

# The Agrarian Question

Thesis Adopted by the Second Congress of the Communist International, Moscow, August, 1920

1.—No one but the city industrial proletariat, led by the Communist Party, can save the laboring masses in the country from the pressure of capital and landlordism, from dissolution and from imperialist wars, inevitable as long as the capitalist regime endures. There is no salvation for the peasants except to join the Communist proletariat, to support with heart and soul its revolutionary struggle to throw off the yoke of the landlords and the bourgeoisie.

On the other hand the industrial workers will be unable to carry out their universal historic mission, and to liberate humanity from the bondage of capital and war, if they shut themselves within their separate crafts, their narrow trade interests, and restrict themselves self-sufficiently to a desire for the improvements of their sometimes tolerable bourgeois conditions of life. That is what happens in most advanced countries possessing a "labor aristocracy," which forms the basis of the would-be Parties of the Second International, who are in fact the worst enemies of Socialism, traitors to it, bourgeois jingoes, agents of the bourgeoisie in the labor movement. The proletariat becomes a truly revolutionary class, truly Socialist in its actions, only by acting as the vanguard of all those who work and are being exploited, only as their leader in the struggle for the overthrow of the oppressors; and this cannot be achieved without carrying the class struggle into the agricultural districts, without making the laboring masses of the country all gather around the Communist Party of the town proletariat, without the peasants being educated by the town proletariat.

2.—The laboring and exploited masses in the country, which the town proletariat must lead on to the fight, or at least win over to its side, are represented in all capitalist countries by the following groups:—

In the first place the agricultural proletariat, the hired laborers (by the year, by the day, by the job) making their living by wage labor in capitalist agricultural or industrial establishments. The independent organization of this class, separated from the other groups of the country population (in a political, military, trade, co-operative, educational sense), and an energetic propaganda among it, in order to win it over to the side of the Soviet Power and of the dictatorship of the proletariat—such is the fundamental task of the Communist Parties in all countries.

In the second place the semi-proletariat or small peasants, those who make their living partly by working for wages in agricultural and industrial capitalist establishments, partly by toiling on their own or a rented piece of land yielding but a part of the necessary food produce for their families. This class of the rural population is rather numerous in all capitalist countries, but its existence and its peculiar position is hushed up by the representatives of the bourgeoisie and the yellow "Socialists" affiliated to the Second International. Some of these people intentionally cheat the workers, but others follow blindly the average views of the "peasantry." Such a method of bourgeois deceit of the workers is used more particularly in Germany and France, and to a lesser extent in America and other countries. Provided that the work of the Communist Party is well organized, this group is sure to side with the Communists, the conditions of life of these half-proletarians being very hard; the advantage the Soviet Power and the dictatorship of the proletariat would bring them being enormous and immediate. In some countries there is no clear-cut distinction between these two groups; it is therefore permissible under certain circumstances not to form them into separate organizations.

In the third place the little proprietors, the small farmers who possess by right of ownership, or rent small portions of land which satisfy the needs of their family and of their farming without requiring any additional wage labor. This part of the population as a class gains everything by the victory of the proletariat, which brings with it: (a) liberation from

the payment of rent or of a part of the crops (for instance, the "metayers" in France, the same arrangements in Italy, etc. to the owners of large estates; (b) Abolition of all mortgages; (c) Abolition of many forms of pressure and of dependence on the owners of large estates (forests and their use, etc.); (d) Immediate help from the proletarian state for farm work (permitting use by peasants of the agricultural implements and partly the buildings on the big capitalist estates expropriated by the proletariat, immediate transformation by the proletarian state power of all rural co-operatives and agricultural companies, which under the capitalist rule were chiefly supporting the wealthy and the middle peasantry, into institutions primarily for support of the poor peasantry; that is to say, the proletarians, semi-proletarians, small farmers, etc.)

At the same time the Communist Party should be thoroughly aware that during the transitional period leading from capitalism to Communism, i.e., during the dictatorship of the proletariat, at least some partial hesitations are inevitable in this class, in favor of unrestricted free trade and free use of the rights of private property. For this class, being a seller of commodities (although on a small scale), is necessarily demoralized by profit-hunting and habits of proprietorship. And yet, provided there is a consistent proletarian policy, and the victorious proletarian deals relentlessly with the owners of the large estates and the landed peasants, the hesitations of the class in question will not be inconsiderable, and cannot change the fact that on the whole this class will side with the proletarian revolution.

