

CLASSIC REPRINT SERIES

---

HITLERISM  
*and*  
SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

---



by  
Karl Kautsky

Forgotten Books

Karl Kautsky

**Hitlerism and  
Social Democracy**

(1934)

---

**Source:** Joseph Shaplen and David Shub (eds.), **Socialism, Fascism, Communism.**

**Published:** American League for Democratic Socialism, 1934.

**Transcribed:** Sally Ryan for marxists.org, 2000.

---

## **I. The Collapse of the German Labor Movement**

### **II. Revolution and Civil War**

### **III. Democracy and Humanity**

## **IV. The Brutality of Latter-Day Capitalism**

### **V. The Period of Dictatorship**

# I. The Collapse of the German Labor Movement

It is a natural inclination of human beings to try to pin the responsibility for a catastrophe upon someone who may appear to have been responsible. The natural inclination is to indict somebody and thus to find some relief from the pain and disappointment caused by the catastrophe.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the tragic collapse of German democracy and with it of the German Social Democracy, its chief bulwark, has provoked a welter of wild resentment against those who are seemingly responsible for this collapse, especially in the light of surrender without battle of all their positions.

Such resentment has proven to be quite useless. For we Social-Democrats are too honest to pounce upon the first person upon whom we can lay hands and slaughter as a scapegoat. We leave such conduct to the National Socialists. They know only too well the art of finding scapegoats for every catastrophe.

Was the Social Democracy the only party that collapsed without offering any resistance at the decisive moment in the early months of 1933? Did not the Communists, the pristine-pure revolutionists, free of any vestige of "reformism," present the same picture? And what about the Centrists at the other extreme? For years they had fought against Bismarck, the Iron Chancellor, until they had forced him to capitulate. Today they bow before Hitler without the slightest sign of active opposition. Nor should we forget the German Nationalists, so militant and warlike, who

controlled the army and the powerful *Stalhelm*, the war veterans' organization. They too permitted themselves to be hurled into oblivion without any attempt of serious resistance.

When seen from this broad, objective angle, the problem of the German Social Democracy becomes the problem of the German people. All its component classes and elements have for the moment lost the capacity for resistance against its oppressors. As regards the Hitlerites themselves, on the other hand, we can say what Tacitus said of the aristocrats of the Roman Empire: *ruere in servitium*. They rushed gladly into slavery. They demanded to become slaves of the "Leader."

Are we to conclude, therefore, that all elements of the German people have lost the capacity to assert their right to freedom? Are all Germans so cowardly, so unwilling to make sacrifices for a common cause? And yet, it was the same German people who in the war had asserted themselves with immense heroism against overwhelming odds! Whence, then, the seeming fear and cowardice of all classes and parties in Germany?

Such a general development cannot be attributed to the false tactics of any single party or to the mistakes of individual leaders. On the contrary, the conduct of individual leaders is determined largely by the sentiments of the people as a whole. It would be erroneous, however, to regard the sentiments of the moment as reflecting the natural make-up and character of the people. They are merely the consequence of the special circumstances which have

brought about this profound degradation of the entire nation.

The prelude to this degradation was the war and the particular part played therein by the German people. The exhaustion into which the German people fell as a result of the war and post-war developments supplied the soil for counter-revolution.

Such exhaustion of large sections of the population has always served as the basis for counter-revolution. At the beginning of every revolution we find joyous expectation and stormy enthusiasm on the part of the broad masses, inspired by the belief and conviction that the end of their sufferings is near. In the course of its development every revolution leads, however, to conflicts between the various component parts of the revolutionary elements, of the classes and parties who brought about the overthrow of the old regime. To this internecine strife of the revolutionists are added struggles with the representatives of the old regime, who sooner or later begin to develop a new resistance. In the meanwhile, the advantages of the new regime cannot make themselves felt immediately. The revolution thus brings not the peaceful enjoyment of its conquests but ever new conflicts and the necessity of new efforts. The revolution thereupon appears to have failed to fulfill its promise. To be sure, it represents great strides forward, but it fails, nevertheless, to satisfy many revolutionists, and it devours, as it proceeds, its own best and most devoted children. Weariness and disappointment overcome many elements of the people in place of enthusiastic confidence. The democratic republic appears to be useless. Such was the general opinion of the workers of Paris after 1794 as well as

after June, 1848. Amidst such sentiments the counter-revolution raised its head.

This was the case in the great French Revolution, as well as in 1848; and now we find a repetition of it after the revolution of 1918. The last mentioned revolution is not characterized by any particularly rapid advance of the counter-revolution. On the contrary, the revolution of 1918 is distinguished from previous revolutions by the length of time required by the counter-revolution to assert itself victoriously.

The revolution of 1789 found its termination in 1794. The counter-revolution began immediately with the fall of Robespierre, i.e. five years after the outbreak of the revolution. The revolution of 1848 was suppressed within one year. The democratic republic in Germany maintained itself, however, for fifteen years, from 1918 to 1933. It held firm for ten years, until the outbreak of the world economic crisis, despite the fact that from the very beginning it had much greater difficulties to contend with than did the French Revolution.

