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HAROLD M. WARE (1890-1935)

AGRICULTURAL PIONEER, U.S.A. AND U.S.S.R.

by

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Introduction

The life of Harold Ware is memorable for his accomplishments on two continents.

In October 1917, the Russian Revolution overthrew the rule of the landlords and nobility and launched the first socialist society. With the collapse of imperial Germany, the Allies - England, France, the United States, Japan - all sent armed forces and supplies to support invading counter-revolutionary armies which were attempting to destroy the young Socialist State.

Four years of civil war devastated the land and interrupted normal agriculture. At the same time the valley of the Volga suffered drought resulting in widespread hunger and in some areas famine. Humanitarian American organizations, including the American Friends (Quakers), raised funds for relief supplies and sent volunteers to distribute food and medicine. Among the volunteers was Jessica Smith, later to become the wife of Harold Ware.

Receiving reports of desperate conditions in the young Socialist state, Ware conceived the idea of sending a group of American farmers and all necessary equipment to the Soviet Union to demonstrate modern methods of producing grain. First he convinced the Soviet authorities of the feasibility of such

a project. Then with their approval he obtained funds from the American-Russian Famine Relief Association and put his plan into operation.

Assigned a remote district where peasants were so short of food that they had eaten the dogs and cats, he and his American group showed volunteer Russian peasants how to operate tractors and their implements and harvested a bountiful crop.

Lenin, then head of state, kept a watchful eye on this operation and enthusiastically supported it.

After this successful demonstration, Ware was authorized to direct a much more extensive project in the North Caucasus. Bringing to the Soviet Union a large number of experts in various phases of farming, and all necessary equipment, he organized an experimental state farm on a former landlord's estate, where many of the methods later used on the collective farms were tried out.

Later the Soviet Government accepted his proposal to organize still another state farm where new cropping methods and the most advanced farm implements could be demonstrated. Ware also persuaded a well-known wheat expert, Professor M. L. Wilson of Montana, to advise on dry farming techniques for raising wheat, and other small grains.

Altogether, Ware spent the better part of nine years helping to bring modern, mechanized methods to Soviet farms and teaching the peasants how to apply them. He was honored by the Soviet Government for his contributions to their agriculture. Lenin took a great interest in his activity and wrote to the American Friends of Soviet Russia that Harold Ware's work "was more helpful than that of any other American."

In 1931, Ware decided that his objectives in the Soviet Union had been successfully met, and he turned his attention to the American farm scene. His first move was to make a year-long survey of American farm regions, noting the desperate conditions brought on by the collapse of prices for farm products. Here, as in the Soviet Union ten years earlier, there were regions of drought where farmers were clamoring for relief payments.

Using the findings of his national survey, he set in motion a whole complex of activities designed to help rural people meet the ruinous effects of the Depression.

With his usual ingenuity and enthusiasm, he established a center in Washington, D.C., called Farm Research, Inc., and recruited personnel to run it. He attracted others to work directly with farmers in their organizations and coopera-

tives. There soon developed mass demonstrations and delegated conferences of militant farmers ready to fight for the security of their farms and homes.

He founded a national farm paper, The Farmers National Weekly, which published uninterruptedly throughout the Depression years. He brought together another group to study the plight of the migratory agricultural workers and soon union activity began, later to become the United Cannery, Agricultural and Allied workers of America, affiliated with the CIO. He went to the deep South where the sharecroppers were forming unions and to Florida where citrus workers were organizing.

All this he accomplished in a short five years when he met his untimely death in an auto accident at the age of 45.

Agricultural Apprenticeship

The pervading influence on the life of Harold Ware both as a youth and an adult was his mother, Ella Reeve Bloor, affectionately known to many thousands as Mother Bloor. Though she was constantly on the move, lending her eloquent voice and ready wit in support of scores of strikes and demonstrations, she never failed to maintain a close, intimate family relationship with all her six children. Her first husband, by whom she had four children, Grace, Helen, Buzz and Harold, was Lucien Bonaparte Ware, a quiet, home-loving man who was secretary to the President of the Norfolk and Western Railroad. The family home was in Arden, Delaware, a kind of enclave devoted to the principles of 'single tax' as proposed by Henry George. The leading spirits of Arden were Frank Stevens and his son, Donald. Hal Ware was later to marry Frank's daughter Margaret, by whom he had two children, Nancy and Robin. Father Ware's great hobby was gardening. Neighbors used to laugh at Lucien Ware working his garden by lantern light late at night.

Ella and Lucien, though fond of each other, were so different, that the time finally came when they agreed to separate. Some years after the separation, Mother Bloor found herself without funds in a dangerous strike situation. She wrote Lucien asking for help. He promptly sent her fifty dollars. A member

of the family who had resented the separation objected, claiming that Mother Bloor had deserted him, so why should he help her? Lucien responded with anger which was unusual for him: "Don't you ever let me hear you utter another word of criticism of Ella. I won't allow it."

Because of the frequent absences of their mother, the children were trained to look after each other and help with everything. By her second marriage, Mother Bloor had given birth to two more sons, Carl and Richard Reeve. Since there was no school in Arden, Harold tutored his brother Carl who was fifteen years younger. Carl remembers with particular relish the course in botany which Hal gave him. Later, when Carl entered Boston University, he was given credit for Harold's courses.

Harold's first venture was the organizing of "Arden Gardens", a vegetable and flower operation for which he drew on his father's experience. He took special pains to package his products attractively and marketed them in nearby Wilmington. Characteristically he kept enlarging the garden area and soon began to need a reliable water supply to irrigate his plots. He solved this by convincing the Arden Society to put in a water system which served all the homes as well as his garden needs.

Soon he added mushroom houses to his operation, and eventually had four of them. This required additional help, so he hired a young man named Tony, who later bought the business from him. Young Carl was hired to work in the mushroom houses, an unpleasant dirty job. He noticed that brother Hal would be away often and did not seem to be doing his share of the dirty work. Mom was appealed to. She pointed out to Carl that Hal was attending to the marketing, transportation and promotion which Carl was too young to handle. Carl remembers this with amusement - his first experience of a "labor dispute."

At the age of nineteen, Ware decided to get college training. He applied to the Pennsylvania State College School of Forestry, but when he found that involved a four-year course, he shifted to a two-year course in general agriculture. Here he studied many of the practical aspects of operating a farm. As he learned later, some of the instruction had to be modified when it came to actual farm operation. For example, when purchasing his first team, he had in mind what he had been taught - the physical characteristics, the chest, the withers, etc. But when he hooked them up to equipment, he found they were untrained - they went wild, raced around, and tangled up all the gear. In disgust, he sold the team at a loss.

On taking his degree, he decided he wanted the experience

of running a farm, because he had long since decided that agriculture was to be his field of work. He went to his father whom he knew had set aside a patrimony for his three children. Mr. Ware gave him the money and he bought a farm near Downington, Pa., which he named Jolly Waters Farm. His wife, Margaret, had died as a result of developing whooping cough during her second pregnancy, and Hal was now married to Clarissa Smith. She and Hal's two children, Robin and Nancy, were with him on the farm. Later Clarissa gave birth to a daughter, Judy.

In 1913, farm tractors were still a rarity. Hal was the first of his community to use tractors in the fields. He could not afford a full line of tractor-drawn implements, so he welded together harrows designed for horses and the same with other implements. Neighbor farmers kept a curious eye on these 'new-fangled' experiments and saw that they really worked. Philip Smith, a successful dairy farmer from New Hope, Pa., a long-time friend, came for a visit to Hal's farm. They walked around the fields and at one point with a sweep of his arm, Hal said: "Look at the beautiful scenery here." To which Philip replied: "You can't farm scenery."

But Hal did farm it. A letter to his mother reports that one year's crop included 27 acres of hay, 18 of wheat, 27 of corn, some oats and soybeans, and 4½ acres of potatoes. But

this letter and other letters show that he was growing more and more uneasy over quiet farming while big events were occurring in the outside world. World War I was raging and it looked as though the U.S. would be drawn in.

In another letter, he invited his mother to come for a rest on his farm. "I know that you would be bored to death for want of excitement, but you would find me material to convince, for I am in want of convincing on many points. Living here 'away from the front' as you justly term it, with only selfish personal troubles, one either forgets society's problems or else looks on them with a calm academic eye. I know the war was started by capital, is continued by capital, and is primarily an Anglo-Teutonic war. I know that militarism is creeping into a permanent form and I see Prussianism appearing here. Yet I believe that labor has a better chance if the Allies prevent a German victory. Had you not better come off the line and come to the 'first line of defense' (farms). I certainly am in need of contact with the world."

In another letter, he quoted sarcastically the World War I slogan: Food will win the war. The farm is the first line of defense. "Mom has been through New York State, and writes that she sees hundreds of instances of how city businessmen gouge the farmers. I have seen it for a long time. I am first

going to become a farmer, and then having been 'admitted', I can speak their lingo, I am going to tell them and hope that I can be convincing."

He only stayed with the farm for three years, then sold out and, since the war was still on, found work in a shipyard as a draughtsman. He was talented in this skill and received a good salary. The yard was well populated with trade-union organizers and IWW members. Hal had many a bull session with these men, some of whom had taken part in the western mine struggles and harvest-hand strikes. These tales fired his imagination and were a cause of his going west eventually to see the open spaces for himself.

