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The All-Russian Peasant Union and Authorities in the Years of the First Russian Revolution in Ukraine

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The revolutionary processes in 1905–1907. A unique opportunity for the transformation and modernization of the existing social and political system was created in the Russian Empire: the Manifesto on October 17, 1905 declared civil liberties, including congresses and unions, the political life revived, the various parties and public political organizations began to emerge from the underground. Against this background, the special attention is paid to the activities of the All-Russian Peasant Union (ARPU) – a non-party mass organization of the Russian Empire peasantry and its interaction with the authorities.

The problem of the ARPU interaction with the authorities still has not been the subject of an independent investigation, but some aspects are reflected in the works of the major ARPU activity researchers: E.I. Kiryukhina¹ [1], D.A. Kolesnichenko² A.A. Kurenyshev³, O.M. Fedkov⁴, and others.

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¹ Е.И. Кирюхина, *Местные организации Всероссийского крестьянского союза в 1905 году*, Учёные записки Кировского государственного педагогического института им. В. И. Ленина, vol. 10, Киров 1956, p. 83–157.

² Д.А. Колесниченко, *Всероссийский крестьянский союз в 1905–1907 гг.*, Москва 2006.

³ А.А. Куреньшев, *Всероссийский крестьянский союз. 1905–1930 гг. Мифы и реальность*, Москва – Санкт-Петербург 2004.

⁴ О.М. Федьков, *Аграрна політика уряду і селянські організації, „Товариства землевласників і землеробів”, приміровальні органи в Правобережній Україні у 1905–1907 рр.*, in: *Матеріали Х-ї Подільської історико-краснавчої конференції*, Кам'янець-Подільський 2000, p. 321–333.

The aim of our study – based on a wide range of sources and literature to consider the transformation of the interaction between the ARPU and the authorities during the 1905–1907 revolution. To achieve this goal we have the following research objectives: to consider the transformation programme in the country, planned by the ARPU; to describe the legislative basis for the functioning of the Union; to analyze government policy in relation to the ARPU and the punitive operations of the government, as well as changing tactics of the Union under the influence of the repressions.

Activity Program Principles

The ideological and programmatic principles of the ARPU functioning were formulated at the Constituent and the Delegates' Congress of the All-Russian Peasant Union. The founding congress was held secretly in Moscow since July 31 to August 1, 1905⁵. It was attended by more than 100 peasants and 25 intellectuals –the representatives of 22 Russian and Ukrainian provinces of the Russian Empire⁶. The Manifesto on October 17 allowed to carry out a legal Delegate's Congress of the ARPU from 6 to 10 November, 1905⁷. 145 peasants-delegates and 42 intellectuals from 75 counties, 26 Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Lithuanian provinces and Poland attended the congress⁸. The Union's political platform was mainly formulated at the Constituent Congress. The Congress resolution emphasized the need for such freedoms as: conscience, speech, press, meetings, unions and strikes. Also the need to introduce the personality and domicile inviolability was discussed⁹. The problem of the government system in the reformed state formation was not considered at the Congresses, but the speeches of the speakers can be concluded that the peasants aspired to democracy. At the same time the majority of the delegates inclined that the monarchy should remain, as there were still quite strong monarchist illusions in the village, the peasants continued to believe in the „benevolent Tsar” A significant role in the achievement of ARPU requirements was assigned to the Constituent Congress, which was to take the basic state laws¹⁰. The Founding congress of ARPU supported also the reorganization of the local

⁵ *О крестьянском союзе*, Санкт-Петербург 1906, p. 13.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 18.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 29.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 18.

⁹ Учредительный съезд Всероссийского крестьянского союза (Протокол), N.p. n.d., p. 22.

