

# The Agrarian Question

(Continued from issue of May 16th)

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

4. The revolutionary proletariat cannot make it its aim, at least for the near future, and during the beginning of the period of proletarian dictatorship, to win this class over to its side. The proletariat will have to content itself with neutralizing this class; i.e., with making it take a neutral position in the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. The vacillation of this class is unavoidable, and in the beginning of the new epoch its predominant tendency in the advanced capitalist countries will be in favor of the bourgeoisie, for the ideas and sentiments of private property are characteristic of the possessors. The victorious proletariat will immediately improve the lot of this class by abolishing the system of rent and mortgage, and by the introduction of machinery and electrical appliances into agriculture. The proletarian state power cannot at once abolish private property in most of the capitalist countries, but must do away with all duties and levies imposed upon this class of people by the landlords; it will also secure to the small and middle peasantry the ownership of their land holdings and enlarge them, putting the peasants in possession of the land they used to rent (abolition of rents).

The combination of such measures with a relentless struggle against the bourgeoisie guarantees the full success of the neutralization policy. The transition to collective agriculture must be managed with much circumspection and step by step, and the proletarian state power must proceed by the force of example, without any violence, toward the middle peasantry.

5. The landed peasants or farmers (Grossbauern) are capitalists in agriculture, managing their lands usually with several hired laborers. They are connected with the "peasantry" only by their rather low standard of culture, their way of living, and their personal manual labor on the land. This is the most numerous element of the bourgeois class, and the decided enemy of the revolutionary proletariat. The chief attention of the Communist Party in the rural districts must be given to the struggle against this element, to the liberation of the laboring and exploited majority of the rural population from the moral and political influence of these exploiters.

After the victory of the proletariat in the towns this class will inevitably oppose it by all means, from sabotage to open armed counter-revolutionary resistance. The revolutionary proletariat must therefore immediately begin to prepare the necessary force for the disarmament of every single man of this class, and together with the overthrow of the capitalists in industry, the proletariat must deal a relentless, crushing blow to this class. To that end it must arm the rural proletariat and organize soviets in the country, with no room for exploiters and a preponderant place reserved to the proletarians and the semi-proletarians.

But the expropriation even of the landed peasants can by no means be an immediate object of the victorious proletariat, considering the lack of material, particularly of technical material, and further, of the social conditions necessary for the socialization of such lands. In some, probably exceptional cases, parts of their estates will be confiscated if they are leased in small parcels, or if they are specially needed by the small-peasant population. A free use must be also secured to this population, on definite terms, of a part of the agricultural machinery of the landed peasants, etc. As a general rule, however, the state power must leave the peasants in possession of their land, confiscating it only in case of resistance to the government of the laboring and exploited peasants. The experience of the Russian proletarian revolution, whose struggle against the landed peasants became very complicated and prolonged owing to a number of particular circumstances, nevertheless shows that this class has been at last taught what it costs to make the slightest attempt at resistance, and is now quite willing to serve loyally the aims of

the proletarian state. It begins even to be permeated, although very slowly, by a respect for the government which protects every worker and deals relentlessly with the idle rich.

The specific conditions which complicated and prolonged the struggle of the Russian proletariat against the landed peasantry after the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, consist mainly in the fact that after the coup d'etat of October 25—November 7, 1917, the Russian revolution traversed a stage of "general democratic" (in fact, bourgeois democratic) struggle of the peasantry as a whole against the landowners, and there was further the low standard of living and scarcity of the urban proletariat, and finally the enormous distances and exceedingly bad transport conditions. As far as these adverse conditions do not exist in the advanced countries, the revolutionary proletariat in Europe and America must prepare with much more energy and carry out a much more rapid and complete victory over the resistance of the landed peasantry, depriving it of all possibility of resistance. This is of the utmost importance, considering that until a complete, absolute victory is won the proletarian state power cannot be regarded as secure and capable of resisting its enemies.

6. The revolutionary proletariat must proceed to an immediate and unconditional confiscation of the estates of the landowners and big landlords, that is of all those who systematically employ wage labor, directly or through their tenants, exploit all the small (and not infrequently also the middle) peasantry in their neighborhood, and do not do any actual manual work. To this element belong the majority of the descendants of the feudal lords (the nobility of France, the Lords in England, the former slave owners in America) or financial magnates who have become particularly rich, or a mixture of those two classes of exploiters and idlers.

