

THE LAND REVOLUTION IN RUSSIA

**Being a Speech on the
Land Question by**

LENIN

Together with the

**TWO FUNDAMENTAL LAND DECREES
OF THE RUSSIAN SOVIET REPUBLIC.**



**THE INDEPENDENT LABOUR PARTY,
8 and 9 Johnson's Court, Fleet Street, London, E.C. 4.**

6d.

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FOREWORD.

We have heard a good deal of the work done by the Soviet régime of Russia in the towns, but we know next to nothing of the revolution which has been accomplished in the Russian villages. Yet the degree in which the Revolution has affected the villages is of prime importance in a country which is so pre-eminently agricultural as Russia. The present pamphlet sheds considerable light upon this highly important aspect of the great Russian Revolution. The two decrees show the principles which were applied by Socialism in power to the solution of the land question, and Lenin's speech gives an outline of what has been practically accomplished in the application of those principles. It will be seen that Lenin considers the Revolution as having proved triumphant also in the villages.

The two decrees have already been translated in America, but rather badly. The present new translation is authoritative. Lenin's speech is translated for the first time, and the translation may also be regarded as accurate in every respect.

It deserves to be noted that the first Land Decree was issued by the congress of Soviets on the day following the successful accomplishment of the Bolshevik Revolution on November 7th, 1917, when the supreme executive authority in the country was grasped by the Council of People's Commissaries, entirely Bolshevik in its composition. Nevertheless, recognising the will of the people as the supreme law, the Council adopted as the basis for the decree the programme drawn up by the peasants themselves, who were at that time under the preponderating influence of the Socialist-Revolutionaries—a programme which the Bolsheviks had regarded as, on many points, impracticable.

The second decree was issued by the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets at a time when the Socialist-Revolutionaries of the Left were forming part of the Government and held, among others, the all-important portfolio of Agriculture. It represents, on the whole, a development of the first one, but contains highly important additions for the encouragement of collective tillage, introduced by the Bolsheviks. Lenin's speech explains the true significance of these additions.

We have pleasure in presenting these important documents to British readers on account not only of their historical interest, but because of their practical value.

PHILIP SNOWDEN,

August, 1919.

Editor.

LENIN'S SPEECH

At the First All-Russian Congress of Land Departments (of Soviets), Committees of the Poor, and Communes.

COMRADES,

The very composition of the present Congress indicates, in my opinion, the important change and the great step forward which has been made by us, the Soviet Republic, in the domain of Socialist reconstruction, especially in its agrarian aspect, the most important for our country. The present Congress unites in its body representatives of the Land Departments of the Soviets, of the committees of the Poor, and of agricultural communes; and this unity shows that our Revolution, in the short space of one year, has already gone far in the task of reconstructing those relations of society which always are hardest to alter, which in all previous revolutions more than anything else obstructed the path of Socialism, and which it is necessary to reconstruct most radically of all, in order to guarantee the victory of Socialism.

The first stage in the development of our Revolution after November was mainly devoted to the task of crushing the common enemy of the whole peasant class—the landowners.

You all know well, comrades, that even the March revolution, the revolution of the bourgeoisie and of the party of "compromise," promised the peasants this victory over the landowners. But it did not keep its promise. Only the November Revolution, only the victory of the working class in the towns, only the authority of the Soviets, made it possible really to free the whole of Russia, from end to end, from the mischievous heritage of our former serfdom—from the economic exploitation of the peasantry by the landowning bourgeoisie, whose yoke pressed impartially on all peasants without distinction.

The peasants—all sections of them—could not but rise—and actually did rise—in this war against the landowners. The struggle allied the poorest peasant class, which does not live by the exploitation of hired labour, with the more prosperous and even with the richest section of the peasantry, which cannot exist without hired labour.

So long as our Revolution was still preoccupied with this problem, so long as we had still to strain every nerve to the end that an independent peasant movement, assisted by the workers in the towns, might really sweep away and finally destroy the power of the landowners—so long our Revolution remained essentially the work of the entire peasantry, and for that reason could not free itself from its bourgeois setting. It did not as yet touch the stronger, the more up-to-date enemy of all workers—that is, Capitalism. It threatened, consequently, to remain half-finished, just as the majority of revolutions had remained in Western Europe, where a temporary alliance of urban workers with all the peasantry succeeded in overthrowing the Monarch, in sweeping away the remnants of medievalism, and in destroying, more or less completely, the great estates or the power of the landowners, but never succeeded in tearing up the foundations themselves of that power—viz., Capitalism.

It was to this task, much more important and much more difficult, that our Revolution began to turn its energies since summer and autumn of this year. A wave of counter-revolutionary revolts arose in the summer of this year, when all the elements that stand for exploitation and oppression in Russian life joined the campaign started against Russia by the Western European Imperialists and by their Czecho-Slovak hirelings; and it was this wave which awakened new activities and new life in the village. The risings united in practice, in a desperate struggle against Soviet power, the European Imperialists, their mercenaries, the Czecho-Slovaks, and all that remained in Russia on the side of the Capitalists and of the landlords; and, in their train, the village vultures revolted also. The village then ceased to be

homogeneous. In that community, which had fought as one man against the landlords, two camps were now formed: the camp of the labouring, the poorest peasants, who, together with the town workers, continued resolutely on the path towards the realisation of Socialism, and were passing from the war against landlords to the war against Capitalism, against the power of money, against exploitation for selfish ends of the great agrarian transformation; and the camp of the richer peasants. This struggle, which finally, definitely freed the Revolution from the propertied and exploiting classes, it was which shunted our Revolution, in all its entirety, on to the Socialist track on which the workers of the towns had firmly and resolutely intended to set it in November, but in which they would have never been able victoriously to guide it if they had not found conscious and united support in the villages.

That, then, is the significance of the Revolution which took place this summer and autumn in the most obscure corners of rural Russia—a Revolution that was not noisy, was not so patently visible and arresting as the November Revolution of last year, but which has a still greater, immeasurably more profound and important meaning.

