

RUSSIA GIVES THE LAND TO THE PEOPLE

The Soviets Government's Decree on the Land

The Congress of Soviets of Workmen and Soldiers' Delegates passed at the meeting on October 25th, 1917, at 2 a.m., the following Decree on the land:—

1. All private ownership of land is abolished immediately without indemnity.

2. All landowners' estates, likewise all the lands of the crown, monasteries, church lands, with all their live stock and inventory property, homestead, constructions and all appurtenances pass over into the disposition of the Volost Land Committees and District Soviets of Peasants (delegates until the Constituent Assembly meets).

3. Any damage whatever done to the confiscated property belonging henceforth to the whole people is regarded as a grievous crime, punishable by the Revolutionary Court of Justice. The District Soviet of Peasants Delegates shall take all necessary measures for the observance of the strictest order during the confiscation of the landowners' estates, to determine the dimensions of the plots of land, and to decide which of them are subject to confiscation, for the drawing up of an inventory of the whole confiscated property, and for the strictest revolutionary guard of all farming property, of the land with all the construction, implements, cattle, supplies of products, etc., passing over to the people.

4. For guidance during the realisation of the great land reforms, with their final solution by the Constituent Assembly shall be used the following peasant nakoz (instruction) drawn up on the basis of 242 local peasant nakozes by the editor's office of the "Investia of All-Russia Soviet of Peasants Delegates," and published in No. 88 of the said Investia (Petrograd No. 88, August 19th, 1917).

Re THE LAND

The question *re* the land may be decided only by the General Constituent Assembly. Meanwhile, equitable solution of the land question, the following must be adopted:—

1. The right of private ownership of the land is abolished for ever; the land cannot be sold, nor leased, nor mortgaged, nor alienated in any other way. All the lands of the State, the Crown, the Cabinet, the monasteries, churches, possession lands, entailed estates, private lands, public and peasant lands, etc., shall be alienated without any indemnity; they shall become the property of the people and the usufructory property of all those who cultivate them.

For those who may suffer from this socialisation of property the right is recognised to receive public assistance only during the time necessary for them to adapt themselves to the new conditions of existence.

2. All the underground wealth: the ore, naphtha, coal, salt, etc., and also the forests and waters, having a general importance, shall pass over to the exclusive use of the State. All the minor rivers, lakes, forests, etc., shall be the usufruct of the Committees provided they be under the management of the local organisation of self-government.

3. The most highly cultivated plots of land: gardens, plantations, nursery gardens, seed-plots, green houses, etc., shall not be divided, but they shall be transformed into model farms, and handed over as the exclusive usufruct of the State or Committees in proportion to their dimensions or importance. Homestead lands, town and county lands, with private gardens and kitchen gardens remain as usufructs of their present owners; the extent of such lands and the rates or taxes to be paid for their use shall be established by law.

4. Studs, governmental and private cattle-breeding enterprises, etc., shall become the property of the people, and pass over, either for the exclusive use of the State or a community, according to their dimensions and importance. All questions of redeeming same shall be submitted to the examination of the Constituent Assembly.

5. All the agricultural inventories, property of the confiscated lands, the live and dead stock, pass over to the exclusive use of the State, or a community depending on their dimensions and local importance without any indemnity.

The confiscation of property shall not concern peasants who have small amount of land.

NO HIRED LABOUR ALLOWED

6. The right to use the land shall belong to all citizens (without distinction of sex) of the Russian State, who wish to work the land themselves with the help of their families, or in partnership, only for so long as they are capable of working it themselves. No hired labour is allowed.

In the event of the temporary incapacity of a member of a County Community, such incapacity not lasting more than two years, during the course of two years, the Community shall be bound to render him assistance by cultivating his land. Agriculturists who, in consequence of old age or sickness, have lost the capacity to cultivate their land, shall lose the right to use it, and they shall receive instead a pension from the State.

7. The use of the land shall be distributive, *i.e.*, the land shall be distributed amongst the labourers, according to local conditions. The way in which the land is to be used may be freely selected; as homesteads or farm, or by communities or associations, as it will be decided in the separate villages and settlements.

8. All the land, upon its alienation, is entered in the general popular land fund. The local and central self-governing organisations, from the democratically organised villages and town communities to the central province institutions, shall see to the distribution of the land amongst the persons desirous of working it.

The land fund is subject to periodical re-distributions according to the increase of the population and the development of its productivity and cultivation.

Through all changes of the uses of the allotments, the original kernel of the allotment must remain intact.

The land of any member leaving the community returns to the land fund, and the preferential right to receive allotments of the retiring members belongs to their nearest relations or the persons indicated by them.

The value of manuring and improvements invested on the lands in so far as the same have not been used up when the allotments, will be returned to the land fund, must be reimbursed.

If in some places the land fund should prove to be insufficient for the needs of the local population, the surplus of the population must emigrate.

The organisation of emigration, also the costs thereof and that of providing the emigrants with the necessary stock must be borne by the State.

The emigration is carried out in the following order: first, the peasants without land who express the wish to emigrate, then the depraved members of the community, deserters, etc., and, lastly, by drawing lots in agreement.

All that is contained in this nokoz, being the expression of the will of the greatest majority of conscious peasants of the whole of Russia, is declared to be a temporary law, which, till the Constituent Assembly, is to be put into execution as far as possible immediately, and in some parts of it, gradually as may be determined by the district Soviets of peasant delegates.

The land of peasants and Cossacks serving in the ranks shall not be confiscated.

Chairman of the Council of Peoples Commissaries,

VLADIMIR OULIANOFF (LENIN).

October 26th, 1917.