

Documents for Future Socialist History

Documents of Russian Constitutional Assembly

At the opening session of the Constitutional Assembly, the chairman of the Executive Committee of the Soviets, Sverdlov, when opening the assembly, read the following declaration:

The Rights of the Toiling and Exploited People

I.

1. Russia is to be declared a republic of the workers,' soldiers,' and peasants' Soviets. All power in the cities and in the country belongs to the Soviets.

2. The Russian Soviet Republic is based on the free federation of free peoples, on the Federation of National Soviet Republics.

II.

Recognizing as its duty the destruction of all exploitation of the workers, the complete abolishment of the class system of society, and the placing of society on a socialistic basis, and the ultimate bringing about of a victory for Socialism in every country, the Constitutional Assembly decides further:

1. The socializing of land will be carried out, private ownership of land will be abolished, all the land is proclaimed to be the common property of the people and will be given to the toiling people without compensation on the principle of equal right to use land.

All the forests, mines and waters, which are of social importance, as also all living and other property, all agricultural enterprises will be declared national property.

2. To confirm the Soviets' law concerning the inspection of working conditions, the highest department of national economy, which is the first step in bringing about the ownership by the Soviets of the factories, mines, railroads and means of production and transportation as property of the Soviet Republic.

3. To confirm the transferring of all banks over into the hands of the Soviet Republic, which is one of the steps in the freeing of the toiling masses from the yoke of capitalism.

4. To enforce general compulsory labor, in order to destroy the class of parasites and to reorganize economic life. In order to

make the power of the toiling masses secure and to hinder the restoration of the rule of exploiters the toiling classes will be armed and a Red Guard, composed of workingmen and peasants, formed, and the exploiting classes will be disarmed.

III.

1. Declaring its firm determination to free society from the claws of capitalism and imperialism, which have drenched the country in blood in this, the most criminal war of all wars, the Constitutional Assembly accepts completely the policy of the Soviets, whose duty it is to publish all secret treaties, to organize the most extensive fraternization among the workers and peasants of the warring armies and to bring about by use of revolutionary methods a democratic peace among the nations without annexations and indemnities, on the basis of free self-determination of the nations—at any price.

2. For this purpose the Constitutional Assembly demands complete separation from the brutal policy of the bourgeoisie, which is furthering the well-being of exploiters among a few selected nations by enslaving hundreds of millions of the toiling people, in colonies generally and in small countries.

The Constitutional Assembly accepts the policy of the Council of People's Commissaries, which has given complete independence to Finland, begun the transferring of soldiers from Persia, and declared for Armenia the right of self-determination.

A first blow to the international bank and finance capital, according to the Constitutional Assembly, is a law which annuls those loans, which have been taken by the governments of the Czar, of land owners and bourgeoisie; and that the Soviet Government is to continue firmly on this road until the final victory from the yoke of capital is won through international workers' revolt.

As the Constitutional Assembly was elected on the basis of the lists of candidates nominated before the November revolution, when the people as a whole could not yet rise against their exploiters, and did not know the extent of the latter's might of opposition in defending their own privileges, and had not yet begun to create a socialistic society, the Constitutional Assembly would consider it, even from a formal point of view, as unjust to put itself against the Soviet power. The Constitutional Assembly is of the opinion that now, in the decisive moment of the struggle of the people against the exploiters, the exploiters cannot have any seat in any of the Government organizations. The power must completely and without exception belong to the people and to its authoritative representatives—to the workers,' soldiers' and peasants' Soviets.