3. All these three groups taken together constitute the majority of the agrarian population in all capitalist countries. This guarantees in full the success of the proletarian revolution, not only in the towns, but in the country as well. The opposite view is very widely spread, but it persists only because of a systematic deceit on the part of bourgeois scientists and statisticians. They hush up by every means any mention of the deep chasm which divides the rural classes we have indicated, from the exploiting landowners and capitalists, and the half-proletarians and small peasants on the one hand, from the landed peasants on the other. This arises from the incapacity and the failure of the heroes affiliated to the yellow Second International and the "labor aristocracy," demoralized by imperialist privileges, to do genuine propaganda work on behalf of the proletarian revolution, or to conduct organizing work among the poor in the country. All the attention of the opportunists was given and is being given now to the arrangement of theoretical and practical agreements with the bourgeoisie, including the landed and the middle peasantry, which we have described, and not to the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeois government and the bourgeois class by the proletariat. Finally, this view persists because of the force of inveterate prejudice already possessing strong roots (and connected with all bourgeois-democratic and parliamentary prejudices), and the incapacity to grasp a simple truth fully proved by the Marxian theory and confirmed by the practice of the proletarian revolution in Russia. This truth consists in the fact that the peasant population of the three classes we have mentioned above, being extremely oppressed, scattered and doomed to live in half-civilized conditions in all countries, even in the most advanced, is economically, socially, and morally interested in the victory of Socialism; but that it will finally support the revolutionary proletariat only after the proletariat has taken the political power, after it has done away with the owners of the large estates and the capitalists, after the oppressed masses are able to see in practice that they have an organized leader and helper sufficiently powerful and firm to support, to guide, and to show the right way.

The "middle peasantry," in the economic sense, consists of small landowners who possess, according to the right of ownership or rent, portions of land, which, although small, nevertheless may (1) yield usually under capitalist rule not only a scanty provision for the family and the needs of the farming, but also the possibility to accumulate a certain surplus, which, at least in the best years, could be trans-

formed into capital; and (2) need to employ (for instance in a family of two or three members) wage-labor. As a concrete example of the middle peasantry in an advanced capitalist country we may take in Germany, according to the registration of 1917, a group tilling farms of from five to ten acres, of which farms the number employing hired agricultural laborers makes up about a third of the whole number in the group. (These are the exact figures: number of farms from 5—10 acres 552,798 (out of 5,736,082); they possess in all sorts of hired workers, 478,794—the number of workers with their families (Familienangehoerige) being 2,013,633. In Austria, according to the census of 1910, there were 383,351 farms in this group; 126,136 of them employing hired labor; 146,044 hired workers, 1,215,969 workers with their families. The total number of farms in Austria amounts to 2,856,349). In France, the country of a greater development of intensive culture, for instance of the vineyards, requiring special treatment and care, the corresponding group employs wage labor probably in a somewhat larger proportion.

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## DIVIDING THE SPOILS

### BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE THIEVES KITCHEN.

#### Magnate Cut Magnate.

What do our rulers spend sleepless nights (if any) over? Are they troubled about the homeless victims of the devastation in France? Or the invalid children and the starving old people in Vienna? Or the mess they are making of all Europe? On arrival in this country for the London Conference, almost the first words of the French Premier to Lloyd George were: "We must punish Hugo Stinnes."

Observe, if you please, how reparations are decided upon!

Here is the real story of the London Conference, where Dr. Simons "failed."

Here is the real reason why there is about to be a fresh march for loot into Germany.

**M.** FRANCIS DELAISI never fails to be interesting. In the Paris "Progres Civique" he describes the battle of the industrial captains which preceded and formed the reality behind the shows of the London Conference.

It is a comedy of the conflict of Stinnes and Loucheur, with a third party coming in at the end to rejoice.

M. Loucheur was, says M. Delaisi, a successful contractor who made continually increasing coups during the war, until finally he was carrying out with his "Societe Generale d' Entreprises," the most varying and important works. Like Stinnes he was interested in the Press—the "Petit Journal" and "Paris Midi." In Parliament he passed from office to office—Senator, Chairman of Committee, Minister of Munitions, Minister for Reconstruction, and finally Minister for the Liberated districts, in which capacity he came to the London Conference. Delaisi describes the first plans of Stinnes and Loucheur for joint working in the devastated districts of Northern France, German material and labor being used only so far as to avoid annoyance to French industry, and—the main thing—French ores from Lorraine being exchanged for German coal and coke.

Meanwhile, a supposed sympathiser with their plans, M. Charles Laurent, president of the Union of Metallurgic and Mining Industries, and of the Committee for the restoration of industrial activity in the devastated districts, went to Berlin as French Ambassador.

But it was no part of Britain's aims to drive German industry out of the world market merely for France's benefit. The Versailles Treaty had very satisfactorily left the good coking coal within the German frontiers when France was given the iron of Lorraine. At all costs this situation must be preserved, and that meant that at all costs Franco-German understanding must be prevented.

So Lord d'Abernon came on the scene. Like Stinnes and Loucheur the British Ambassador at Berlin is not a diplomat by profession. A prosperous career in the Near East led in the end to his appointment as British representative on the Turkish debt control, and subsequently a director of the Ot-

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