

THE CAMPAIGN TO ASSASSINATE THE TSAR.

I. THE "PEOPLE'S WILL" PASSES DEATH SENTENCE ON ALEXANDER II.

Aug. 26, 1879 -- formally condemned him to death.

Zheliabov + Sophia Perovskaia,

II. THE ATTEMPTS ON THE EMPEROR'S TRAIN. (1879)

Alex. was in Yalta for the summer. Decided to blow up train on return.

Would try at 3 places, sure to succeed at one.

1. Odessa -- Emperor supposed to go by boat across Black Sea to Odessa, there catch train.

Vera Figner -- arranged through high connections to ~~get a revolutionary~~ a job as watchman on the railroad. ~~for one of them~~ ^{get a revolutionary} Succeeded. To bury dynamite on tracks.

But then it was learned that Tsar had decided not to go via Odessa.

Weather bad, tsar afraid he might get seasick. Go all the way by train.

2. THE ALEXANDROVSK ATTEMPT. (*now Zaporozh'ie*)

Zheliabov -- in charge. Chose Alexandrovsk because the tracks were on a high embankment, so that the train would crash down after it was blown up.

Posed as merchant, planning to set up a tannery there. Got very chummy with people, including a member of town council. Brought his "wife" and 2 employees along.

Digging -- While making friends with townspeople during daytime, Zheliabov and the others were busy at night digging a tunnel under the tracks for placing the cylinders of dynamite.

Cold, rained constantly. Stumbling in mud in the dark.

Guards -- came by regularly. Had look-outs.

Plan -- to have the electric switch in a cart, *push the button.*

Signal -- spy went south, returned to report that Emperor would be in the 2nd train in the 4th coach.

Nov. 18 -- Zheliabov went out, connected the wires, waited.

When the 2nd train came, he waited for the 4th coach, pushed the switch. Nothing happened.

Never found out why. Loose connection?

One member later became a police spy - did he cut the wire?

3. The Moscow Attempt.

- a. House -- Bought a house on outskirts of Moscow, 50 yards from RR tracks. ~~Man and woman~~ ^{Posed} as man and wife.
- b. Digging -- tunnel $3\frac{1}{2}$ ft high by $2\frac{1}{2}$ across. Put the dirt in the storehouse. When it was full, put it under the floorboards in the living room. Piles in the cellar. Finally had to spread it in the fields at night.
- c. Former Owner -- came to get some jam she had left in the storehouse. Perovskaia pretended she had lost the key, took the jam to her later.
- d. Fire -- storehouse caught fire, neighbors came to help put it out. She told them ~~that~~ God had set it afire, and God would put it out if he wished. They left.
- e. Rain -- tunnel filled with water. Bailed it out. Cafe-in. Left hole above, which they had to fill up;
- f. Came to Rock -- Had to buy a drill. To ~~me~~ get money had to mortgage the house. Inspector came, but found nothing.
- g. Telegram -- from Simferopol, "Price of flour 2 rubles, our price 4." ~~■~~ Indicating that tsar would be in the 2nd train, 4th coach. Obviously phoney, but the stupid officials didn't notice anything.
- h. Train comes -- 1st train passed. When 2nd train passed, they blew up the 4th coach. Train derailed.

Emperor - had gotten impatient with delays, transferred his train to the front, so he had passed in the 1st train.

2nd train, 4th car - ~~was full~~ full of jam from the tsar's estates in the Crimea, being taken back to Pete.
No one hurt.

4. Manifesto -- We have tried but failed. We will succeed next time.

Take notes on this from Faustman

X

By this time Goldenberg had begun to betray his fellow Party members to his questioners in response to assurances that there was evidence for arresting them immediately and to promised leniency towards them. When this bewildered informer learned what fate was actually in store for the members, he hanged himself in his cell, but his written testimony later served to convict a number of the Party members.