The formation in the villages of the committees of the poor was the turning point, and showed that the working class of the towns, which united last November with all the peasants for the purpose of destroying the chief enemy of free, labouring and Socialist Russia—the landowners—had advanced from that problem to another, much more difficult, historically much higher, and really Socialistic. This was to stimulate in the villages, too, the understanding that the great agrarian Revolution, the November proclamation abolishing private property in land, and socialising it, would inevitably remain a mere paper reform if the town workers did not awaken to life the village proletariat, the village poor, the labouring peasantry, which constitutes the enormous majority, which, in common with the "middle" peasantry, does not exploit hired labour, and is not interested in such exploitation, and which, therefore, is capable of advanc-

ing—and has now done so—from a joint struggle against the landowners to a joint proletarian struggle against Capital itself, against the exploiters who rely on the power of money. In other words, having liberated Russia from the yoke of the landowners, it has now proceeded to the creation of a Socialist commonwealth.

This step, comrades, was the most difficult of all. Inevitable failure in it was the prospect held out to us by all those who doubted the Socialist character of our Revolution; and with its fate, indeed, is bound up at the present moment the fate of Socialist reconstruction in the villages. The formation of committees of the poor; the growth of a network of such committees through the length and breadth of Russia; their transformation, already begun, into fully competent village councils of delegates (Soviets), charged with the duty of laying foundations of Soviet reconstruction in the village on the basis of all authority for those who work—these are our best guarantees that we have not ended our labours at the point where the usual middle-class democratic revolutions of the West ended theirs. Having destroyed the Monarchy and the medieval power of the landowners, we now come to the problem of a genuinely Socialist régime. This problem is most difficult in the villages, but at the same time most important and most fruitful of all. If we have succeeded in the village itself in awakening class-consciousness amongst the labouring peasantry; if, by the very agency of the Capitalist revolts, its interests have been separated from those of the Capitalist class; if the labouring peasants, in their committees of the poor and their reconstructed Soviets, are becoming more and more closely united with the workers of the towns—then we have the only, the truest, the best pledge that the work of Socialist reconstruction in Russia has been put at last on a firm footing. It has acquired a foundation in the enormous mass of the agricultural village population.

There can be no doubt that, in a peasant country like Russia, Socialist reconstruction is a very difficult problem. Beyond doubt it was comparatively easy to overthrow enemies like the Tsardom or the power of the landowners.

It was possible to carry this out in the centre in a few days and throughout the country in a few weeks. But the problem we are tackling now is, of its very nature, one which can be solved only by long and stubborn effort. Here we have to fight step by step and yard by yard in the battle to secure the conquests of Socialist Russia and the communal tilling of the soil. Under no circumstances, of course, can such a change from small individual farming to communal tillage be completed all at once.

We know very well that in countries of small peasant proprietors the transition to Socialism is impossible without a whole series of gradual, preparatory stages. Recognising this, we confined ourselves to merely sweeping away and destroying the power of the landowners. The February law on socialisation of the land, by the unanimous decision, as you know, of both the Communists and of those adherents of the Soviet regime who did not share all their views, was thus both the expression of the thought and desires of the immense majority of the peasantry and a proof that the working class, the Communist Labour Party, had grasped the nature of the problem before it. Persistently and patiently, awakening by a series of gradual transitions, the class consciousness of the labouring section of the peasantry, and advancing only in proportion as that awakening progressed and the peasantry was organising by its own efforts, the working class was moving along the path to the new Socialist organisation.

We know well that such immense changes in the life of scores of millions of people, affecting the very foundations of life, as the transition from small peasant proprietorship to communal agriculture, can be effected only by prolonged effort; that, altogether, they can be realised only at the point when necessity forces men to rebuild their lives. But, after the desperate and prolonged war all over the world, we plainly see the beginning of a Socialist revolution all over the world. This necessity has been created even in the most backward countries, independently of theoretical considera-

tions and Socialist doctrines—a necessity which tells us all, in a voice of authority, that we cannot go on living in the old way.

When the country has suffered such colossal ruin and collapse; when we see that this collapse is spreading all over the world, that all the culture, arts and sciences which man acquired during many centuries have been swept away in four years of this criminal, destructive war of Capitalist greed; when we see that not only Russia, but all Europe, is returning to a state of barbarism—then among the large masses of the people, and among the peasants in particular, who perhaps have suffered most in this war, there plainly arises the consciousness that extraordinary efforts are necessary, that our capacities must be strained to the utmost, if we wish to be freed from this legacy of the accursed war, which left us only ruin and misery. We cannot live as we lived before the war; and such a waste of human power and labour, as is involved in small peasant economy, cannot go on any longer. The productivity of labour and the economy of effort would be doubled and trebled in agriculture if from the present disjointed individual system we could pass to one of collective tillage.

The ruin we have inherited from the war simply does not allow us to restore the old small peasant system. Not only have the peasant masses been awakened by the war; not only has the war shown them the technical marvels that exist nowadays, and their application to the destruction of mankind; but it has prompted in them the idea that these marvels ought to be devoted, first and foremost, to the reconstruction of the most universal as well as the most backward of all industries—agriculture. Not only has there been an awakening of consciousness as to this; but people have become aware, by the monstrous horrors of the present war, of the powers which have been created by modern technical developments, how they are wasted in this most terrible, most senseless war, and how the only escape from those horrors lies through these very forces of applied science. Our bounden duty is to direct them to the end that the most

backward industry, agriculture, should be put on a new track, should be rebuilt and transformed from an occupation carried on on lines of routine and tradition, as it has been for centuries, into an industry based upon the results of experimental and applied science. The war has awakened this consciousness immeasurably more than any of us can estimate. But, while doing this, it has also destroyed the *possibility* of continuing production on the old lines.