With the war ended, the shipyard shut down. Liberty ships were a drug on the market. The sheltered, self-contained life of Arden held no charm for him. He felt he must get out and study rural America on a bigger scale. His years on his farm had taught him "the lingo"; he felt "admitted." Meanwhile his mother was taking active part in the Workers Party which was just forming and was the precursor of the Communist Party. Like many others he saw the enormous implications of the overthrow of Russian czarism and the emergence of the first socialist nation.

Ware was then a member of the Workers' Party and gained

their approval to go West and follow the grain harvest from Kansas to Dakota. For six months he joined the harvest hands hoboing his way on the freights from point to point. Riding the "blinds", clinging between cars, was plenty dangerous. Once he fell off, due to smoke inhalation when passing through a tunnel. He found himself in a wilderness and was trying to make his way to a town. In a lonely spot he heard screams of a woman. He saw a cabin, looked in, and there was a woman writhing in pain, obviously about to deliver a child. Hal walked in, told the woman that he was a doctor, which calmed her, and went to work. He helped her deliver, cut the cord, washed the child, when a frantic husband arrived. The husband drove him to the nearest town.

What to do? He was weakened by the smoke and exposure and had to find a place to rest. He went to the town's bar and there met one of the women on the prowl for a customer. He made friends, told her his plight and asked her for help. She took him to a house where a whole group of prostitutes lived. The women adopted him, nursed him back to health and on parting would accept no money.

It was in North Dakota that he encountered the organized remnants of the Non-Partisan League, one of the few farmers' revolts to attain a measure of success. Just before the war,

A. C. Townley, the founder of the League, launched a statewide organizing drive by dirt farmers to effect reforms by gaining political control of the state. Townley was a natural rural orator, who could charm his listeners with homely allusions. He once described the then Republican governor as "about as useful as an old bull that had one horn and one nut. All the bull could do was 'beller' and fart."

Soon scores of farmers were criss-crossing the state in old Model T's, collecting sixteen dollars membership dues from every farm and leaving a list of favored state candidates. After a year of organizing, Lynn Frazier, a dirt farmer, was elected Governor, and Leaguers began to take seats in the State House and Senate. Some useful reforms were effected, notably State control over the weighing and grading of farmers' wheat crop. Until then farmers had been unmercifully cheated of their true grade.

But the main drive of the League turned out to be a disappointing illusion. In virtual control of the State apparatus for a time, the League established the Bank of North Dakota which, it was thought, would furnish low interest credit to farmers and establish statewide crop insurance. The Bank never succeeded in doing either. Then great stock was placed in the building of a large State-owned grain mill and elevator at Grand

Forks. Called Dakotamaid, it was hoped that it could force better prices for the farmers' grain. It was found to be no match for the price manipulators in the Wheat Pit of the Chicago Board of Trade.

While all this was going on, someone approached Townley and said: "A.C., these measures won't get us anywhere. You ought to read history." "Hell," Townley replied, "I don't need to read history, I make history."

Ware met with all the leaguers he could, especially the men who had built the organization, like "Dad" Walker, Otto Anstrom, Alfred Knutson, Andrew Omholt. They all realized that they had tapped a big popular upsurge, but something went wrong and the League was fast becoming a memory.

Ware returned East and made his report to the Party. In it he emphasized the potential militancy of farmers and farm workers and urged the formation of a farm league that would not compete with existing farm organizations but be a policy-maker affecting all of them. He included his conviction that an important first step would be the founding of a weekly farm paper with columns open to farmer correspondents, where policies could be discussed. No action, however, was taken on his report and recommendations.

Ware and the Bolshevik Revolution

Being at somewhat loose ends, Ware accepted a position on the big farm of the Loyal Order of Moose at Mooseheart, Illinois. He was made manager of their horticultural department. This was work he enjoyed, but he could not shake off his old fear of getting into a rut, of by-passing the people's struggle. As always, he turned to his mother and wrote her as follows:

I am trying to keep you in touch with me. I more and more realize just what you said. You face the music. You want your kids to do the same, and the Lord knows I do mine. You have been through it.

Well, I am here, glad, oh so glad to be out of it all. Then I began to crystallize, to probe it. I found that I was running away, that I had left my kids and my father with my responsibilities. I would stay here if I only thought of my daily comfort and freedom from worry...

Give me the understanding of you who are close and damn the 'I told you so's.'

Love and strength to you dear,

Harold

In four months he gave up his job at Mooseheart.

Then came the real turning point of his life. He had been watching the events of the Russian Revolution, the invasion of the White Guard armies and their defeat. News was reaching the United States of the terrible sufferings of the Russian people while repelling the counter-revolutionary armies. In addition to the devastation of the invaders, drought in the Volga basin brought famine and a plague of typhus in its wake. Thousands died while the enemy powers maintained a commercial

blockade.

First to respond with shipments of relief food were the Quakers. Others joined and formed the American-Russian Famine Relief Association. Large shipments of wheat were sent in an effort to end the famine.

It was while following these events that Ware became convinced that an effective use of a part of the relief funds would be to send over experienced American wheat growers, tractors, and a full line of farm implements and actually grow thousands of bushels of grain on Russian soil while demonstrating the enormous productivity of power farming. The first step, of course, was to gain approval from the Soviet authorities. With the aid of the U.S. Communist Party, he received assurance that such a demonstration farm operation would be welcomed. He was told that Lenin was personally interested.

With this assurance he approached the Famine Relief Association. After much discussion and the promise of recruiting the farmers and assembling the machinery, he gained an appropriation from the relief funds of \$75,000. To help raise still more money, Harold's brother, Carl Reeve, traveled widely about the United States showing a film made by the Famine Relief Association. It depicted the terrible conditions, including scenes of crying children abandoned by their dying parents begging for help. Carl showed the film in many large theatres and also in the homes of miners in Appalachia.

Ware went to Racine, Wisconsin, to the J.I. Case Farm Implement Co. and closed a deal for 24 tractors and necessary implements. He even obtained the services of Joe Broecker, their chief field demonstration agent, to be one of the American farm experts to come for six months, at no salary, just expenses.

In North Dakota, he looked up some of the Leaguers he had met on his hobo trip -- George Iverson, Otto Anstrom and others. He found Otto Anstrom tending bar in his home town of Wilton, North Dakota. The Anstrom family had come over from Sweden and proved up a homestead -- real pioneers. As usual, the family was large, ten children. When some of the boys were big enough to run the farm, old man Anstrom decided that he liked Sweden better than the open spaces, left his family and went home, never to return. Years later, when Otto was in Sweden, he looked up his father as a friend. The old man kept looking at him all evening and finally said: "You are one of the boys, but I don't know which one."

Hal walked into the saloon and asked Otto for a beer. Otto drew it and was scraping off the suds when Hal said: "How would you like to come with me to Soviet Russia and help run a farm?" Otto pushed over the beer, hesitated a moment and said "Sure." He was young, unmarried, and ready for adventure. In parting, Hal told Otto: "Come to Russia with me and you

will become a professor over there." The recruiting of the others was almost as simple.

In May, 1922, the entire outfit, including Ware and Clarissa (the three children remained in the U.S.A.), sailed on the Baltic American liner, bound for Libau, Latvia (now Lepaya). Also on board were nine experienced farmers, 22 tractors, farm implements, a complete medical unit, a doctor who spoke Russian, and several tons of food supplies. The farmers aboard were in vacation mood and indulged in drunken frolics. The captain of the vessel took a dim view of such activities and when one of the farmers started climbing up the mast and slipped and fell to the deck, the captain ordered him locked in his stateroom to sober up.

But after arrival in Moscow after a train trip from Libau, playtime was over and a series of problems confronted them. Most serious was that under the disorganized conditions of that year, the various carloads of tractors and supplies had been scattered around to half a dozen different freight yards. The explanation was that this was an act of deliberate sabotage by elements unreconciled to the new state of affairs.

The whole project was threatened. Seeding time was fast approaching and the best guess was that it would take a month to assemble the train. Ware went to the Commissar of Internal

Security, Felix Dzerzhinsky, Lenin's close colleague. Ware was admitted and when Dzerzhinsky heard the problem, he said nothing, just looked grim, and pressed a button. His secretary came and Dzerzhinsky said: "Call every station master where those cars are scattered and give them three days to have the train assembled at the correct station. Immediate removal and other consequences if the train is not ready." The train was ready in three days.

At departure time, Otto Anstrom believed the best place for him to ride was on top of a freight car where he could watch the flat cars with the tractors. One of the armed guards patrolling the platform did not think this was an acceptable way to ride a freight. He ordered Otto down, but Otto did not seem to understand. To make his wishes clear, the guard unslung his rifle and aimed it menacingly at Otto. "I understand, I understand," shouted Otto and came scrambling down.