NEXT ATTEMPT

(1880)

The explosion which took place in the Winter Palace in February had considerable advance planning. A worker named Stephen Khalturin became disgusted when his Northern Workers' Union was crushed by the police and presented the Executive Committee of the Narodnaya Volya with a plan for killing the Emperor.¹ Khalturin knew something of explosives, and he brought along a map showing exactly how he planned to mine the Winter Palace of the Tsar. The Committee was impressed with the plan's completeness and daring, and it adopted the scheme very largely as it was presented by Khalturin.

Khalturin secured a job on Alexander's yacht, and very soon he was transferred to the Winter Palace as a carpenter. His antics as a country hick delighted all of the Tsar's staff, and he was accepted without question and given more freedom of movement than was usually accorded to newcomers. The carpenter's bed was in the basement ~~under~~ ^{below a guard room, which was} under the dining room of the Tsar. Every day Khalturin smuggled in a bit of dynamite in his boot and placed it under his pillow. When the fumes became too strong

1. Ibid., pp. 124 ff.

Member of Exec. Com. who was the contact man was arrested. Police found in his possessions some dynamite + 2 plans of Winter Palace with X on din. rm

for sleep, he transferred the explosive to a wooden box which then held his extra shirt, but which was later to serve as the casing for the bomb. The Emperor's dinner was a routine scheduled for ~~seven o'clock~~ ^{6:30} every night with all of the Royal Family attending, so it was planned that the explosion should take place immediately after the beginning of the meal.

The Executive Committee became more and more apprehensive that Khalturin would be caught before he had lit the fuse. When his box contained 100 pounds of dynamite, they insisted, against his protests, that the time had come to act. On February 5, 1880 Khalturin made some excuse about not feeling well at mealtime and lit the fuse as the Tsar ate dinner. Then he went outside the palace to ~~meet Zheliabov,~~ ^{meet Zheliabov,} The explosion destroyed ~~part~~ ^{part} of the Winter Palace and killed ~~several~~ ¹¹ people. It was not until later, when the Peoples' Will members were drinking toasts to a better order, that they learned that a cousin ~~had~~ ^{had} arrived at dinnertime, and Alexander and family had stepped into the other half of the Palace to receive him. None of the Royal Family was hurt.

The Executive Committee promptly issued another manifesto claiming responsibility for the attempt, reiterating its demands and promising renewed efforts towards killing the Tsar.¹

After this attempt the Third Section was replaced by a more efficient police system under General Loris-Melikov. A number of reforms were promised, and the Executive Committee voted to

1. Ibid., p. 134.

Yarnalinsky (268) - Even if tsar had been in the dining room, he would not have been hurt.

What happened to K?

relax its terroristic activities temporarily in order to see what the reforms would mean. An independent revolutionary, Molodetsky, did, however, attempt to kill Loris-Melikov, but he was caught and hanged "with the smile of a hero."¹

There was a crop failure in Russia in 1880 with the usual famine and unrest resulting. This was obviously an "economic Crisis" which the Party had earlier described as favorable to revolution, but for some reason they did not take full advantage of the situation. Mr. Footman says that Party members were so concerned with relief measures that they defeated their own purpose by helping to placate the masses.²

Plans to kill Alexander in St. Petersburg.

During the late fall of 1880 and early 1881 there were increasing activities planned. New members were recruited and funds solicited, connections with the provinces were strengthened, the newspaper circulation was increased and agitation was more widespread. More detailed plans than ever were considered for Alexander's assassination. The leaders disagreed on a method: Zhelyabov was in favor of hand grenades, Kibalchich preferred nitro-glycerine and the majority of the Committee advocated a land mine.³ This conflict was finally resolved by setting up a series of different methods: first of all, they planned to use a land mine; if that failed, then they would have several men strategically stationed who would throw ~~Kibalchich's~~ hand grenades; and if the grenades

1. Figner, op. cit., p. 86.
2. Footman, op. cit., pp. 160-1.
3. Ibid., p. 171.

Plans to Kill the Tsar in St. Pete

were unsuccessful too, then Zhelyabov planned to rush in with a dagger.