Those who think that after this war we can attain to a restoration of pre-war conditions, that we can restore the systems and methods of farming which prevailed hitherto, are mistaken, and every day shows them their mistake more and more clearly. The war has created such appalling ruin that small private farms have now neither working cattle, stock, nor implements. We cannot go on any longer with this criminal dissipation of labour. The toiling poorest peasantry, which made most sacrifices for the Revolution, suffered most in the war, did not take the land away from the landlords in order to give it to new vultures. Life itself is bringing that toiling peasantry face to face with the question of passing to communal tillage as the only way of restoring the civilisation ruined and broken by the war, as the only way to escape from that darkness, ignorance and oppression to which Capitalism hitherto condemned the whole mass of the rural population. It was that darkness and oppression which allowed the Capitalist to throttle Humanity during four years of war: and from it, all the workers of all countries, with revolutionary energy and determination, are making up their minds at all costs to be free.

Such, comrades, are the conditions which had to develop on a world-wide scale in order that this most difficult, and at the same time most important and fundamental reform in the work of Socialist reconstruction should become a question of practical politics—and that is what it is in Russia to-day. The formation of committees of the poor, the present congress of land sections of Soviets, of those committees of the poor, and of agri-

cultural communes—all this, considered in connection with the struggle which went on in the villages during the summer and autumn of this year, shows us that class-consciousness has been awakened in the vast masses of the peasantry, and that the movement towards communal tilling of the soil is a peasant movement, and is making way among the mass of the toiling peasantry. Of course—I repeat—we must approach this greatest of transformations gradually. Here nothing can be done at one blow. But I must remind you that in the fundamental law of the land socialisation, which was agreed upon on the day following the Revolution of November 7th, and was voted at the first session of the supreme authority in the country—the Second All-Russian Congress—it is laid down, not only that private property in land is forever abolished, not only that the ownership of large estates is destroyed, but also that the stock, cattle, and implements, which pass into the possession of the people and of working associations, must also become public property, and are not to remain the private property of those associations. Further, also, in the law of Socialisation passed in February, 1918, in reply to the question of what are the aims we set before ourselves, what problems in connection with the distribution of the land we wish to solve, and what we expect the supporters of the Soviet régime, the labouring peasantry, to carry out—to this question the law, in Article 2, replies that the task before us is the development of collective, in the place of private property, farming and rural economy, as the most beneficial from the point of view of labour and productivity, and with the object of effecting a transition to a Socialistic system.

When we were voting this law, comrades, we had not yet complete agreement between the Communists and the other parties; on the contrary we were voting it at a time when in the Soviet Government there was no unity between the Communists and the Left Social-Revolutionaries. Nevertheless, on this point we arrived at a unanimous decision, to which we still adhere, albeit mindful that such a transition from individual farming

to communal tilling, I repeat, cannot be accomplished all at once, and that the struggle in the towns was confronted with a simpler problem. There, against a thousand workmen, stood only the solitary Capitalist, and it did not require much labour to sweep him away. But the struggle in the villages was much more complex. At first there was a general attack of the peasants on the landowners, ending in a complete and final destruction of their power; and then a struggle within the peasantry itself, where, in the persons of the "kulaks," the exploiters, the speculators, using their surplus grain to make profits out of the hungry non-agricultural Russia, new Capitalists were arising. Here we were confronted with a new struggle; and you all know how this summer that struggle led to a whole series of risings. But even then there remained the question of the attitude of the poorest section of the toiling peasantry towards the "middle" peasantry, and here our policy was as unflinching as it had been against the landlords and the Capitalists. We do not say of the "kulak," as we do of the landlord or Capitalist, that he must be deprived of all property. We say that we must break down his resistance to such necessary measures, as, for example, the corn monopoly, which he does not observe in order to enrich himself by the speculative sale of surplus grain at a moment when the workmen and peasants of non-agricultural districts are experiencing the tortures of starvation. In the case of the "middle" peasantry our policy has always been one of alliance. They are in no way the enemies of Soviet institutions, of the proletariat, and of Socialism. They will, of course, hesitate, and will consent to come into the Socialist camp only when they see sound and unmistakeable proofs that such a course is absolutely necessary. We cannot, of course, convince this "middle" peasantry by theoretical arguments or by speeches, and we are not relying on such methods. What will convince them will be the example and solidarity of the peasant labourers, the union of the peasant labourers with the town proletariat; and here we are counting on a protracted and gradual process of

persuasion, on a series of transitional measures drawn up on the basis of an agreement between the proletarian Socialist section of the population, the Communists, carrying on a decisive struggle against Capitalism in all its forms, with the "middle" peasantry.

And so, taking account of these circumstances, taking account of the fact that in the village we have to deal with infinitely more complicated problems, we formulate the main problem in the way in which it is formulated in the law on the Socialisation of the land. You know that in that law the system of private property in land is abolished, and equitable distribution is instituted. You know that in this way the application of the law has begun, and that we have brought it into operation in most rural districts; that at the same time, by a general and unanimous agreement between the Communists and those who as yet did not share their views, a provision was inserted in the law which I have just read out to you, and which lays down that our common task, our common goal is a transition to Socialist economy, to collective ownership and communal tillage. The further the period of construction proceeds, the more clearly both the peasants who have already settled on the land, and the prisoners of war who are now, in their hundreds of thousands and millions, returning from captivity, exhausted and suffering, perceive the gigantic extent of what has to be done in order to rebuild our agriculture and to bring the peasants once and for all out of their former misery of neglect, oppression and ignorance. More and more clearly do they see that the only way out, the only way which will bring the peasants nearer to a civilised existence, which will really put them in a position of equality with other citizens, is through communal tillage of land. And it is towards communal tillage that, by gradual stages, the Soviet State is at present systematically moving. In the name of that communal tillage, communes and Soviet farms are being created. The significance of this kind of husbandry is indicated in the law on the Socialisation of the land, in the section dealing with the question as to who may enjoy it. You

will read that, amongst the persons and institutions who may enjoy the possession of land, the first place is held by the State, the second by public bodies under Soviet control, the third by agricultural communes, and the fourth by agricultural co-operative societies. Once again I draw your attention to the fact that these fundamental principles in the law were laid down when the Communist party was not merely enacting its own programme, but was also consciously making concessions to those who in one way or another expressed the class feeling and the will of the "middle" peasantry. We made and are still making concessions of that kind, and we do so because the transition to the collective form of land-holding, to communal tillage, to Soviet husbandry and communes is impossible all at once. A persistent and determined effort is required on the part of the Soviet Government, which has already assigned one milliard (1,000,000,000) roubles for agricultural improvements on the condition that communal tillage is taken up. This law shows that we desire to influence, mainly by the force of example, by the power of attraction exercised by improved farming, the masses of the "middle" peasantry, and are reckoning only on the gradual effect of such measures for this deepest and most important revolution in the economics of agricultural Russia.