Upon arrival at Verashagino, their rail destination, they found that Toikino, where land had been assigned, was forty miles overland. How to get the stuff there -- twenty-two tractors and eleven Americans who could drive a tractor. This included Clarissa Ware, who had learned how to drive a tractor on Ware's farm. The authorities had recruited about fifty young Russian peasants to work the farm under the direction of the Americans. None of them had ever seen a tractor, or a car for

that matter. So the first move was to put these peasants on the tractors and give them a few hours of practice driving. They caught on fast -- exploding a theory held by some Moscow agronomists that illiterate peasants would have to stick to horses because they could not learn to handle machinery. In a week they were all tractor drivers, and all the supplies were in Troikino.

Clarissa Ware had taken part in training the young Russians in tractor driving and was useful in many ways at the headquarters. But her health was not good and she missed Robin, Nancy and Judy; she therefore returned home early. Undergoing a serious operation after her return, she died on the operating table.

The next problem was with the local community. Of course, the arrival of foreigners and strange machines created great local excitement. Peasants came in from surrounding villages. To make the most of it, Ware arranged a demonstration day in which the first furrows would be turned. Otto was on the tractor, the gang plows hitched, all set to go. At that point the local priest with his flowing beard and somber robes stepped forward and with his cane, drew a circle on the earth around the tractor. Then he turned to the crowd of peasant onlookers and made a speech, frequently pointing to the tractor and using the word "chort." This was one of the few Russian words Otto knew because it is a constant expression of peasants. It means 'devil.'

Otto decided 'We will show them what the devil can do.'
So he revved up the tractor and started plowing toward the crowd who gave way in some panic. But every peasant understood the nice deep furrows the tractor plows were turning, so different from the poor performance of their one horse plows.

By the end of the first furrow, an older peasant approached Otto and made clear that he would like Otto to come and plow his plot. With the aid of an interpreter, Otto explained that any single peasant's plot was too small to accommodate a tractor, they would have to put their plots together into big fields, then the tractor could do the work. Perhaps this was the first seed of the future collectivization to be sown on Soviet soil.

The work began to hum. Forty-four peasants worked the tractors on two seven-hour shifts, Ware reporting that you had to practically pull the young men off the tractors at the end of their shift, such was their enthusiasm. The Americans worked fourteen hours, directing operations, keeping the tractors running. Famine conditions had eroded the health of the local people and a seven-hour work day was about their limit. But increasing the protein content of their diet improved their physical condition in just a few weeks. Four thousand acres were plowed, harrowed, sown to rye and harvested.

Gasoline for the tractors had to be hauled in by peasant wagons forty miles from the railroad. Findings were being

made that somehow water was in the gasoline. Ware knew his customers, so when a big delivery was made, before paying the peasants, he dropped a rubber tube into a gas drum and sucked out some of the bottom - water. He looked at the peasants and shook his finger. "Umnee Amerikanski" one of them said (Smart American), whipped up his horse and left. The others did the same. They did not know the difference between gasoline and kerosene and had drained off some gas, replacing it with water, for use in their lanterns at home. For a few evenings thereafter, fires were visible in the distance where the villages lay. Lamps were exploding.

Many peasants came to watch the farm's activity and some would even show up at meal time in the tent used as a mess hall. They were always invited to have a meal. Otto recalls one such who took a great interest in everything and occasionally had a meal with the staff. Otto noticed that he would come, then go away for a day or two and then reappear again.

One day, Harold and Otto were supervising the planting of the first field with seed drills. The tractor drivers had been told to drive around the field in ever narrowing circles, thus avoiding any turns of the equipment at the end of rows which might have been difficult for the still inexperienced drivers. When the tractors would complete a circle, Harold and Otto would

help fill the drill boxes with seed and send them on the next lap. While waiting for the next tractor to come by, the peasant whom Otto had noticed, came up. He took off his hat and bowed respectfully. Harold used his limited Russian to say that he could not speak Russian. In good English, the "peasant" said: "Comrade Ware, you do not need to. I have been observing your work and have something important to tell you. Your doctor-interpreter, is stirring up trouble. He is telling the peasants that you are industrial spies, preparing this farm for the American Case Company who will take the land and work it for themselves. Also, he tells them that the Americans are drunkards and some of them are syphilitic. You should get rid of this man. Here is a railroad ticket to Moscow; the train leaves at six p.m. Get him on that train; tell him he will be met upon arrival in Moscow and he must leave Moscow within twenty-four hours, never to return."

Harold called in the doctor, gave him the railroad ticket and told him if he valued his life, he would act as ordered. When first interviewed in the USA, the doctor said he was a socialist, even claimed to be a friend of Maxim Gorki. But now he asked no questions, said nothing, just took the ticket and departed.

At season's end, all the Americans except Otto left for Moscow. Upon arrival, they learned that they had been widely

publicized in the Soviet press. They were received as heroes, wined and banqueted, and sent home with the thanks of a nation.

Lenin had taken a continuous and personal interest in the Toikino venture. Hearing that the farm was not being supplied with enough gasoline and lubricating oils, he dispatched a message:

To Comrade Trifonov, Deputy Chief of Perm District Committee:

I have been informed of the considerable successes achieved by the American tractor expedition for the mechanical cultivation of land in the Toikino State Farm, Okhansk Uyezd, Perm Gubernia.

The Perm Gubernia Executive Committee reports that they would have scored an even greater success but for the shortage of gasoline and lubricating oil (it is being reported that kerosene is being supplied instead of gasoline).

Please issue urgent orders to your subordinate organ (Perm District Oil Office) handling the distribution and sale of oil products in the area to supply the American expedition working in the Toikino State Farm with the necessary quantity of gasoline and lubricating oil on the easiest possible terms.

Send a copy of your order to Comrade Smolyaninov.

Chairman of the Council of
People's Commissars
Lenin

Oct. 10, 1922

Then ten days later, Lenin wrote to the Society of Friends of Soviet Russia in the United States:

Oct. 20, 1922

Dear Comrades:

I have just verified by special inquiry to the Perm Gubernia Executive Committee the extremely favorable information that was published in our newspapers about the work of the members of your Society, headed by Harold Ware, with the tractor team at the Toikino State Farm, Perm Gubernia.

In spite of the immense difficulties, particularly in view of the extreme remoteness of that locality from the centre, and also the devastation caused by Kolchak during the Civil War, you have achieved successes that must be regarded as truly outstanding.

I hasten to express to you my profound gratitude and to ask you to publish this in your Society's journal, and, if possible, in the general press of the United States.

I am sending a recommendation to the Praesidium of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee that it should recognize this State Farm as a model farm, and render it special and extraordinary assistance in building and also in supplying petrol, metal, and other materials necessary for a repair shop.

Once again on behalf of our Republic I express to you our profound gratitude, and ask you to bear in mind that no form of assistance is as timely and as important for us as that which you are rendering.

Lenin
Chairman of Council of People's
Commissars

One of the Americans, Otto Anstrom, stayed behind to winter in Toikino and look after the repair work of the equipment. Anstrom has described that winter as one long holiday, living and sporting with the peasants. He enjoyed their form of

sledding, called "katyatsa". They had round wooden saucer-like sleds, big enough for four -- sitting facing each other -- usually men and women. Down the slopes they would slide, twisting, revolving, often ending up against a tree for there was no way of guiding the course. Most of the village took part and greatly enjoyed watching the big Swede-American roll in the snow with one of the women after such a slide.

The American astonished the village with another caper. One day a peasant came to the village leading a half-grown bear. Otto made friends with the bear and traded a bag of flour for the animal. He named it Mischa and soon Mischa would do most anything Otto wanted -- they would hug each other, wrestle, and romp. But Mischa's affections were only for Otto. At anyone else, he would bare his teeth and growl, so others kept their distance.

When the cold had really set in, Otto dug a big pit, lined it with hay, put Mischa in, covered him up and hoped he would hibernate. He did, to the relief of the village. Then one day a month later, after a thaw, there was an uproar in the camp, and cries for Otto. When Otto arrived on the double, there was Mischa, who had come alive and broken into the food storehouse. He had clawed some flour bags, gotten himself all dusted with flour and presented an unusual white

appearance. Otto entered and said in a harsh voice, "Mischa, what have you done?" Mischa understood the rebuke, put his forepaws over his face and whimpered. Otto led him out, cleaned him off and fed him. Mischa did not seem to have any desire to do any more hibernating.

The experience of that first season convinced the Commissariat of Agriculture that this valuable machinery and the by-now experienced tractor drivers should be transferred to a more productive region. A telegram from Moscow reached Otto in Toikino which instructed him to move everything back to the rail point and proceed to new land near Cheliabinsk. With no interpreter to help, Otto puzzled out the wire and then composed his answer:

I agree. Need money. Need interpreter.
Anstrom

Pretty soon, a Russian who had lived in Canada seven years arrived. He brought with him a suitcase which was jam full of rubles.

By his own decision, Otto left with the neighboring peasants two tractors and a binder to guarantee that the winter rye which they had sown would be harvested. Then he loaded up all the remaining tractors and equipment, took along his bear, and headed for Vereshagino. On the way, one of the tractors fell

off a sleigh into a ditch. Another tractor had to have its wheels put back on, and with ropes and the help of a crowd of peasants, they got it back on the sleigh. Nothing was damaged except the vertical exhaust pipe that was crumpled. On the train to Chelyabinsk all went well except that in an unguarded moment, Mischa got up into a baggage rack and tore up a supply sack which spilt its contents all over the car. Once more, Mischa whimpered apology when Otto scolded him.