¹⁰ Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine in Kyiv (TsDIAK of Ukraine), f. 318, op.1, spr. 947, ark. 148.

government. The existing provinces were supposed to merge into larger administrative units – oblast (districts). The latter was given the right to self-government and to take the local laws within the limits set by the future Constituent Congress. The local self-governments at the level of provinces, counties and townships were given the right to solve all the problems of the local life, to manage the economic, administrative and cultural needs in the field. It was also responsible for the administration and the police appointments¹¹. In addition, the Delegates' Congress noted the need for the election of all the rural, township, district and provincial officials¹². Thus, the documents of the Congresses provided democratization policy of the local life and a wide autonomy for the regions of Russia. The general democratization of the courts was also discussed and the resolution on the reorganization need of the court on the elective basis was approved¹³. An important task is to clarify the tactics of the Peasant Union. The Delegate's Congress developed concrete measures for the Union main slogan implementation – „The Powers and the Land – to the People”. Political reforms and the transfer of the lands to the peasants were to be the result of a peaceful struggle for power. The main line of the Union tactics reflected in such Delegates' Congress regulations: 1) the Constituent Congress must finally solve the agrarian problem and in favor of the people, 2) the peasantry confederates in ARPU in order to achieve their demands, the Peasant Union takes the lead in the achieving of the peasants aims¹⁴. The Delegate's Congress of the Union to combat the bureaucracy and the police in the field outlined the following measures: a) do not provide rural and township judgements for approval to rural authorities, and bring them to an order by gatherings; b) do not apply to land superior on any matter; c) do not provide the police officers with carts, apartments, travel funds and do not send messengers to the authorities; d) to remove the entire local administration and elect reasonable people; e) to cancel those amicable and county fees, which would be recognized as unnecessary by the gathering; f) to choose the authorized representative to protect the public property; g) do not provide any information to the authorities about the struggle of the peasants and the Peasant Union¹⁵. The measures against the bureaucracy can be considered as the most revolutionary in the tactics of the Union.

¹¹ Учредительный съезд Всероссийского крестьянского союза (Протокол), N.p. n.d., p. 39.

¹² TsDIAK of Ukraine, f. 318, op.1, spr. 947, ark. 149.

¹³ Учредительный съезд Всероссийского крестьянского союза (Протокол), N.p. n.d., p. 39.

¹⁴ TsDIAK of Ukraine, f. 318, op.1, spr. 947, ark. 148.

¹⁵ Ibidem, f. 838, op.5, spr. 42, ark. 1-1 zv.

The Initial Period

The initial phase of the Peasant Union existence is associated with a certain „helplessness” of the authorities, when they had to make concessions to the revolutionary-minded masses, liberalizing the regime increasingly. The first cells of the Peasant Union in the Russian Empire appeared in May, 1905. Its activities took place mostly on the basis of the Decree on February 18, 1905, which became the legal basis for starting the judgemental companies in which individuals and institutions were granted the right to submit its proposals for improving the state system to the Council of Ministers¹⁶. This decree caused quite strong reactions in all sectors of the society and harassed the Minister of the Interior, who asked for the interpretation of the decree in the Council of Ministers. The latter made a reservation that though the decree allowed the right to submit the applications by the individuals and institutions authorized by the law and the government without any restrictions, still did not give the right to: public collective discussion of various issues, convening congresses, peaceful meetings and gatherings dangerous to the public, pronouncement, compilation and dissemination of the speeches and writings of criminal detention etc. At the same time, the Council of Ministers recommended the local authorities to use all the available means in the cases of the attacks on the foundations of the autocratic system. The mentioned above interpretation was sealed with the signature of the monarch on April 1, 1905¹⁷. Thus, the Decree on February 18 was a quite controversial phenomenon. It was a strange attempt to combine certain features of liberalism with the indestructibility of the autocratic regime principles¹⁸. The decree was repealed, along with the publication of the Decree on August 6, 1905 „On the Establishment of the State Duma” and „The Provisions” on the election to it¹⁹. Despite this, the activity of the All-Russian Peasant Union organizations took place on the basis of it from May to August 1905. In particular, the petition campaign on the basis of the Decree on February 18 preceded the appearance of the most powerful Peasant Union centers.

A small amount of the semi-legal organizations of the Union started to appear since the ARPU Constituent Congress on July 31 – August 1, 1905 up to the Manifesto on October 17 of the same year. Its activities took place peacefully, in line with the tactics produced by the Constituent Congress in compilation of the judgements and the dissemination of the information about the ARPU among the peasantry.