The alliance between the Committees of the Poor, the agricultural communes and the Land Sections of the Soviets—the alliance which we see before us in the present Congress—shows us and convinces us that the business has been properly placed on a Socialist basis by this transition to communal farming. By means of this unflinching and systematic work we must attain an increase in the productivity of labour. For this purpose we must introduce the very best agricultural methods, draw upon the best agronomic experts of Russia, in order to profit to the full by the most scientifically regulated farms, which hitherto have served solely as a source of wealth for private individuals, as nurseries for a new Capitalism, new bondage, new enslavement of hired

workers; but now under the law on Socialisation and the complete abolition of private property in land, must become the source of agricultural knowledge and of increased productivity of labour for millions of workers.

In this union of the town workers with the labouring peasantry, in this formation of the Committees of the Poor and their transformation into Soviet institutions, we have a pledge that agricultural Russia has set her march along the path on which, after us, but for that very reason more firmly than ourselves, the Western European States are entering one by one. It has been much more difficult for them to begin the revolution, because their enemy was not a rotten autocracy but a most cultured and united Capitalist class; but you know that that change has begun and that the revolution has not stopped at the frontiers of Russia. You know that our main hope, our chief security, is the proletariat of the Western European and other advanced countries. It is the great buttress of the world-revolution. We firmly believe in it, and the progress of the German revolution shows us that we are justified. United with the workers of the towns, united with the Socialist proletariat of the whole world, the Russian labouring peasantry may now be assured that it will overcome all difficulties, all the attacks of the Imperialists, and will successfully solve the problem without which the emancipation of the workers cannot be achieved—the problem of communal tilling of the soil, the problem of the gradual but unswerving transition from small private farming to communal agriculture.

LAND DECREE

Of the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets of Workers',
Soldiers' and Peasants' Delegates, of November 8, 1917.

1. The landowners' right of property in land is herewith abolished without compensation.

2. The landowners' estates as well as all the lands of the Imperial family, of the monasteries and of the Church, with all their live and inanimate stocks, manor buildings and all appurtenances are placed in the charge of the cantonal Land Committees and District Soviets of Peasants' Delegates pending the decision of the Constituent Assembly on the land question.

3. Any damage caused to the thus confiscated property, which henceforth belongs to the entire people, is hereby declared a grave crime punishable by the revolutionary courts. The District Soviets of Peasants' Delegates shall take the necessary measures for carrying out the confiscation of the landowners' estates in a strictly orderly manner, for determining the maximum size and the kind of land plots which are to be confiscated, for drawing up an exact inventory of the entire property to be confiscated, and for the establishment of the strictest revolutionary control over all the property now passing into the hands of the people, including the buildings, implements and machinery, cattle, stores, etc.

4. The following Peasants' instruction, drawn up on the basis of 242 local peasants' instructions by the editorial committee of the *Izvestia* of the All-Russian Soviet of Peasants' Delegates and published in No. 88 (August 19th, 1919) of that paper, shall serve everywhere as a guidance for carrying out the great land reforms, pending the final decision on them of the Constituent Assembly.

5. The lands of the rank-and-file peasants and rank-and-file Cossacks are not subject to confiscation.

THE LAND INSTRUCTION OF THE PEASANTS.

The land problem in its entirety can only be solved by a popular Constituent Assembly. The most equitable solution of the land problem must proceed on the following lines:—

1. The right of private property in land is to be abolished for all time. The land shall not be bought, sold, leased or otherwise alienated. All lands, whether belonging to the State, the former Imperial family, the ex-Tsar, the monasteries, or the Church, whether copyhold, entailed, private, public or peasant,

shall be taken over without compensation, turned into the property of the entire people, and placed at the disposal of all who till them for use. Those who have suffered by this revolution in the property relations shall only be entitled to public support for such time as may be needed for their adaptation to the new conditions of life.

2. All the wealth that is below the surface, such as ore, oil, coal, salt, etc., as well as forests and waters which have a national importance, shall be placed in the hands of the State for its exclusive use. All the smaller rivers, lakes, woods, etc., are placed at the disposal of the communes, provided they are managed by the local organs of self-government.

3. Landed plots of high cultural value, such as orchards, plantations, nurseries, seed plots, hot-houses, etc., shall not be broken up and divided, but shall be preserved as model farms under the exclusive management of the State or commune, as suits their size and importance. Lands under dwelling houses, urban and rural, with the gardens and vegetable gardens belonging to them, shall be left in the use of their present owners, the size of such lands and the amount of tax to be paid for their use being fixed by subsequent legislation.

4. Studs, cattle-breeding and poultry farms, whether belonging to the State or to private individuals, shall become the property of the entire people under the management of the State or commune, as suits their size and importance. The question of compensation in such cases is reserved for the Constituent Assembly.

5. The entire farm property to be confiscated, *i.e.*, the live and dead stocks, shall be placed under the charge of the State or commune as the case may be, according to their size and importance, for their exclusive use, without any compensation. Peasants possessing insufficient amounts of land are not affected by the above provision regarding confiscating of farm properties.

6. The right to use the land shall be given to all citizens, regardless of sex, of the Russian State, who desire to work it by their own hands, that is, by the labour of their respective families or on co-operative principles, for such periods only as they are able to do so. Hired labour is not permissible. Should a member of a village community become disabled for a period not exceeding two years, the said village community shall, pending his recovery, assist him by arranging for the tillage of his land by means of public labour. Agriculturists who, through old age or permanent incapacity, should permanently cease to be able to work their lands, shall forfeit the right to use them, but shall receive a State pension instead.

