

On the Agrarian Revolution

by Bertram D. Wolfe

We begin below the publication of a series of articles dealing with the problems raised in the recent work of Karl Kautsky, *Bolshevism at a Deadlock*, published by the Rand School. Further articles in the series will appear from time to time in future issues.

In May 1930 the Labor and Socialist International (the Second International), grown strangely tender, issued a manifesto calling on the workers of the Soviet Union and of the world to save the Russian revolution. The manifesto says:

"The victory of the counter-revolution would be formidable catastrophe not only for the people of the Soviet Union, who would be cheated of the fruits of the great revolution, not only for the working class of the Soviet Union, whose heroic struggle would have been in vain, but also for the labor movement, democracy and world peace."

Naive young Socialists, eager to believe that the "Socialist" International really fights for Socialism, were delighted with the declaration. Less naive and more experienced workers, accustomed to the fatal chasm between the words and the deeds of the leaders of the Social-democracy, asked anxiously: "What new maneuver are the MacDonalds, Vanderveldes, Blums, Kautskys and Hillquits planning against the Soviet Union?" Now Karl Kautsky, leading theoretician of the Second International, succeeds in dispelling all doubts of even the most naive of youngsters. He has written a book to explain the meaning of the above declaration.

His *Bolshevism at a Deadlock* is avowedly a footnote to the Manifesto of the Second International quoted at the beginning of this article. It sets out to answer two related questions: "What counter-revolution are we afraid of?" "What revolution do we propose to defend?"

Oh, that's easy! says the innocent working class reader. The revolution we propose to defend is the Russian revolution, the "October" revolution, the revolution of November, 1917, that gave land to the

peasants, the factories to the workers, all power to the councils of workers and peasants, peace to a war-torn world.

Wait a minute! says the learned Kautsky. "But it's not so simple to decide which manifestations in Russia we are to regard as revolutionary and which as counter-revolutionary" (page 58). The simple reader is puzzled. But Kautsky does not leave him long in doubt.

The Agrarian Revolution

"I was very much surprised," writes Kautsky, "when some time ago a member of our Party expressed to me his enthusiasm regarding the socialization of agriculture which is now being carried out in Russia." The good Kautsky's heart is grieved to find that a German Social-democratic workman should be inspired by an achievement of the Russian revolution. He hastened to "correct" him. "My position is not that the experiment will probably fail; it can be said with full confidence that it will fail—that it must fail" (page 29). Such touching "confidence!"

Kautsky Feels Guilty

Upon Kautsky's aging spirit weighs a deep sense of guilt—maybe he started the Russian revolution!!! "It is quite true that ideas which I had previously developed were used when Russian Kolkhozi—collective farms—were introduced." (Nobody would ever have suspected you if you had only kept your mouth shut, old man!)

"Many other ideas of mine have also been put into practice but I am not always pleased about it" (page 29, 30).

Why is the old fellow not pleased that "his ideas" are being put into practice? First, because they are being started in backward Russia and not in Kautsky's fatherland. Second, because they should have waited with their agrarian revolution, "even in Western Europe perfect conditions, do not exist and intensive work is required in order to improve them." Third, because the collectivization of agriculture is awful rough on the kulaks.

The Gentle Kulak

For Kautsky the kulak is not the exploiter of landless peasants, the village usurer, the dynamiter of collective farms, the murderer of Soviet officials and village correspondents, the village rallying center for attempted counter-revolution. The kulak's wolfish face becomes lamb-like when retouched by Kautsky's loving pen. The kulaks are "all those peasants who have not yet been completely ruined and still have something to lose" (page 53). And what "crimes" are committed against these poor rich fellows! "Wealthy peasants are outlawed, not on account of their deeds but on account of their possessions" (page 52). What a pity! Wealthy peasants are being "reduced to beggary" (page 52) by those who "have nothing to lose." The world turned upside down!

Kautsky does not blame the kulak for fighting tooth and nail against the collectivization of agriculture. The collectives "are not an advance towards a higher form of economic organization but a return to the old serfdom" (page 54). "Only the destitute and entirely ruined peasants enter the collective farms willingly and they are precisely the persons who have proved themselves to be the most unskilled and incapable of work" (page 54). (Yes, reader, this is a "Socialist" theoretician talking!)

Socialism Destroys "Initiative"

But now, they are destroying rugged individualism. "No one will put up large costly buildings or provide machinery unless he can expect to reap the obvious advantages. That is one of the reasons why the system of confiscating the means of production in order to convert them into communally owned property is economically so damaging and wasteful" (page 61). (And this was once a Socialist!!!)

The "Real" Agrarian Revolution

The "real" agrarian revolution was not accomplished by the Bolsheviks, according to Kautsky. It consisted of the empty phrases and decrees of the Kerensky period. It is bad enough that "Lenin attained power because he gave way to the peasants" and "brought about a partition of the land in a haphazard fashion with pillage and rapine" but that, "should not be scored too heavily against them" (page 59).

The Real "Counter-Revolution"

Everything the Soviet state has done since has made matters worse and "tends to the wholesale expropriation and enslavement of the peasants (in place of 'peasant', read 'kulak'—B.D.W.)" (page 64). "If the beginnings of the Soviet regime in the countryside signify a revolution, its further acts must more and more be looked upon as a direct counter-revolution."

"It is against this counter-revolution that the peasants (read 'kulaks'—B.D.W.) are rising."

"Which side must we take if we want to ward off the counter-revolution and save the threatened revolution in Russia?" (page 64).

So! The cat's out of the bag. The collectivization of agriculture and liquidation of the remnants of capitalism in the village—that's the counter-revolution. The resistance to collectivization and a longed-for kulak-led peasant rising against the Soviet government is what Kautsky's enfeebled old eyes are straining themselves to see. And that is the "revolution" which Kautsky and the Executive of the Second International would support!

The Sectarian Trade Union Line At Work

THE PARTY AND THE STEEL "STRIKE"

by J. R.

The Communist Party started its campaign in the steel industry with a bang. The first master stroke was the headline in the *Daily Worker* of September 26: "Smash The Wage-Cut Drive! Organize and Strike." Simple isn't it?

The Wage Offensive

The announcement by the U. S. Steel Corporation, the largest in the world, of the 10% cut in wages marks a decisive change in the tempo of the slashing of so-called American living standards. From the pious promises to President Hoover not to cut wages coupled with indirect wage-cuts in the form of the stagger system, workers fired and rehired at lowered wages, speed-up, cuts in individual departments and mills, the "captains" of American industry, in their desire to shift more speedily the increasing burdens of the economic crisis on the shoulders of the workers, now openly slash wage standards. These new methods of the bosses place the issue in the sharpest form before the workers, offering the most splendid opportunity for struggle since the 1919 steel strike.

It must be established from the start

plied, because of the shameful lack of support the various A. F. of L. officials offered the strike committee, even then, the method of piece-meal strikes was not resorted to. A different strategy was worked out comparable to the strength of the organization committee. They began by building sentiment for the organization drive and then the drive was started in the Chicago area, where considerable support of the state A. F. of L. was to be had. Thousands of workers flocked into the union. These workers were out immediately struck but were held in line until the other workers were brought into the union fold. As the workers flocked into the union the strike committee turned its attention to the Pittsburgh area, the heart of the steel area, employing over 100,000 workers. Only when the workers had been aroused and partially organized on a national basis was the strike call issued. Says Foster (p. 32):

"In the face of such suppression of constitutional rights and in the face of all other staggering difficulties it was clearly impossible for our scanty forces to capture Pittsburgh for unionism by a frontal attack. Therefore, a system of flank attacks was decided upon. This involved itself