

THE LESSON OF GERMANY

A GUIDE TO HER HISTORY

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PREFACE

The defeat of Hitler Germany has not automatically solved the German problem but only created extremely favorable conditions for its solution.

About 70,000,000 Germans remain in the heart of Europe. No serious person advocates their extermination. Hence the manner in which the Germans develop after the military destruction of Hitlerism will profoundly influence the further course of events.

Just as they did after World War I, the German imperialists will again make every effort to restore their power. They will seek — and find—support from those international pro-fascist and big capitalist elements who are attempting to halt the forward march of the peoples of Europe.

These elements now see a great “vacuum” on the European continent because Germany has been crushed as a fascist and imperialist Great Power. So long as the rebirth of such a Germany is prevented, for the first time in modern history the forces of international reaction will no longer have at their disposal on the continent of Europe a powerful reactionary ally and mercenary.

Humanity faces the task of preventing these international forces from using the Germans as an instrument and German territory as a springboard for a new imperialist war against the peace- and freedom-loving peoples of the world.

The German people, and especially the German working class, liberated from the yoke of Hitlerism, are faced with the historic task of re-educating themselves from the ground up in order to achieve political maturity and create a Germany which can play a progressive role in history.

The United Nations can take steps to prevent the German imperialists from becoming once again a menace to the world. They can create conditions which will make it easier for the German people to transform themselves. But in the final analysis, this transformation itself can only be the work of the Germans themselves.

Future developments in Germany—the attitude of the victor powers on the one hand toward the historically reactionary German classes and groups, and on the other hand, toward those classes and groups which could lay the basis for a stable, peaceful, democratic Germany—will therefore be an important political barometer. They will demonstrate in what direction history, and the men who make

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history, are moving: toward peaceful collaboration of all peoples, or toward new devastating wars.

The present volume, the collective work of three authors, has not sought to unravel an uncertain future, as full of great promise as it is replete with great danger. Nor does it attempt to make a blueprint for the future and to justify it with evidence. The book seeks rather to answer the question: how did it happen that a people like the Germans, with such an old labor movement, could be led by their imperialists into the greatest ignominy and catastrophe in their history?

The present book is therefore a guide, a modest attempt to interpret the past history of Germany, which will enable the reader better to study and understand the future course of the German people in the light of their past.

Wartime conditions have forced the authors drastically to limit the scope of their volume: the reader will find that individual phases of modern German history are described and its most significant episodes analyzed with the utmost brevity. In view of the profuse richness of the material at hand, it was not easy to decide what should be included and what omitted from this book. No doubt many a reader will feel that a multitude of things have been left out which, in a many-volume history of Germany, would certainly find their place. But in a book of this size, it was impossible to do more than to touch upon the significant highlights of German history across four centuries.

THE AUTHORS

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I

THE GERMAN REFORMATION

On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg and thus challenged the Catholic hierarchy to a theological controversy over the misuse of church indulgences. Luther, a miner's son, was at that time professor of theology at the University of Wittenberg, founded by his princely protector, the Elector of Saxony. Luther's action gave the signal in Germany for an open struggle against Rome. It was the official act of birth of the German Reformation, that turbulent period in German history which reached its climax in the Great Peasant War (1525) and came to a close—in 1648—with the end of the Thirty Years' War.

Pope Leo X, constantly in need of money because of the lavish life he led, had again sent his dealers in indulgences to Germany. Such practices as the sale of relics and church offices and absolution of sins for cash were a lucrative source of income for the papal treasury. Other European nations having long since barred papal exploitation, Germany remained its chief field of activity.

The peasants and city plebeians, the most numerous class of the population, were victims of harsh social oppression and exploitation at the hands of the ruling feudal classes, doomed to decay, and the newly rising class of merchant capitalists. The hatred of the peasants and plebeians against the papal traffickers in indulgences had long since reached boiling point. The princes and merchants, on the other hand, resented the fact that year after year vast sums, subtracted from their own profits, flowed to Rome.

The wealthy Electorate of Saxony, possessing deposits of silver, highly developed mining works, and an extensive home-weaving industry', was an especially attractive province for the papal peddlers of indulgences. The Elector of Saxony, himself a devoted Catholic, forbade them from entering his state and welcomed Luther's protest against the papal traffic in indulgences. Thus, the long simmering dispute came to a head.

To evaluate the Reformation historically, it is important to realize that during the Middle Ages the Papacy, as a temporal power, united the Christian states of Western Europe against the Mohammedan world of Islam and the various lands adhering to the Eastern Orthodox Church. But the Papacy, as the universal monarchy of

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Europe, hindered the growth of modern national states. These, in turn, were the indispensable instruments for the newly developing capitalist relations of production and trade. Hence, the formation of modern nations could be accomplished only in antagonism to Rome. Since all spiritual and political life in the Middle Ages was shaped by the ideology of the Catholic Church, the economic and political revolutions of that era appeared in religious dress.

To understand the dynamic effect of Luther's Theses, we must bear in mind that merchant capital was revolutionizing the medieval world, producing far-reaching results in Germany as well.

Around the fourteenth century, modern capitalism began to develop, at first in the form of merchant capital, in the great trading centers of the Mediterranean. The beginnings of capitalist commodity production (manufacture) paralleled this development. Trade with the East, reaching out also to the North, caused hitherto little known luxury items to circulate in Europe; it awakened new needs among the ruling classes and at the same time quickened their desire for gold and silver. Money as a means of exchange became common and commodity production became a factor of power.

The lust for profit led to the opening of ever new trading areas, sending merchants far beyond the confines of Europe. The spread of the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire over Asia Minor, Egypt, and the Balkans forced Mediterranean commerce westward.

The Atlantic displaced the Mediterranean as the main world artery of commerce, an event that proved of world historic significance.

The development of merchant capital altered the intellectual and the political, as well as the economic, life of the Western world— first of all, in the economically advanced countries of Italy, France, and Spain. The new way of life, corresponding to changed economic relations, manifested itself in a magnificent upsurge of the arts and sciences, originating in Italy. The Renaissance, with its secular direction of intellectual life, gave the death blow to the feudal modes of thought which had become completely fettered in rigid religious dogmas.

Merchant capital also proved to be the force that destroyed the temporal power of the Papacy. World commerce required strong centralized states, in order to afford the merchants protection and enhance their chances of making profit; while in internal trade, urban commodity production took forward strides and the factors of

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insecurity bound up with feudal methods were markedly lessened. Favored by their geographical position, France and England gradually developed into a closed trading area based on Paris and London, which became seats of increasingly centralized political power.

Germany participated actively in the advance of civilization during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Urban handicrafts, flourishing in the commercial centers of Upper Germany, began to produce more and more for distant markets. The weaving of wool and linen made noteworthy progress and German artisans achieved a high degree of excellence. Goldsmiths, silversmiths, sculptors, etchers, wood carvers, wood engravers, and wood turners, working for the rich prelates and patricians of the cities, enjoyed a fine reputation, while the miners of Central Germany were considered the most skilled of their day. New inventions multiplied, the most epoch-making of which were printing and gunpowder. Land under cultivation increased and farming methods improved. As a result of this economic advance, southern Germany became the center of the German Renaissance.

German trade made signal progress. The main overland trade routes went from Augsburg and Nuremberg to Cologne and thence to the Low Countries, and from Erfurt to the North. These commercial centers were closely linked with the Mediterranean, and the gradual decline of this world highway of trade at the close of the fifteenth century soon proved detrimental to the economic life of Upper Germany. Though its trade began to flow in part toward the Atlantic, by the middle of the sixteenth century it had virtually ceased.

Late in the Middle Ages, a second trading area arose in the North and Baltic Sea region, centering in the Hanseatic League, a loose union of merchants in the North Sea and Baltic cities, with Luebeck as its seat. From the end of the fifteenth century on, the Hanseatic League lost ground to the swiftly rising maritime powers of England and Holland whose merchant fleets, unlike those of the League, received the backing of strongly centralized political power. The small feudal principalities in North Germany contributed to the decline of the Hanseatic League by forcing the cities lying within their domains to quit the organization. Nevertheless, the hundred-year sway of the Hanseatic League helped North Germany to emerge from medieval backwardness.

Taken as a whole, civilization in Germany did not reach the

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levels attained in the most advanced nations of the West. It was grouped about central points of industry and trade that were thinly strewn over a wide area. Traffic was limited to coastal and river boats and a few main overland routes. A host of smaller towns, scarcely touched by trade, sprawled in medieval somnolence. Germany lacked a powerful focal point like London or Paris. Furthermore, the center of gravity of the feudal German Empire lay outside Germany. Under Charles V, Spain was the cornerstone of the Holy Roman Empire. Therefore the Kaiserdom could not become the focus of German political centralization. Whereas in other European nations the reigning monarchs, allied with the cities, defeated the feudal nobility, controlled the Church, and broke the temporal power of Roman Catholicism within their own borders—in a word, subjugated the representatives of feudal power—in Germany there were only regional concentrations around individual princes and local centralizations within a general framework of dismemberment. So Germany remained the stamping ground of petty princes, feudal lords, and free cities subject only to the Emperor, and of the temporal influence of church prelates.

At the turn of the sixteenth century, Germany's social structure offered a motley picture. The medieval "corporate" state was clearly disintegrating. But the rise of classes corresponding to the new capitalist relations was hindered by factors that stood in the way of Germany's economic and national unity. In the course of the revolutionary epoch of the Reformation, three well defined political camps arose. The Emperor stood at the head of the *conservative-Catholic* camp. The German Emperor Charles V of the House of Hapsburg, King of Spain and Lord of the Austrian hereditary lands, was a determined foe of the Reformation, since the Catholic Church was his strongest instrument of rule in Spain as in Austria. In Germany, he relied on the princes of the Church and one section of the secular princes, the rich noblemen, the prelates, and the city patricians—in short, on all the strata interested in preserving the status quo.

Arrayed against them at the start was the overwhelming majority of the German people. Martin Luther, their spokesman, passionately incited them to struggle against Rome: "If thieves are being punished with swords, murderers with ropes, and heretics with fire, why do we not seize, with arms in hand, all those evil teachers of perdition, those popes, bishops, cardinals, and the entire crew of Roman Sodom? Why do we not wash our hands in their blood?"

Words such as these achieved their effect. For among the impoverished peasants and plebeians, conspiracies and uprisings had been occurring for some decades past. Some fifty years after the suppression of the Hussite movement in Bohemia, the first peasant uprising in the diocese of Wuerzburg broke out in 1476. In the final decade of the fifteenth century, peasant outbursts flared up in Holland, Friesland, and Upper Swabia. In 1493, there arose in Alsace the great peasant conspiracy of the *Bundschuh* (which was so called because a peasant's shoe was its symbol). Despite repeated defeats, this secret organization survived and, in 1502, the reorganized *Bundschuh* spread in the diocese of Speyer, went into Swabia, and before long extended throughout all southwestern Germany. Here for the first time the peasants demanded among other things the expropriation of church lands and their partition among the people, and a unified German monarchy. These demands recurred ever more frequently. And in 1503, the powerful peasant conspiracy of Poor Konrad took place in Remstal (Swabia). Both the *Bundschuh* and Poor Konrad were active in southwestern Germany from 1513 to 1515, while during these same years peasant rebellions broke out in Switzerland, Hungary, and Slovenia.

In 1517, the fourth *Bundschuh* conspiracy was suppressed in the Black Forest region. And in 1517, Luther's Theses gave the signal for a general uprising. The Opposition, embracing the majority of the people, soon divided into two groups. The middle-class reformist camp comprised the lower nobility, the city burghers, and a section of the lay princes; the *revolutionary* camp consisted of the peasants and city plebeians, whose most devoted and politically developed leader was Thomas Muenzer. Luther, on the other hand, having aroused the revolutionary ardor of the people, deserted them to become the political representative of all the possessing classes in the middle-class reformist camp. In particular, he became the mouthpiece of the princes who seized on the Reformation as an opportunity to increase their wealth by secularizing the Church treasures and lands.

Prior to the great peasants' rebellion, an uprising of the lower nobility broke out in the autumn of 1522. Its military leader was Franz von Sickingen; its theoretician and political leader, the noted German humanist, Ulrich von Hutten. Its program was the restoration of the medieval Reich—a kind of democracy of the nobility—a powerless Emperor on the throne, elimination of the reigning princ-

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es and the cities, secularization of the Church principalities and estates, and serfdom for the peasants. Had they succeeded, the result would have been anarchy of the aristocracy, similar to that which centuries later doomed Poland. Their uprising, basically a reactionary movement, was quelled in the autumn of 1523.

The peasants had formulated their demands in Twelve Articles, which contained in substance what the French peasantry had gained in 1789, the first year of the Great French Revolution. Briefly summarized, these demands called for the abolition of serfdom and all the exactions of feudalism. Their carefully prepared uprising took the ruling classes by surprise and prospects for success seemed favorable. At first, Luther endeavored to act as a friendly mediator. But he soon gave the princes, the nobility, the burghers, and the Pope the “pious” advice to put down the peasants:

“They should be knocked to pieces, strangled and stabbed, secretly and openly, by everybody who can do it, just as one must kill a mad dog!... Therefore, dear gentlemen, hearken here, save there, stab, knock, strangle them at will, and if thou diest, thou art blessed; no better death canst thou ever attain.”

Thomas Muenzer championed political aims—cloaked in mystic-religious form—that were far ahead of his times. He demanded the immediate establishment of the Kingdom of God—a society without class distinctions, without private property, and without an alien state power standing independently above the members of society. Muenzer called for the overthrow of all elements hostile to the revolution. The political core of his program went beyond that of the peasants’ Twelve Articles; instead of the partitioning of Church estates, he demanded their confiscation for the good of the community, and instead of a unified German Empire, a unified and indivisible republic.

An irreconcilable foe of princes, prelates, and patricians, Muenzer was persecuted. His ideas, growing ever bolder, soon separated him from the middle-class Reformation. In his pleas for reforming church ceremonies, he went far beyond Luther, whom he called that “luxury-loving piece of flesh.” Luther became Muenzer’s bitterest enemy and denounced him savagely to the princes.

Months before the outbreak of the Peasant War, Muenzer had agitated and established connections in Upper Germany. From 1518 to 1523, local peasant uprisings, mostly led by followers of Muenzer, flared up continuously in the Black Forest and Odenwald

regions. At the end of 1524, the Stuehlinger peasants in Upper Baden formed an evangelical league with the burghers of Waldshut, their emissaries making contacts throughout all southern and southwestern Germany. Then in January-February 1525, the storm burst over the entire area between the Danube, Rhine, and Lech rivers. By the beginning of March, in Upper Swabia alone there were from 30,000 to 40,000 armed peasants in six camps. At the outset, the princes and city burghers commanded an army of some 10,000 men, led by the notorious *Landsknecht* (mercenary), Captain Georg von Truchsess. The peasants retaliated by burning down their castles, monasteries, and walled cities. They engaged in a number of successful battles against the army of the princes. Truchsess was able to save his forces only by persuading individual peasant groups to negotiate, after which he would perfidiously attack and slaughter them en masse.

Muenzer, stationed at Muehlhausen, was the heart and soul of the peasants' war in Thuringia. At the end of May, 1525, 8,000 Thuringian peasants were slain by the princes' army, near Frankenhause. Muenzer was captured and executed after frightful torture. In Franconia, Swabia, Alsace, and the Black Forest, powerful peasant rebellions were subdued by the princes—in part because of lack of co-ordinated peasant action, in part because of betrayal by noblemen leaders like Goetz von Berlichingen and by the city burghers.

The sanguinary defeat of the Great Peasant War in 1525 brought to an end the first and decisive period of the German Reformation. With the massacre of hundreds of thousands of peasants and city plebeians, Germany's prospects for becoming a unified, modern nation were buried for centuries. Nevertheless, the Reformation did provide two positive factors toward that end: (1) Luther's translation of the Bible, which unified the German language and at the same time placed a powerful weapon in the hands of the people's movement; (2) the separation from Rome. But the bewildering crisscross of economic interests in the individual provinces of Germany and the shift of the main trade route from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic, leading to the rapid impoverishment of Germany, favored those forces that worked against the rise of a great and unified nation.

The cities, too weak and undeveloped, could not become focal points for the anti-feudal forces who longed for a national state. The

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imperial power, ever closely bound up with the Papacy in world affairs, opposed the Reformation. The feudal princes, interested solely in strengthening their dynastic power, became partisans of the Reformation, not because they were eager to see Germany develop into a great nation, but because the Reformation meant freeing them from Rome and the power of the Emperor. They carried out "reforms" in their own way: they appointed themselves bishops of their state church and seized the treasures and estates of the Catholic Church which, until the Reformation, had owned about a third of all land in Germany. The newly "reformed" churches became instruments in the development of that spirit of subservience, a narrow, typically German kind of spirit, which was to prove a weighty obstacle to intellectual and political progress in Germany.

In South and West Germany, economic ties with Catholic Italy, France, and Spain had always been closer than with the rest of Germany. The movement for a return to the Catholic Church which, under Jesuit inspiration, had adapted itself to the needs of capitalist development, now gained headway. In 1545, Emperor Charles V made an attempt to put an end to the fragmentation of Germany and restore German unity along Catholic lines, but his victory was short-lived. The economic conditions of the country favored the particularism of the princes and encouraged only local political centralization. In the religious Peace of Augsburg (1555), freedom of religion was sanctioned for the "estates" of the Reich. That meant sanctioning the split in the Church and fostering the sovereignty of the princes rather than national unity.

With the abdication of Charles V, the Hapsburg Empire broke up. Charles's son, Philip II, mounted the throne of Spain; his brother, Ferdinand, as Lord of the hereditary lands of Austria, was elected Emperor of Germany. The German princes indulged in further "reforms": in other words, they intensified their haggling and bribing to enlarge their realms. During the so-called religious wars, Germany became the arena of struggle among German princes and foreign powers and remained the theater of conflict during the ensuing Thirty Years' War. What was really at stake was not the fight to maintain the true faith, but the more down-to-earth struggle for material power and pelf. Catholic France allied herself with the Lutheran King of Sweden, Gustavus Adolphus, against the Catholic House of Hapsburg; Protestant German princes sided with the Catholic powers against the German Hapsburg Emperor. And so the

bloody whirligig went on. Albrecht von Wallenstein, the commanding general of the Emperor, strove for national unity under a secular monarchy which under prevailing conditions could not but fail.

The historian, Franz Mehring, has summed up the consequences for Germany of the Thirty Years' War in the following words:

“Never has a civilized people had to suffer similar destruction. According to the most reliable estimates, more than three-quarters of the inhabitants lost their lives. The population dropped in thirty years from 17,000,000 to 4,000,000. Germany was thrown back for two hundred years. It took her two hundred years to reach the economic levels already attained before the Thirty Years' War began. Broken and maimed, the German monarchy remained little more than a putrefying corpse. The Low Countries and Switzerland tore apart the loose bonds hitherto linking them with the Reich. In the West, France seized the richest territories for herself; in the North, Sweden took the mouths of the Oder, Elbe, and Weser rivers. Both countries had the right to intervene in internal German affairs. The Emperor had lost the last shreds of his authority... Meanwhile, the economic causes of the Reformation continued to make themselves felt...”

At the close of the Thirty Years' War (the peace of Westphalia, 1648), the peace of the grave lay over a devastated, depopulated, and mortally exhausted Germany, ruled by some three hundred princely despots, and the plaything of the great powers of Europe. The curse of defeat in that first powerful uprising of the German people, the Peasant War, clung to Germany for two hundred years. Such a situation was bound to have an adverse effect on the intellectual and cultural makeup of the German people. Moreover, in the words of Frederick Engels:

“The deadly inanition and impotence of the German petty bourgeois, arising from the miserable economic position of Germany from 1640 to 1830 and expressing itself first in pietism, then in sentimentality and cringing servility to princes and nobles, was not without economic effect. It was one of the greatest hindrances to recovery and was not shaken until the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars made the chronic misery an acute one.”¹

II

THE PRUSSIAN STATE

Unlike the modern states of Western Europe—Holland, England, and France—which founded their colonial empires and assured their position as world powers as early as the seventeenth century, Germany after the Peace of Westphalia fell into economic, political, and cultural decay. Henceforth, until the advent of the French Revolution, we cannot even speak of a history of the German nation. It did not exist. Over three hundred petty principalities formulated “national policy” on their own. The Peace of Westphalia gave the swarm of princelings a free hand in making individual treaties with foreign powers—a factor that furthered Germany’s national disintegration. What these petty despots inflicted on Germany during this period belongs to the seamy side of world history. To fill their purses, they served foreign powers against the interests of German national unity. At the same time they were ruthless exploiters and taskmasters of their subjects. (During the American Revolutionary War, for example, the princely “father” of Hesse sold his subjects as Hessian mercenaries to England.)

Two events, momentous for the future of Germany, are rooted in this period: the first, the rise of the Prussian state, determined Germany’s fate; the second, the rise of classical German literature and philosophy helped win for Germany a place among the civilized nations of modern times.

The original territorial basis of the Prussian state was Mark Brandenburg, founded in the Middle Ages by German settlers as a military colony on Slavic land. After the crushing defeat inflicted by the Poles on the Teutonic Order of Knights at Tannenberg in 1410, the German king of the House of Luxemburg, Sigismund, appointed the Hohenzollern Burgrave of Nuremberg, Friedrich, lord of Mark Brandenburg. Thus began the rule of the Hohenzollerns as Electors of Brandenburg. The Prussian state derived its name from the native Prussians (living in what is today East Prussia), who were “Germanized”^{*} by the Teutonic Order of Knights, and in whose capital,

^{*} The Germanization of Prussia resulted in the devastation of the country, in the destruction, enslavement, or expulsion of the Prussians. It is worth noting that in World War II the Nazis waged their war in the East with constant allusions to the Teutonic Order of Knights; yet some

Koenigsberg, Frederick I, the Elector of Brandenburg, was crowned King of Prussia in 1701.

The Electorate of Brandenburg emerged from the Thirty Years' War as the largest individual German state. The Hohenzollerns ruled an area the size of present-day Bavaria, Wuerttemberg, and Baden (about as large as the state of Georgia). The Electors of Brandenburg "earned" this enormous increase in territory primarily because of the services they rendered France against the German Hapsburg Emperor—in other words, against the national interests of the Reich—and against Sweden. The "Great Elector" of Brandenburg, as a vassal of the Polish King, obtained the Duchy of Prussia; and in western and northeastern Germany large sections fell to this dynasty of the Hohenzollerns by hereditary succession. France, Russia, and England alternated in rewarding the Hohenzollerns for their services as vassals against the Reich.

This traditional Prussian foreign policy continued, though in modified form, when Prussia became the instrument of European reaction against revolutionary France. The result was that in 1806 Napoleon inflicted a crushing defeat on Prussia. Thenceforth and until the beginning of the era of imperialism, Prussia—and later, Prussian Germany—sided with tzarist Russia, the bulwark of European reaction.

A characteristic episode in Prussian foreign policy, one that is not without relevance today, is worth noting: the participation of eighteenth-century Prussia in the three partitions of Poland. Frederick II, "the Great," played a role in the first partition (1772) as the jackal of Russian tsarism, obtaining thereby the diocese of Ermland and present-day West Prussia (except for the cities of Danzig and Thorn).

"From the beginning of 1771," wrote Karl Marx, "entire cantons of Prussian Poland were swamped with Prussian mercenary troops which committed incredible acts of pillage and cruelty, outrages and brutalities of every description. Not only did the famished rabble steal on their own account and by official order, but the villages were even instructed to deliver *quotas of women* according to prescribed lists, and these women, impressed in these villages, were condemned to marry that filthy canaille, those Prussian military."¹

German democrats in exile, like Prince Hubertus zu Loewenstein, have praised the Teutonic Knights as early fighters for German culture.

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The “great” Frederick’s successor, Friedrich Wilhelm II, dissatisfied with the first partition of Poland, made an alliance with Poland and promised to aid the latter with armed force in the event of Russian intervention. At the same time, he entered into an alliance with Russia against revolutionary France, demanding a second partition of Poland as a reward. As a result of the armed assistance he gave Empress Catherine II against Poland, the Prussian King received in the second partition (1793) the cities of Posen (Poznan), Thorn (Torun), and Danzig. By the third Polish partition (1795), which for a long time snuffed out Poland’s independence, Prussia received more Polish land. Thus the Hohenzollerns, from 1525 to 1657 vassals of the Polish kings, filched vast expanses of territory from their former overlords.

Of course, the rise of the Prussian State cannot be explained solely in terms of the unscrupulous foreign policy of the Hohenzollerns. Brandenburg grew by taking advantage in the 16th century of the confused conditions in the Reich and the absence of a strong centralized power. It rose in the eastern border-regions of the Reich, on land that was stolen from the Slavs and that was remote from the main orbits of world trade. Since the center of gravity of Brandenburg-Prussia always lay in that backward East-Elbian region, the interests of the most reactionary class of the population, the Junkers and feudal lords, always remained dominant. And the cities of the province declined during the sixteenth century, partly because they were oppressed by the ruling princes and nobility, and partly for economic reasons, since the main trade routes did not even touch Mark Brandenburg in the south or west.

The Hohenzollern princes and kings were despots not by the will of God, but by the will of the Junkers. Even in the twentieth-century Germany of Kaiser Wilhelm II, this subordination of the Hohenzollern monarchs was expressed in the phrase: “Our King absolute, if he does our bidding.” As opposed to the course of development in the modern nations of Western Europe, the Hohenzollerns did not ally themselves with the cities against the shabby provincial nobility, but joined with the nobility to subjugate the cities and share in their exploitation. So the city patricians, representing merchant capital, were suppressed} and the newly developing manufacturing industry, based on merchant capital, played little part in the rise of Prussia.

That state remained essentially feudal in its “corporate” hierar-

chical structure; at the apex, the absolute monarch who was dependent on the Junkers. The latter changed from highwaymen and footpads into grain producers and whiskey distillers. Then there were the small artisans and handicraftsmen, formed into guilds and lacking any strong consciousness of their position as a class. At the base of this social order were the “subjects,” miserable victims of the feudal landlords—in peacetime, serfs of the Junkers; in wartime, mercenaries impressed into service. The *leitmotiv* of Prussian home policy was ever the training of obedient subjects, the gagging and enslavement of individuals.

The third characteristic of the Prussian state was militarism. The Prussian State received its specific stamp under Friedrich Wilhelm I and Frederick II. In this “corporate” state, the army was built on a strict separation of castes. “The three great groups of the nobility, the peasantry, and the burghers corresponded in the military hierarchy to: officers, soldiers, and exempt civilians. (Burghers and artisans were as a rule excused from military duty.) The landlord’s son commanded as an officer the sons of the peasants from his father’s estate.”²

In the words of Franz Mehring, the Prussian militarist state arose “from one of those agreements between the nobility and the monarchy which are characteristic of Prussian history, and in which the lion’s share always went to the nobility. The Prussian nobility had from the outset sought to obtain officers’ posts; but at the start, it had to compete against foreign noblemen, petty German princes, and even middle-class officers who had won their spurs in the Thirty Years’ War. The army became its own private domain when it managed to solve the problem of how a population of less than 2,000,000 can support an army of 80,000 men.

“The solution was relatively simple. As yet, the army was far from completely ‘nationalized.’ It still bore many vestiges of its freebooter days, especially the so-called company economy.” The company head was a “contractor” who in exchange for a sum of money from the royal treasury paid all the expenses of recruiting, arming, feeding, and caring for his company. He simply took the submissive peasants’ sons and turned them into soldiers. Every year they drilled for a few months and spent the rest of the time working on the noblemen’s estates. Thus the nobility were not deprived of their labor force; and at the same time, they made a considerable profit by economizing on bounties for attracting recruits.

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Under the impact of the Great French Revolution, the medieval Holy Roman Empire of the German nation, still existing in name if not in fact, passed from the scene. In 1806, the Emperor of Austria renounced the title of German Emperor, which for decades had been nothing but a title. Moreover, military defeat had brought the decaying Prussian state to the verge of ruin. In the south and west of the Reich, the conquering Napoleon gathered up innumerable feudal duchies and principalities and brought them into larger territorial units, joining them in the Rhine Confederation (*Rheinbund*). So there arose, among others, the kingdoms of Bavaria, Wuerttemberg, and Saxony, and the duchies of Baden and Hesse. Furthermore, Napoleon introduced middle-class reforms in the states of the Rhine Confederation. The only region in which the German people showed any marked disposition to inaugurate reforms on their own was Prussia.

The political situation resulting from military collapse forced the Prussian Crown and its reactionary supporters to grant a number of significant political and social reforms known as the Stein-Hardenberg legislation. The October edict of 1807 did away with the feudal monopoly of landed property and hereditary serfdom of the peasants. The municipal decree of 1808, gave political rights to the middle class and temporarily restricted the powers of the Junkers in Prussia. But the only democratic reform that remained intact for more than a century, until the Weimar Republic again restricted it, was the grant of local self-government to the cities. The Prussian military reformers—Gneisenau, Boyen, Scharnhorst, and Clausewitz—considered political and social reforms a prerequisite for changing the army structure. They sought to replace the army of ill-treated mercenaries with a people's army: middle-class citizens were to be admitted as officers, officers were to be elected by their soldiers, and the clergy given the right of supervision.

After Napoleon's disastrous defeat in Russia (1812), Germany rose enthusiastically to free herself of French rule. For the first time since the days of the Peasant War, a desire for national unification gripped the German people. Ernst Moritz Arndt, a foe of feudal absolutism and a close friend of the reformers, became the inspired poet of German liberty and unity. The Prussian king now had to yield to the popular demand for thoroughgoing army reforms, which went into effect in 1814. But after the newly constituted people's army won back the throne for the wretched King Friedrich Wilhelm

II, the narrow spirit of Prussianism reasserted itself. The military reforms were undone and, after the wars of liberations, the army reformers were dismissed.

The middle-class reformers suffered a similar defeat. After the fall of Napoleon, the princes cast all promises of constitutional reforms to the four winds. Now the rule of the Prussian nobility developed on a broader basis. There was no class in all Germany capable of forestalling the return of reaction. The people had exhausted their energies on the battlefield, while the princes again joined together in the German Confederation, guided by the reactionary Austrian statesman, Metternich. The "Holy Alliance," founded in Paris in September, 1815, at the initiative of the Russian Tsar, included at the outset Russia, Prussia, and Austria; and until the 1840's, it weighed on Europe like a horrible incubus. At the instigation of these allies, Prussia adopted in 1819 the repressive Karlsbad Decrees. Henceforth, German universities came under police surveillance, newspapers and other publications were subject to censorship, and the secret police in the various states were coordinated. Advocates of national unification were persecuted and driven into exile. Once more, Prussia followed in the wake of tsarist Russia, the bulwark of European reaction.

The rise of classical German literature and philosophy in the second half of the eighteenth century stands in sharp contrast to the barbarous conditions then prevailing in Germany, above all in Prussia. With this classical German literature and philosophy begins the social emancipation of the middle class. Since the prerequisites for its social and political emancipation were lacking and since the middle class could not effectively carry through its revolution, its unsatisfied political yearnings found expression all the more intensely in the domains of literature and philosophy. Classical German literature and philosophy reached a degree of brilliance and excellence that assured Germany of a place among the civilized nations of modern times. At the same time, they bore a special stamp, reflecting the stifling atmosphere of the country and the political impotence of the middle class. This may be illustrated by their reaction to two historic events: the rise of Prussia and the French Revolution.

The impetus for a period of enlightenment in Germany came from the Western nations. Germany's intellectual life was stimulated most of all by the French Enlightenment of the eighteenth centu-

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ry, itself influenced by the English philosophers of a preceding period.

The fact that the middle class in Germany, unlike that in Britain, Holland, and France, had no strong economic basis, hampered and restricted its intellectual development, chaining it to the whims of the petty despots and their courts. The princes sought clumsily to imitate France's enlightened despotism by subsidizing scholars and writers while relegating them to humiliating positions of inferiority. Only where cultural traditions had not completely died out after the Reformation, as in Saxony, did middle-class culture show signs of promise. Moreover, the Saxon city of Leipzig maintained relatively active connections with the outside world because of its importance as a center of trade. In Mehring's words: "Most of the intellectual leaders in Germany from the end of the seventeenth until late in the eighteenth century were either born in Saxony or went to Saxon schools." The philosopher Leibnitz (1646-1715), the jurists Pufendorf (1632-1694) and Thomasius (1655-1728), the literary "pope" Gottsched (1700-1766), and the writer Lessing (1729-1781) were all Saxons. And the poet Klopstock (1724-1803), though born in Prussia, was educated in the schools of Saxony.

In contrast to Saxony, Prussia was the chamber of horrors for the great innovators of classical German literature. King Friedrich Wilhelm I (1688-1740) paid his court fools with the scanty resources of the Berlin Academy of Sciences and forced professors at the University of Frankfort-on-the-Oder to vie with him, under penalty of flogging, in ridiculous contests of oratory. Professor Wolff at the University of Halle was threatened with hanging because of his philosophical views and forced to quit Prussia within twenty-four hours. Frederick "the Great" was completely devoted to French court culture: he despised German literature and did not even master the German language. But he looked on the French writers whom he invited to his court more as amusing wits than as enlighteners. Voltaire broke with Frederick and became his lifelong enemy. Klopstock, Herder, Winckelmann—great figures of German literature—fled their Prussian homeland, cursing Prussian despotism. Winckelmann wrote: "I shudder from head to foot when I think of Prussian despotism and of that hangman of the people who has made that land, which nature herself has cursed and covered with desert sand, into an abomination of men." And Lessing, the forward-looking representative of middle-class thought, called Prussia the

most slavish country in Europe. In the rest of Germany too, the pressure of the petty tyrants was so great that the representatives of literature and enlightenment were faced with a dilemma: either they had to flee their native “homeland” or adjust to conditions there, which meant self-abasement and humiliating compromises.

Until the appearance of its classical writers, German literature had been characterized, on the one hand, by servile glorification of the princes and, on the other, by swollen sentimentality, which reflected the political impotence of the middle class. Even the great classical writers were not free of these blemishes, not even that son of a Frankfurt patrician, Wolfgang von Goethe (1749- 1832).

The middle-class point of view expressed itself most strongly in the writings of Klopstock, Lessing, and Schiller. Klopstock greeted the French Revolution and called upon the Germans to imitate their French brethren. Schiller, at first sympathetic to the French Revolution, grew hostile to later events, and after the execution of Louis XVI became its avowed enemy. Goethe, Herder, and Alexander von Humboldt all took a positive stand toward the French Revolution.

This period marked the flowering of German literature. Its creations became part of world literature. As Goethe warned the German people:

If we Germans do not look beyond the narrow circle of our surroundings, we will only too easily fall into pedantic obscurantism. Therefore, I am glad to learn from foreign nations and advise everyone to do likewise.”

Alexander von Humboldt expressed the spirit that animated the most progressive Germans of that epoch in the following terms:

“If we wish to point to an idea which throughout all history has assumed ever broader significance, if any one idea proves the oft-disputed but even more often misunderstood concept of the perfecting of the human race, it is the idea of humanity: the effort to remove the hostile barriers that create all kinds of prejudices and one-sided attitudes and to treat all humanity as one great race bound together in fraternity, as a single whole striving for the goal of the free development of man’s inner force, without regard for religion, nation or color...”

German philosophy, unlike the great literature of the middle class, developed by accommodating itself to the state. The three leading representatives of classical philosophy—Kant, Fichte, and Hegel, with Kant alone a born Prussian—entered the service of the

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Prussian state. While literature produced pioneering works, such as the plays of Lessing and Schiller, that grappled clearly with the problems of the period, philosophy took truths that could have had the effect of political dynamite and wrapped them around with such obscure verbiage that the Prussian authorities were incapable of comprehending them. In his *Lessing* Franz Mehring found a most apt comparison for this: In a world-historic comedy, the Prussian corporal's whipping rod drove German philosophy to ever loftier heights, until what was in reality an ominous storm cloud was taken to be a harmless camel or weasel.

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), though a Philistine in his personal life and little interested in the political and national struggle of the "third estate" in Germany, showed in his first scientific achievements a spiritual affinity with the great enlighteners of the West. Fichte, basing himself on Spinoza, went back to the dialectical method of the ancient Greek philosophers for his inspiration. With Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel (1770-1831), classical German philosophy reached its high point.

The work of each of these three great philosophers covers a definite period in the development of Prussia. Kant's pioneering achievements coincided with the rise and decline of the Prussian state under the rule of Frederick II. When, after the collapse of Prussia, the idea of a German nation temporarily assumed significant proportions, Fichte became one of the awakeners of the nation. Hegel's doctrines, which came to fruition in Prussia after the period of the reforms, became the Prussian state philosophy. For what could better "justify" the existence of that reactionary state form than Hegel's dictum that whatever is, is rational. Whoever dared openly to doubt this axiom with reference to Prussia was persecuted as an enemy of the state. It remained for Karl Marx to free the revolutionary core of Hegel's philosophy—the dialectical approach to history—from its reactionary shell.

III

THE REVOLUTION OF 1848

With Napoleon's defeat in 1815, a reactionary period held sway in Europe. The first break in the general paralysis came with the Revolution of July, 1830, in Paris. This historic event, marking the emergence of the working class as an independent force, sent sparks of democratic and socialist ideas into neighboring Germany. Moreover, changed economic conditions gave the German middle class and newly arising industrial working class of the 1830's solid ground on which to wage their fight.

Two economic developments in particular had contributed to this transformation: the formation of the Prussian-German tariff union (*Zollverein*) and the revolutionizing effect of the steam engine on industry and transport. Hitherto, Germany had remained far behind England and France in her economic evolution. Split up into three-dozen odd sovereign duchies and principalities, the overwhelming majority of Germany's population vegetated in conditions that had not changed in thirty years. In 1830, less than a third of the inhabitants lived in cities. In the countryside, the feudal landlords ruled, exercising political and judicial powers. In the cities, the antiquated guild system prevented handicrafts from giving way to capitalist manufacture. Small-scale handicrafts, producing predominantly for local needs, were the rule.

Capitalist commodity production began to develop in those regions where it was unhampered by the guild system or by local proscriptioins, and where a cheap supply of labor power was available. These conditions existed especially on the mountain slopes of Central Germany where the population—in consequence of the decaying mining industry or, in the case of the peasantry, where the soil was not fertile—had developed spinning, weaving, basketry, pottery, toys, glassware, and the manufacture of clocks, jewelry, and hardware. This domestic industry became the chief basis of capitalist commodity production of the period. But Saxony and Silesia, once thriving mining regions and hence especially suitable terrain for modern industry, lay too far from the world trade routes of the Atlantic to take this decisive step.

Only in the Prussian Rhenish province did industrial development almost keep pace with that of the more advanced industrial nations; but that region really belonged more to the Dutch- Belgian-

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Northern French economic orbit than to the German. Under French rule, the German provinces on the left bank of the Rhine had attained an unusually high degree of economic development. Freed of the feudal fetters on industry and trade, they were also freed for a time, during Napoleon's continental blockade (1806-1813), of English competition. The textile industry of Saxony also profited largely from the continental blockade. Since no English yarns were available, it began to produce its own; and the beginnings of the machine industry in Saxony date from this epoch. After the fall of Napoleon and the lifting of the continental blockade, the economy of even the most advanced sections of Germany again went into decline. The Rhine provinces, annexed to Prussia, were thus deprived of their French market. German domestic production languished: taking advantage of the lack of tariff barriers, cheap English goods flooded the German market. The hungry hand weavers in Silesia still had to pay a special weavers' tax and perform compulsory labor for their feudal lords—had to toil mercilessly so that their capitalist employers could compete with English machine-made textiles.

Moreover, the tangled network of internal tariffs in the dozens of German states further hampered the development of industry and trade. To overcome this handicap, existing barriers within Prussia were removed and a protective tariff against foreign competition introduced by the tariff law of 1818. Gradually other German states joined in and by 1836, the tariff union founded by Prussia in 1834 comprised a unified tariff area of some 30,000,000 inhabitants and over 150,000 square miles. Industrial production and commerce surged forward with the appearance of the steam engine in Germany. The building of railroads (in 1835, the first line from Nuremberg to Fuerth was constructed, and in 1839 the Dresden-Leipzig line), the use of the steamboat, and the introduction of the mechanical loom stimulated the machine-building industry and increased the need for iron and coal.

With developing communications, new industries, exploitation of coal and iron resources, and a dosed tariff area, Germany's industrial expansion proceeded apace under Prussian leadership. This rise of industry destroyed the basis of handicraft production and transformed the life of the urban population. The artisans were rapidly proletarianized. A similar process got under way in the countryside among the poorer peasants with the introduction of industrial meth-

ods in agriculture (the sugar beet industry, grain export, and whiskey distilling).

In the 1830's, the impoverishment of broad sections of the population assumed staggering proportions. Despair gripped them. Contemporary with the 1830 Revolution in Paris but politically immature, their reaction took the form of machine-wrecking in the Rhineland, unrest and demonstrations in Hesse and Saxony, and the overthrow of the petty despot of Brunswick. The industrial proletariat of modern society now appeared on the stage of history, beating desperately against the bars of its poverty. The uprisings of the starving weavers in the Silesian villages of Langenbielau and Peterswaldau (July, 1844), crushed by Prussian armed forces, were portents of the German Revolution of 1848-49.

The longing for democratic reforms and national unification, which had never died out among the German bourgeoisie since the wars of liberation against Napoleon, received a fresh impetus as a result of the economic developments in the most advanced regions of Germany. The modern liberal movement proceeded, in the main, from the bourgeoisie in the rising industrial centers and from some of the East-Elbian grain producers who began to flirt with liberal ideas because they wanted unlimited exports of grain.