7. The lands shall be distributed among those who use them on the principle of equalisation, that is, on the basis, as determined by local conditions, of the normal units of labour or food. No restrictions shall be placed on the mode of land-tenure, the individual villages determining whether it should be by households, individuals, village communities, or co-operative organisations.

8. All lands, on their confiscation, form the land stock of the entire people, its distribution among the labouring classes being effected by the local and central organs of self-government, from the democratically organised non-class village and urban communities up to the central regional institutions. The land stock shall be periodically re-divided in accordance with the changes in the population and the growth of productivity and the improvement of agriculture, provided that the original allotment-nucleus remains intact. The lands of those who cease to be members of their respective communities shall revert to the common land stock, the nearest relations of the previous users or persons designated by them being entitled to preference in any new allotment of them. The value of permanent improvements as well as the cost of the fertilisers put in such lands shall be repaid in so far as they have not been used up during the reversion of the allotment to the land stock.

Should the local available land stock prove insufficient to satisfy the needs of the entire local population, the surplus population shall be transferred elsewhere. This transfer shall be carried out by the State, which shall also bear the cost of the operation and of the supply of live and dead stock, etc. The population is to be transferred in the following order:—Willing peasants who have no lands at all; undesirable members of the community, deserters and others of that kind; and those who agree to go voluntarily or are selected by lots.

All the above provisions in the INSTRUCTION, as being the expression of the absolute will of the overwhelming majority of thinking peasants throughout Russia, shall have the force of a provisional law and shall, pending the meeting of the Constituent Assembly, be carried out with as little delay as possible, and in some parts, with the inevitable graduation determined upon by the District Soviets of Peasants' Delegates.

DECREE ON LAND SOCIALISATION

Of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Delegates. (Promulgated on February 19, 1918).

PART I.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES.

ART. 1. All property in land, underground wealth, waters, forests and living natural forces on the territory of the Russian Federal Soviet Republic is hereby abolished for all time.

ART. 2. The land is hereby handed over for use to the entire labouring people without any, overt or covert, redemption fees.

ART. 3. The right to use the land belongs only to those who till it by their own labour, except in cases expressly provided by the present law.

ART. 4. The right to use the land shall not be restricted either by sex, religion, race or nationality (including foreign).

ART. 5. The right to use the subsoil wealth, forests, waters and natural forces is vested, in accordance with their respective importance, in District, Provincial, Regional or Federal Soviet State authority under the control of the latter. The mode of using and disposing of the sub-soil wealth, forests, waters, or the living forces of nature, is to be defined by a special law.

ART. 6. All private agricultural machinery and live stock on farms which are worked by hired labour pass, without compensation, to the Land Departments of the District, Provincial, Regional or Federal Soviets in accordance with the degree of their importance.

ART. 7. All buildings of farms, comprised in Art. 6, and agricultural industries attached to them are vested, without compensation, in the District, Provincial, Regional or Federal Soviets in accordance with their importance.

ART. 8. All non-able-bodied persons who are deprived of all their means of livelihood by the present law alienating their estates, forests, stocks and other properties on the said estates, may, pending the issue of a general law of insurance of non-able-bodied citizens, and on a certificate from the local courts and the Land Departments of the Soviets, draw a pension, equivalent to that received by soldiers, for the remaining period of their lives, or until the attainment of majority, as the case may be.

ART. 9. The distribution of agricultural land among the labouring population is vested in the Village, Cantonal, District, Provincial, Regional or Federal Land Departments of the Soviets in accordance with their importance.

ART. 10. The lands which are held in reserve are vested, in each Republic, in the Land Departments of the main or Federal Soviets.

ART. 11. Over and above the equitable distribution of agricultural land among the labouring population and the most productive possible exploitation of natural riches, the land administration of the Land Departments of the local and central Soviet authority aims at the following objects:—

(a) To bring about such conditions as would favour the growth of the productive forces of the country, such as an increase of the fertility of the soil, the improvement of the technical methods of agriculture, and the increase of agricultural knowledge among the labouring masses of the agricultural population.

(b) To form a reserve stock of lands having agricultural value.

(c) To develop such kindred industries as horticulture, apiculture, vegetable gardening, cattle-breeding, dairy farming, etc.

(d) To accelerate the passage from inadequate to more productive systems of land-tillage in the different zones by an even distribution of working farmers.

(e) To foster collective farming as the more advantageous system in point of labour-saving and productivity, at the expense of individual farming, with a view to transition to Socialist agriculture.

ART. 12. The distribution of land among the labouring population shall be carried out on the principle of equalised labour in such a wise that the combined normal unit of food and labour, adapted to the historical system of land-tenure prevalent in each locality, does not exceed the labour capacity of each farming household and yet enables each family to live in adequate sufficiency.

ART. 13. Personal labour constitutes the general and fundamental basis of the right to use land of agricultural value. In addition, the organs of Soviet authority have the right, with a view to the improvement of agriculture by the organisation of model farms or experimental and index stations, to borrow limited plots from the reserve stock (former monastic, State, Imperial family, Tsar's personal and private owners' lands) and to work them by State-paid labour, such labour to be subject to workers' control according to general rule.

ART. 14. All citizens engaged in agriculture shall be insured at the expense of the State against death, old age, sickness and accidents impairing their capacity for work.

ART. 15. All incapacitated agriculturists and non-able-bodied members of their families shall be cared for at the expense of the organs of Soviet authority.

ART. 16. All working farms shall be insured against fire, foot-and-mouth disease, failure of harvest, drought, hail and other elemental calamities by way of mutual Soviets' insurance.

ART. 17. All surplus revenue resulting from the natural fertility of lands of better quality or from their more advantageous situation as regards the market shall be remitted to the local Soviet authorities for public needs.

ART. 18. The trade in agricultural machinery and seeds constitutes a monopoly of the Soviet authorities.

ART. 19. Both external and internal corn trade shall be a monopoly of the State.