The causes of the collapse of the German Republic may be summarized as follows:

1. The consequences of the Versailles Peace Treaty.
2. The inner weakness of the republic, born out of military defeat.
3. The economic crisis.

The great French Revolution came under conditions of peace. The humiliation and exhaustion of military defeat did not rest upon the French people. They were able to devote all

their fighting strength to the Revolution. The German Revolution of 1918 came at the end of a war which had brought the German people to a condition of unprecedented exhaustion.

Added to this was another important factor. The French Revolution soon found itself at war with the monarchs of Europe, whom it finally vanquished. However internationalist we may be in our sentiments, we are compelled to admit that the national enthusiasm of a people who repels the attacks of foreign adversaries constitutes a tremendous propelling force. A revolution is greatly strengthened when it combines revolutionary with national enthusiasm. This was a factor that proved of great help to the Bolsheviks in 1920, who drew new power from the war with Poland. It strengthened greatly the French Revolution after 1792. Of course, in the end democracy is the loser under such an awakening of the warlike spirit, even when the revolutionists emerge as the victors.

In contrast to the French Revolution of 1789, the German Revolution of 1918 sprang from the horrible misery of the war. In addition, it was compelled to accept a most humiliating and crushing peace. The monarchy unleashed and lost the war, but the monarchists deserted before the conclusion of peace. The ignominious and ruinous peace treaty of Versailles was the consequence of the policy of Kaiserist Germany. But the signing of the inevitable peace treaty the monarchists left to the republicans.

In the eyes of those politically illiterate masses who prefer to look for scapegoats rather than for the causes of events, the



Social Democrats appeared to be most responsible for the peace treaty.

The force of national sentiment which had so strengthened the revolutionary elan of the first French republic had the opposite effect on the fate of the first German republic. The democratic victor states did everything they could through the conditions of peace which they had imposed upon the German Reich to rouse the national feeling of the German people against the republic which had been compelled to accept those conditions. Nor did the victor states permit the German people to return to a state of calm. This was done through the imposition of insane reparations payments, which, in turn, provoked the inflation and Ruhr occupation, both equally ruinous in their political and economic effects. The consequence was a repetition of the situation created by the war. A German reactionary cabinet permitted itself to be drawn into the Ruhr conflict, unleashed the inflation, thereby bringing Germany to the abyss, and deserted at the decisive moment, leaving it to the Socialists to clean up the mess piled up by Messrs. Cuno and his confreres.

Hardly had the worst consequences of reparations been overcome and the reparations themselves eliminated, than the world crisis made its appearance, affecting all countries, but none so severely as Germany. This was the decisive factor in Hitler's victory.

In this connection, and as confirmation of our point of view, it is important to keep in mind the political effects of the economic crisis in many other countries, where it led to the overthrow of existing political regimes, whether democratic or dictatorial. It brought about the collapse of the Labor

Government in England, the Republican administration in the United States, the dictatorial regimes in Spain and several Latin-American countries, and more recently of the Machado government in Cuba.

In July, 1932, only a minority of the 20,000,000 wage earners in Germany were fully employed; 7½ million were without jobs and 5 million were on part-time work.

No less eloquent are the statistics of the trade unions, showing unemployment of only 8.6 per cent among the organized workers in 1928, the last year before the crisis, as compared with 46.1 per cent in March, 1933! In 1928, part-time workers comprised only 5.7 per cent. In March, 1933, the figure was 23.4 per cent. (In February it was 24.1 per cent.) Fully employed in the critical month of March were only 30 per cent of the organized workers!

It is not necessary to emphasize how deadening the effect of such a situation must be upon the power and fighting spirit of the workers. But the crippling of the masses cripples also the leaders. At the recent international Socialist conference in Paris some delegates took the position that it would have been better to have died on the barricades than to have permitted ourselves to be slaughtered. This is, no doubt, true. It must be remembered, however, that those fighting on barricades are confronted with the necessity not only of showing courage themselves but of rousing the courage of those behind them. Those who feel that the masses are animated by a sense of power and bold revolutionary daring will naturally develop an initiative quite different from that of leaders who perceive that they who stand behind them are a thin, hesitating line who have already admitted defeat,

before they could possibly reach the barricade. Whether a general assumes the offensive or maintains a defensive position, whether he seeks to give battle or to avoid it, depends much less upon his own physical courage than upon the condition of the troops under his command.

Add to the situation the split between the Social Democrats and Communists, which, in the final analysis, was also a consequence of the World War, and assumed particularly large dimensions in Germany, and we are compelled to admit that in no other country have the workers since the war, and to a large extent as a consequence of the war, been subjected to so much suffering. Nowhere have the workers been compelled to pass through so many struggles, economic, social and political, nowhere have the workers faced such a corroding ordeal as the workers of the German Republic. I do not believe that the Social Democracy of any other country would have behaved differently under similar circumstances. The energy generated by the German Social Democracy during the period of 1918-1933 has not been fully appreciated abroad for the simple reason that conditions in Germany expressed themselves only occasionally in explosive form, as during the Kapp putsch, whereas the general situation was one of a prolonged, stubborn contest for power, without dramatic sensations, and failed, therefore, to find proper appraisal.