On arrival in the Chelyabinsk area, Otto was taken to land where they proposed to set up a farm. Otto took one look at it and noted that it was covered with stumps and brush. He went to the authorities and told them nothing doing, it would take a whole season to clear the stumps and brush; if that was the place allotted for his work, he was leaving. This forced a quick conference and a search was instituted for better land. Fifty miles away, an abandoned former landlord's estate was selected which Otto agreed to farm.

He took charge of the operation for that season, returning to the United States in the Fall. Before leaving, he signed papers turning over all the equipment to the Soviet authorities. As for Mischa, Otto found a peasant willing to take him on. All went well while Otto was still around. But when

Mischa saw Otto leaving, he put on a furious act that frightened everyone, including his new keeper. There were yells for Otto, who came, calmed Mischa down, and for the moment at least, Mischa accepted his new master.

Back to the United States

After that first season, as Ware was about to leave for the United States, an official entrusted to him a package. It contained an autographed picture of Lenin addressed to Charles P. Steinmetz, the renowned engineer who was consultant to the General Electric Co. Steinmetz had written to Lenin of his enthusiasm for the new Soviet State, even offering to be of assistance in planning the electrification of Soviet Russia.

Ware went to Schenectady and without previous appointment appeared at GE's executive offices. He informed a young receptionist that he wished to see Mr. Steinmetz. Believing Ware to be some sort of a salesman, the receptionist said that it was not possible to see Steinmetz since he was meeting with the directors of the Company. Hal then wrote a note and, giving it to the clerk, told him that if he valued his job he would deliver it immediately. In the note he had written: "Dr. Steinmetz, I have a message for you from Lenin."

Steinmetz immediately appeared with the note in his hand, left the meeting, and took Ware to his private office. There, Steinmetz propped up Lenin's picture against some books and said: "Now the three of us will talk."

Though the conversation ranged over the Soviet Union's efforts to industrialize, the food problem, science, education, Ware remembered that Steinmetz's greatest concern was the

attitude of the peasantry towards the new society. He quoted Steinmetz as concluding: "If only a significant portion of this huge mass of rural humanity can be brought to understand what socialism can mean to them, the Revolution will be safe. I would like to go, meet Lenin and see if I can be of help."

At this point, Ware was beginning to think he should return to the American scene. It happened that the Communist Party had forwarded a summary of its activities to Moscow, and Lenin, in returning it, had scribbled on the margin: "Have you no farmers in America?" The report had not mentioned agriculture. This led the Political Bureau to send for Ware. He agreed to make another trip West to see if conditions he had observed on his previous survey were still the same.

To aid his discussion with farmers and farm workers, he wrote a four-page leaflet entitled:

WHY NOT A United Farmers Educational League
and then a Union Between
Working Farmers and City Workers ???

After outlining the causes of the farm crisis, the collapse of farm prices far below their costs of production, he listed "Fundamental Remedies":

- Land be given to the users of the land
- Organize farm labor unions along the lines of the organizations of the city workers. These farm labor unions will not work on the land of owners maltreating

or evicting tenant farmers.

- Control of the management and operation of the marketing facilities, such as grain elevators, etc., by the economic organizations of the working farmers.
- All rural credit operations be governed, controlled and be carried out through the organizations of the working farmers and the organizations of the workers representing the consumers.
- The working farmers must employ every means of struggle against their capitalist exploiters. This includes the strike weapon; but in such strikes, the working farmers should feed the city workers through the organizations of the working class.
- The working farmers and city workers must organize into a mass political party of the working class in order to achieve a government of, by, and for the industrial and rural working masses.

This leaflet was signed by H. M. Ware and Alfred Knutson, Fargo, North Dakota.

Ware's survey took him from North Dakota to Texas. Everywhere he could, he gathered groups of farmers together or talked with them individually. Everywhere he encountered the same reaction: anger over looming bankruptcy and the prospect of losing everything. In South Dakota, he met a farmer spreading straw on his stubble. Ware asked: "Do you know how many years it will be before that becomes soluble as plant food?" The farmer replied: "You can't make me sore, brother, the bank can take this place any time it wants to, but I need the exercise - and there's nothing else to do anyway."

In Bismarck, Ware interviewed Dad Walker, a founder of the Non-Partisan League. They agreed that A.C. Townley was finished, "a tragedy of lost opportunities," Walker added.

At least 80% of the farmers are busted. There have been over 10,000 foreclosures in the past year... One of our papers carried notice of 75 foreclosures in one issue. Your idea of a U.F.E.L. is damn good... The farmer is ready to go, but you can't steer him without a paper... Have short articles and cartoons in every issue... You are damn right I will help, but put me down for the new job, not the Workers Party. I have been in this game a long while and I learned long ago that I could get farmers to yell socialism, communism or any other ism, just so you call it something else. And what difference does it make what you call it?

Ware returned East and reported his findings to the Political Bureau. He emphasized the need and opportunity of organizing a United Farmers Educational League, adding that it should not be competitive with existing farm organizations. Having found wide support for Dad Walker's view that farmers would balk at joining a Workers Party, he proposed that only farmers with advanced understanding of the class struggle should be invited to join the W.P.

* * *

Ware's views were not adopted by the Political Bureau. Apparently the formation of a Farmers Educational League did not appear to the Bureau as the best way to develop a radical farm movement. Ware himself wrote the comrades that he felt their attitude towards farmers was too "casual." He added that "as a member of the Party, every connection, every scrap of my poor knowledge will at all times be at the disposal of the Committee."

When it appeared that there was no possibility of developing at that time the program for work among American farmers, Ware's thoughts turned again to his plans for continuing the Toikino project on a much higher level. He proposed to the Soviet Commissariat of Agriculture that an expanded program be authorized in an area of rich soil. He reported that he felt he had prepared the ground for financing the American equipment he proposed using. He had received very favorable responses from officials of the J.I. Case Co., International Harvester, and other U.S. companies. He convinced these companies that furnishing tractors and implements free would be the best possible way to promote sales as Soviet Russia modernized its agriculture. The Commissariat had already decided on the state and collective farm system and welcomed the opportunity of establishing an experimental state farm using modern machinery.

The Commissariat offered a large tract of land in the Kuban area just north of the Black Sea - a rich, fertile, black earth region, one of the most productive areas in the U.S.S.R. Ware alerted the people whom he had chosen as his group of agricultural specialists, as well as others qualified as a teacher, a doctor and a nurse -- forty people in all. He also set up the organization which was to run the American part of the project, and named it Russian Reconstruction Farms.

Returning to the Soviet Union, Ware was planning to travel south and inspect the allotted area. Just at this point he was informed by the Soviet authorities that the project was off. The Civil War caused by counter-revolutionary interventionists had delayed the organization of land distribution. A delicate situation had arisen since former landless peasants were moving in on the land set aside for the American project. The Soviet authorities would not take land away from these peasants and assign it to Americans. This would take time to straighten out. They proposed postponing the project until later.

With his usual persistence, Ware kept on trying. Matters had gone too far in the U.S. for further postponement. The Soviet authorities understood this and found another place in the North Caucasus, also on good soil. Scant rainfall made it less desirable than the Kuban area, but Ware found it satisfactory

for his project. The population there was sparse because peasant farming was too hazardous. It became one of the first fully functioning state farms in the Soviet Union.

When Ware left Moscow to inspect the new site, he had difficulties getting directions from local people as to where the village was which was to be his headquarters. The village was called Maslov Kut, but it seemed that none of the local people had ever heard of it. The interpreter remembered that Maslov Kut had been the center of an enormous estate. He gave the name of the former landlord, a baron, and immediately the peasants responded, "oh yes, Plaksaka," which means "The Place of Tears." Ware describes the story told him by the peasants:

The old baronial mansion had housed a tyrant and his son. All the land was theirs, and every soul in the village was a serf... Being a thrifty business man, the baron erected flour mills to grind his wheat. To get water from the river, he needed twenty miles of canals. After the crop was in one Fall, he began that job. The entire village was driven out in the bitter winter steppe winds and mud. Practically every homestead paid its toll in one or more deaths from exposure. At last, some of the bravest peasants revolted. But the commander of the local army post, a convivial friend of brother Baron, sent his soldiers and shot the leading peasants in their own churchyard. From that moment Maslov Kut became Plaksaka, The Place of Tears. When asked what happened to the Baron after the Revolution, an old grandfather peasant replied: "Oh, he died of fright." In all the time we were there, no one in the village of 3,000 souls, or in any neighboring village ever called it Maslov Kut. Plaksaka, The Place of Tears, it will always remain for those peasants.

Ware spent most of 1925 in the United States promoting Russian Reconstruction Farms, Inc. Sponsors were found such as Horace Truesdell, for many years with the U.S. Department of Agriculture; Stuart Chase, popular writer, was treasurer; Frank P. Walsh, formerly with the War Railway Board, was General Counsel; and other well known people. George Lawrence Parker, Boston's prominent Unitarian Church leader, was one of those who endorsed the project: "I see in your plan the biggest ray of light that I have seen for the new Russia." Money-raising affairs were held, most notably a New York City concert featuring the great Russian basso, Feodor Chaliapin, at which \$8,000 was raised.