The student fraternities and athletic societies founded by Friedrich Jahn, embodying the romantic yearning for national unity, became centers of the bourgeois liberal movement. In 1832, twenty thousand people gathered in the Palatinate town of Hambach in a great demonstration for freedom and a republic. In Hesse, the young Georg Buechner published his *Hessian Country Messenger*, a political pamphlet addressed to the peasants and written in a revolutionary language hitherto unknown in Germany. From exile in Paris, Heinrich Heine and the brilliant publicist Ludwig Boeme, the outstanding minds of the "Young Germany" movement, fulminated against the princes and the lethargic bourgeois philistines. In 1837, the "Goettingen Seven" protested against the *coup d'état* of the King of Hanover: these seven university professors were forthwith dismissed and expelled from the province. In East Prussia, Johann Jakoby led the fight for popular representation and a democratic constitution. Despite repression, the liberal movement made headway. In Baden, bourgeois radicalism, powerfully influenced by events in France and Switzerland, forced the government as early as 1846 to adopt a more liberal policy. German journeymen who had

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participated in the revolutionary movement in France fertilized the working class movement in Germany with new ideas; and the journeyman tailor, Wilhelm Weitling, was one of the outstanding pioneers in this work. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, the clearest and boldest of the fighters for German democracy, forged theoretical weapons for the working class: their *Communist Manifesto* appeared in February, 1848, on the eve of the bourgeois revolutions in Europe.

In the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, founded in Cologne in June, 1848, Marx and Engels formulated a clear political program for revolutionary German democracy. Much later, in 1884, Engels characterized this program as follows:

“Petty-bourgeois democracy was at that time divided into two fractions: the North German, ready to accept a democratic Prussian Kaiser; and the South German, then almost exclusively from Baden, which sought to transform Germany into a federated republic along the lines of Switzerland. We had to fight both fractions. The interests of the proletariat forbade either the Prussification of Germany or the perpetuation of small-stateism (*staaterei*). These interests demanded the unification of Germany into a nation cleansed of all the petty obstacles that had survived, a nation which could become an arena of struggle in which both the proletariat and the bourgeoisie could measure their respective strength. But they likewise forbade the establishment of a Prussian head: for the Prussian state with its entire apparatus, its traditions, and its dynasty was the only serious internal enemy which the revolution in Germany had to overthrow. Moreover, Prussia could unify Germany only by dismembering her, by excluding German Austria. The dissolution of the Prussian state, the overthrow of the Austrian state, the genuine unification of Germany as a republic—we could have no other immediate revolutionary program.”¹

The great economic depression of 1847 caused a crisis in Europe. In 1847-48, there were revolutionary uprisings in Switzerland and Italy. In London, the Chartist movement grew to impressive proportions. In Germany, the political crisis sharpened. The police-state of Metternich only heightened the tension by repressing the progressive movement. In Prussia, Friedrich Wilhelm IV, who had come to power in 1840, was compelled by pressing financial needs to convoke some kind of a sham parliament—the *Landtag*, an institution of the feudal “corporate state.” The bourgeois representatives,

however, insisted that the Prussian King first honor the grant of a constitution he had promised before they would consent to advance the loan sought by the Crown.

In Paris, the Revolution of February 1848 overthrew the bourgeois king, Louis Philippe, and proclaimed the republic. The revolutionary ferment in Europe was coming to a head; in Germany, revolutionary uprisings were increasing in Baden and Wuerttemberg.

Under the pressure of the aroused populace, the lesser German princes, concerned about their "divine right" to rule, granted concessions, such as the appointment of liberal ministers. On March 5, fifty-one liberals in Heidelberg called upon men of good will throughout Germany to gather at Frankfort-on-the-Main in order to discuss the immediate election of a German Parliament. This was the origin of the German National Assembly which was later formed in Frankfort. The people's movement gathered momentum. On March 13, the people of Vienna triumphed on the barricades: Metternich, overthrown, was forced to flee to England. The workers of Berlin held giant demonstrations at which they demanded freedom of the press and assembly. The government sent armed forces against them. A delegation of bourgeois Rhinelanders threatened the Prussian King with the secession of the Rhineland if he did not grant far-reaching reforms. On March 18, a mammoth demonstration before the royal palace in Berlin demanded the withdrawal of troops from the city. When soldiers were sent to break up the gathering, street fighting began. The people of Berlin, especially the workers from the northern districts, fought all night and forced 14,000 soldiers and 36 cannon to retire from Berlin. The Prince of Prussia—later Wilhelm I, the "hero Kaiser"—who had incited the troops against the people, fled to London disguised as a stagecoach driver. On March 19, the Berlin barricade fighters bore their dead to the royal cemetery and forced the King to doff his hat in their honor.

March 18 saw the first victorious advance of the German Revolution against feudal-absolutist Prussianism. But the working class, which had paid for its triumph with 183 dead, was gradually cheated of the fruits of victory by the big bourgeoisie. The German working class was still too undeveloped to profit from the momentous events. The upper-class Rhinelanders, Camphausen and Hansemann, together with a few bourgeoisified noblemen, formed a new Prussian Government. In order to "preserve legal continuity,"

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the government convoked the old “corporate” *Landtag*. The *Landtag* and the Throne were to unite in promulgating a new constitution (the “Joint Assembly”). Thus, out of fear of the workers, the big bourgeoisie formed an alliance with Prussian absolutism. In contrast to their counterparts in England and France who fought relentlessly against feudalism, the German bourgeoisie renounced the struggle for bourgeois democracy. In England and France, the rising middle class chopped off the heads of their kings; in Germany, they bowed their heads in servility to the German princes. From that time on, the German bourgeoisie never departed from this basic attitude; on every crucial occasion, it joined with reaction against the workers.

After the defeat of the workers of Paris in the bloody June days and the triumph of the counter-revolution in Vienna, the Prussian Crown staged its own *coup d'état* in November, 1848, dispersing the *Landtag* with armed violence. Instead of calling the people to arms against this usurpation, the Joint Assembly proclaimed passive resistance. German unity was again frustrated. The German National Assembly, meeting in Frankfort-on-the-Main, had already yielded to the princes by choosing the Austrian Archduke Johann as imperial regent. The forces in the country bent on resistance now pinned their last hopes on the Frankfort Parliament. In March, 1849, the latter finally completed a draft of a German constitution under which the Prussian King was to be chosen Emperor of Germany. The King reacted to this offer in “dilatory” fashion: he could not accept such an honor, he said, without first conferring with the princes. To his intimates he confided scornfully that he could not set upon his head a crown compounded of filth and dung and smelling obscenely of the revolution.

For a whole year the Frankfort Parliament had engaged in a futile talk-fest. Having created no real basis of power when the occasion was ripe, it lacked the power to put through its own constitution. And now the Prussian Crown struck at the Frankfort Parliament. Its members fled to Stuttgart, where armed soldiers scattered the assembly to the four winds. After this, the Prussian soldiery proceeded to drown the last strong outburst of the German Revolution in the blood of the workers and the petty bourgeoisie: in May 1849, Prussian troops crushed the uprising in Dresden. In the Baden-Palatinate insurrection, workers, petty bourgeois, and the army, after officers and the grand duke had fled, fought the last battle for a

national constitution. Frederick Engels participated actively as an adjutant of August Willich, the military commander of the insurgents. Prussian troops under Prince Wilhelm, later Kaiser Wilhelm I, savagely suppressed the uprising.

Nineteenth-century American history contains the names of many Germans who had fought for freedom in 1848. In the reactionary period that set in after 1849 and lasted until the 1860's, about 1,500,000 of the most progressive-minded Germans emigrated overseas, most of them coming to the United States. Even before that time, in the two decades preceding the Revolution of 1848, about 800,000 Germans had left the country to escape the Metternich reaction. The German refugees of 'forty-eight were for the most part intellectuals—scientists, writers, clergymen, professors, students, and political leaders—who subsequently left their mark on American life. Many friends and co-workers of Marx and Engels, representing the socialist-communist wing of the 1848 revolutionaries, were among those who emigrated to America—such figures as Friedrich Anneke, Friedrich Anton Sorge and Joseph Weydemeyer. In the United States, they found an emerging labor movement, which they strongly influenced. Many prominent leaders in the American Civil War were political exiles from Germany. Several of the former commanders of the Baden-Palatinate insurrection held the rank of general in the Northern armies, including Friedrich Hecker, August Willich, Carl Schurz, and Franz Sigel. Joseph Weydemeyer, the Communist and former German artillery officer, served as a colonel of the Missouri Volunteers in the Northern army. At the close of the war he was promoted to the rank of brigadier general and became city auditor of St. Louis.

IV

THE RISE OF MODERN GERMANY

The victory of the counter-revolution in Europe was aided by the industrial prosperity which set in after 1848 and reached its peak in 1850. As a result of this economic recovery, the triumphant counter-revolution in Prussia did not simply mean a restoration of pre-revolutionary conditions. The alliance between the Junkers and the monarchy, with the first predominating, was re-affirmed in Prussia} but economic necessities pressed for the fulfillment of national unification, the prerequisite for an unhampered expansion of capitalism.

While politically Germany after the revolution remained split into 36 sovereign states, economically there were only three important areas. Prussia formed territorially the largest economic unit in Germany: it contained the industrially advanced regions of the Rhineland, Silesia, and Berlin; and it was the leader in the largest tariff union. This was the economic basis for Prussia's political primacy at a later date, and favored the Prussianization of Germany.

There were three possible solutions for the unification of Germany. The most far-reaching was the *revolutionary Great German* solution, the establishment of a unified German Republic including German Austria. This solution failed because of the inner conflicts among the German bourgeoisie, their fear of the working class, and the immaturity of the working class. After the defeat of the 1848 Revolution, therefore, the problem of German unity became a struggle for supremacy between Prussia and Austria, between the Hohenzollern monarchy and the Hapsburg monarchy, between the great German solution and the little German solution, in either case a monarchist instead of a revolutionary democratic solution.

Attempts at a *great German reactionary* solution envisaged a rebirth of the Holy Roman Empire, at the head of which the Hapsburgs had stood as German Emperors. The southern German states, once parts of the old Holy Roman Empire and jealous of expanding Prussia, tended in this direction. This trend was strengthened by the dominant position of the Catholic Church in the regions in question. Since the Reformation, the Church and the Hapsburg monarchy had cooperated intimately to maintain their power. Economically, South Germany had as yet been little affected by industrial developments of the 19th century and yearned for the former economic ties it had

enjoyed. Before world trade shifted to the Atlantic, South Germany had been a transit and hinterland area for Mediterranean and Near Eastern commerce. To some extent, this sentiment existed also in the Rhineland, where anti-Prussian tendencies were fortified by the tradition of the Rhineland League set up in the years of the Napoleonic wars. In all this, we see the historic causes of the particularism prevailing in South and West Germany, a sentiment that has not died out to this day.

The *little German* solution signified a Germany under Prussian rule and without Austria; in other words, not a desire for national unity but a tendency for the Hohenzollern dynasty to expand at the expense of Germany. The Prussian government, after crushing the 1848 Revolution, annexed territory from those German states Prussia had helped to master the revolution. These states then fled for protection into the arms of Austria. Prussian-Austrian tension grew so intense that both countries mobilized. Upon the intervention of the Russian Tsar, annexationist Prussia had to bow to Austria after negotiations at Olmuetz (November 1850). Prussia was compelled to recognize the federal constitution, the "Parliament" of the German princes in which the Hapsburgs dominated. This humiliation of Prussia, however, did not end its preponderant position in Germany as the Prussian-dominated tariff union was further expanded.

The German bourgeoisie having renounced political hegemony in the Revolution of 1848, entrusted power to the Junkers and princes all the more readily since under their rule it prospered from the rising industrialism in the 1850's. But it was this circumstance which finally brought the bourgeoisie into conflict with the Prussian regime: the rapid growth of the productive forces made imperative their liberation from the fetters of feudal-bureaucratic governments.

In Prussia, the insane Friedrich Wilhelm IV was succeeded in 1858 by the Prince Regent Wilhelm, the "grapeshot prince" of the 1848 Revolution and later Kaiser Wilhelm I. Summoning a liberal ministry, Wilhelm was enthusiastically greeted by the bourgeoisie, although at bottom he remained an arch-reactionary and accomplished little in a progressive sense during "the new era." At the beginning of the 1860's, a constitutional conflict broke out over demands for army reform. The bourgeoisie realized that German unity under Prussian primacy required a powerful army; on the other hand, reorganization of the army signified strengthening the Prussian King and Junkers. The liberal majority in the Prussian Par-

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liament finally accepted the army reforms for a provisional one-year period, without obtaining any guarantees as to how the army would be used. The new Parliament, elected in 1861 immediately after Wilhelm's coronation as King of Prussia, had a strong contingent of the newly organized Progressive Party. The constitutional issue soon developed into a struggle over the budgetary rights of Parliament. While the Crown won out over the weak bourgeois opposition, the crisis continued. The royal semi-absolutist regime won out over the parliamentary regime until the former's collapse in 1918.

On September 24, 1862, the Prussian King, who had decided to abdicate because he saw no way out of the internal crisis, appointed Otto von Bismarck as Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs. The unification and Prussification of Germany became the work of this reactionary Junker. Bismarck announced a few days after his appointment: "Germany does not look to Prussia's liberalism but to its power. Prussia must muster and retain its power for the favorable moment, which has already been missed on several occasions. Prussia's boundaries after the Vienna treaties are not conducive to a healthy national life. The great issues of our time are not decided by speeches and majority decisions—that was the great mistake of 1848 and 1849—but by blood and iron."

Bismarck had served as Prussian envoy in Paris, where he had been an avid student of Napoleon's statecraft. He was in advance of his own clique in that he esteemed capital at its proper value and realized that the Junkers could not retain power without making compromises with the bourgeoisie.

He unified the Reich by subjugating Germany to Prussia. The working class was too weak and undeveloped to bring about a genuinely democratic unification; while the bourgeoisie, by its cowardly behavior during the constitutional controversy, had proved anew its unwillingness and inability to carry through the work of national unification. The more unscrupulously Bismarck realized his program, the more reverently the German bourgeoisie kissed his jackboot.

In foreign policy, Bismarck first won the favor of the Russian Tsar by helping him to suppress the Polish uprising in 1863. A year later, Prussia joined Austria in a war against little Denmark, which by the Peace of Vienna was forced to yield the duchies of Schleswig-Holstein to the two powers. Soon thereafter, Bismarck turned against his erstwhile ally, Austria. Having assured himself of Rus-

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sian neutrality, he formed an alliance with Italy against Austria and promised France the left bank of the Rhine if she refrained from intervening. Assured of a free hand, Prussia then struck, and at the battle of Koeniggraetz (Sadowa) on July 3, 1866, Prussia defeated Austria and the smaller German states allied with her. The terms of the peace, suggested by France, did not fully achieve Bismarck's aim of Prussian hegemony over Germany but brought them appreciably closer. Henceforth, Austria had to renounce all interference in German affairs. Prussia incorporated the provinces of Hanover, Schleswig-Holstein, Hesse, and Nassau and the Free City of Frankfurt-on-the-Main. The states north of the Main River were at Prussia's dictate and formed into a North German Confederation (*Bund*) with a common parliament. The states south of the Main, already forming an economic unit through the tariff union, were bound by alliance to the North German Confederation.

The constitution of the North German Confederation removed the worst excesses of small-stateism which had prevented the development of capitalism and blocked Prussia's plans for domination. Unified decrees on citizenship and freedom of movement in the entire territory of the League, and uniform laws on commerce, industry, tariffs, currency, weights and measures, banks, foreign policy, etc., reconciled the German bourgeoisie to Bismarck's "revolution from above." In fact, they soon grew wildly enthusiastic over the "Blood and Iron" Chancellor, their enthusiasm reaching its apex with the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71.

The promises of territory which Bismarck had made to Napoleon III were not kept. By diplomatic intrigues, Bismarck provoked the French Emperor into declaring war on Germany in 1870. Since Napoleon III was the aggressor, it was easy enough for Bismarck to assert that the Germans were fighting a defensive war. In reality, the war was popular with the German masses to the extent that it involved defending Germany's national existence. But the conflict was not limited to that: it became a war of conquest with the aim of annexing Alsace-Lorraine. After the French defeat, the preliminary Peace of Versailles (February 26, 1871) dictated that France surrender Alsace-Lorraine to Germany and pay five billion gold francs as a war-indemnity.

Even before peace was signed, the German princes were cajoled and pushed into accepting unity of the Reich. A formal declaration to this effect was made in Versailles on January 18, 1871, and the

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King of Prussia became Emperor of Germany, symbolizing the fact that the unified Reich was an enlarged Prussia. The deteriorated constitution of the North German Confederation became the basis for the new constitution of the Reich. Twenty-three principalities and three free cities immediately adhered to the "unified" Reich. Due concessions were made to the spirit of particularism, especially in the South German states, and small-stateism, a vestige of feudalism, remained to plague Germany even in the period of the Weimar Republic.

The rise of capitalism, which had led to the unification of the Reich, produced a second phenomenon of historic significance: the Socialist labor movement. Its beginnings go back to the Socialist-Communist groups, primarily the journeymen, of the pre-revolutionary period and the years of revolution. But it was only with the advance of industry that the labor movement won a firm footing among the working class. In 1863, Ferdinand Lassalle (1825-1864) founded the General German Workers' Union. (This movement was thereafter called Lassalleanism.) Here for the first time the German 'working class formed a political party independent of the bourgeois groups. In the fight for universal suffrage and in the development of workers' consumers' co-operatives, broad sections of the working class received their political schooling. Lassalle's activities as a propagandist gave a decided impetus to the embryonic labor movement.

Another branch of the Socialist labor movement, especially active in Central and South Germany, developed under the leadership of August Bebel (1840-1913) and Wilhelm Liebknecht (1826-1900). It arose first from the Workers' Cultural Societies within the framework of the bourgeois Progressive Party. Bebel, a journeyman turner who had arisen from president of the Leipzig Workers' Cultural Society to become general president of the Society throughout Germany, proved to be one of the most important Socialist leaders in the history of the German labor movement. In 1866, Bebel joined the First International (the International Workingmen's Association), founded and led by Marx and Engels. Liebknecht had been a friend and student of Marx and Engels since the Revolution of 1848. Bebel and Liebknecht popularized the program of the First International in the Workers' Cultural Societies, laying particular stress on trade union demands. At the workers' Congress of Nuremberg (1868) and Eisenach (1869), these two leaders broke away

from the Progressive Party to found the Social Democratic Workers Party (called the Eisenachers).

Both factions, the Lassalleans and Eisenachers, engaged in lively polemics until the unity congress at Gotha (1875). The basic point at issue between Marx, Engels, and Bebel on the one hand and Lassalle and his associate von Schweitzer on the other lay in the question of the attitude of the working class toward the State and the tactics to be applied in forging Germany's national unification. The conflict reached a high point during the controversy over the Prussian constitution. In an article on August Bebel, written on August 8, 1913, Lenin dealt with this conflict in the following terms:

"The historic cause of the split in German socialism lies, in brief, in the following: The unification of Germany was the order of the day. It could be achieved on the basis of the then existing relationship of classes in two ways, either through a workers' revolution creating an all-German republic or through dynastic wars by Prussia strengthening the hegemony of Prussian landowners in a unified Germany.

"Lassalle and the Lassalleans, seeing little chance for the proletarian and democratic way, carried on a vacillating tactic, adapting themselves to the hegemony of the Junker Bismarck. Their mistakes led to the Workers Party tending toward the Bonapartist-state-socialist way. Opposed to that, Bebel and Liebknecht consistently fought for the democratic and proletarian way and struggled against the slightest concessions to Prussianism, Bismarckism, and nationalism."¹

The democratic and revolutionary tactics of Bebel and Liebknecht against nationalism and their hostility to the unification of Germany "from above" created an initially firm foundation for the Social Democratic Party, while Lassalle's "flirtations with Bismarckism" proved in the long run an evil heritage of the German labor movement.

The far-reaching implications of this split became apparent in and after the first World War. With the upward surge of the labor movement in Imperial Germany, revisionism had also gained ground and during World War I, the "Kaiser Socialists," basing their attitude toward the state on the theories of Lassalle, widely disseminated those revisionist ideas in the German working class movement.

In a letter from Lassalle to Bismarck (June 8, 1863), published

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many years later, the former declared that the workers were disposed "to see in the Crown the natural bearer of the social dictatorship, if on its part the Crown... decided to transform itself from a kingdom of privileged estates into a social and revolutionary people's monarchy." Lassalle's followers even accepted financial bribes from Bismarck for their newspaper, the *Social-Democrat*.

The Franco-Prussian War confronted the young German labor movement with its first serious political test. Without exception, the bourgeois representatives in the North German Reichstag, the parliament of the North German League, had joined Bismarck's war-camp. The Lassalleans also voted for war credits at Bismarck's behest, since they considered the war one of national defense. Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht, representatives of the Eisenachers, opposed the chauvinist war-fever and abstained from voting war credits with the explanation that an affirmative vote would have been "a vote of confidence in the Prussian government, which by its behavior in 1866 prepared the present war."

Karl Marx publicly recognized this move of Bebel and Liebknecht as a courageous act, although it did not harmonize with the basic theoretical position taken by Marx and Engels toward the Franco-Prussian War. In his first address on the Franco-Prussian War to the General Council of the International Workingmen's Association (July 23, 1870) Marx declared: "On the German side the war is a war of defense; but who put Germany to the necessity of defending herself? Who enabled Louis Bonaparte to wage war upon her? *Prussia!* It was Bismarck who conspired with that very same Louis Bonaparte for the purpose of crushing popular opposition at home and annexing Germany to the Hohenzollern dynasty."² Basing themselves on this analysis, Marx and Engels developed the following guiding principles for the German Social Democrats in the Franco-Prussian War: "(1) Join the national movement.... (2)... emphasize the difference between German-national and dynastic Prussian interests.... (3) Work against any annexation of Alsace-Lorraine.... (4) As soon as a non-chauvinistic republican government is at the helm in Paris, work for an honorable peace with it. (5) Constantly stress the unity of interest between the German and French workers who did not approve of the war and are also not making war on each other...."³

When Emperor Napoleon III was overthrown after the military defeat at Sedan (Sept. 2, 1870) and Bismarck continued the fight

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against the French Republic as a war of conquest, the leaders of both workers' parties in Germany refused to vote a second time for war credits. Nor did they limit themselves to parliamentary action. At the initiative of the Brunswick central committee of the Eisenachers, mass demonstrations were called against the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine and for an honorable peace with the French Republic. In this, the stand of the Eisenachers coincided completely with that of Marx and Engels. The Prussian military authorities had the members of the Brunswick central committee arrested on charges of high treason and imprisoned in the fortress of Loetzen in East Prussia. The East Prussian democrat, Johann Jacoby, an old forty-eight year old and one of the few authentic bourgeois democrats in Germany, suffered the same fate because at a people's demonstration in Koenigsberg he protested openly against the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine.

The unification of Germany was a necessity from the point of view of the development of capitalist economy. And it was historically progressive in that now the German labor movement could organize the fight for its social and political aims on a national scale, no longer hampered by constant bickering about German unity.

V

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Germany, unified by Chancellor Bismarck, entered the ranks of the Great Powers. The belated unification of the Reich explains in part the sense of haste and unrest that characterized German politics. Germany's rise to the position of a leading power was compressed within a span of decades, in contrast to the centuries of evolution in the other leading powers of Europe. And the fact that national unification occurred under the leadership of Prussia made certain a reactionary, anti-labor course in domestic affairs and a continuation of traditionally unscrupulous Prussianism in foreign policy.

The history of Imperial Germany up to World War I falls into two definite epochs: the pre-imperialist and the imperialist. They correspond generally to the era of Bismarck and that of Kaiser Wilhelm II, although the beginnings of imperialism were already perceptible under Bismarck.

The immediate consequence of the Prussian victory in 1870-1871 was a breath-taking advance in German economy. The five billion francs indemnity paid by France were used primarily to build up German military might. The army was modernized and increased; fortifications and barracks were constructed} and at the initiative of the General Staff, the network of railways, tested in two wars, was vastly extended. Heavy industry profited especially from this armaments policy and the increased amount of liquid capital. New banks and industrial enterprises were founded. A general speculative fever gripped the country: between 1871-1873, share capital invested almost reached the total of the French war indemnity. This wild post-war boom was followed by the "crash of 1874 in which tens of thousands of middle class citizens were ruined by stock-market swindlers and speculators.

In domestic policy, two events characterize the Bismarck era: the *Kulturkampf* and the "Socialist law." In both cases, Bismarck attempted to win mastery over internal opposition by exceptional law's and brutal police measures. The first conflict was settled by a compromise, the second led to Bismarck's fall.

Kulturkampf was the name given by adherents of Bismarck to the struggle of the Prussian State against the Catholic Church. Several factors had aroused the militant supporters of the Papacy: the

revolt of healthy common sense in a number of German bishops and orthodox Catholic laymen against the dogma of papal infallibility (July 18, 1870); the end of the Papacy as a temporal power in consequence of the national unification of Italy; and the fear of the Papacy that its influence in the new Reich would be weakened, since with the exclusion of Austria the population of Germany was about 63 per cent Protestant.

In the autumn of 1870, therefore, the Center Party arose. It assembled the most heterogeneous political and social elements, for the most part the historically retrograde sections of the population who had fought against national unity for particularist reasons. These particularist tendencies were strongest among the Catholic populations of the Rhineland, Silesia, and the South German states — above all, Bavaria. In the last-named, the former alliance with Austria played a significant part. But there were also Protestants who joined the Center Party, including the orthodox Protestant Guelphs of Hanover, who wanted to restore their kingdom which had been annexed by Prussia in 1866. The former Justice Minister of Hanover, Dr. Ludwig Windthorst, was the first outstanding leader of the Centrists, and in Parliament they were joined by the Catholic deputies from Alsace and the former Polish territories. The Party began with 57 and later had over 100 deputies in the Reichstag, roughly 14 and 25 per cent respectively of the total membership.

Bismarck called the formation of the Center Party the “mobilization of the enemies of the Reich,” because he saw in particularist tendencies the influence of the Pope working against Germany’s national unity. Instead of trying to reconcile the petty bourgeois and proletarian followers of the Centrists with the new Reich by means of progressive legislation, Bismarck concentrated his fire on Rome, as though acting in the spirit of a belated Reformation. During the ensuing years, a series of laws was passed throughout Prussia and the Reich aimed at undermining the power of the Church and, in the final analysis, at founding a German National Church. The shrewd Windthorst built a mass base for the Center Party by advocating the interests of the workers and middle classes. Bismarck finally had to yield to the growing power of the Centrists when he needed the votes of their party to carry through his reactionary financial and economic reforms. In 1878, the reconciliation with Rome began under the new Pope Leo XIII. Gradually, the exceptional laws against the Catholic Church were abrogated and by 1887 the

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Kulturkampf was ended. The Centrists, now allied with the Conservatives, the party of the Prussian Junkers, became parliamentary supporters of Bismarck.

Bismarck's "Socialist law" was an exceptional law against the working class. It was passed in the Reichstag on October 19, 1878 by 221 to 149 votes, a few months after negotiations had been consummated with Rome for ending the *Kulturkampf*. The two moves were intimately connected: Bismarck needed the votes of the Center Party for his economic program and to stem the growing influence of the Social Democrats, the only opposition party which seriously opposed his policies.

Taking revenge on Bebel and Liebknecht for their attitude during the Franco-Prussian War, Bismarck instigated a high treason trial which ended when the two labor leaders were each sentenced to two years imprisonment. Nevertheless, the trial before the Leipzig Court proved effective propaganda for Social Democracy. Enthusiasm for the Emperor and the Reich had quickly cooled among the workers as a result of onerous military and tax burdens. In addition, the real wages of the workers dropped perceptibly during the post-war boom years, producing a powerful strike wave and the beginnings of trade union organization. In the Reichstag elections for 1874, both Socialist factions received a total of 351,670 votes. The elections and Bismarck's repressive campaign brought them closer together, and in May 1875 at the Gotha Congress they united into a single party.

Although the bourgeois parties agreed with Bismarck in his hostile attitude toward the Social Democrats and trade unions, they still hesitated to agree to the oppressive anti-labor laws which Bismarck repeatedly demanded.

Two attempts to assassinate Kaiser Wilhelm I, on May 11 and June 2, 1878—the first by a member of the anti-Semitic Christian Social Party of the court preacher Adolf Stoecker, the second by a bourgeois youth—gave Bismarck his long-awaited opportunity to strike against Social Democracy. After the second attempt, in which Kaiser Wilhelm I was gravely wounded, Bismarck dissolved the Reichstag. New elections took place under conditions of police terror against the Social Democrats, who lost several thousand votes. In the bourgeois camp a sharp swing to the Right was noticeable. Now Bismarck was in a position to play off the three large Rightist parties—the Conservatives, National Liberals, and Centrists—

against one another and obtain alternative parliamentary majorities at will. His task was rendered easier when the Junkers, alarmed by changing conditions in the world grain market, especially growing American competition, clamored for protective tariffs, while the industrialists also demanded tariffs on manufactured goods to protect themselves from British competition.

The new Reichstag passed the Socialist Law. Organizations and newspapers of the labor movement were suppressed, labor leaders and their families persecuted by the police, imprisoned, and banished from the country. The first reaction in the ranks of the Social Democrats was utter confusion. Weak-kneed leaders who urged surrender had to be brushed aside as well as anarchist groups permeated with police spies. Within a year, however, the workers had set up their underground organization. Meetings were held under all sorts of disguises. The central organ, the *Social-Democrat*, published first in Switzerland, then in London, was smuggled weekly into Germany in thousands of copies and found its way to the remotest corners of the land. A well-organized relief society cared for the families of those exiled and imprisoned. For a decade the Social Democrats waged their heroic guerrilla warfare against Bismarck's repressive system.

On January 25, 1890, the Socialist Law was defeated in the Reichstag and in September of that year it went out of existence. Bismarck's campaign had checked but not crushed the Social Democrats. This was evident from the Reichstag elections of February 20, 1890, at which they received 1,427,000 votes, or almost 20 per cent of the entire electorate. This not only sealed the fate of the Socialist Law but also led to the overthrow of the "Iron Chancellor" who had been toying with the idea of destroying the Social Democrats by means of a grandiose military provocation.

The fall of Bismarck marked a decisive turning-point in German politics, which went far beyond the differences in age and temperament between Bismarck and the young Kaiser Wilhelm II who had acceded to the throne in June 1888 after the death of his father, Friedrich III, who reigned 99 days. The Prussian Junker Bismarck had fulfilled his historic mission. By unifying the Reich he had removed the most serious impediments to capitalist development, appeased in large measure the bourgeoisie, and protected the interests of the princes and nobility. He had fused the feudal-absolutist power of the princes and nobility prevailing since the sixteenth century

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with modern banking and industrial capital into a specifically German amalgam: the result was a new ruling class held together through fear of the working class and through common efforts to extort as much as they could from the people. Within two decades after the unification, by his brutality toward the working class and his adroit handling of foreign policy he had placed Germany among the Great Powers.

In the 1880's, while Bismarck was still at the peak of his power, the first outspokenly expansionist moves leading to World War I occurred: most of Germany's colonial conquests in the Pacific and Africa; the beginning of the Berlin-to-Bagdad railway policy; and the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria, and Italy (1883) which aimed at expansion in southeastern Europe and led to the alienation of Russia.

The national unification of Italy (1868) and Germany (1871) had brought to a close the period of the formation of large national states in Europe. In and of itself this forced a new orientation in the foreign policy of the older powers. And when Germany, rising quickly to a leading position in Europe and acquiring colonial possessions, entered the arena of world politics in the 1880's almost simultaneously with the United States and Japan, a new chapter in world history began. The period of modern imperialism was at hand. The concentration of capital in the leading capitalist countries had reached a point at which national economic boundaries became too narrow: new sources of profit had to be found. The struggle for world markets and a new division of the world became the source of unavoidable and violent conflicts between the rival powers.

From 1871-1914, German economy developed at a tempo comparable only with that of the United States and, in relative terms, that of Japan. The population of Germany rose from 40,800,000 in 1870 to 67,000,000 in 1914. Iron production increased from about 1,400,000 tons in the early 1870's to 8,500,000 tons in 1900 and 20,000,000 tons in 1913, with Germany outstripping England and climbing to second place behind the U.S.A. in world production. The corresponding figures for coal production were: 34,000,000 tons in 1870; 150,000,000 tons in 1900; and 290,000,000 tons in 1913* Germany's abundant coal and iron resources encouraged a rapid development of the railroads and machine-building industry. The rail network rose from 21,650 kilometers in 1870 to 63,000 kilometers in 1913. The value of foreign trade expressed in billions

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of marks was as follows:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Imports</i>	<i>Exports</i>	<i>Total</i>
1870	3.5	2.5	6
1900	6.0	4.75	10.75
1913	10.8	10.1	20.9

The process of concentration of capital accelerated in the period 1870-1914, with finance capital strengthening its grip. In 1870 there were some 400 joint-stock companies with three billion marks in capital, most of it invested in the railways; the number of companies rose to 5,486 in 1913 with some 17,400,000,000 marks capital. In addition, there were close to 3,000 limited stock companies capitalized at almost 5,000,000,000 marks. In Prussia alone the number of millionaires augmented from 5,256 in 1895 to 9,341 in 1914. Savings bank deposits showed the following picture: 1,500,000,000 marks in the 1870's, 8,800,000,000 in 1900, and close to 20,000,000,000 in 1914. According to an estimate by the financial expert Karl Helfferich, Germany's national wealth rose from 200,000,000,000 marks in 1895 to 300,000,000,000 in 1913.

The general economic advance and especially the expansion of foreign trade found expression in the increase of the merchant marine. Ship tonnage rose from 982,000 tons in 1871 to 3,200,000 tons in 1914. The German merchant fleet, surpassing that of the United States and France, rose to second place in the world behind that of Great Britain.

By the beginning of the 1880's, the rivalry for colonial acquisitions had set in among the major capitalist powers. England had already in the two preceding decades made extensive colonial conquests. In the period of intensified expansion from 1884 to 1900, England acquired 3,700,000 square miles of colonial territory with a population of 57,000,000; France 3,600,000 square miles with 36,500,000 inhabitants; and Germany 1,000,000 square miles with 14,700,000 in population. Starting as an undertaking of the shipbuilding and export and import industries, German colonial aggrandizement received state protection when its success became apparent.

Germany's overseas expansion was a serious obstacle to British maritime supremacy. As Germany hastened to build up her fleet, the tension with other powers, particularly Britain, was dangerously heightened. By penetrating overland Britain's most vital spheres of

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interest in the Near East and astride the land route to India, the Germans dreamt of dealing England a mortal blow.

The policy of the Berlin-to-Bagdad railroad, initiated in the 1880's, was a concrete expression of this dream. The *Deutsche Bank*, a stronghold of German finance capital, took the initiative in the Bagdad railway enterprise. The German state soon backed the project with the full extent of its authority. Turkey was the key to the situation. During a state visit in October 1898 to Damascus, Kaiser Wilhelm II declared himself protector of the Mohammedan world; and one year later, in 1899, the German-Turkish alliance was formed. Economic penetration of the Balkan countries, the exploitation of dynastic ties with Balkan kings who came from German royal houses, and the policy of alliances with Austria-Hungary and several Balkan states marked out southeastern Europe as the chief direction in which German imperialism sought to expand.

The Berlin-to-Bagdad undertaking brought German imperialism hundreds of millions of marks in profit by the actual building of the railroad in Turkey, by land concessions connected therewith, high-interest loans to the state, deliveries of materials, etc. But the political purposes behind the enterprise brought Britain, France, and Russia together in the Entente opposed to the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy. As the twentieth century opened, all European and even world politics revolved more and more around the sharpening antagonisms between these two imperialist camps.

It is not our intention to enumerate all the political and diplomatic details in the struggle between these two camps. Let us limit ourselves to a general characterization of Kaiser Wilhelm's foreign policy. Uncertain and vacillating between possibilities of an alliance with Tsarist Russia or Britain; truculent and quick to appear wherever there was a smell of gunpowder—whether in China or Morocco, and in the end taking fright at his own courage; repelling every attempt of British imperialism at an alliance at the turn of the century, meanwhile rearming Germany on land and sea with ever more feverish haste, Kaiser Wilhelm II steered the German ship of state "with the sureness of a sleepwalker" into the world war and collapse.

After the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05), the war tensions steadily heightened in Europe. After the victory of Japan over Russia, the former's predominant position in the Far East left little room for German colonial expansion in Asia. The Germans therefore

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turned their eyes toward Africa, with a view to obtaining a contiguous colonial domain extending from German East Africa over the Congo and diagonally across the African continent to Morocco, where the German firm of Mannesmann was interested in exploiting the iron ore mines. This division would have cut across the British Cape-to-Cairo line in flagrant fashion; it also provoked the French who were particularly interested in Morocco.

In 1906, war threatened to break out over the clash of French and German interests in Morocco. In 1909, war threatened to break out between Austria and Russia because of the former's annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. That would automatically have brought Germany into the conflict because of her alliance with Austria. In 1911, the Moroccan situation almost exploded into open hostilities. The armaments race intensified. The Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 became the prologue to World War I.

Germany had for so long been tacking between East and West that she ended by having a two-front war on her hands, the very thing she dreaded most. Yet Marx and Engels had prophesied that she would have to fight on two fronts after her annexation of Alsace-Lorraine, since it was bound to throw France into the arms of Russia.

Imperial Germany's internal policy corresponded with her bellicose foreign policy. At the outset, a gesture of reconciliation was made toward the working class. In view of Bismarck's failure to achieve the desired results by cracking down on the workers, Kaiser Wilhelm felt that he might win them over by honeyed promises. Immediately after the defeat of the Socialist Law and two weeks before new elections for the Reichstag scheduled for February 20, 1890, there appeared the Kaiser's "February decrees," granting a series of social reforms such as regulation of the working day, workmen's compensation, limitation of child and female labor, and introduction of workers' committees in the factories. But the Kaiser was wrong in believing that by such moves he would keep the Social Democrats at bay. On the contrary, they gained in influence. As strikes increased, the big capitalists again demanded repressive measures against the workers. Kaiser Wilhelm, incited by the Court clique, now changed his mind and prepared a new criminal law against the Social Democrats. It never came before the Reichstag because the majority was opposed to it. Meanwhile, the police and courts meted out drastic punishment to striking workers. The Kaiser

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gave the signal when he openly condemned the Social Democrats as “a gang of men not worthy of bearing the name of Germans.”

Economic pressure went hand in hand with political repression: taxes and tariffs were sharply increased in order to extort extra profits from the masses for the Junkers and industrialists and to cover the inflated costs of armaments. These anti-labor policies produced a rising tide of protest in ensuing elections: in the Reichstag elections for 1903, the Social Democrats received some 3,000,000 votes and elected 81 deputies. By 1912, the figures had risen to 4,250,000 votes and 110 deputies. The free trade unions, with over a million members in 1904, had 2,500,000 in 1913.

But party groupings, legal measures, and statistics do not suffice to convey the mental climate of a people. Under the semi-absolutist regime of Wilhelm II, the bourgeoisie was monarchist to the core and outdid itself in fawning loyalty to the Kaiser. Classical German philosophy degenerated into Nietzsche’s “Superman” philosophy. In general, art, literature, and science mirrored the spirit of reactionary Prussianism.

One sociological phenomenon was especially characteristic: the role of the officers’ corps in thoroughly imbuing the bourgeoisie with the outlook of reactionary Prussianism. In the words of a close student of German militarism, Karl Demeter: “In Prussia, the officers’ corps together with the nobility formed the first estate—in practice, even after the corporative nature of the State with its privileges for nobility was abolished and the officers’ corps included more and more sons of the bourgeoisie. Accordingly, its feeling of social separation from the rest of the population was even more profoundly marked.... The more bourgeois elements flocked into the officers’ corps, the more the latter nourished and emphasized the ideology and behavior patterns of the nobility, especially of the landowning gentry.” In time, this ideology of the officers’ corps spread to the professional elements who bowed and scraped before the plumed military caste.

Two organizations became transmission belts for outspokenly imperialist ideas: the German Colonial Society founded in 1882 and the German Navy League founded in 1898, the first agitating for colonial expansion and the second for a massive naval building program. Both were branch enterprises of the Pan-German Society (*Alldeutscher Verband*) founded in 1891, the real brain trust of German imperialism, backed by the leading industrialists and Jun-

kers. Politically, the Pan-German Society worked through the Conservative and National Liberal parties, and its doctrines later found a ready listener in Adolf Hitler.

The workers and their organizations were not immune to this spirit of German philistinism and imperialism. To explain how this came about, we must go back a few years. After the Socialist Law was eliminated, the Social Democratic Party was reorganized in 1890 on a centralist-democratic basis at the Halle Congress; and one year later, in 1891, at the Erfurt Congress it adopted a Marxist program, the author of which was Karl Kautsky.

The later development of the Social Democratic Party coincides with the rise of German Imperialism. Apart from periodically recurring economic crises, the workers' standards of living had at first risen, thanks to the untiring efforts of the trade unions and Social Democratic Party. But in the first years of the twentieth century, these standards were perceptibly lowered as a result of the reactionary tariff and armaments policy of the regime. The Social Democrats also fought indefatigably against Prussian militarism, mistreatment of soldiers, the reactionary judiciary, and for the elimination of the vestiges of feudal-absolutism. Prussia still had an electoral system based on the three-class system of the counter-revolutionary years after 1848. Both Prussia and Saxony defended tooth and nail these privileges of semi-absolutism, with police attacks and jailings against the workers. It was not until the accession of Kaiser Wilhelm that the three-class system of voting was liquidated.