Plans were set in motion when two members, posing as man and wife, rented a small shop along the Tsar's parade route and proceeded to set up a business in the guise of cheese merchants. By day they were respectable, although unsuccessful, storekeepers, but by night they worked on a tunnel under the street to prepare the mine. They narrowly escaped detection a number of times-- once a police inspector came by, but after a quantity of liquid hospitality and entertaining conversation he left, and his report showed that after a thorough inspection he had found nothing suspicious.¹

Preparations were almost complete when it was learned that the Tsar was to attend a parade on March 4. As many members as could without attracting too much attention began working night and day in the tunnel, and Kibalchich was busily practicing throwing blank hand grenades with the four volunteers and completing the real ones. A real setback came the day before the attempt when Goldenberg's testimony was used by the police to locate and arrest Zhelyabov. ~~This removed the last possibility of killing the Tsar.~~ but Perovskaya rallied the members to concentrate on the first two plans. She and others sat up all night working on the hand grenades, and by morning everything was ready and waiting for the Emperor.

1. Ibid., pp. 190 ff. for an account of the assassination.

Early the next morning Perovskaya went out to take a last look at the street, and she discovered that there had been reports of a revolutionary attempt, and the Tsar had decided to change his customary route. He must have been either a brave man or a fatalist to have attended the parade at all. Perovskaya's news discouraged many members, and they advocated postponing the attempt, but she insisted that the hand grenades must be successful. When the Tsar approached, Perovskaya gave a signal to the bomb throwers, but the first one had already run in fright. Rysakov, the second one, threw his bomb; the explosion killed some soldiers and damaged his carriage, but Alexander lept out unhurt and went to investigate. Grinevitski was standing close by with the third bomb, and as the Tsar thanked God for his safety, Grinevitski countered that his thanks were premature and threw his bomb between them. Both died several hours later. Rysakov was quickly taken into custody, and Timothy Mihailov, who still had the fourth bomb under his arm, was arrested also. Perovskaya was arrested a few days later.

Alex: "Thank God no one was killed!"
Grinevitski - "Don't thank God too soon!"

The great Reformer - killed for not reforming enough.

The free members of the Executive Committee did not consider that it should, from a feeling of delicacy delay...its declaration," because "the course of events which threatens us with terrible convulsions, and rivers of blood in the future, will suffer no delay."¹ It accepted responsibility for Alexander II's assassination and urged ~~him~~ grant some of its demands. They

Alex III &

¹Edmund A. Walsh, The Fall of the Russian Empire (New York, 1931), pp. 49-50.

were careful to define exactly what was meant by the "free elections" which were demanded.¹ On April 29, 1881 Alexander III replied officially by issuing a manifesto affirming the principle of autocracy.²

Vera Figner tells of a possibility which she advocated at the time and no other writer mentions. The dynamite was still intact under the cheese shop, and she claims that she suggested it be used immediately in the assassination of Alexander III since he would use the same route, but she was voted down by the other members.³

Aftermath

The Trial of the Six took place on March 26. Zhelyabov's attempts at propagandizing for the Party and discrediting the government were squelched, and they were sentenced to be hanged.

Though the trial had received as little publicity as was possible, there was a large crowd present to see the execution of Zhelyabov, Perovskaya, Kibalchich, Rysakov and Timothy Mikhailov on April 3.⁴

The Peoples' Will did not ignite the spark of revolution, but it did accomplish its primary immediate aim, the assassination of the Tsar. Immediately after this success the Party reached the

1. Ibid., pp. 49-50.

2. Alexander Kornilov, Modern Russian History (New York, 1943), p. 252.

3. Figner, op. cit., pp. 129-31.

4. Jesse Helfmann, the sixth of the condemned, had her sentence commuted when it was discovered that she was pregnant.