PART II.

THE RIGHT TO USE THE LAND.

ART. 20. The right to use definite plots of surface land for public and private needs on the territory of the Russian Soviet Federal Republic belongs to:—

(a) *For cultural and educational purposes.*

1. The State as represented by the organs of State authority, Federal, Regional, Provincial, District, Cantonal and Village.
2. Public bodies, with the sanction and under the control of the local Soviet authorities.

(b) *For agricultural purposes.*

3. Agricultural Communes.
4. Agricultural co-operative societies.
5. Village Communities.
6. Individual families and persons.

(c) *For building purposes.*

7. Soviet authorities
8. Public bodies and individual families and persons, provided the buildings are not used for making profit.
9. Commercial, industrial and transport businesses, by special permission and under the control of the Soviet authorities.

(d) *For traffic purposes.*

10. The Soviet authorities, Federal, Regional, Provincial, District, Cantonal and Village, according to the importance of the means of communication.

PART III.

THE MODE OF GRANTING LAND FOR USE.

ART. 21. In the first instance, land for use is granted to those who intend working on it, not for their own private profit, but for public benefit.

ART. 22. The following order is to be observed in granting the use of land for agriculture for private gain:—

First, to that part of the local agricultural population which has no, or insufficient land, as well as the local agricultural labourers, both on equal terms.

Second, to that part of the agricultural population which has immigrated into the locality after the promulgation of the present Decree.

Third, to the non-agricultural population in the order in which they have registered in the Land Department of the local Soviet authority.

Note.—In determining the mode and order of granting the use of lands, preference is to be given to working agricultural co-operatives as against individuals.

ART. 23. The use of lands for horticulture, market-gardening, apiculture, fishing, cattle-breeding and afforestation is to be granted on the following principles:—

First, such lands as are unsuitable for agriculture, and second, such lands suitable for agriculture, which by reason of local conditions are more suitable for this or other farming pursuit.

ART. 24. In rural localities land for building purposes is allotted by the local Soviet and local population. In urban localities land for building purposes is allotted, according to the order of applications, by the local Soviet, on the condition that the building shall not injure the other buildings in the neighbourhood and that it satisfies all the requirements of the building bye-laws.

Note.—Land for public buildings is allotted without regard to the order of applications.

PART IV.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A NORMAL UNIT OF FOOD AND LABOUR.

ART. 25. The quantity of land allotted to individual households for agriculture with a view to gaining a livelihood shall not exceed the combined normal unit of food and labour in the respective zone, as calculated on the basis of the INSTRUCTIONS appended herewith.

Instruction for determining the normal unit of food and labour in respect of the use of land of agricultural value.

1. All agricultural Russia is divided into as many zones as there are traditional systems of tillage at the present economic stage of development (such as the fallow-land, three-field, eight-field, multi-field, crop-rotation, and other systems).

2. For each of these zones a special food-and-labour unit shall be established, which may be altered within each zone for this or other farm land on the ground of climatic conditions, the natural fertility of the soil, proximity to the market (town or railway), and others of a local nature.

3. With a view to an exact calculation of this normal unit in each zone an agricultural census shall be taken in the near future all over Russia.

Note.—A complete survey of the land is to be taken immediately after the present DECREE has been carried out.

4. The distribution of land on the principle of equal labour-quantities among the agricultural population is to be effected zone by zone in the manner provided for by the present DECREE.

Note.—Pending the complete application of the present Decree in the various localities, the relations of the agriculturists are regulated by the Land Departments of the Soviets, in accordance with a special instruction to be issued on the subject.

5. The normal unit of food and labour in a zone is to be determined by the normal, that is, average-sized farm-household in one of the districts (or any other administrative and farming unit, equal in size) of the zone, having a density of population which is the lowest in the zone, and such a proportion of various kinds of lands (arable, pasture, alluvial, dried-up, meadow, waste, kitchen-garden, etc.) as would be judged by the local population (as represented by the Regional or Provincial meeting of the Land Departments of the Soviets) to be the most normal, that is, most suitable for agriculture of the type prevailing in the zone.

6. In determining the average, now prevailing, type of peasant land tenure, only those lands must, in the first instance, be taken into consideration which were *de facto* held by the working peasants before 1917, that is, those which had been bought by village communities, peasant co-operative societies and individual persons; as well as those held on lease or as allotments from the time of Emancipation.

7. Woods, subsoil minerals and waters are to be excluded from the above computation.

8. The computation also excludes all private farms hitherto worked by hired labour and held *de facto* in ownership or lease by the State, private banks, monasteries, the former Imperial family, and landlords, including the ex-Tsar and the Church, since they are to form the Land Reserve Stock, out of which allotments are to be made to all peasants having no lands at all, or only such quantities which are below the now prevailing peasant normal unit of food and labour.

9. In calculating the entire quantity of land held *de facto* by the working peasants before the Revolution of 1917, it is necessary to compute it in respect of each kind of land separately, such as arable, meadow, pasture, alluvial, etc.

10. This computation is to be made both in absolute figures and in percentages of the total quantities, for each individual household-farm, for the village community, canton, district, province, region, or the entire zone.

11. In thus computing the total quantity of lands it is necessary to establish the quality of productivity of each typical *dessyatin* of arable and meadow land on the basis of the crop per *dessyatin* of each soil in the zone, calculated in *poods* of corn or hay on the figures of the last ten years.

12. Along with the computation of the quantity and quality of the land, it is necessary to calculate the entire population in the given zone, which is engaged in agriculture or is dependent upon it.

13. The census of the population engaged in agriculture must be made according to sex and age as well as family status for each farming unit separately, afterwards summing up the figures according to village, canton, district and province in the zone.

14. In taking the census of the population it is necessary to compute the number of labour power units (L.P.) and of mouths, for which purpose the entire population is divided according to age, thus:—

Non-able-bodied.

Girls up to the age of 12. Boys up to the age of 12. Men after the age of 60. Women after the age of 50.

(Non-able-bodied persons through sickness are registered separately according to physical or mental sickness).

