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LEON TROTSKY

PRELUDE TO HITLER

WHICH SIDE TO TAKE?

WHY PAST REVOLUTIONARY
MOVEMENTS FAILED

THE FASCIST COUNTER-REVOLUTION

LONG LIVE THE WAR!

BOOK REVIEWS

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This magazine consciously opposes all forms of sectarianism. The sectarian confuses the interest of his group, whether it is a party or a union, with the interest of the class. It is our purpose to discover the actual proletarian tendencies in their backward organizational and theoretical forms; to effect a discussion of them beyond the boundaries of their organizations and the current dogmatics; to facilitate their fusion into unified action; and thus to help them achieve real significance.

LEON TROTSKY

With Leon Trotsky there passed away the last of the great leaders of bolshevism. It was his activity during the last fifteen years that kept alive some of the original content of the bolshevik ideology — the great weapon for transforming backward Russia into its present state-capitalistic form.

As all men are wiser in practice than in theory, so also Trotsky by his accomplishments achieves far greater importance than through his rationalizations that accompanied them. Next to Lenin, he was without doubt the greatest figure of the Russian Revolution. However, the need for leaders like Lenin and Trotsky, and the effect these leaders had, brings to light the utter helplessness of the proletarian masses to solve their own real needs in face of a merciless unripe historical situation.

The masses had to be led; but the leaders could lead only in accordance with their own necessities. The need for leadership of the kind practiced by bolshevism finally indicates nothing else than the need to discipline and terrorize the masses, so that they may work and live in harmony with the plans of the ruling social group. This kind of leadership in itself demonstrates the existence of class relations, class politics and economics, and an irreconcilable opposition between the leaders and the led. The over-towering personality of Leon Trotsky reveals the non-proletarian character of the Bolshevik Revolution just as well as the mummified and deified Lenin in the Moscow Mausoleum.

In order that some may lead, others must be powerless. To be the vanguard of the workers, the elite has to usurp all social key positions.

Like the bourgeoisie of old, the new leaders had to seize and control all means of production and destruction. To hold their control and keep it effective, the leaders must constantly strengthen themselves by bureaucratic expansion, and continually divide the ruled. Only masters can be leaders.

Trotsky was such a master. At first he was the masterly propagandist, the great and never tiring orator, establishing his leading position in the revolution. Then he became the creator and master of the Red Army, fighting against the *Right* and the *Left*, fighting for bolshevism, which he hoped to master too. But here he failed. When leaders make history, those who are led no longer count; but neither do they disappear. Trusting in the force of grand historical spectacles, Trotsky neglected to be the efficient opportunist behind the scenes of bureaucratic development that he was in the spotlight of world history.

Today, great men are no longer necessary. Modern propaganda instruments can transform any fraud into a hero, any mediocre personality into an all-comprehending genius. Propaganda actually transforms through its collective efforts any average, if not stupid, leader, like Hitler and Stalin, into a great man. The leaders become symbols of an organized, collective, and really intelligent will to maintain given social institutions. Outside of Russia, Trotsky was soon reduced to the master of a small sect of professional revolutionists and their providers. He was "the Old Man", the indisputable authority of an artificial growth upon the political scene, destined to end in absurdity. To become the master of a *Fourth International*, as his adversary Stalin was master of the *Third*, remained the illusion with which he died.

There is here no need to re-trace Trotsky's individual development; his autobiography suffices. Neither is it necessary to stress his many qualifications, literary and otherwise. His works, and most of all his *History of the Russian Revolution*, will immortalize his name as a writer and politician. But there is a real need to oppose the development of the Trotsky legend which will make out of this leader of the Russian state capitalist revolution a martyr of the international working class — a legend which must be rejected together with all other postulates and aspects of bolshevism.

Louis Ferdinand Celine has said that revolutions should be judged twenty years later. And in doing so, he found only words of condemnation for bolshevism. To us, however, it seems that a present-day re-evaluation of bolshevism could well do without any kind of moralizing. In retrospect it is quite easy to see in bolshevism the beginning of a new phase of capitalist development, which was initiated by the first World War. No doubt, in 1917, Russia was the weakest link in the capitalist world structure. But the whole of capitalism in its private property form was already on the verge of stagnation. To erect and expand a workable economic system of the laissez-faire type was no longer possible. Only the force of complete centralism, of dictatorial rule over the whole of society, could guarantee the establishment of an exploitative social order capable of expanding production despite the declining world-capitalism.

