

KAUTSKY AND THE COMING WAR

Karl Kautsky is the leading theoretician of old-guard or anti-revolutionary socialism, the leading theoretician of the leading current of the Second International. He has long broken with Marxism. During the war he employed scraps of Marxist erudition, quotations and references to wars from the progressive period of capitalism, deliberately torn from their historical and textual context, to "prove" that the Second International had not collapsed ("War time is least of all propitious for peaceful discussion"; "to disobey martial laws would simply lead to a suppression of our press"; "To obey these laws does not in any way mean to refuse to defend party principles"); that its leaders had not betrayed their trust in supporting their governments; and that true internationalism did not consist in a revolutionary struggle against war but that whereas the nationalist justified only the "defense of his own government",

the internationalist was willing to concede the right of all socialists, including those of the "enemy" country, to support their respective governments ("Social-Democrats of all countries have an equal right and duty to participate in the defense of the fatherland; no nation ought to blame the other for doing it. . .")¹

Since the war his main "theoretical" activities have been two fat tomes on "Historical Materialism" revising the Marxist theory of society in the direction of a non-social biologism, a series of articles and pamphlets attempting to portray bourgeois democracy as classless democracy, and a number of venomous and slanderous works against the Soviet Union.

¹ All the above quotations from Kautsky's attitude on the World War are from his article in the *Neue Zeit*, Oct. 2, 1914, entitled, "Social Democracy in War Time."

Now Kautsky is engaged in the preparation of a thick, "learned", verbose, four-volume work on "Democracy and War." The work cannot be dismissed as the work of a garrulous old man who has lost the ability to write clearly. Its size is intended to overwhelm the unlearned by its mere magnitude and display of erudition. Its fuzziness is not accidental but deliberate. It is intended to cover up an anti-Marxist position with many layers of allusion, quotation and fuzz. But the mounting war tension, the development of a new war position by the Adler-Bauer-Dan Zyromski current of the Second International, and a distinct position by revolutionary socialists to the left of the Adlers, Bauers and Zyromskis, as well as a modification by the Communist International of certain aspects of its traditional position, have all impelled Kautsky to rush his conclusions into print before his four-volume "monu-

ment" is completed.² They may fairly be taken as representing the theoretical "justification" for the position of the right wing in the Second International as the Adler-Bauer-Dan-Dunoi-Zyromski thesis does for the position of the "Center."

Kautsky is like a pitcher who takes so long in winding up that the spectator begins to feel a pain in his shoulder before the pitcher actually throws the ball. But in this case, the "wind-up" is not mere decoration. It makes the unguarded reader dizzy and is intended to. Hence, a few preliminaries are needed to analyze the "wind-up".

"Marx and Engels," writes Kautsky, "had never considered the question how war was to be prevented. They regarded the question as superfluous."

That this is a falsehood is obvious. We need only remember the activities of Marx and Engels in urging and helping the British labor movement to prevent England's entrance into a war against the United States on behalf of the South during the course of the American Civil War.

"Lacking power to overthrow such a militarist government in time of peace," continues Kautsky, "the workers and the Socialist parties will, as a rule, find it even more difficult to do so at the outbreak of war. This was how Marx and Engels reasoned."

This was not how Marx and Engels reasoned, but was how Kautsky reasoned at the outbreak of the World War in 1914. It is obvious that Kautsky is trying, cuckoo-fashion, to lay his eggs in Marx's nest. Moreover, as in 1914, there is a dangerous evasion of the real issue. The question is not whether the Socialists are stronger or weaker after war begins, but whether "the party joins imperialist plunder and deception, or it preaches and prepares for revolutionary action." So wrote Lenin in 1915 when Kautsky tried the same subterfuge to justify the betrayal of August 4, 1914. It took Kautsky a whole year to think that up in 1914 but as a new war draws

² The concluding chapter of the Fourth Volume has been reprinted in two instalments in the New Leader of Nov. 9 and 16, 1935 with endorsement by the editor as "of the utmost importance to Socialists everywhere in determining their point of view and shaping their policy."

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WHOEVER PAYS THE PIPER CALLS THE TUNE

The Republican Party, center of "conservative" reaction as opposed to Roosevelt's "progressive" reaction, has done its best to create a National Finance Committee worthy of the name. On the list of these bigshots, the Republican Party stakes its claim to being the party of the people and of the republic, opposing its "democracy" to the thriftless bureaucracy of the New Deal. Let's look at the boys who will grease the Republican wheels.

Ernest Weir: The vicious opponent of labor unionism, chief figure in the famous Weirton Steel case, which attempted to force a company union down the throats of the steel workers, and with the aid of the government, succeeded in doing so. Weir is, in addition, director of the Edgewater Steel Co. President of the Peoples Bank of Holliday Cove, pres. of the Weirton Coal Co., and pres. of the Bank of Weirton (which certainly ought to convince anybody that the "steel baron" is actually a feudal lord).