¹⁶ Полное собрание законов Российской Империи, vol. XXV, Санкт-Петербург 1908, p. 133.

¹⁷ TsDIAK of Ukraine, f. 320, op.1, spr. 781, ark. 76-76 zv.

¹⁸ Л.Т. Сенчакова, *Приговоры и наказания российского крестьянства 1905–1907 гг.*, vol. 1, Москва 1994, p. 28–29.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 32.

The Short Period of Legal Functioning

The period of legal ARPU organizations begins after the publication of the Manifesto on October 17, 1905 „On Public System Improvement”, that proclaimed basic civil liberties in the country; including freedom of „congresses and organizations”²⁰. The Manifesto was received with trust, admiration and enthusiasm in the field. So long as the highest sanction was important for the peasants the declared freedom (especially of meetings and organizations) became the basis for further activities of the All-Russian Peasant Union organizations.

The activity of the Peasant Union became widespread, there were rallies and demonstrations, a significant number of its centers were formed. The decision to join the ARPU was certified by the judgement of the village gathering. In conditions of the freedoms, declared by the Manifesto on October 17, 1905, the verdict was seen as an official document by the peasants. For example, The peasants from Manuylovki village, Novomoskovsk county, Ekaterinoslav province explained their participation in the Peasant Union that „they considered it to be legal [...] The judgement was issued in the prescribed manner”²¹. The judgment often emphasized the peaceful nature of the Union activity and commitment to the Tsar. Sometimes the judgements were sealed by the rural municipality or the village head and were put into the book of judgements. Some villages sent their judgements to the Tsar or the chairman of the Council of Ministers S. Yu. Witte in person. In general, the content thereof was almost the same. It was based upon the exemplary judgement that was sent from Moscow to all the corners of the Empire. It was drafted in the spirit of the ARPU Constituent Congress decisions. The analysis of the peasants’ judgements demonstrates a special distribution of such peasants demands as: the abolition of private land ownership, the convening of the Constituent Congress, the election of the officers, the establishment of political rights and freedoms for all the citizens of Russia, the destruction of the estates, the introduction of the universal free education, the elimination of landlordism and other remnants of the serfdom, converting the land into public ownership, etc²². Ukrainian peasants demanded the equality of languages and autonomy²³.

²⁰ Полное собрание законов Российской Империи, vol. XXV, Санкт-Петербург 1908, p. 754–755.

²¹ TsDIAK of Ukraine, f. 313, op. 2, spr. 1442, ark. 484.

²² Е.И. Кирюхина, *Местные организации Всероссийского крестьянского союза в 1905 году*, Учёные записки Кировского государственного педагогического института им. В. И. Ленина, vol. 10, Киров 1956, p. 143.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 141.

The second November ARPU Delegate's Congress was convened on the wave of the revolutionary enthusiasm. The ARPU local organizations, carrying out its resolutions, boycotted and changed the power in the field, closed liquor stores forcibly, created police squads to maintain order and to prevent the revolutionary tyranny.

The Authorities Repressions

The reaction at the end of 1905 – beginning of 1906 completed the period of the Peasant Union open activities. The governors of Volyn, Kherson, Poltava and Ekaterinoslav provinces expressed a negative assessment of ARPU activity and appealed the peasants to withdraw from the Union and to stop the struggle²⁴.

The authorities also took a number of measures to prevent the holding of the All-Ukrainian Peasants Congress in Kiev and the Ukrainian Peasant Union formation at the end of 1905 – at the beginning of 1906. The Kiev province governor announced an appeal in December 1905, in which he said he would not allow any of the Congresses and, if necessary, disperse it by force. The organizers of the planned congress were arrested²⁵.