There can be no doubt that the bolshevik leaders by creating their state-capitalistic structure — which has, within twenty years, become the example for the further evolution of the whole of the capitalist world — were deeply convinced that their construction conformed to the needs and desires of their own and the world proletariat. Even when they found that they could not alter the fact that their society continued to be based on the exploitation of labor, they sought to alter the meaning of this fact by offering in excuse a theory that identified the rule of the leaders with the interests of the led. The motive force of social development in class society — the class struggle — theoretically was done away with; but practically, an authoritarian regime had to be developed masked as the dictatorship of the proletariat. In the creation of this regime, and in the attempt to camouflage it, Trotsky won most of his laurels. He rested on those laurels to the very last. It is only necessary to reflect on the paramount role which Trotsky played in the first thundering years of Bolshevik Russia to understand why he could not admit that the bolshevik revolution was able only to change the form of capitalism but was not able to do away with the capitalistic form of exploitation. It was the shadow of that period that darkened his understanding.

In the general backwardness that prevailed in Czarist Russia, the intelligentsia had little opportunity to improve its position. The talent and capacities of the educated middle classes found no realization in this stagnating society. Later this situation found its parallel in the middle class conditions in Italy and Germany after Versailles and in the wake of the following world crisis. In all three countries, and in both situations, the intelligentsia and large layers of the middle classes became politicized and counter-poised to the declining economic system. In the search for ideologies useful as weapons, and in the search for allies, all had to appeal to the proletarian layer of society, and to all other dissatisfied elements. The leadership of the bolshevik as well as of the fascist movements was not proletarian, but middle class: the result of the frustration of intellectuals under conditions of economic stagnation and atrophy.

In Russia, before 1917, a revolutionary ideology was developed with the help of western socialism — with Marxism. But the ideology served only the act of revolution, nothing more. It had to be altered continuously and re-fitted to serve the developing needs of the state-capitalist revolution and its profiteers. Finally, this ideology lost all connection with reality and served as religion, a weapon to maintain the new ruling class.

With this ideology, the Russian intelligentsia, supported by ambitious workers, were able to seize power and to hold it because of the disintegration of Czarist society, the wide social gap between peasants and workers, the undeveloped proletarian consciousness, and the general weakness of international capitalism after the war. Coming to power with the help of a russified Marxian ideology, Trotsky, after he lost power, had no choice but to maintain the revolutionary ideology in its original form against the

degeneration of Marxism indulged in by the Stalinists. He could afford this luxury, for he had escaped the iron consequences of the social system he had helped to bring about. Now he could lead a life of dignity, that is, a life of opposition. But had he suddenly been brought back to power, his actions could have been none other than those of Stalin's which he so despised. After all, the latter is himself no more than the creature of Lenin's and Trotsky's policies. As a matter of fact, "Stalinists" as a particular type are, so long as they are controllable, just that type of men which leaders like Lenin and Trotsky need and love most. But sometimes the worm turns. Those bolshevik underlings elevated into power positions understand to the fullest that the only insurance for security lies in imprisonment, exile, and murder.

In 1925 oppressive methods were not far enough advanced to secure absolute power for the great leader. The dictatorial instruments were still hampered by the traditions of democratic capitalism. Leadership remained after Lenin's death; there was not yet the Leader. Though Trotsky was forced into exile, the unripeness of the authoritarian form of government spared his life for fifteen years. Soon both old and new oppositions to Stalin's rule could easily be destroyed. Hitler's overwhelming success in the "night of the long knives", when he killed off with one bold stroke the whole of the effective opposition against him, showed Stalin the way to handle his own problems. Whoever was suspected of having at one time or another entertained ideas unpleasant to Stalin's taste and absolute rule, whoever because of his critical capacities was suspected of being able in the future to reach the willing ears of the underdogs and disappointed bureaucrats, was eliminated. This was done not in the Nibelungen manner in which the German fascists got rid of Roehm, Strasser and their following, but in the hidden, scheming, cynical manner of the Moscow Trials, to exploit even the death of the potential oppositionists for the greater glory of the all-embracing and beloved leader, Stalin. The applause of those taking the offices emptied by the murdered was assured. To make the broad masses happily accept the miserable end of the "old Bolsheviks" was merely a job for the minister of propaganda. Thus the whole of Russia, not only the leading bureaucratic group, finished off the "traitors to the fatherland of the workers".