When one considers the circumstances under which the German Republic came into being and the persistent sapping of the strength of its best defenders, the German workers, who had already reached a high point of exhaustion as the Kaisereich collapsed and the revolution began in November 1918, there need be little wonder of the triumph

of the counter revolution, as it triumphed finally after 1789 and 1848. The remarkable thing is that this triumph came only after 15 years of struggle.

It may be argued that even if this be true, there still remains the fact that the Social Democracy had pursued a mistaken policy and thus opened the door to the calamity.

It is quite true that “the policy of the lesser evil” of supporting Hindenburg for the presidency against Hitler and tolerating the quasi-dictatorial government of Bruening as the last available bulwark against Nazism, did not avert the ultimate greater evil and that it proved a failure.

In the situation which developed under the historic circumstances outlined above there were but two roads open for the Social-Democrats – the road of either the lesser evil or that of the Communists, which would have led inevitably to the greater evil. The Social Democratic policy at least made possible the averting for a time of the greater evil, the Hitler dictatorship. Had the Socialists followed the policy of the Communists, the Socialists themselves would have put Hitler in the saddle.

Many German Socialists now declare calmly they had made a mistake in supporting the policy of the lesser evil. They have no reason, however, to don sackcloth and ashes – certainly not until it is demonstrated that any other policy could have averted the Hitler dictatorship. Should they have made a revolution? He who demands this does not know that revolutions are possible only under certain circumstances, above all only under conditions of an upward activist surge of the masses. Had a revolution appeared to have the slightest chance of success, the Communists would

have surely tried to make one. Unfortunately, the masses can succumb to such a state of paralysis as to render even the most optimistic hopeless and incapable of action.

But am I not preaching a policy of hopelessness? Not at all. On the contrary, it would be much more discouraging to admit that the Social Democracy could have been victorious in the duel with Hitler if its leadership had been better and bolder. Are we to assume that all the important leaders of the Social Democracy were either cowards or idiots? And what should we think of the workers of a democratically organized party which kept such incompetents for fifteen years at the helm of its organization and gave them blind obedience? What can we expect of such workers in the future?

Quite different is the impression created by emphasis of the fact that the German Social Democracy succumbed to the counter-revolution only after 15 years of most stubborn resistance, in the course of which it was called upon to fight an overwhelming combination of enemies, ranging from the Communists to the People's Party, the German Nationalists and the National Socialists. The causes of the defeat of the German proletariat must be sought not in any defects peculiar to it as a "race" but in the cumulative effect of unfavorable and ultimately annihilating difficulties arising from a special combination of historical circumstances. These circumstances brought about the victory of the Hitlerites.

In pointing out the injustice of condemning the German Social Democrats for their failure to put up a forcible resistance against Hitler, I again wish to emphasize that the

condemnation of the Social Democracy on this point would have to apply with equal force to the German Communist Party, whose voting strength was greater than that of any Communist Party in other countries.

At times this party was almost as strong as the Social Democratic Party. (In November 1932 the Communists had almost six million votes, while the Social Democrats rolled up slightly over seven million.) In view of such tremendous mass support it is useless to look for individuals to put the blame on; one must search for deeper causes. How did it happen that thirteen million proletarians permitted themselves to be disfranchised without offering violent resistance?

This attitude of the workers appears all the more strange when one contrasts it with the fighting spirit they displayed in a previous attempt to impose a dictatorship upon the German nation, namely the Kapp putsch of 1920. The occupation of Berlin by counter-revolutionary troops was answered with a general strike of such sweep and power that in a few days the counter-revolutionary uprising was crushed.

Quite different was the conduct of the same parties and even the same leaders in 1933. This fact alone suggests we must look for the cause of the difference in conduct then and now not in personalities but in the dissimilarity of circumstances.

This dissimilarity is not difficult to establish. Those who took part in the Kapp rebellion of 1920 soon came to realize that they were an unsupported, isolated group in the nation. They wanted to bring back to power the very same class that had brought bloody war and terrible defeat upon the

German people. In 1920 this fact had not yet been forgotten, hence the united will to fight back, which found its most powerful expression in the great general strike.

The Communists at that time felt so strong that they attempted to organize armed uprisings in the Ruhr and Vogt regions, which of course quickly came to naught. The social Democracy on the other hand could truthfully claim that in its effort to ward off dictatorship it had the support of the great majority of the German people.

The present situation is quite different. The Hitlerites came to the fore not as the result of a coup by a few regiments, but by steadily winning the favor of the masses. A mere handful before 1928 they very suddenly developed such vote-gathering powers that already in June of 1932 they became the strongest party, with 230 mandates. And their rise continued unabated, as the elections of March 5, 1933, showed, resulting in almost half of the entire vote being cast for the National Socialists alone, and more than half for the National Socialists and their political allies combined.

This points to a profound change in the frame of mind of the people generally. And such a change is bound to affect all parties; no party can escape its influence unless the party is only a small sect whose power does not spring from the large masses.

Revolutionary parties are strong and often successful when they oppose a government that is universally hated. On the other hand, its sharpest weapons, such as barricades or the general strike, are useless when a party finds itself opposed not only by the power of the government but by the majority of the population. In such cases, if it undertakes a decisive

struggle in spite of conditions it merely demonstrates a lack of understanding of the political situation.