There were carried out punitive expeditions in villages, which sometimes ended in beatings and murders. The measures taken against the local organizations of the Peasant Union were characterized by the unprecedented cruelty and humiliation. Its symbol is still the so-called „Sorochinskaya tragedy” – punitive expedition members' arbitrary in Bolshye Sorochintsy village, Mirgorod district, Poltava province. The reason for this attitude was that the authorities saw a particular danger in the ARPU activity in comparison to the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Social Democrats, it was even noted in the circular of the Police Department of the Ministry of Interior to the governors on November 23, 1905²⁶. The main gendarme officials blamed the All-Russian Peasant Union in spreading of the revolutionary idea and the strength of Peasants Union among the peasants, that constituted the main labour forces in Russia, as well as the requirements of the land and the freedom²⁷. Therefore all the powers of repression were directed to the Union. So, we know the facts that occurred in two neighboring districts of Poltava province in late 1905 – early 1906: the democra-

²⁴ О.М. Федьков & В.О. Магасъ, „Селянству – владу і землю!”. *Всеросійський селянський союз в Україні (1905–1907 рр)*, Кам'янець-Подільський 2011, р. 171.

²⁵ Д. І. Дорошенко, *Мої Спомини Про Давнє Минуле (1901–1914 роки)*, Вінніпег-Манітоба 1949, р. 79.

²⁶ State Archives of Khmelnytsky Oblast, f. 228, op. 1, spr. 7267, ark. 456.

²⁷ TsDIAK of Ukraine, f. 320, op. 1, spr. 785, ark. 20 zv.

tic intelligentsia organized Peasant Unions, promoted constitutionalism and the bailing-out of the private land in one of it and the revolutionary parties advocated the expropriation of the land, formed a clandestine party organizations etc. in the other. When the repression began, the first county suffered more than the second²⁸.

The Union activists, mainly from the rural intelligentsia, were arrested, detained or went into exile. Some Peasant Union activists put up armed resistance to the Government punitive operations. The Ministry of Internal Affairs sent instructions to the governors, which said that there was no need to pay attention to the protest actions „of various self-appointed unions and delegations if there were arrests of teachers, medical assistants and other employees”²⁹. In some cases of this instruction implementation the local government was forced to apply the measures of extraordinary nature. So, the artillery unit was sent to arrest V. Stromenko the Peasant Union agitator in Solenoe village, Yekaterinoslav county and province. Stromenko was forced to give up to avert catastrophe and save the village³⁰. The local authorities of Sumy county Kharkov province had constantly to change the places of their imprisonment to thwart attempts to release the principal leaders of the county Peasant Union³¹. The main „success” of the repression was the seizure of the democratic intelligentsia active representatives and the conscientious peasantry of the village. It was precisely the moderate element that chose the motto of its propaganda „peaceful parliamentary struggle” and that to some extent was compromised by the prospect of a non-violent way³². So, the landowners’ economies and bread arsons begun in 1906 instead of systematic organized struggle that preceded the reaction after the main leaders of the Peasant Union arrests at the end of 1905 in Vasilevka village, Lebedinsky county, Kharkov province³³.

The Clandestine Activity and ARPU Collapse

The ARPU activity was illegal in 1906–1907. The reason for the ARPU transition to conspiratorial activities was the Decree on March 4, 1906 „On the

²⁸ Р. Оленин, *Крестьяне и интеллигенция (к характеристике освободительного движения в Малороссии)*, N.p. n.d., p. 166.

²⁹ TsDIAK of Ukraine, f. 320, op.1, spr. 781, ark. 111.

³⁰ О. Александров, *Селяньска спілка перед царським судом*, Харків 1931, p. 19.

³¹ *Хроника*, Право 2 (1906), p. 142.

³² Р. Оленин, *Крестьяне и интеллигенция (к характеристике освободительного движения в Малороссии)*, N.p. n.d., p. 166.

³³ TsDIAK of Ukraine, f. 705, op.1, spr. 181, ark. 47.

Temporary Rules of the Societies and Unions”, which empowered the Minister of Internal Affairs the right to terminate the activities of societies and unions at any time and in its sole discretion³⁴. Thus, it created the legal obstacle for the further opened activities of the Peasant Union.

The authorities also blocked the information about the activity of the ARPU. The peasants learned of the Union mainly from newspapers in 1905, in 1906–1907 – through a variety of illegal publications, which was due to the severe censorship. The ARPU proclamations and brochures printed locally in clandestine printing houses, or in the other revolutionary parties and organizations.