Though secretly celebrating Trotsky's death at studio parties, the defenders of Stalinism, affecting naivete, will ask why Stalin should be interested in doing away with Trotsky. After all, what harm could Trotsky do to the mighty Stalin and his great Russia? However, a bureaucracy capable of destroying thousands of books because they contain Trotsky's name, re-writing and again re-writing history to erase every accomplishment of the murdered opposition, a bureaucracy able to stage the Moscow Trials, is certainly also capable of hiring a murderer, or finding a volunteer to silence the one discordant voice in an otherwise perfect harmony of praise for the new ruling class in Russia. The self-exalting identification with his leader of the last pariah within the Communist Party, the idiotic fanaticism

displayed by these people when the mirror of truth is held before their eyes, permits no surprise at Trotsky's murder. It is surprising only that he was not murdered sooner. To understand the assassination of Trotsky, it is only necessary to look at the mechanism and the spirit of any bolshevik organization, Trotsky's included.

What harm could Trotsky do? Precisely because he was not out to harm his Russia and his workers' state was he so intensely hated by the ruling bolshevik bureaucracy. For the very reason that the Trotskyites in countries where they had a foothold were not out to change in the least the party instrument devised by Lenin, that their spirit remained the spirit of bolshevism, they were hated by the proprietors of the separate Communist Parties.

The swift steps of history make possible any apparent impossibility. Russia is not immune to the vast changes the present world experiences. In a tottering world, all governments become insecure. No one knows where the hurricane will strike next. Each one has to reckon with all eventualities. Because Trotsky insisted on defending the heritage of 1917, because he remained the bolshevik who saw in state capitalism the basis for socialism and in the rule of the party the rule of the workers, because he wanted nothing but the replacement of Stalin and the Stalin-supporting bureaucracy, he was really dangerous to the latter.

That he had other arguments, such as that of the "permanent revolution" against the slogan of "socialism in one country", etc., is rather meaningless, because the permanence of the revolution as well as the isolation of Russia, is dependent not upon slogans and political decisions, but on realities over which even the most powerful party has no control. Such arguments serve only to disguise the quite ordinary interests for which political parties struggle.

It was the non-revolutionary character of Trotsky's policies with regard to the Russian scene that made him so dangerous. The Russian bureaucracy knows quite well that the present world situation is not given to revolutionary changes in the interests of the world proletariat. Dictators and bureaucrats think in terms of dictatorship and bureaucracy. It is pretenders to the throne they fear, not the rabble of the street. Napoleon found it easy to control any insurrectionary crowd; he found it far more difficult to deal with the machinations of Fouché and Talleyrand. A Trotsky, living, could be recalled with the help of the lower layers of the Russian bureaucracy whenever an opportune moment arose. The chance to replace Stalin, to triumph finally, depended on Trotsky's restricting his criticism to Stalin's individual, brutal moroseness, to the sickening, newly-rich attitudes of the Stalin satellites. He realized that he could return to power only with the help of the greater part of the bureaucracy, that he could take his seat in the Kremlin again only in the wake of a palace revolution, or a successful Roehm putsch. He was too much of a realist — despite all the convenient mysticism of his political program — not to realize the

silliness of an appeal to the Russian workers, those workers who must have learned by now to see in their new masters their new exploiters, and to tolerate them out of fear and necessity. Not to tolerate, and not to approve the new situation means to surrender the chance to improve one's own situation; and as long as Russian economy is expanding, individual ambitions and individual apologia will rule individuals. The suckers make the best of a situation which they feel is beyond their power to alter. Precisely because Trotsky was not a revolutionary, but merely a competitor for leadership under existing Russian conditions — ever ready to follow the call of a bureaucracy in re-organization should a national crises demand the abdication of Stalin — he became increasingly more dangerous to the present ruling clique engaged, as it is, in new, vast imperialistic adventures. Trotsky's murder is one of the many consequences of the re-birth of Russian imperialism.

Today Bolshevism stands revealed as the initial phase of a great movement which, expected to perpetuate capitalistic exploitation, is slowly but surely embracing the whole world and changing the no longer functioning private property economy into greater state capitalistic units. The rule of the bolshevist commissar finds its logical conclusion in fascistic dictatorships spreading over the globe. Just as little as Lenin and Trotsky knew what they were actually doing when they were fighting for socialism, just as little do Hitler and Mussolini know today what they are doing in fighting for a greater Germany and the Roman Empire. In the world as it is, there is a wide difference between what men want to do, and what they are actually doing. Men, however great, are very small before history, which steps beyond them and surprises them always anew with the results of their own surprising schemes.