Victories scored by counter-revolutionists during a period of civil strife signify not the beginning but the conclusion of a counter-revolutionary process. These victories are accounted for by the change of attitude of the broad masses of the people who have lost faith in the revolution or have even turned against it because they have been disappointed or believe their interests to have been endangered by it. Thus in 1848 many of the bourgeois, petty-bourgeois and peasant elements in Germany and France, who during the months of February and March were revolutionists, later turned counter-revolutionist. It was this change of heart that encouraged the reactionary elements, who in February and March had been in hiding or had fled from the revolution, to appeal to arms once more.

At first glance it may seem as though the work of “one lieutenant and ten men” was sufficient in July 1932 to destroy the entire German Social Democracy. In reality, however, it was the irresistible advance of National Socialist ideas and sentiments among the masses of the people that rendered ineffective the fighting spirit of the class-conscious proletariat, both Communist and Social Democratic.

Whence came that irresistibility? Did it come from the superiority of the National Socialist program, the higher moral concepts and intelligence of its champions, the greater courage and spirit of self-sacrifice of their followers? In all of these things the “Marxists” leave the National Socialists far behind.



Whoever wishes to learn the reason for the irresistible upsurge of National Socialist sentiment need only observe the date when it began in Germany. Before the advent of the economic crisis the National Socialists were an insignificant group. In the Reichstag elections of 1928 they won only 12 seats. Two years later, however, they succeeded in increasing the number of their mandates almost tenfold, the number of seats captured jumping from 12 to 107. It was precisely these two years that saw the beginning of the world crisis. And this crisis everywhere brought revolutionary developments in its train. Revolutionary not in the sense that they favored the success of the Socialist-revolutionary parties, but in the sense that they rendered desperate the existence of large masses of people who blamed the governments or political parties in power for the misery brought about by the crisis and believed that they could save themselves by overthrowing those governments and parties. He who promised to bring about the overthrow most speedily and successfully was the right man for those masses, the man through whom they hoped to achieve their salvation, no matter what his program. The manner of reasoning of the rank and file of the population, wholly without political or economic experience and stirred to political action only by the war and its consequences, was militaristic, not economic. They thought that in order to secure the things they were most anxious to have all that was needed was the right kind of will and the necessary power to enforce it. The despairing masses completely disregarded the truth that there are economic laws without an understanding of which it is utterly impossible to plan measures for economic rehabilitation, just as they overlooked the fact that the crisis was international in character and, therefore, demanded international remedies.

These masses were striving not for knowledge but for power; power not for themselves – for they are fickle and have no faith in themselves – but for some individual leader of whom they could expect the most, that is to say the most successful championing of their personal interests.

In Anglo-Saxon countries like England or America the franchise law operates so that small political parties have no chance to assert themselves and political struggles are always transformed into a contest between two major political parties, so that the party that happens to be in power is held responsible for the economic situation existing. The party in office thus gets more than its share of praise in times of prosperity, but on the other hand is mercilessly condemned in times of depression.

This was responsible for the grave defeat of the British Labor Party in the elections of 1931, that party having had the misfortune of being at the helm of the government at that time. Compared with its record of the two years preceding it lost two million votes; the Conservatives on the other hand gained more than three million ballots. In consequence of the peculiar working of the franchise under which even a plurality assures victory, the losses or gains in mandates were even more striking. The Labor Party representation in Parliament was reduced from 288 to 50, while that of the Conservatives rose from 260 to 554. It was a veritable revolution brought about by the crisis, but not in the sense in which Socialists use, the term.

The same thing happened in the United States. In 1928 the Republican party was in power and the country happened to enjoy economic prosperity. The latter was regarded as the

accomplishment of the Republican administration and therefore led to the election of Hoover, the Republican candidate, to the Presidency. But before any one realized it the United States too was in the grip of the crisis (1929) and that spelled the doom of the Republican party and its President. In the next presidential elections Roosevelt, a Democrat, proved victorious with a vote of 23 million over Hoover, who received only 16 million votes. Here, too, there was a revolution which, however, was not the outgrowth of a higher social conception but was rooted merely in the expectation that since the party in power failed to maintain the country's prosperity the new administration would show a better record.

In the countries of continental Europe the prevailing voting system is that of proportional representation. It assures greater justice in the apportionment of mandates to each political party on the basis of its vote, but also facilitates the formation of small parties and thus encourages party splits. To this must be added the circumstance that in the countries which suffered defeat in the war there was a considerable growth of the proletarian parties, none of which succeeded in gaining a majority either of the votes of the people or in Parliament. Yet all of them grew strong enough to refuse to hand over their political influence and power to their opponents.

Coalitions with the most democratic of the bourgeois parties became necessary in order to save the German Republic and its hard won social acquisitions. On the other hand, as a result of the economic breakdown caused by the war and its consequences, and the insane peace treaty, circumstances favoring the formation of a purely Socialist government

would have made its task difficult because of the lack of the support of a Socialist majority. Conditions became utterly unbearable with the setting in of the crisis, which sharpened the social contradictions to such an extent that it was impossible for the Socialists to remain in the government any longer. In March, 1930, the cabinet of Hermann Mueller resigned. Its place was taken by the Bruening cabinet.