The second period of the revolution was the time of rebirth, clandestine work and phasing out of the All-Russian Peasant Union and its local organizations activities. There were some changes in the ARPU ideologies that were the reaction to the repression. The Union centers, destroyed by the persecution, revived during this period gradually, formed new organizations, changed the nature of their activities. It became clandestine. The ARPU large-scale participation was lost, because the clandestine organization with a small number of members had a chance to survive in the period of the reaction. A new phenomenon in the ARPU activity during the second period of the revolution was the preparation of orders to the State Duma. The peasants had high hopes for the latter, expecting a just solution to the agrarian problem.

The local organization of the Peasant Union radicalized gradually. At the second Union Delegate’s Congress, that was secretly held in Moscow on 7–8 March, 1906 the propagandists encouraged to refrain from the direct promotion of the land grab, but it was recognized that it is impossible to prohibit the agitation. If the fact of the forcible land seizure took place, the Congress recommended that the members of the Peasant Union in every way should contribute to this, and regulate the process if possible. At the same time the meeting was widely advised to use the ability to capture the crops and organize a boycott to the landlords who oppressed the peasants³⁵.

The local Congresses approved such revolutionary measures as murder and arsons, and the Peasant Unions formed the „fighting squads”. For example, the ARPU Delegate’s Congress of the Podolsk district took place in the August 21, 1906 and considered it possible to use the armed force and proposed to create a fighting squads consisting of the most reliable peasants³⁶. In another case, the Kharkov provincial ARPU Congress held on October 23, 1906 accepted such methods of struggle as murder and arsons of the dwellings. At the

³⁴ Полное собрание законов Российской Империи, vol. XXVI, Санкт-Петербург 1909, p. 201–207.

³⁵ TsDIAK of Ukraine, f. 289, op.1, spr. 20, ark. 272-272 zv.

³⁶ Ibidem, f. 1596, op.1, spr. 1, ark. 61 zv.

same time, the Union leaders did not refuse the legal parliamentary struggle: the resolution to run the members of the Peasant Union for the candidate to the State Duma was adopted³⁷. The Bakhmut county ARPU Congress of the Ekaterinoslav province stood for the agrarian terror in the form of the landlords' and rich peasants' homesteads and bread burning. At the same time, they were advised to use the all available legal means of cultural and educational activities in the village, to use it to expand the outlook of the peasants and to accustom them to the solidarity. The delegates called for the improvement of agricultural education of the peasants, the creation of co-operative institutions, etc³⁸. Thus, the answer to the repression of the authorities was the radicalization of the Peasant Union program and tactics. At the same time, the Union used all legal methods. The Unions gradually fell into decay and disappeared with the completion of the first Russian revolution.

OGÓLNOROSYJSKI ZWIĄZEK CHŁOPSKI A WŁADZA PODCZAS PIERWSZEJ REWOLUCJI ROSYJSKIEJ NA UKRAINIE

(STRESZCZENIE)

Działalność pierwszych związków chłopskich na Ukrainie całkowicie mieściła się w granicach obowiązującego ustawodawstwa, a mianowicie Dekretu z 18 lutego 1905 r., który rozpoczął kampanię wyrokową, mimo że same związki były kwalifikowane jako nielegalne stowarzyszenia. Po ogłoszeniu Manifestu 17 października, przedstawiającego różne wolności, w tym „stowarzyszeń oraz organizacji”, rozpoczął się krótki legalny okres otwartej działalności Ogólnorosyjskiego Związku Chłopskiego (OZCh). Został opracowany program przemian demokratycznych przez centralne organy Związku Chłopskiego, a jego jednostki realizowały taktykę „pokojoywej ofensywy” na właścicieli majątków (ziemian) oraz władze lokalne, powstrzymując chłopów przed radykalnymi działaniami. Zaznaczony okres skończył się okrutnymi represjami na szeroką skalę przeciwko przewodniczącym i członkom OZCh na przełomie 1905 i 1906 r. Dekret z 4 marca 1906 r. „O tymczasowym regulaminie dotyczącym Stowarzyszeń i Związków” na poziomie ustawodawczym uniemożliwił dalszą otwartą działalność organizacji Związku Chłopskiego. Z kolei zebrania chłopskie o różnym poziomie w latach 1906–1907 zademonstrowały wzrost nastrojów rewolucyjnych. Ciągłe prześladowania oraz zakończenie rewolucji stały się przyczyną upadku organizacji Związku. Szeroki zakres i poparcie działalności OZCh przez prostych chłopów przyczyniło się do dostrzeżenia przez władzę ogromnego zagrożenia z ich strony. Władza zdecydowała się na zastosowanie środków represyjnych, co spowodowało nie tylko utratę możliwości pokojowego dialogu z chłopami, ale także zniszczenie załączków stowarzyszenia obywatelskiego w wiosce.