In 1917, Trotsky knew as little as we ourselves knew that the bolshevik revolution would have to end in an international fascistic movement and in the preparation and execution of another world war. If he had known the trend of development, he would either have been murdered twenty years ago, or today he would occupy Stalin's place. As it is, he ended as a victim of the fascist counter-revolution against the international working class and the peace of the world.

Nevertheless, despite the fact that Stalin murdered Trotsky, despite the displacement of all forms of bolshevism by fascism, a final evaluation of Trotsky's historical role will have to place him in line with Lenin, Mussolini, Stalin and Hitler as one of the great leaders of a world-wide movement attempting, knowingly and unknowingly, to prolong the capitalist exploitation system with methods first devised by bolshevism, then completed by German fascism, and finally glorified in the general butchery which we are now experiencing. After that — the labor movement may begin.

PRELUDE TO HITLER

THE INTERNAL POLITICS OF GERMANY: 1918-1933

As the period under discussion begins and ends with a revolution, our first and main concern will not be the particular problem, however important, that arise and are solved from day to day and from year to year in the normal development of a political unit. Our main concern is rather the basic problem of government itself. The crucial question that faced the so-called Weimar Republic during most of its life-time was the question whether this republic existed at all, and what was its real political structure.

From a formal point of view that question seems to be easily answered. When the empire had been finally defeated and its ruler, the Kaiser,— or more correctly the twenty-odd kings and arch-dukes and dukes who had been the collective sovereign of imperial Germany — had formally abdicated, the German people after a comparatively short period of turmoil and strife gave itself a new republican constitution by its chosen representatives at Weimar in August, 1919. That constitution remained valid until the advent of Nazism, and in a sense remains valid even today, as the state power was seized by the Nazi party in a perfectly legal manner. Hitler was made Chancellor, that is Prime Minister, by the President of the German Republic, Field Marshall Hindenburg, on January 30, 1933. He was confirmed in that position by the overwhelming majority of the Reichstag and by a number of practically unanimous plebiscites. The same procedure was observed when later, after Hindenburg's death in 1934, the office of president was abolished, and Hitler, in his new position as "Leader and Chancellor", united in his person and thereby in the office of Chancellor both the powers of the presidency and of the chancellorship. Even the transfer of all legislative powers from parliament to the Leader, including the power to further change the constitution itself, was performed in a perfectly legal manner. These powers were formally delegated from the Reichstag to Hitler's cabinet by the device of two "enabling acts" presented to the first and second Reichstags of 1933, and invariably accepted by majorities much greater than the two-thirds required by Article 76 of the Weimar constitution.

This formal record of the constitutional development does not, however, give a real answer to the basic problem of that fourteen years' interlude between two revolutions and two world wars that was the German Republic. There is even some doubt whether in the continuous flux and incessant struggle between progressive and reactionary, revolutionary and counter-revolu-

tionary forces there ever was any tangible condition or state of affairs sufficiently stable to be described as the German Republic or as a government based on the Weimar constitution.

For the purpose of a realistic interpretation the history of the fourteen years preceding the victory of Nazism in Germany must be divided into at least five totally different periods. The first period is marked by the struggle for and against the so-called Workers' Councils which lasted from November, 1918, to August, 1919. This was, according to a particularly intelligent and understanding British observer,* "the critical period for Germany and for Europe. It was the formative and creative stage for a new Germany and for a new Europe." Looking backward, we may say indeed that this was the last chance for the survival of a genuine democracy under conditions of a rapidly increasing monopoly and state capitalism in post-war Europe.