The unremitting struggle of the Social Democrats for basic democratic rights in Kaiser Wilhelm's Germany brought many bourgeois and petty bourgeois elements, especially intellectuals, into their camp. This tendency was accentuated when the rapid growth of the party offered careers to many journalists, writers, and parliamentarians. Moreover, within the party, above all in the trade unions, there developed an upper stratum of well paid officials and employees who grew more and more bourgeois in their outlook. Thus, in the course of time the party developed a right wing which advocated a revision of the Marxist party program aiming to adapt itself to Imperial Germany. The revisionists, led by such theoreticians as Eduard Bernstein, Albert Suedekum, and Eduard David, leaned especially on skilled and well paid workers, such as the printers.

The first acute crisis within the Social Democratic Party came

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at the Dresden Party Congress in 1903. The Revisionists concentrated their fire on Franz Mehring, the outstanding Marxist historian. August Bebel, leader of the party, inflicted a defeat on the Revisionists and some of them were expelled. But the revisionist disease remained in the body of Social Democracy. No sharp lines of cleavage were drawn, as was the case in the same year at the London Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Party, at which Lenin and the Bolsheviks broke cleanly with the Mensheviks. In the German party, the leading exponents of Marxism were Bebel, Paul Singer, Franz Mehring, Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Kautsky, and Clara Zetkin.

After the Russian Revolution of 1905, the controversy grew more acute. The question of the mass strike as a political weapon of the working class led to a vigorous clash. The revisionist trade union leaders were adamantly opposed to the mass strike. It is significant that at annual congresses of the Social Democratic Party, the Marxist wing always won out, while in practical day-to-day activity the reformists increasingly gained the upper hand. At the Essen Congress (1907), Gustav Noske, later an executioner of the German Revolution, openly declared his support of Imperial Germany in the event of war. This was immediately after the Morocco crisis in North Africa and after the Stuttgart Congress of the Second International (1907), which had adopted a resolution against the war danger, with an amendment by Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg that in the event of war the parties of the Second International pledged themselves to do everything in their power to bring the conflict to a rapid end and to work with all their might in every country to overthrow the forces responsible for the war.

In the discussions within the Social Democratic Party after 1907, three groups were prominent: the openly revisionist wing, the radical Left, and a third Centrist group, which led to a further weakening of the workers' fighting strength.

As the war danger mounted, the mass anti-war movement led by the Social Democrats intensified. But external appearances were deceiving: despite all the anti-imperialist pledges which the German masses took seriously, the seemingly powerful structure of German Social Democracy collapsed like a house of cards on August 4, 1914, when the leaders of the party voted in the Reichstag war credits for German imperialism.

VI

THE FIRST WORLD WAR

The struggle for a new division of the world defined the imperialist policies of the Great Powers in both belligerent camps, but the main guilt for the actual outbreak of hostilities in August, 1914, lies with the governments of Germany and Austria-Hungary.

German imperialism sought to make up for the time lost during the long period of the Reich's political disunity. Seeing the richest raw material-producing areas in the hands of their competitors, the German imperialists, banking on their powerful industrial potential, gave free rein to their greed. The heads of the large German banks and armament industries and the big exporters and importers strove to extend the boundaries of the country, to smash the existing relation of forces. They pressed for war. The murder of the heir to the Austrian throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, by a young Serbian student on June 28, 1914, was the long-awaited pretext on which they seized to test their weapons.

On July 10, the Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Count Berchtold, informed the German Ambassador Tschirschky that he was racking his brains to find some demands that Serbia would consider utterly unacceptable. Finally, he succeeded: the demands presented were tantamount to destroying Serbia's independence as a nation. When the Serbian government bowed to all the demands save those that would have transformed the country into a puppet state of Austria, even the German Kaiser had to admit that the Serbian note in reply was mild and "with it every reason for war drops away." Yet that did not prevent him from supporting Austria's mobilization and from suggesting to the Court at Vienna a partial occupation of Serbia.

On July 23, the Austrians handed the Serbs a forty-eight-hour ultimatum. On July 25, Serbia answered in conciliatory fashion. On July 26, Britain's Foreign Minister, Sir Edward Grey, proposed a four-power mediation by England, Germany, France, and Italy. A day later, Berlin forwarded the proposal to Vienna, but advised the Austrian government not to accept it. On July 28, Austria declared war on Serbia.

Now the avalanche broke loose. Tsarist Russia began to mobilize. Germany replied with a declaration of war against Russia on August 1. Simultaneously, Berlin sent an ultimatum to France, de-

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manding that the latter declare within forty-eight hours her neutrality in a German-Russian war. That the German government wanted war with France and not French neutrality is clear from the instructions of the German ambassador in Paris. In the event France accepted the German ultimatum, he was instructed to demand the surrender of the fortress cities of Verdun and Toul as guarantees of French neutrality! It was a deliberately unacceptable demand: for the plan of the German General Staff envisaged the swift defeat of France by means of a series of lightning blows of annihilation, after which Germany would throw all her weight against Russia, which in the meantime would be kept in check by ten German divisions. On the evening of August 1, the French government answered with general mobilization but at the same time, it withdrew all troops to a line ten kilometers (about six miles) behind the French frontiers, in order to avoid any border incidents. On August 3, Germany declared war on France and demanded of Belgium the right of passage for German troops. England's note, insisting that Germany respect Belgium's neutrality, was answered on August 4 by the invasion of that little country. Thereupon, Germany and England entered into a state of war.

What were the war aims of imperial Germany? All sections and parties of the governing classes were united in respect: Germany had to enlarge her territory. But the various groups were not all in accord on the extent of this aggrandizement or which specific regions should be annexed. At the bidding of Krupp, the armament magnate, and his managing director, Alfred Hugenberg, Heinrich Class, the chairman of the Pan-German Union, formulated a set of war aims. Ratified by the heads of the war industries in western Germany and accepted by the six largest industrial and business associations in the country, these aims were made public in May 1915. Among the territories to be annexed were the following: the iron-ore basins in eastern France and the fortified cities of Verdun and Toul; Belgium and northern France, whereby the Germans intended to rob France of her coal mines, gain access to the Atlantic, and clutch England by the throat; Poland; the Baltic provinces of Russia; and the Ukraine. To insure their own cotton supply and to sever England's imperial lifeline, they proposed that Austria annex Egypt. This fantastic program of annexation received the support of the German General Staff, especially of Hindenburg and Ludendorff and the naval head, Admiral von Tirpitz.

This same Heinrich Class, who by his own admission was subsidized by the armament magnates of the Ruhr and Rhineland, was also the author of a memorandum written in July 1915, and addressed to over twelve hundred of the best-known German scientists, artists, and writers. In this document, endorsed by these intellectuals, Class declared that “the culture of Germany and of Europe must be defended against the barbarian flood from the East and the spirit of revenge and domination in the West.”

Another wing of the German ruling class, more sober-minded, realized that Germany could not simultaneously defeat Russia, France, and England. They therefore felt that the war should be waged at Russia’s expense and vast areas of Russia annexed, while attempting to reach some kind of an understanding with Britain. These “liberal” banking and commercial circles fostered an anti-tsarist ideology: their spokesmen prattled about a “Middle Europe” extending under German rule from Hamburg to Bagdad, its Near-Eastern sector securely flanked by a “German Ukraine.”

So long as German imperialism believed it would triumph, the C Kaiser’s government refused to commit itself to any concrete program of annexation. But in the Crown Council binding agreements existed with respect to the incorporation or vassalization of Belgium, parts of France, Poland, the Baltic states, and other territories.

During those opening days of August, 1914, the whole world watched German Social-Democracy. What would the political representatives of German labor, the strongest party in the Reich, the leading section of the Second (Labor and Socialist) International, do? Had not the German Social-Democrats reaffirmed at the Basle Congress of the Second International (1912) the resolution unanimously passed five years before at the Stuttgart Congress, which not only called for a struggle against the war danger but which pledged the Socialist parties, in the event of the outbreak of an imperialist war, “to utilize the economic and political crisis created by the war to rouse the masses and thereby to hasten the downfall of capitalist class rule”?

The Reichstag fraction of the Social-Democrats dispelled one of the gravest worries of the German imperialists when on August 4, 1914, it voted the war credits and accepted the thesis, formulated by the Kaiser in his Address from the Throne, that Germany was “forced to fight in self defense.” The right-wing of German Social-

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Democracy had long spread the idea that an enlargement of Germany's colonial empire and an expansion of outlets for German capital would also benefit the workers and therefore deserved the support of German labor. (At the beginning of 1913, the official spokesman of Social-Democracy, Dr. David, asserted in the Reichstag: "We must demand an open door for ourselves in the Balkans... and the Berlin-to-Bagdad railway is a justifiable interest which must not be destroyed.") On September 28, 1914, Otto Braun, the future Socialist Prime Minister of Prussia, justified his party's policy on the war by pointing out that the 11,000 employees of Social-Democratic organizations and the 20,000,000 marks invested in Social-Democratic newspapers would have been endangered if the party had denounced the war.

The German Social-Democrats were decisively swung over to the support of their own imperialists by the behavior of the Socialist-led free trade unions. The leadership of this powerful movement had before the war drifted further and further away from the great political and economic ideals of the working class. Now that war had broken out, the trade unions helped militarize the entire German working class.

What occurred in August, 1914, was no sudden shift on the part of the leaders of German Social-Democracy and the trade union movement. All the practical and ideological concessions made piecemeal in years gone by to monarchical imperialism now had a cumulative effect: they were qualitatively transformed into open betrayal of the labor movement. Austrian Social-Democrats, following in the footsteps of their German colleagues, enthusiastically greeted the Hapsburg policy of annexations.

August 4, 1914, opened a new chapter in the history of the German labor movement. The majority of trade union and Social-Democratic leaders remained standard bearers of German imperialism in the ranks of the workers. Whoever opposed them was dismissed from the editorial boards of their papers, expelled from membership in their party. Thus the leaders of Social-Democracy, fighting shoulder to shoulder with the Junkers and big capitalists, provoked the tragic split in the German working class.

Alone of the 110 Social-Democratic deputies in the Reichstag, Karl Liebknecht in December, 1914, voted against the imperialist

war.* The son of Wilhelm Liebknecht had even before the war gained renown for his blistering attacks on German militarism and his exposes of the criminal machinations of Krupp, the armaments king. Now he rose in the Reichstag and openly assailed the grant of war credits. He tore to shreds the lie that Germany was engaged in a progressive war against tsarism, spread by the Social-Democratic leaders to exploit the traditional hatred of the German workers against tsarist tyranny. Liebknecht refused to be silenced. The presiding officer would not recognize him; the Rightist deputies and his own party colleagues howled him down; and finally, in January, 1916, the party expelled him from the Social-Democratic Reichstag fraction. But Liebknecht was undaunted.

He carried the fight from Parliament to the local branches of the Social-Democratic Party. Together with other outstanding left-wing leaders, especially Rosa Luxemburg, Clara Zetkin, Franz Mehring, Leo Jogisches, Wilhelm Pieck, and Eugen Levine, he joined the group known as the "International" around a newspaper of the same name. Later they were called the Spartacists, from the "Spartacus letters" which they published after January, 1916. They furnished leadership for the most progressive and resolute German workers. The activity of this group marked the rebirth of the Socialist movement in Germany.

On May First, 1916, the Spartacus League and the Socialist Youth Organization of Berlin organized an illegal May Day demonstration at which thousands shouted the slogan: "War against war!" Liebknecht who spoke at this meeting was arrested and sentenced to four years' imprisonment, an act that led to the first political mass strike in Germany during World War I. Rosa Luxemburg, too, was thrown into jail, where she wrote the "Junius" pamphlet, one of the most illuminating documents of the internal opposition to German imperialism. Clara Zetkin and Franz Mehring were also placed behind bars.

Within the Social-Democratic organization, the workers' opposition crystallized in many localities. Stirring leaflets and resolutions assailed the right-wing leaders, Friedrich Ebert, Phillip Scheidemann, and Friedrich Stampfer, who were turning the party

* Earlier, on August 4, 1914 Karl Liebknecht voted for war credits adhering to the unit rule of the Social-Democratic deputies. Soon afterward he realized his mistake.

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into a virtual appendage of the German General Staff. When it became obvious that the party executive, with the help of the Kaiser's military authorities, meant to stamp out ruthlessly any dissent in its ranks, the opposition held a national conference in April, 1917, and founded the Independent Socialist Party, under the leadership of two deputies, Hugo Haase and Paul Ledebour. A significant minority of Social-Democrats, among them twenty Reichstag deputies, joined the new party which received widespread support in the trade union movement and among the shop stewards in the factories. But while the new party opposed the prosecution of the war, many of its leaders did little more than pass pacifist resolutions. Action against the Kaiser's regime was left to others. The Spartacus League, while retaining its organizational autonomy, joined with the Independent Socialists. Spartacist representatives and other leaders of the left-wing Social-Democrats had already made contact with opposition Socialists from almost every other country of Europe at conferences, held in 1915 and 1916, in the Swiss towns of Zimmerwald and Kienthal.

The German General Staff had counted on a *blitzkrieg*, and official propaganda intimated to the soldiers that they would return home in triumph by the Christmas of 1914. The Battle of the Marne in the autumn of 1914, however, upset this calculation. The Western Front was stabilized. Italy, originally allied with Germany and Austria-Hungary, entered the war in 1915 on the side of the Allies. Although on the Eastern Front, the Central Powers, joined by Bulgaria and Turkey, were winning resounding victories, the losses were staggering and the tightening Allied blockade reduced the imports of vital foodstuffs to below-subsistence levels. Having sacrificed entire German armies in 1916 in a vain attempt to storm Verdun, the German High Command now staked its all on unrestricted U-boat warfare.

Germans were well aware that this would lead to war with the United States, but the Pan-German propagandists laughed at the possibility of American intervention having any real effect in the European theater of war. Even in January 1918, after hundreds of thousands of American troops had landed in France, Admiral von Tirpitz declared scornfully: "American aid is and remains a phantom." This phantom helped in forcing a military decision on the Western front before the year was out.

The Russian Revolution of March, 1917, which overthrew the

Tsar, had repercussions in Germany and provoked much agitation both inside and outside of Parliament. April, 1917, saw the first great mass struggle of the German workers during the war. Earlier in the year, demonstrations protesting against food shortages and calling for peace had taken place. Now in Berlin alone, 300,000 workers walked out of their war plants. The Spartacus League led these strikers in their demands for the liberation of political prisoners, an end to the state of siege, establishment of freedom of assembly and of the press, and the election of factory councils to lead the fight for peace and freedom. The generals answered these demands by sending many of the strikers into front-line trenches and by enlisting the services of the Social-Democratic and trade union leaders to break the strike.

The government and several Reichstag parties decided to pour oil on the swiftly rising waters of popular protest. Internally, the Kaiser's regime talked of electoral reforms, promising to introduce universal suffrage and the secret ballot in Prussia. The joy with which the Social-Democratic leaders greeted this show of generosity by the Kaiser was calculated to drown out the thunder of cannon on the battlefronts and prove to the workers that after all the war was worthwhile. But until the outbreak of the German Revolution in 1918, electoral reforms remained on paper.

The leader of the Center Party, Mathias Erzberger, returned in 1917 from Austria where he had found the internal situation even more critical than in Germany. In July, he persuaded his own party, together with the Progressive Party (Democrats), and the Social-Democrats, to frame a joint resolution calling for a negotiated peace and declaring against economic and political violations of justice. This so-called peace resolution provided an urgently needed alibi, especially for the Social-Democrats, whose followers, increasingly restive, were beginning to move to the left. But that it was a false alibi became evident when Scheidemann asserted in the Reichstag that on the basis of this peace resolution Germany could annex the province of Kurland (Latvia).

By the late summer of 1917, it was clear that the general discontent had made deep inroads into the armed forces of the nation. Sailors revolted on a number of warships. The Spartacus League formed secret groups, the delegates of which prepared a mass strike of the fleet with the object of forcing an immediate peace. The government managed to uncover this conspiracy in August, 1917—two

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of its leaders were court-martialed and shot, the rest thrown into prison.

But revolutionary sentiment was soon to receive a new and more powerful stimulus. In the early days of November, 1917, the Russian people under the leadership of the Bolsheviki overthrew the Kerensky regime which proposed to continue the war. The Soviet Government called upon the warring nations to terminate the war on the basis of a peace without annexations and indemnities. Men like Hindenburg and Ludendorff eagerly welcomed peace on the Eastern Front, since Germany's military position on the Western Front was growing more and more precarious. On the other hand, they feared like the plague the effect of the Bolsheviki's peace propaganda on the peoples of Germany and Austria-Hungary.

On December 15, 1917, an armistice was drawn up between Russia and the Central Powers. A week later, peace negotiations were started at Brest-Litovsk, in the course of which the German and Austrian representatives demanded the cession of the Baltic provinces and the Ukraine, Armenia, and the Transcaucasian territories. Confronted with this staggering program of greed and loot, the Bolsheviki went over the heads of the imperialists with whom they were negotiating and appealed directly to the workers of the Central Powers.

Repercussions were almost immediate: in Vienna, a general strike, hastened by the desperate hunger of the people, broke out on January 14, 1918 and spread throughout the entire country. Thanks to vague promises by the Austrian government and to the intervention of the Social-Democratic leaders of Vienna, the strike was broken within a week. During the closing days of January, the struggle burst out into the open in Berlin, where 500,000 workers joined in a strike movement that paralyzed war production. Another half million in other cities of the Reich joined the Berlin strikers. For the first time in Germany's history, the workers elected councils in many plants. But to illustrate the lack of clarity prevailing in broad sections of the labor movement, leaders of the Social-Democratic Party constituted half of the members of the executive committee that led the strike. The Social-Democratic leader Ebert admitted five years later in 1924 before a court of justice: "I entered the strike committee with the express purpose of bringing the strike to its earliest possible conclusion." Another of his Social-Democratic colleagues echoed his refrain: "We went into the leadership of the

strike movement in order to behead it.” The strike was finally defeated.

On March 3, 1918, the peace of Brest-Litovsk was signed. By its harsh terms, the young Soviet Republic, lacking arms and armies, had to yield the Ukraine, Poland, the Baltic provinces, Armenia, and the Transcaucasian provinces to the German imperialists. In the Reichstag, the Center Party and the Progressive Party voted in favor of this monstrous peace; the Social-Democrats abstained. These were the same parties which, eight months previously, had introduced the joint resolution for a “peace without annexations and indemnities.” The attitude of the Social-Democrats in the face of this seizure of Russian land and the campaign which they now launched against the Bolsheviks foreshadowed the anti-Soviet policy which they carried out when they were the dominant party in the German government.

The Hohenzollerns and Hapsburgs, their generals and politicians, did not long rejoice over their *Diktat* against Russia, soon followed by a similar *Diktat* against Rumania, the Treaty of Bucharest. On March 21, 1918, Ludendorff opened a large-scale offensive in northern France, but after some partial successes the offensive stalled. On July 18, Marshal Foch launched his big counterblow. Finally on August 8, when the Allies staged a breakthrough, the German General Staff realized that the game was up. The Allies landed at Salonika and rolled up the Balkan front. On September 30, Bulgaria sued for an armistice. On October 1, Ludendorff demanded an armistice within 24 hours. On October 3, the German government requested President Wilson to effect an armistice. A long exchange of notes ensued, accompanied by the swift advance of the Allied armies. On October 30, Turkey surrendered; and that same day, Austria-Hungary, whose armies were in chaotic flight and whose peoples were in open rebellion, asked for an armistice.

German militarism, critically wounded, lay in agony. The lightning flash of the German Revolution appeared on the horizon.

VII

DEFEAT AND REVOLUTION

Two events outside Germany had given a powerful impetus to revolutionary tendencies. The first was the October Revolution in Russia. Large numbers of German troops on the Eastern Front had fraternized with Russian soldiers. Tens of thousands of them, transferred to the Western Front after the signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, brought back the facts about the Russian Revolution.

Secondly, President Woodrow Wilson's Message of January 8, 1918, made a deep impression on the German people. Wilson's fourteen points corresponded with the sentiments of the broad masses in Germany who were pressing for peace and a democratic regime. Long before this, German left-wing revolutionaries had urged a peace without annexations or indemnities and the right of self-determination for all peoples. Placing no faith in the statesmen who exploited Wilson's fourteen points as a weapon in their anti-democratic maneuvers, they appealed directly to the people. Moreover, Wilson's hostile attitude toward the Russian Revolution deepened the distrust of the German left against the representative of American imperialism.

On October 23, President Wilson informed the Germans that the Allies refused to deal with the monarchy—the Kaiser would have to abdicate. But could the Crown be saved? The next few days were marked by intense efforts to save the tottering throne. One can understand the exertions of Prince Max, a relative of the Hohenzollerns. But what about the Social-Democratic leaders who acted in the same way? On November 6, at one o'clock in the afternoon—North and South Germany were already in the throes of a popular uprising—Ludendorff's successor, General Wilhelm Groener, held a conference in the Chancellor's office with six leaders of the Social-Democrats and free trade unions. At this meeting Ebert made the following proposal: "Kaiser Wilhelm abdicate if we are to prevent the masses from staging a revolution. I therefore propose that today, or at the very latest tomorrow, the Kaiser abdicate of his own free will and entrust one of his sons, perhaps Eitel Fritz or Oskar, with the Regency." Side by side with these secret negotiations to bolster the Hohenzollern regime went passionate appeals from the Social-Democratic and trade union leaders to the workers

not to strike or demonstrate, but to await the results of negotiations by Ebert, Scheidemann, and Karl Legien, head of the trade union movement.

But it was too late! The Revolution rode roughshod over all obstacles. At the end of October, the Admiralty ordered the Fleet to engage in one last desperate engagement on the high seas. The sailors mutinied, whereupon many of them were arrested. Others then made contact with the dock workers of Kiel, where the Fleet was stationed. A giant demonstration on November 3 demanded freedom for the arrested sailors, and on November 4, a general strike broke out in Kiel. The sailors took possession of the docks and hoisted red flags on the warships.

In mingled accents of threats and despair, the local Social-Democratic paper, the *Schleswig-Holsteinische Volkszeitung*, appealed to the re- amnesty if they returned immediately to their ships and remained under the Admiralty's orders.

By way of reply, on November 5 and 6, armed revolutionary sailors rose up throughout all North Germany. Theirs was the spark that touched off the explosion. In Hamburg, Bremen, and Hanover, revolution broke out. Delegations of sailors journeyed to Cologne and the other cities of West and South Germany, making contact with workers and soldiers. Everywhere Workers' and Soldiers' Councils formed to take over power. On November 7, a tremendous crowd in Munich proclaimed the demise of the kingdom of Bavaria and the setting up of a republic. Within a few days the crowns of German kings, princes, grand dukes, and dukes rolled into the dust.

After the January, 1918, strike in Berlin, an underground organization of revolutionary shop chairmen had begun to function in the plants. After consulting with Karl Liebknecht who in October, 1918 had been released from prison by an amnesty, the left-wing shop chairmen joined with soldiers' delegates to form an illegal Workers' and Soldiers' Council. Hesitation on the part of the Independent Socialists had prevented an earlier bid for power; but now, on November 8, the executive committee of the Workers' and Soldiers' Council issued a call for a general strike. This strike aimed at overthrowing the military dictatorship and the government.

On the morning of November 9, all factories lay idle. Huge crowds of workers, some of them armed, marched to the barracks where they were joined by the soldiers. They proceeded to the district where the government buildings were located. On all sides,

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they were met by exultant shouts for the republic. The military authorities were helpless; the armed people ruled the streets. The Revolution had triumphed in the capital city of the Reich! When Ebert and his associates realized that they could no longer stem the tide of events, they too proclaimed a general strike at one o'clock in the afternoon—a strike that had broken out several hours before and against their will. They then hurried to the office of Prince Max of Baden. In a scene reminiscent of a sentimental tearjerker in the movies, the Prince resigned as Chancellor in favor of Ebert.

Hearing that Liebknecht, at the head of a mammoth procession, was advancing to proclaim the socialist republic, State Secretary Philip Scheidemann hurried to a window in the Chancellery and shouted: “Long live the German Republic!” Ebert, livid with rage, immediately summoned Scheidemann and roared at him as he banged his fist on the table: “Is that true? You shouted for the republic? You had no right to do so!”¹ But no outburst of rage by the Social-Democrat Ebert could bring back the monarchy. The Kaiser and Crown Prince, like most of the other German princes, had already fled abroad. Two days before World War I came to an end, on November 11, the German republic was born.

The German republic would either triumph over the reactionary elements—or become their victim. It would either undermine the economic basis of the reactionaries—or lose all power itself. It would either resolutely sweep away the supporters of Pan-Germanism, the big industrialists, the bankers, and the Junker landlords—or be swept away by them. It would either destroy Prussian militarism—or eventually be itself destroyed. Only in the struggle against the reactionaries could the republic exist, develop, and triumph.

History afforded a unique opportunity to uproot the old regime with a minimum of sacrifices in those first weeks and months after the Revolution. The people—workers, peasants, and urban middle classes—stood on the side of the Revolution. The lower middle class, moving away from the camp of the imperialists, looked to the working class for leadership. The Kaiser’s generals had forfeited their authority. The Junkers went into hiding. The reactionaries and their political parties were at first demoralized and panicky. Had there been at that time in Germany a large and mature revolutionary party, the fate of Germany, Europe, and the world would have been far different.

Certainly, the Spartacists were active—but they were only relatively small groups which had been formed during the war under illegal conditions. They possessed no long traditions; they had no deep roots among the workers. Not until January 1, 1919, had they organized into the Communist Party of Germany and demanded the disarming of the imperial officers; the formation of an armed workers' militia, the replacement of the political apparatus of the previous regime by Workers' and Soldiers' Councils; the formation of a revolutionary court to try the Hohenzollerns, Hindenburgs, Ludendorffs, Tirpitzes, and the other German war criminals; the expropriation of the Junkers, bankers, and big industrialists. At the same time, the Communists emphasized that they did not intend to overthrow the Social-Democratic government by means of a *putsch* but, as Rosa Luxemburg wrote in the program of the Spartacus League, they sought power “only through the clear and unequivocal will of the great majority of the proletarian masses.”

When the counter-revolution of Ebert, Scheidemann, and the generals struck, the Communist Party was the soul of the resistance movement. It paid heavily in human blood for its heroic struggle against the counter-revolution. But the initial Communist Party congress showed a lack of clarity on fundamental questions of political tactics. And the reactionaries intended to smash the party to bits before it grew out of its swaddling clothes and could assume leadership of the German working class.

The Independent Socialist Party was also on the scene, but it contained many divergent opinions as to how to defeat the reactionaries. Hence the party lacked driving force. And the Social-Democratic Party leaders were now repeating on a national scale what they had done ten months previously in Berlin when they placed themselves at the head of the strike in order to strangle it. Now they placed themselves at the head of the Revolution in order to kill it. The new regime was ostensibly built on the principle of parity: three Social-Democrats side by side with three Independent Socialists. But the former—Ebert, Scheidemann, and Landsberg—conspired so flagrantly with the counter-revolutionaries behind the backs of their colleagues in the government that the three Independent Socialists finally announced their resignation.

Ebert and Scheidemann had changed colors with amazing dexterity. On November 8, they were for the monarchy and war credits; on November 9, they were republicans and pacifists. On November

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10, twenty-four hours after the triumph of the Revolution, Ebert, the head of the revolutionary government, made a secret alliance with the German General Staff, led by Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg and General Groener, with a view to crushing the Revolution. This action by German Social-Democracy allowed the General Staff quickly to regain its equilibrium and consolidate its position at the head of the German counterrevolution.

In 1924, some conservative journalists accused President Ebert of sharing responsibility for the Revolution. Ebert brought a libel suit against them. At the ensuing trial, both he and General Groener revealed to the court that on the evening of November 10, 1918, he had carried on a conversation with von Hindenburg that had ended in an alliance between the two men. In the words of General Groener:

“We made an alliance in the struggle against Bolshevism.... Every evening between eleven and one, we spoke on the phone from General Staff headquarters to the Chancellery by means of a secret wire. Our first task was to drive the Berlin Workers’ and Soldiers’ Council from power. Ten divisions were to march on Berlin. Ebert assented and agreed that the troops be heavily armed. We worked out a program which included a mop-up of Berlin after the troops had marched in. We also discussed that with Ebert, to whom I am particularly grateful.”²

With this secret pact, the corruption of the republic began. When apologists for the Weimar Republic maintain that Communist-inspired disorders caused civil war in Germany, they resort to a gross falsification of history. It is the same type of distortion to which Hitler later had constant recourse when he used “the threat of Bolshevik revolution” as the pretext for his aggressions within Germany and outside the Reich. In reality, the Ebert- Hindenburg alliance represented a conspiracy against the democratic Revolution and aimed at: retaining the Imperial officers’ corps as the backbone of the new army; maintaining the bureaucratic state apparatus; and rescuing the landed estates of the Junkers and the factories of the Pan-German industrialists. This conspiracy was the cause and the starting point of the bitter struggles that convulsed Germany in the following months.

On November 12, the new government allowed the Soldiers’ Councils only a consultative voice without voting power and stressed the need for soldiers to obey their superior officers. Three

days later an event occurred which went beyond even the boldest imaginings of the armament kings: on November 15, they signed a “central labor-management agreement” with the trade union leaders Legien and Leipart. The object of this accord was to put a stop to “revolutionary excesses”; and to that end, Hugo Stinnes, who signed for the employers, recognized the trade unions as partners to the contract. To grasp what that meant, one must remember that at the time the German people, including many middle class citizens, felt deep-seated hatred and contempt for men like Krupp, Thyssen, and Stinnes, whom they considered profiteers and guilty of the war. The cry to socialize industry and to break the power of the trusts and cartels rang out in every socialist and democratic party and group. But scarcely a week had gone by since the outbreak of the Revolution—and the candidates for the criminal’s bench in a people’s court had now become respectable partners to a labor agreement.

Meanwhile, military preparations to defeat the Workers’ and Soldiers’ Councils went forward. When the generals saw that most of the veteran troops would not participate in the bloody business of civil war, the government formed so-called Free Corps (*Freikorps*). Led by ultra-reactionary officers, these corps accepted as volunteers professional army men who feared unemployment, degenerate sons of Junker families, lumpen-proletarians, and Rightist students of the upper classes. This mixture of declassed and class-conscious elements of the Right became the Praetorian Guard of the Ebert government, from whom it received arms, money, food, and the command to maintain “law and order.”

The first provocation failed. An attempt to dislodge the People’s Marine Division from the Kaiser’s palace ended on Christmas eve in a defeat for the attacking troops. The Cabinet ministers debated heatedly with high army officers in Ebert’s study. Gustav Noske, who had in the meantime entered the government, demanded a clear-cut decision. Someone shouted to him: “Then you do the job yourself!” Noske replied in words which he himself recorded in his memoirs, words which may serve as a motto for the early history of the Weimar Republic: “All right, as far as I’m concerned, someone has to be the bloodhound!” So this newly hatched Social-Democratic Defense Minister proceeded forthwith to organize civil war.

On January 4, 1919, the government dismissed the Police Chief of Berlin, Emil Eichhorn, an Independent Socialist. This provoca-

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tive act gave rise to the bloody January struggles. The heavily armed elite of the Junker officers were sent out against the workers, who refused to yield the positions gained by their Revolution. After a week of fighting, the people of Berlin were beaten. The capital of the Reich was in the hands of the monarchist General von Luettwitz. Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, leaders of the left wing of the German workers' movement, were arrested on January 15 and several hours later assassinated. Among those who helped create the pogrom-like atmosphere which preceded their death was Friedrich Stampfer,* editor-in-chief of the Berlin *Vorwaerts*, central organ of the Social-Democratic Party.

In December, 1918, the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils of Germany had convened their first congress. At that moment, they represented formally all political power in the country. But owing to the naïveté and political inexperience of the people, a good many counter-revolutionaries had managed to get elected. About 30 per cent of the delegates consisted of Social-Democratic deputies, editors, and party officials. We will soon see why this party was able to exert such an influence on the course of events. The congress, with a minority dissenting, fixed January 19, 1919, as the terminal date for holding a National Constituent Assembly. The Social-Democratic leaders urged this National Assembly, by which they hoped to strip the councils of all power and thus deal them their death sentence. The councils did not see through this cunning maneuver. Perhaps they were fooled by the fact that the congress, despite its mixed political complexion, unanimously went on record for immediate socialization of the mines and demanded that "military authority in the barracks be exercised by Workers' and Soldiers' Councils." A few weeks later, the Ebert Government tore up these decisions. With the government decree of January 19 establishing military authority along the lines Hindenburg desired, a process began which culminated before the year was out in the dissolution of the Soldiers' Councils.

Supervised by monarchist generals, the elections to a National Assembly took place. At their first party congress, the Communists made a serious mistake when, against the will of most of their out-

* In exile after 1933, Stampfer became the spokesman of that group of reactionary German Social-Democrats who have continued their fight against the Soviet Union and against the German Left.

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standing leaders, they decided against participation in the elections, thus leaving the field wide open for the Social-Democrats. The results were:

<i>Party</i>	<i>Votes</i>
Social-Democratic Party	11,509,000
Independent Socialists	2,317,000
German Nationalists	2,618,000
German People's Party	1,345,000
Center (Catholic) Party	5,709,000
Democratic Party	5,500,000

One may ask: How was it possible, after all that had happened since 1914, for such discredited and compromised leaders as Ebert and Scheidemann to win almost 40 per cent of all the votes? For one thing, though they had been deeply involved in the sins of the Kaiser's regime, they raised their voice noisily after November 9 and condemned the overthrown imperialist regime and its policies. Furthermore, the Revolution had overthrown the monarchy, introduced universal suffrage and the secret ballot, established freedom of assembly and association, recognized the trade unions, eliminated the "company unions" of the employers, and introduced the eight-hour workday. These were indeed significant achievements, won as a result of the popular uprising of November 9. And were not Ebert and Scheidemann at the head of the new government? Was it surprising therefore that many people believed them when they took credit for these revolutionary victories and identified themselves with the social gains for which in reality they had not lifted a finger? Now, when the new rulers even swore to introduce socialism, many Social-Democratic workers were ready to forgive them and consider their wartime sins as temporary aberrations.

It is a striking feature of the first parliamentary election after the Revolution that the majority of the urban and rural middle classes voted Left—for the Social-Democrats and the Democrats—the Democrats represented the most progressive section of the middle class groups). These two parties received 17,000,000 out of a total of 30,000,000 votes cast.* The small peasants and farm laborers also

* In the Reichstag elections of March 5, 1933, Hitler received 17,700,000 votes out of a total of 39,300,000. In the course of thirteen years, the policies of the Weimar Republic succeeded in driving the

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voted for them in the hope that the republic would free them of traditional Junker rule and divide up the land among them. The city middle strata, never acting independently and disappointed in the "strong men" of the Kaiser's era, supported the new men of the hour and were ready to accept any progressive measures they adopted. These groups, who later eagerly swallowed the most vicious kinds of anti-Semitic propaganda, were not in 1919 swayed by this weapon of the reactionaries. On this point, we have no better evidence than that of Hitler himself:

"In the year 1918 there was absolutely no systematic anti-Semitism. I still recall the difficulties which one ran into the minute one used the word Jew. One met either a dumb stare or experienced the most violent opposition. Our first endeavors to show the real enemy to the public then seemed almost hopeless and only very slowly did things begin to turn for the better."³

What a fund of confidence was placed at the disposal of the new men in power! And how ignobly it was frittered away! The Eberts and Scheidemanns, the Noskes and Stampfers solemnly promised to introduce socialization, but did everything they could to prevent its achievement.

Moreover, they failed to clean out the reactionaries from the key positions in the republic. Of the 2,500,000 federal and local officials employed under the Kaiser, only 300,000 were removed. Yet even these 300,000 reactionaries received generous pensions from the government and were able to constitute a kind of "shadow staff" of civil servants in the reactionary movement.

The new rulers of the young republic allowed the discredited Pan-German imperialists to crawl out of their holes, form legal political parties and, thanks to wealthy backers, monopolize the press. They made an alliance with the munitions-makers at a moment when the German people were ready to take the sharpest action against them.

The bourgeois-democratic revolutions in England and France had led inexorably to the overthrow of the forces of feudalism, with the ruling princes expropriated and beheaded. Germany's democratic revolution not only did not behead the princes 5 it allowed them to retain their fortunes which they diligently used to further their

broad masses of the urban petty bourgeoisie and the peasantry into the arms of reaction. (See Chapter XII.)

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conspiracy against the republic and set up their rule over the dead bodies of thousands of murdered German revolutionaries.

In the first months they were in office, the leaders of the Weimar Republic restored the reactionaries who had been overthrown with the monarchy on November 9. This road led backwards, not forwards. And a decade later, it led the same middle-class groups who had in 1919 trusted the Social-Democrats and the Democrats into the Nazi camp. For the republic offered them nothing: neither material existence, political ideals, nor a strong democracy.

VIII

COUNTER-REVOLUTION

During the first half of 1919, the same process repeated itself with sickening monotony all over Germany: under the pretext of maintaining "law and order," Defense Minister Noske sent military detachments to break up the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils. These troops struck at the workers of Rhineland-Westphalia, Central Germany, Bavaria, Berlin, and Bremen with a savagery like that which, fifteen years later, characterized the S.A. and S.S. formations of Adolf Hitler.

While the January conflict was still raging in Berlin, a general conference of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils in Rhineland-Westphalia decreed the socialization of the Ruhr mining industry. Social-Democrats, Independent Socialists, and Communists unanimously adopted the resolution, and a commission was elected to carry out this socialization at once. The Berlin government fumed at the spectacle of workers' representatives taking possession of the coal syndicate in Essen. As soon as Noske regained freedom of maneuver in Berlin, he initiated military counteraction. The situation was complicated by political factors, since members of the Social-Democratic Party in power in Berlin had voted for socialization in Western Germany.

On February 11, General von Watter, acting under government orders, dissolved the General Soldiers' Council in Rhineland-Westphalia. The Free Corps were let loose. In reply, a general strike was called. Coincident with the advance of the troops, the Social-Democratic leaders intensified their work of political disruption. Formulating the slogan: "Socialization is already law," they misled their own followers into abandoning the strike movement.

On March 31, when the miners saw that they had been duped, they called another general strike. The government decreed a state of siege, and in many localities ordered its troops to shoot down workers. At the same time, the Social-Democratic government commissar Girt Severing introduced forced labor for all individuals between seventeen and fifty. But the terror raged for weeks before the 300,000 strikers resumed work again at the end of April.

Meanwhile, the government was facing new worries in Berlin as well as in sections of Central Germany. The dispatch of counterrevolutionary troops to Central Germany provoked a general

strike in that region, which broke out on February 24. Under the slogan of "democratize the factories," the workers quit the mines, foundries, railroads, and the Leuna Works of the later I. G. Farben Trust. The government, temporarily meeting with the National Assembly at Weimar, found itself cut off from Berlin by the strike. So after protracted negotiations, it declared its readiness to recognize the Workers' Councils and to legalize them in the new Constitution. It went so far as to assert:

"The government of the Reich has accepted socialization laws, specifically the law for the socialization of the coal industry. Further measures of socialization will be taken immediately, after consultation with the Workers' Councils."

Thereupon, the workers called off the general strike at the beginning of March.

The regime had made these concessions without seriously intending to carry them out, because it wanted to have freedom of action in Berlin where matters were approaching a new crisis. Since it was not strong enough to overpower the revolutionary movement in all parts of Germany at once, its plan was to put down the workers by stages.

Infuriated by the terror that had raged in Berlin since the January battles, the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils in the capital called a general strike for March 3. Although many Social-Democratic members of the Councils had voted for the strike, the Prussian Provincial Government, containing a majority of Social-Democrats, ordered a state of siege. It banned freedom of the press, assembly, and association; abolished the customary judicial processes and inviolability of domicile; and entrusted all power to the monarchist General von Luettwitz.

All the parties participating in the strike, including the Communists, cautioned the workers against armed conflict. But the Ebert government and its reactionary generals fostered such a conflict in order to destroy the last military detachments fighting on the side of the people. Defense Minister Noske issued an order: "Any person found with arms in his hand fighting against government troops is to be shot at once."

The Free Corps opened their assaults against military detachments suspected of sympathy with the workers. Resistance was met with frightful massacres. Hundreds of innocent people were placed against walls in the working class districts of the city and shot. To

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whip up the frenzy of the reactionaries, the workers were accused of slaughtering a number of policemen they had taken prisoner. What did it matter if a week later it was admitted that the policemen were still alive and in the best of health? It was a “deed of the most degenerate lust for blood, vengeance, and murder,” wrote Stampfer’s *Vorwärts*. In the meantime, the Free Corps ruffians shot and stabbed and clubbed and drowned workers and soldiers and sailors at will. Arrested left-wing leaders, like Leo Jogisches, and Lieutenant Dorrenbach, the commander of the People’s Marine Division, were shot “while trying to escape.” Their murderer, a Sergeant Tamschick, was rewarded by the Social-Democratic government with a promotion to lieutenant! On March 16, Noske peremptorily ordered the arrest of all Communists. By Noske’s own account 1,200 human beings lost their lives. The general strike collapsed.