No propaganda can be admitted in the ranks of the Communist Party in favor of an indemnity to be paid to the owners of large estates for their expropriation. In the present conditions prevailing in Europe and America this would mean a treason to Socialism and the imposition of a new tax on the laboring and exploited masses, who have already suffered from the war—which has increased the number of millionaires and multiplied their wealth.

In the advanced capitalist countries the Communist International considers that it should be a prevailing practice to preserve the large agricultural establishments and manage them on the lines of the "Soviet farms" in Russia. It is also advisable to encourage collective establishments (Communes). In regard to the management of the estates confiscated by the victorious proletariat from the owners of large landed property, the prevailing practice in Russia, the cause of economic backwardness, was that of the partition of this landed property for the benefit of the peasantry, and comparatively rare exceptions were the preservation of the so-called "Soviet farm," managed by the proletarian state at its expense, and transforming the former wage laborers into workers employed by the state, and into members of the soviets managing these farms.

The preservation of large landholdings serves best the interests of the revolutionary elements of the population, namely, the landless agricultural workers and semi-proletarian small landholders, who get their livelihood mainly by working on the large estates. Besides, the nationalization of large landholdings makes the urban population, at least in part, less dependent on the peasantry for their food.

(To be continued.)

C. M. O'BRIEN DEFENCE FUND

Previously acknowledged, \$104.85 A. C. Roga, Lettonia, \$1—total to 13th June, \$105.85.

## MATERIALIST CONCEPTION OF HISTORY

(Continued from page 2)

tain it. The serfs, slaves, and guildsmen were narrow and conservative in their outlook. Even when they rebelled they were reactionary, like the early proletariat who broke the new machines when introduced.

The growth and expansion of modern industry tends to broaden the minds of the modern worker. He learns that it is not the past but the future wherein lies his salvation. Apart from the wage laboring class in the 17th century there was an independent producing rural class, who combined spinning and weaving in the home with the cultivation of a small plot of land. The producers originally bought their own raw materials and sold the finished cloth. With the growth of commerce in the 17th century, there stepped in between the rural producers and the market a merchant class, who brought the raw materials to these domestic factories and took away the finished article to the market. In this way the rural producers became more and more dependent on the merchant class. These must be distinguished from the modern workers who own neither land or tools, but it was out of the ruins of rural production, out of the expropriation of the more or less independent producers, originated the modern proletariat. The breakup of the feudal system, the migrations to the towns, the shutting out of the later immigrants from the guilds, helped to furnish the first elements for the formation of a labor market. The division of labor in the workshop became the means of raising the productivity of labor and the master's profits.

The revolution which specialized the worker led to the specialization of tools. Just as the laborer became confined to a single operation so also the machine was adapted to a single operation, a result obtained because of the simplification and multiplication of specialized tools requisite in the methods of a division of labor. The industrial revolution was made possible because of the preceding evolution of the specialized tool.

We have now reached the period of the American Revolution, which we will take up in our next lesson, pointing out the economic causes which were the fundamental forces of the revolution.

PETER T. LECKIE.

## PLATFORM

### Socialist Party of Canada

We, the Socialist Party of Canada, affirm our allegiance to, and support of, the principles and programme of the revolutionary working class.

Labor, applied to natural resources, produces all wealth. The present economic system is based upon capitalist ownership of the means of production, consequently, all the products of labor belong to the capitalist class. The capitalist is, therefore, master; the worker a slave.

So long as the capitalist class remains in possession of the reins of government, all the powers of the state will be used to protect and defend its property rights in the means of wealth production and its control of the product of labor.

The capitalist system gives to the capitalist an ever-increasing stream of profits, and to the worker, an ever-increasing measure of misery and degradation.

The interest of the working class lies in getting itself free from capitalist exploitation by the abolition of the wage system, under which this exploitation, at the point of production, is cloaked. To accomplish this necessitates the transformation of capitalist property in the means of wealth production into socially controlled economic forces.

The irrepressible conflict of interest between the capitalist and the worker necessarily expresses itself as a struggle for political supremacy. This is the Class Struggle.

Therefore, we call all workers to organize under the banner of the Socialist Party of Canada, with the object of conquering the political powers, for the purpose of setting up and enforcing the economic programme of the working class, as follows:

1. The transformation, as rapidly as possible, of capitalist property in the means of wealth production (natural resources, factories, mills, railroads, etc.) into collective means of production.
2. The organization and management of industry by the working class.
3. The establishment, as speedily as possible, of production for use instead of production for profit.