The form of government during that initial period can be described under various aspects: According to the then generally accepted opinion, both the legislative and the executive powers were vested in a so-called *Council of People's Commissaries* which derived its authority from other and more democratic instances of the revolutionary *Workers' and Soldiers' Council* organization. Yet the six leading members of the two fractions of the *Social Democratic Party*, who composed that so-called Council of People's Commissaries, actually regarded themselves as an anticipated cabinet of the parliament-to-be. These Commissaries were, in fact, replaced as early as February, 1919, by a *coalition cabinet* and a *president* elected by the *National Assembly*, which had convened in January. The "coalition cabinet" thus created, which was to recur again and again in the future development of the German Republic, represented the three parties which had been the only ones to accept unreservedly the new state form of a parliamentary republic on the Western model. The three parties were: (1) the moderate Social-democrats, (2) the catholic Center, and (3) the newly formed democratic State Party. They were opposed from one side by the two monarchist parties which differed from the traditional conservative and National-liberal parties of pre-war times by a change of name only, and from the other side by the new revolutionary parties emerging from the war and the ensuing collapse of the old regime. These new parties were the left wing of the formerly united Social-Democratic Party which now called itself the *Independent Socialist Party*, and the revolutionary *Spartakus Bund* which had just re-baptized itself as the *Communist Party*.

However, the real form of government prevailing during this first period did not conform to either of those two theoretical patterns. During this time there was not any generally accepted authority either in the form of a revolutionary rule of the working classes nor in the form of an effective rule by parliament. A temporary eclipse of all state power in November,

* George YOUNG, *The New Germany*, London and New York, 1920

1918, was followed by a violent struggle for power between the revolutionary workers' council movement on the one hand and a secretly growing counter-revolutionary form of government which can be most adequately described as a "*government by Freicorps*" on the other. This state of affairs was in no way changed by the formal enactment of the new republican constitution on August 11, 1919. It was the tragic fate of the German Republic that its first official government chose to lean more and more heavily on the power of the military. After a first unsuccessful attempt to find effective support in the remnants of the old imperial army, it turned for help and alliance to the newly formed military organizations (Freicorps) which were later to join in every reactionary assault on the constitutional government and which represented in fact the first important kernel of the future military organization of the counter-revolutionary Nazi power.

We now turn to the second period of the Weimar Republic which was inaugurated by the total defeat of the first reactionary onslaught on the new state made by the very powers which it had allowed and even helped to grow up for the purpose of its own defense. This was the monarchistic putsch of Generallandschaftsdirektor *Kapp* of East Prussia, or rather of the Reichswehr General *von Luetwitz*, the close friend of the first social-democratic War Minister *Noske*.

The Reichswehr marched into Berlin through the Brandenburger Tor and the Weimar government fled in terror to Stuttgart where it was joined by the National Assembly. Nevertheless, the enterprise of *Kapp* failed utterly for two very different reasons. First, he had relied merely on military action and had neglected the task of building up a new political organization and a new political ideology — an experience which was not lost on later putschists. Yet even their later and better prepared actions were for a long time defeated until they had learned by experience and had finally built up that tremendously efficient and recklessly unscrupulous modern counter-revolutionary movement which was to deal the death blow to the Weimar Republic in 1933.

The second and much more important reason for *Kapp's* failure was not of a technical nature. The mass of the German workers, called upon by their government, rose in a unanimous general strike for the defense of republic and democracy. This was a kind of *second revolution*, though not in the direction of an increased radicalism — like that of the Jacobin Convention of 1792 or that of the Russian October Revolution that followed upon the first revolution of February, 1917. Rather, it was a falling back from the utopian dreams of the first attempt of November, 1918, to the realistic aims of the socialist movement that had developed during the preceding fifty years.

This time the workers fought for what they really wanted and they got what they had fought for. Up to then the Weimar constitution had enjoyed only a precarious existence. The official republican government had been barely tolerated by its own backers, i. e., by the reactionary army

and the ultra-reactionary Freikorps. It had now won a certain degree of stability. March, 1920, rather than August, 1919, is the birthday of the German constitution. Even so, this was not a republic triumphant, but at the most a republic mildly militant — as shown later by the feeble reaction of the public against the murder of the Catholic minister Erzberger in 1921 and the Democratic minister Rathenau in 1922. The republican revolt exhausted itself in empty street demonstrations and culminated in a never constantly applied *Statute for the Protection of the Republic*.

As a detailed discussion of the foreign politics of the Weimar republic is outside the scope of this paper, I propose to pass over the new deep crisis of 1923 which was mainly caused by the impact of foreign coercion: Versailles, reparations, occupation of the Ruhr, separatism, Hitler's beer-hall putsch in Munich, revolutionary rising of the German workers in defense against the Hitler threat, and military expeditions led by Hitlerite and neutral Reichswehr generals against all anti-Hitlerite movements of the people in various parts of Germany.