Historians concerned with whitewashing the Weimar Republic, justify the Eberts and Scheidemanns in their recourse to ultra-reactionary officers on the ground that after four years of war the workers no longer wanted to serve as soldiers. That is not true. Hundreds of thousands of workers were ready to bear arms again, not to serve Ebert’s aims, but to eliminate the reactionaries. In many communities, workers’ defense corps formed spontaneously. And there were reliable democratic detachments, such as the People’s Marine Division. But because they embodied the aspirations of the new democracy, they were persecuted, attacked, and finally dissolved by a government that had a secret alliance with Hindenburg. The Social-Democratic leaders and the militarists had a common goal: to destroy the power of the councils and safeguard the social status quo now menaced by the Revolution.

In Munich on February 21, the Prime Minister of Bavaria, the Independent Socialist Kurt Eisner, was murdered by Count Arco-Valley. This precipitated a period of turmoil in Bavaria, during which the two Socialist parties proclaimed a Soviet Republic. The Communists refused to participate in this movement on the ground that conditions were not yet ripe. But when reactionary troops tried a few days later to stage a *-putsch* in Munich, the Communists threw themselves into the struggle. Although they opposed the proclamation of the Bavarian Soviet Republic under the conditions then existing, the Communists played an outstanding part in defending the Bavarian Soviet Republic against the troops of intervention.

While Eisner was still alive and governing with popular sup-

port, the Berlin government had granted funds to a Colonel von Epp to form a counter-revolutionary Bavarian army. This von Epp had won his laurels in Africa as a colonial taskmaster of the Kaiser's Germany. Now Noske, disregarding the fact that thousands of his own Bavarian party comrades had proclaimed a Soviet Republic, sent von Epp's army of 80,000 against Munich. After three days of street fighting, the city fell to von Epp on May 3, 1919. Those who came into the hands of the counter-revolutionaries were foully murdered.

Ebert and Noske turned Bavaria into the citadel of German reaction, the birthplace and the center of the Nazi movement. Adolf Hitler began his career as a paid spy of the against the Bavarian Soviet Republic. Colonel (later General) von Epp, one-time subordinate of Noske, rose to become head of the Colonial Office of the Nazi Party and, after Hitler's rise to power, Nazi *Statthalter* (governor) of Bavaria.

While German cities were still resounding with the shots of civil war, general strikes spread in one province after another. The government, feeling none too safe in Berlin, where even martial law could not stifle the workers' protests against the military dictatorship, fled with the National Assembly to Weimar. There, at the beginning of February 1919, the National Assembly elected Friedrich Ebert president of the republic and set up a cabinet of Social-Democrats, Democrats, and Catholic Centrists. This coalition was to dominate the political scene in Germany for the next few years.

The Republican Constitution went into effect on August 11, 1919. Its progressive articles were the fruit of the Revolution and the subsequent mass strikes. Freedom of opinion and association, equal and universal suffrage by secret ballot, and other democratic principles found legal expression in the document. At the same time, Article 48 provided for the abrogation of all these freedoms in case of emergency. This Article later became a favorite instrument of the governments of the Weimar Republic. The Constitution also sanctioned the establishment of workers' councils which were, in fact, little more than agencies for settling disputes between employers and workers. The burning issue of socialization was ceremoniously buried in parliamentary committees.

In March, 1920, the militarist clique felt that the left had been sufficiently weakened by the 1919 blood-letting, and that it could now proceed openly to institute its own monarchist dictatorship. For

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Noske had again suppressed the press of the Independent Socialists and Communists, arrested thousands of their functionaries, and issued a ban on strikes for miners and railroad workers. With the government thus playing into the hands of the reactionaries, the latter received considerable reinforcements from returning soldiers who, stationed on the estates of the East-Elbian Junkers, had in 1919 engaged in the campaign against Soviet Russia. But what decided the date of the uprising—known as the Kapp putsch—was the fact that the moment had come for disbanding the army in accordance with the Versailles Treaty. By April 10, 1920, the army had to be reduced to 200,000 men; by July 10, to 100,000. To the professional officers and non-coms, therefore, the *putsch* became a matter of their very livelihood. The material motives remaining carefully hidden in the background, in their propaganda the Rightist parties emphasized that the people were filled with “sacred wrath” at the Allies’ demand that the war criminals be turned over to them. Their agitation was directed against the republic, which they blamed for Germany’s defeat in the World War and for the Versailles Treaty.

Their anti-Versailles propaganda did not influence the broad masses at that time. Again, Hitler has furnished the best evidence to substantiate this point:

“But in those days a public mass-meeting which consisted not of petty bourgeois but of goaded proletarians, and its subject ‘The Peace Treaty of Versailles’ meant an attack upon the Republic and a sign of reactionary, if not even monarchistic attitude. Even with the first sentence that contained a criticism of Versailles one would be bombarded with the stereotyped call: ‘And Brest-Litovsk? Brest-Litovsk!’”¹

The rebuff which Hitler and his kind then suffered shows that the broad masses understood that Germany’s imperialist policies of aggression had conjured up the Versailles Treaty. And it demonstrated that they were in no mood to wage a new war in order to abolish the Versailles *Diktat*. It was only after the policies of the Weimar Republic had put all the burdens of the Versailles treaty upon the workers and the petty bourgeoisie that especially the latter fell prey to the anti-Versailles propaganda of the reactionaries.

But the fact that as early as 1920 the Right could plan and organize a *putsch* shows how fundamentally the situation had changed. Sixteen months before, the reactionaries lay crushed and in despair. The Eberts, Scheidemanns, and Noskes had given them

new life; allowed the Junkers to regain possession of *the* instrument of state power, the army, which for the first time in German history seemed to have slipped out of their fingers.

The putsch which broke out on March 13, 1920, was under the military leadership of General von Luetwitz, the same officer who a year before had crushed the Berlin workers at the orders of the government. Politically, it was led by Wolfgang von Kapp, spokesman of the East Prussian Junkers and a prominent leader of the Pan-German Society. The most notorious putschists came from the Erhardt Brigade, which later spawned the murderers of Cabinet Ministers Erzberger and Rathenau and, still later, a good many high officers of the Nazi S.S. When it became evident that the Reichswehr generals were not willing to fire on units of their own army taking part in the anti-government putsch, President Ebert and his government fled Berlin. The rebels occupied the government buildings, naming Kapp Chancellor, and General von Luetwitz, Defense Minister and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces.

The legal government hid in Stuttgart. But the workers, salaried employees, and civil servants throughout Germany arose in a mammoth people's strike which shut down every factory, mine, dock, and office. Kapp and Luetwitz operated in a vacuum. Their orders went unheeded; in many places their troops suffered defeat in armed conflicts with the workers. On March 17 they abdicated. The rescued government returned from Stuttgart. And now, as though nothing had happened, it attempted to send the workers back into the factories. Having done their duty, the underlings were now to be ignored!

But popular feeling ran so high that the government parties and trade union leaders had to act: on March 20, 1920, they published a nine-point program which promised among other things—punishment of all those guilty of the putsch and “immediate steps to socialize branches of the economy that were ripe for socialization.” Under the chairmanship of Karl Legien, the trade union head, negotiations took place between the leading committees of the three workers' parties with a view to forming a workers' government. But as soon as the Ebert regime was again firmly entrenched, the Social-Democratic leaders broke off discussions.

In Rhineland-Westphalia the commanding general, von Watter, refused at the outbreak of the Kapp putsch to sign an appeal on behalf of the Ebert government. Now his troops marched into the in-

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dustrial centers, some of them bearing aloft the black-white-red imperial flag and shouting for the monarchy. On March 15, a joint appeal was issued, signed by the leaders of the Rhineland-Westphalia Social-Democrats, the Independent Socialists, and the Communists. Its aim was: "(1) gaining political power by means of the dictatorship of the proletariat; (2) immediate socialization of branches of industry ripe for it." The workers fought and expelled the Kapp militarists from one city after another. On March 19, Essen fell to the workers. A central military committee organized the workers into a Red Army, which by March 21 had entirely cleared that vital industrial region of Germany of reactionary troops.

The Ebert government, again installed in Berlin, viewed these developments with mounting anxiety. Censorship concealed from the workers of Berlin the magnificent victory won by the workers of the Ruhr. At this juncture, Carl Severing began negotiations with a view to smashing the Ruhr workers' united front, and utilized the time gained to assemble troop transports from the whole Reich against Western Germany. In the name of the government, on March 23 Severing and the Catholic Centrist Minister Giesbert signed the Bielefeld Agreement with representatives of the three Left parties and the Catholic trade unions. This pact allowed the workers to form local defense groups and pledged that the Reichswehr would not occupy the Ruhr region. Why did the Government sign this accord? Severing, in a speech delivered in April, 1920, revealed the reason: "The Bielefeld Agreement worked like dynamite in the ranks of the Red Army."

For no sooner had a large section of the workers, trusting the agreement, laid down their arms than the Social Democratic Chancellor Hermann Mueller and General von Watter set an impossible time limit for the immediate dissolution of all people's defense groups and the surrender of their weapons. With the demobilization in full swing, the Kapp putschists of yesterday, reinstated as "loyal" government troops, struck with unbridled ferocity. Invading the Ruhr, these military bands turned it into a veritable inferno.

Once the workers were crushed, the government naturally forgot all its promises. Not a word about socialization or dissolving the counter-revolutionary detachments. The Kapp putschists who had lost their jobs received substantial yearly pensions. Proceedings against 540 putschists of the Reichswehr were suspended. But the workers who had resisted the uprising, and to whom the Bielefeld

Agreement had promised an amnesty, received an aggregate total of more than one thousand years' imprisonment.

With the defeat of those who bore the main burden in smashing the Kapp putsch, the revolutionary period of 1918-1920 came to an end. There were later crises, and notably in 1923, revolutionary clashes. But never again would the progressive workers' movement surge so far forward. Those eighteen months that shook Germany shaped her political and economic structure: the victorious counter-revolution gave birth to a republic that moved step by step toward extreme reaction. The old *military* forces of the monarchy were restored; the old *economic* relationships left unaltered. Inevitably, therefore, *political* reaction found fertile soil in which to sprout again. At the same time, the policies of the Social-Democratic leaders caused a deep split in the workers' camp.

These were the first steps on the road back, at the end of which lurked the Nazi dictatorship.

IX

ON THE ROAD TO FASCISM

The elections of June 6, 1920, were for deputies to the first Reichstag, which succeeded the Constitutional National Assembly. The election results should have been a warning to the government which had enlisted the aid of the reactionaries to defeat the people. Some of those who had formerly voted for the Weimar coalition, disappointed and embittered, moved to the Left; others, especially among the city and rural middle classes, returned to the Rightist camp which they had left in 1918 in the hour of military defeat. The Social-Democratic Party vote was reduced from 11,500,000 to 5,600,000; the Democratic Party from 5,500,000 to 2,200,000. On the Left, the Independent Socialist Party vote rose from 2,300,000 to 4,900,000, and the Communists, participating in elections for the first time, received 500,000 votes. Both Rightist parties, the German Nationalists and the German People's Party (corresponding to the Conservatives and National Liberals in imperial Germany), increased from 3,900,000 to 7,300,000. In Parliament, too, the reactionaries profited from the policies of Ebert and Noske. The Catholic Centrists, who had obtained 5,700,000 votes in January, 1919, now received 3,500,000—a large portion of what they lost going to the new reactionary Catholic party in Bavaria, the Bavarian People's Party, which received 1,200,000 votes.

These results were bound to encourage the Right. The same Captain Erhardt who had organized the Kapp *putsch* now formed the O.C. (Organization Consul), the members of which attacked and murdered people holding high posts in the republic. In June, 1921, this band murdered Karl Gareis, a Bavarian Independent Socialist deputy; and on August 26 of the same year, it assassinated the Catholic political leader, Mathias Erzberger, who, while Finance Minister, had been violently attacked by reactionaries because he had proposed a modest tax on the propertied classes. The Rightist papers were savage in their denunciations of the Foreign Minister Walther Rathenau, who was of Jewish origin. On June 24, 1922, he was struck down by the O. C.

This murder touched off tremendous popular demonstrations against the terrorists and the German Nationalists who were close to them. Rightist newspaper offices were stormed. The terrorist gangs were cleared from the streets. On the day Rathenau was slain, their

political spokesmen were driven from the Reichstag plenary session as the liberal Catholic Chancellor Joseph Wirth thundered: "The enemy is on the Right!" Parliament set up a special court to try the criminals. It functioned promptly and flawlessly—against the Left. Since the republic had simply neglected to replace the personnel of the judiciary appointed by the Kaiser, this special court and 99 per cent of the general courts sent thousands of resolute enemies of reaction to prison. About a dozen criminals of the Right were punished!

The republic abdicated to the reactionaries in the economic as well as political field. The big industrialists, applauded by the profiteering Junkers, torpedoed the mark and organized inflation.* A democratic regime should have taken over sizable blocks of shares in the biggest firms, placed heavy mortgages on the landed estates, and forced the rich to grant interest-free loans. That would have been the proper answer to the sabotage of currency and taxes by the upper ten thousand; and it would have obviated the government's constant need to obtain new loans from the *Reichsbank*, which kept on issuing more paper money without gold coverage. Not one of these elementary measures of economic security was carried out.

With the drop of the mark, real wages steadily declined. The workers answered with gigantic demonstrations and a strike movement embracing over two million people in 1922, and 2,600,000 the following year. French occupation of the Ruhr and ensuing German passive resistance resulted in a serious coal shortage and the shutting down of many factories. In the latter half of 1923, the number of jobless receiving unemployment insurance rose from 186,000 to 1,337,000. A general strike which broke out in Berlin on August 10, 1923, spread throughout most of Germany. Two days later, the purely bourgeois government of Wilhelm Cuno, general director of the Hamburg-America Steamship Line, which had been in power since the end of 1922, fell.

Appealing to the despairing middle-class professionals and intellectuals who were facing ruin in the inflation, the reactionaries prepared their *coup*. In the foreground of the movement was the National Socialist Workers' Party of Adolf Hitler, founded in Munich in 1919. In February, 1920, Hitler provided the party with a program that promised to "abrogate unearned income, break the

* See Chapter X "The Foreign Policy of the Weimar Republic."

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bonds of interest-slavery, confiscate all war profits, turn over all trusts to the state, introduce profit-sharing in all big enterprises, create a healthy middle class, divide department stores into a number of small shops leased by small storekeepers at low rentals, give maximum consideration to small merchants in furnishing supplies to the state, and punish usurers and speculators with death.”

The name and program of the party was proof that the German reactionaries could hope to win the masses only if they wore a socialist mask. Thus they hoped to allure the workers at the same time they made sweeping promises to the urban middle class, which ten years later they broadened to include lavish pledges to the peasants. For internationalism they substituted hatred of other peoples and of the Jews. The politically unstable middle classes, who had supported the republic only to find themselves draining the cup of their misery, were particularly receptive to Hitler’s unbridled chauvinism:

“All people of German blood, whether they live under Danish, Polish, Czech, Italian, or French rule, must be united in the German Reich.... We will not renounce a single German in the Sudetenland, in Alsace-Lorraine, in Poland, in the League of Nations’ colony, Austria, or in the succession states of old Austria.”¹

In the summer of 1923, the various counter-revolutionary groups prepared their uprising in Bavaria. The Prime Minister of Bavaria, Gustav von Kahr, and the Bavarian police commissioner, Hans Ritter von Seisser, were conspiring with ex-Crown Prince Ruprecht and seeking to restore the Bavarian monarchy. Under the benevolent eyes of von Kahr numerous military groups, with headquarters in Munich, were drilling for their projected “march on Berlin.” Their vanguard consisted of Captain Erhardt’s units, preparing to attack Saxony and Thuringia from Northern Bavaria.

In both these provinces, Communists and Social-Democrats, supported by parliamentary majorities, had for the first time in Germany’s history set up coalition regimes elected in accordance with the Weimar Constitution. They were hated by the Kahrs, Hitlers, and Erhardts in Bavaria as much as by the Eberts and Reichswehr generals in Berlin. The Social-Democratic leaders of Saxony and Thuringia belonged to the left wing of the party and one of them, Erich Zeigner, Prime Minister of Saxony, threatened to make a public expose of the secret arming of the Reichswehr.

This matter involved the notorious “Black Reichswehr,” a se-

cret military organization in violation of the Versailles Treaty, which had permitted Germany an army of 100,000. The men were recruited from the so-called "Fatherland Leagues," in which all the fascist-minded, anti-Semitic, and semi-military units had gathered. As these groups began to infiltrate into the armed forces of the nation and threatened to march on Berlin—in imitation of Mussolini's "march on Rome"—to set up a dictatorship, the workers formed semi-military units in self-defense in Saxony, Thuringia, and other parts of the Reich.

Meanwhile a new government under Chancellor Gustav Stresemann succeeded the Cuno government. This was a coalition regime in which the Social-Democrats were also represented; the Social-Democrat Wilhelm Sollmann was Minister of the Interior. When at the end of September the cabinet was forced to halt passive resistance to French occupation of the Ruhr, the Bavarian government and the reactionary organizations branded the act as "high treason." General von Lossow, commander of the Reichswehr forces stationed in Bavaria, refused to obey the Reich government, allowing his troops to take an oath to the Bavarian regime which broke off relations with Berlin. That was really mutiny and high treason!

Berlin informed the Saxon government that it was getting ready to send the Reichswehr against the Bavarian fascists. The Reichswehr did march—but against the people of Saxony and Thuringia! Sent by Ebert and the Berlin government, the Reichswehr invaded these two provinces on October 29, 1923. The troops, commanded by General von Mueller and his chief of staff Gerd von Rundstedt (who became a Field Marshal under Hitler), smashed the defense organizations and swept away the governments in both provinces.

A few days later, on November 8, 1923, Adolf Hitler struck in Munich. He called for a new government and a march on Berlin under the command of General Ludendorff. His putsch collapsed the next morning after a few rounds of gunfire by the police.

Why was Nazism beaten with such comparative ease in 1923, only to take power in 1933? The upper classes and Reichswehr generals felt that the time had not yet come to destroy the facade of the Weimar Republic and institute a full-blown dictatorship. Moreover, in 1923 German reaction was split into many factions, of which the Nazis, whatever their importance, were but one. The aims of these

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groups did not coincide. Kahr, for example, had no intention of accepting a Hitler-Ludendorff dictatorship. He too wanted reactionary rule, but he wanted it to come through the Bavarian royal house. In other parts of Germany, Catholic politicians and influential businessmen like Baron Kurt von Schroeder (who later backed Hitler), played with the idea of an independent clerical-reactionary state of Rhineland-Westphalia, separated from the rest of the Reich.

Almost immediately after November 9, 1923* Hitler's party completely disintegrated. To eliminate Hitler and his group once and for all would then have been an easy matter. Instead, Hitler was aided zealously by ex-Prince Ruprecht of Bavaria, and had to serve only a few months of his five-year sentence, in a comfortably furnished fortress. After this none-too-arduous sojourn, he was set free to rebuild his party and spread his Nazi propaganda.

Thus, the main blow was struck, not against the reactionaries, but against the Left. President Ebert proclaimed a "state of exception" and entrusted the head of the Reichswehr, General von Seeckt, with full powers. When, as a result of the withdrawal of the Socialist ministers, the Stresemann cabinet fell in November, 1923, Ebert appointed the right-wing Centrist leader, Wilhelm Marx, Chancellor. The Communist Party and all organizations sympathetic with it were banned. Anti-Communist "exceptional laws" were invoked to imprison 6,500 workers.

Once the inflation had achieved its purpose by enriching the magnates, the mark was stabilized at the close of 1923. But the small depositors, pensioners, and *rentiers*, ruined by the inflation, received no relief.

The two Reichstag elections of 1924 demonstrated that millions of expropriated middle class citizens were fleeing into the arms of the Right. On the other hand, the Communists had now grown into a mass party, a majority of the delegates of the Independent Socialist Party, meeting at Halle in the autumn of 1920, having voted to join this party.*

Two large parties now represented the German workers, and in 1925 they were put to the test again. President Ebert had died early in the year. In the voting for his successor, none of the seven candidates received the necessary majority on the first ballot. The parties

* A minority of Independent Socialists later returned to the Social-Democratic fold.

of the Weimar coalition obtained a total of 13,250,000 votes, the reactionary candidates 11,700,000, and the Communist Ernst Thaelmann 1,870,000 votes. For the second and deciding ballot, the Communists offered to withdraw Thaelmann if the Social-Democrats retained their candidate, Otto Braun, Prime Minister of Prussia, who had received 7,800,000 votes on the first ballot. Had the Social-Democrats agreed to this proposal, Braun would have gained not only the votes of both labor parties but also millions of Democratic and Catholic Centrist votes. There was a strong likelihood that he would have been elected President of Germany.

But the Social-Democratic leaders refused Communist support. Withdrawing the candidacy of Braun, they mobilized their followers to vote for the unpopular Wilhelm Marx, responsible in the winter of 1923-24 for suppressing the workers' movement and for passing legislation victimizing the poor. The Communists warned the people in advance about this right-wing Centrist. Later, their warnings became reality; for on all decisive questions, Marx adopted the same attitude as Hindenburg. He tossed the Social-Democrats out of his government and formed a cabinet with the Rightist German Nationalists.

Marx became the candidate of the Social-Democrats, Democrats, and Centrists against Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg, the choice of the reactionaries. Numerous Social-Democrats in Berlin, Saxony, and Thuringia refused to vote for him, since they felt that a vote for Marx was tantamount to a vote for Hindenburg. But it was the Bavarian People's Party that decided his fate. Deserting their Catholic co-religionist, they went over to Hindenburg.*

That co-operation between the two workers' parties could still attract broad sections of the petty bourgeoisie was proved by the outstanding event in domestic politics during the ensuing year. It was revealed that the republic was paying high pensions to the princes who had been overturned in November, 1918. Even descendants of the princelings whom Napoleon had dethroned were regularly receiving substantial sums from the German Republic.

To put an end to this scandal, the Communist and Social-Democratic parties proposed a plebiscite to decide on expropriation without indemnification of the princes. President Hindenburg and

* The final results were: 14,650,000 for Hindenburg, 13,750,000 for Marx, and 1,930,000 for Thaelmann.

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Chancellor Marx, in violation of their constitutional position, carried on vigorous counter-propaganda, supported by all parties, from the Democrats clear over to the National Socialists. Nevertheless, over 14,400,000 voted to expropriate the princes—in other words, 4,800,000 more than had voted a year previously for the Socialist and Communist presidential candidates on the first ballot. True, the figure was not high enough to win the plebiscite. But the outcome opened up far-reaching perspectives: a united front of both workers' parties mobilized many who did not usually vote and aligned with labor many middle class citizens who under other circumstances would have fallen prey to Rightist propaganda.

Unfortunately, this co-operation, created by strong popular pressure, did not continue. On the contrary, Prussian Premier Braun effected a compromise with the Hohenzollerns by which the latter received approximately 400,000 acres of land and 15,000,000 marks.

The leaders of Social-Democracy wanted no co-operation with the Communists. They saw in the economic upturn which set in after 1924, and which was aided by foreign loans, the beginning of a long period of capitalist prosperity. Powerful trusts arose in Germany during these years: for example, the *I. G. Farben* combine, formed from the merger of a number of chemical enterprises, and the *Vereinigte Stahlwerke*, which fused the coal mines, iron and steel works of Thyssen and Kirdorf and most of those of the deceased Hugo Stinnes in a single giant undertaking. In 1927, at the Kiel convention of the Social-Democratic Party, Rudolf Hilferding, the party's leading economic thinker, characterized these trusts as "organized capitalism, the socialist principle of planned production." In his view, they had replaced the capitalist principle of free competition. In line with Hilferding's conception, the annual convention of the Free Trade Unions held that year in Hamburg declared: "The democratization of our economy is moving forward, bringing with it ever more clearly visible changes in the structure of capitalism. The democratization of economy leads to socialism." The leaders of German Social Democracy and trade unions oriented the German people toward the peaceful development of monopoly capitalism.

The Social-Democratic and trade union leaders disregarded the Communists' warnings that the boom was only temporary and stabilization only relative. They failed to see that in this period of rela-

tive prosperity class antagonisms were sharpened rather than blunted, since employers' profits rose incomparably more quickly than the wages of workers and salaried employees; that the introduction of rationalization in industry at the start of 1929 had already thrown 2,150,000 men out of work; that the concentration of capital, far from eliminating competition, raised it to an even higher level and precipitated the approaching economic crisis. While they were speaking of democratizing the economy, the anti-democratic monopolies had already obtained an enormous concentration of power and were in control of the key sections of Germany economy. The Social-Democrats refused to heed these facts and therefore failed to draw conclusions from the Reichstag elections of May, 1928,* in which the conservative parties lost heavily and both workers' parties scored considerable gains. A broad popular coalition would have attracted millions and challenged the growing power of the reactionaries.

Instead, the Social-Democratic Chancellor Hermann Mueller formed a coalition with the German People's Party, the outstanding party of the big bourgeoisie. Social-Democratic ministers agreed to the construction of pocket battleships, although their own party had opposed this step during the election campaign.† They decreased expenditures for social welfare, banned such workers' organizations as the Red Front Fighters' League, at the same time raising the tariff on grain to benefit the big landowners and creating the *Osthilfe*, the most notorious "slush fund" in the republic, which by 1932 made the Junkers a present of some four billion marks. Mueller finally compromised himself by introducing a bill for a head tax and for lowering unemployment insurance. At the end of March, 1930, his cabinet fell.

Meanwhile, the economic crisis which had begun six months before, was sharpening the political situation within Germany. Early

* Results of the election of May 20, 1928: Social-Democrats, 9,146,000 votes; German Nationalists, 4,703,000; Catholic Centrists, 3,711,000; Communists, 3,262,000; German People's Party, 2,678,000; State Party (Democrats), 1,504,000; Economy Party (middle class), 1,395,000; Bavarian People's Party, 943,000; Nazis, 809,000.

† An opposition group, led by such men as Kurt Rosenfeld and Max Seydewitz, vigorously assailed this policy of rearming for imperialist aims. Later, this group left the Social-Democratic Party.

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in 1929, Fritz Thyssen told a group of iron and steel magnates who were meeting with Dr. Hjalmar Schacht, President of the *Reichsbank*: "I need this economic crisis. It offers the only chance of solving the questions of reparations and wages at the same time."

The same industrialists who had taken advantage of the inflation now exploited the economic crisis not only to stop interest payments on foreign loans but also to lower wages, salaries, and unemployment benefits. They worked through Chancellor Dr. Heinrich Brüning, who had succeeded Müller in the spring of 1930. Brüning, one of the few officers who in November, 1918, had attempted to oppose the revolution against the Kaiser, belonged to the right wing of the Catholic Centrists. In Hindenburg he saw less the President than the Field Marshal, whom he respected as much as he scorned parliament.

The die was cast 3 the crisis was to be fought at the expense of the people. The first act of the Brüning cabinet was to reduce social expenditures and to increase taxes on the low-income groups. When Brüning feared that the Reichstag might reject his harsh economic decrees, he invoked Article 48 of the constitution and had Hindenburg enact his "emergency decrees" into law. This article gave the President the right to govern dictatorially without consulting parliament, in the event of serious unrest in the country. There was no such unrest. But Brüning undermined further the parliamentary system and opened the door to an era of extra-parliamentary dictatorship. When on October 18, 1930, a majority of the Reichstag, including the Social-Democratic deputies, voted for this authoritarian course, the Weimar politicians signed the death warrant of their own parties and of the republic. And the man who, two and a half years later, carried out this death sentence, was already sitting in the Hotel Kaiserhof opposite the Chancellor's office planning the Nazi seizure of power.

For the party of Adolf Hitler was again in the public eye. With the failure of the beer hall putsch of 1923, it had sunk into obscurity. Now it rose rapidly. Long before the start of the economic crisis, the Nazis had received powerful financial and political backing from such leaders of industry as Emil Kirdorf and Fritz Thyssen. Reichswehr generals were favorably disposed toward them.

In the 1928 elections, the National-Socialists had played a relatively insignificant role. They increased their vote eightfold two years later, in the September, 1930, elections, called when Brüning

dissolved the Reichstag in which he found himself in a minority. What was the secret of this sudden rise? In 1928, the urban middle classes, recovering from the paralyzing effects of inflation, were unreceptive to Nazi demagoguery. But now the economic crisis hit them with unprecedented severity. Master mechanics were out of work. Small business declined disastrously. Unemployment among teachers, engineers, technicians, and chemists often attained higher proportions than even among the workers.

In the countryside, the peasants faced multiplying difficulties. As a result of tariff increases by the Mueller and Bruening governments, the price of fodder soared. Many farmers, unable to pay taxes and interest payments on loans, lost their farms by foreclosure.

Twelve years before, the urban and rural middle classes had reposed their confidence in the republic. It had not helped them. Since one after another of the old-line parties in the government failed to mitigate their ever-increasing hardships, they began to pin their hopes on the Nazi Party, which made rosy promises without making any great demands on them. The traditional extreme conservative party, the German Nationalists, had become somewhat compromised through participation in several cabinets responsible for measures hostile to the middle classes; moreover, one of its wings, sympathetic to Bruening, had split off. Hitler's party became therefore the center of attraction for the great mass of the politically vacillating who were desperately seeking a way out of their misery. Its far-flung apparatus offered many well-paid jobs for jobless intellectuals, ruined storekeepers, and former officers who had originally been active in forming the "storm-troop units." Many of these S.A. headquarters were crowded with unemployed men, deprived of unemployment insurance by the Bruening decrees.

The election returns of the autumn of 1930 laid the groundwork for new advances by the Nazi Party. The Kaiser's sons, leading industrialists, landowners, and bankers hastened to join the movement. The lure of great names and rise of a lowly house-painter to the leadership of a mass party created an appealing aura for the German petty bourgeois with his spirit of subservience.

Hitler's main propaganda weapon was his attack on the Versailles Treaty and on those parties he held responsible for having signed the *Diktat*. His promise to make Germany free again was an empty one, since some of the burdens of the Versailles Treaty had already been removed by peaceful negotiations and others were in

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the process of being eliminated.* Nevertheless, his rantings impressed those who were looking for an explanation of their woes. Moreover, Hitler kept from them the fact that the real authors of their poverty were the big capitalists who were his paymasters. To prevent a social explosion within Germany, the Nazis diverted the wrath of millions of Germans into chauvinist and anti-Semitic channels.

The 1930 elections[†] showed that the Nazis had not succeeded in penetrating the ranks of the politically conscious workers. Both workers' parties, with the pendulum of influence swinging slowly in favor of the Communists, had stood their ground in the face of the Nazis' head-on assault. But to halt the rising tide of Nazism demanded that they unite their efforts.

Instead, the Social-Democratic leaders declared that Bruening was "the lesser evil" and had to be tolerated as against the greater evil, Hitler. But Bruening's policies hastened, not hindered, the victory of Hitler. By his emergency decrees, Bruening dug the grave of the Weimar Republic.

Bruening's decrees lowered unemployment insurance payments from an average of 80 marks to 56 marks monthly (roughly from \$32 to \$22) and excluded 700,000 jobless from any benefits. After a few months, the unemployed were handed over to "crisis welfare organizations," from which they received but 46 marks monthly. Furthermore, Bruening decreed that all unemployment benefits were to be deducted from the recipient's pay check as soon as he secured work. The Centrist Chancellor demanded wage-cuts, decreased sickness and health insurance, and limited the right to strike.

In short, Bruening's deflationary policies sought to overcome the crisis by a frontal attack on the living standards of the people. But toward the upper classes the Chancellor behaved quite differently. He granted the Junkers fantastically high tariffs to maintain

* See Chapter X "The Foreign Policy of the Weimar Republic,"

[†] Results of the Reichstag elections of September 14, 1930: Social-Democrats 8,572,000 votes; Nazis 6,401,000; Communists 4,590,000; Centrists 4,129,000; German Nationalists 2,458,000; German People's Party 1,658,000; Agrarian and Conservative (a split-off of the German Nationalists) 1,563,000; Economy Party 1,379,000; State Party (former Democrats) 1,323,000; Bavarian People's Party 1,058,000.

the exorbitant prices of their grain. When the *Vereinigte Stahlwerke* firm encountered financial difficulties, Bruening came to the rescue of Kirdorf, Thyssen, and Flick by having the government buy a large block of shares in the company at three times the price quoted on the Stock Exchange.

Hindenburg's seven-year term of office as President expired at the beginning of 1932. To illustrate how low the ruling parties of the republic had fallen, the only candidate they could find to oppose Hitler was Hindenburg. In 1925, they had voted for Wilhelm Marx who later made common cause with Hindenburg. Now they voted for Hindenburg, who less than a year later made Hitler Chancellor of Germany. Nothing is more absurd than the plea of the Socialist, Democrat, and Centrist politicians that they could not foresee Hindenburg's impending "betrayal." After World War I, Hindenburg had sedulously spread the "stab-in-the-back" legend which later became one of Hitler's main propaganda weapons. According to this myth, the German army had not been defeated on the battlefield by the Allies but had been stabbed in the back by the forces of the German Revolution. To see in Hindenburg anything but a forerunner of open dictatorship meant to bury one's head in the sand; it meant continuing an "appeasement policy" toward the reactionaries, who fed on it and became all the more aggressive and insatiable.

No sooner was Hindenburg re-elected on April 10, 1932, with 19,360,000 votes as against 13,418,000 for Hitler and 3,706,000 for Thaelmann, than he thanked Bruening, who had actively campaigned for him, by turning the Centrist Chancellor out of office on May 30, 1932. The new Chancellor named by Hindenburg was Franz von Papen, a deputy of the extreme right wing of the Centrists. The government he formed, given full support only by the German Nationalists, has gone down in history as "the Cabinet of counts and barons." Bruening's emergency decrees were continued, and on July 20, 1932, by a sudden stroke, von Papen drove from office the Prussian Provincial Government.

Prussia represented three-fifths of all Germany. Since 1920, it had been governed almost uninterruptedly by a Social-Democratic, Democratic-Centrist coalition, with the Social-Democrats Otto Braun as Prime Minister and Carl Severing as Interior Minister. This government had fought the conservatives only mildly, but the radicals met with its implacable hostility. It was responsible for the blood-bath in Berlin, on May 1-3, 1929, when the police fired on

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the workers' traditional May Day demonstration, killing 33 persons. It banned the militant Red Front Fighters' League, a workers' organization that had often clashed with Nazi storm-troopers and put them to flight. During 1930, while all civil servants of the Braun government who were even suspected of sympathy with the Communists were dismissed forthwith, reactionaries continued on the job in key posts of the administration.

This concentration on the Communists as the main enemy bore tragic fruit. In the provincial elections of April, 1932, the Weimar coalition in Prussia was badly beaten and the Nazis swelled their votes. The continued existence of the Weimar governing coalition now depended on the Communists, who offered their support on condition that the ban on anti-Nazi organizations be lifted and an amnesty declared for hundreds of imprisoned anti-Nazis. They were not even given the courtesy of a reply. Instead, Otto Braun who was in perfect health hied himself to Switzerland on "sick leave," and Carl Severing advocated that governmental responsibility be entrusted to the party of Hitler!

In answer to von Papen's *coup* of July 1932, the Communists proposed joint action by the trade unions and working class parties, beginning with a call for a general strike for which the workers were waiting. Would it not have been logical for Severing to have mobilized the eighty thousand policemen under his command to defend the Prussian government? Popular hatred against the von Papen regime was so high that determined resistance, which even bourgeois members of the Prussian cabinet favored, had every chance of succeeding. Instead, Severing, who had been brave enough when it came to arresting thousands of Communists during his tenure of office, now showed his true colors. On the afternoon of July 20, a Reichswehr lieutenant and two soldiers, acting under von Papen's orders, demanded that he hand over the affairs of the Prussian government. Declaring: "I yield only to violence," Severing retired to private life. The trade union leaders refused the Communist demand for a general strike on the ground that it was a "provocation."

Whoever rules Prussia rules Germany. That was true so long as reaction ruled in Prussia. It proved false under the rule of Social-Democracy. Prussia, which was supposed to be a "bulwark against reaction" and which might have been one, proved but a house of cards under Social-Democratic leadership. Prussia in reactionary

hands left its stamp on all Germany j Prussia under the Social-Democrats yielded at the crucial moment to the reactionaries without the slightest struggle. Again, a historic opportunity to change the course of Germany's fate was missed.

To be sure, tens of thousands of workers, both Social-Democrats and Communists, in their militant organizations, the *Reichsbanner* and the illegal Red Front Fighters' League, did not capitulate to reaction as did Carl Severing and his colleagues. They stood their ground against the Nazi gangs emboldened by Hindenburg and von Papen. Throughout 1932 bloody clashes occurred all over Germany between Nazi storm troops on one side and Communists and Social-Democrats on the other. Characteristically, the local authorities always sent the police to help the Nazis.

Von Papen hoped to consolidate his position by calling new Reichstag elections. But the results of the voting on July 31, 1932, dashed his hopes. The German Nationalists lost more ground to the Nazis, with whom von Papen could not come to an understanding concerning their share of seats in the government. On the Left, the Communists prevented any of the votes lost by the Social-Democrats from aiding a conservative party. Again Parliament was dissolved and new elections were held in November.* The results of this election brought von Papen no satisfaction; a transport workers' strike in Berlin, which the government could not control, sealed his fate.

Defense Minister General Kurt von Schleicher—the "social general"—became Chancellor. He sought to bring the trade unions into the camp of open imperialism and unite them on a common

	<i>* Results of the election of July 31, 1932</i>	<i>November 6, 1932</i>
Nazis	13,372,000	11,705,000
Social-Democrats	7,951,000	7,231,000
Communists	5,278,000	5,971,000
Centrists	4,586,000	4,228,000
German Nationalists	2,173,000	3,062,000
Bavarian People's Party	1,190,000	1,081,000
German People's Party	434,000	659,000
State Party	371,000	338,000
Economy Party	146,000	_____
Agrarian	91,000	_____

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platform with the opposition wing of the Nazi Party led by Gregor Strasser. To this end, social demagoguery was essential.

But the reactionaries insisted that the labor organizations be crushed without delay. They could not afford to wait a moment longer, because every week lost lessened the prospects of their success. The Nazi Party was in open crisis. In the November, 1932, elections it had lost 2,000,000 votes and in subsequent local and provincial polls it had suffered further losses. It was faced with a catastrophe similar to that which had occurred after November, 1923. But this time it would have meant more than a defeat for Hitler; it would have signified a defeat for German imperialism as a whole. It ran the risk of losing its mass base and with it the chance to set up an open fascist dictatorship.

This course of events was hastened by developments in connection with the *Osthilfe* scandal, an affair of fraud and corruption which threatened to compromise the circle around Hindenburg and even his own family. It had to be kept under cover. Papen, who felt that von Schleicher had been responsible for his own fall from power, finally convinced Hindenburg that the general was plotting with the Reichswehr to stage a *coup*. It was this highly charged atmosphere of political intrigues that motivated Hindenburg's refusal to decree a dissolution of the Reichstag, as von Schleicher requested. On January 30, 1933, the President of Germany appointed Adolf Hitler Chancellor.

X

THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC

It is not true that the Weimar republic bore no guilt in the rise of German fascism because the latter was an “inevitable” product of the Versailles Treaty. After all, fascism arose first in Europe in Italy, one of the victor powers, not a defeated nation in World War I. Another country which suffered a far more terrible *Diktat* than the Versailles Treaty, the Soviet Union, never went fascist. Despite the severity of the Versailles Treaty and the national humiliation it brought Germany, thus creating a fertile soil for nationalist poisoning, the coming to power of the Nazis could have been prevented.

Germany's national tragedy did not begin on June 28, 1919, in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles, when the Social-Democratic Chancellor Hermann Mueller signed the treaty; it began rather on August 4, 1914, when the German nation plunged into a world war. The continuation of the war at any price had to produce surrender at any price. On the very eve of their collapse, early in 1918, the German imperialists, in the Brest-Litovsk Treaty with the Soviet Union, gave the Allies a lesson in how to deal with a beaten adversary.

Moreover, the young German republic adopted a course that frittered away the sympathy of the world's progressive forces for Germany. If during the November, 1918, Revolution, genuine representatives of the cause of anti-imperialism had risen to the top, Germany would certainly have had more friends in the world. As Sumner Welles writes in his *Time Decision*: “Had there been enough Karl Liebknechts, the future of Germany and of the world might have been different.” Instead, the Weimar Republic inaugurated its domestic policy with a crushing blow against the Left and its foreign policy with attacks on the Soviet Union.

Self-preservation bade the young German Republic improve its isolated position in international affairs by establishing friendly relations with the U.S.S.R. Instead, the German General Staff and influential government circles—above all, Ebert, Scheidemann, and Noske—clung to the idea of making up for the war they had lost in the West at the expense of Eastern Europe. They thought that by exploiting the open hostility of the Western Allies against the Soviet Union, which was then suffering intervention at the hands of Britain, France, and the United States, they could become the gendarme of world reaction and retain the territories they had conquered in

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Russia during the war.

As early as October 1918, the Kaiser's regime set up a White-guard Russian Army of the North and had it swear an oath to "the legal Tsar." Diplomatically too, they prepared the ground for resuming the war in the East. At the Cabinet session of October 28, 1918, Philipp Scheidemann proposed as a scheme to "prove" Soviet violation of extra-territoriality, which the German government could then exploit. Government agents planted revolutionary leaflets in the German language in the baggage of Soviet diplomats, and Scheidemann proudly narrates the results in his *Memoirs of a Social Democrat*:

"A few days after my proposal, on November 4, Dr. Solf [then Foreign Minister] informed us that at a Berlin railway station, a chest had fallen and broken open while German porters were carrying Russian courier-boxes. It contained vicious Bolshevik propaganda of all types. The day after, the Russian diplomats were expelled."