The Socialist ministers without a Socialist majority naturally could not terminate the crisis. Those who expected the Socialists to do that should have at least granted them the necessary power by providing them with a parliamentary majority. To be sure, even then socialization measures would have merely mitigated but would not have entirely overcome the crisis. This could not be done by one country alone. There were, however, certain manifestations of the crisis that could have been avoided, manifestations from which by the adoption of proper policies based upon the understanding of economic laws the nation could have been spared. The ruling classes nowadays proceed upon the opposite principle: they aggravate those avoidable manifestations in that in every land they seek to shift the burden of the crisis to some other class and above all to the working class.

This could have been prevented by a Social Democratic government supported by a Social Democratic majority, and the masses of the people thereby saved a tremendous lot of suffering. But under the division of power then existing among the parties and classes in Germany the Social Democrats were not even in a position to beat off successfully the attack of the possessing classes upon the

proletariat. The purely bourgeois cabinets made the evil even worse.

Large numbers of people, especially among the middle classes and including a great many workers, saw and felt the misery of the times very keenly. They rebelled against it. But in their ignorance they failed to see that the root of the calamity lay in the powerlessness of the Social Democracy, that it was necessary to help it achieve power. They lost faith in all the major political parties who took part in the parliamentary struggle and who sought to assert themselves in parliament and through parliament. They looked for the cause of the misery not in the balance of power of the political parties, not in the unfitness of the bourgeois parties, not in the lack of power of the Social Democracy, but in the parliamentary system itself. They were vexed with the image of political and social relationships as reflected in parliament. And they thought they could improve the image by breaking the mirror.

The crisis, which in England happened to strike the Labor Party and in America the Republican Party because at that time both were steering the ship of state, was utilized in some of the constitutionally governed countries of continental Europe in attacking parliament itself. Since parliaments exist, since in them the political life of the countries is concentrated, they must be blamed for all evils and their destruction made a prerequisite to something better. But what shall be put in their place? The idea of a hereditary monarchy has become so obsolete that it finds but few adherents nowadays. Not a hereditary ruler, but a man from the ranks of the people shall bring the desired salvation.

Thus the idea of “democratic” dictatorship becomes more and more enticing to many unemployed, dispossessed and despairing elements.

There were in Germany three anti-parliamentary parties: the Communists, the German Nationalists and the National Socialists. Of these three parties the National Socialist Party at the time the crisis set in was the weakest. In 1928, as already stated, it had but 12 seats in the Reichstag, the Communists had 54 and the German Nationalists 73. Since then the Communists had grown rather slowly, while the German Nationalists had lost rapidly. The latter had been unable to compete with the National Socialists, who for the most part drew their support from the same elements of the population. The superiority of the National Socialists arose partly from the fact that although both the German Nationalists and the Communists were theoretically anti-parliamentary they had in practice associated themselves very closely with the parliamentary struggle in Germany, which contradictory conduct could not be laid at the door of the National Socialists, inasmuch as prior to 1930 they were numerically very weak in the Reichstag.

All the other parties, whether in the government or in the opposition, had become, in a parliamentary sense, worn out with time. This could not be said of the National Socialist party. It had all the lustre and allurements of newness. The National Socialist party was young and for that reason appeared to many superficial observers also handsome.

And as soon as the circumstances described above began to exert their influence there was added a new factor: success.

Here, too, the old adage may be quoted: "Nothing succeeds like success."

In order that the masses may believe in the dictator he must be successful. He must dispense power and must be believed to be capable of heroic deeds. The Communists, too, advocated a dictatorship, they too promised the starving masses heaps of gold. But their rise in Germany never assumed such proportions as to make one hope for immediate practical results. And the starving wanted bread immediately. They would not and could not wait. The German Nationalists, on the other hand, were not only sworn enemies of the workers to begin with, but by the time of the crisis had lost much of their ground. From the days of the Constitutional Assembly in Weimar up to 1924 they had been making steady progress. In 1924 they had 111 seats in the Reichstag. Then they began to lose. In 1928 their representation was reduced to 73. With the elections of 1930 their retrogression continued, the number of their mandates dropping to 41, while that of the National Socialists jumped from 12 to 107. It then became clear as to whom was to be given the confidence of those masses who expected their salvation to come from above, who distrusted "Marxism," the proletarian class struggle, in other words their own power.

To the superiority of the National Socialists over the German Nationalists, which is based on the fact that in comparison with the latter the National Socialists represented a new and, parliamentarily speaking, unspent party, there was now joined the magic of success, the faith in their own power.

This is what made the National Socialists irresistible – not their program, for they have not as yet shown any ability to work out a consistent program.

Yet it was precisely this inability that helped them, as long as they were counted among the opposition parties. It forced them to draw their plans for the future in the vaguest outline, permitting them to make the most contradictory promises, pledging everything to everybody, to capitalists as well as to workers.