From this chaos there emerged a new phase of the German Republic, the parliamentary government of the so-called *Stresemann era*.

The nine cabinets of the six-year period from 1925 to 1929 were of a widely different political composition, varying from the so-called bourgeois bloc which included the Nationalist Right, to a government headed by a social-democratic chancellor. Yet they were in fact all dominated by the undisputed leadership of one and the same minister of foreign affairs. Herr Stresemann represented those strata of German industrial capital which had by then resolved to accept for the time being the republican form of the state as a given fact and to comply with the reparation demands of the Versailles treaty by a carefully elaborated policy of "tactical" fulfillment. At the same time, the impossible burden which had been placed on the German nation after the 1923 crisis by the so-called *Dawes Plan* was gradually undermined until the Dawes Plan could be replaced by the *Young Plan* of 1929, which cut down the obligation of Germany to annual payments decreasing from 2½ to 1½ billions in 1988. It was in the violent campaign for a plebiscite against the acceptance of this plan that the new counter-revolutionary forces led by Hitler first joined hands with the old reactionary forces of traditional nationalism and conservatism, thereby foreshadowing the combined action of the two unequal partners in 1933. Yet against all such disturbing elements, the Stresemann policy of fulfillment and conciliation prevailed, paving the way for the final annulment of all reparation payments which was to be achieved, one year before Hitler's advent, by the *Lausanne conference* of 1932.

It was during this Stresemann era — and this era alone — that it might be possible to speak of an existing Weimar Republic.

This was the time of an exceptionally mild political climate, economic prosperity, and a comparatively undisturbed international situation.

It was the time when there was peace on earth and *Locarno* in Europe. Germany entered the League of Nations and under the leadership of the United States and the French minister *Briand*, more than sixty nations agreed under the *Kellogg Pact* to ban war as an instrument of national policy.

Thus, the stability shown by the German Republic during this six-year period was stronger in appearance than it was in fact. It was not exposed to any real trials. The republic survived, yes, but only during the closed season. All apparent stability disappeared when the economic and political climate changed under pressure from the world crisis beginning in 1929. For the sake of brevity I shall describe this change by quoting from a recent article by the English historian *G. P. Gooch*:

"The Weimar Republic was unwittingly destroyed by American speculators. The economic blizzard crossed the Atlantic and burst on Europe in 1930. In Germany the number of unemployed doubled, banks collapsed, old firms shut their doors. At the general election of September the Nazis jumped from 12 to 107 deputies, which made them inferior in number to the socialists alone.

From this point there developed what must be described as the decay and fall of the Weimar Republic, and what might be called even more appropriately the rise and victory of the fully matured counter-revolution.

It would be a mistake to look at the three governments following upon the Stresemann era (the government of *Bruening, von Papen, Schleicher*) as being republican and parliamentary governments at all.

None of these governments could ever count on a majority in parliament. A note of censure which was passed at the end of the von Papen government late in 1932 (when Herr von Papen had the presidential decree for the dissolution of the Reichstag already in his pocket, but did not succeed in reading it before the vote was taken), showed that of the 600 members of the Reichstag only 40 were prepared to back the government.

Thus all the governments of the German Republic after September, 1930, represented a *presidential regime* rather than a parliamentary government. They ruled by *emergency decree* and not by normal parliamentary procedure. This tremendous growth of the emergency power was, of course, in flagrant contradiction to the spirit of the constitution, though perhaps it did not go against its letter as it was formally based on *Article 48 of the constitution* which entitles the president of the Reich "in case of severe disturbance of public safety and order to take all necessary measures to restore public safety and order, and, if necessary, to intervene with the aid of the armed forces of the realm".

Before we deal with this last fateful period when all principles of republican and parliamentary government and the rights of man as embodied in the constitution were utterly destroyed, we must point out in fairness that with all its abuses this indiscriminate recourse to Article 48 was not an entirely new practice.