During the next few months, the policy of Republican Germany operated on this level of flagrant provocation. When after the outbreak of the November 1918 Revolution, the Soviet regime offered to send a few carloads of grain to help the starving German people, the Ebert cabinet coolly rejected this gesture of friendship from a people itself suffering want. But though they refused the outstretched hand of Lenin, they hastened to accept an offer of wheat from America and used it as political blackmail. They proposed to President Wilson that the foodstuffs be sent on condition that they, the Eberts, remain in power to guarantee law and order. The *Kreuzzeitung*, a paper close to the General Staff, invited the Allies to join in an alliance with Germany to fight against world Bolshevism. At the same time they nourished the hope that, once they had assured themselves of raw materials and strategic positions in Russia, they would turn on the Western powers and settle accounts with them. The Republican government at the end of 1918 and in 1919 suggested to the Allies that a war in the East would help save Germany and the world from Bolshevism.

Indeed, one week after the Revolution, on November 18, 1918, the German High Command sent a secret order signed by General Groener to the commanders of the troops in the East, ordering them not to evacuate the Ukraine and the Baltic regions. In the Ukraine, revolutionary agitation had made such headway among the German

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soldiers, the people's uprising was so general, and the advance of the young Red Army so irresistible that there was nothing left to do but ship the German soldiers back to the Reich.

The situation was quite different in the Baltic regions. There, close to the borders of Germany, it was easier to station armed forces, supported by the German barons in Latvia and Esthonia. These descendants of the "Teutonic Knights" were small in numbers but constituted the top landowning group in the two Baltic states; from their midst, came the later theoretician of National Socialism, Alfred Rosenberg. With the consent of the German government, the High Command began to recruit troops for this army. The Ebert regime placed in command of the undertaking General von der Goltz, who in mid-1918 had cooperated with Baron von Mannerheim to crush the Finnish Soviet Republic and who now, with some 40,000 men at his disposal, invaded Soviet Latvia. Conquering Riga, he overturned the Soviet regime, proclaimed the Latvians "a Germanic race" and set up a puppet cabinet. The Allies had favored von der Goltz's action because they too wanted to see the workers' and peasants' governments swept away in the Baltic lands. But now, as the German Baltic army donned its Pan-German cloak, the Entente demanded the dissolution of the German units. Badly beaten by the Soviet forces in June, 1919, this army then resorted to a trick: it placed itself formally under the tsarist flag and the command of a White-guard Russian, the self-styled "Prince" Avaloff-Bermond. As late as September 1919, the Reich government tolerated the adventure by granting financial subsidies to these anti-Soviet troops. Their plan envisaged overrunning Latvia and Esthonia. "We must finish them off, before we march on Soviet Russia," von der Goltz wrote in his Memoirs. The offensive, paralleling that of General Yudenitch against Leningrad, was successful—until the British fleet, under whose aegis bourgeois governments had been formed in Latvia and Esthonia, intervened. Defeated, the Baltic army retreated to Germany in December 1919. Three months later, it furnished the core of the Kapp putschists. Most of its officers found places in the Reichswehr and became generals in the campaign against the Soviet Union.

During these same months in which the Ebert-Hindenburg group encouraged this war in the East, the Western Allies prepared the peace treaty which Germany was forced to sign on June 28, 1919. By this treaty, Germany had to bear sole guilt for the war,

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give up her colonies, disarm, hand over her merchant marine, and pay reparations. Alsace-Lorraine was given back to France, the Saar basin placed under League of Nations control until a plebiscite in 1935, the Rhineland occupied by the Allies as a guarantee that Germany would fulfill her treaty obligations, Memel and Danzig severed from the Reich, and the boundary between Germany and Poland was to be decided by a plebiscite. After a plebiscite, North Schleswig went to Denmark, the Eupen-Malmedy region to Belgium.

These conditions were severe, but the representatives of the Weimar Republic could only swallow the bitter brew that the Hohenzollern regime had prepared. No government in their position could have done anything but sign the treaty. Their great historic guilt lies in the fact that first, they sought to pile all the burdens of the treaty on the common people of Germany, and second, that by their domestic and foreign policies they prepared the rebirth of German imperialism. Though the Kaiser went, the generals remained—and with them the armament kings and the Junkers. Thus the Versailles Treaty became the blight of the broad masses of the German people. Out of the peace treaty, the Republic forged new chains for the people who were forced to pay not only foreign powers but also the ruling classes of Germany who used the treaty and the reparations payments to enrich themselves.

The German Communists denounced the *Diktat* of Versailles as an imperialist act and demanded that the burden of reparations be placed on the shoulders of those Germans who had fostered the war and grown rich from it. The German Communist Party declared with prophetic foresight that if the ruling classes of Germany were not rendered harmless, the signing of the Versailles Treaty would only be “a breathing-space for the German counter-revolution, a breathing-space in which German imperialism would await its moment to strike.”

The question of reparations led to serious international complications. At the Reparations Conference of Spa in 1920, the big industrialist Hugo Stinnes spoke provocatively about the impossibility of Germany's making coal deliveries. He admitted that he wanted the negotiations to break off. A year later, when the German Government representatives at the London Reparations Conference negotiated for an easing in the conditions of payment, this same Stinnes bought for a huge sum the Austrian *Alpin Montan*

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Gesellschaft, with the largest daily production of iron ore in the world. In May 1921, the German government was forced to acknowledge a total reparations bill of 132 billion gold marks. When in December of that same year, Foreign Minister Walter Rathenau journeyed to London to procure a loan, Stinnes followed in his wake and torpedoed his efforts with a public declaration that the German government could get the money from German industrialists if it entrusted them with the State-owned railways.

In the meantime, the mark continued on the disastrous downward course that had begun during the war. The dollar (quoted in 1913 at 4.2 marks) was worth 64 marks on January 1, 1920, 191 marks on January 1, 1922, and on January 1, 1923 reached 18,000 marks. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that the responsibility for destroying the German currency did not lie in the Allies' demands for reparations or the efforts of the German people to meet them. The full weight of the responsibility lay with the German industrialists and government, who let the currency go to ruin. Stinnes and his associates developed a system whereby they incurred large loans from the Reichsbank to buy foreign currencies with which they speculated against the mark, thus driving it down. Then they repaid their loans in devalued marks, pocketing enormous profits in the process. Whenever the government took a few timid steps toward stabilizing the currency, the *Reichsverband der deutschen Industrie*, the leading manufacturers' association, declared that the time was not yet ripe for such a move. At the beginning of 1923, the mark reached 60,000 to the dollar; the *Reichsbank* succeeded in bringing it back to 20,000 to the dollar. Then Stinnes dealt it a new thrust. According to official disclosures, he went to every important private bank in Berlin and between April 10 and April 17 bought no less than 150,000 pounds sterling. He knew what would happen: the mark, possessing very scanty reserves of foreign currency, swiftly sank. Government action failed to halt its decline, and the mark now plummeted so fast that on November 1, 1923 the dollar was quoted at 8 billion marks.

The currency crash had grave consequences in both foreign and domestic policy. German workers suffered disastrous impoverishment. Small depositors, pensioners, and *rentiers*, their savings wiped out, faced ruin. At the same time a small group at the head of German industry grew fabulously rich. Stinnes himself founded an economic empire worth several billion gold marks embracing some

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1,000 important undertakings of all types inside and outside of Germany. Thanks to the inflation, the Junkers, everlastingly in debt, were able to pay off the mortgages on their estates with worthless paper marks. By the autumn of 1923, the top groups of German business had not only completely paid off their internal indebtedness but also realized huge profits, since the sharply declining real wages of the workers allowed German businessmen to sell their goods on the world market at "cut-rate" prices. All that could have been prevented if, as the Left proposed, the government had confiscated the coal mines and steel-mills of the Pan-German industrialists and sharply increased their taxes.

While Stinnes torpedoed the mark and sabotaged reparations payments, he and his business associates bought a number of newspapers with mass circulation, which daily screamed at the German people: "Versailles is responsible for your troubles. Reparations, and the ministers paying them, are the cause of your misery!" The criminals, cunningly diverting attention from their own crimes, sharpened international tensions.

At the end of 1922, a crisis developed in international affairs. The German people were squeezed between their industrialists' sabotage of reparations and the intrigues of French imperialism, which had long cast covetous eyes on the rich coal deposits of the Ruhr. On November 27, the French government passed a decree concerning the "seizure of productive guarantees" in Germany. Under this pressure, the German government in December asked for a moratorium on payments and a sizable loan, in return for which it promised to stabilize German currency. The next day, December 11, Stinnes' paper, the *"Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung"*, carried the following statement at the head of the first column: "German industry has not been asked about the German offer. We consider the proposal unsuitable and unrealizable."

Thus the signal was sounded for a breach: in January 1923, the battle of the Ruhr began. French and Belgian troops occupied this vital industrial region in Western Germany. Fritz Thyssen, backed by the leading industrialists, demanded armed struggle at a meeting of the German coal syndicate. The Reich government proclaimed passive resistance. At the end of September 1923, it was called off as a result of the ensuing chaos and in the face of the threat of a new revolution. A new chapter in German foreign policy began.

In 1919, the overriding concern of the Allies had been to pre-

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vent a social revolution in Germany. The fear of Bolshevism had been so great that Marshal Foch, the Allied Commander-in-Chief, refused to demand the immediate dissolution of the German General Staff. He even permitted German regiments loyal to the Kaiser to march back fully armed to Germany, in order to crush the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils. Georges Clemenceau and Louis Barthou testified in the French Chamber that Foch allowed the Ebert regime and the German General Staff to retain 5, 000 machine-guns "to use them against the Revolution." When the Allies occupied the Rhineland, they re-installed the old bureaucrats swept away by the Revolution. Colonel J. L. Hunt, the officer in charge of civil affairs with the American forces in Germany, revealed in his report on the occupation of the city and district of Coblenz how the Allies supported these reactionary bureaucrats:

"It was fortunate indeed for Germany that the plans of the independent wing of the Socialist Party were foiled. The counsel of moderation won the day, and most of the ex-imperial officers remained at their post. In occupied territory *their retention was made a condition of the armistice*.... In many cases our arrival was welcomed by the officials, who regarded our coming as being of great assistance in enforcing their authority, which had been weakened by the revolution."

The French General Hirschauer was even more outspoken. On his arrival on the German side of the Rhine, he told the Germans: "*C'est bien entendu, plus de Soviets ni d'histoire de ce genre!*" ("One thing is clear: no more Soviets or any monkey business of that sort!")

In the general European attack against the Soviet Union which Marshal Foch planned, he allotted no small part to Germany. Lloyd George in his "Memoirs of the Peace Conference" elaborated this point. The new "Holy Alliance" of the Western imperialist powers thought of enlisting the entire European continent in their anti-Soviet crusade. Thus, Poland was not given her independence for Poland's sake but as a *place d'armes* against the young Soviet Republic, which she immediately became under the command of the French General Maxime Weygand. The Hungarian Soviet Republic was crushed by the military power of the Entente. Determined to stamp out every vestige of revolutionary spirit, the Entente did not materially undermine German imperialism, which Britain used as a counterweight to France and which both Britain and France desired

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as a weapon to be employed against the Soviet Union. German imperialism was to be weakened and punished—but not destroyed. That was why the German generals were supported when they murdered or destroyed those Germans, like Liebknecht, Luxemburg and the Communists, who advocated close relations between an anti-imperialist Germany and the Soviet Union. But the Eberts and the men behind them did not, like the Russians, fight against the imperialist principles of Versailles; they fought only against the fact that they were no longer in a position to inflict new Versailles on other nations. This mentality led them to give immediate support in the Baltic adventure to the war in the East.

To be sure, in the first period after the world war Germany's wounds were too fresh and the antagonisms between the victorious and vanquished powers too lively for the German imperialists to exploit the hostility between the Allies and the Soviet Union so as to obtain new territory in the East. Even the attempt of the German generals to push forward Germany's boundaries at the expense of Poland were without success. In partly Polish-speaking, partly German-speaking Upper Silesia, nationalistic sentiments were so inflamed that between 1919 and 1921 small-scale warfare broke out three times between Germany and Poland. The generals utilized their Free Corps, which drowned all strike actions in Upper Silesia in the blood of Polish *and* German workers. But in the boundary question, a plebiscite gave Poland a part of Upper Silesia, West Prussia (the so-called Polish Corridor), and access to the Baltic. Neither the open terror of the Free Corps nor the secret terror of the *Fehme* could alter these results.

Germany's isolation was virtually complete. In 1922, at the Genoa Reparations Conference, the German delegation heard the rumor that the Allies intended to offer the Soviet Union a share in reparations. Immediately Chancellor Wirth, a liberal Centrist, and the Democratic Foreign Minister Rathenau decided to enter into negotiations with the Soviets. The result was a mutual treaty of peace and friendship signed on April 16 at Rapallo, near Genoa, whereby for the first time diplomatic relations between Republican Germany and Soviet Russia were placed on a normal basis. President Ebert was "extremely annoyed" at the conclusion of the pact and wanted to dismiss Rathenau from his post, as the English Ambassador, Viscount d'Abernon, relates in his Memoirs. The murder of Rathenau a few weeks later made it unnecessary for Ebert to act.

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But he did take revenge on Wirth. The fall of Chancellor Wirth in November 1922 and his replacement by a rightist government under the leadership of Wilhelm Cuno, director general of the Hamburg-America Line, was the result of Ebert's unmitigated anger at the Rapallo treaty.

Ebert's behavior typified the philistine narrow-mindedness and petty prejudices of the Social Democratic leaders. Their hatred of the Soviet Union blinded them to the fact that at bottom the fate of the Reich depended on lasting peace and friendship between Germany and the Soviet Union. Certain bourgeois groups, in whom partisan interests did not take precedence over national interests, understood that fact much better. After Versailles, there were groups in the German bourgeoisie and officers' corps which followed the traditional foreign policy of Bismarck and advocated peaceful collaboration between Germany and Russia. They soon realized, however, that the Soviet Union was a people's state which would never indulge in schemes to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for the German imperialists. Yet so long as Germany and the Soviet Union lived together in peace, trade relations between the two countries proved mutually beneficial. But the decisive section of the capitalists and Junkers considered Germany's position between the West and the East as a chance for a double game. At bottom, their foreign policy consisted in dealing with the East in order to extort more from the West, and *vice versa*. It was a policy of "finessing" (*finassieren*), in the words of Foreign Minister Stresemann, a policy of many-sided maneuvering not for the sake of peace but to win time for German imperialism to gain new vigor.

When the German government halted passive resistance and began to stabilize the mark, the Dawes plan for reparations was adopted early in 1924. It provided for payments for the next five years, rising from a billion marks in the first year to two and a half billions in 1928-29, then giving way to a new settlement. As surety, the nations claiming reparations obtained a decisive share in the control of the state railways. The *Reichsbank* also came under foreign control, and the American S. Parker Gilbert took up residence in Berlin as reparations agent.

With this settlement, the Anglo-Saxon powers had dealt France a heavy blow. The reparations question, exploited by Paris as a means of furthering the imperialist aims of the French bourgeoisie, was taken out of French hands and turned into an instrument of An-

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glo-American policy. While America sought primarily a market for her capital investment, British policy worked systematically to strengthen Germany as a European counterweight to France and especially as a potential opponent of Soviet Russia. The British ambassador, Viscount D'Abernon, became the soul of anti-Soviet machinations in Berlin.

At the end of 1925, the Locarno Pact was signed between England, France, Germany, Italy, and several smaller European states. Germany renounced any revision of her western boundaries; but the German government, in adamantly refusing to give any similar pledges regarding the eastern frontiers, enjoyed the benevolent support of Britain. At closed sessions of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Reichstag, Foreign Minister Stresemann described the Locarno Pact as an instrument with which, in a short time, he hoped to revise Germany's eastern boundaries. Mr. Ormsby-Gore, however, revealed the true meaning of Locarno to the Tory British government of which he was then a member: "The solidarity of Christian civilization is necessary to stem the most sinister growth that has arisen in European history.... The struggle at Locarno, as I see it, was this: Is Germany to regard her future as bound up with the fate of the great Western powers, or is she going to work with Russia for the destruction of Western civilization. Locarno means that so far as the present Government of Germany is concerned, it is detached from Russia and is throwing in its lot with the Western party."¹ At the same time, Locarno signified an appreciable strengthening of Britain's influence on the continent at the expense of France: the pact made England a guarantor of the boundaries of France and Belgium, while France's satellite state, Poland, received no such guarantee from Britain. A year later, in September 1926, Germany entered the League of Nations.

Early in 1927, the British government broke off diplomatic and trade relations with the Soviet Union. Shortly afterward the Germans carried out a police raid on the Soviet trade delegation in Berlin, similar to the incident in London preceding the break in relations between Britain and the Soviet Union. At the same time, anti-Soviet intrigues, financed by the oil-magnate, Sir Henry Deterding, and furthered by reactionary German politicians and generals, intensified. The Social Democratic leaders sought to divert attention from their own acquiescence in German re-armament by "revelations" concerning Russia's alleged re-arming of Germany. Actually,

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the whole affair reduced itself to the building of an airplane factory by the Junkers firm in Russia. Not one of the planes produced there ever reached Germany, and the Social-Democratic *Vorwaerts* complained bitterly on January 17, 1927, that "in that way Bolshevism was being provided with the most up-to-date methods and techniques of modern warfare." When the Social-Democrats scandalously agreed in 1928 to the building of some pocket battleships, one of their most prominent leaders, Otto Hoersing, justified the move on the ground that Soviet Russia "has developed into the greatest menace to Europe, in fact, to the entire world."

In the first years after the inflation, the formation of international cartels between German industry and that of the other Western powers made rapid progress and favored the renaissance of German imperialism. The beginnings of the potash cartel go back to 1924: in 1926, it was finally established between Germany and France, and dominated the world market. In the same month that Germany entered the League of Nations, the international steel cartel was created. These and other cartels, especially those formed by the German chemical and electrical trusts, often exerted fateful influence on political events in the years ahead. The masters of German economy used them as a powerful weapon in their efforts to dominate the world market and undermine the position of other capitalist powers.

There was a special reason for the marked strengthening of German business in the framework of world economy. Between 1924 and 1928, at least 63 billion marks were invested in German industry. More than 30 billions came from abroad, especially from the United States, in the form of loans to Germany: and they became the basis for the modernization and rationalization of Germany's productive plant, whose capacity increased at an extraordinary rate.

The rapidly expanding German economy was especially hard hit by the world crisis which began in October 1929. The sudden recall of foreign loans led to the collapse of big banks and industrial enterprises. Whole branches of industry fell silent, and the number of unemployed rose to 7,000,000.

At the beginning of 1929, the Dawes Plan was replaced by the Young Plan, which saddled Germany with a six-year term of reparations, yearly payments averaging 2 billion marks. With the acceptance of this plan, the last Allied controls in Berlin were relaxed;

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the State railways and *Reichsbank* were returned to German sovereignty, and in 1930 Allied troops evacuated the entire Rhineland.

But now the deepening world crisis caused the collapse of the entire system of reparations payments. On July 1, 1931, the Hoover moratorium went into effect, in accordance with which payments on international debts were suspended for a year. One year later, in June 1932, the Lausanne Reparations Conference decided to stop all further reparations payments. In principle, it was decided that Germany would have to make a final payment of 3 billion marks in 1935, but everyone knew that it would never be paid.

Thus ended the chapter of reparations, which had evoked so much international confusion and conflict: Germany had paid 10,800,000,000 marks in cash and about 20 billion marks in goods (coal, merchant ships, etc.). Approximately the same total sum of 30 billion marks came into Germany in the form of foreign loans. Reparations and foreign loans just about balanced each other. But it must be borne in mind that the reparations payments fell as an additional burden on the hard-pressed German people.

After Germany's entry into the League of Nations in September 1926, succeeding governments of the Reich demanded with increasing insistence "equality of armaments" and territorial revision of the Versailles Treaty. During the negotiations with Mr. Owen D. Young in 1929, Dr. Schacht, President of the *Reichsbank*, demanded the return of Germany's colonies and the revision of her eastern boundaries. A year later, in the midst of crisis, German imperialism made a bold move: the German government declared a customs union, prelude to territorial annexation, with Austria. Britain and the United States supported the move, but it failed because of the hostility of the continental European countries led by France. Early in 1932, Chancellor Brüning conferred at Geneva with the ex-leader of the British Labor Party, Ramsay MacDonald, and the Italian Fascist, Dino Grandi; he raised the demand that the German army be doubled in strength and that Germany have the right to possess heavy weapons of which she had been deprived by the Versailles Treaty. MacDonald tried to obtain the support of French Premier Tardieu for this project. Finally, on December 11, 1932, the League of Nations granted Germany equality of rights in armaments.

The German people were freed of the burdens and humiliations of the *Diktat* of Versailles. Having regained a footing of equality with the other nations, Germany had a chance to develop in peace

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and security, once the low point of the economic crisis had passed. But it soon became evident that the liquidation of the Versailles Treaty was only the end of the peaceful phase of German foreign policy. German imperialism had concealed its sharp claws until it felt itself sufficiently strong again. Now it sought to inflict on the German people a burden a hundred times more severe than Versailles; it moved to force a new war and a super-Versailles on Europe and the world.

The time was ripe for Hitler. Fifty days after December 11, 1932, the day which had brought Germany equality of rights, the German war party brought Hitler into power.

XI

HITLER BECOMES CHANCELLOR

The Nazi movement did not come to power in Germany because it had won over the majority of the people to its policies, or because the Germans are “by nature” Nazis. Even under the most advantageous conditions, despite fraudulent elections, terror, and the pro-Nazi sympathies of many government officials, the National-Socialists never won a clear majority of the voters in anything like a normal election. Nor did they achieve power at a moment when their influence was at its height—after the Reichstag elections of July 31, 1932, when they received 13,740,000 votes. At this time, Hindenburg and the reactionary clique working with him were only willing to appoint Hitler Vice-Chancellor under Franz von Papen, but Hitler refused the offer.

What the Nazis could not accomplish at the peak of their influence, they accomplished when the first grave signs of doubt and confusion arose among the millions they had mobilized, and when the Nazi party was in the throes of an internal crisis. Three months after their most resounding electoral victory, in the Reichstag elections of November 6, 1932, they lost 2,000,000 votes. Several factors had weakened the movement: first of all, Hitler had not come to power on his own nor had Hindenburg named him Chancellor. The fight of the anti-Nazis had some influence on Nazi followers. Moreover, the Nazi party was in financial difficulties because German big business had stopped giving lavish subsidies. By withholding their money, the big businessmen sought to make Hitler enter into a coalition with the German Nationalists rather than set up his own party dictatorship.

Describing the mood of the Nazi Party, Goebbels wrote in his diary for December, 1932:

“Deep depression throughout the organization. One feels so worn out; one longs for nothing but a few weeks’ escape from the whole business....”

“Phone call from Dr. Ley: The situation in the party is getting worse from hour to hour.”

“The year 1932 has brought us eternal ill luck.... The past was sad, and the future looks dark and gloomy; all chances and hopes have quite disappeared.”

“For hours, the leader paces up and down the room in the hotel.

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It is obvious that he is thinking very hard.... Suddenly he stops and says: 'If the party once falls to pieces, I shall shoot myself without more ado.' A dreadful threat, and most depressing."¹ But Hitler did not have to shoot himself, nor did his party fall to pieces. The parties and classes opposed to his assumption of power did not take advantage of this favorable situation. They failed to act. But the reactionaries needed him and his party in order to set up a dictatorship. On January 4, 1933, in the presence of Franz von Papen, Hitler negotiated with the Cologne banker, Kurt von Schroeder, a financial intimate of the big industrialists and a man who had excellent international connections with British and American financial interests. As a result, Hitler obtained all the money he needed to finance his campaigns and his terrorist gangs.

And he received much more. On January 30, 1933, Hitler was named Chancellor of Germany by von Hindenburg, the very man whom the middle-class democrats and Social-Democratic voters had elected President in order to defend the Weimar Republic against Hitler. At first, and for a brief space, the Nazis ruled in a coalition with other reactionary parties and groups. They did not yet hold exclusive title to represent the political interests of German imperialism.

It was no accident that Hitler became Chancellor and that he and his party received increased financial, political, and moral assistance at a moment when the Nazis were in serious difficulties. For the reactionary cliques in Germany were confronted with the momentous question: what would happen if the Hitler movement disintegrated and progressive forces were allowed to develop? They finally decided that it was vital to prevent this rather than to perpetuate differences of opinion and competition in the struggle for power. In every acute situation since 1918, the traditionally right-wing parties had failed to bring the great mass of the people directly under their influence. Now the German upper classes realized that the crumbling of the Hitler movement would not benefit them but the Left. The masses, disillusioned with the Nazis and aroused by demagogic anti-capitalist slogans, might have marched into the camp of democracy and the working class rather than into that of the old parties of the Junkers and generals, the Krupps, Thyssens, and Hugenburgs.

So a "candidate for suicide" became Chancellor of Germany! This same sort of "miracle" was to recur often, particularly during

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international crises. But behind these miracles stood the very prosaic fact that the Nazi movement was too valuable a weapon for the reactionaries to smash it.

The German ruling classes were bent on a dictatorship. But a dictatorship of big business, the Junkers, and the generals was not possible without the support of the masses. The workers would oppose it; so would democratic elements in the middle class. Moreover, it would have meant by-passing the powerful Nazi movement. Without a broad mass base, the counter-revolution would have faced a well-nigh impossible task. Pondering the lessons of World War I, the upper classes realized that they had to make far-reaching political preparations to solve the "German question" in an imperialist way. To achieve that, all Germany had to be harnessed materially and spiritually to a new imperialist war.

But such a solution was not possible so long as there was a working class movement; so long as there remained democratic liberties, however curtailed, such as the right to strike, freedom of assembly, freedom of association, freedom of the press, and free elections. In short, so long as the working class and the democratic republic were still able to mobilize the people against such a policy.

Nor could the total destruction of democracy be carried out with the Social-Democrats, heretofore the outstanding party of the Weimar Republic. For however much the right-wing Social-Democrats and trade union leaders had aided German imperialism since the outbreak of World War I, their participation in a dictatorship would have won over neither the urban middle classes nor the peasantry. On the contrary, it would have left the Social-Democratic leaders without a mass following and driven Social-Democratic workers into the Communist camp.

The Reichstag elections of 1930 and 1932 are a political barometer of this trend. What the Social Democrats lost in votes the Communists gained. Between 1930 and 1932 the former lost 1,338,000 votes; the latter gained 1,384,000. In the November 6, 1932, elections, in which the Nazis lost 2,000,000 votes, the Social-Democrats obtained 7,240,000, and the Communists 5,980,000 votes. This represented a loss, over the preceding election, of 712,000 votes for the Social-Democrats and a gain of 698,000 for Communists. Both workers' parties together received 13,220,000 votes, about 65 per cent of the 18,000,000 industrial and white-collar workers then in Germany. In elections during crisis years, the

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Nazis never succeeded in obtaining a large vote among the industrial workers.

Nor was it possible to set up a German dictatorship in the form of a restoration of the monarchy or a purely military dictatorship; even a great majority of the Nazi-influenced masses were against a monarchist restoration. They had high hopes of a new “anti-capitalist” national government led by Hitler, a government of the “little men,” but they had no faith whatever in the old discredited monarchy.

All inner differences concerning the role of Hitler and his movement in this dictatorship gave way in the face of the danger that this potent political instrument might disintegrate before the reactionaries could use it. Although big business, the Junkers, and the generals mistrusted and even despised Hitler; and though they made strenuous efforts for a time to prevent him from gaining exclusive power, one thing they recognized: the Nazi movement provided an unequivocal answer to a good many questions which the old leaders of the German bourgeoisie had not been able to answer. And the proof that they acknowledged this fact was the extensive political and financial help they rendered Hitler.

For Hitler had finally created what had hitherto remained a dream of the traditional parties of German imperialism under the Weimar Republic: within a few years, the Nazis had developed into the biggest mass party in Germany. Hitler brought “the people” to the counter-revolution. In a period of acute economic and social crisis, the National-Socialist leaders had succeeded in channelizing the unrest and despair of the millions and in building a mass party of the counter-revolution, with an army of hundreds of thousands of members, most of whom owned arms and had had some military training.

The Nazi leaders had successfully duped these masses with lies that all their misery sprang from the Weimar Republic, the Versailles Treaty, the Jews, Marxism, Bolshevism, liberalism, and all progressive thought. And they systematically imbued their followers with the deepest hatred of the labor movement and its organizations.

This was a party of a new type for the German counter-revolution, a mammoth party of “true German patriots,” ready today to trample on German democracy, labor, liberals, and anyone else who stood in their way; ready tomorrow to lunge at the French, the

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Poles, the Czechs, the Russians, the English, and all others unwilling to recognize Germany's right to world mastery. This was the party of the German "master race," filled with every barbarous idea and tradition, with all the backwardness and confusion so prevalent in German history.

It would not have been difficult to smash the Nazi movement politically and militarily. It had been done before, after Hitler's "beer-hall putsch" in Munich in 1923. Had the Reichswehr and the bourgeoisie wanted to do it again, they would undoubtedly have received the full support of the working class. But that would have entailed political and social concessions to the impoverished workers, the petty bourgeoisie, and peasants; strengthening the Weimar Republic; and renunciation of an aggressive policy of imperialism based on massive rearmament.

But the German bourgeoisie, led by its most reactionary sections, had not reasserted its power after 1918 only to yield it up or weaken it again. It meant to exploit its regained power to the full. And under the pressure of the crisis, in its fear of the social and political consequences, and in its lust to revenge the loss of World War I in a second world conflict, the bourgeoisie behaved more recklessly and brutally than ever.

So it came to pass that the high and mighty German imperialists made Adolf Hitler, the Austrian lumpen-proletarian who began his career in Munich as a petty spy of the Reichswehr, the Chancellor of Germany. They chose him as the successor of Bismarck! As the head of the Nazi Party, Hitler had vied with many other reactionary leaders who had shot up like mushrooms after 1918, but he had proved himself the fittest instrument for predatory German imperialism.

Hitler became Chancellor of Germany—yet the Nazis did not have a majority either in the Cabinet or in Parliament. The Fuehrer had to share power with Hindenburg's intimate, Vice-Chancellor Franz von Papen, and the representative of the German Nationalists, Hugenberg. The Prussian General von Blomberg, who soon turned out to be a Nazi general, became Defense Minister; the old Pan-German, Hugenberg, Minister of Trade and Economy; the career diplomat, von Neurath, Foreign Minister; the leader of the *Stahlhelm* veterans' organization, Seldte, Labor Minister; and the conservative Count Schwerin-Krosigk, Finance Minister. Hitler took his oath to the Weimar constitution and pledged to President

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von Hindenburg that he would make no changes in the leadership of the Reichswehr or in his Cabinet.

Everything proceeded “constitutionally.” Hitler was put in power not by a “revolution,” but by backstairs parliamentary maneuvers and intrigues among the reactionary cliques. The terrible tragedy of Germany—later to become a ghastly world- tragedy—commenced strictly within the framework of the Weimar constitution. The bourgeois Weimar Republic spawned the Nazi monster. Whoever rose up in protest was violating “law and order.” Many at the time did protest, but far more numerous were those Germans who, under the influence of their leaders, had learned from history always to respect their superiors, and to render unto Caesar that which was Caesar’s, even if they had nothing but scorn for this Caesar. Very soon it became apparent that “Caesar” demanded everything—first from Germany, then from the world.

XII

THE NAZIS SET UP THEIR DICTATORSHIP

On January 30, 1933, Hitler became Chancellor in a coalition government of the reactionary parties and groups. To add insult to injury, the deadly enemies of democracy passed off their dictatorship as a government of the Weimar Republic. It was as if history with gruesome irony was bent on showing the German people that democracy could mean anything in their "democratic" republic, in which reactionaries occupied every key post and decisive position of power.

Hitler was a partner in the reactionary dictatorship; but it was not yet a full-blown Nazi dictatorship. For a short time Hitler was forced to continue playing the comedy of legality to which he had committed himself to Hindenburg and his partners in the coalition. He still had to maneuver in order to dupe both. For behind Hindenburg stood the Reichswehr generals, and behind his German Nationalist colleagues stood important big business men and the Junkers who insisted on retaining some semblance of legality in their dictatorship as a last safeguard to prevent Hitler from excluding them from the political leadership of German imperialism.

The Hitler-Hugenberg coalition could rule without a Reichstag only if, in accordance with the constitution, two-thirds of the Reichstag deputies passed a so-called enabling law, voting themselves out of existence. The Catholic Centrists, without whose assent no two-thirds vote was possible, still refused to agree to such a law. They feared that a free hand for the Hitler-Hugenberg coalition would mean attacks on the Catholic Church and on Catholic government officials, and would also affect the interests of Catholic industrialists in the armaments industry.

In this situation, Hitler demanded of his German Nationalist colleagues the dissolution of the Reichstag and the calling of new elections. If the German Nationalists insisted on adhering formally to the constitution, Hitler would seek by means of a new election, in which he hoped to win a clear majority, to solve in his own way the question of the two-thirds vote in Parliament and the constitution. Hugenberg and von Papen had no illusions about Hitler's intentions. Lacking mass appeal, they could not hope to win anything from an election. After long deliberations and after Hitler had pledged himself not to alter the composition of the government, no matter what

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the electoral results would be, they consented to new elections. The extent of the conflict in the camp of the reactionary leaders can be judged by the fact that Hugenberg and von Papen refused to vote for banning the Communist Party and depriving the Communist Reichstag deputies of their mandate. For the exclusion of the Communist deputies would have only further strengthened Hitler's position in the Reichstag and in the coalition regime. The date set for new elections to the Reichstag was March 5, 1933.

The electoral campaign, accompanied by bloody clashes between Nazis and anti-Nazis, was waged with whirlwind intensity throughout the country. The Nazi leaders were determined to win a clear majority of the votes at any price. They sought to demonstrate to that section of the big bourgeoisie which still doubted the feasibility of a purely Nazi dictatorship, their ever-growing and decisive influence with the masses. Unscrupulously, they exploited their newly won positions in the federal and provincial governments, especially in the police force. Their influence was enhanced by the fact that Hindenburg had named their leader, Hitler, Chancellor of the Reich. At the same time, the Nazis waged their electoral campaign in preparation for "the night of the long knives," for a mass pogrom against the labor movement and its leaders, liberals and democrats, Jews and Catholics. Nazi propaganda concentrated more and more on warnings of an imminent Communist uprising and on revelations of an alleged Communist plot, which they themselves had planned and uncovered, involving "fiendish terrorist plans."

Despite all this, the Nazi leaders soon realized that their prospects for winning a majority were dismal. Many Nazis were even worried lest the party again lose votes, as in the November, 1932, elections. For the opponents of National-Socialism, uncowed by Nazi terror, campaigned with marked vigor and tenacity.

The Nazi leaders knew that they had to win the election. Not to gain a majority or, worse still, to lose votes, would weaken their position in the coalition and set new obstacles in their path of a purely Nazi dictatorship. So they hit on the idea of attaining their ends by means of a gigantic provocation. What they could not achieve by demagoguery and terror, they hoped to accomplish by means of a *blitzkrieg* against the German people.

Their plan was to drive the German people into headlong panic, rob them of all powers of rational judgment, and then come forward as the only saviors of society. The method they devised was based

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on flaunting the “Red menace,” a method used since 1918 by every other party in the Weimar Republic. The Communist bogey had been used time and again with more or less success—but never without at least some success.

But the Nazis were no gentlemen like those British Tories who in 1924 used the forged “Zinoviev letter” to stage a noisy anti-Bolshevik campaign to win victory at the polls. Mere forgeries were not enough for them: was not their whole propaganda based on fraud? They required something far more grandiose and startling. On February 27, 1933, they set fire to the Reichstag building, discovered the blaze they had themselves started, extinguished it, accused the Communists of the fire, and then paraded before Germany as the saviors of the country.

This provocation also served as a signal for the mass pogrom they had planned. Tens of thousands of Social-Democrats, Communists, liberals, Jews, Catholics, and Germans of every class were arrested, brutally tortured, and foully murdered by Nazi gangs sworn in as auxiliary policemen. The Nazi barracks dripped with the blood of the tortured and slain. The terrorist gangs became pillars of law and order; torture became an official method of this new Reich; pogroms became feats of patriotism.

After the Reichstag fire, Germany divided into two great camps. One consisted of the “know-nothings” who swallowed the provocation whole. Since 1918, they had been carefully and thoroughly schooled by the parties of the Weimar Republic to believe the worst about the Communists and the Soviet Union. They were joined by those who, despite their qualms, refused to believe that the National-Socialists could commit such a wanton act. Had not Hindenburg, the President of Germany, made the Nazis the leading government party? The other camp knew well who the incendiaries were. But it in turn was divided between those who courageously denounced the Nazi provocation, and those who kept silent out of fear of the Nazis or for “diplomatic reasons.”

To this last-named group undoubtedly belonged the heads of the Reichswehr; the old Pan-German chauvinist, Hugenberg; and the diplomatic spy of World War I, Franz von Papen. They and their colleagues had no doubts as to who the guilty parties were. They realized also that the Nazis would utilize the Reichstag blaze in such a way as to shift the balance of forces within the reactionary coalition in favor of Hitler. They knew that they would not find it easy to

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deal with their Nazi associates, who in the struggle for power would stop at nothing. But they felt that the destruction of democracy and the labor movement, the rearming of Germany, and the preparations for new imperialist aggressions were far more vital than all such "petty and subordinate" differences of opinion. So Hugenberg and von Papen acquiesced in every measure Hitler proposed to save the Fatherland from the "Communist menace," including the outlawing of the Communist Party.

In this situation, Hugenberg and von Papen did insist on one thing: they accepted the ban on the Communist Party, yet they refused to allow the duly elected Communist deputies to be deprived of their mandates. For they could not completely rid themselves of the illusion that with the help of the Communist deputies they could prevent Hitler from obtaining a two-thirds majority in the newly elected Reichstag. The German Nationalists had not yet given up the hope of holding the balance of power in the government.

The elections were marked by unbridled Nazi terror. Over 39,000,000 voters went to the polls, almost 4,000,000 more than in November 6, 1932. The Nazis received 17,772,000 votes, a gain of 6,035,000; the German Nationalists 3,137,000, a gain of 178,000; the Social-Democrats 7,182,000, a loss of only 66,000; the Centrists 5,499,000 votes, a gain of 163,000; and the party that suffered the fiercest repression, the Communists, received 4,848,000 votes, a loss of 1,132,000.

The Reichstag fire, the panic it helped create, and the wave of organized Nazi terror paid handsome dividends. The National-Socialists gained 6,000,000 votes. Yet despite the widespread falsification of returns, the Nazis did not succeed even now in winning a majority of the voters and the German people. They obtained about 43 per cent of the votes. Their total of 17,772,000 compared with a combined vote of 21,571,000 for the Social-Democrats, Catholic Centrists, Communists, and German Nationalists. Despite all the terror and fraud, the Nazis could not win over large numbers of adherents of these four parties.

Nevertheless, Hitler was able to utilize the results of the "Reichstag fire" election to transform the coalition dictatorship into a Nazi dictatorship. Now he began systematically to suppress and "coordinate" all other political parties and organizations. He demanded of the new Reichstag an enabling act which would grant him as Chancellor full powers for four years: thus he would be in a position

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to promulgate laws and conclude treaties without the consent of the Reichstag, the Reich Council, and the President of the Reich.

The incoming Reichstag consisted of 656 deputies, 343 of whom were National-Socialists and German Nationalists. Opposed to them were 291 deputies of the Social-Democrats, Centrists, and Communists, and 22 deputies from small splinter parties. To obtain the necessary two-thirds majority for the enabling act, Hitler first declared the seats of the 81 Communists null and void. But even after annulling these mandates, the outcome of the voting still depended on the behavior of the Centrists, or at least some of them. Hitler negotiated with the leaders of the Centrist Party, Monsignor Kaas and Heinrich Bruening, who also must have been aware of the real culprits in the burning of the Reichstag. By promising to sign a *concordat* with the Vatican and to respect the interests of the Catholic Church in Germany, Hitler elicited from them the pledge that the Centrists would vote *en bloc* for his “full powers” decree.

March 23, 1933, was a tragic hour for German Catholicism. Its political leaders—in the face of strong opposition in their own ranks—voted to make Hitler absolute dictator of Germany for four years. The Social-Democratic deputies voted against the “full powers law,” but their negative vote was accompanied by a declaration of their party leader, Otto Weis, in which he expressed his solidarity with the demand formulated by Hitler for “German equality of rights” in foreign affairs.

Weis asserted: “We agree with the demand for German equality of rights in foreign affairs which the Reichschancellor has raised; and we support it all the more vigorously in that we have always fought energetically for that principle.” Weis spoke in the name—though not with the approval—of all the Social Democratic deputies. Did they not know of Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*? Were they not acquainted with the plans of the German trusts and Reichswehr generals for whom Hitler spoke? Weis and the other Social-Democrats in Parliament knew exactly what Hitler meant by “equal rights for the German people”; he meant unlimited rearming for new imperialist aggressions. And yet the Social-Democratic fraction of the Reichstag expressed solidarity with his demand; they even justified it as a fundamental principle for which the Social-Democrats had long fought.