In accord with the agreement reached with the Soviet authorities, money was cabled from the United States and acknowledged by Smirnov, Commissar of Agriculture. His cabled reply of January 24, 1925, acknowledged receipt of \$20,000 and that \$21,000 of farm machinery was in transit for the port of Novorosisk and adds:

This marks fulfillment of first part of agreement and opens it to realization stop attaching great importance your work increasing production farm labor stop wishing you success speedy organization your work.

Included among the forty Americans who had joined the project were some of those who had worked on the Toikino farm;

also Ware's friend, Philip Smith, a Quaker and experienced dairyman from Pennsylvania; Donald Stevens from Arden, Delaware, a skilled builder and carpenter with his wife, Ingeborg, and two daughters; also four women, including a physician, a nurse, and several teachers to conduct classes in hygiene and sanitation, as well as to teach the American children. The women organized a day nursery, an innovation for the peasant women who formerly had taken their babies and toddlers to the fields with them and fed them with prechewed black bread.

At this time, Harold Ware was married to Jessica Smith who helped in setting up the U.S. organization in raising funds. Her and Ware's three children were part of the American contingent on the farm. There she issued publicity material and was useful in various capacities.

This second farm was organized as a Russian-American Mixed Company with a Soviet Director and Harold Ware as American Director. A major objective was to train a considerable number of young people in the skills of agriculture. To this end, a regiment of Red Army soldiers was stationed nearby and every member of the regiment got a few weeks experience driving tractors and learning new farm methods. In addition, 25 children who had been orphaned by the War of Intervention were received and attended school. Even some "bez prigrni," children made homeless by the wars, joined the farm. They received not only

schooling, but practical training in poultry raising and general farming. Ingeborg Stevens applied Makarenko methods in her position as Director of the group.

Unusual misfortunes greeted the first season. Five weeks of drought preceded seeding time. Peasant crops sprouted but quickly turned brown. Thanks to deep plowing, the farm's seeds had more moisture available and the sprouts stayed green. The peasants were impressed when American tractors came over to their fields to help them replant and again to help with the harvest. Time was even found to drain some marshes and thus keep down malaria.

Also that first season, there occurred a plague of locusts. A deep purple cloud appeared on the horizon as the swarms arose in their millions from one field of grain to fly over a few before alighting on the next. If they landed on a wheat field, not a grain was left when they finished. If on a corn field, their weight bent and broke the stalks until they were flat on the ground and the locusts stripped them of every leaf and every grain of corn. Everyone, Americans and Russians alike, was mobilized to go out in the fields with sticks and pans to force the locusts to take flight and thus save the crop. Many peasants lost their entire crop to the hordes. The Maslov Kut State Farm was fortunate in losing the wheat only on one experimental field.

There were many aspects to the educational work of the project. The few peasants on the land when the Americans arrived were using oxen and the most primitive tools. The introduction of tractors and modern machinery in the first year meant an increase of 258% in acreage under cultivation. And even after a dry summer the farm harvested 13.7 bushels to the acre whereas the peasants averaged only 10 bushels to the acre. This difference did not pass unnoticed by the peasantry.

In addition to teaching farm skills to a regiment of soldiers, seventy local peasants were taught the operation of tractors and farm machinery as hired workers. Also, there were twenty students for a regular agricultural school during the first summer and large numbers later. The first group was made up of ten young Communist students from the Timiurazev Agricultural Institute in Moscow and ten from an evangelical school. These last came in accordance with an agreement with the American Christian Missionary Society which helped in raising funds. This mixture of Communists and evangelists worked out very well.

Probably the greatest sensation was created by the appearance of the first combined harvester-thresher in that part of Russia. A local newspaper reported the reaction of a Soviet official, watching the combine harvest a fifteen foot swath of wheat: "This, brother, is the Soviet Government working. We must import 10 of these machines, no 50." (Today, over 700,000

Soviet-made combines harvest the grain crop.)

At the end of that first season, there was a public meeting for the purpose of giving awards to the Americans. Especially noted by the speakers was the fine impression made on the surrounding peasantry, who like farmers everywhere, had been watching closely the goings-on. Of course, some of the peasant reactions were of less than historical significance. Thus, when an American woman was seen wearing pants as she did chores, the wondering peasant asked: "Tell me, please, is that a woman or a man?"

Ware directed the Maslov Kut State Farm for three years. By that time the work was practically completed since it was never planned that the Americans remain indefinitely. Their job was to train Soviet specialists and farmers who would take over. This was done.

In addition to strict farming operations, four old flour mills were taken over and operated at a considerable profit to the farm. Harry Minster, from Stamford, Connecticut, who was fluent in Russian, managed the mills and was responsible for their success. There was also a central machine repair shop which not only served the farm but the needs of the surrounding peasants. Several portable machine shops did repairs out in the field.

The Americans had been able to bring electricity to the entire farm. One of the most exciting events was when they rigged up electric lights around a huge field so work could continue at night. A crowd assembled to see this novelty.

Another innovation was delivering meals to field workers. In the old days when peasants tended strips of land too far away to return home, the peasants carried on their shoulders burlap bags filled with coarse black bread, which was about all they had to eat. Were set up "food wagons on wheels," big trucks that would go around and deliver real meals and other supplies to the field workers.

It became evident that some groups of farmers were beginning to see the advantages of larger-scale farming over trying to make a living from their small and scattered holdings. Some put their land together and started working it in common. One of the U.S. group's most fascinating experience was visiting such early collective farms, and talking with the members about their plans for the future. Of course, today there are 27,900 collective farms in the USSR and 19,636 state farms. (The collective farms are where former peasants put together their land, implements and livestock and farm cooperatively. State farms are large farming operations, run by the government, which pay salaries and wages to the workers.)

Those Americans who worked at Maslov Kut have testified that this experience affected their whole lives and changed their attitudes toward the Soviet Union. There were a few who were unhappy and left, having expected more comfortable conditions. There were also some real trouble makers who left. But most felt it was a glorious experience to take part in these early stages of building socialism. Some among them have given the rest of their lives in promoting friendship and understanding between the two great countries.

Again in the Soviet Union

Toward the end of the Maslo Kut American-Soviet State Farm operation, Ware began to conceive what was to be his largest and most significant contribution to Soviet agriculture. He proposed to the Zernotrest (Grain Trust) a State Farm on fine land which would combine demonstration of the best and largest tractors and farm implements, experimentation with new types of implements and methods of culture and training of many more farm mechanics and agronomists.

Called in for consultation by the Zernotrest, Ware was astonished to find that old questions he thought settled were still being argued: Can peasants learn to operate tractors and their implements? Should not a combination of ox power and tractor power be considered? If tractors, should they not be confined to low horsepower because the peasants presumably could not learn to run the big ones. In an article published in the U.S. press at that time, Ware wrote:

We knew better... One of the most significant lessons to us as Americans was the rapid change in psychological reactions of the farmer-workers on our job. ... Once they felt the tractor respond to their own touch and go, nothing could drive them back to an oxen agriculture. ... Applications from the villages for sovhoz jobs far exceeded our needs.

The Zernotrest agreed and set 1929 as the opening season. Ware was authorized to scour America for farm implement companies willing to ship their line of machinery and send experts

to demonstrate their effectiveness. Ware also got permission to engage the services for one year of a leading American wheat expert. The Zernotrest agreed to assemble all necessary personnel, including specialists, mechanics, chauffeurs, cooks, also the housing and temporary harvest camps.

The new farm was named the Verblud Sovhoz, officially Sovhoz #2. (Verblud means camel of which there were many in the region.) The Verblud farm consisted of a number of units scattered along a railroad running east from Rostov-on-the-Don, some 150,000 acres. The land was Don Cossack territory cropped to a limited degree, but used mostly as grazing land for their herds of horses. One of the purposes of selecting that region was to show how, by using dry farming methods, satisfactory grain crops can be raised. The soil was exceptional -- black earth, chernozem, of extraordinary depth, up to fifteen feet. One of the Cossack stantsias (villages) was called Selenaw (Virgin Soil).

During the winter of 1928-29, Ware returned to the United States to attract once more the participation of American farm implement and tractor manufacturers. Ware was by then a known figure in agricultural circles; that and his charm and sales ability brought good results. International Harvester, Caterpillar, Cleveland Tractor Co., Nichols & Shepherd, and Massey-

Harris (from Canada), all responded and sent tractors, combines, plows, moldboard and disc, and a full line of equipment for dry land grain production. These companies also sent mechanics to assemble and demonstrate their equipment. Ware's most telling argument was that the Soviet planned to keep a record of the performance of each different make and in following years place orders with those companies whose machines stood up best under Soviet conditions.

Ware thought he knew the American agricultural expert best fitted to advise the Zernotrest. He journeyed out to Bozeman, Montana, to interview Professor M. L. Wilson, Director of the Department of Farm Economics at the State College. Wilson's special focus was dry land grain farming. Wilson consulted his wife and his doctor and agreed to come for the 1929 season.