Government by martial law and by emergency decree was rampant in Germany during the rule of the Social-democratic president, Ebert, from 1919 to 1924, and there was no misuse of the emergency power during the later period of 1930-1933 and beyond for which a precedent could not be found among the hundreds of emergency decrees issued during that earlier phase.** The much indicted replacement of the socialist government in Prussia by a Reichskommissar under von Papen in June, 1932, finds its precedent in the "imperial executions" of October and November, 1923, against the socialist governments which had attempted to fight the threatening march of Hitler to Berlin by the organization of a workers' militia in Saxony and Thuringia. Nor was it a novelty when the most unpopular economy measures of Bruening and von Papen were decreed by the government under Article 48 with the formal justification that "according to the statements of the party leaders acceptance by the Reichstag could not be expected". The machinery of Article 48 had been used for the purpose of normal financial and economic legislation as early as 1923 and 1924 under the presidency of Ebert. Even the "enabling acts" of Herr Hitler in 1933 had been preceded by the "enabling acts" of Herr Stresemann in 1923.

Thus while the whole history of the German Republic from 1918 to 1933 could be described as the history of the growth of martial law and emergency power, yet there are some important differences between the earlier and later periods. First of all, there had been that intervening period from 1924 to 1929 during which the application of Article 48 had become increasingly rare and had finally been discontinued. The return to those rough and ready improvisations after a time of comparative stabilization gives in itself a new significance to the use of the same method in the later period.

Another difference arises from a consideration of the main function fulfilled by Article 48 before 1924 and after 1929. During the first phase it had served mainly to invest the existing authorities with extraordinary powers for the suppression of what was rightly or wrongly considered as threats or dangers to the newly created order of the republic. This was, indeed, the time when all the forces which might have later resisted the victory of the fascist counter-revolution were most cruelly suppressed by an unchecked use both of the military and the civil executive power, by extraordinary courts, and by a general eclipse of the administration of justice in the ordinary courts whenever a crime could be excused on account of a pretended national interest. Even if the criminal was formally tried, he would escape without punishment because political murder from the Right was

**The number of decrees issued under Article 48, Section 2, by the government of the Reich alone during the first five years of the republic amounted to 135. To this number should be added the decrees issued under Article 48 during the same period by the governments of the states, the uncounted number of emergency measures enforced by civil and military authorities before August 11, 1919, and the 110 decrees issued under the "enabling acts" of October and December, 1923.

forever protected by the strong hands of the semi-legal and the wholly illegal, yet officially tolerated, organizations of the secretly recruited new army.

The later period of emergency government since Bruening showed an entirely different character. This time the ordinary business of parliamentary legislation was totally superseded by legislation through emergency decrees. There was a permanent discontinuance of all genuine parliamentary government and a deliberate attempt to replace it by the principle of leadership.

Article 48 became the most important part of the Weimar constitution.*** After five years of non-application of Article 48, Chancellor Bruening on July 16, 1930, enacted his whole program of financial reconstruction in the form of two decrees based on Article 48, and when a majority of the Reichstag revoked his decrees, he dissolved the Reichstag and re-enacted the decrees on the same basis before a new election. Article 48 was in the end used even for the purpose of decreeing the whole of the imperial budget for the parliamentary year 1932 — the last year of the Weimar Republic.

We shall not deal in detail with those last phases of German republicanism that preceded its ultimate overthrow by the temporarily combined forces of the old nationalist and militarist reaction on the one hand and the new and incomparably more vigorous, reckless, and efficient forces of the Nazi counter-revolution on the other. A closer study of the various phases of this final period would only further corroborate the fundamental result already reached in this paper. It would show that from the grim beginnings to the bitter end all the internal developments of the German Republic are not to be contrasted with the later Nazi development, but rather regarded as its first and preparatory phase.

The main points made in this paper are the following:

I have tried to explode two common fallacies:

- 1) that there ever was a "German Republic";
- 2) that there ever was a "German Revolution".

In opposition to those two fallacies I assert:

That the so-called "German Republic" that filled the gap between the old imperialist Germany of the Kaiser and the new Nazi Germany of Herr Hitler was forever a "republic without republicans"; that the so-called "German Revolution", which is supposed to have taken place during the first years after the war, was neither a social revolution of the proletarian class nor a democratic revolution destroying the old reactionary powers. It was a "revolution without revolutionaries".