On May 17, 1933, the representatives of German Social-Democracy and Catholic Centrism repeated this show of solidarity

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with Hitler's foreign policy in even more striking fashion. On that day, Hitler called a special session of the Reichstag, in order to make clear to the governments of other powers that all Germany, not only the Nazis, backed German rearmament and her "freedom to defend herself." In a long address, Hitler justified Germany's right to rearm, which he then called in diplomatic language "Germany's equality in the world." After his speech, Hermann Goering presented the following resolution for the deputies to vote on: "The German Reichstag as the representative of the German people agrees with the declaration of the government; and in the decisive question involving the nation's life, the equality of the German nation in the world, stands solidly behind the government." Not only the German Nationalists and National-Socialists, but also the Centrists and sixty of the Social-Democratic deputies voted for this resolution. The Social-Democrats had been specially invited to the session to furnish the outside world with a demonstration of German national unity behind Hitler's rearmament program and his foreign policy.

And while, down below, Nazi gangsters with clubs and revolvers began to whip the Germans into line for the coming war, blotting out every trace of liberty in the country, non-Nazi deputies, up above, demonstrated their solidarity with this policy of preparing for World War II. They used their last legal appearance to give the masses one more lesson in how to surrender to German reaction, the traditional policy of the German liberals and Social-Democrats. A few months later—at the Reichstag fire trial—a Bulgarian, George Dimitroff, gave these German democrats a lesson in how to conduct oneself in the struggle against Nazism.

The behavior of the Centrists and of many of the Social-Democratic leaders during these fateful months was typical. Where they could still come forward legally, they did so only to accept Hitler's promises, surrender, disarm politically, and dissolve their own organizations. They all behaved as though possessed of the spirit of Job: "Though He slay me, yet will I put my trust in Him."

Hitler did not hesitate to "slay" them. All the non-Nazi parties that had hoped the Communists alone would serve as lightning-conductors and divert the wrath of the Nazis, were soon tragically disillusioned. On March 28, 1933, the pro-monarchist war veterans' organization, the *Stahlhelm* (Steel Helmets), was dissolved; its leader, Seldte, promptly joined the Nazis. In April, 1933, all Social-Democratic headquarters were occupied by the Nazis, Social-

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Democratic newspapers were banned, and their printing presses confiscated.

Every attempt by the leaders of the trade union movement, the *Allgemeine Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund*, to compromise with the National-Socialists on the question of preserving the trade unions, was futile. Their alacrity to obey the Hitler regime and function under its command led to naught. The labor leaders degraded themselves to such a point that on May 1, 1933, they called upon the workers to participate in the Nazi May Day celebration. The very next day, all trade union headquarters were occupied and their assets confiscated. The Nazis took over the unions, dismissed their leaders, driving some into exile, jailing others, and murdering many. The German trade union leaders who, instead of uniting the workers in struggle against the Nazis, had followed out the policies of the right-wing Social Democrats to the bitter end, now handed over their unions, the prize of the German labor movement, to the Nazi enemy without a fight.

On May 10, 1933, the Social-Democratic Party was banned and all its auxiliary organizations dissolved. On June 5, 1933, Bruening was compelled to disband the Catholic Centrist Party. On June 27, Hugenberg was forced out of the government coalition and his party, the German Nationalists, was dissolved. In vain the Nationalists sought to escape their fate by rebaptizing themselves “the German Nationalist Front.” The question of who was to wield the dictatorship was now solved—with Hugenberg and the German Nationalists on the losing side.

The Nazis began to “cleanse” the state apparatus from top to bottom. Social-Democratic, democratic, and Jewish civil servants were replaced by National-Socialists or by those who hastened to leap on the Nazi bandwagon. The police and secret police (*Gestapo*) became powerful instruments in the hands of the Nazis for persecuting their opponents. District and provincial governments were dismissed, with administrative powers entrusted to Nazi commissars.

Having triumphed, the Nazi dictatorship sought feverishly to strengthen its hold in every conceivable direction and to turn every German into a National-Socialist. Any opposition to Nazism became a crime against the state and any organization that was not National-Socialist was dissolved or “co-ordinated.” The adventure of the Third Reich could now begin. Hitler promised the German people that this adventure would last a thousand years.

XIII

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The majority of the German people, especially the decisive sections of the workers, were against the Nazis. But, having said this, one must add that this majority surrendered to National-Socialism without a struggle. Neither the workers as a class, the middle-class democrats, the Catholics, nor the liberal intellectuals, all of whom saw in Nazism their enemy, proved themselves, in those fateful years, sufficiently far-sighted and resolute to take up the fight against Nazism in order to safeguard their own existence and, with it, the existence of their country.

The situation was rendered even more tragic by the fact that millions of Germans, Social-Democrats as well as Communists, middle-class democrats as well as Catholics, saw the need for such a fight. Individual Germans of every social category demonstrated courage and self-sacrifice in opposing Nazism. Germany was in a state of permanent guerrilla warfare: bloody clashes at meetings and demonstrations were frequent. The most active of the anti-Hitler Germans defended their democratic liberties against the Nazi gangs and the “republican authorities” who so conspicuously aided these gangs, they defended democracy not only with speeches but with their lives. Many of these anti-Nazis were thrown into jail by the reactionary judges of the Weimar Republic. There were moments, such as after von Papen’s *coup* against the Prussian state government, when the workers would have responded at once to an appeal by the trade unions and the workers’ parties for a general strike. They waited in vain for such an appeal. What was lacking? A unified, centrally directed struggle by the workers’ parties and the entire democratic camp against National-Socialism.

If the policies of the counter-revolution were determined by the most reactionary forces, those of the anti-Nazi camp were determined by the working class. Only the workers could have become the focus of resistance against the projected dictatorship; only they could have attracted and gathered together all the other groups comprising firm or even vacillating foes of the Nazis. But such a move presupposed unity of action on the part of the working class parties and the concentration of all their efforts against National-Socialism.

Such unity did not materialize. The leaders of the Social-

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Democrats and the Communists had diametrically opposed views on the struggle against Nazism; and although the executioner stood outside the door for both, they were unable to agree on a common platform of struggle.

The right-wing leaders of the Social-Democrats and trade unions were ready for any compromise with the bourgeois parties, with arch reactionaries, even with Hitler; they were not ready for a single compromise, not even the slightest, with the Communists. They explored every path except that of working together with the Communists to mobilize the democratic forces of the nation against Nazism. They were ready to pin their hopes on anything: on the reactionary Centrist leaders, Hindenburg and the Reichswehr, the constitution which by now was nothing but a scrap of paper, the Supreme Court manned by reactionary judges, and finally even on Hitler—but not on the strength of the organized workers and the unification of the democratic forces in Germany.

These leaders wanted to save the Weimar Republic, or what was left of it, but the methods they used to accomplish their ends only hastened the downfall of German democracy. Even in those critical years when their traditional policies proved unmistakably bankrupt, the right-wing leaders of Social-Democracy were unable to draw the necessary conclusions and break with policies that had made the Weimar Republic ripe for conquest by any adventurer.

The anti-democratic Reichswehr, in which imperial generals of World War I enjoyed restored power and authority; the reorganized giant industrial trusts and big banks; the estate-owning Junkers; the reactionary bureaucracy, especially in the law courts and educational institutions—all these forces of German imperialism which had lent real power to the Nazi movement and shaped it into a serious menace, now worked together to attack German democracy and the labor movement.

Nevertheless, with the advent of the economic crisis in 1929, the workers and democrats faced a far from hopeless task—if they were bent on checking the threatening dictatorship. In the ranks of the bourgeoisie there arose panic, fear of the social consequences of the crisis, and there were many different opinions as to the proper way out. The upper classes feared that the workers, middle classes, and peasants would force them to make far-reaching economic and political concessions that would end or weaken their power.

But the flagging spirits of the reactionaries began to revive after

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the 1930 Reichstag elections. For the Nazis had proved that they could divert the growing despair and bitterness of the lower middle class, peasants, and politically backward workers into reactionary channels. Big business understood the meaning of the crisis elections and drew its reactionary conclusions. But the Social-Democratic and trade union heads and most of the official leaders of the democratic forces were afflicted with blindness. They did not put forward a program to lessen the burden of the crisis on the common people; they did not take the lead in fighting to preserve the Weimar Republic and to defend democracy; they did not become the party of all those who were weary and oppressed, and whose heads were being turned by demagogues who promised everything. The result was that they failed to create, either in the working class, the middle class, or among the peasants, a willingness to struggle for their just social demands and their democratic existence. They failed to organize a common front with all the other anti-Nazi forces, not only the Communists but also the middle-class democrats, the liberal intellectuals, the Catholics, and all those who for one reason or another were hostile to Nazism. Since these leaders took no serious practical steps to help the despairing masses, they could not effectively oppose the Nazis' social demagoguery and the maneuvers of the wealthy industrialists backing them. Nor did they make it plain to the reactionaries that any attempt to set up a dictatorship would unleash a violent civil war with all its consequences, as was the case after the Kapp *putsch*. Only policies such as these would have prevented the impending catastrophe, the extent of which even the most far-sighted Germans could not then imagine.

In this period only one party in Germany, the Social-Democrats, was strong enough and wielded sufficient authority among middle-class democrats and Catholics as well as among workers to organize and make possible a policy of resistance. The Communists, as we have pointed out, did not yet have the strength to carry out such a policy against the will of the Social-Democrats and the trade unions. The Social-Democrats, on the other hand, by joining with the Communists in a common front, would have been able to unify the German working class in the fight against the reactionary dictatorship.

But the leaders of German Social-Democracy behaved in exactly contrary fashion. Although their policies met with increasing opposition within their own ranks and strengthened the influence of

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the Communists among the workers, the Social-Democrats persisted, even in the midst of the crisis, in playing the part of “a bulwark against the Left.”

The longer they pursued such a policy, the easier it became for the Nazis to mobilize the hard-hit petty bourgeoisie, peasants, and politically backward workers, in whom they instilled a fierce hatred of the organized labor movement and the Weimar Republic, which they held responsible for their hunger, unemployment, and the loss of their businesses and farms. The more the Social-Democrats and trade union leaders shrunk from giving these panic-stricken masses practical answers to the real causes of their misery, the more eagerly the latter hearkened to the demagogic promises of the Nazis.

And the more convinced the counter-revolutionaries were that they could carry out their general attack on the working class and the Weimar Republic without unleashing a civil war, the more high-handed and provocative they became. Von Papen's *coup* against the Prussian regime was a case in point. The reactionaries saw finally that the Social-Democratic leaders were beginning to resign themselves to Hitler's eventual accession to power, as if to an unavoidable spell of bad weather. They realized that the Weimar spokesmen had become convinced that “the experiment of a parliamentary government with National-Socialism had to be made.”¹ So they pressed even more relentlessly to institute a dictatorship. The German Communists were not surprised by the advent of the economic crisis. They had predicted it and warned the German people. The most persecuted party in Germany during the entire period of the Weimar Republic, they entertained no illusions about the Weimar constitution, about the behavior of the bourgeois parties and the Reichswehr, or about the aims of the Nazis in this crisis. And they clearly recognized that only a united working class could block the road to a triumph of reaction.

Nevertheless, once the crisis had started, the Communists too failed to grasp quickly or thoroughly enough all the implications of the new situation. From 1918 on, they had counterposed the fight for a socialist Germany to the bourgeois republic. To be sure, the propaganda for a socialist Germany had never prevented the Communists from advocating energetically the immediate democratic and social demands of the people. After the many defeats they had suffered, the Communists realized that without winning a majority of the workers and the sympathies of the broad masses they did not

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have the slightest prospect of bringing socialism to Germany.

After the crisis set in, the Communists continued to advance the slogan of a socialist Germany. They hoped that in the course of the depression millions of Germans, particularly workers, would be convinced of the necessity to break the power of the German financial and industrial trusts and the big landowners and establish socialism. But they overlooked the fact that in clinging to the slogan of a socialist Germany as a way out of the crisis, they played into the hands of the Social-Democrats who *were not even ready to defend the bourgeois Weimar Republic, the most elementary democratic liberties, or the most urgent social demands of the people.*

In this situation, instead of attempting to unite the whole anti-Nazi camp, above all the workers, in defense of the republic and against the threatening dictatorship, the German Communists clung to their slogan of a Socialist Germany, thus making it easier for the Social-Democratic and trade union leaders to refuse any cooperation with them. For the Social-Democrats demagogically exploited the pretext that the Communists were for a Soviet Germany, while they stood for the Weimar Republic.

Furthermore, during the first years of the crisis, the Communists allowed their justifiable bitterness over the policies of Social-Democracy to determine their tactic. They insisted upon appealing to the Social-Democratic workers over the heads of their leaders, instead of trying persistently at the same time, to come to an understanding with these leaders, especially the more progressive ones, in order to build a common front of resistance against the Nazis. The Social-Democratic leaders utilized this mistake: they refused a united front on the pretext that the Communists sought only to destroy the Social-Democratic Party and the trade unions. Sectarian attitudes within the Communist Party made it easier for them to use such arguments.

But that these arguments were merely a pretext can be demonstrated by a whole series of events, which took place during 1932 and 1933. During that period, the Communists, correcting the position they had previously taken, tried repeatedly to come to an agreement with the Social-Democratic and trade union leaders. Here are but a few of the most striking examples:

In 1932, the Central Committee of the Communist Party proposed to the leadership of the Social-Democratic Party that both groups act together to defend against Nazi attacks the Berlin prem-

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ises of the Social-Democratic *Vorwaerts*. At the same time, they declared their readiness to protect all democratic liberties and social gains as well as to defend all trade union headquarters and similar working class establishments. After the elections to the Prussian *Landtag* (Diet) on April 26, 1932, the Communist leaders made known to all Social-Democratic workers and trade unionists that they were ready to join with any organization of workers to prevent wage cuts and reductions in unemployment benefits. On July 20, 1932, the Communists appealed directly to the Executive Committee of the Social-Democratic Party and the trade unions to answer von Papen's *coup* against the Socialist-led Prussian government with a general strike. But all of these offers were refused; they were labeled "provocations."

As late as January 31, 1933, after Hitler had become Chancellor, the German Communist leader, Ernst Thaelmann, proposed to the chairmen of the Social-Democrats and the trade unions the joint organization of a general strike to overthrow the Hitler-Hugenberg regime. This proposal was rejected on the grounds that Hitler had come to power constitutionally, and that working class struggle was in order only in the event that Hitler transgressed the bounds of the Weimar constitution. Had the Social-Democrats consented even once during this period to act together with the Communists, the ice would have been broken. The disastrous split between the two parties might have been healed by common action.

In any case, the facts of history belie the oft-repeated assertion that the Communists refused to co-operate with the Social-Democrats and trade unions in defending the Weimar Republic against the Nazis. They prove rather that the right-wing Social-Democrats defended nothing and did not mean to defend anything; and they were unwilling under any circumstances to collaborate with the Communists. No doubt, the behavior of these leaders was also influenced by the fact that at bottom they were convinced that the Communists alone would be the target of the reactionaries' wrath.

There was an alternative for the Communists. They could have built a united front with the Social-Democrats if they had agreed to pursue the latter's policies. Like the Social-Democrats, they could have tolerated the policies of Bruening; they could have joined with the Social-Democrats in supporting the re-election of von Hindenburg as President of Germany; they could have shared all the illu-

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sions of the Social-Democrats and rejected every proposal involving struggle. But that would certainly not have prevented the triumph of the Nazis. The Communists would thereby simply have added their names to those who joined in the united front of capitulators to National-Socialism.

Even the criticism of that the German Communists failed to go over the heads of the Social-Democratic leaders and rouse the workers to a general strike and a life-and-death struggle against Nazism, is wide of the mark. Certainly Communist influence among the workers was growing. But their influence was not powerful enough to lead the workers, in the face of active resistance by the Social-Democrats, against the Nazis and their gangs, the Reichswehr and the police, and the combined parties of the bourgeoisie.

The Communists encountered fierce resistance even when they sought to arouse the people to fight against wage cuts and reductions in unemployment insurance, and against restrictions on their democratic liberties. There was not a single strike, led by Communists, which the leaders of Social-Democracy and the trade unions did not try to break. There was not a single large factory in which Communists and their sympathizers were not the first to lose their jobs—and with the acquiescence of the union leaders. The police, administered in many localities by Social-Democrats, intervened in brutal fashion against Communist-organized demonstrations of the unemployed, or against their political meetings. There was no other party in Germany which waged such a tenacious, courageous, and relentless fight against Nazism—and in those years, many Communists paid for it with their lives. The workers increasingly acknowledged the role of the Communists, as their successive gains in elections proved.

But even the six million who voted for the Communists at the height of their influence could not alter the fact that the majority of the organized workers were not ready to follow the Communist program of a general strike and a popular uprising, against the will of the Social-Democratic and trade union leaders. The Communists, including in their ranks the most active German workers, would have been a potent force in a broad people's movement, organized and led by the workers' parties. But as things stood, they came up against the stone-wall hostility of the Social-Democratic leaders. Despite their six million votes, the German Communists were not

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able to influence the working class and the entire democratic camp in such a way as to prevent the surrender to Nazism.

The majority of the German workers were unable to free themselves, as rapidly as the situation demanded, of a spirit of blind discipline. They had been brought up and led in that spirit. They did not choose new leaders when they realized that their old leaders were not ready to break with a policy of capitulation. Despite the efforts and warnings of the Communists, the workers allowed themselves to be led like sheep to the slaughter.

The Nazis were of course the first to profit from the acrimonious polemics and recriminations between Social-Democrats and Communists. Charges and counter-charges by the working class parties were hardly calculated to attract the backward, impoverished masses who were succumbing to Nazi demagogy. The Nazis found it easy to denounce Social-Democratic policies as "Marxist mismanagement." As for the Communists, since 1918 they had been considered outcasts by all parties of the republic, including the Social-Democrats. The petty bourgeoisie viewed them partly as a mortal enemy, partly as an isolated party that did not have the slightest chance of attaining power or of doing anything tangible for them. But in the National-Socialists these millions saw a new German party which seemed to hold the key to the solution of all the problems oppressing them, and which had very tangible prospects of forming a new government soon.

During these critical years the German churches, both the Protestant Evangelical and the Catholic, played a far from creditable role. Under the Weimar Republic, as under Kaiser Wilhelm, the German churches had never been decided partisans of German democracy. At best, the church attitude toward democracy could be described as opportunist. Under the Republic, the Protestant Church had not reconciled itself to the loss of its traditionally privileged position as a State Church. This general outlook of the German churches contributed to the fact that in modern Germany the labor movement always looked upon the Church as an instrument of reaction.

In the critical years from 1930 to 1933, the German Protestant Church sympathized with the reactionaries. The example of Pastor Martin Niemoeller, who later suffered martyrdom in the prisons and concentration camps of Nazism, illustrates how far this went. Despite the Nazis' blatant anti-Semitism and fierce chauvinism,

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Niemoeller was at first a follower of Hitler. He hoped that Hitler would strengthen the power of the Evangelical Church and bring together all the provincial Evangelical churches into a single strong National Church. Niemoeller even hoped to enlist the aid of National-Socialism in order to regain for the Evangelical Church the place it had occupied under the monarchy. And so, in exchange for increased external power, the Protestant Church was prepared to help barter away the freedom of the German people.

The Catholic Church, represented politically in the Center Party, adopted fundamentally the same attitude. After the protracted *Kulturkampf* with Bismarck, German political Catholicism had made its peace with the imperialist ruling class of Germany. After the 1918 Revolution, the Catholic Church accommodated itself somewhat to the general revolutionary upsurge, mainly as a result of pressure from Catholic workers. At a time when everyone paraded in democratic colors, the Centrists had to keep in step if they wanted to remain a mass party.

Later, during the crucial years of the economic crisis, the political party of German Catholicism moved swiftly to the side of reaction. Although the bishops spoke often and very pointedly against the Nazi racist theories, the political leaders of Catholicism found it possible to make compromises with Hitler. Matters went so far that the leaders of the Centrist Party, Monsignor Kaas and Heinrich Bruening, voted for the decree granting Hitler dictatorial powers of government, in exchange for a German *concordat* with the Holy See. It is logical to infer that they acted in agreement with the then Papal Nuncio in Germany, Cardinal Pacelli, today Pope Pius XII. Shortly after Hitler openly proposed at the Reichstag session of March 23, 1933, that Germany sign a *concordat* with the Vatican, the Bishops' Conference at Fulda publicly retracted many of their complaints against National-Socialism and lifted the hitherto existing ban on Catholics voting for Hitler or joining the Nazi Party. In the following years the bishops approved Hitler's foreign policy.

Like the Social-Democrats, the German churches later paid a heavy price for their policies. Hitler was determined to make a Nazi Church of them and to "co-ordinate" Christianity with the principles of National-Socialism—in other words, to put an end to Christianity.

Many individual Protestant and Catholic clergymen, fighting heroically against this attempt, were imprisoned or murdered. Nev-

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ertheless, it must be recorded that the German churches as a whole shared in the responsibility of helping Hitler to power and persuading the German people to surrender to Nazism.

The establishment of the Nazi dictatorship was by no means inevitable. What a small minority of Germans tried and failed to do, the great majority of Germans could have accomplished. The erection of the Nazi dictatorship was unavoidable only to the extent that those who held power in the Weimar Republic behaved in the decisive years as if they had made up their minds to allow Hitler to come to power. These leaders acted quite in the spirit of the traditional liberal German bourgeoisie, "which in its struggle for civil liberties, had, from 1846 to 1870, been exhibiting an unexampled spectacle of irresolution, incapacity and cowardice."² It was not that the leaders of the Weimar Republic desired the frightful *denouement* which resulted from their policies. They were simply incapable of foreseeing the results of their actions. One may excuse such irresponsibility in the case of a small child who sets fire to a house. In the case of the political leaders of a nation like the German nation, one cannot forgive such flagrant historic irresponsibility.

XIV

HITLER CONSOLIDATES HIS DICTATORSHIP

The story of counter-revolution in various lands and periods is rich in examples of how the defeated hope to rise up quickly again and prevent the reactionaries from consolidating their power. Such a hope was at first widespread in the ranks of the most active anti-Nazis. They felt that the National Socialist dictatorship would be unable to solve the problems of the economic crisis, above all the question of mass unemployment. They nourished illusions that before long the workers would draw the necessary conclusions from their defeat and the policies that had caused it. They believed the workers would finally unite to struggle for their liberation and that in the process they would gather around them broad sections of the disillusioned petty bourgeoisie and peasantry. They also assumed that the aggressive policy in foreign affairs would create serious international complications for the Hitler dictatorship and weaken its position. Finally, they did not immediately take into account the full extent and effect of Nazi terror and the impact of Nazi propaganda on the German people, especially the youth and the completely demoralized workers.

But it soon became evident that events would take a quite different turn.

A number of favorable factors helped the Nazis overcome their initial difficulties and strengthen their influence and power. They could then come before the Germans as the first government since 1918 in which all the factories were again busy, in which no one ran the risk of being jobless, and before which other nations trembled. To make other peoples "tremble" had always been the ideal of the German philistine who considered himself a superman and who, after World War I, felt himself a victor cheated of his victory. Relatively few were the Germans who foresaw that the unfolding of this "National Socialist miracle" marked the first step in Germany's march to her greatest national catastrophe.

After Hitler's accession to power, the international situation favored German imperialism.

In 1931, Japanese imperialism had begun the second World War with its seizure of Manchuria from China, without any serious resistance by the League of Nations or the leading Western powers, whose interests were threatened by the aggression. Japan's success

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emboldened Nazi Germany and further convinced her that “aggression pays.”

The international atmosphere in which German Nazism came to power was best characterized by the following remarks of Lloyd George:

“If the powers succeeded in overthrowing Nazism in Germany what would follow? Not a Conservative, Socialist or Liberal regime, but extreme Communism. Surely that could not be their objective. A Communist Germany would be infinitely more formidable than a Communist Russia. The Germans would know how to run their Communism effectively. That was why every Communist in the world from Russia to America was praying that the Western nations should bully Germany into a Communist revolution. We should entreat the government to proceed cautiously.”¹ Like the German imperialists, the reactionaries in other countries looked upon the Hitler dictatorship as the subduer of the working class and the democratic forces, the “bulwark” against “Communism.” Moreover, they saw in Nazi Germany the most powerful link in the *cordon sanitaire* against the Soviet Union. Hitler’s “accomplishments” far outshone those of Mussolini, long the darling of international reaction.

Hitler found a situation in which no foreign power had any aggressive intentions toward Germany. On the contrary, many responsible circles abroad, in large states as well as small, accepted every provocation, such as Nazi Germany’s brusque departure from the League of Nations and Disarmament Conference, her feverish rearmament, and her disruptive international activities, in part as unalterable accomplished facts, in part with secret satisfaction.

Hitler did not begin his aggressive foreign policy with all the weapons of his entire propaganda arsenal. He had first to prepare and educate the German people for his later adventures. He initiated his chauvinist campaign with affirmations of his will to peace, in the name of Germany’s liberation from the bondage of Versailles. But the Versailles Treaty had already been practically liquidated in peaceful fashion under the Weimar Republic: all that remained of it was the ban on German re-armament and compulsory military service, and the problem of Danzig and the Polish Corridor. The great mass of the German people had reconciled themselves to the loss of Alsace-Lorraine and the colonies, although imperialist circles vigorously campaigned for a return of the colonies even under the Republic. The Saar question was to be decided by a plebiscite in

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1935.

Re-arming was the central problem of the Hitler regime, because it was a prerequisite for solving Germany's acute economic problems and at the same time preparing a forcible redivision of the world in her favor. Hitler's game was a double one: aggressive, chauvinist propaganda was coupled with seemingly sincere protestations of his desire for peace. And every time the powers showed signs of retreating before Hitler, the latter's influence rose in Germany. He tranquilized those who wanted no war over Alsace-Lorraine, colonies, Danzig, the Polish Corridor, or any other territory. At the same time, he began to produce among the Germans a mystic belief that he could attain everything without war and succeed in everything he undertook: a belief which made many Germans, including some who had formerly been anti-Nazis, blind, uncritical followers of the "Fuehrer."

Economic developments also favored the Nazi dictatorship. The crisis in Germany had reached its high point in 1932. When Hitler came to power, industrial activity was already resuming and the first signs of a drop in unemployment were perceptible. However slight this "improvement" was at first glance, and despite the fact that it would have occurred under any other regime—as was the case to a greater or lesser degree in the other capitalist countries after 1933—the Hitler regime could present itself to the sorely pressed people as the first German government since 1930 under which unemployment had declined. At a time when the specter of unemployment hung over every German family, this fact lent the Hitler dictatorship enhanced prestige.

The Nazi regime had no intention of letting the crisis run its normal course until the upturn again set in, or to hasten the recovery by increasing the purchasing power of the masses. It adopted a whole series of measures that brought about an artificial and parasitic boom, in which the nation's economy was geared for total war.

To hasten the decline in unemployment, the Nazis introduced labor-service. In the course of 1933, 250,000 unemployed men were brought into the factories to do "labor-service" at wages no higher than the prevailing rates of unemployment insurance; 300,000 were assigned to the big landowners as emergency labor; and 400,000 others were used to build strategically important auto highways and fortifications. In addition, there were 150,000 political prisoners in the concentration camps who had to do hard labor for no pay, re-

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ceiving in return a little food and brutal mistreatment. So within one year, the government created over a million badly paid or unpaid jobs. At the same time, industry absorbed more than a million unemployed as it began work on re-armament orders.

By the end of 1934, such methods—called the “battle of Labor”—had caused a drop in the number of unemployed from the official high of 6,000,000 in 1932, unofficially reckoned as around 7,000,- 000, by several million workers. The total wages paid out to the workers and unemployed did not differ in substance from the total amount of wages and unemployment insurance at the low point of the crisis. In consequence of this wage policy, there were strike movements in a series of factories, in which many of the Nazi factory cells also participated.

All these measures were taken with a view to keeping the purchasing power of the people on the lowest level possible, around the crisis levels of 1932, and by neglecting consumers’ goods in favor of armaments production. This policy was particularly designed to please heavy industry and the trusts, which were eager to use their productive capacity not to augment purchasing power or to increase exports, but to manufacture arms. Re-armament was the decisive and seemingly unlimited internal market for the rapid economic upturn in the country. For the workers, petty bourgeoisie, peasants, and even those industries not directly producing for war, it became the supreme national duty to subordinate themselves to the interests of the great steel, iron, and chemical trusts. The Nazi State and party were the gendarmes standing by with steel whip and propaganda, seeing to it that every German did his “duty” for the new Germany.

But the petty bourgeoisie and peasantry, misled by the Nazi movement and taken in by its demagogic promises, looked upon the Hitler dictatorship as their own state, which was to be not only “national” but also “socialist” and “anti-reactionary.” They had helped to crush the labor movement, to destroy Marxism, “international Socialism,” and liberalism, to mistreat and torture the German Jews. That was what they understood by “national.” Now, with the triumph of Nazism, they awaited the introduction of what they understood by “German Socialism”:^{*} Germany was to be reorganized in

^{*} “German Socialism” has a long tradition in Germany. Marx and Engels characterized it as follows in *The Communist Manifesto*:

“And on its part, German Socialism recognized, more and more, its

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accordance with the ideals of the small storekeepers, handicraftsmen, and peasants. The over-zealous officials of the Nazi Party and its affiliated organizations thought they were fulfilling the desires of their *Fuehrer*, the “model German,” by boycotting and then occupying the big department stores. They placed commissars in “trustified” enterprises and staged demonstrations against the “lords of finance” in front of their banks, demanding “the breaking of the bonds of interest-slavery.” Lumpen-proletarians also took part in these actions, feeling that as a reward for their help to the Nazis they were entitled to satisfy their natural inclinations to rob and loot.

It was relatively easy for the government to control these wild actions of the first weeks and months. It was in a position to pay off hundreds of thousands of its adherents with jobs. An “old party fighter” replaced a liberal, Marxist, or Jew, and a half a dozen others expected to be the next to get jobs. Many S.A. troopers, especially the jobless among them, were taken on as guards in the newly established concentration camps, where they could vent all their frustrated ambitions and bestial sadism.

Many ruined intellectuals and professionals were given small posts in the administration, especially the school system. For those who had not yet been placed, the regime organized in April 1933 a day of protest “against world Jewry’s boycott of the National Socialist Reich”: all Jewish businesses were closed, their windows smeared with obscene inscriptions, many of their proprietors beaten, and some dragged through the streets on wagons and murdered. Many professionals: scientists, professors, doctors, dentists, lawyers, journalists, actors, musicians, students were eager to see Jewish competitors in the professions eliminated.

own calling as the bombastic representative of the petty bourgeois Philistine. It proclaimed the German nation to be the model nation, and the German petty Philistine to be the typical man. To every villainous meanness of this model man it gave a hidden, higher, socialistic interpretation, the exact contrary of its real character. It went to the extreme length of directly opposing the ‘brutally destructive’ tendency of Communism, and of proclaiming its supreme and impartial contempt of all class struggles. With very few exceptions, all the so-called Socialist and Communist publications that now (1847) circulate in Germany belong to the domain of this foul and enervating literature.”

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Apart from the S. A. which contained many petty bourgeois, the strongest organization of the petty bourgeoisie was the "Fighting Organization of Middle-Class Trade and Handicraft Workers" (*Kampfbund des Gewerblichen Mittelstands*), founded in 1932. This organization considered itself the special guardian and executor of the Nazi economic program. Led by the Reich economics commissar, the *Kampfbund* demanded ever more noisily that the department stores, one-price stores, consumers' co-operatives, and even the big banks be broken up. It sought to remove competition from centralized big businesses by re-introducing medieval and guild laws. By "breaking the bonds of interest-slavery," in their minds an invention of the "Jewish race," by cheap credits at two per cent as well as a share in the profits of big business, the sorely beset middle classes hoped to improve their lot. The *Kampfbund* also hoped that small tradesmen would profit most from the expropriation of Jewish competitors and the elimination of "Jewish" capitalism.

To prepare the ground for this far-reaching program, the *Kampfbund* placed its commissars at the head of S.A. detachments in as many factories as possible and began to spread the slogan that now that the National Revolution had triumphed, the second or "Social Revolution" should begin.

Such slogans were not calculated to please the big industrialists and Junkers who had brought the Hitler regime into power for their own interests, not for the sake of the petty bourgeoisie. Nor were the generals content, since they based their plans for "total war" on the big industrial combines and a subservient population. These slogans also ran counter to Hitler's own desire. Such organizations as the *Kampfbund* had been useful to him in the period of "the struggle for power." He had used them to buttress his own power and as a means of blackmailing the industrialists and generals. But he had no intention of granting them any independent power.

He made short shrift of the illusions of the *Kampfbund*. On May 30, 1933, the League was forbidden to intervene in economic matters. On July 4 of the same year, Hitler declared that a synthesis was necessary between the ideals of National Socialism and the real demands of the economy. The "National Revolution" was declared officially ended on July 11, 1933 and at the beginning of August the *Kampfbund* was dissolved. Many of its most active leaders and adherents were sent to concentration camps. But Hitler continued to improve his relations with the "general council of German indus-

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try”—the Krupps, Thyssens, and Voeglers.

The *Kampfbund* was dissolved, but the dissatisfaction of his petty bourgeois followers did not disappear. This dissatisfaction now expressed itself primarily in the Storm Troop formations. Toward the end of January 1933, these S.A. detachments became more and more the center of all those Nazis who were disillusioned and discontented. In the months following the seizure of power, the S.A. had swelled from 600,000 to over two million men. It considered itself the victorious army which had conquered power for the new regime. Opportunists of every stripe, from sons of the Kaiser to demoralized workers, hastened to put on a brown shirt. The S.A. naturally considered the Nazi state as its own state. But after the defeat of the working class and the organization of the German Labor Front, a vast company union on a national scale, the S.A. no longer had any specific functions in the new State. The “legal apparatus” of violence and oppression of the Nazi dictatorship now performed all the functions which the Storm Troopers had formerly exercised illegally against the workers.

But in spite of pressure from the generals and big business, Hitler still hesitated to weaken and liquidate his private army of brown shirts. He still needed it as a guarantee that if Hindenburg died, he would succeed him and become commander-in-chief of the armed forces. He wanted to avoid the possibility of someone else becoming President and head of the Reichswehr, thus relegating him to second place in the Reich. Hitler was the instrument of the most reactionary sections of the German ruling class, but that did not prevent him from setting his own stamp on the future of Germany. He wanted to safeguard his position in the event of differences of opinion or conflicts among the ruling groups, arising on any critical issue.

The man around whom the opposition forces in the Nazi movement gathered in increasing numbers was Hitler’s intimate friend, Ernst Roehm. Roehm was the leader and organizer of the Nazi military formations, the chief of staff of the S.A. During the war, he had risen to captain in the Imperial army and, as an intelligence officer of the Reichswehr, had been the first to discover Hitler. Later, he had gone to Bolivia where he had trained the Bolivian army.

After the triumph of the Hitler dictatorship, Roehm had poor prospects of achieving his ambition to become head of the mass army of

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German imperialism. The conservative officers' corps rejected him despite his organizing abilities, because of his notorious homosexuality and his general reputation as a libertine. After the seizure of power, he began to organize the Nazi military formations on a national scale and prepared at a given moment to turn these erstwhile voluntary formations into the official army of the nation. Thus he hoped that even if he could not entirely unseat the Reichswehr generals with their army of a few hundred thousand, he would force them to fuse the official army with his private Nazi formations. After the fusion, he would occupy a leading post. The attitude of Hitler's Defense Minister, the Nazi General von Blomberg, strengthened him in the belief that he had good chances to win the upper hand over the Reichswehr generals. At first, Hitler let his old friend cherish his illusions, and even reinforced them. The more completely Roehm organized the S.A. into a model of a new mass army, the stronger was Hitler's position vis-a-vis the generals.

But toward the end of 1933, opposition sentiments among the S.A. increased. So with the help of the newly former Gestapo and the picked formations of the S.S. (*Schutzstaffel*), Hitler purged the S.A. of about 200,000 unreliable members, without however disturbing Roehm's mobilization measures in the slightest.

The discontent among Hitler's followers which, after the dissolution of the *Kampfbund*, found expression in the S.A. 5 the increase in political tensions between the S.A. and the Reichswehr; the growing unrest among the workers—all these were heightened by the defeat of the regime in the Reichstag Fire Trial. In the oft-postponed Reichstag Fire Trial, which finally took place in the autumn of 1933, the defeated German anti-Nazis found a spokesman in George Dimitroff, whose courageous stand before the corrupt judges of the Leipzig Court struck fear in the heart of the Hitler regime.

In this trial, Dimitroff showed the Germans and the entire world that the Nazis were the real incendiaries, and in such a way that even the most stupid German could see it. By turning the "great" Nazi leader Goering into a figure of ridicule, this Bulgarian Communist helped Germany and the democratic world to overcome their almost paralyzed awe at the triumph of Nazism. He exposed the Nazi gods and their regime in all their wretchedness and vulnerability. Dimitroff's challenge was the first significant political and moral defeat of the Nazi dictatorship.

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The Nazi dictatorship did not have the courage to try Ernst Thaelmann, the leader of the Communist Party, together with Dimitroff. What would have been more logical than to try the leader of the party publicly accused of having burned the Reichstag as a signal for an uprising? Or at least to bring him into court as a witness? After their initial experiences with Dimitroff, the Nazis let this idea drop. And the carefully planned, frequently announced trial of Thaelmann, scheduled on the docket to begin in April 1933, never took place. Until 1944, Thaelmann remained in custody; in that year, he was murdered by the Nazis.

Just when the compromising revelations of the Reichstag Fire Trial became known to the outside world, Hitler Germany abruptly left the League of Nations and Disarmament Conference in October 1933. The government declared that Germany intended to re-arm, whatever other countries might say about it. Simultaneously, direct negotiations began with the Polish dictator, Marshal Pilsudski, resulting in January 1934 in the signing of the ten-year German-Polish non-aggression pact. This pact, which the Nazi regime paraded as proof of Hitler's love of peace, prepared the ground for the introduction of universal military service and the re-militarization of the Rhineland. By this accord, the Hitler dictatorship sought to safeguard the Eastern borders of Germany in case the League of Nations were to answer Germany's planned reoccupation of the Rhineland with a collective counterblow.

At the beginning of 1934, Hitler entered into negotiations with the Reichswehr generals, to settle the question of a successor to the dying Hindenburg and the future command of the army. In the protracted behind-the-scenes negotiations over a successor to Hindenburg that took place in 1934 among representatives of the Reichswehr, industry, Hindenburg and his Junker circle, von Papen and his *Herrenklub*, and the Nazi Party, the opinion soon gained ground that they had no other choice but to agree on Hitler. Any other solution threatened to undermine the dictatorship and create dangerous confusion in the country.

Hindenburg's pet idea had always been that he was a trustee for the Imperial dynasty and that with his death, power should devolve on a Hohenzollern prince. He formulated this idea in his will but it found supporters only in his own narrow circle of Junkers. The generals and industrialists felt that such a solution would be risky. It might have unfavorable repercussions in foreign policy and domes-

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tically, it might disturb the process of turning the masses into an obedient, nazified horde.

The only other possibility was for the Reichswehr to act on its own and set up a military dictatorship. This would undoubtedly have been easier to carry out in 1934 than ten years later, when Hitler had a number of generals hanged for trying it. But it would have meant forsaking the plan of revenge nurtured since 1918, and fighting against Nazism with those sections of the population that were not poisoned by Hitlerism. The generals were by no means ready to take that step. Besides, they had no fundamental differences with Hitler on the question of the dictatorship and foreign policy. In the struggle for a successor to Hindenburg, the reactionary cliques proved themselves to be the same kind of self-seeking adventurers as the intriguers just prior to Hitler's seizure of power. So it was agreed that Hitler should be Hindenburg's successor and the supreme commander of the Reichswehr.

In return, Hitler was expected to acknowledge full authority for the Reichswehr in all military matters, liquidate the S.A. as a competing force by placing it under the Reichswehr, and finish once and for all the shouts of his followers for a second revolution, their attacks on big capital, and their demands for breaking up the large landed estates. Hitler would now have to muzzle the petty bourgeois and peasant opposition and get rid of his private Nazi army. The reactionaries were not content with secret negotiations; they began to bring public pressure on the regime. On June 17, 1934, Franz von Papen made a speech at Marburg in which he clearly formulated the demands of the ruling class. He declared in part:

"I have outlined the problems of the German revolution in my attitude to it so sharply because there is no end of talk of a second wave which is to complete the revolution. Whoever irresponsibly toys with such ideas should not hide from himself that a second wave might be followed by a third, and that he who threatens the guillotine might soonest fall its victim.

"Nor is it clear where such a second wave should lead. *There is much talk of the coming socialization. Have we gone through an anti-Marxist revolution in order to carry out a Marxist gram?*"

Von Papen's words were an invitation to Hitler to strike swiftly and hard against the unruly petty bourgeois masses and the S.A., around which the opposition was gathering. Hindenburg sent von Papen a telegram of congratulations for his speech.

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Thirteen days after the address, on June 30, 1934, Hitler solved the problem of the opposition in his own way: S.S. men of his personal staff invaded Roehm's headquarters, murdering him and many more S. A. leaders in cold blood. Thousands of Storm Troopers were thrown into jails and concentration camps. The pretext was the same as that used for the terror against the Communists: Roehm was planning an uprising against the Hitler regime. And Roehm's sexual perversions, long known to Hitler, were now openly revealed to the entire country. Since the moment for butchery had arrived, the Nazis seized the opportunity to do away with other adversaries of Hitler from the most diverse circles. Thus General von Schleicher and his wife, General von Bredow, and several leading Catholics were assassinated. Von Papen himself barely escaped a similar fate.