Able-bodied.

Men between the ages of 18 and 60	...	...	1.0 LP.
Women " " 18 " 50	...	...	.8 "
Boys " " 12 " 16	...	...	.5 "
Girls " " 12 " 16	...	...	.5 "
Boys " " 15 " 18	...	...	.75 "
Girls " " 15 " 18	...	...	.6 "

Note.—Departure from these figures is permitted, with special reference to climatic conditions and local customs of life, on a decision of the respective local Soviet authorities.

15. The number of *dessyatins* per LP. is arrived at by the division of the total number of *dessyatins* by the number of LP.

16. The number of non-able-bodied mouths per LP. is determined by the division of the total number of non-able-bodied agricultural population by the number of LP.

17. It is also necessary to take a census of the number of working horned and small cattle which can be supported on one *dessyatin* by one LP.

18. In determining the average, now prevailing, size of peasant holding in a district which is taken as the fundamental unit for the entire zone, it is necessary to find the average (in point of quality and productivity) *dessyatin*, which average is the quotient in the division of the sum total of the crops collected from all the *dessyatins* of different soils by the number of these soils.

19. The average figure thus arrived at constitutes the basis for determining the normal food-and-labour unit to which the individual household-farms are to be levelled up from the Land Reserve throughout the zone.

Note.—Should the average figure determined as above be found, on a provisional computation, to be inadequate for enabling a household to live in sufficiency (vide Part I., Art. 12), it shall be increased from the Land Reserve.

20. In order to determine the quantity of land of different kinds (arable, pasture, meadow, etc.) requisite for supplementary allotment in the case of those who hold insufficient land, it is necessary to multiply the quantity of *dessyatins* per one LP. in the district by the sum total of the working agricultural LP. in the zone and subtract from the product the quantity of land held by working peasants.

21. By comparing the quantity of land (in figures and percentages, according to its different kinds) in the Land Reserve with the quantity of land requisite for supplementary allotments among those who hold insufficient land, it is necessary to compute whether a resettlement of the population can be effected within the limits of the given zone. If it can, the size and the absorbing capacity of the Land Reserve must be determined; if not, it is the number of family households to be settled in another zone which has to be determined.

Note.—Both in cases when free land is available and when it is not, the principal Land Departments of the Soviet authority must be kept informed as to where, how much and what kind of lands are available unoccupied.

22. In connection with the supplementary allotment of lands among individual farms it is necessary exactly to compute the quantity and quality of the lands held by them according to kind (arable, pasture, meadow, etc.), the number of cattle according to stock, the composition of the family in respect of LP., mouths, etc.

23. When determining the supplementary allotment of lands among individual farms on the basis of the normal food-and-labour unit it is necessary to increase the allotment in proportion (1) to the excessive number of non-able-bodied mouths as compared with the LP., in the family; (2) to the poor quality of the lands already held by the family; and (3) to the quality of the land, arable or meadow, in the Land Reserve, out of which the allotment is to be made.

24. In the case of supplementary allotment of lands on the basis of the normal food-and-labour unit, should the quantity of lands of any kind be insufficient in a given district, the family is to be allotted a corresponding quantity of land of another kind.

PART V.

QUANTITY OF LAND TO BE ALLOTTED FOR BUILDING, EDUCATIONAL AND INDUSTRIAL FARMING PURPOSES.

ART. 25. When land is intended not for agriculture, but for cultural and educational or industrial purposes as well as for buildings for personal needs, or for the pursuit of cattle-breeding, horticulture, and other farming pursuits, the quantity of land to be allotted must be determined by the local Soviets in accordance with the needs of the persons or bodies applying for the use of the land, and with the social utility of the purpose for which the land has been applied.

PART VI.

EMIGRATION AND RESETTLEMENT.

ART. 27. If the Free Land Reserve in a given zone proves insufficient to supply with supplementary allotments those who hold insufficient land, some of the latter may be settled in another zone where there is a sufficiency of free lands.

ART. 28. The transfer of agriculturists from one zone to another must be preceded by a resettlement of the agriculturists within that zone.

ART. 29. Both the transfer from one zone to another and the resettlement within the same zone must be carried out in such a wise that those most distant from the lands of the Land Reserve

are transferred first, and that in case of equal distance the order in which the lands of the Land Reserve are distributed be as follows:—

(a) First come the agriculturists of that village in the vicinity of which the free lands are situated.

Note.—If there are several of such villages, preference is to be given to those who have hitherto tilled those lands.

(b) Second come the agriculturists of the canton within the boundaries of which the free lands are situated.

(c) Third come the agriculturists of the district within the boundaries of which the free lands are situated.

(d) Last come, if the given system of tillage embraces several provinces, the agriculturists of that province within the boundaries of which the free lands are situated.

ART. 30. This being the order to be observed in the distribution of lands, the following is the order in which the population is to be moved from one place to another: (a) volunteers; (b) village communities suffering most from lack of land; (c) land-needy agricultural co-operative societies, agricultural communes, families with abundant LP., and the smallest families.

ART. 31. The allotment of lands among land-needy families which have to be moved is to be carried out in the following order or rotation: (a) the smallest land-needy families; (b) the most land-needy families with abundant LP.; (c) land-needy village communities; (d) co-operative societies; and (e) agricultural communes.

ART. 32. The moving from one zone to another must be carried out in such a wise that the new locality should not only offer through the natural conditions a real chance for engaging in agriculture with success, but also, in respect of soil, climate, etc., correspond to the conditions of the old locality. It is also necessary to take into consideration the habits of life and the nationality of the settlers.

ART. 33. The settlement of agriculturists in new localities is to be carried out at the expense of the State.

ART. 34. It is the duty of the State to assist the new settlers in the provision of buildings as well as in the construction of roads, wells, ponds, and reservoirs, by the supply of agricultural implements and fertilisers, by artificial irrigation whenever necessary, and by the organisation of educational establishments.

Note.—With a view to the earliest possible development of Socialist agriculture, the State is to give every assistance to the new settlers in introducing collective farm management on scientific principles.