³⁷ Ibidem, f. 304, op.1, spr. 140, ark. 223-223 zv.

³⁸ Ibidem, f. 313, op.2, spr. 1655, ark. 4-7 zv.

THE ALL-RUSSIAN PEASANT UNION AND AUTHORITIES IN THE YEARS OF THE FIRST RUSSIAN REVOLUTION IN UKRAINE

(SUMMARY)

The activity of the first Peasant Unions in Ukraine confined within the limits of the current legislation – namely, the Decree on February 18, 1905, which started the judgement campaign, although the unions were established as unlawful societies. A short period of ARPU open legal activities began after the announcement of the Manifesto on October 17 that proclaimed various freedoms, including „meetings and organizations”. The central authorities of the Peasant Union worked out the democratic reforms program and its centers implemented the tactics of „peaceful attack” on the landowners and local authorities, keeping the peasants from radical actions. This period ended with the widespread brutal repression against the ARPU leaders and members at the end of 1905 – at the beginning of 1906. The Decree on March 4, 1906 “On the Temporary Rules of Societies and Unions” at the legislative level made it impossible to continue the open Peasant Union organizations activities. In its turn, the peasant congresses of various levels in 1906–1907 showed revolutionary sentiment growth. The constant pursuit and the completion of the revolution caused the decline of the Union institutions. Thus, the authorities saw a huge threat in the breadth and scope of the activities supported by simple peasants and decided to use the repressive means, while the possibility of a dialogue with the peasants for the reform of the agrarian and political sphere was lost, and the beginnings of a civil society in the country were destroyed.

ALLRUSSISCHE BAUERNUNION UND BEHÖRDEN IN DEN JAHREN DER ERSTEN RUSSISCHEN REVOLUTION IN DER UKRAINE

(ZUSAMMENFASSUNG)

Die Tätigkeit der ersten Bauernunion in der Ukraine wurde im Rahmen der geltenden Gesetzgebung geregelt, nämlich im Dekret vom 18. Februar 1905, das die Verurteilung der Kampagne gestartet hat, obwohl die Unionen als rechtswidrige Gesellschaften gegründet wurden. Eine kurze Zeit der ARBU offenen rechtlichen Tätigkeiten begann nach der Ankündigung des Manifests am 17. Oktober, das verschiedene Freiheiten proklamiert hat, darunter „Treffen und Organisationen”. Die zentralen Behörden der Bauernunion erarbeitete das demokratische Reformprogramm und seine Zentren implementierten die Taktik des „friedlichen Angriffs” auf die Grundbesitzer und lokalen Behörden, um die Bauern von radikalen Aktionen ab zu halten. Diese Periode endete mit der weit verbreiteten brutalen Repression gegen die ARBU Führer und Mitglieder Ende des Jahres 1905 bis Anfang 1906. Das Dekret vom 4. März 1906 machte es unmöglich, die offenen Tätigkeiten der Bauernunion fortzusetzen. Seinerseits zeigten Bauernkongresse auf verschiedenen Ebenen in 1906–1907 die Entwicklung der revolutionären Stimmung. Die ständige Verfolgung und die Vollendung der Revolution verursachten den Rückgang der Institutionen der Union. So sahen die Behörden eine große Bedrohung in der Breite und dem Umfang der von einfachen Bauern unterstützten Tätigkeiten und entschieden, repressive Mittel zu nutzen, weil die Möglichkeit eines Dialogs mit den Bauern für die Reform der Agrar- und politischen Sphäre verloren war, und die Anfänge einer Zivilgesellschaft im Land zerstört wurden.