Modern European History

Unit 7 – Nation-Building and War

Revolutions in Russia

**PLAN #1: Create A Liberal Democracy**

The time has come to build a liberal democracy in Russia! With the February Revolution and the abdication of the tsar, we can create a society guided by the rule of law. In the spirit of our French, British, and American historical ancestors, we have the opportunity to establish here, in our beloved Russia, a state characterized by limited government and the protection of individual rights.

The days of tsarist coercion are gone, never to return. We support the Provisional Government until a Constituent Assembly can be elected to enact needed political and social reforms. Already, Russia has transformed itself into a beacon of freedom. The Provisional Government has passed measures to:

guarantee freedoms of speech, press, and assembly;

rescind legal restrictions based on class, race, and religion;

provide a general amnesty;

establish universal adult suffrage;

reform the justice system (including abolishing capital punishment);

introduce democratic local self-rule.

We have an optimistic faith in the goodness of the Russian people. Despite the many challenges that face us, the resilience and cooperative spirit of our people will carry us through the difficult days ahead. Our liberal leaders seek to look after the welfare of all people, not just one class. The people can be relied upon to be patient while a legal framework is put in place to safeguard public order and private property.

Private property should be protected and free enterprise should be encouraged. Russia’s economy will thrive when the people become aware that entrepreneurial initiative will be rewarded. Previously, the Russian state has spearheaded the process of modernization. Today, economic leadership roles need to be assumed by individuals themselves - whether they are peasants, workers, landholders, or industrialists. Capitalism is the wave of the future for Russia. The integrity and unity of the Russian state must be preserved. We support the authority of the state and oppose federalism. The blood of many gallant soldiers and sailors has been spilled in defense of the Russian Empire. Their sacrifices must not be in vain. All Russians must unite to defeat the Central Powers. We will defend our fatherland!

We believe that:

> Liberal democracy and capitalism represent the leading edge of modern political and economic thought. Russia needs to look forward, not backward.

> The road of revolution is fraught with danger to law and order. We must proceed cautiously, with an eye to appropriate historical precedent.

> The current international borders of the Russian state must not be altered, and there should be no concessions to those ethnic groups seeking even limited autonomy within Russia.

> We must honor our dead by defending Russia against the Central Powers.

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**PLAN #2: Respect the Peasants**

The peasants are the backbone of Russia. Approximately 80 percent of Russia’s population are peasants, while most of the remainder are but one or two generations removed from peasantry. The peasants grow the food that keeps Russia alive. Thanks to their toil, Russia was the world’s leading pre-war grain exporter. If there is a social class that deserves respect, it is the peasantry. Tragically, far from receiving anything resembling respect, the peasants instead receive horrible abuse. Russian peasants were the last in Europe to be released from serfdom. Since then, the peasants have still been heavily dependent on their former masters - the nobles.

Under the old regime, the government has attempted to “help” the peasants. May the Good Lord preserve us from such “help” again! The “reforms” of Alexander II and bloody Nicholas drove good people off the land and redoubled human misery. These “reforms” brought nothing but Stolypin’s neckties and carriages. Thank God that those accursed bloodsuckers are gone for good! The exploitation of the peasants must end!

Land and liberty! It is time that the peasants received their due. All land should be granted to the peasants without compensation to the nobility. The timeless traditions of the Russian commune will be observed. Equality of all peasants will be guaranteed. Russia will only progress if the rural economy progresses first. Agriculture, the most important sector of our economy, will feed the factory workers in our cities. The Russian people must be a single family of brother-laborers. The Russian people have pulled themselves free and thrown off the heavy chains of tsarist oppression. Now Russia can be rebuilt, like a beautiful new house, by all its inhabitants.

Participation in the soviets and the Provisional Government are necessary so that the voice of the people can be clearly heard. In addition, we should work with the Socialist Revolutionary Party to advance the cause of the peasants. Countless peasant members of our brave Russian army have enriched our soil with their own blood, shed by the hated invaders. The sacrifices of our heroes must be repaid through the defeat of the Central Powers! After victory, we will seek a peace of justice with our international brothers.

We believe that:

> Since the peasants are the foundation of Russian society, any serious attempt to improve conditions in this country must begin with the peasants.

> Land should belong to those who make it productive. Peasants have a right to the land and the gentry do not.

> The current international borders of the Russian state should remain intact. We are reluctant to consider limited autonomy for ethnic groups within Russia.

> The Russian army is a peasant army, and peasants are men of the soil. Countless peasants have given their lives to defend that soil; their sacrifice must not be in vain. We must defeat the Central Powers and seek a peace of justice!

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**PLAN #3: Work Toward a Future Socialist Society**

The ideas of Karl Marx can guide Russians to a bright future. Marx’s ideas mirror what is happening now in Russia. Russia is industrializing rapidly. This process is both creating an urban lower class and exacerbating class conflict. Since the 1890s, Russia has seen population growth in the cities and an increasing number of strikes and labor violence.