PART VII.

THE FORM OF TILLAGE.

ART. 35. With a view to the earliest realisation of Socialism, the State is to give every encouragement, material and moral, to the collective system of tillage, giving preference to the communist and co-operative farm management as against individual.

ART. 36. With a view to combating the interpolation, so harmful to the development of agriculture, in lands tilled by one party, of strips belonging to another, lands allotted for collective or individual tillage must, as far as possible, be concentrated on the same spot.

PART VIII.

ACQUISITION OF THE RIGHT TO USE THE LAND.

ART. 37. The right to use the land is acquired on the strength of following qualifications:—

(a) *For cultural and educational purposes.*

1. Public utility.

(b) *For agricultural purposes.*

1. Personal labour.

(c) *For building purposes.*

1. Public utility or need.
2. Housing requirements.
3. Needs of a farm worked without hired labour.

(d) *For the construction of ways of communication.*

1. Public need.

PART IX.

PROCEDURE OF ACQUISITION OF THE RIGHT TO USE THE LAND.

ART. 38. The acquisition of the right to use the land is preceded by the handing in of an application to this effect at the Land Department of the Soviet authority of the locality in which a person wishes to obtain a plot of land for use.

ART. 39. The application establishes the order in which it is examined, and its satisfaction in respect of the quantity of land applied for follows the general provisions of the present DECREE.

Note 1.—In addition to the full name and surname as well as residence of the applicant for the land, the application must show his previous application, the object for which the land is required, the family status or size of family, the quantity and kind of dead or live stock available, the place where land is applied for, the size of the plot required, and the ground for determining upon such size.

Note 2.—The decision of the Land Department of the Cantonal Soviet may be made, within one week, the subject of an appeal to the Land Department of the District Soviet, and the decision of the District Department may be appealed against, within a fortnight, to the Provincial Department.

Note 3.—The right to use the land (its subsoil, waters, forests and natural forces) can in no circumstances be acquired by purchase or lease or gift or inheritance or any other private transaction whatever.

PART X.

TAKING POSSESSION OF THE LAND FOR USE.

ART. 40. The following in each individual case is the mode of taking possession of the land for use:—

ART. 41. For building purposes the right to the use of the land is made good by actual occupation of the land, or preparation for such occupation, within not more than three months after the receipt of notification from the local Soviet authority.

Note.—As actual preparation is to be regarded the collection of building material at the place of building or the conclusion of an agreement with men for the commencement of building operations at that place.

ART. 42. For farming pursuits of any semi-industrial kind without hired labour, the right to use the land is made good by actual engagement in the said pursuits at the commencement of the next agricultural season.

ART. 43. For the pursuit of agriculture, the right to till the land is made good by actual application of labour (not hired) all over the area, not later than the next agricultural season after the receipt of the notification of the Land Department of the local Soviet authority.

Note.—The construction of buildings of a permanent character on arable land is permitted with the special sanction of the Land Department of the local Soviet authority only.

ART. 44. Should it prove impossible for the user to take possession of the land allotted to him within the prescribed period, the Land Department of the local Soviet authority may grant a delay, if failure to take possession of the land has been due to serious reasons, such as illness of the labourer, natural calamity, etc.

PART XI.

TRANSFER OF THE RIGHT TO USE THE LAND.

ART. 45. The right to use the land in anyone's occupation cannot be transferred to another person.

ART. 46. The right to use the land is acquired by the procedure laid down in the present DECREE only, and cannot under any circumstances pass from one person to another.

PART XII.

SUSPENSION OF THE RIGHT TO USE THE LAND.

ART. 47. The right of a person to use the land may be temporarily suspended without being totally extinguished.

ART. 48. Any person occupying land may cease using it without losing his right to use it at any future date (a) if a natural calamity (such as an overflow of a river or collapse of a dyke) temporarily prevents him from using it; (b) if he is visited by a temporary, but grave, illness; (c) if he has to perform some obligatory State or other public service, and in other socially deserving cases, pending the return of conditions enabling him to resume the use of the land.

Note.—The period of suspension is determined in each case by the Land Department of the local Soviet authority.

ART. 49. In all cases of interruption of agricultural activity, mentioned in the preceding article, as well as in cases of temporary disablement, death, etc., the local Soviet authority, with a view to the preservation of the property of the concern and the continuation of the production, must either organise public assistance for the farm or apply hired labour at the expense of the State and subject to the general rules of workers' control.

PART XIII.

THE EXTINCTION OF THE RIGHT TO USE THE LAND.

ART. 50. The right to use the land may become extinguished in respect either of the whole or of part of the working household or other unit.

ART. 51. The right to use the land may become extinguished in the case of a person either completely, or in respect of a particular plot of land.

ART. 52. The right to use the land becomes totally extinguished (a) in the case of an institution, with its abolition, or with the abolition of the object for which the land has been taken; (b) in the case of working associations, like co-operative societies or communes, with their breaking-up or their civil extinction as an economic unit; (c) in the case of individual citizens, with their death or loss of all civil right by a verdict of the courts; (d) in the case of physical impossibility for a person to carry on the pursuit, accompanied by the presence of other sources of livelihood (such as the receipt of a pension by the non-able-bodied).

ART. 53. The right of using a given plot of land is extinguished :

(a) In cases of a formal refusal to use it.

(b) In cases of a refusal to use it, even if not accompanied by a formal refusal.

(c) In cases of employment of the land for prohibited purposes (such as turning the land into a dumping ground for rubbish).

(d) In cases of employment of the land in an unlawful manner (such as the secret employment of hired labour).

(e) In cases when the use of the land proves a nuisance to the neighbouring farms (as, for instance, in chemical manufacture).

Note.—The user of land is entitled, if his right to the land has been extinguished and he has not received adequate compensation in the form of revenue from it during the time of his occupation, to demand from the Land Department of the Soviet authority compensation for the still inexhausted improvements as well as for all labour invested by him in the soil, plantations and buildings.

(Signed),

SVERDLOFF, President of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the Councils of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Delegates.

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