Stantsia Egorlikskaya (The Cossack village where the Verblud Sovkhoz first established its headquarters) looked like a boom town in the Spring and Summer of 1929. A special concrete grain elevator had been rushed to completion on the railroad siding. Temporary wooden machine repair shops, a carpenter shop and storage sheds had all been erected. A big open area near the shops was set aside for the assembling of the American implements from their export packing cases. Ware had directed that the largest of the packing cases,

those that had contained the 6-horsepower caterpillar tractors, should be saved for a special purpose he had in mind. No new housing was built since it was possible to rent bedrooms in the village. Often no one was at home in these little houses except a grandmother since all other hands were out for the summer, working their strips of land which might be as much as ten miles away.

A great mass of the largest and most modern farm equipment ever seen on the Soviet land went to work that season. Major work-horse was Caterpillar's 60-horsepower tractor. In plowing the virgin sod, such a tractor could pull three gangs of moldboard plows, turning sod on a swath 14 feet wide. When it came to cultivating the upturned sod into a smooth seed-bed, harrows created a 90-foot swath. But here a difficulty arose. No hitch was available between the tractor and harrows that had a ninety-foot spread. To meet this, George McDowell, a skilled mechanic and carpenter from Kansas, was called on to design and build such a hitch. Using timber, iron rods, and cable, and pirated wheels, and employing the help of a local blacksmith, he built a hitch that successfully did the job. For solving this and other difficult problems, McDowell was to be awarded the Order of Lenin.

More of Ware's ingenuity was evident during the harvest. He saw to it that the workers in the harvest lived in movable

camps equipped with all the necessities. They lived in tents supplied by the Red Army, large enough to have thirty cots. Food was cooked by women in army field kitchens. For the morning shift, already in the field by five a.m., one of the cooks would load a wagon with pails of kasha (cereal), black bread and tea and drive out to the harvest field in a one-horse buggy. Breakdowns of equipment were handled by a small machine shop on wheels. Toilet was an open pit with a plank across - requiring good balance, else dire consequences. Final touch was the big Cat packing cases with five gallon tins on top, fitted with nozzles. Water from a tank car was pumped into the tins, the hot sun warmed the water, and everyone could take a good shower.

A fine stand of wheat and barley was obtained and soon the combines were cutting and threshing the crop. A student from the Kharkov Agricultural College was put on each combine to keep a record of how much grain was threshed, how much gasoline was used, what breakdowns occurred. By the end of the harvest, the Soviet authorities knew which of the various makes of American combines best suited their conditions. It was the Caterpillar combine and the following year the Soviet Union began the manufacture of that model, unencumbered by patent restrictions. Any objections that the Caterpillar Company may have had were soothed by a five million dollar order for 60-horsepower tractors which the Soviet Government

placed.

One day during the harvest, Ware and the author drove around the surrounding communities to observe peasant operations. We saw various forms of harvesting. In one place a camel and a horse were hitched together, pulling a gear-shaped threshing stone round and round a circular area. Peasants were forking sheaves in the path of the stone, raking away the straw and sweeping up the grain, shovelling it into a hand-cranked winnowing machine where the clean grain was sacked. In another area, a steam-powered engine was driving a belt which ran an ancient British-made threshing machine. Peasant carts were bringing bundles which were fed by hand into the thresher. Other carts were hauling away the grain. Ware figured that maybe one-hundred and fifty peasants working a month at this second operation were doing about the same work that three men - one on a combine, one on its tractor, and one on a truck hauling away the grain - did in one week's time.

Professor Wilson accompanied Ware everywhere and made many important comments. Most significant was his directing the first demonstration of dry land summer fallow system, as successfully practiced in Montana. It consists of allotting half the plowed land to clean bare fields for the entire season. Periodic cultivation with special implements, rotary-rod weeders and duck-foot harrows, kept this fallow land completely clear of

weeds, but left the surface a bit cloddy and trashy. The idea was to conserve the soilmoisture, prevent green weeds from pumping moisture out of the soil and keep a dry, baked surface that discourages subsoil evaporation. The effect is that on the following season, a crop has the advantage of the natural soil moisture of two seasons for one crop.

Of course, leaving whole fields bare throughout the growing season was a strange thing for the peasants to contemplate. One, bolder than his neighbors, came out by night and planted a quarter acre of sunflowers in one of these vast fallow fields. The sunflowers came up, subsequent cultivations by the big tractors detoured around this quarter acre. By September, the sunflowers were ready to harvest and it was time for seeding the fallow field to winter wheat. Ware directed that a notice should be posted in the nearest village requesting that whoever planted the sunflower patch should harvest it before the following Wednesday, or it would be plowed under. The peasant concerned got the message, but preferred to remain anonymous. Wednesday disclosed a neatly harvested patch.

Before returning home, Professor Wilson wrote a detailed report outlining all his suggestions concerning successful grain cultivation. He mentioned the problem of dry winds coming from the desert lands of Central Asia to the East as

one of the major crop hazards of that area. I returned to this very farm forty years later and could see that Wilson's warnings had been taken seriously. This whole region, once virtually treeless, is now protected by good stands of tree-shelter belts planted in squares about a kilometer to a side. Farm specialists believe that these tree belts, by breaking up the scorching winds, add about five bushels to the acre to the grain crops. The summer fallow system that Professor Wilson recommended is now the approved system generally used in the vast Virgin Lands of Kazakhstan.

Eight years later in 1937, Mother Bloor, as part of her tour of the Soviet Union, visited the Verblud farm now grown up into a sizeable community with tree-lined avenues centering on a large Agricultural Institute for the study and demonstration of the latest techniques of power farming. As the mother of the American who had conceived this whole project, she was received as an honored guest. A high moment for her was when a picture of her son was placed in the Red Corner of the Institute.

Surveying Agriculture in the United States

Over a meal in a Moscow restaurant in the Fall of 1930, Ware discussed with me his plans for the future. "We have accomplished what we set out to do. Soviet factories are starting to turn out a full line of farm equipment. You worked during much of this year in the first combine factory. They are making the Caterpillar combine - proved the best at Verblud. Tractors are in production in Stalingrad. Plants for big cats are under construction. We have done our bit.

"Now we should turn our minds to American agriculture. I suggest we spend 1931 taking a careful look at the American scene, the South, the West, Middle West, even Canada. I have talked it over with Earl and he agrees." (Earl Browder was at that time General Secretary of the Communist Party, USA).

"We need a letter that we can use to talk with agricultural professors in Colleges, and for explaining our presence to Southern plantation owners and big operators. We will have no problem with the smaller farmers."

Upon returning to the States, I did obtain such a letter from a professor of economics whom I had met in the course of his tour of the Soviet Union.

So, in the Spring of 1931, Ware and I started our nationwide farm survey from Washington, D.C., in a Model A Ford. Our equipment included sleeping bags for occasional nights on the

roadside, portable typewriter for writing up our interviews, and our tuxedos - "You never know where you will be called on to speak," Ware said. We did speak in a lot of places, but never required the tux.

The first months of the survey were spent slowly moving about the tobacco and cotton areas of the old South. 1931, Hoover still President, and prosperity still far from "around the corner", there was rural distress everywhere we went. Farm commodity prices had collapsed, typified by cotton bringing 8¢ a pound and costing about triple that to raise. The old archaic plantation system was breaking up. Landlords could not supply "furnish" for their tenant's crop; tenants were left stranded. When we asked the Southern college farm experts what they proposed for the small cotton farmer, they all repeated a common refrain: "Live at home; raise a garden and survive." Ware called this "back to peasantry."

We called on a Black share cropper who invited us into his cabin. It had no windows and only slowly did we realize that his wife and daughter were there sitting quietly in a corner. "How are you living?" we asked. His answer was to show us his most valuable possession. Out back was what I thought was a calf. It was his full grown cow, a runt with a small udder capable of giving about two glasses of milk a

day. "This keeps us going," he said.

At another plantation we chatted with the white foreman who was supervising a dozen Black "hands" who were working a field with mules and walking plows. "We run out of money for food here," the foreman said. "So we all go down to the pond with nets and drag up everything that's there. We keep it all for eating, fish, turtles, frogs, snakes, everything. That's how we get by."

We kept a running log. Ware's notes include the following: "The advice given the small farmers is to hole in, diversify, reduce dependence upon the outside community. This is a renunciation of the benefits that might accrue from modern machines. No national program is offered. If this policy is persisted in, standards of living will be greatly lowered and great numbers of refugees will press on the cities to join the throngs of unemployed."

We discussed producers cooperatives as a way in which small farmers could get the benefits of large scale operations. We knew that the landlord class would be bitterly opposed to any measures that would help small tenants become owners. A decade and a half later the Farm Security Administration made a myriad of loans to small farmers, particularly in the South, also to some cooperative farms. Nearly a billion dollars was

loaned, all of it what banks would call bad loans (no collateral), but virtually all of it was paid back. Much good was done. But the Southern bourbons, like Senator Eastland of Mississippi, attacked the FSA savagely and transformed it into an agency for large-farm operations. Ware's instinct was on the mark.