And what they now say about the future is quite in keeping with the conceptions prevailing among elements from which they draw their principal support, elements who are perishing in misery or are languishing in want and still are critical of the proletarian class struggle or shrink from it in fear. They are the peasants, the small shopkeepers and craftsmen as well as clerks and wage earners who have lost courage, and also those of the intellectuals to whom science (and it may be added also art) is not a means to intellectual advancement but merely a means of earning their bread and butter. Their “socialism” is of no consequence to industrial capital. Of this capital they say nothing. They are only anxious to destroy the “slavery of money interest,” and fail to distinguish between usury and credit. They rant against the department stores and the Jews, not against the functions performed by them. They storm against the competition of the Jews not only in commerce but in science and art. They likewise want to eliminate the competition of woman. Her activities are to be limited to the home.

The above outlined program is not particularly distinguished for originality. Fifty years ago this was the program of the



anti-semites. The Democrat Kronawetter called it “the socialism of the fools of Vienna.” It corresponds to the intellectual level of philistines of all classes. Yet now the political situation favors its putting into effect so completely that the glib imbecilities which are uttered about all the things that have been achieved in the course of more than a century of social progress carry the day against better judgment. At the moment National Socialism enjoys its greatest propagandistic power. All the more so as ever since the war militaristic thought has proved victor over economic thought. To be sure, a farseeing warrior gives proper recognition to economic factors as well. But the soldier of limited abilities thoroughly believes in the omnipotence of force. The war and its consequences have done much to instill this child-like belief in large groups of people. And now the coarsest ignorance of the philistine is encouraged to provide guidance for the organization of the state and society without further study but merely on the basis of the philistine’s immediate needs.

These then are the factors responsible for the enormous propagandistic strength which National Socialism displays in Germany today. The most recent of these is the world crisis under conditions created for the German people by the world war and the treaty of peace. To this must be added the crippling of parliament, at a time when purposeful and vigorous intervention in economic life was most urgent, by a deadlock of parties and classes; the obsolescence of all the old parties; the disillusionment not only of the workers but of the lower middle class groups and intellectuals; the belief in the omnipotence of force, and the ignorance of a large portion of the population, especially the youth, with respect

to social and economic matters, an ignorance brought about largely by the war and cultivated since.

These are the circumstances from which the belief in a dictatorship as the way out took its growth. The fact that the National Socialists have been spared the disadvantage of revealing their parliamentary inefficiency, as well as their limited intellectual outlook, an outlook which appealed to the ignorant masses, and their success in elections resulting therefrom, prepared the ground for that intellectual "Brown Shirt" pestilence from which we now suffer.

At the moment this is being written the rapidly growing popularity of National Socialism owes its existence essentially to the factors indicated above. But they explain only one aspect of its nature. There is another that is just as important. It originated not in the World War but in the treaty of peace signed at Versailles. This treaty compelled the German State to disband its armed forces and to reduce its standing army to the small body of troops represented by the Reichswehr. This might have been made the starting point of a general disarmament movement and hence the beginning of an economic revival in Europe. But the treaties made in 1919 brought a peace dictated not by reason but by force. A higher statesmanship would have called together a world congress at which all the powers, whether victor or defeated, belligerent or neutral, would have met on terms of equality to deliberate on new world policies made necessary or desirable by the outcome of the war, these deliberations to be later ratified by popular vote in the respective countries.

This would have been a great and sublime move; it would have brought enduring and happy peace to the entire world

and would have made possible a general disarmament. The latter would have relieved the governments of great burdens removed economic obstacles and stimulated a rapid economic upturn throughout the world.

But the victors, blinded by war passions, limited by national selfishness, and guided by cowardice and demagoguery, acted differently, sacrificing better judgment to the shortsighted immediate interests of ruling groups.

Under these circumstances national rivalries have continued, the armament race has not abated, and the world has achieved no peace. And least of all has peace been achieved by the German nation, so hard hit by the treaty of peace, especially its reparation clauses.

As a result, the enforced disarmament of Germany has had none of those beneficial effects which would have accrued from it had it formed part of a reasonable peace policy of the nations. It has indeed saved Germany from a worse fate, since without it the nation might have utterly collapsed under the staggering burden of reparations. But it created a new source of trouble in Germany.

It brought about the discharge of many army officers and privates unwilling to bow to the dictates of peace and find a place for themselves in civil life. These rebellious elements attempted again and again to organize themselves into illegal armed bands, the movement being greatly encouraged by the unsettled conditions in Eastern Prussia and adjoining regions, and later also by the occupation of the Ruhr.

These elements sought also to assert themselves politically. The most varied groups of extreme nationalistic persuasion came under their leadership. Ultimately they all united and since 1925 have been under the command of Hitler. From their ranks came the officers, the commanders, the instructors and the most active elements of the National

Socialist Party, the rigidly disciplined storm divisions (S.A.) who form a separate army in the state. In a military sense they were no match for the Reichswehr and the state police. But they became a power as soon as they became aware of the Support of the masses of the population and a large Part of the government machinery. Even where the government officially frowned upon them, functionaries, judges and others took kindly to them. Numbering at first but a few thousand, they infected the ever growing multitudes of youths who flocked to the ranks of National Socialism with their enthusiasm or rather false enthusiasm for violence and coarseness and brutality toward any one who refused to do their bidding. On the other hand, they infected these multitudes with the mercenary spirit of readiness to sell oneself to any one who will pay the price.

