

Terrorism and Communism.

By V. BYSTRIANSKY.

Thanks to the pen of the well-known renegade, Karl Kautsky, a new work against Communism has just appeared, entitled "Terrorism and Communism".

To this work, whose author is forever excluded from the ranks of the Marxists, Lenin has devoted an article in the 5th number of the "Communist International", entitled "How the Bourgeois Utilizes the Renegade". The Russian counter-revolutionaries of the "Rousskaja Jasn" appearing in Helsingfors, do not permit an advantageous exploitation of this last outburst of the renegade.

Undoubtedly, Kautsky has more than once entrenched himself behind the authority of Marx in order to excuse his attacks against Bolshevism; nor has he abstained this time from making any appeal to the shadow of the great master in order to justify the principal thesis of his work.

Those who pin their faith in the Political Revolution are in error in Kautsky's opinion. Do you want to know the arguments he advances in support of his allegations? A revolution such as has been achieved in Russia, if extended to Europe would embroil the entire world in civil war for a whole generation, and this Civil War would not be a struggle between the classes, but what is more, a fratricidal war between the proletarians!

Let us analyse in our turn the opinions of Marx concerning the Proletarian Revolution in order to establish whether he conceived it in any other form than that of civil war. This shall be our subject-matter.

In his work, "The Trial of the Communists of Cologne", Marx cites the following declaration that he had made to the Assembly of the Central Committee of the Communist Union, reunited at London, Sept. 15th, 1850, in order to justify his proposition of the abolition of the Union: "We say to the workers: You will have to endure 15, 20, 50 years of civil war and of international struggle, not only to transform the social régime but also to transform yourselves fit to exercise political power"

Marx, as we see him, feared not to embroil whole generations in civil war. Contrariwise, he taught that that was the only means for the social revolution to obtain victory, and that the promised land of Communism could only be attained by traversing the arid desert of civil war.

And Marx has not renounced this view. In his work "The Civil War in France" 1848-1850, composed of articles published in the "Neue Rheinische Zeitung", Marx wrote:

"The actual situation brings to mind the traversing of the desert by the Hebrews led by Moses. This war ought not only to put an end to the conquest of a new world, but the combatants in it are destined to disappear in order to give place to men whose education renders them capable of living in a new world"

In his 18th Brumaire, written in 1852, Marx contrasts the proletarian revolution with bourgeois revolutions as follows:

"Bourgeois revolutions, such as the revolution of the 18th century, rush onward rapidly from success to success, their stage effects outbid one another, men and things seem to be in flaming brilliancy, ecstasy is the prevailing spirit; but they are short-lived, they reach their climax speedily, then society relapses into a long fit of nervous reaction before it learns how to appropriate the fruits of its period of feverish excitement.

"Proletarian revolutions, on the contrary, such as those of the 19th Century, criticize themselves constantly; constantly interrupt themselves in their own course; come back to what seems to have been accomplished in order to start over anew; scorn with cruel thoroughness the half-measures, weaknesses and meannesses of their first attempts; seem to throw down their adversary only in order to enable him to draw fresh strength from the earth and again to rise up against them in more gigantic stature; constantly recoil in fear before the undefined monster magnitude of their own objects, until finally that situation is created which renders all retreat impossible, and the conditions themselves cry out: *Hic lictodas, hic salta!*"

Thus does Marx present the proletarian revolution to the brief bourgeois revolution; he conceives it in the form of an entire historic period in which the violent tempests of the revolutionary movement succeed one another with moments of calm.

Let us now see in what manner Marx comprehended this proletarian revolution.

Precisely in the form of civil war.

"The Civil War in France"—such is the title given by Marx to one of his most beautiful works consecrated to the glorification of

the Paris Commune of 1871, which was precisely an example of this "fratricidal war between proletarians" which Kautsky fears so much. Those proletarians who fought in the camp of Thiers against the Communards were indeed deceived by the Versailles. The whole world knows the inspired pages that Marx dedicated to the memory of the Paris Commune; we shall only quote the following lines:

"The working class did not ask the Commune to perform any miracles. It did not expect to realize complete Utopias prepared in advance by the wish of the people. It ignores nothing in order to obtain its liberty and to attain to superior forms of existence towards which modern society irresistibly tends by reason of a series of historic processes which will transform entirely both men and circumstances".

And thus Marx conceived "this difficult struggle"—the struggle for power of which the Paris Commune was the first act—as a series of historic processes, which signifies according to him the civil war had to extend over an entire epoch.

Such is the essence of true, revolutionary Marxism, whose principles are revealed in the works of the great master and which the miserable charlatans try in vain to falsify. Marx is with us and not with our enemies. Communism is a different thing from revolutionary Marxism realized in practical life during the period of the social revolution.

There was a time, however, when Kautsky himself followed Marx in the question of the duration of the civil war. We wish to speak of the work of Kautsky entitled "The Road to Power", which appeared in 1909 and with good reason styled his swan song.

Then he expressed the supposition that the proletarian revolution might indeed last for several generations. Here are his own words:

"Will this revolutionary period last as long as the revolutionary period of the Revolution of the Third Estate, which began in 1789 and lasted up to 1871—this is what is impossible to foresee.

"It is true that during the actual period all development is made more rapid; but as retribution, the arena of the struggle is immeasurably extended. When Marx and Engels wrote their Communist Manifesto, the arena of the proletarian revolution was represented in their eyes by Western Europe alone. At that moment the field of battle embraced the entire world.