Silas Strawn: Reactionary lawyer, a director of the First National Bank and erstwhile president of the U. S. Cham-

ber of Commerce, that is, organizer and leader of the greatest center of open-shopism in the U. S.

Sewell Lee Avery, who will probably represent the small business man by being director of Montgomery Ward, Armour and Co., Chicago Daily News, the Great Western Railroad, State Bank of Evanston, U. S. Steel, and president of the Illinois Manufacturers Association.

Wallace M. Alexander: Sugar king, who apparently is the real owner of the Hawaiian Islands. He owns the Hawaiian Sugar Co., the Hawaiian Oil Co., and about three steamship companies. Then just to make sure that he wins at both ends, he has organized and directs a Marine Insurance Company.

Edward L. Ryerson: A philanthropist of sorts. He was the chairman of the Governor's Committee on Unemployment and Relief for Illinois in 1931. The relief was for the bankers, because his organization starved the unemployed into riots.

Alfred L. Shapleigh: President of the St. Louis Chamber of Commerce, but just to make sure that this organization

will be able to fight trade unionism, he's had himself made president of the St. Louis Light Artillery Association.

These are just a few of the choice members of the committee who in the words of Fletcher, chairman of the G.O. P. National Committee, "clearly reveal their convictions by their position".

These people, mighty powers of finance capital, can never be the channel thru which the mighty indignation of the working class against the Raw Deal can flow. These bosses against whom the workers strike against on the economic field, just as well as they strike against Democratic bosses, have the same answer to the needs of the workers, economically and politically, as the Democratic Party.

The answer given to the G.O.P. in 1932 was to put the New Dealers into power. Today the answer of the workers cannot be the same. Not back to the old, proven useless, but forward to the new—to a Labor Party, the representation of the workers by their own class representatives.

KAUTSKY, OLD GUARD, AND COMING WAR

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near, he shows that he has learned something and begins his "moral" preparations in good time.

WHICH RULING CLASS SHALL WE SUPPORT?—ASKS KAUTSKY

"The question that Marx and Engels put themselves at the outbreak of a war was, which side they would support," Kautsky's article continues. "To answer this question they sought to determine who actually began the war, who was the aggressor."

Kautsky undoubtedly knows better than to believe that Marx and Engels supported one side or the other in every war. True the bulk of the wars of the period from 1789 (the French Revolution) to 1870 (Franco-Prussian War, Paris Commune and beginnings of modern imperialism) were wars of the period of rising, progressive capitalism, wars which on one side were generally for national unification (Germany, Italy), national emancipation (Poland, Italy, etc.) and the development of capitalism, and on the other side were wars for the retention of feudalism, for national oppression and reaction (example: Russia's wars against Poland, against the revolution of 1848, Austria against Italy, etc.) In those wars there was no question yet of bourgeoisie or bourgeoisie, but of bourgeoisie supported by the immature proletariat on the one hand versus feudal reaction on the other. It is sheer historical forgery to transfer the criteria and tactics of the proletariat in a period when the bourgeoisie is progressive and struggling against feudalism, the proletariat not yet an independent force and socialism only a future dream, to the period when capitalism is in decay, the bourgeoisie reactionary and struggling against the proletariat, against the freedom of colonial peoples, and against socialism.

Since the rise of modern imperialist capitalism, the capitalist social order has become reactionary (here in greater, there in less degree, but reactionary everywhere) and decaying, and parasitic. The proletariat has become a powerful independent force. Socialist and communist parties and the mass trade unions have grown up, the objective conditions have ripened which make socialism possible, desirable, even a burning necessity, if decaying capitalism is not to strangle civilization itself in its dying grip.

Engels lived on into the beginning of the period when imperialism was ripening, and to his keen vision the general outlines of the coming world war were beginning to appear even as early as 1870. In his articles and letters written in the years 1888 to his death in 1895 he again and again indicated the magnitude, character, line-ups, and probable results of that impending war. Each time he emphasized that it was a race between war and social revolution and that if the former came first social revolution would have to come during it or as an aftermath. Does that sound like Kautsky's philistine query, "which side they would support?"

In his article entitled, "Socialism in Germany," written in 1891 shortly after the consummation of the Franco-Russian alliance and published in both French and German by Engels in 1892, he wrote:

"No socialist, whatever his nationality, can desire the military victory of either the present German government, nor of the French bourgeois republic, nor least of all that of the Czar which would be equivalent to the subjection of Europe and therefore the socialists of all lands are for peace. But if war comes just the same, one thing is certain: this war, in which fifteen to twenty million armed

men will kill each other off and lay waste all Europe as never before—this war must either bring the immediate victory of socialism, or else so upset the old order of things from head to foot and leave behind such a heap of ruins that the old capitalist society would become more impossible than ever, and that the social revolution might, to be sure, be postponed ten or fifteen years, but then would have to triumph in a so much more rapid and thoroughgoing way."

