

# Peasants and Workers

By NIKOLAI LENINE

**I**N No. 88 of the *Izvestiya* of the Pan-Russian Council of Peasants' Delegates there are printed a number of proposed laws, which are of interest in connection with the agrarian question in Russia. The first division of these laws deals with the general political premises, the requirements of political democracy, while the second division is concerned with the land question.

The land demands of the peasantry in these proposed laws, consist, first of all, in an abolition of all private ownership of land down to the peasant holdings, without compensation; in handing over to the state or the communes all parcels which are under intensive cultivation; in likewise confiscating all live stock and immovables (excluding those of peasants with small holdings), and handing them over to the state or to the communes; in the prohibition of hired labor; in equalizing the distribution of land among the toilers, with periodic redistributions, etc. Among the measures proposed for the transition period before the convocation of the Constituent Assembly, the peasants demanded the immediate passing of laws requiring the cessation of all buying and selling of land, the abolition of laws permitting sales of land to the commune, by persons intending to liquidate, or permitting the cutting down of forests, etc., for the conservation of forests, fisheries, and other preserves, etc., for the abrogation of all long-term leases and the revision of those made for shorter periods.

A short reflection on these demands will show the absolute impossibility of securing the aid of capitalists in their realization—in fact, the impossibility of avoiding a break with the capitalists, a determined and merciless struggle with the capitalist class, in short, a complete overthrow of their rule.

In fact, the confiscation of all private ownership in land means the confiscation of hundreds of millions of bank capital, with which these lands, for the most part, are mortgaged. Is such a measure conceivable unless the revolutionary plan, by the aid of revolutionary methods, shall break down the opposition of the capitalists? Besides, we are here touching the most centralized form of capital, which is bank capital, and which is bound by a million threads with all the important centers of the capitalist system of this great nation, which can be defeated only by the equally well-organized power of the proletariat of the cities.

Moreover, there is the matter of handing over the highly cultivated estates to the state. Is it not clear that the only "state" which is capable of taking them over and actually administering them in the interest of the toilers, and not for the good of the *chinovniks* (officials) and of the capitalists themselves, must necessarily be a proletarian revolutionary state?

The confiscation of stud-farms, etc., and then of all cattle and immovables, these measures are not only increasingly crushing blows against private ownership of the means of production. They are steps toward Socialism, for the passing over of this property "into its exclusive utilization by the state or the communes," makes absolutely necessary a huge Socialist system of agriculture, or, at least, a Socialist regulation of its functioning.

But, how about "the prohibition of hired labor?" This is an empty phrase, the helpless, unconsciously naive hope of the downtrodden petty farmers who do not see how impossible it is "not to permit" hired labor in the country, if it is to continue to be permitted in the cities,—in short, that the "prohibition" of hired labor can never be nothing else than a step toward Socialism.

This brings us to the fundamental ques-

tion of the relations of the laborers to the peasants. The social-democratic mass movement in Russia has been going on for twenty years (if we count from the great strikes of 1896). Throughout this interval, passing through the two great revolutions, there runs, a veritable red thread of Russian political history, this great question: shall the working class lead the peasantry forward to socialism, or shall the liberal bourgeoisie drag them back, into a conciliation with capitalism?

The revolutionary Social-Democratic Party has all this time been fighting to remove the peasants from the influence of the cadets and has offered them, in place of the utopian middle class view of Socialism, but a revolutionary-proletarian path to Socialism.

"Conciliate yourselves with the rule of capital, for 'we' are not yet ready for Socialism," that is what the Mensheviks say to the peasants. In other words, they misrepresent the abstract question of "Socialism" as being the concrete question of whether the wounds inflicted by the war may be healed without taking resolute steps toward Socialism.

The Monarchy has been abolished. The bourgeois revolution was crowned with success, inasmuch as Russia became a democratic republic with a government consisting of Cadets, Mensheviks and S. R.'s. But, in the course of three years, the war has driven us thirty years ahead, has made compulsory military service universal in Europe, has led to a forced monopolization of industry and brought the most developed nations to suffer hunger and unparalleled destruction, forcing them to take definite steps toward Socialism.

Only the proletariat and the peasantry can overthrow the Monarchy—that has been the fundamental declaration of our class policy. And it was a correct position, as the months of February and March, 1917, have once more confirmed.

Only the proletariat, leading on the poorest peasants (the semi-proletariat, as they are called in our program) may terminate the war with a democratic peace, may heal its wounds, and may undertake the steps toward Socialism that have become absolutely unavoidable and non-postponable. That is the clear demand of our class policy at present.

The course of history, accelerated by the war, has made such huge strides forward, that the ancient slogans have been filled with a new content. For instance: "The prohibition of hired labor" was merely an empty phrase of the *petit bourgeois* intellectual. Millions of impoverished peasants, in 242 instructions, declare that they want to attack the problem of abolishing hired labor, but do not know how to go about it. But we know how. We know it can only be done by cooperation with the workers, under their lead, and not "in agreement" with the capitalists.

Only the revolutionary proletariat can actually carry out the above plan of the impoverished peasants, which they present in the 242 instructions. For the revolutionary proletariat is actually going about the task of abolishing hired labor, and by the only real approach, namely, by overthrowing capitalism, and not by forbidding the hiring of labor. The revolutionary proletariat is actually going to confiscate the lands, the property on them, the agricultural corporations—which is exactly what the peasants want.

