

are very instructive for our purposes, even though he was speaking of the rural proletariat and not merely those who hire out for wages at times.

This covers the propertyless peasants, including the completely landless ones; but the most typical representative of the Russian rural proletariat is the allotment-holding farmworker, day labourer [sic], unskilled labourer, building or other worker. Insignificant scale of farming on a patch of land, with the farm in a state of utter ruin (particularly evidenced by the leasing of land), inability to exist without selling labour-power (= “industries” of the indigent peasants), an extremely low standard of living (probably lower even than that of the worker without an allotment)—such are the distinguishing features of this type.

Lenin continued:

It should be added that our literature frequently contains too stereotyped an understanding of the theoretical proposition that capitalism requires the free, landless worker. This proposition is quite correct as indicating the main trend, but capitalism penetrates into agriculture particularly slowly and in extremely varied forms.⁴⁴

So, in our case, although it is true that the majority of peasants owned the land they cultivated, and only 30 percent were landless, it is equally true that the size and nature of the holding for most peasants did not provide for sufficient subsistence; thus, a majority of peasants were forced to seek other sources of income including wage labor to the extent it was available. Before the substantial increase in the demand for wage labor associated with the war conditions, the majority of peasants suffered from a process of pauperization in which they were forced to reduce their consumption levels. Having primarily stayed in their villages where even the landless had houses gives the wrong impression about the changes

⁴⁴V. I. Lenin, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1956), 178-9.