We pushed on to the little town of England, Arkansas, where the first farm revolt of the Depression had occurred a few months before our arrival. We called on Mr. Coney, its leader, a poor white on a miserable farm, but a man of spirit. He related how a neighbor woman came to him crying, and said: "The kids h'aint et for two days. What will I do?" Coney said: "Something went right up in my head. I told her to come with me to town." He went to town, but picked up neighbors on the way who were in just the same condition. There were fifty cars by the time they got to town and they made for the city hall. "I guess the mayor hid, 'cause we couldn't find him. So we went right on down to Ben High's grocery store. Old Ben saw us coming, and got right out in front. 'I know what you want and you have a right to it, but give me a half hour and maybe we can do it legal.' Then Ben called Red Cross in Little Rock, told them the farmers had come to town to get or take food. Red Cross said give everybody seven dollars' worth of groceries. We took it and went home."

The England "riot" was national news. The next day both

the Senators from Arkansas were on the floor of the Senate urging relief measures for starving communities.

We noticed men with house brooms sweeping the main street, right in front of the Bank of England (!), and learned that those getting relief payments had to make a spectacle of themselves in this way.

We thought we should interview the Red Cross office, newly opened. We were received and given an account of how concerned the Red Cross was with the people of the community. As we were talking, a young farmer in patched overalls waited for the Red Cross director to recognize him. He had been studiously ignored until we called attention to him. He showed the director a slip from the doctor which read: "This man's baby has pneumonia and urgently needs a jar of Vicks Vaporub." The director glanced at the paper, passed it back, and said: "We don't supply patent medicines." The farmer stood a moment, trembling with rage and stamped out.

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Probably the richest agricultural region in California is the "delta area" around Stockton where the waters of the San Joaquin and Sacramento Rivers conjoin. Here water can be siphoned into the rich fields of black muck. With perfect soil and full control of moisture, huge truck and potato

crops can be raised. An owner told us that he sometimes got a thousand bushels of potatoes to a measured acre. (In other areas, potato farmers who attain 300 bushels to the acre are honored as members of the 'Three-hundred Club').

We walked down to the river bank and found a Hooverville. Here men were existing in shacks made of discarded crates and stuff from the city dump. Nearby was a warehouse from which a great pile of spoiling beans had been heaped. Dirty cylinder oil had been poured on it to keep down the smell. One of the Hooverville men had climbed the pile and was digging down beneath the oily part to try to pick out some beans that were still edible. Here, side by side, was surplus food and starvation.

Next we followed the wheat crop from Texas to Manitoba. Ware had heard of a businessman named Hickman Price who believed he could make a fortune raising low cost wheat. He had seeded 25,000 acres of wheat near Amarillo in the panhandle of Texas. The land was black earth, the same chernozen as the Verblud Farm, gently rolling, perfect for tractors and combines. Drought had hit the north plains but the panhandle got good rain. Price got a good stand.

So everything was rosy for Hickman Price, with one exception - depression price. His operation was low cost, just 25 cents

per bushel. Price said: "I was sure that the price of wheat could not drop below 30 cents - actually it hit 15 cents." He had hit the low point of the Depression and was wiped out.

Later, we drove over the Crow Indian Reservation land near Hardin, Montana, where Tom Campbell, touted as America's largest wheat grower, had rented extensive acreage. He had pulled strings with the Bureau of Indian Affairs and paid but a few cents per acre. His operation was even more of a disaster than Hickman Price's. Severe drought hit Montana that season. We were there at what should have been harvest time. Here and there were stunted stalks of wheat trying to head out. I put a tomato can on the ground, stepped back twenty feet and took a picture. The can was plainly visible. The crop was a total loss.

Turning East, we joined up with Harold's mother, Mother Bloor and her husband, Andrew Omholt, a farmer who had homesteaded near the Montana border of North Dakota. Omholt was the Communist Party Organizer for the state and Mother Bloor had been assigned to the region representing the Party's Central Committee.

They were constantly on the move, holding open air meetings, urging the farmers and town unemployed to join the United Farmers League (successor to the United Farmers Education League), and press state and national authorities for relief payments, crop

loans, crop insurance - a whole series of demands which in later years under Roosevelt's New Deal were in part realized.

We attended a giant rally at Brush Lake, Montana, attended by farmers and their families who came fifty miles or more. I asked Hal if he planned to speak. "No," he said, "I am no speaker. We will talk and you will speak. I will make it, and you will throw it." Here was an unexpected side of his personality. With small groups he was convincing, persuasive, eloquent. But before an audience of size he became self-conscious. I recall an occasion when he was called on to speak. He tried, became confused and sat down. An hour later, he was impressing a circle of people with the very things he wanted to say before.

Farm Organizing in the United States

On our return from the national farm survey, Ware wrote a popular pamphlet* summarizing his findings, region by region: the Northeast General and Dairy, Southern Cotton, Great Plains Wheat, Mountain States Irrigated, and West Coast Fruit and Truck. Each farm region was in deep trouble. He summed it up in a paragraph:

Thousands of tons of California's fruits dumped into the Pacific Ocean. Grain used as fuel in Indiana and cabbages plowed under in Louisiana. Two hundred million bushels of "surplus" wheat in government granaries. The Farm Board recommends plowing under every third row of cotton. The California Fruit Growers Exchange plans the destruction of a large proportion of its 1932 orange crop. At the same time in every city, millions of unemployed workers! Bread lines! And in obscure country towns, foodless farmers riot for bread. Everywhere Big Business - the capitalists and their obedient government - has produced the ultimate absurdity: surplus and starvation.

Ware was full of plans for developing farm work along the lines of our findings. His first move was establishing a center in Washington called Farm Research, Inc. Under his direction, a small staff consisting of Ware, Lem Harris and Jeremiah Ingersoll, began putting meat on our findings by delving into the

* The American Farmer, by George Anstrom (pseudonym)
International Publishers, N.Y., 1932

extensive resources of the Department of Agriculture Library and the data of the Bureau of the Census.

In July, 1932, Farm Research issued its first publication called Farm News Letter. Its masthead carried the following, written by Ware:

Farm News Letter is issued weekly to supply farmers and farm workers with a critical analysis of official reports, farm relief proposals, farm legislation, etc. It gives timely accounts of the struggles of the farm population against those agencies responsible for the chronic agricultural crisis by supplying vital facts which are too often beautified, ignored or actually distorted.

The opening article of Issue #1, also by Ware, reads:

In a news letter addressed to business men, Roger Babson (the doctor for sick business) tells them to "go into the woods, rest, think and pray." Farm News Letter is addressed to farmers, and it will not advise them to "rest, think and pray." When farmers are losing their homes to the sheriff and tax collector, when their year's crop is being swallowed by the banker and the food industries, it is not time to talk about resting and praying. It is time for thinking, of course, but especially it is time for action.

There was no lack of action out across rural America.

Ware heard that some farmers in the Philadelphia milkshed held a mass meeting to protest low prices for their milk. He sent me out there to meet the leaders. I found a radicalized group of Jewish, Lithuanian, Quaker and Mennonite farmers who were forming a Farmers' Protective Association.

In the Midwest, the storm center that Summer was Iowa,

where Milo Reno, the President of the Iowa Farmers' Union, was calling on farmers to withhold their products so long as prices remained ruinous. He called on them to "take a holiday from marketing" and pretty soon his followers had formed the National Farm Holiday Association. The farmers did much more than take a holiday. They blocked highways and dumped the milk of those who continued to ship. There were pitched battles and angry threats from State Governors.

Ware telegraphed his mother and the two met in Sioux City, Iowa. They contacted the just forming Nebraska branch of the Holiday Association and worked out tactics with more chance of making gains. Meanwhile Reno became concerned with the degree of militancy being shown by farmers of four states and after consulting with two Governors, called off the action. This seemed like betrayal to the Nebraska branch and they decided to go it alone.

A conference of governors to consider the farm emergency attracted a huge crowd of many thousand farmers. While Reno and the Governors were conferring and drawing up proposals without teeth, Mother Bloor went to the farmers, mounted a truck and stirred them with a ringing speech. She declared that they should not have faith in the governors or anyone other than their own elected leaders. She proposed they show their strength by

parading around the building where the governors were meeting. This they did, with Mother Bloor leading the parade, perched on the cab of a truck. She told me: "I nearly died on that slippery cab, would have fallen off had not a big farmer held me tight."

That night, Ware worked out with the Nebraska leaders a plan to call The Farmers National Relief Conference to be held in Washington, D.C. the following December. They agreed that Farm Research would be the headquarters of the conference and that I would be the Secretary in charge of arrangements.

This started more action. Before long, farm groups in thirty states had endorsed the Conference. And on December 7, over three hundred farmers from across the nation were on hand to draw up their program of action. Ware, on the resolutions committee, helped to write the program emphasizing cash relief, government price regulation, ample credit, debt moratorium, no evictions for non-payment of debts. With the program written, farmer delegations presented these demands to President Hoover, Vice-President Curtis, and a score of senators and representatives. The Conference paid special tribute to the Black delegation that was sent north from the Alabama Sharecroppers Union.

As its final action, the Conference set up the Farmers National Committee for Action and launched a farm paper, The

Farmers National Weekly. For a long time, Ware had believed that the key to building a coordinated movement on the countryside would be the right kind of a farm publication. He was determined that this paper should play that role and gave it close attention both as to editorial tone and circulation. The first issue appeared January 30, 1933, and continued regularly once a week through all the years of the great Depression. The bound volumes of this journal, available in various libraries, constitute a wonderful running account of farmer actions during the period 1933-1937.

