

Documents of the Russian Revolution

Decree on Land

The Second-All Russian Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies
8 November 2017

The Decree on Land, enacted 100 years ago today, was the second decree of the Workers' and Peasants' Government after its assumption of power in Petrograd. It was adopted by the All-Russian Congress of Soviets of Workers,' Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies on November 8 (October 26, O.S.).

Krestyanskikh Deputatov [News of the All-Russian Council of Peasants' Deputies] from 242 local peasant mandates and published in No. 88 of that paper (Petrograd, No. 88, August 19, 1917 [O.S.]) shall serve everywhere to guide the implementation of the great land reforms until a final decision on the latter is taken by the Constituent Assembly.

Decree on Land

Decree on Land of the Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies

November 8 [October 26 O.S.], 1917

(1) Landed proprietorship is abolished forthwith without any compensation.

(2) The landed estates, as also all crown, monastery, and church lands, with all their livestock, implements, buildings and everything pertaining thereto, shall be placed at the disposal of the *volost* land committees and the *uyezd* Soviets of Peasants' Deputies pending the convocation of the Constituent Assembly. [1]

(3) All damage to confiscated property, which henceforth belongs to the whole people, is proclaimed a grave crime to be punished by the revolutionary courts. The *uyezd* Soviets of Peasants' Deputies shall take all necessary measures to assure the observance of the strictest order during the confiscation of the landed estates, to determine the size of estates, and the particular estates subject to confiscation, to draw up exact inventories of all property confiscated and to protect in the strictest revolutionary way all agricultural enterprises transferred to the people, with all buildings, implements, livestock, stocks of produce, etc.

(4) The following peasant Mandate, compiled by the editors of the newspaper *Izvestia Vserossiiskogo Soveta*

Peasant Mandate on the Land

The land question in its full scope can be settled only by the popular Constituent Assembly.

The most equitable settlement of the land question is to be as follows:

(1) Private ownership of land shall be abolished forever; land shall not be sold, purchased, leased, mortgaged, or otherwise alienated.

All land, whether state, crown, monastery, church, factory, entailed, private, public, peasant, etc., shall be confiscated without compensation and become the property of the whole people, and pass into the use of all those who cultivate it.

Persons who suffer by this property revolution shall be deemed to be entitled to public support only for the period necessary for adaptation to the new conditions of life.

(2) All mineral wealth—ore, oil, coal, salt, etc.—and also all forests and waters of state importance shall pass into the exclusive use of the state. All the small streams, lakes, woods, etc., shall pass into the use of the communes, to be administered by the local self-government bodies.

(3) Lands on which high-level scientific farming is practiced—orchards, tree-farms, seed plots, nurseries, hothouses, etc.—shall not be divided up, but shall be converted into model farms, to be turned over for

exclusive use to the state or to the communes, depending on the size and importance of such lands.

Household land in towns and villages, with orchards and vegetable gardens, shall be reserved for the use of their present owners, the size of the holdings, and the size of tax levied for the use thereof, to be determined by law.

(4) Stud farms, government and private pedigree stock and poultry farms, etc., shall be confiscated and become the property of the whole people, and pass into the exclusive use of the state or a commune, depending on the size and importance of such farms.

The question of compensation shall be examined by the Constituent Assembly.

(5) All livestock and farm implements of the confiscated estates shall pass into the exclusive use of the state or a commune, depending on their size and importance, and no compensation shall be paid for this.

The farm implements of peasants with little land shall not be subject to confiscation.

(6) The right to use the land shall be accorded to all citizens of the Russian state (without distinction of sex) desiring to cultivate it by their own labor, with the help of their families, or in partnership, but only as long as they are able to cultivate it. The employment of hired labor is not permitted.

In the event of the temporary physical disability of any member of a village commune for a period of up to two years, the village commune shall be obliged to assist him for this period by collectively cultivating his land until he is again able to work.

Peasants who, owing to old age or ill-health, are permanently disabled and unable to cultivate the land personally, shall lose their right to the use of it but, in return, shall receive a pension from the state.

(7) Land tenure shall be on an equality basis—i.e., the land shall be distributed among the working people in conformity with a labor standard or a subsistence standard, depending on local conditions.

There shall be absolutely no restriction on the forms of land tenure—household, farm, communal, or co-operative, as shall be decided in each individual village and settlement.

(8) All land, when alienated, shall become part of the national land fund. Its distribution among the peasants shall be in charge of the local and central self-government bodies, from democratically organized village and city communes, in which there are no distinctions of social rank, to central regional government bodies.

The land fund shall be subject to periodic redistribution,

depending on the growth of population and the increase in the productivity and the scientific level of farming.

When the boundaries of allotments are altered, the original nucleus of the allotment shall be left intact.

The land of the members who leave the commune shall revert to the land fund; preferential right to such land shall be given to the nearest relatives of the members who have left, or to persons designated by the latter.

The cost of fertilizers and improvements put into the land, to the extent that they have not been fully used up at the time the allotment is returned to the land fund, shall be compensated.

Should the available land fund in a particular district prove inadequate for the needs of the local population, the surplus population shall be settled elsewhere.

The state shall take upon itself the organization of resettlement and shall bear the cost thereof, as well as the cost of supplying implements, etc.

Resettlement shall be effected in the following order: landless peasants desiring to resettle, then members of the commune who are of vicious habits, deserters, and so on, and, finally, by lot or by agreement.

The entire contents of this Mandate, as expressing the absolute will of the vast majority of the class-conscious peasants of all Russia, is proclaimed a provisional law, which, pending the convocation of the Constituent Assembly, shall be carried into effect as far as possible immediately, and as to certain of its provisions with due gradualness, as shall be determined by the *uyezd* Soviets of Peasants' Deputies.

(5) The land of ordinary peasants and ordinary Cossacks shall not be confiscated.

Chairman of the Soviet of People's Commissars

Vladimir Ulyanov-Lenin

Endnotes:

[1] *Volost* and *uyezd* are traditional administrative subdivisions, which might be roughly translated as "communities" and "districts."



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