SOVIETIZING RUSSIA'S PEASANTS

OFFICIAL BOLSHEVIK POSTERS TO RALLY THE RUSSIANS IN SUPPORT OF THE SOVIET STATE.

—*Soviet Russia* (New York).

SOVIET RUSSIA'S WEAKNESS lies in the intractability of the peasants, it has often been charged, because they have stedfastly refused to knuckle under to the domination of urban Bolsheviki. Even H. G. Wells admitted that less than 5 per cent. of the Russian people are Bolshevik. What is more, according to various French newspapers, the Russian peasants had long enjoyed certain facilities of communal life acquired under the Czarist régime "without any of the explosions that are necessary to the establishment of ideal Soviet government." That Lenine and his lieutenants have had to train up the peasants in the way they should go is admitted by a Soviet authority, Mr. V. Kalinin, who assures us, however, that the past three years have "strengthened the Soviet power not only on the war-front, but also on the peasant front, on the interior front." Mr. Kalinin writes in *Soviet Russia* (New York), by which semiofficial weekly he is described as chairman of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee, a post "corresponding somewhat to that of President of a Republic." He is said to be a personification of the present system in Russia in that he is at once a peasant and worker whose life up to 1917 was divided "between his farm, metal factories, and the Czar's prisons." His name, we are told, was signed to the recent Russian note to President Harding. The first period of the revolutionary development of Russia's village population, he writes, began three years ago, when the peasant of Great Russia particularly gave ear to the Bolshevik watchwords defending his interests, namely, the "expropriation of the big landholders and the end of the war." The second period he terms the "equalizing period," and—

"It began in the middle of 1918, when the peasants, having expropriated the land, the estates, and the implements and live stock of the landholders, began to proceed to an equal distribution of the land within the villages. The division of the land began. The important personages of the villages were assessed with contributions, their implements and live stock were confiscated. In a word the poor peasant and the middle peasant aimed at the liquidation of the rich landholders. The so-called 'committees of the poor' were the external manifestations of these tendencies.

TO STIMULATE THE PEASANTS.

"To have more, we must produce more;
To produce more, we must know more."

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"But the class of rich peasants resisted more than the landed proprietors and struggled against the seizure of its property. Each resolution of the 'committee of the poor' or even of the needy population of the country, and the least requisition or confiscation (unjust from the point of view of the old code of laws), resulted in violent protests from the rich peasants. These complaints unnerved the middle peasant who began to fear that he in turn would be expropriated. These protests led to the belief that the poor peasant robs and violates the toiling middle peasantry in general. After all, the rich peasants in many places were stronger than the poor peasants combined, if not numerically at least they had the better of them owing to the fact that they were accustomed to give orders and that they had administrative ability."

TO STIMULATE THE WORKERS.

"With arms we got the enemy, with work we will get bread. All get to work, comrades."

The third period of the revolutionary development of the Russian village, Mr. Kalinin goes on to say, covers what is actually taking place, namely, the division of land with a view to its best possible use. In this period, it is said, "one can observe among the peasants the tendency to divide the land into parcels, the limits to coincide with the maximum profit of their exploitation." He admits, however, that the forms indicated for the cultivation of the land—the division into equal parts, and the more or less rational rounding out of a piece of land, "did not convert the peasant masses to Communism." The conditions of the socialization of agriculture were "very unfavorable," we read, but the Soviet régime, which "always blazes new trails," meets the situation by having on the one hand the People's Commissariat of Agriculture, which regards the peasant commune from the point of view of its territorial organization, in order to improve production, while to counterbalance, there is the People's Commissariat of Food Supply, which considers it "from the opposite angle in taking from the commune the results of its production." At first the peasant masses were openly opposed to the People's Commissariat of Food Supply, says this informant, and sought to evade levies. In fact, it is admitted, the organs of the People's Commissariat of Food Supply, "often not very satisfactory from the technical view-point," weigh heavily on the rich peasants, and we read:

"The peasant adds a good deal to the price of his products, setting on them a price above the real value; that is why, obliged to submit to levies, he is beginning to question with zeal where and how his products are going.

"The more he desires to find a moral justification for his conduct, the less he succeeds. The more deeply he looks into things the more he is impress with the necessity of firmness on

the part of the Government in questions dealing with the food supply.

"And having recognized the moral justice of his contributions toward the state, he begins to take account of the malpractices of agents of the Commissariat of Food Supply, a thing which is very desirable.

"It is in this way that the Commissariat of Food Supply inculcates the scattered mass of small producers with an understanding of the interest of the state. In fact, no institution, no establishment, has to such a degree directed the thought of the peasant toward the interests of the state as the Commissariat of Food Supply. This is quite evident, if judged by the results obtained in the course of these three years during which the quantity of bread and other products has increased considerably. . . . . .

"In summing up the three years which have passed, it can be affirmed, without danger of being deceived, that the political consciousness of the peasant has made more progress than during the last one hundred years. The Russia of the Soviets is very great, and its development goes on gradually from the center to the periphery."