“Lenin's Statement of Bolshevik Demands”

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Vladimir Lenin (1917)

CONTEXT: Reproduced below is the text of Lenin's statement of Bolshevik demands, dated 24 October 1917 (6 November 1917 using the West's Gregorian calendar). Lenin's catalogue of demands included the abolition of all monarchies, the creation of a single state bank, the abolition of the standing army, and the establishment of a sole governing body overseen by the Councils of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Delegates. Lenin's statement of demands followed an appeal for civil unrest five days earlier, and a repeated call along similar lines on 20 October 1917. His famed 'Call for Power' was issued on the same day as his statement of demands, 24 October. Lenin's appeals were ultimately successful; within a matter of days the Bolsheviks succeeded in seizing power, and with it brought about Russia's withdrawal from the war with the punitive (for Russia) Treaty of Best-Litovsk.

The Councils of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Delegates must at once take every practicable and feasible step for the realization of the Socialist program.

The Bolsheviks demand a republic of the Councils of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Delegates; abolition of the standing army and the police, substituting for them an armed people; officials to be not only elected but also subject to recall and their pay not to exceed that of a good worker.

Sole authority must be in the hands of the Councils of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Delegates. There must be no dual authority.

No support should be given to the Provisional Government. The whole of the people must be prepared for the complete and sole authority of the Councils of the Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Delegates.

A constituent assembly should be called as soon as possible, but it is necessary to increase the members and strengthen the power of the Councils of 'Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Delegates by organizing and arming the masses.

A police force of the conventional type and a standing army are absolutely unnecessary. Immediately and unconditionally a universal army of the people should be introduced, so that they and the militia and the army shall he an integral whole. Capitalists must pay the workers for their days of service in the militia.

Officers must not only be elected, but every step of every officer and General must be subject to control by special soldiers' committees.

The arbitrary removal by the soldiers of their superior officers is in every respect indispensable. The soldiers will obey only the powers of their own choice; they can respect no others.

The Bolsheviks are absolutely opposed to all imperialist wars and to all bourgeois Governments which make them, among them our own Provisional Government.

The Bolsheviks are absolutely opposed to "revolutionary defence" in Russia.
The Bolsheviki are against the predatory international treaties concluded between the Czar and England, France, etc., for the strangling of Persia, the division of China, Turkey, Austria, etc.

The Bolsheviki are against annexations. Any promise of a capitalist Government to renounce annexations is a huge fraud. To expose it is very simple, by demanding that each nation be freed from the yoke of its own capitalists.

The Bolsheviki are opposed to the (Russian) Liberty Loan, because the war remains imperialistic, being waged by capitalists in alliance with capitalists, and in the interests of capitalists.

The Bolsheviki refuse to leave to capitalist Governments the task of expressing the desire of the nations for peace.

All monarchies must be abolished. Revolutions do not proceed in fixed order. Only genuine revolutionaries may be trusted.

The peasants must at once take all the land from the landholders. Order must be strictly maintained by the Councils of Peasants' Delegates. The production of bread and meat must be increased and the soldiers better fed. Destruction of cattle, of tools, etc., is not permissible.

It will be impossible to rely upon the general Councils of Peasants' Delegates, for the wealthy peasants are of the same capitalist class that is always inclined to injure or deceive the farmhands, day labourers, and the poorer peasants. We must at once form special organizations of these latter classes of the village population both within the Councils of Peasants' Delegates and in the form of special Councils of Delegates of the Farmers' Workers.

We must at once prepare the Councils of Workers' Delegates, the Councils of Delegates of Banking Employees, and others for the taking of all such steps as are feasible and completely realizable toward the union of all banks in one single national bank, and then toward a control of the Councils of Workers' Delegates over the banks and syndicates, and then toward their nationalization, that is, their passing over into the possession of the whole people.

The only Socialist International, establishing and realizing a brotherly union of all the workers in all countries, which is now desirable for the nations, is one which consists of the really revolutionary workers, who are capable of putting an end to the awful and criminal slaughter of nations, capable of delivering humanity from the yoke of capitalism.

Only such people (groups, parties, etc.) as the German Socialist, Karl Liehknecht, now in a German jail, only people who will tirelessly struggle with their own Government and their own bourgeoisie, and their own social-patriots, and their own "centrists," can and must immediately establish that international which is necessary to the nations.

The fraternization between soldiers of the warring countries, at the front, must be encouraged; it is good and indispensable.