In olden days, too, mercenary troops dismissed after the conclusion of a war often became a burdensome nuisance and a source of oppression to the peaceful population. The best known example of that we have in the so-called "Armagnacs." The war between France and England which began in 1339 and lasted for more than a century was conducted by both sides with the aid of feudal levies and hired troops recruited from many lands and who in the course of the contest became more and more unmanageable. When the war was approaching its end and the victory of the French became assured, the king dismissed the mercenaries. But they refused to leave the country and made themselves at home in the most dissolute and cruel manner. They were named "Armagnacs," for their leader, Count of Armagnac. In South Germany the name was corrupted into "Arme Gecks," meaning "poor fops." But in France a more appropriate name was chosen for them: "Fleecers." They behaved in their homeland even worse than they did as disciplined troops in the enemy country.

One is reminded of these “fleecers” when one observes the doings of the bands of Hitler’s hirelings. Where the government not only does not restrain them but often supports them they destroy without pity everything that displeases them, and crush even the slightest manifestation of disapproval more ruthlessly than is done by the most thoroughgoing despotism. Conditions under Bismarck’s discriminatory law of 1878 were for us Socialists heaven compared with the present raging of the brown-shirted bands.

We can see thus that Hitlerism is a complex phenomenon. One source of its power is the economic crisis. Due to this crisis, parliament, which could not terminate it, became unpopular among the middle classes now living in want, and also among unschooled, unorganized workers – the very same parliament which the capitalists hate because it offers too dangerous a tool for the Socialists to use against capital. To all these people the most acceptable thing is the reverse of parliament, namely, dictatorship.

And to that was added the rise of numerous bands, born of the peace of Versailles, who have entered into the service of the dictatorship, have become its chief instrument of power, and have left their impress upon the methods employed in maintaining that dictatorship.

If combined with the above two factors we have yet a third, namely, the possession of government authority, we get as a result a political and social power which no single party can effectively resist.

## II. Revolution and Civil War

After an unsuccessful war or a revolution that has miscarried, the losing side always becomes the subject of criticism as well as of self-criticism. This last is not only inevitable but necessary and has a salutary effect if it helps to clear up the causes of defeat and enables the vanquished to resume the struggle anew with a higher solidarity and purposefulness and pursue it with greater vigor. Contrariwise, self-criticism is fruitless and of no avail if the only purpose it serves is to find scapegoats over whom the man indulging in self-criticism can assert his superiority with pharisaical conceit.

Perhaps a deeper inquiry into the combination of circumstances that led to Hitler's victory would cause us to revise some of our long held views. For the present, however, I see no reason for doing so. At any rate we should guard against overestimating the superiority of Hitler's power at the moment and adopting some of the views of the National Socialists. We must not allow that to happen. For it would add moral failure to material defeat. Of course, the danger must not be minimized. Present conditions in the state and in society lend a great power of attraction to some of the National Socialist ideas even for outspoken enemies of National Socialism who wish to utilize those ideas in order to defeat it. They think this can be best accomplished by using National Socialism's own weapons.

The unrestrained violence of the Nazis has made a profound impression on some Social Democrats, an impression far from deterrent. They see in this violence the reason for Nazi success and an example worthy of emulation. A member of

the Social Democratic party recently told me: "If at the end of 1918 we had acted toward our opponents as the Nazis acted toward us, we would have captured political power completely and maintained it, and would be now living in a Socialist republic."

To these regrets for the past are added corresponding intentions for the future: "When we get back into power again in Germany we shall take frightful revenge on the Nazis and give them some of their own medicine. 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'"

In the face of the sadistic fury of the brown terror such a state of mind is quite understandable. Nor is it lessened by the fact that there exists an old revolutionary tradition, according to which it is impossible to carry out a revolution without bloodshed. "Revolutions are not made with rosewater."

This tradition is based partly on the confusion of revolution with civil war and partly on the assumption that the reign of terror in revolutionary France which lasted from 1792 to 1794 was the highest point of the revolution that began in 1789. Every revolution in the future was to strive to reach a similar climax if it wished to accomplish something big.

It goes without saying that civil war, like all war, means violence, bloodshed, cruelty. This is the very nature of war. One might even say that civil war is the most repulsive form of war. It may sound strange but it cannot be denied that the most humane form of war is that between professional warriors. When warfare becomes the specialty of a separate calling whose adepts use it as a means of gaining a livelihood, there is created among the professionals of the

different countries a sort of community of interest, an international solidarity, which manifests itself in spite of the duty devolving upon them to crack one another's skulls. There arises a code of honor which commands that the enemy be shown every consideration during the struggle. The encounter becomes a sort of sport with definite rules, which are carefully observed and forbid every unnecessary cruelty, even in the most savage hand-to-hand fighting. The meeting of the opponents before and after the combat is characterized by exquisite politeness. Mistreating or slaying an unarmed prisoner is supposed to be out of the question.