Kautsky knows of this article of Engels just as well as I do, even better, for it was published in the *Neue Zeit* of 1892 while Kautsky was its editor!

COMPOUNDING A FORGERY

Kautsky does not stop with the deliberate and conscious falsification of the views of Marx and Engels. He adds to it "proofs" derived from the already exposed forgeries of others, forgeries which in his Marxist days he helped to expose!

In the 1890's Friedrich Engels wrote an introduction to a new edition of Marx's "Class Struggles in France, 1840-1850." From this introduction all the most revolutionary passages were expurgated by the leaders of the German Social Democratic Party on the ground that the state of siege (exception

laws) in Germany required their omission if the document were to be published legally. Later this censored introduction was shamefully utilized to give the impression that Engels had revised his views on armed insurrection and become a legalistic on principle, a so-called democratic or parliamentary socialist believing in the possibility of a peaceful and purely parliamentary conquest of power by the proletariat. All Engels' remarks about the greater difficulty of popular revolutions under modern conditions of warfare, were printed. But all his remarks about the necessity of work within the armed forces because of that greater difficulty, were omitted.

To be sure, Engels had originally consented to the doctoring of the manuscript for legal reasons, but he was shocked and indignant when the printed version was deliberately used to falsify his views. He protested bitterly in a letter to Lafargue (April 3, 1895), and in a letter to Kautsky (April 1, 1895)³ in which letter Engels urged Kautsky to print the article unabridged in *Neue Zeit* in order to correct the "shameful impression." Kautsky him-

³ This letter was recently republished by Kautsky in "Aus der Frühzeit des Marxismus: Engels Briefwechsel mit Karl Kautsky." (Orbis Verlag, Prague, 1935, pp. 383-384.)

self protested against Bernstein's use of this falsification three years after Engels' death, in 1898, in an article in the *Neue Zeit* entitled "Bernstein and Dialectics", and again in 1908 in the same periodical in an article entitled, "Some Observations on Marx and Engels", as well as in his pamphlet, "The Road to Power."

What then are we to think of Kautsky when we find him, in 1935, forty years after the forgery was committed and exposed, writing the heading, "Engels Revises Views"? and under that heading we find Kautsky perpetrating such sentences as this:

"From his study of the technique of modern warfare Engels also drew the conclusion that the time of popular armed insurrection was over, that the people were helpless when pitted against modern armies firmly in control of a government determined to utilize all the instruments of its destruction at its disposal." From which Kautsky concludes that: "It is more than ever our duty to do our utmost to prevent war, external war AS WELL AS CIVIL WAR." (emphasis mine—BDW).

What shall we think of Kautsky who compounds the forgery he himself has exposed? What shall we think of a "Marxist" dishonest enough to write the

above, when he knows that Engels' discussion of the difficulties of insurrection under modern conditions was followed not by a conclusion that revolution should be abandoned but by the opposite conclusion that it should be more carefully prepared? Kautsky knows for example, as Engels' letter to him and his own articles of his honest and Marxist days show, that in one of the expurgated passages which followed immediately after his discussion of the increased difficulties of revolution, Engels said:

"Does this mean that street battles will play no part in the future? Not at all. It simply means that conditions have become far more unfavorable for the civilian fighters since 1848, and far more favorable for the military forces. Street battles in the future may be successful only if this unfavorable situation can be neutralized by other factors. Such fights will therefore be far less usual in the earlier stages of a great revolution, than in its later course, and will have to be fought with greater resources of strength. Such battles will rather resort—as in the great French Revolution, and as on September 4th and October 31, 1870, in Paris—to open attack than to the defensive tactics of the barricades."

And what shall we think of James Oneal and Algernon Lee, editors of the *New Leader*, both of whom personally know the circumstances of the forgery, Engels' protest, and Kautsky's and Riazanov's exposures, and who nevertheless print Kautsky's shameful article without a word, except a commendatory introduction? People who preach to the labor movement social-chauvinism, support of the ruling class in war, glorification of capitalist democracy, opposition to proletarian revolution, such people must be tirelessly fought. But people who operate with conscious forgeries and falsifications, who ascribe to revolutionaries like Marx and Engels their own anti-revolutionary views, such people must be publicly exposed and scourged out of the labor movement.

At any rate, it is impossible to analyze the views on war which Kautsky offers to the international labor movement, and which received the blessings of Abe Cahan (in the *Jewish Daily Forward*) and James Oneal (in the *New Leader*) without an introductory examination of the reliability of the author since Kautsky is offering the views not merely as his own, but ostensibly as the views of Marx and Engels on the question.