"The proletarian revolution will emerge from the revolutionary epoch, which already begins, and which extends perhaps over the entire length of a human existence, entirely divergent from what it was when it entered"...

Such were the opinions of Kautsky at the time when he had not yet broken with Marxism. Would he, taking the pain to observe himself, be able to compare what he has been with what he has become?

In his book "Terrorism and Communism", Kautsky, in the language of the social-patriot, showed how the Bolsheviks always succeeded in doing the opposite of what was their aim. They were forced under pain of death to proceed to executions en masse. According to the "Rousskaja Jasn", Kautsky said further: "The Bolsheviks have borrowed from the story of the Paris Commune its implacable terrorism without taking into account their democratic and humanitarian foundation. Terror exhausts the revolutionary energy of the masses and prepares the country for rebellion; it leads to the destruction of the democratic power which is supported by the will of the people".

"Thus it was with Robespierre—it will be the same with the Bolsheviks" concluded Kautsky. This opinion of Kautsky on the terrorism of the proletarian revolution and that of the Russian peasants is indistinguishable from the opinions on the same subject expressed by Lloyd George and Clemenceau and repeated in every tongue by the bourgeois press in the pay of the financiers.

Let us now see what was the opinion of Marx on revolutionary terrorism.

In 1847, in his article "Die Moralische Kritik und die Kritische Moral", he wrote:

"The reign of terror in France could consequently serve to efface all the feudal ruins as by enchantment under the blows of the terrible mallet. The bourgeoisie would have lived unceasingly for decades without being able to attain this result".

The bloody excesses of the people have served but to shorten its life. (Aus dem literarischen Nachlass von Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels und Ferdinand Lassalle, Stuttgart 1892, III, 465-6).

In January 1849, the "Neue Rheinische Zeitung" characterizes "the heroic epilogue of the revolutionary movement of the year 1848"—the terrorism of the Hungarian revolutionaries—in the following term:

"For the first time in the revolutionary movement of 1849, for the first time since 1793, a nation surrounded by superior counter-revolutionary forces has the boldness to oppose the revolutionary passion to the timorous wrath of the counter-revolution (Die feigen gegen-revolutionären Wuth die revolutionäre Leidenschaft)."

All of Marx's sympathies were, as we see it, on the side of the revolutionary terror. There was a time however when Kautsky was capable of judging "Terrorism and Communism" more objectively. We have seen his work on the subject which appeared in 1895, Die Vorläufer der Sozialismus—absolving the Communist movement of the past age and of the epoch of the Reformation from all the calumny with which the bourgeois historians had blackened its memory.

The most interesting pages of this work are those dedicated to the Commune of Munster—this "New Jerusalem" of the epoch of the Reformation. At the end of 1639, the Anabaptists, the Communists of that epoch, had seized power at Munster in Westphalia.

Numerous indeed are the accusations against which our historian had to defend himself in his "Precursors of Socialism"—precursors too precocious of the springtime of Communism; he was not able to forbear taking up the question of "the terror".

Kautsky's reasoning on this subject is very important in order to rightly appreciate his real attitude to the Red terror of the Russian Communists: As the sky differs from the earth so do they differ from his true opinions.

Twenty five years ago, Kautsky, with a single stroke had grasped this question in its very essence.

"Above everything else let us not forget that Munster found itself in a state of war since the Bishop had attacked it February 10th. This circumstance, ordinarily, is never taken into consideration by the historians biased towards the Anabaptists.

"One must think that war is a very insignificant circumstance, else how can the fact be explained in this case that the 'very thoughtful' historians who discovered with such perspicuity the smallest circumstance bearing any influence on the like action of monarchs, always fail to take into consideration the state of war, when it is concerned with judging the acts of a democratic society fighting for its existence. To convince oneself, it suffices to examine the ordinary, idle tales of the Bourgeoisie on the insurrection of the Paris Commune in 1871 and on the reign of terror during the Great French Revolution.

"The Anabaptists of Munster have the same fate". (From the Russian translation of the "precursors of Socialism", St. Petersburg 1907, page 356).

At an opportune moment, Kautsky the historian, in his role of publicist, likewise fails to take into consideration "this very insignificant circumstance"—a state of war—when it is concerned with judging the acts of the Russian Communist society fighting for its existence. It is quite natural that the "good intentions" of Kautsky are taken cognizance of by the paper "Rousskaja Jasn", organ of Czarist propaganda.

Let us see again what Kautsky has to say on the same subject.

"If one wishes to understand the insurrection of Munster and the aims pursued by the Anabaptists, he cannot criticize their acts in accordance with standards established in times of peace, but contrariwise, he must bear in mind that a besieged city is in question, and one in particularly trying circumstances. Ordinary military laws did not exist for the Anabaptists; no honorable capitulation was possible for them. The besieged had to make their choice between victory and a terrible death".

"With regard to the rebels the most lenient punishment was still too mild for them; it is, as Luther says, a good thing that the government fell into their hands. If these rebels counted up the many sanguinary acts committed by princely cruelty, one would be better able to infer what outrages are perpetrated in the name of liberty and equality. Such is the logic of our scientific light!"

Kautsky, in his capacity as historian, manifested an analytical and very perspicacious mind; then, he remembered what was most important to bear in mind, and took even the most "insignificant circumstance" into consideration.

How then does it happen that now, he forgets that all of Soviet Russia is a more fortress besieged by the omnipotent imperialists the whole world over? Does he really think that the Russian Communists have had other alternatives than those of the Anabaptists of the 16th century?