Hitler had checked the danger of the "second revolution." Big business, the generals, and Hindenburg personally congratulated him. By moving swiftly and relentlessly against the Storm Troop leaders he had removed the possibility of a conflict between the Reichswehr and the Nazi private army, a conflict which might have been exploited by various other adversaries of the government. He had shown the stupid petty bourgeoisie, who had taken his demagogic promises seriously, who was master of Germany.

The Reichstag Fire was the first, the "night of the long knives" on June 30, 1934 was the second *blitzkrieg* against the German people. Before the people realized what was going on, the corpses of the murdered victims were already lying in the earth. For the second time, Hitler had come forward as the savior of Germany from a terrible threat. After the murder of Roehm, Heinrich Himmler became the all-powerful police-chief of the Third Reich. Thenceforth, the S.A. lost all importance. The brown shirts were soon absorbed by the new army.

The Nazis made an attempt to carry out a *coup d'état* in Austria on July 15, 1934, but it was not successful. They did, however, succeed in murdering in brutal fashion the Austrian Chancellor, Engelbert Dollfuss. But the killing of this pro-Italian, fascist competitor did not lead them to their goal. Hitler could not back up his initial move by marching his troops into Austria, since Mussolini, who was not yet ready to hand over Austria to Hitler Germany, mobilized troops on the Brenner Pass. The attempted Nazi putsch in Austria, temporarily repelled, waited for a more auspicious de nouement.

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On August 1, 1934, in agreement with the head of the Reichswehr, General von Blomberg, a law was passed that at the death of Hindenburg, Hitler would become Leader and Chancellor of the Reich. On August 2, the senile Field-Marshal died, and a forged will was circulated containing the statement that he had chosen Hitler as his successor. That very day, the Reichswehr took an oath of loyalty to Hitler. With the Fuehrer's position thus secure, a plebiscite was called for the people to vote "*Ja!*" on the accomplished fact. The results were discounted in advance. But even the Nazis could not conceal the fact that in some industrial areas, such as Berlin, Hamburg, and the Ruhr, many voters wrote "no" on their ballot.

Consolidated in his political power, Chancellor Hitler now hastened to make of Germany the most powerful imperialist war-machine in the world. He did not intend, as the unruly petty bourgeoisie had thought, to write the second chapter of the "National Revolution" in Germany. He meant to write it on the battlefields of Europe and the entire world.

Neither the workers nor any of the other opposition forces had utilized the initial difficulties of the Hitler dictatorship in order to prevent its consolidation. The fact that during the period of legality there was no agreement between the Social Democrats and the Communists, no common approach to fundamental problems, and above all no joint action, made it far more difficult to organize this joint action under the complicated conditions of illegality. The workers were filled with various moods: bitterness, mutual reproaches, confusion, disorientation, and despair, and the groping for new forms of struggle. Moreover, tens of thousands of the most active and experienced workers in the labor movement succumbed to the first waves of terror. The first to be victimized were those who were publicly known for their long years of activity. The police, Gestapo, and Reichswehr secret service had carefully noted their names and they had little chance to go underground. Thus the Nazis consolidated their ranks far more quickly than did the defeated workers.

Moreover, the nations in whose interest it was to halt or slow down the juggernaut of German imperialism did nothing to stop it before it overran the whole world. The lesson of the Reichstag Fire Trial went unheeded and was soon forgotten.

XV

PRELUDE TO WORLD WAR II

Having dealt the economic and political aspirations of the middle class a crushing blow, Hitler could now proceed to give legal sanction to the power of the trust magnates. In November 1934, the government issued a law concerning “the organic reconstruction of German economy,” by which seven national business groups were constituted, with 44 sub-groups and some 1,000 specialized groups subordinate to them. This decree introduced the “leadership principle” into German business.

As in politics, so in business the regime concentrated power at the peak of the pyramid. Millionaires became the commanding generals in their own branch of business and industry. The “leadership principle,” which the Nazis vaunted as far superior to degenerate democracy, was in truth nothing but a phase of the regimentation of all Germany. Business, like everything else, was militarized in a Germany that had become a giant Prussian barracks.

The Nazi leaders pretended grossly that state intervention in business meant “socialism”! Every war economy is characterized by government intervention—and Nazi economy was war economy from its outset. The slogan of “guns, not butter” prevailed even in peacetime in the Third Reich. But all the Nazi government decrees, including the establishment of the “leadership-principle,” served to increase, not lessen, the profits and powers of the richest men in Germany.

At the head of the most important of the seven national groups, *Reichsgruppe Industrie*, was Wilhelm Zangen, head of the firm of Mannesmann, one of the big industrial companies in Germany. The banker O. C. Fischer headed the banking group, while the Lord Mayor of Essen, Dillgardt, a former associate of Fritz Thyssen, led the public utilities group.

The seventeen “chambers of business” distributed regionally throughout the country were exclusively in the hands of big capitalists or wealthy Nazi officials. In Cologne, for example, the banker Kurt von Schroeder headed the chamber of business.

Schroeder was the financial agent of the most important industrial trusts of the Ruhr. In Berlin, State Councillor Reinhart of the big *Commerzbank* headed the chamber of business; in Lower Saxony, Herr Hecker of the Ilseder mining works; in Silesia, Herr Fitzner

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of the Giesche coal firm; in East Prussia, Herr Riess of the cellulose trust Waldhof; in Hesse-Nassau, Dr. Luer of the Opel automobile works; and in Bavaria, Herr Pietzsch of the chemical trust and the firm of Siemens.

Article 13 of the Nazi Party program declared: "All trusts must be handed over to the state." Once in power, the Nazis did just the reverse. The stocks of the largest banks—the *Deutsche Bank*, *Dresdener Bank*, *Commerz und Privatbank*, etc.—which were held by the government, were returned to private ownership in 1936. German financial journals admitted that in the course of this transfer enormous profits were made at the expense of the Reich.

About the same time, the Steel Trust (*Vereinigte Stahlwerke*) received back all the shares which the government had taken over when the firm was on the verge of bankruptcy. Other firms, including the *Vereinigten Oberschlesischen Huetttenwerke* of Krupp, the *Deschimag* of Marshal Goering's family, and the *Atlaswerke* of the Stinnes brothers, reverted to private ownership. And the major shipping lines, the Hamburg-American, the Norddeutscher Lloyd, and the Hamburg-South American, rescued financially by the government after World War I, got back all their shares under Hitler.

What about the department stores, which the Nazis had promised to the small storekeepers? They did change hands. Their Jewish owners were driven out, but a consortium of private banks took over the leading German chain stores and department stores.

National Socialism, in order to justify its co-operation with the imperialist trusts and monopolies, had to distinguish in its propaganda between "parasitic" and "creative" capital. In the former group, held responsible for all the abuses of capitalism, was banking and department-store capital; by the latter group, the Nazis meant men like Krupp, Thyssen, Mannesmann, and Siemens, who were favorably mentioned by name in the Nazi program. This distinction was grossly misleading, since industrial and finance capital worked hand in hand, industrialists sitting on the boards of banks and bankers sitting on the boards of the industrial trusts. Now, however, the Nazis not only gave the state-held shares back to the banks, they also handed over to them the department stores and much more besides.

In November, 1938, a young Jew in Paris murdered the German embassy attaché, Ernest vom Rath, a nephew of the chairman of the board of *I. G. Farben*. The "Aryan" capitalists then took advantage

of the wild pogroms that ensued in Germany to seize the goods and property of Jews who had either been murdered or sent to concentration camps. With the blessing of the government, the *Deutsche Bank* and *Dresdener Bank* took over all Jewish-controlled banks—Mendelssohn, J. Bleichroeder, Arnhold Brothers, and several others. Jewish blood turned into “Aryan” money.

Anti-Semitism, always at the core of Hitler’s propaganda, became an instrument of enrichment: the profiteers of the first World War and inflation years were also the ones to benefit from the pogroms. Only now they were joined by a number of Nazi leaders, such as Max Amann and Hitler himself, who made millions from confiscated publishing houses and other Jewish property. Thyssen, Flick, Mannesmann, Otto Wolff, Hoesch, Haniel, and the two big electric trusts all took over factories and wholesale houses whose owners had been thrown into concentration camps.

Hitler’s successive blows against the middle classes resulted in buttressing the power of German finance capital. In October 1937, the so-called “share-holding reform” entered into effect, eliminating all joint-stock companies with a capital of less than 100,000 marks and banning the formation of new companies with less than 500,000 marks in capital. Between 1931 and 1938, the number of German joint-stock companies fell from 10,437 to 5,518, four-fifths of the liquidated firms belonging to the under 500,000 marks category. During the same period profits of the big firms soared.

The various cartel decrees issued after July, 1933, gave the giant industries absolute sway over the lesser ones. They forced all outsiders into the cartels controlled by the big trusts. The cartels were run according to quotas, thus assuring the domination of the big capitalists over the smaller ones. Many smaller traders were not allowed to make deliveries unless they had a prescribed minimum of capital and annual business intake.

In addition to their cartel decrees, the Nazi authorities made direct attacks on the middle classes: thousands of small stores were closed by Nazi mayors and police because they could not show sufficiently high annual receipts. In 1938 alone, six hundred dairy firms in Hamburg, fifteen hundred grocery stores in Munich, and 40 per cent of all the food stores in Mannheim were closed by the local authorities. Small workshops suffered a similar fate. Beginning in 1936, the government bore down heavily on these workshops in order to safeguard the stock pile of raw materials for the armaments

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trusts and make up for their lack of skilled workers. Dr. Walther Funk, the Economics Minister, revealed on May 7, 1938, that in 1936 and 1937, 15 per cent of the 600,000 one-man workshops had been closed by government order. That was only a beginning, for the Nazi press declared that 600,000 of the 1,700,000 artisan's workshops were superfluous. And as war drew closer, the tempo of elimination increased: from April, 1938, to April, 1939, 76,000 small workshops, an average of 208 daily, were driven out of business. Hitler's promises to the middle classes signified in reality their ruin.

Hand in hand with this catastrophic decline went a phenomenal increase in the profits of big capital: between 1933-1938, undistributed profits of joint-stock companies rose nearly twenty times, from 175,000,000 to almost 3,500,000,000 marks. This was in addition to some 1,200,000,000 marks distributed as dividends and several billions more privately invested during the last prewar year.

Dr. Robert Ley, head of the Nazi Labor Front, told the truth when he asserted: "We have again made the employers masters in their own house." The Nazi leaders did not shrink from dissolving their own factory organization, the NSBO (National Socialist Factory Cell Organization), when it appeared that here and there cells of the NSBO were opposing wage reductions and grumbling against the exorbitant profits of the industrialists. They also dissolved the factory councils, substituting for them workers' spokesmen without power. The first election of these spokesmen in 1935 was also the last, for despite all terrorizing the majority of the workers elected anti-Nazi candidates.

The workers in the factories were overworked, underpaid, and had to face ever rising prices. Let us take one example, the Ruhr mining industry. The average annual coal production of an individual worker, 349 tons in 1929, rose to 417 tons in 1937. Thus, productivity increased by twenty per cent, but the wage per shift declined in the same period from 10.11 to 8.28 marks.

The "German Labor Front" had been founded by Dr. Ley on May 10, 1933, eight days after the Nazis had occupied all trade union headquarters. It finally embraced 25,000,000 workers and employees who were forced to become members. In 1935, it lost even a semblance of independence when the chambers of commerce and industry joined it, without the "Labor Front" retaining the slightest power of decision in this organization of the employers. The func-

tion of the "Labor Front" was reduced to extorting money as bribes and keeping a close political watch over the workers.

In the countryside, the Nazis destroyed the unions of agricultural workers and forbade the farm laborers to join the Labor Front. Some two million permanent and about a million casual farm laborers were given over to the so-called "Reich Food Estate" (*Rekhsnaehrstand*), a Nazi organization embracing all agriculture and led exclusively by Junkers and rich peasants. In consequence, the already miserable wages of agricultural workers fell after 1935 from ten to thirty per cent.

The agricultural policy of the Nazis was to preserve the antiquated giant estates of the Junkers and create a small upper crust of wealthy peasants. Agriculture Minister Richard Darre admitted in August 1936 that 412 Junkers owned as much land as a million peasants. The so-called "hereditary farm law" of October 1, 1933 made approximately 700,000 German farms hereditary, that is, indivisible. After this decree was promulgated, the average size of these hereditary farms constantly increased: from 12.3 hectares in 1933 to 22.5 hectares in 1939. The law provided that farms could not be split up among several children of a deceased farmer but were to be inherited by the oldest son. Thus the Nazis killed two birds with one stone: on the one hand, they created a stable group of well-to-do farmers by the side of the Junkers, most of whom functioned as local "peasant leaders"; and on the other, they used the disinherited sons and daughters as their urgently needed industrial reserve army. During the six "peace" years of the Hitler regime, about 1,500,000 people left the countryside for the city. The 23,000 paid officials of the "Food Estate," all of them Junkers or sons of well-to-do farmers, promoted the Nazi program of autarchy (self-sufficiency), which became a vital factor in the Reich's war preparations.

The brunt of the burden in the rural areas was borne by the farm laborers and broad sections of the small and middle farmers. Their impoverishment is confirmed by official Nazi statistics concerning forced sales of farms. Before Hitler, the average size of foreclosed farms was over twenty hectares; in 1936, this figure sank to ten hectares. From 1933 to 1937 the number of foreclosed farms averaging five hectares rose by fifty per cent. The German Institute for Business Research admitted in 1940 that in 1939 the German farmers used only 23 per cent of their produce for themselves, compared

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with 27 per cent in 1929. Moreover, a million hectares of agricultural land were expropriated by the government for motor highways and fortifications. So in agriculture as in industry, the Nazi regime favored the wealthy few at the top at the expense of millions of poorer peasants.

In view of these facts, it is incomprehensible how a whole school of bourgeois and Social Democratic economists deny the monopoly-capitalist character of the Hitler dictatorship and even find “anti-capitalist” features in its workings. What they are doing is simply repeating the stock Hitler thesis that the Nazis brought “socialism” to the Third Reich. The truth is that after 1933 the top leaders of the Nazi Party—Hitler, Goering, and Ley—became partners of the big capitalists of Germany; and many of the latter, like Krupp and Schacht, who had adopted a wait-and-see attitude toward the Nazis until 1933, became active in the Nazi Party.

Admittedly, there was another side to this picture of an enslaved working class and a ruined middle class. The economic crisis was over, everyone had a job and a minimum of food, and family incomes were higher because more members were employed albeit at extremely low wages. Although hundreds of thousands of small stores and workshops had shut down, the middle-class youth had brand new possibilities for advancement. Millions of them were absorbed by the enormously inflated state apparatus, the newly established labor-service army, the S.A. formations, and the S.S. These young people thrived on Hitler’s rule. They looked forward to a victorious war assuring Germany mastery of the world.

Even before these young people perished on the plains before Stalingrad or on the deserts of North Africa, the Nazi regime had drawn a shroud of cultural death over Germany. When in 1944 the Nazis sent actors and writers to work ten-hour shifts in the arms factories or making tank-traps and digging trenches, they completed a process begun in the spring of 1933, when millions of volumes of the finest literature were burned, artworks mutilated, plays and musical compositions banned. In the Third Reich, art, science, and education existed only to prove the superiority of the “Aryan” race and to prepare the Germans to subjugate other peoples. War was declared on all religions and philosophies teaching the Golden Rule and respect for other nations. The Nazi slogan was: “Banish sub-human ideas of Marxism and the Jews.” Many outstanding intellectuals who had fought Nazism under the Weimar Republic were ar-

rested and murdered. Thousands more, among them the greatest names in German arts and science, were driven into exile. Those who remained accepted Nazism or fell silent.

Intellectuals were forced to join the Reich Chamber of Culture, led by Goebbels, Rosenberg, and Himmler. Their job was to carry out the Hitlerite dictum: "It is the task of a folkish (*voelkisch*) state to write a world history in which the race question dominates all others." Books and manuals of all kinds drew inspiration from *Mein Kampf*, from which the above quotation was taken; and Hitler's book became the paragon of German literature, philosophy, and history, the Bible of the Third Reich.

The Nazis boasted that their state form was the highest in the world. The six hundred odd "elected" deputies of the Reichstag were all appointed by Hitler. Their duties consisted of meeting once or twice a year, applauding a speech of the "Fuehrer," and pocketing their monthly salary of \$240. These "deputies" were also highly paid Gauleiters, heads of the civil and semi-military organizations of the Nazi Party, or officials of the provincial regimes. Bismarck had unified Germany "from above," that is, through the princes; but Hitler simply stripped the various provinces of any vestige of independence. By the law for the "reorganization of the Reich" of January 30, 1934, Hitler himself received the power to appoint and dismiss all officials of the provincial governments. This super-centralization, reinforced by Nazi-appointed governors (*Reichsstatthalter*) in every province, served the purpose of thwarting potential opposition in any part of the country.

Naturally, the unbroken series of enormous political and military victories served to foster illusions about Hitler's genius and the superiority of his regime. When Germany withdrew in October, 1933, from the League of Nations and the Disarmament Conference, the leaders of Great Britain and France made only perfunctory protests. Hitler was encouraged to go further; and as he admitted in a speech delivered in 1942: "In 1934 Germany began to produce armaments on an all-out basis." His first attempt to overrun Austria in July, 1934, failed when Mussolini mobilized his army against the Nazi putschists who had murdered Chancellor Dollfuss. Seven months later, Hitler introduced universal military conscription and announced to the world that Germany had secretly built a powerful air force.

Europe was now confronted with the fact that a rapidly rearm-

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ing power in the heart of the continent was rushing preparations for an aggressive war. At this juncture, in September 1934, the Soviet Union entered the League of Nations and became the spokesman of collective security, a policy opposed by the then leaders of the British government. Stanley Baldwin, Neville Chamberlain, and Sir John Simon. They replied to Hitler's provocative act in building a mass army with their first step in appeasement: the 1935 English-German naval agreement, which gave Germany the right to build up her fleet to 35 per cent of British strength. As early as October 1933, one of Britain's leading industrialists, Sir Arthur Balfour, chairman of the Balfour Steel Works, disclosed the motives behind this appeasement policy:

"...Will the Germans go to war again? I don't think there is any doubt about it, and the curious thing about it is that I am almost persuaded that some day we shall have to let the Germans arm or we shall have to arm them. With the Russians armed to the teeth and the tremendous menace in the East, Germany unarmed in the middle is always going to be a plum waiting for the Russians to take, and which we should have to defend if the Germans could not defend themselves. One of the greatest menaces to peace in Europe today is the totally unarmed condition of Germany."¹

To encourage Germany's re-arming and involve Hitler in a war with the Soviet Union—that was the dominant idea in the minds of the British rulers of those years.

In 1935; British and French foreign policy encouraged Mussolini to attack Abyssinia, fearing among other things that a military defeat for Mussolini would lead to a popular revolution in Italy. The outcome only served to encourage Hitler, and Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany now drew closer together. In July 1936, both regimes joined forces to support General Franco's rebellion against the legal government of Republican Spain. Hitler was thus realizing a favorite idea of Bismarck: "to set the Spanish fly at France's neck."

After two and a half years of desperate fighting, during which thousands of German anti-Nazi volunteers covered themselves with glory, the Spanish Republic was defeated. Spain became a fortress of European Fascism, one of the most important bases for German U-boats, a center of German espionage, and a key position of German finance capital. She combined with Mussolini to turn the Mediterranean for years into a fascist lake. She became the inspiration for dangerous intrigues against the United States fomented by the

Falangists in South America.

In the autumn of 1936, shortly after the outbreak of the Spanish War, Hitler addressed his followers at a Nazi Party Day in Nuremberg. In a bristling speech, he demanded the Urals and the Ukraine for Germany, and he announced a four-year plan: "Within four years Germany must be wholly independent of the outside world in all materials which can by any means be produced at home through the efforts of our chemical, engineering and mining industries." To fulfill this plan, synthetic production of rubber and oil was stepped up, even though the synthetic commodities were often several times dearer than imported natural raw materials. But it was a question of planning for war, not for a sane economy. Autarchy became a vital economic factor in getting Germany ready for aggression.

The behavior of the French and British in the Abyssinian and Spanish affairs convinced Hitler that he could go much further with impunity. His successes convinced the top leaders of business and the army that his policy of reckless daring was the correct one. On February 20, 1938, Anthony Eden, a British Conservative, resigned in protest against the appeasement policy of Chamberlain. Interpreting this as a go-ahead signal, Hitler attacked Austria twenty days later. The Soviet Union immediately undertook a demarche with the Great Powers "for a firm and unambiguous stand in regard to the problem of the collective salvation of peace by the great powers." But on March 24, the British government declared that such action was inopportune.

Hardly had the Nazis digested their Austrian victim when they began to develop their assault on Czechoslovakia. Here, as in the case of Austria, it was "only" a question of annexing territories with German-speaking inhabitants. In reality, German imperialism sought these "peaceful annexations" in order to strengthen its hand for future assaults. The pretext for the annexation of Austria was the alleged oppression of the Austrian Nazis, although in the German-Austrian pact of July, 1936, Hitler had guaranteed the sovereignty of Austria and recognized the problem of the Austrian Nazis as a purely internal one. The pretext for the assault on Czechoslovakia was the existence of three million German-speaking inhabitants living in the Sudeten regions. They had their own parties in the Czechoslovakian Parliament, even ministers in the cabinet of the country; they possessed their own schools; they had free German-language newspapers of every political opinion. Yet Hitler com-

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plained of their national oppression. He was not really concerned with the fate of the Sudeten Germans—he coveted the land in which they lived, the land of which Bismarck had said: “Whoever is master of Bohemia, is master of Europe.” Meanwhile, the Berlin banks and big industrial trusts took over the most important factories and banks in Austria.

As Hitler engaged in ever louder bluster and sword-rattling against the government of President Eduard Benes, demanding the cession of the Sudeten regions, the Soviet Union proposed on September 2 and again on September 11, 1938, a joint demarche by the British, French, and Soviet regimes on behalf of Czechoslovakia. There was no reply to this proposal. Three weeks later, at a four-power conference in Munich from which the Soviet Union was excluded, the governments of Great Britain, France, Italy, and Germany agreed that Czechoslovakia must hand over the Sudeten regions to Germany. When the defection of the Western powers became known, the Soviet government assured President Benes that it was ready to aid Czechoslovakia with armed force, even if Britain or France, who had a treaty of alliance with the smaller republic, refused to help. Thereupon, the ambassadors of France and Great Britain threatened Czechoslovakia with military measures by the Western powers. The abandoned Czechs were forced to accept the Munich betrayal!

On September 26, 1938, Hitler shouted in the Berlin *Sportpalast*: “We don’t want any Czechs!” But the Sudeten mountains were only a springboard from which he leaped; and in March, 1939, he annexed all Czechoslovakia. Slovakia was made into a puppet state and Hungary was given the eastern portions of the country as a bribe to march to war with the Axis. The democratic agrarian reforms, instituted in Czechoslovakia just after World War I, were revoked: princes and counts of German blood got back their huge estates and became masters of hundreds of thousands of Czech peasants. All the important banks in the land fell into the hands of the large Berlin financial institutions. The Goering combine, I. G. Farben, and Mannesmann—how the same names always recur!—took possession of the extensive coal mines and heavy industries of Czechoslovakia.

Without even inviting the Czechoslovak government, the four powers had dismembered the country at Munich. Nevertheless, the Munich Agreement did contain a clause guaranteeing the independ-

ence of what was left of Czechoslovakia. What did Britain and France do when Hitler broke this pact and, on March 15, 1939, entered Prague? Nothing. Three days later, the Soviet Union urged a conference of England, France, the U.S.S.R., and the states most directly menaced, Poland, Rumania, and Turkey, to decide on common action to prevent further aggression. Since the Polish government, tacitly supported by the Western powers, refused to act in concert with the Soviet Union, the proposal came to naught. Hitler lost no time in exploiting these antagonisms between the West and the East: a week after the seizure of Prague, he grabbed the Lithuanian port of Memel, while his Axis partner, Mussolini, overran Albania on Good Friday, April 7.

The Soviet government still did not give up hope. On April 17, it proposed a three-power pact between Britain, France and the Soviet Union, designated to meet any aggression with armed force. The British government made no reply. But Hitler replied. On April 28, he denounced the German-Polish non-aggression pact and the German-British naval agreement! And he no longer bothered to conceal his intentions of annexing Danzig and the Polish "Corridor" to the Reich.

As if intent on encouraging Hitler, the Chamberlain government in England continued to play its double game. On the one hand, the British and French ambassadors in Moscow finally received permission on May 27 to discuss the three-power pact. On the other hand, in June of that year the Basle Bank of International Settlements, with the knowledge and consent of the British government, handed over the deposited gold reserves of Czechoslovakia to Hitler. Several weeks later, in July, it became known that German Minister Wohltat was negotiating with London concerning a British loan to Germany of from half a billion to a billion pounds sterling.

All these events gave Hitler, as he himself boasted, "the sureness of a sleepwalker" in continuing his provocations. Intensifying his threats against the Poles, he made open preparations for war. No member of the British or French government journeyed to Moscow to speed up negotiations, yet a year previously Chamberlain had found it possible to visit Hitler on several occasions. Finally in July, the Soviet Union proposed that military missions be sent to Moscow to consult with the general staff of the Red Army on joint future action. Instead of sending responsible military leaders or chiefs of staff, the Western powers sent subordinate officers who had no

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powers to sign an agreement.

The nub of the issue soon became manifest: Poland refused to allow the Red Army the right of transit to aid her in the event of a German-Polish war. One year before, the British and French regimes had forced Czechoslovakia to capitulate to Hitler; now they did nothing to alter the attitude of the Warsaw government. They desired a pledge from the Soviet Union to aid Poland but wanted the Russians to wait until the German attackers reached the Soviet borders. It loomed up as an ingenious trap: the Chamberlains foresaw that the German army would soon overrun Poland. Once the Germans were at the Polish-Soviet border, hostilities would finally break out between Germany and the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, the Western powers would stand armed guard on Germany's western borders without attacking, as in fact they did after war actually began.

As a result of this diplomatic sabotage, the Moscow negotiations broke off. The policy of collective security, of common struggle of all the nations opposing aggression could have stopped Hitler. The policy of Chamberlain and Daladier, who hated the Soviet Union more than they feared Hitler, gave the latter a series of "peaceful" conquests and enabled him to unleash World War II.

Pretending a struggle against plutocracy, Hitler led Germany against Europe. Whole nations lay prostrate under the iron heel of German imperialism. Over the old continent, the four swastika-branded horsemen of the Apocalypse rode, bringing hunger, disease, death, and destruction to the world.

XVI

HITLER'S PROGRAM OF WORLD CONQUEST

Hitler's plan for world conquest has failed. To measure the extent of Hitler's defeat, one must bear in mind what he planned and how much of this original concept the German armies accomplished in the course of the war. This is the second smashing defeat which German imperialism has suffered within a quarter of a century. The first was a temporary one. German imperialism proved itself so powerful that after two decades, heavily rearmed and with more grandiose aims for conquest than ever, it unleashed the second World War. The second defeat of German imperialism will be final and irrevocable when those social and economic forces which have produced it no longer have any influence whatever on Germany's fate.

Hitler's *Mein Kampf* gave programmatic expression to the plans of post-1918 German imperialism. Hitler reproached Kaiser Wilhelm's policy with seeking simultaneously to win continental conquests in Europe and create an overseas colonial empire. He sought instead to realize these aims in succession with changing allies, so as to protect Germany from the spectre of a two-front war. He wanted first to strengthen Germany as a continental power and then to complete his conquests by acquiring colonial possessions. In his *Mein Kampf* he says openly:

"If one wanted territory in Europe, this could in a general way be acquired only at the expense of Russia. Then the Reich would, in the manner of the Teutonic Knights, have had to start marching on the old road to the East in order to conquer with the sword the land, and with the plow the bread for the German nation.

"For such a policy there was only one ally in Europe: England. Only with England protecting the rear would it have been possible to start out upon the new Germanic conquest...."

And again:

"Colonial policy, on the other hand, is only conceivable against England and with Russia as an ally. The decision must be made without thought of consequence: either to ally with Russia against England or with England against Russia. In either case, the end must be war."

The guiding principle of Kaiser Wilhelm's continental program was: the Berlin-to-Bagdad railway as the backbone of expansion to

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the Near East; a zone of German-dominated states from the North and Baltic Seas to the Persian Gulf between Western Europe and the Russian Empire; an economic and military alliance with the countries in that zone; a virtually closed area of production and consumption, in other words, a region of “autarchy” (self-sufficiency). This was also the plan of the geopolitician Professor Haushofer; and Hitler followed it in essence with initial success. The Balkans and Turkey were considered direct springboards to Egypt, and the main route to the Persian Gulf lay across the Ukraine and the Caucasus. On this road were grain, coal, iron, and oil. That was what German imperialism had in mind when it spoke of “the struggle against Bolshevism.” And these riches were to strengthen Germany’s “autarchy” and take her further along the road to world mastery.

In Hitler’s continental program, the eastward and southeastward expansion of German imperialism was the nodal point of the irreconcilable antagonism with the Soviet Union; his colonial program created the equally irreconcilable antagonism with England. The plan to create a contiguous colonial empire in Africa went back to the re-orientation of German imperialism after the Russo-Japanese War: no “scattered territories”; temporary renunciation of former German possessions in the Pacific; attempts to build a large closed African colonial empire. That was why Hitler had formed the Rome-Berlin Axis. Italy as a European colony, Italy’s African colonies as a southern extension of German imperialism; Africa as a reservoir of manpower and raw materials, as a strategic base westward to the Americas, eastward to the Indian Ocean and the lands bordering it—that was the meaning of the slogan, “the Axis.” In the same sense, the negotiations with Petain and Laval were not only conditioned by territorial interests in Europe, namely to eliminate France as an independent great power, but also with a view to building a vast African empire under German domination. The old imperialist project was thus broadened to East Africa—the Congo—Morocco, including Southwest Africa south of this line, and north of it all of North Africa.

In the final analysis, this plan of German expansion could only be realized against the Soviet Union and Great Britain. But Hitler was not able to stick to his own program: the initial successes of the German war machine whetted the appetite of German imperialism. An attempt was made to carry through both the continental and the colonial program at the same time. In spite of the interlude of the

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Munich Agreement and the Soviet-German pact resulting from it, Hitler remained in the middle, between the U.S.S.R. and Britain.

At the height of his military triumphs in Europe, he played his trump card: the alliance with Japan. Close diplomatic collaboration between Berlin and Tokyo had begun with Hitler's accession to power. Now economic and "cultural" ties were strengthened and steps taken to coordinate military and political moves. The signing of the treaty of alliance merely set a formal seal on this collaboration.

The Berlin-Tokyo alliance was preceded by a cleverly synchronized diplomatic game on the part of both powers. First of all, both agreed to sweep aside any international obligations standing in the way of unlimited arming. In March, 1933, Japan announced her intention to withdraw from the League of Nations; Germany took the same step in October of the same year. On March 21, 1935, Hitler introduced universal conscription. Japan left the League on March 27. On July 18, 1935, Germany signed the naval agreement with Britain and left the League in October. At the beginning of 1936, Japan quit the London Naval Conference, resolved to tolerate no more treaty limitations on her naval building program or her fortified bases in the Pacific. Germany and Japan exchanged military missions. The Japanese officers' revolt in February, 1936, was followed on March 7, 1936, by the entry of German troops into the demilitarized Rhineland zone. In July, 1936, the Nazi-inspired and Nazi-abetted uprising of General Franco broke out in Spain. Japan joined the anti-Comintern Pact 5 and on July 7, 1937, she began her predatory war against China. In the summer of 1939, Japan provoked the Soviet Union in the Far East since Hitler needed his rear protected for his campaign of conquest in Europe. After France was crushed in the summer of 1940, Japan occupied French Indo-China in September and joined the Rome-Berlin Axis. In June, 1941, Hitler attacked the Soviet Union; in November his armies were stopped before Moscow. He pressed his Japanese ally for a *quid pro* and on December 7, 1941, the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor occurred.

Thus Germany and Japan called into being the world coalition of nations which assured their defeat. In the first phase of the war, the German and Japanese incendiaries could view their handiwork with satisfaction: expansion was proceeding according to plan. In this phase of her war, Japan had conquered a vast empire with an abundance of vital raw materials. Germany had conquered or sub-

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jected almost all of Europe. In the East, Hitler's armies had driven to the shores of the Volga and the Caspian Sea. In North Africa, Marshal Rommel stood at the gates of Alexandria.

This was the high point of Hitler's conquests—as it was the turning point. Before Stalingrad and on the Kuban steppes the Red Army chewed to pieces the vanguard troops of German imperialism. The expulsion of German and Italian forces from Africa meant the end of Hitler's colonial program. Burning and laying waste, plundering and murdering, the armies of Hitler went thereafter from defeat to defeat. Germany's national catastrophe is the result of Hitler's criminal policy of conquest.

The theory of total war emanated from Germany's militarist clique. Hitler and the German General Staff prepared it and forced it on the world. The owners of the German monopolies were the beneficiaries of Hitler's rearmament program and its temporary victories. The fate in store for the vanquished in the event of a Hitler victory has been described by the *Deutsche Wehr*, organ of the German General Staff:

“A victor who allows the vanquished to rebuild their industry and continue to develop their economy has made his heavy sacrifices in vain and jeopardizes his own existence. The only prize of victory which justifies such a risk and compensates for such sacrifices is the complete liquidation of the vanquished as future rivals, their destruction as independent and significant economic powers. The enemy must no longer be able to produce; he must no longer plague our lives with renewed competition; he must no longer retain a productive industry capable of waging a new and perhaps more successful war. He must therefore be crushed—and his productive forces taken over. In such a situation, total victory means that—and only that.”

German imperialism produced this madness of total war and, as a logical consequence, methodical barbarism in waging war.

XVII

NAZI BARBARISM

No analysis of German degradation can pass over in silence the most sinister chapter in German history—barbarism in warfare. Here we are not speaking of those practices that occur, to a greater or lesser degree, in every war, but of a specific feature of German warfare. In their conduct of the war, the Germans methodically annihilated by hunger and murder over 8,500,000 human beings in Europe—more than the total dead of belligerents in World War I inclusive of America and Japan. Eight and a half million slain—in addition to the millions who died as a result of actual military operations! The Nazis systematically destroyed cultural institutions—particularly in the Soviet Union, Poland, and Yugoslavia—in order to obliterate the national traditions of these peoples as well as to decimate them physically. To this end, they singled out for destruction every monument and treasure which might someday rekindle the national will to live of a sorely stricken people. In three Polish “extermination camps” alone—Maidanek, Sobibur, and Osviecim-Birkenau—the Nazis slaughtered over five million prisoners of war and civilians, all unarmed, from all European countries which were under control of the Gestapo. In the former Nazi-occupied areas of Soviet Russia, some two million Soviet citizens were gassed in special gas chambers, hanged, shot, or otherwise tortured to death. Many more millions of people were murdered by the Nazis on Soviet and on Polish soil—murdered, not killed in the course of military operations. Nor does this figure include the civilians and prisoners of war in other European countries whom the Nazis murdered or starved to death.

The Allied armies have unearthed death factories in concentration camps in Germany itself. Here, hundreds of thousands of Jews and other anti-Nazis as well as foreign slave workers—among them women and children—and prisoners of war, have been tortured and murdered since Hitler’s advent to power. The “methods of production” and “output” in these death factories measure up to those of Maidanek and others outside Germany. Buchenwald, situated in the heart of Germany, is but one of the many marks of infamy of Nazi barbarism.

It will never be possible to give a complete numerical tally of the victims of the Nazi policy of extermination. No poet, even if he were endowed with the imagination of a Dante, could portray the

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abysmal depths of human degradation reached by Nazi warfare. The human mind refuses to grasp these horrors in all their magnitude.

These crimes go back to German imperialism's lust for world conquest and the Nazi theories of a German *Herrenvolk* (master race), elaborated by venal German scientists in support of the imperialists. One of the key objectives of German imperialism in war was to bring about such a change in the relations of the German population potential with that of other European nations that in the end Germany's population would dominate Europe and thus be assured of economic hegemony. A leader of the Pan-German Society, Thormann, formulated this aim as early as 1895:

"In a number of years the world will see the following: the German flag will wave over 86,000,000 Germans; and they will rule over a territory inhabited by 130,000,000 Europeans. Only the Germans in this region will possess political rights; only they will serve in the army and navy; only they will be able to acquire land. Then they will be a Master Race, as in the Middle Ages, and the peoples under their rule will do all inferior types of work."

Hitler, a pupil of the Pan-German Society, wrote in *Mein Kampf*: "Today we are 80,000,000 Germans in Europe! If in less than a hundred years, 250,000,000 Germans are living on this continent, our foreign policy will have proved correct."¹ The struggle for a higher German population potential began before World War II. A higher birth rate was encouraged at the very time when the slogan of *Volk ohne Raum* (people without space) was shouted so vociferously that even English lords and Western statesmen believed it. A fundamental change in population status in Germany's favor at the expense of other nations occurred with the seizure of Austria and the German-speaking border regions. The western powers agreed to the change. Only in that way did Germany obtain the eighty million inhabitants about which Hitler had spoken years before. But the decisive factor in reducing the populations of other European states was the war itself. We are not speaking of "normal" war losses, which Germany also suffered. We mean the decimation of non-German peoples by hunger and murder. During the first years of the war, the German people were well nourished, at the expense of the plundered and starving peoples of Europe. Wiping out some eight million human beings in three to four years could not be perpetrated by a handful of people, even if the murders were "mass-produced" in special death factories. Outside of the tens of thousands directly

involved in the slaughter, millions of Germans were aware of these killings, despite all efforts to keep them secret, even if they did not perhaps realize the full extent of the horrors. The number of soldiers who carried out orders to murder will never be known, but it is very high. For it was part of the Nazis' diabolical system to make as many people as possible accomplices of their crimes and thus yoke them to their chariots of destruction.

The question arises: How is it that so many Germans were a party to these sadistic crimes and so many more knew about them yet no one did anything about it? How could there come from the German people so many dehumanized creatures? What was it that robbed so many individuals of every moral scruple? Do any of the Germans consider their acts despicable?

These questions may be answered in summary fashion: The Nazi race theories deprived hundreds of thousands of Germans of all moral scruples about killing other peoples, irrespective of age and sex. The false notion that the German people were the Master Race called to rule the world and that other peoples had to serve this Master Race became the state doctrine of the Third Reich. And who constitutes this Master Race? "The German is physically and intellectually the highest form of the species *homo sapiens*,"² wrote an anthropologist of Kaiser Wilhelm's Germany. And the National-Socialist Gauch writes in his book *New Foundations for the Science of Racial Study*: "The only differences that exist are between the Nordic man on one side and all animals, including the non-Nordic man, and sub-humans on the other."

To use theories of breeding, suitable for cattle and hogs, as a political weapon is a crime against humanity, and whoever does so sinks ultimately to the animal level. The pseudo-scientists who poisoned the people with perverted doctrines of racism are the intellectual sources of inspiration for German war crimes. With this as a foundation, the Nazis succeeded by terror and a monopoly of propaganda, in saddling the overwhelming majority with their criminal policies. The Nazi murderers practised first on German Jews and anti-Nazis in order to become experts in their depraved handiwork. Jews and political opponents of the Nazis were declared "racially inferior." To flay and murder them assured one of a career and rapid advancement in the Third Reich. Germans of "mixed race," children of Jewish-Christian marriages, were forcibly sterilized, as were consumptives, cripples, other sick people, and political adversaries.

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German doctors perpetrated these deeds.

Human beings who helped exterminate part of their own people, only to have the state conveniently shoulder responsibility for their crimes, had no qualms whatever about murdering in “enemy country,” where there were only “sub-humans.” Many who still shrunk from such deeds in Germany lost all sense of restraint once outside of the country. Rape, pillaging, burning, and massacring became part of the day’s routine. To encourage such wanton acts, Hitler’s army cultivated the traditions of the medieval marauder bands (*Landsknechte*).

The Third Reich prepared and organized total war not unlike an assembly line in a giant factory. Everything was under central control and direction, even the extermination, by hunger and murder, of millions of Europeans. The man responsible for this important branch office of German imperialism was the head of the Security Police and S.D. (*Sicherheitsdienst*, the notorious special troops of the S.S.), in agreement with the Army High Command. This fact was incontrovertibly established by documents found in the Gestapo headquarters in Kiev, after the Germans had withdrawn. Other groups participated in the systematic annihilation of civilians and prisoners of war; these included the Secret Field Police (*Geheime Feldpolizei*) and units of the regular army.

The head of the Security Police and S.D. in Berlin covered all Europe with a network of murder factories. Local leaders received instructions concerning the number and destination of transports to be shipped from concentration camps and prisoner-of-war camps in Nazi-occupied lands “to the East.” Smaller death factories also existed in the West, as the armies of the United Nations have found.

According to the findings of the Polish-Soviet Extraordinary Commission for the investigation of crimes committed by the Germans in Maidanek, 1,380,000 persons were exterminated in this death factory.³ On November 3, 1943, alone, 18,400 people were shot. The gas cells of this death factory were equipped to kill 1,940 persons at one time and the furnaces could burn 1,920 persons within twenty-four hours.