4 For full account of the forgery and the omitted portions see *Unter dem Banner des Marxismus*, Vol. I, No. 1, March 1925.

NEXT WEEK: Comrade Wolfe will continue with an article on Kautsky's attitude on democracy and fascism, the League of Nations, the Soviet Union, and national defense.

ENTER THE PEOPLES' FRONT IN GERMANY

By AUGUST THALHEIMER

The illegally distributed "Rote Fahne" and the "Rundschau" of October 31st carry the program of the German Communist Party for the formation of the "Peoples Front" in Germany. The program is based on negotiations carried on outside of Germany by representatives of the CPG with representatives of Social Democracy, the former Catholic Center-Party, the former State Party, (bourgeois democrats), as well as the Catholic and Protestant Church oppositions.

THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

In addition to a number of very moderate and vague immediate demands, the program contains the following political analysis:

"The broad masses of Germany are asking: After Hitler, what next? Without abandoning our fundamental conviction of the necessity of a Soviet Germany which alone can really emancipate the working class, we, Communists, are ready to support another government, a united front or Peoples Front government and, moreover, are ready to participate in it under certain conditions, i.e. if the working masses are not yet ready to wage a struggle for soviet power and wish to form a united front or Peoples Front government. Such a government—as Comrade Dimitroff emphasized at the 7th World Congress of the C.I.—would primarily be a government for the struggle against fascism and reaction.

The CPG wants the people to decide their future freely after Hitler is overthrown. A successful Peoples' Front will guarantee the peoples' freedom of decision. We, Communists, are therefore in favor of the election of a NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ON THE BASIS OF FREE, GENERAL, EQUAL AND DIRECT SUFFRAGE. We are convinced that the terrors of Hitler fascism have furnished an important lesson to all liberty-loving persons in Germany, that, hence, they will not repeat the mistakes

mediary step. But we do know that the forces fighting for the proletarian dictatorship will be just as strong as the influence of Communism is among the working class, and that in turn this depends upon the condition that the CP propagate the slogan of soviet power only and that it organize the struggle around this slogan.

There is no Party, no other force which can do this. If, however, the CP demands the return to Weimar, to a bourgeois-parliamentary republic as an intermediary stage, the direct replacement of the fascist dictatorship thru the proletarian dictatorship becomes impossible and the victory of the bourgeois republic in replacing fascism is assured from the outset.

The reservation of the CPG that it adheres to the "belief" that the proletarian dictatorship alone can emancipate the working class has no practical meaning whatsoever since the CPG on the basis of the new line fails to advance the slogan for a soviet government as one for which the working masses are to struggle to replace the fascist government. The "belief" that this national assembly will not repeat the errors of the national assembly of 1919 is nothing but a pious wish since the CPG has given up the slogan of soviets as a revolutionary counter-force of the working class to parliament. Incidentally, the Peoples Front policy has led the CP to a gross distortion of history. The decisive errors of the working class in 1919 were not those of the National Assembly, but the fact that the workers' and soldiers' councils gave up power in favor of the National Assembly. It is therefore not a question of the mistakes committed by the National Assembly; the mistake was the establishment of a National Assembly itself. Should the CPG cling to this crude, opportunist line until the overthrow of the fascist dictatorship, the situation will be much worse than that of 1919.

At that time, workers, and soldiers, councils were formed. Who will form

the formation of a National Assembly? How are the Social Democratic and non-partisan workers, who are aware of the bankruptcy of bourgeois democracy and have accepted the idea of proletarian dictatorship, to fight for Soviets when the CP itself demands the return to Weimar? How are they to dissociate themselves from reformism, from coalition politics with bourgeois parties if the CPG is now reviving these bankrupt policies? This new line of the CPG—a mechanical copy of the false slogan for a "Peoples Front government" issued by the French CP—will greatly hamper the leftward movement of Social Democratic workers.

However, one will ask, can the slogan of a proletarian dictatorship be advanced in a coalition of Communist, Social Democratic and bourgeois-democratic parties and groups? Of course, not. The upshot of such a coalition is in effect the slogan for the return to Weimar. (It is characteristic of the depth of the opportunist deviation of the CPG that even Social Democracy after the victory of the Hitler dictatorship did not directly advance the slogan, Back to the Weimar Republic, but rather demanded the establishment of a socialist dictatorship of the working class!)

A RALLYING CENTER FOR COUNTER REVOLUTION

We maintain then that such a coalition is incompatible with the preparation of the proletarian revolution and that the alliance of the working class with petty bourgeois elements cannot be realized thru a coalition with bourgeois parties and groups but only thru the formation of united front organs against bourgeois opposition groups—united front organs which in the course of struggle must develop into soviets (workers', peasants' and soldiers' councils).

A National Assembly such as the CPG demands would be a rallying center of all counter-revolutionary forces against the forces of the proletarian revolution, split, unorganized and without leadership as a

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