Here is the change to be made in the outline of the workers' appeal to the peasant: We, the workers, want to give you, and do give you, that which the impoverished peasantry wants and seeks, without always knowing where to find it. We, the workers, are defending our interests

against the capitalists, and these interests are those of the vast majority of the peasantry.

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Let me remind the reader of what Engels said, not long before his death, concerning the agrarian question. Engels emphasized the point that nothing was further removed from the minds of socialists than the intention of expropriating the smaller peasants, and that the latter should be made to see the advantage of machine-process, socialist agriculture, by the force of example alone.

The war has now placed before Russia, in a practical form, this very question. Of farm property there is little. Simply confiscate it, and "do not divide" the highly cultivated estates.

The peasants have begun to see this. Need made them see it. The war made them see it; for the farm accessories are not worth taking. They must be husbanded. But management on a large scale means the conservation, both of labor on these accessories, and of many other things.

## The July Uprising

By LEON TROTZKY

From Petrograd "Vperiod", July 25, 1917

**B**LOOD has flowed in the streets of Petrograd. A tragic chapter has been added to the Russian Revolution. Who is to blame? "The Bolsheviks," says the man in the street, repeating what his newspapers tell him. The sum total of these tragic happenings is exhausted, as far as the bourgeoisie and the time-serving politicians are concerned, in the words: Arrest the ringleaders and disarm the masses. And the object of this action is to establish "revolutionary order." The Social Revolutionists and the Mensheviks, in arresting and disarming the Bolsheviks, are preparing to establish "order." There is only one question: What kind of order, and for whom?

The Revolution aroused great hopes in the masses. Among the masses of Petrograd, who played a leading role in the Revolution, these hopes and expectations were cherished with exceptional earnestness. It was the task of the Social-Democratic Party to transform these hopes and expectations into clearly-defined political programs, to direct the revolutionary impatience of the masses in the channel of a planful political action. The Revolution was brought face to face with the question of state power. We, as well as the Bolshevik organization, stood for a handing over of all powers to the Central Committee of the Councils of Soldiers, Workers' and Peasants' Delegates. The upper classes, and among them we must include the Social-Revolutionists and the Mensheviks, exhorted the masses to support the Milyukov-Guchkov government. Up to the last moment, that is, up to the time when these more distinctly imperialistic figures of the first Provisional Government resigned, both the above mentioned parties were firmly united with the government all along the line. Only after the reconstruction of the government did the masses learn from their own newspapers that they had not been told the whole truth, that they had been deceived. They were then told that they must trust the new "coalition" government. The revolutionary Social-Democracy predicted that the new government would not differ essentially from the old, that it would not make any concessions to the Revolution and would again betray the hopes of the masses. And so it came to pass. After two months of a policy of weakness, of demands for confidence, of verbose exhortations, the government's posi-

The peasants want to retain their small holdings and to arrive at some place of equal distribution. So be it. No sensible socialist will quarrel with a pauper peasant on this ground. If the lands are confiscated, so long as the proletarians rule in the great centers and all political power is handed over to the proletariat, the rest will take care of itself, will be a natural outcome of the "power of example;" practice itself will do the teaching here.

The passing of political power to the proletariat, that is the whole thing. Then all the essential, fundamental, real points in the program of the 242 instructions become realities. And life will point out with what modifications this realization is to proceed. We should worry: we are not doctrinaires.

We do not pretend that Marx or the Marxians know every detail of the road which leads to Socialism. That would be folly. We know the direction of the road, we know what class forces will lead to it, but the concrete, practical details will appear in the experience of the millions when they tackle the job.

tion of beclouding the issues could no longer be concealed. It became clear that the masses had once more—and this time more cruelly than ever before—been divided. The impatience and the mistrust of the great body of workers and soldiers in Petrograd was increasing, not day by day, but hour by hour. These feelings, fed by the prolonged war, so hopeless for all participating in it, by economic disorganization, by an invisible setting-in of a general cessation of the most important branches of production, found their immediate political expression in the slogan: "All power to the Soviets!" The retirement of the Cadets and the definite proof of the internal bankruptcy of the Provisional Government convinced the masses still more thoroughly that they were in the right as opposed to the official leaders of the Soviets. The vacillations of the Social-Revolutionists and the Mensheviks simply added oil to the flames. The demands, almost persecutions, addressed to the Petrograd garrison, requiring them to inaugurate an offensive, had a similar effect. An explosion became inevitable. All parties, including the Bolsheviks, took every step to prevent the masses from making the demonstration of July 3rd (N. S. 16): but the masses did demonstrate, and with weapons in their hands, moreover. All the agitators, all the district representatives, declared on the evening of July 3rd (N. S. 16), that the July 4th (N. S. 17) demonstration, since the question of power remained unsettled, was bound to take place, and that no measures could hold back the people. That is the only reason why the Bolshevik Party, and with it our organization, decided not to stand aloof and wash its hands of the consequences, but to do everything in its power to change the July 4th (N. S. 17) affair into a peaceful mass demonstration. No other was the meaning of the July 4th appeal. It was of course clear, in view of the certain intervention of counter-revolutionary gangs, that bloody conflicts would arise. It would have been possible, it is true, to deprive the masses of any political guidance, to decapitate them politically, as it were, and to leave them, by refusing to direct them, to their own fate. But we, being the Workers' Party, neither could nor would follow Pilate's tactics: we decided to join in with the masses and to stick to them, in order to introduce into their elemental turmoil the greatest measure of or-