Yet, although there never was a real revolution, it can be shown that there was — and there still is going on — a very real counter-revolution. Those forces which conquered the German state for the Nazi dictatorship in 1933 arose and grew simultaneously with the development of that political

***The comparative number of emergency decrees based on Article 48 as against normal parliamentary legislation rose from 5:95, in 1930, to 42:35, in 1931, and to 59:5, in 1932.

system which was generally assumed to be a modern republican and democratic state. Although Nazism is neither socialist nor democratic, yet by feeding upon the failures and omissions of the so-called "system politicians" it enrolled in the long run the support of the majority of the nation, and in both the economic and political fields solved a number of concrete problems that had been neglected or frustrated by the unsocialist attitude of the socialists and the undemocratic behavior of the democrats. Thus a certain part of the tasks that "normally" would have been fulfilled by a genuinely progressive and revolutionary movement were fulfilled in a distorted, but nevertheless realistic manner, by the transitory victory of a non-socialist and undemocratic but plebeian and anti-reactionary counter-revolution. Nor is this a thing of the past. The Nazi counter-revolution that began in Germany, 1918-1933, is continuing today on an enlarged European scale.

Karl Korsch

WHICH SIDE TO TAKE?

The second World War has presented grave and fateful problems to the socialist workers' movement. Again it is faced with a situation similar to that which confronted the old labor movement at the outbreak of the first World War. There is a danger that the mistakes which brought doom to social-democracy will be repeated.

The question confronting us today is whether Liebknecht's slogan: "The enemy is at home!" is as valid for the class struggle now as it was in 1914. When Liebknecht voiced his slogan class-struggle conditions were relatively simple. In Germany, for instance, the semi-feudal government was undoubtedly considered a greater foe of the proletariat than the democratic governments of the Entente. Today, too, the fascist government of Germany is apparently a more dangerous enemy of the workers than is England. Liebknecht's slogan would therefore have today an even greater validity for the German working class than it had in 1914.

It would seem, however, that today the workers in the democratic countries are faced with a different situation. Bourgeois democracy confronts them in their struggle for political and economic emancipation. Nevertheless, being at war with the totalitarian states, primarily with German fascism, the democracies cannot be regarded as the arch-foe of the proletariat.

Because of their political structure and their class-struggle mechanics, the democratic countries are forced to grant certain liberties to the proletariat which enables it to carry on its struggle in its own manner. In the totalitarian countries this is no longer possible. Within the framework of dictatorship, even when it calls itself socialist, the proletariat has no liberties,

no rights or possibilities to fight its own struggles. There is no doubt that totalitarianism is the greater, the more vicious and dangerous foe of the proletariat. It would appear then that Liebknecht's slogan has thus lost its validity for the proletariat in the democratic countries.

In the face of this situation working-class movements of democratic countries shift in a direction which sets aside the struggle against democracy as long as the latter is engaged in a war against the totalitarian countries, in a great crusade against its arch foe, against monopoly, fascism, bolshevism — the totalitarian system in general.

It is this situation which gives rise to the present confusion, debate and controversy within the working-class movement. To understand the present tactical shifts, however, it is necessary to have some knowledge of the situation preceding the shift in policy in 1914. Laws, principles, programs and slogans have only a transitory validity, are determined historically by time factors, situations, and circumstances, and are to be viewed dialectically. Thus what may have been the wrong tactic then may be the right one today, and vice versa. Let us apply this to the present tactical shift.

When German Social Democracy in 1914 capitulated to the Kaiser and voted war credits, the proletariat of the whole world branded this act as a shameful betrayal of socialism. Until then it had been an established policy of socialists in parliaments to oppose military appropriations. In the case of war credits it was taken for granted that the socialists would act in accordance with the established policy. Therefore, when the socialists did vote the war credits they disrupted an established tactic and betrayed an established principle.

This act was universally condemned and aroused heated disputes within the entire socialist movement. The opportunists justified it on the grounds that they were exchanging "cannons for social reforms". The radicals, on the other hand, urged a more vigorous struggle against the government in order to turn the war into a civil war and to prepare for the final struggle — the coming revolution.

For present day fractions this struggle has become meaningless, mainly because socialist parties and parliamentary functionaries have become meaningless in many countries. And in those countries where they are still tolerated their voices have become mere patter. Either they are not consulted at all about whether they will grant war credits, or they themselves are its staunchest supporters. Without deliberation and without struggle they are on the side of their governments. If formerly they were allies of the bourgeoisie they are now its servants and lackeys, without being in the least aware of their role of betrayers. In England, France, Holland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Belgium, Switzerland and Czechoslovakia — in fact everywhere — the Socialists were and are siding with the bourgeoisie. And the "Communists", once the fiercest critics and opponents of the Social-Democrats, for whom the especially invented the term "Social-fascist", bowed