A former resident of Warsaw named Frieberg, who escaped after a seventeen-month stay in the camp of Sobibur during an uprising of the inmates, describes the “production technique” of that death factory as follows: The people undressed. Three barracks were built for the women, one for removing their shoes, the second

for their clothing, while in the third their hair was cut and packed in sacks for shipment to some factories in Germany. From a second camp the people were taken to a third one. None of the people taken there ever returned. A brick building with heavy iron gates was situated there. As soon as about 800 people passed into the building the doors were locked. An electric engine in an adjoining wing pumped poison gas into the building, and as a rule all the people inside perished in fifteen minutes. Since the end of 1942 bodies removed from the gas chamber were no longer buried but cremated at once. Special containers were fitted to the rails for collecting human fat. The Germans said that it made good soap. The furnaces were manned by a special crew of 150 prisoners. The ashes were collected in sacks and sent to Germany for use as fertilizer. There was also a mill in the third camp for grinding human bones.⁴

In the Kharkov Trial against German war criminals (December 1943), George Heinisch, *Obersturmbannfuhrer* of the S.S. (corresponding to major general), formerly deputy chief of staff for Rudolf Hess and during the war special Nazi commissar in Melitopol, declared that in the autumn of 1942 there was a conference between Hitler, Himmler, and the chief of the S.D., Kaltenbrunner, at which it was decided to prepare mass exterminations by means of gas.

“From statements made by official sources,” Heinisch revealed, “I know that it was assumed that the Russian army would quickly disintegrate. Judging that it would be very difficult to suppress the Russian people, orders were issued that relentless measures of repression be used against the civil population. We were not to hesitate to arrest and shoot people, because that was the only way to keep the people down and colonize the land. Furthermore, it was stated that it was necessary to weaken the people by reducing the population. At a conference of regional commissars in August 1942, the Reichscommissar for the Ukraine, Erich Koch, proposed that the entire population of the Northern Ukraine be forcibly evacuated to Germany. To weaken the Russian people’s will to resist, all superfluous individuals were to be exterminated.”

Who is guilty of these unprecedented crimes? It is not only the bestialized murderers who practiced mass slaughter, not only their immediate superiors; those who profited from the murder, spoliation, and enslavement of other peoples are just as guilty. They must all appear before the bar of justice, including those who, by distorting and falsifying science, poisoned the thinking of a whole generation.

XVIII

THE UNDERGROUND

To capitulate before fascism is not only a disaster for those who capitulate; it is also a crime against their own nation and against the people of other nations. This lesson the Germans learned in a terrible school.

Under Hitler, Germany became a country in which the overwhelming majority of the people, willingly or unwillingly, worked and fought for its imperialist aims. In the Nazi armies not the slightest trace of German culture could be found. Nothing indicated that this mass army came from a country in which there had once been a powerful and modern labor movement. The Germans strove to give their soldiery whatever they needed in the way of arms and equipment, whatever they could not extort from other peoples or from the work-slaves imported into Germany. They all strained to the limit to bring about a military victory for Nazi Germany: soldiers as well as civilians} the ruling classes, in whose interest the predatory war was waged, as well as the ruled and brutally repressed lower classes. Not even after Germany had begun to suffer decisive military defeats, when the country was subjected to devastating aerial bombings, when the objective conditions for struggling against their own regime were incomparably favorable, did the German people aid the United Nations in the task of overthrowing the Hitler regime. Thus, the German nation, including the great majority of the workers, became an instrument of Nazism.

To achieve this end, the Nazi dictatorship from the first days of its rule carried out a systematic and terrible war of extermination against all German opposition forces, isolating them by terror and propaganda from the great mass of the people. This no-quarter war within Germany assumed greater proportions as military difficulties increased. Of all the victories of National Socialism, only one proved decisive: namely the victory within Germany itself. One cannot speak of any *effective* German opposition to Nazism during the war, from its outset until the spring of 1945.

Small wonder that abroad the feeling grew that there were no more anti-Nazis in Germany, and that everything reported about the pre-war anti-Nazi movement had been more or less wishful thinking. This opinion was strengthened when in the conquered countries, despite the terror of the German armies of occupation and

their own native fascists, liberation movements arose and grew stronger the longer Nazi occupation lasted. Fascist ideas did not infect these countries, in the way they did in Germany.

Yet there always was an underground in Nazi Germany.* Its strength and influence varied. It was weakest when the Hitler regime won its greatest military and foreign-political successes and when the invaded nations most needed the active support of a German underground. Between 1933 and 1939, 350,000 persons were condemned to some 1,000,000 years imprisonment, not counting secret sentences. In the same six-year period, from 1933-1939, the number of known executions and murders reached 14,000. In addition, there were still in 1939 about 90,000 Germans in concentration camps.

The victims of the Hitler terror came primarily from the ranks of the Communist and Socialist workers. Communist and Social Democratic groups distributed newspapers and anti-Nazi literature, organized underground radio propaganda, and led movements in the factories for higher wages and improved working conditions. Many of the best members of the underground entered Nazi mass organizations, where they used “Trojan horse” tactics against the Hitlerites. The activities of these German anti-Nazis were supported by groups abroad, and by the liberal forces and labor movement in other countries.

The most active group in the German underground was the German Communists; consequently their losses were the highest. The Nazi dictatorship, considering the Communists its most dangerous enemy, determined to exterminate them physically— and in the course of time this decision was to a large degree carried out. Some of these losses were made up, however, when the most active anti-Nazis in other groups drew closer to the Communists.

Besides the political opposition, there was also the religious opposition. Individual Catholic and Protestant bishops fought for freedom of religion, the independence of the church, and against persecution of clergymen. Although they limited themselves to the religious sphere and *never became a general opposition* to the poli-

* The real story of the heroic German underground will be written in the years after the destruction of Hitler Germany. The world will be astounded to learn how many real national heroes Germany had during her most shameful period.

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cies and atrocities of Nazism, they facilitated the cooperation of many parish priests, especially in districts with a large Catholic working class population, with other groups of the underground. In other sections of society—among the peasants, intellectuals, civil servants, small shopkeepers, even among some individual members of the upper class—there were occasional signs of uneasiness and disillusionment. The underground movement utilized these sporadic symptoms of disaffection. But not once did it succeed in creating any serious difficulties for the regime.

How was it that despite their heroic efforts the underground groups lost rather than gained in influence? Two factors were responsible. First, the anti-Nazi masses remained apathetic while the rest of the Germans became more and more infected with the poison of Nazism. Second, Hitler's prestige rose sharply, first as a result of his successes in foreign policy, and later his military triumphs.

The sentiment of the cowed anti-Nazi Germans was that it was useless to beat one's head against the wall. The century-old tradition of the German bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie not to act on their own, or to show individual initiative—a fateful heritage; the lack of civic courage and the traditional spirit of German subservience; the Social Democratic schooling of large sections of the workers, which had taught them to wait in disciplined fashion until orders came from above and then passively to accept the situation if such orders were not forthcoming (as during the critical years 1930-1933)—these all constituted the breeding-ground for that fateful apathy. This apathy also permitted ideas which claimed to be "Marxist and radical," to gain currency: namely, since Nazism could not be overthrown without a violent political crisis, one could do nothing but wait for war, which would produce this crisis and the defeat of Nazism. The Communists, combating this theory on the grounds that it justified passivity and continual surrender, were often accused of vainly sacrificing their members instead of "sparing" them and saving them for the "future crisis." The Communists did not deny the great difficulties involved in the fight, but they replied that anti-Nazis who refrained for years from struggle would be no force if war and a shattering crisis finally did come. Such anti-Nazis would themselves end by being demoralized and shattered by National Socialism.

The second factor was the long chain of victories won by the Hitler regime in the field of foreign policy: from the re-occupation

of the Rhineland to the Munich Pact, and later the initial military victories of World War II. These triumphs until Munich seemed at first glance to refute all the warnings the anti-Nazis had given the German people. They had warned of the coming war into which the Nazis would plunge Germany in order to carry through their imperialist policies. They had also tried to explain to the masses the secret of the Nazi "economic miracle," behind which there was nothing but preparation for total war. But what happened? Hitler trained a powerful army, militarized the Rhineland, occupied Austria and the Sudetenland, and "unified the German people." He seemed to make Germany far stronger than she had been under Bismarck. What was more, the Western powers came to Munich and expressly stated that this policy meant "peace in our time."

Thus, Munich was a powerful blow to the German anti-Nazis as well. They had hoped that the Great Powers, acting collectively, would inflict a stinging defeat on Hitler's foreign policy and thus aid them in convincing the German masses that Nazism meant war. Just the opposite occurred. The Western powers proved valuable accomplices of the Nazis in their "education" of the German people. The Hitler regime proved that it could "accomplish anything" and "in peaceful fashion." The German people, trembling at the thought of war in the days preceding Munich, now believed in Hitler more than ever, and were more eager than ever to follow him in the event war did break out. The most active groups of the German underground, however, did not relax in their struggle against this dangerous blindness. At the end of January, 1939, the Communists held a national conference in Berne, Switzerland, after which they issued the following statement to the German people:

"Developments since the conquest of Austria and the Sudeten region confirm the May 1938 resolution of the Central Committee, which stated that the slogans of the Hitler regime, 'Greater Germany' and 'the right of self-determination for the German people' are only pretexts for carrying through Nazism's plans of conquest against other peoples and its imperialist 're-partitioning' of the world. Exploiting its victory at Munich, won with the aid of British and French reactionaries, the Hitler regime, allied with Mussolini, is doing its utmost to crush the heroic Spanish people. Spain is to be converted into a colony for German and Italian Fascism, in order to point a pistol at the heart of France and, by threats of war, to blackmail France into handing over territory to Germany. In his speech of

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January 30, 1939» Hitler for the first time openly admitted his criminal intervention in Spain and declared his readiness to drive the German people into war....

“At the same time, the Hitler regime continues in most brutal fashion the policy of enslaving small nations, threatens to break *any show of resistance by these nations with military measures, demands colonies as military bases for his war plans, and prepares its attack on the Soviet Union. In West as in the East, the Hitler regime is thus creating a situation in which overnight the German people may be plunged into the catastrophe of war, a war against the powerful front of all the peoples menaced and attacked by Hitlerism.*”

The outbreak of the European phase of World War II brought new and heavy losses to the German underground. The Gestapo carried out mass arrests; many carefully erected underground organizations were smashed; many anti-Nazis were murdered in concentration camps. The underground had expected such heightened persecution in the event of war. As a result of Germany's initial successes, an orgy of chauvinist intoxication seized the people. The Communists and other anti-Nazis who denounced this war as an imperialist war were virtually reduced to silence.

At the outbreak of war, the masses were at first confused and disturbed. Contrary to their hopes, Hitler had not been able to accomplish everything in peaceful fashion. Except for dyed-in-the-wool Nazis, the outward signs of war-fever were less marked than in 1914. But the situation soon changed. The *blitzkriegs* against Poland, Denmark, Norway, Holland, Belgium, France, and the Balkan countries made Hitler the god of war of the German people. The Nazi armies had proved that nothing could resist German might. And all these victories were won without too great losses. Life in Germany was not only normal, it was even improved. Food and other commodities poured into the country, plundered from all the other nations. Germany enjoyed more consumers' goods than before the war. Cleverly, Hitler allowed the “little men” to participate in this loot and awakened in them the lust for more booty. Broad sections of the German people were quite literally bribed by the material results of these victories. The Nazi theory of a Master Race seemed confirmed in practice. Everything the Nazis had told the Germans about the inferiority of the other peoples, about the German right to rule, seemed borne out by experience. Now the Germans had “living space.” Europe would work for them: they would

be the overseers, officials, policemen, and soldiers of Europe. Millions of Germans saw handsomely paid posts in the offing. Peasants' sons would acquire land, and the workers' lot would improve. German rule over Europe would solve all social questions.

In this orgy of easy victories and overflowing booty, from stolen machinery to silk stockings, chocolates, and bottles of champagne, the voice of the German opposition was a cry in the wilderness. The passive anti-Nazis budged less than ever. Some of them were in despair at the victories of Hitlerism and the effect of these victories on the masses: they began to consider Hitler's hold unbreakable. The spokesmen of the Churches found no word of protest against the violence inflicted on other peoples. The Nazis were the heroes of the hour. Every Nazi in the tiniest village was the picked, living representative of "Superman" Hitler, who put all of his predecessors in the shade. The German Philistine looked up with cringing reverence at this *Fuehrer* who had made himself master of Europe. During this period, quite a few anti-Nazis went over to the victorious Hitler camp. Quite a few of the waverers banished their hesitations and joined the Nazis. Quite a few who had hitherto viewed the Nazi regime with skepticism or mistrust forgot their misgivings. Quite a few were unable to resist the fascination of the victorious German soldier's uniform.

The invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941 struck the German people like a bolt from the blue. This attack had not been prepared with the usual atrocity-propaganda spread by the Nazi regime prior to an attack. After the signing of the German-Soviet non-aggression pact, Nazi propaganda had constantly repeated that friendship with the U.S.S.R. would be lasting and that a German-Soviet war was unthinkable. The German Communists greeted the signing of this pact, but warned against attempts to break it as the Nazis had broken other treaties in the past. The Communists sought tirelessly to explain to the German people that Germany's attitude toward the Soviet Union was *a life-and-death question of the German nation*. At their above-mentioned national conference, the German Communists asserted:

"The Berne Conference of the Communist Party of Germany declares that the policy of the Hitler regime toward the Soviet Union is the most abominable betrayal of Germany's national interests. After the defeat of Germany in World War I, the Soviet Union, despite the barbarous behavior of the Kaiser's armies in the Ukraine,

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was Germany's only friend and an irreconcilable foe of the *Diktat* of Versailles, which Lenin and Stalin characterized as incompatible with the greatness of the German people. Since its inception, the Soviet Union has proved that it has never represented a threat to Germany. ... *To follow a 'policy of hostility against such a land and drive the German people into war against it is a policy of national catastrophe....*

"The German people must never allow themselves to be drawn into war against the U.S.S.R. In the event of war, every means must and will be explored to overthrow Nazism by independent action and in alliance with the Red Army, and to fight for peace and freedom in Germany.

"The Communist Party of Germany declares: *If, despite all the efforts of the anti-Nazis, it is not possible to prevent the war against other peoples provoked by Hitler, it is in the national interests of the German people to end the war as quickly as possible and with every means in their power by overthrowing the Hitler regime. Only thus can the German people save themselves from the terrible consequences of such a war and preserve the very existence of the German nation.*"

There were many Social-Democrats who attacked the Communists because of their defense of the German-Russian non-aggression pact. The executive committee of the Social Democratic Party in exile used the pact to commence a rabid campaign against the U.S.S.R. Even many so-called "Left" Socialists assailed the attitude of the German Communists toward the pact. Those in Germany who looked on war as a way out, wanted armed conflict with the Soviet Union in order, as they declared, to overthrow Hitler. They hoped that the Red Army, against which they had carried on a campaign of slander during the period of the Nazi dictatorship, would do for them what they had not been prepared to lift a finger to accomplish. Objectively, this attitude signified, even in the best of cases, support of the Nazis. The German Communists, however, and other far-sighted anti-Nazis consistently refused to advocate a German-Russian war "in order to defeat Hitler," just as they refused to advocate a Nazi war against other nations in order to create "revolutionary situations and political crises."

The assault on the Soviet Union, unaccompanied by any propaganda fanfare, was designed to catch the German people as well as the Russians unawares. The Germans were to be placed before an

accomplished fact, without any time to offer resistance. A leading official of the Berlin Communist underground has described the first days after the invasion as follows:

“By seven in the morning our comrades were on the way to factories with instructions to organize protest meetings by direct action. I made my way to one of our secret meetings to confer with our people.

“Berlin had a somber appearance on that fateful day. There were, of course, no signs of enthusiasm by the populace, and alarm and dejection could be felt everywhere. Strong police details patrolled the streets as in the days of great civilian disorder. Gestapo plain-clothes men were posted at street corners and stared into the face of everyone.

“Obviously Hitler had a reason to fear his people and was ready to handle them roughly. We Communists, too, expected an unquiet day in Berlin. *We were indeed, convinced that after the conclusion of the German-Soviet pact Hitler would not be able to swing our people over to war against the U.S.S.R. We trusted the wisdom and class consciousness of the Berlin workers. But subsequent events show that we miscalculated.*

“Toward evening it became clear that the Berlin worker would not budge. Attempts by our comrades to hold mass meetings near factories met with no success. All we could manage were small clandestine meetings of our Party organizations and sympathizers in various districts. We felt our great responsibility to the workers of the world and primarily to our Russian brothers, who were now shouldering the whole burden of the war with Hitler Germany. At that time we saw with distress and affliction that the war, like a wave, was sweeping over the heads of our party organizations, which were just coming back to life.

“Explanation can be found for the cowardice of those, who, while opposed to the criminal anti-Soviet war, nevertheless tried to advance some excuse for their capitulation. Some of them reasoned in a purely philistine manner: “It’s like banging your head against a stone wall. The Nazis are strong, and if you put up a fight you will either be killed or land in prison.” But these people forgot that had the Russian workers taken that line, they would never have overthrown Czarism, and abolished the rule of the landlords and capitalists.

“No little work is required to expose the cowardly attempts of

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certain anti-fascist elements who gloss over the question of responsibility which our working class and our people bear for the war against the Soviet Union. Only the Nazis are responsible for the anti-Soviet war and for the German army's invasion of the U.S.S.R.—these people maintain. That the Nazi villains are responsible is, of course, beyond a doubt. But we say that those who actually encouraged such crimes by their passivity and silence must bear their share of responsibility. Whoever remains silent exposes himself as a participant in the Nazi crimes. Anti-fascism confined to four walls and finding no outlet in action is sheer capitulation and not anti-fascism at all. It is not this sorry platonic anti-fascism that we require, but a fighting effective anti-fascism.”

Again the Gestapo made mass arrests, especially of Communists and anyone known to have sympathized with them. The Gestapo campaign was also extended to all “politically unreliable” and “potentially dangerous” individuals. Now, with the technical means of modern propaganda, the Germans were told hair-raising atrocity stories about the Russians and given a glowing picture of their future after the defeat of Soviet Union. Millions of them, losing all sense of restraint, panted like beasts for Russian blood. Those passive anti-Nazis who had awaited this conflict so as to defeat Hitler, saw to their horror how the Nazi armies were penetrating deeply into the Soviet Union. Nor had it become any easier to overthrow Hitler. But many Germans, persuaded that Hitler would defeat the U.S.S.R. in six weeks and then bring the war to a glorious end, considered him more than ever the greatest war lord of all times.

Under such circumstances, the Germans began their march to their greatest national catastrophe. Most of the workers remained passive, working ten, twelve and more hours daily for the war and by their passivity enmeshed ever more deeply in the Nazi net. Attempts at resistance, examples of sabotage were few in number, as though there had never been a forward-looking German labor movement. Again the voice of the underground died away as a result of the Gestapo's new wave of terror. Whatever they did, could not alter the course of events. The German people refused to listen to them.

The political and military defeats in the ensuing years, both on the Eastern and Western Front, created a wave of war-weariness and growing opposition among various German classes. Even sections

of the industrialists and higher functionaries looked for ways to save what they could.

It seemed the moment had come in which the unfavorable military position of the Nazi regime would make it easier for the active anti-Nazis to bring the German people to their senses and develop a broad popular movement for the overthrow of Hitler. But again it became evident that the strength of Nazi influence, the power of chauvinist ideas, and above all, the passive spirit of subservience of millions, the demoralization of potential anti-Nazis, and the fragmentation of the underground movement represented formidable obstacles that the anti-Nazis were unable to overcome. Despite a long string of defeats in both East and West, despite terrible military losses, despite pulverizing air bombardments, the Nazi armies maintained their discipline; and the workers and peasants of Germany continued to produce the wherewithal for these armies.

Many Germans accepted the new Nazi argument for the need of continuing the war: namely, that now it was a question of saving Germany from destruction. This propaganda was all the more effective since great masses of Germans had either actively participated in the heinous crimes of the Nazis or had tolerated them without any visible protest. The feeling of their own guilt and the fear of righteous vengeance by other peoples helped the Nazis slow up the process of deterioration in the army and civilian population. Especially did they succeed in convincing many Germans that the Russians were bloodthirsty, Asiatic barbarians who would not spare a single German. So, despite the increasing activity of the German anti-Nazis in 1943-1944, they were not able to turn the sharply rising sense of war-weariness and the growing moods of opposition among all classes and groups, including high army officers, into a centralized anti-Hitler movement.

Hundreds of thousands of Germans have fallen in the fight against Nazism. Tens of thousands more who first became anti-Nazis in the course of Germany's military' defeats because they realized the madness of continuing the war and wanted to save what could be saved—like the generals and other officers who sought to assassinate Hitler on July 20, 1944—fell victim of Gestapo terror. These victims came from every social and age group, from every religious denomination, from every political grouping. But no German liberation movement developed capable of taking the country's fate in its own hands by throttling the Hitler dictatorship and ending

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the war.

When apologists for Germany seek to exonerate the German people of moral guilt in the Nazi war and war-crimes by evoking the heroes of the German underground, they commit a dangerous mistake. The great mass of the German people followed the Nazis, rejoiced in their victories, participated in their outrages, profited from their booty, or passively tolerated their barbarous rule. The heroes of the underground swam futilely against the current of the entire Nazi-infected nation. That is why the German underground did not come to the aid of the other peoples; its own people had rejected it, and even those Germans who sympathized with it displayed merely platonic sympathies.

The fate of the German underground is tragic confirmation of the fact that the people capitulated to National Socialism. The existence of this underground does not free the German nation of its guilt; rather is the fate of this underground one more proof of Germany's submission to Nazism. A nation that allows its most courageous and persistent fighters for freedom to be destroyed is inevitably condemned to disaster. Moreover, the more successful reaction and fascism are in this destruction of the nation's best sons, the greater the final disaster. The active German anti-Nazis could not prevent the crimes of the Hitler dictatorship against other nations, nor the catastrophe of their own nation. Nevertheless, their struggle was not in vain. Even if the fruits of their struggle take an agonizingly long time to ripen—as in Germany.

XIX

THE DOWNFALL OF GERMANY

When the insurgent German peasants of the sixteenth century, beaten, tortured, and massacred by the princes, feudal lords, and bishops, were hurled back into miserable serfdom, a song arose among these peasants. And in one line of this song they left their last will and testament to posterity: "Beaten, we return home: may our grandchildren fight a better fight."

But unfortunately for Germany and the world, their descendants have not since fought a better fight. Time and again, the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of these peasants have been ground down by the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the reactionary classes. Time and again, and under diverse historic conditions, the Germans have taken to the sword and hearkened to the ideas and traditions of their extreme reactionaries. Time and again the most progressive men, classes, and ideas have been isolated from the great mass of the people. Upsurges, like the 1848 Revolution and especially the 1918 Revolution, broke off abruptly after hopeful beginnings and initial successes. They collapsed long before they reached their goal—and their foes, apparently beaten but never eliminated, rose up again and again to enjoy unlimited freedom of action.

All the classes whose historic task it was to make Germany a modern forward-looking nation, free of all feudal remains, of reactionary decay and centuries-old superstitions, abdicated. The bourgeoisie, which in other lands became the driving force in the assault on feudalism and its reactionary ideology and the prime mover in the creation of a modern nation, arrived late on the scene in Germany. And fearful of the working class from its inception, it betrayed democracy and the ideas of its most advanced thinkers. The German bourgeoisie early became a class that fought against its own workers and peasants and against other peoples, using the whole arsenal of reactionary methods and traditions so characteristic of German history. Its dominant sections combined all the lusts and evils of modern robber-imperialism with the brutal, predatory spirit of historic Prussianism.

Even the most advanced class in Germany, the working class, whose historic task it was to carry through not only its own program of social revolution but also the democratic tasks unfulfilled by the

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bourgeoisie, proved incapable of doing this. After a period of ascension, which made the German working class the pride and hope of every progressive group in the world, it fell more and more under the influence of the upper strata of the labor movement. These forces, corrupted by German imperialism, embodied the typically German spirit of servility and philistinism toward the reactionary ruling classes, their ideas, and their institutions. After 1914, the German labor movement, disrupted and split by the working-class representatives of German imperialism, opened wide the doors of the labor movement to chauvinist ideas.

But, after the experiences of World War I, the hour seemed finally to have struck for the German people, especially their most advanced class, the workers, to “fight a better fight” than their forebears. A situation had arisen which seemed to confirm the prophetic remarks which Engels had made in 1848:

“All peoples make progress; the smallest, weakest nations always find in the complicated European situation the moment to snatch, despite their big, reactionary neighbors, one modern institution after another. Only the forty million Germans do not budge. *Therefore, the Germans must first be thoroughly compromised before all other nations; they must become, even more than they already are, the laughing stock of all Europe, they must be compelled to make a revolution. But then they will rise, not the cowardly German burghers, to be sure, but the German workers; they will rise, put an end to that whole unclean, muddleheaded official German crew, and restore German honor by a radical revolution*”¹ (Authors’ italics.)

But after 1918 there was not such a radical democratic revolution. In 1848, Frederick Engels could not of course foresee—though later in his life he warned of this possibility—that the leaders of the great majority of the German workers would behave in exactly the same way as the “cowardly German burghers.”

Exploiting the workers lack of revolutionary and democratic traditions, their political inexperience, their proneness to blind discipline, and the absence of a revolutionary party rooted in the people, the Social-Democratic leaders destroyed the brightest hope the Germans had ever had of thoroughly cleansing Germany of its centuries-old decay. A democratic republic arose, but it proved to be a rallying ground for defeated German imperialism and offered the reactionaries a welcome breathing space. It was not the revolution

that triumphed; what triumphed was the extreme, total counter-revolution: German Nazism. Germany was not cleansed of every reactionary institution, tradition, and individual—but of every progressive idea and institution, of every freedom-loving individual and party. The great traditions and ideas of the German labor movement, representing the best in German culture, did not transform the German people, particularly the politically backward masses. On the contrary, many German workers became permeated with the influence of the barbarous and medieval ideas of the most reactionary sections of the German ruling class and their instrument, the Nazi dictatorship. The result was that the most advanced class in Germany, the workers, the great majority of whom were disorganized, terrorized, demoralized, or corrupted by Nazism, were not a factor in preventing the Nazis' robber-war and their systematic extermination of other peoples. And this class became, either passively or actively, an instrument of German National-Socialism. It was not the German workers who saved the world from Nazism—this was the work of people outside of Germany, the result of their heroism, their ability to endure and to resist without surrendering. If the Soviet Union and the peoples of the other United Nations had behaved in the same way as the German Social-Democrats, the majority of the German workers, and the German republic, Hitler Germany would have won world mastery. Instead, Hitler Germany was crushed.

Once again, the Germans face essentially the same historic tasks which they failed to solve in 1918-19 and the years that followed. But under what conditions! Forty to fifty million dead, Europe a continent of ashes and rubble, billions of dollars of wealth wasted. And all this came to pass because, in the final analysis, the Germans had failed to carry through their democratic, anti-imperialist revolution, and were not even capable of defending the freedoms they had won in 1918; because they did not find the strength to resist Nazism and become a key factor in liberating their own country and the world from Nazi tyranny; because the courageous and far-sighted minority of Germans, fighting against reaction and Nazism, have not been able in any decisive situation since 1914 to alter the course of the current against which they swam.

Not from their own strength and their own knowledge, but rather from the military exploits of the peoples assaulted and oppressed by Nazism are the Germans now learning *that their exist-*

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ence is incompatible with the existence of German reaction, German imperialism, and German Nazism. Under National-Socialism, the Germans had a Germany that represented the heart's desire of the reactionaries: a Germany without an organized labor movement, without workers' political parties, without democratic liberties, without Jews, without social progress or enlightened ideas. This was a Germany of absolutism, of unlimited exploitation by the big trusts and banks, a regime of police rule and terror, of unbridled militarism, of unchained chauvinism and race hatred, of blind adoration of the German "Superman." And the results? Ten to fifteen million Germans killed, millions maimed, the leading cities and industrial centers laid waste, crushing military defeats, the bestialization of broad masses of the "master race," moral and cultural decay, the hatred and contempt of other peoples throughout the world, and the loss of national sovereignty for an indefinite period. What the Germans did not learn after 1918 they will now be *compelled* to learn—or they will cease to exist as a nation.

For in the fiery furnace of this war the peoples have learned that Germany's internal affairs are the concern of the entire world. The existence of such a nation, which allows itself again and again to become the tool of its worst reactionaries, which obeys them in exterminating other peoples, is absolutely incompatible with the existence of other peoples. In order to regain the confidence of the peoples of the world, the German people will have to give proof that at last they are able to learn from experience, to root out their reactionaries and to take the road to peaceful progress. Therefore the Germans must be compelled to destroy German militarism and Nazism with all their institutions and ramifications. For only a nation that does not use its sovereignty to blot out that of other nations can demand of the latter respect for its own sovereignty.

Only the future can tell whether the Germans will break completely with their reactionary past. Is a Germany without reactionaries and without imperialism possible, or is this but a Utopian dream never to be realized? To this problem German history offers some clues.

German history teaches that the reactionary classes of Germany, the social props of militarism, imperialism, and Nazism, are *incorrigible*. One cannot "re-educate" German monopoly capitalism and German Junkers. Again and again, adopting cunning new methods, these reactionary classes have sought to wage their counter-

revolutionary onslaughts against the German people and other peoples; and on every occasion, they have eventually succeeded in bringing the masses of their own people under their influence. They did this in the Kaiser's Germany, under the Weimar Republic, and most of all during the period of German Nazism. Undoubtedly they will try it again. The Kaisers, Eberts, and Hitlers may come and go—but the reactionary classes will leave nothing undone to turn a beaten, militarily impotent Germany into a strong imperialist Germany; and they will do their utmost to subject the Germans to their vicious influence. *Such is the historic law of the reactionary classes of Germany.*

These classes will find a set of favorable premises for their reactionary plans. As a result of their predatory war and their senseless last-ditch continuation of hostilities, the Germans will in the first place be in abject misery. They will have to make good the damage they have wrought. A far greater percentage of Germans than in 1918, especially among the youth, have been completely infected with chauvinism and have fallen into political and cultural illiteracy. Demagogic exploitation of the social consequences of the war, military defeats, United Nations' occupation and control, reparations, and territorial losses will prove effective weapons in the hands of the reactionaries and their followers when they fight against democracy. The reactionaries and their numerous Nazi followers will don the most varied cloaks as they adapt themselves to the changed situation at home and abroad: they will exploit the Church, wear the mantle of the right-wing Social-Democrats, pose especially as champions in the struggle against Communism, and, last but not least, come forward as the defenders of "free enterprise." They will parade as anti-American, anti-English, anti-Russian, or anti-French, depending on circumstances, and solicit sympathy and aid in reactionary and pro-fascist circles throughout the world. Germany's upper-class reactionaries who were never democrats will not be democrats after this war, no matter how carefully they disguise themselves, no matter how cunningly they exploit the newly introduced democratic liberties and institutions for their own purposes. They were—and they will remain when this war is over—irreconcilable enemies of democracy and the labor movement. They will resort to all kinds of tricks and provocations, all kinds of national and social demagoguery; and they will try to avenge their present defeat by unleashing a third world war. *So long*

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as these imperialist classes and their influence exist, Germany will remain a festering source of danger for the rest of the world.

In every capitalist country occupied by the Nazis, the workers played the most active part in uniting the nation to fight against the invaders. In their struggle, the workers overcame many of their weaknesses and encrusted prejudices and much of their backwardness. True to their historic role in bourgeois society, they became the most far-sighted representatives of the national and social interests of their country. In their struggle against Nazism, the working-class movements, in varying degrees, reached a new and higher stage in their development.

This did not happen in Hitler Germany. Under Nazi rule, the German labor movement plunged to its lowest level. Under Hitler, the deeds of this class stood in complete antithesis to its historic role and many positive traditions. In contradistinction to the workers in the Nazi-occupied lands, the German workers did not purge themselves of their weaknesses. Instead, these weaknesses developed to the extreme and helped the Nazis carry through their work of disorganization and moral disruption.

Until the German working class can find a way to cleanse itself by deeds of the consequences of its passivity and its subservience to Nazism, it will not be in a position to raise itself and its nation to a higher level of human development, and regain the trust of the peoples and labor movements of other countries.

But if history teaches that the reactionary classes of Germany are incorrigible—which does not exclude the possibility that individual members of those classes may be corrected—this is not the case with the German working class, despite its shocking deterioration and its far-reaching historic responsibility for Germany's crimes. In the history of modern imperialism, the German workers have never been the *initiators* of reaction, imperialism, and Nazism. And whatever resistance there was in Germany to these pernicious forces *came in the first place from the ranks of the German workers*. Nazism came to power under the leadership of the most reactionary sections of the German upper classes, with the help of the misled peasants and lower middle classes, *but against the will of the great majority of the German workers*. The reactionary classes had to summon National-Socialism and set up the most terrorist dictatorship the world has ever seen in order to subjugate the German workers.

From the foregoing it follows that the peoples of the world and especially their labor movements will expect the German workers to learn the lessons of their own bitter history and never again to surrender to their reactionaries. *But of all the classes and groups in Germany, the reorganization of the German working class, the re-education of the German workers, holds out the greatest promise of success.* Hence the elimination of every Nazi and militarist idea and institution means for the German workers a powerful new historic opportunity for the rebirth of their class. The establishment of democratic conditions and the destruction of the Nazi apparatus of total power give the most active and progressive German workers—whose prestige among their fellow-workers will rise sharply after the war—a chance in the course of time to transform the Nazi-corrupted and demoralized sections of their own class into politically conscious, forward-looking workers. It affords them an opportunity to cleanse their own class of the consequences of Germany's rottenness.

This re-education of the German workers will be no easy task. Many of their most active and enlightened leaders have been eliminated. Many of their sons and daughters have been educated under National-Socialism and imbued with the poison of Nazi ideas and influences. Broad sections of the lower middle class, of the peasantry, and millions of women have for the first time become workers under the Nazis, bringing with them their political backwardness and readiness to accept Nazi ideas. Many members of former German minorities from the Sudeten regions, Poland, Yugoslavia, Rumania, and Hungary, notoriously backward politically, have become workers in the Reich. Moreover, considerable sections of the workers have served as soldiers in the Nazi army and have become brutalized. Many who belonged to the traditional labor movement have been demoralized by the long period of terror, political isolation, and adaptation to the Nazi dictatorship: they have grown passive, incapable of acting on their own initiative. Not with impunity can one work and fight, even unwillingly, for years against freedom. However, the liberation of the German workers from Hitler's tyranny by the United Nations will create favorable conditions for the awakening of large sections of this class that fell prey to the terror and influence of the Nazi dictatorship.

With respect to the German middle strata—the urban middle classes, the professionals, and the peasants—German history teach-

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es that they have always been most receptive to all the anti-democratic, anti-Semitic, racist, chauvinist, and reactionary teachings of the upper classes, their parties and their leaders. These in-between classes, who helped crush the labor movement and blot out all democratic liberties, have been especially poisoned by Nazism. The absence of modern, national, democratic traditions is especially marked in these classes. In every social, political, and international crisis they are easily disposed to seek a way out in the camp of the extreme reactionaries and imperialists.

Just as after World War I, these elements, after the overthrow of the Hitler regime, will cast about for new leaders, parties, and ideas to follow. Only the future will demonstrate whether the Germans will evolve such new parties and leaders, capable of guiding the floundering middle classes to new paths. At any rate, it is clear that for a long time to come these middle classes will represent a most favorable terrain for Nazism and other forms of reaction j it is in these groups that reactionary and chauvinist propaganda will long remain virulent. These in-between classes will therefore pose a very complicated problem in Germany's reeducation. But however difficult the task may be, objectively they can be re-educated—unlike the reactionary classes who are *cabble*. After 1918, when these middle strata swung out of the camp of German imperialism to the side of the workers, it would have been quite possible to prevent them from returning to the camp of the counter-revolution. But to accomplish this, it would have been necessary to extirpate the economic, social, political, and ideological influences of the reactionaries.

In pre-war days the German churches supported reaction. The German churches also did not prevent any of the barbarities of the Hitler regime; they did not shorten the war by a single day; nor did they stir up the masses to active struggle against Nazism. Thus, the German churches and their preachers cannot lay any moral claim to exemption from the political responsibility borne by the entire German nation.

Only the future will show to what extent the German churches will bring their moral influence to bear on reshaping Germany in a progressive sense from the ground up, after the Hitler regime has been crushed, democratic liberties restored, and all church restrictions removed. In this connection, it is well to point out that quite a number of individual clergymen of both Catholic and Protestant denominations have never in any way compromised with

Nazism.

In any case, it is obvious that the reactionaries and their Nazi followers will try in the coming postwar period to use the churches as refuges and strongholds of imperialism. *The churches will be exploited in an attempt to prevent a drastic purge of the reactionary spirit and institutions in Germany.* One section of the Catholic Church hierarchy waged, during the entire period of Hitler rule, a so-called “two-front war”; against Nazi racial theories and the suppression of Catholic organizations, *but at the same time and above all in favor of Hitler’s foreign policy.* These churchmen may again raise the banner of anti-Communism and become a bulwark of defeated German imperialism. This possibility cannot be overlooked, especially since reactionary circles in the international Catholic hierarchy will unquestionably make every effort to use and misuse the German Catholic Church for their anti-progressive, anti-democratic, and, above all, anti-Soviet policies.

Will the Germans finally learn from their history, will they learn the lessons of the crumbling of their three Reichs—the Kaiser’s Reich, the Weimar Republic, and Hitler Germany? Will they proceed along a new historic path? They have tried every reactionary highway and byway: every one of them has led to a more catastrophic debacle. They have tried everything—*the necessary road of human progress and the realization of the rights of man.* After every forward step the Germans have taken, they have gone back two or many more steps. They have either chased every bauble of reaction, every idea and demagogic slogan, or they have allowed themselves to be overpowered and led by reactionary forces. But up to now, they have never recognized as *the* German party, *the* German idea, and *the* German man those parties, ideas, and men who have been the bearers of progress and who have never compromised or trafficked with the reactionaries. In the final analysis, peoples, classes, and parties learn from their own experiences. But what more shattering experience than the devastation of Europe and the most violent catastrophe in German history must the Germans, particularly the workers, undergo for them to acquire the capacity to free themselves once and for all from Germany’s historic misery? And who would be so insane as to permit the Germans to repeat any such “school of experience”?

The answer is not to be found either in Germany’s previous history or in speculations about the future. It will be given by the deeds

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of the Germans themselves in the years ahead. Certainly there is no historic or social law which makes it impossible for a people so backward and so barbarous as the Germans have become to return to the path of progress, culture, and civilization. The power and grip of their reactionary traditions and their unbelievable crimes as a nation make it hard for a people to travel that road, but the road is not irrevocably barred to them. There is no law of hereditary sin in the evolution of nations and classes. Sins which human beings have committed can be atoned for by human beings, once they uncover the sources of these sins and root out the unholy sinners and their institutions.

A number of factors will help prevent the Germans from plunging into a fourth catastrophe. The defeat of Hitler Germany means not only freeing the peoples attacked, occupied, ravaged, or menaced by German Nazism. It also means freeing the Germans themselves of the rule of their arch-reactionaries. After the fall of Hitler, history will give the Germans yet another chance. But this time it will be thanks to the arms and heroism of other peoples. This time, unlike 1918, the whipped German reactionaries will not find as many patrons or accomplices in other lands. There will be quite a few in some countries} but for the most part they will find deadly enemies, stern judges, implacable guardians and avengers. At the Crimea Conference, the leaders of the three strongest powers on earth proclaimed their “inflexible purpose to destroy German militarism and Nazism and to insure that Germany will never again be able to disturb the peace of the world. ... It is not our purpose to destroy the people of Germany, but only when Nazism and militarism have been extirpated will there be hope for a decent life for Germans, and a place for them in the comity of the nations.” And genuine German anti-Nazis, whatever their initial strength and influence in the postwar period, can count on the support of the other nations in their struggle to liquidate German Nazism and re-educate the German people. *For the extirpation of German Nazism and militarism is the decisive national task of the Germans, without which they cannot take a single forward step.* This is the crux of the German problems} and on this point, the interests of the other nations are absolutely identical with the true national interests of the Germans. This is true irrespective of what the Germans are made to do, in order to insure that they will carry out this task and make good the savage destruction they have wrought.

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The experience of Nazism will help whatever progressive German forces exist slowly to become the teachers and leaders of their country. These Germans under Nazism were isolated, decimated, or driven into exile. Their ideas drew the concentrated fire of the Nazis within Germany} and yet in tragic fashion they have been justified in the eyes of their own nation. In those Germans who have not ceased to represent the other Germany with their ideas, their struggle, their love of liberty, and their lives, who have embodied the great cultural traditions of Germany, there lies a powerful potential force.

If the overwhelming majority of Germans draw up a balance-sheet of their history in such a way that they honor their heroes in the fight against reaction and Nazism as true national heroes; if they recognize the victories of the United Nations armies over the Hitlerite armies as national victories; if they look upon the initial victories of the Nazi armies as themes for national mourning—then will a new German nation be born. Then finally will come the day in which the Germans will use their oft-proved talents and capabilities in the service of peaceful human progress. Then and only then will the German misery come to an end; then and only then will the dreams of the insurgent peasants of the sixteenth century find fruition; then and only then will their descendants have fought a better fight. Only then will the name of German cease to be identical with bestiality; only then will the Germans become a people who have ceased for all time to represent a horrible nightmare to the peoples of the world.

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