A year of intense activity followed the Washington Conference. Fifty-three different farm groups scattered in thirty-three states affiliated with the National Committee for Action and received its paper, The Farmers National Weekly. State farmers' conferences, all of them demanding relief action by the government, were held in eight states. Ware saw to it that all of them were covered by one or more of the members of the National Committee for Action. More and more farms were saved from the auctioneers' hammer by the now famous "Sears Roebuck" or "Penny Sales" in which hundreds of farmers would appear and not permit any bid more than a few cents on each item, whether a cow or a hay-rake. Even a Quaker-Mennonite community in Pennsylvania controlled a sale, holding the total bid to \$14.00

which was collected from the crowd, paid to the auctioneer, and the farm deeded back to the same owner.

Ware, trying to keep abreast with all this action, was constantly on the move. His obvious concern was that while all the action and everything published should serve the interests of the working farmers, he was anxious that the organizers in the field never lose touch with mass sentiments of the farmers.

This concern became apparent in connection with relations with Milo Reno. Because Reno had aborted the three-state farmers' strike, the Farmers National Weekly in editorial articles written by Ware, blasted him without reserve. But when Ware got out to Iowa, talked to farmers and heard Reno orating to thousands of farmers, he called for a change of tactics.

In a letter to the editor of the Weekly, Ware wrote:

Don't print the next issue until you get my full report! We have got to about face! I was all wet on planning to continue to attack. Reno personifies their movement to the great majority of Iowa farmers. To attack him personally is to attack them - until he slips again - as he will when his latest "truce" ends.

We distributed 400 copies of the Weekly and it got under Reno's skin. He attacked "two people" responsible for the sheet as Reds and financed by Moscow. Political Blunder #1 It didn't go over. #2 He slammed Russia - and that fell flat. #3 While the farmers were in the State House expecting him to lead a militant attack, he never peeped. The farmers felt let down.

Reno's blast charging communism had some interesting reactions.

Ware reported in the Farmers National Weekly the statement of

Jess Green, one of the eloquent Nebraska Holiday Association farmers:

If saving people from being thrown out of their homes and saving children from going hungry and ragged is Communism - then they can call me a Communist. They can call me anything they please.

In time, Reno himself began to change his view. In June, 1935, he made this statement in his paper:

If I am compelled to make a choice between a Fascist dictatorship, in which a few who have gathered to themselves the wealth created by others, supported by a military dictator ... or the Communist idea of tearing the whole system down and then rebuilding it, I would be inclined to the latter.

Although Ware was the responsible person for initiating and coordinating action right across the country, the holding of farmers' conferences, state and national, the launching of a weekly farm paper with national circulation, the gathering of personnel, the framing of strategy, he never allowed himself to become prominent. He pushed others forward, gave them the responsibility of carrying on the work, and kept himself free to devise new plans and expand the activity.

One such rather original conception was the launching of the "Farm School on Wheels." Ware pointed out that in key spots there were clusters of farmers taking militant action "storming heaven" but with no clear idea of the forces they were challenging. He organized an unusual young team of

"instructors" - a woman from Alabama, a graduate of Amherst College, a Finnish farmer with experience with cooperatives, and an American woman economist. They obtained a panel truck, fitted it with a small library, including maps, charts, blackboard, etc., spent several months preparing simple outlines on government, history and simple basic economics and set off for the countryside. Schools averaging fifteen to thirty farm students, young and old, lasting one or two weeks, were held in a number of widely scattered places. Such stops included Eastern Pennsylvania, Grand Island, Nebraska, Roberts County, South Dakota, the Mesaba Park, Minnesota, and a stop in California.

With the farm activity launched and rolling, Ware found it possible to respond to the urging of the Communist Party to start the organization of farm workers, the agricultural proletariat. Though these workers were the lowest paid, most irregularly employed section of the American working class, the American Federation of Labor had always passed them over, probably because they offered the least attractive opportunity for organizations with stable membership able to pay substantial dues. No one but the maligned IWW, the "Wobblies", had paid any attention to harvest hands and other migratory workers.

Ware began, as usual, by enlisting able personnel. He started with a Columbia University instructor, Donald Henderson,

who had been fired for his activities encouraging students to organize and for participating in an investigation of conditions of miners on strike in Harlan County, Kentucky.

At Ware's request, Eleanor Henderson, married to Donald, started things by writing a massive report of the conditions of farm workers based on a six months' survey which took her across the country.

Hearing that Florida citrus workers were starting to organize, Ware drove to Central Florida to meet the leaders and assess the possibilities of organizing. On one occasion in a small town, he noticed that he was being followed by several men. He walked on unconcernedly to his car, jumped in, slammed and locked the door and sped off. The men pursued him in their car and a wild chase developed. He headed for Orlando where he would have a chance of losing his pursuers, came to a detour, took a chance and ignored the detour signs, got through and escaped. He was saved by the fact that he always kept a full tank of gas, anticipating the possibility of such an incident.

Henderson began building a union which was later to become the U.C.A.P.A.W.A. (United Cannery, Agricultural and Allied Workers of America). It won its spurs in leading the strike of workers on the Seabrook Farms in South Jersey. After a few years of activity, mostly in California, John L. Lewis, President of the C.I.O., called in Henderson and agreed to

finance the budding union. Within the first two months of its existence 76 local unions had been chartered.

But the developing activities amongst farmers and farm workers became the heritage of Harold Ware, because on August 13, 1935, he died. Driving at night through the mountains of Pennsylvania, he collided with a coal truck and died the next morning in a hospital in Harrisburg at the age of 45. His mother, Ella Reeve Bloor, received the news during a visit she was making to Commonwealth College in Mena, Arkansas. Good friends there arranged to have her stay on quietly for a week while she recovered from the loss of this son of whom she was so immensely proud.

Conclusion

Harold M. Ware is remembered in the Soviet Union as the American comrade who demonstrated how primitive peasant farming could be transformed into modern mechanized agriculture. His place in Soviet history is assured by Lenin's tribute: "... the work of the members of your Society, headed by Harold Ware, with the tractor team at the Toikino State Farm... in spite of immense difficulties... have achieved successes that must be regarded as truly outstanding..."

And later Lenin wrote: "...on behalf of our Republic, I express to you our profound gratitude and ask you to bear in mind that no form of assistance is as timely as that which you are rendering."

Recently a team of Soviet journalists visited Toikino, still an obscure hamlet. But fifty-four years after the Americans left, the local farmers still refer to those acres as the "American farm." And in Verblud, now called Selinaw in the North Caucasus region, Ware is honored as a founder of their farm.

In the United States, there are few who remember Harold Ware. Though his achievements were considerable, his muted, behind-the-scenes role denied him the limelight then and now. Yet some results of his efforts can be seen today. Thus, Cesar

Chavez's Farm Workers Union can trace its origins to the CIO UCAPAWA Union founded by Ware's protege, Donald Henderson. The emergence of Black political power in the deep South has roots in the struggles of the Sharecroppers' and Tenants' Unions in Alabama, Louisiana and Arkansas, in all of which Ware played a role.

The outlook of family type farms has undergone such drastic changes during the past forty years, that the struggles of the thirties seem like ancient history. Yet today there are audible rumblings out of the midwest from angry farmers who once more face falling prices for their crops and rapidly rising prices for everything they have to buy. Once more they are threatening to withhold crops from market until they get cost of production.

Perhaps as we close out the Twentieth Century some young Ware should make a new rural survey and develop a program of action which will show the way towards restoring some balance to our overurbanized society.

Acknowledgements and Sources

This account of the life of Harold M. Ware is derived from the memories and records of his brother Carl Reeve; Otto Anstrom, the North Dakota farmer who joined Ware's tractor brigade to the Soviet Union in the early twenties; his wife, Jessica Smith, who took part in Ware's second farm project at Maslov Kut in the Caucasus; and my own recollections which include Ware's last two years in the Soviet Union and four years working with farmers and farm workers in the United States until his untimely death in 1935.

All three mentioned above went over my manuscript and made numerous suggestions, making of the whole something of a joint work. However, responsibility for any errors or omissions is my own.

Ware's achievements were mostly unheralded with the exception of Lenin's warm praise for Ware's original demonstration farm. Of signal importance was Ware's initiative in convincing an eminent American wheat expert, Professor M.L. Wilson, later to become U.S. Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, to come as an advisor to a Soviet Sovkhoz of which Ware was the Assistant Director. Wilson submitted a report at the end of the growing season recommending a method of raising wheat in areas of low rainfall. The recommendations of that report are being practiced

today on the extensive wheat lands of Kazakhstan. Those interested in acquainting themselves with Ware's dramatic organizing activity amongst American farmers may consult the bound volumes of Farmers National Weekly and its successor, The National Farm Holiday News, a publication launched by Ware which appeared through the years of the American farm depression, 1932-37. These volumes are available in the New York Public Library, the Congressional Library, the Minnesota Historical Association, St. Paul, and the Lenin Library, Moscow. Lenin's letters expressing gratitude and high praise for Ware's demonstration of power farming are to be found in Lenin on the United States (International Publishers, N.Y., 1970), pp. 588-89, 590-93.

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