against humanity and called on the peoples and governments of the belligerent countries to discontinue hostilities immediately and to conclude peace on terms equally just for all, without annexations and indemnities.<sup>2</sup>

Then the Congress adopted another decree proposed by Lenin, the *Decree on Land*. It declared that the landed estates, as well as all crown, monastery, and church lands (more than 150 million hectares), were confiscated and turned over to the peasants for their use free of charge. The *Peasant Mandate on Land* drawn up as early as in May 1917 and compiled from 242 local peasant mandates, was declared by the Congress to be the guiding document for carrying out agrarian reforms. Not all

---

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 247.

<sup>2</sup> Not receiving any reply to the many proposals it addressed to the governments of the Allied countries of the Entente, the Soviet government decided to enter unilaterally into negotiations with the Central Powers. On December 5, 1917, an armistice and on March 3, 1918, a peace treaty were signed with Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey.—*Ed.*



the points of the Mandate coincided with the Bolsheviks' programme. On the contrary, it reflected the Socialist-Revolutionary Narodist utopias of "socialization of the land", namely egalitarian land tenure, and the regular redistribution of allotments among individual peasant farmers. "Voices are being raised here that the decree itself and the Mandate were drawn up by the Socialist-Revolutionaries. What of it? Does it matter who drew them up? As a democratic government, we cannot ignore the decision of the masses of the people... Experience is the best teacher and it will show who is right... The point is that the peasants should be firmly assured that there are no more landowners in the countryside, that they themselves must decide all questions, and that they themselves must arrange their own lives."<sup>1</sup>

By accepting the SRs' agrarian programme without a single amendment the Bolsheviks were undoubtedly making a compromise in order to prove to the peasants that the working class wanted agreement with them, not their subjugation. Thanks to the Decree on Land at the very moment of establishing its dictatorship the proletariat formed an informal but very important and very successful *political bloc* with the lower middle-class peasantry.

It was a wise political step. It led to many million more peasants leaving the "peasant" party of the Socialist-Revolutionaries, which during eight months of its stay in power had done nothing to meet the vital needs of the countryside. A Left wing gained strength in the SR Party. Expelled from it, the Left-wingers began to form a new party, that of the *Left Socialist-Revolutionaries*. The Bolsheviks offered to establish now a formal politi-

---

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol 26, pp. 261-262.

cal bloc with them and have them participating in the government.

On the same day the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets decided to form a workers' and peasants' government—the *Council of People's Commissars*—to govern the country. *Lenin* was endorsed as Chairman of the Council. The Left SRs entered the new government a month later, when Soviet rule had sufficiently consolidated itself in the country.

In the meantime the new government had to repel the offensive of counter-revolutionary troops, which on November 9 (October 27) Kerensky brought very close to Petrograd. Two days later two officer-cadet schools in Petrograd staged a revolt, which was immediately suppressed. On the next day Kerensky's troops were halted. On November 14 the soldiers he had led went over to the side of the revolution, while Kerensky himself once again managed to escape secretly.

The Bolsheviks could now tackle the very difficult and very important task of running the newly-born state. Thousands of the most literate and politically mature workers were dispatched to state institutions to take the places of capitalists and high officials who were sabotaging the new government's plans. Workers' control was established at all industrial, trading and banking enterprises and extended to the production, storing and sale-and-purchase of all finished products, half-finished products and raw materials. An eight-hour working day was decreed, new state bodies were set up to manage the economy, and all private banks and credit institutions were nationalized. Nationalization began of factories and plants. In the countryside the first state farms and agricultural co-operatives (collective farms) were established on former landowners' estates which had been farming the

land most efficiently. The church was separated from the state. Universal compulsory primary education was introduced. Women were granted equal electoral rights and equal pay with men. All the nations living on the territory of the old Russian Empire were granted the right to self-determination.

This tremendous constructive work, however, was soon interrupted by foreign military intervention and a civil war. First Austrian, German, Hungarian, Turkish and then British, French, Japanese, American, Czechoslovak, Polish, Romanian and other troops invaded Soviet Russia. Under their protection the forces of internal counter-revolution grew bold and unleashed civil war in the middle of 1918. At first it was the Right SRs and Mensheviks who fought against Soviet rule. Then their place was taken by former tsarist generals and the Cadets. An anti-Soviet revolt was also organized by the Left SRs. These enemies of Soviet power hoped it would rapidly collapse. But by the end of 1920 the tireless activities of the Bolshevik Party and the mass heroism of the workers and peasants who rose staunchly to defend the revolution brought victory: the forces of the foreign invaders and of internal counter-revolution were defeated. As a result all the political parties which had discredited themselves in the eyes of the people quit the political arena and found themselves in the dustbin of history.

\* \* \*

What are the main conclusions one can draw from studying the history of class and political struggles in Russia in the early part of the 20th century, the history of the *three Russian revolutions*? Why did the Bolsheviks win?

In the first place, they won because they truly voiced the *objective needs* of the country's development and the *vital interests* of the overwhelming majority of its population.

They taught the *proletariat* to see its immediate and long-term goals, to recognize its enemies and allies and use a great variety of methods and forms of class struggle. In this struggle the working class itself showed an unparalleled capacity for self-sacrifice, remarkable staunchness and persistence, determination and consistency.

The Bolsheviks relied on the *rural poor* and then enlisted the support of the *middle peasants*. Thus they built an *alliance of the working class with the peasantry*, who formed the bulk of the country's population. They also succeeded in winning the fullest confidence of the working people of the *outlying national regions*.

The strength of the Bolsheviks was doubled and trebled also by the fact that they were led by *Vladimir Lenin*, a theoretician of genius, a wise politician and a great revolutionary.

**Юрий Васильев**

**ПОЧЕМУ ПОБЕДИЛА ПАРТИЯ БОЛЬШЕВИКОВ**  
на английском языке

Цена 35 коп.



If you wish to be abreast of developments of Marxist-Leninist theory and of problems of building a new society in the USSR and other socialist countries, read the Soviet monthly illustrated digest

SOCIALISM: THEORY AND  
PRACTICE (STP)

You can subscribe to STP at any firm or bookshop handling Soviet publications.





Yuri Vasiliev

*Why the Bolsheviks Won*

Dear Reader,

Please fill out the following questionnaire and send it to:  
Novosti Press Agency Publishing House  
7 Bolshaya Pochtovaya Street, 107082 Moscow, USSR

1. What is your opinion of the subject matter of this publication?
2. ...its language and style?
3. ...its design and general appearance?
4. How long have you been familiar with Novosti publications? Which of them interested you most?
5. Where did you obtain this publication?

6. V  
Unit

# DATE DUE / DATE DE RETOUR

iet

FEB 27 2001

FEB 27 2001

MAR 27 2001

DEC 06 2002

You

APR 03 2002

MAR 23 2002

Cou

DEC 03 2002

Nam

MAR 27 2007

APR 25 2007

Add

Sh

lette  
are

ate  
ou

CARR MCLEAN

38-297

Юрий Васильев

ПОЧЕМУ ПОБЕДИЛА ПАРТИЯ БОЛЬШЕВИКОВ

на английском языке

TRENT UNIVERSITY



0 1164 0306913 5

**WHY**  
**the**  
**BOLSHEVIKS**  
**WON**

---