But we are not quite ready for socialism. According to Marx, industrial capitalism is the final stage of history. This stage pits factory owners against the factory workers. In a socialist revolution, the workers will overthrow the owners and seize power. Eventually, private property will be abolished and capitalism will be succeeded by an economic system – socialism - in which the people will labor out of a sincere desire to contribute to the well-being of their fellow humans. However, in Russia, industrial capitalism is still in its infancy; and therefore, Russia is not yet ready for socialism. We must be patient and allow the lower classes to develop enough class-consciousness to organize for the final defeat of capitalism. We must also trust in our wise Menshevik leaders to guide us to this eventual goal.

Active participation in the soviets provides us with the best opportunity to contribute to the new Russia. The soviets control the armed forces, transportation, and communications. They are workers’ organizations pursuing workers’ objectives. The brave deeds of the Petrograd workers of the glorious February Revolution must be advanced through the organization of a strong workers’ political party. This workers’ party must be active in the upcoming elections to the Constituent Assembly.

Although led by liberals and capitalists, the Provisional Government is putting together a temporary post-tsarist political structure. In time, by working in this political structure, revolutionaries will come to know the true nature of the class enemy, and will be better prepared to defeat it in the final conflict.

It is true that the Great War is the savage result of destructive competition between corrupt bourgeois states and, as such, is contemptible. However, the progress made in Russia since February must be protected from German invaders. When Russia is under attack, all of her children must lay aside their differences and defend the fatherland. We must win the war so that a just peace will nurture our social revolution!

We believe that:

> Karl Marx has provided an ideology based on scientific laws of history. This philosophy positions socialist revolutionaries within a historical stream flowing from the dawn of man, through the French Revolution, to a future when man can finally control his own destiny.

> Industrial capitalism is the crucial fact of modern economic life. Its great promise and its awful pitfalls embody the present and future of Russia. The workers must master industrial capitalism in order to transcend it.

> The current international borders of the Russian state must not be altered. In principle, we accept the right of ethnic groups to self-determination within Russia. However, we are opposed to any efforts at territorial autonomy or separation before the election of the Constituent Assembly.

> The progress made in Russia since February must be protected from German invaders. We must win the war so that a just peace will nurture our social revolution!

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**PLAN #4: Organize for a Second Revolution**

The ideology of Karl Marx provides a superb framework for action, but it must be adapted to Russian conditions. It is true that, at present, Russia’s urban lower class lacks sufficient class-consciousness to overthrow capitalism. However, precise, skilled organization of the lower classes can and will make a decisive difference. With the February Revolution, the time is ripe for radical change. The workers can be taught and led to achieve this all-important goal.

We will stop at nothing in our quest to reach the broad, sunlit uplands of socialism. The hard, sharp edge of determination of this vanguard has been forged during years of tsarist oppression. Toughened by persecution, imprisonment, and exile, the revolutionary vanguard understands that now is the time for courage, sacrifice, and boldness, not just in thoughts, but in heroic deeds!

The brave workers of Petrograd showed us the way in February. When they acted, bloody Nicholas and the other Romanov wolves turned tail and ran. But our work is far from done. A second revolution is needed in Russia! All Russians should join the cause of the Bolsheviks! All power to the soviets! Peace, land, and bread!

The Provisional Government is a powerless empty shell. We are told to wait until its leaders see fit to devise elections for a Constituent Assembly, and that this Assembly will be the true government of a new Russia. Political participation in this deceptive farce is laughable. The aims of the Provisional Government are to perpetuate the leadership of the ruling class and to oppress the workers and peasants. After a period of organization and subversion, the lower classes, led by its vanguard, will send the Provisional Government where it belongs - into the dustbin of history.

The present war is a horrible example of bloody imperialist competition over the means of production. Russia should immediately renounce its role in this carnage and conclude a peace. Then we can turn our attention to the daily needs of the real masters of Russia: its workers, peasants, and soldiers. Under the leadership of the soviets, land should be confiscated from the nobles and redistributed by the peasants themselves. Private property is the root of all evil. Class struggle is the only avenue to real social change. Familiar with great personal hardships, the Russian workers and peasants possess the will and stamina for the coming conflict. They only need to be guided by a reliable core of trained revolutionaries. All of Europe is poised for the brave new world of socialism. Russia can show the way through decisive action now! Long live the international socialist revolution!

We believe that:

> Russia’s suffering people cannot wait any longer. Only a fervent, uncompromising, disciplined elite of trained revolutionaries can organize the urban lower class and peasants for a final successful revolt against the forces of capital.

> Private property is the root of all evil. The workers and peasants are the ones who make property economically productive. Therefore, they should control that property.

> Ultimately, the success of international socialism will transform national self-determination into an irrelevancy.

> The war has been a horrible example of bloody imperialist competition over the means of production. Russia should immediately renounce its participation in this carnage and look after the daily needs of its real heroes: the workers, peasants, and soldiers.