This is the essence of chivalry. It is founded not upon gentleness of manners but the spirit of fellowship. When the enemy against whom the knights or the professional fighters are contending is one who does not belong to the profession he is fought not only with that savagery which an armed struggle naturally calls forth but also with hatred aroused in the professional against the non-professional and interloper. His chivalry does not prevent the magnanimous knight from putting to torture peasants who presume to put up an armed defence of their hearth and kin.

In this twentieth century army officers still treat as a common criminal any man taking up arms in defense of his country who is not enrolled in the army. Hence warfare becomes more cruel when professional soldiers do not predominate in the armies, when instead of war as planned out beforehand at headquarters we have war conducted by the masses of the people. The struggle is most brutal in the case of civil war when it is waged by professional fighters on the one hand and mere "civilians" on the other. Regular



soldiers who join the civilians are particularly hated as traitors by their former comrades.

Yet civil war is almost never identical with revolution. In most cases it is only a prelude to revolution. It is only when the revolutionists gain the upper hand in the fratricidal struggle that there begins the revolutionization of the state and of society. At least this was true of the revolutions of the nineteenth century where civil war was limited to street battles that lasted only a few days and in some cases even a few hours. It was quite different during the English revolution of the seventeenth century. At that time civil war lasted a decade, and throughout its course the revolutionary activity of Parliament continued. But this civil war was not a struggle between professional soldiers and civilians. It was precisely the revolutionists who formed a professional fighting army whose superior discipline and strategy brought them victory.

At that time the civil war period was coterminous with the period of revolution. This was no longer the case in the revolutions that followed. Armed clashes between the revolutionists and counter-revolutionists in the nineteenth century formed the beginning and in some instances the end of the revolution, but they consumed only a few days, a very small part of the entire duration period of the revolution in question.

A special case is provided by the Great French Revolution, which began in 1789. It initiated an era of foreign wars which, with but a few interruptions, lasted from 1792 to 1815. At times these foreign wars were interspersed with civil war. But even here it can not be said that the civil war

was identical with revolution. The outbreaks of civil war were merely episodes in the unfolding of the revolution.

It cannot be even said that every revolution at one time or another is necessarily connected with civil war. A revolution can overthrow only a government that no longer enjoys the confidence of the people and is rejected by them. This happens through an armed uprising of the people when the latter are kept down by the armed forces of the government. But when the army has before this been defeated by a foreign foe and disbanded, or when the government is financially bankrupt and cannot pay its defenders, then the government is forced to capitulate without a struggle and the revolution proves victorious without resort to civil war. This was the case in France in September 1870, in Russia in March 1917, in Austria and Germany in November 1918.

There is yet another factor that may be responsible for a bloodless revolution. In the course of the nineteenth century democracy, political freedom of the masses, had made great progress throughout Europe. This created an opportunity to ascertain the strength of the separate parties and movements at election time. The results of elections were at times so overwhelming that the government or party in power realized the futility of offering resistance and resigned without appealing to the force of arms, even where there was no regularly functioning democracy, which places government power in the hands of the strongest party in the state as a matter of course. Thus in Spain of late (April 1931) a municipal election was sufficient to overthrow the monarchy. On the other hand, the results of the last German Reichstag elections made possible the success of Hitler's counter-revolution.

It is even possible to gain political power by fraudulent means, without resort to force, by the wolf parading in sheepskin. Of this, too, the National Socialist movement offers an excellent illustration.

It is, therefore, quite wrong to regard civil war as the sole content of revolution and its only form. Nor are cruelty and terrorism, apart from civil war, necessary concomitants of every unfolding revolution.

The reign of terror of 1792-1794 in France was not a necessary manifestation of the progress of the revolution that began in 1789, but a consequence of the war waged by revolutionary France against the allied monarchies of Europe, which began in 1792. Moreover, it was the outcome of a certain phase of the war, namely, the defeat of the French armies in the first years of the struggle. It was not the revolution, it was the war, the menace to the revolution presented by the foreign armies, as well as the treason of the counter-revolutionists, that led to the reign of terror and to the adoption of measures such as are resorted to in a besieged fortress, but which bore a socialistic stamp because the working classes of Paris were the most active advocates of a policy of fighting the war to a finish. Which was quite natural, since they stood to lose most if victory went to the opposing monarchies, while under military communism they would lose least. I discuss this question in my book *War and Democracy*.

The tremendously important historical role played at that time by the revolutionary parties of Paris exercised a great influence and led to the belief among many revolutionists

and counter-revolutionists that terror was the proper form of every revolution.

As a matter of fact, many of the democrats and socialists of later days recoil from bloody terror. Only the socialist successors of the bourgeois Jacobins, these standard-bearers of the reign of terror of 1792-1794, definitely believed in it. They were the Blanquists. But even they extolled terror only in theory, not in practice, for which they had hardly had an opportunity at all. It was only their successors, the Bakuninist anarchists, who practiced terror, not on a mass scale, but on individuals. And they practiced it not as a method of maintaining power for victorious revolutionists, but as a fighting method of separate individuals in desperate struggle with an overpowering government when this government rendered impossible the slightest mass movement, as was the case in Russia. We are not concerned here with this aspect of terrorism.

In general, it may be said that for a century or so the democratic and socialist movements have been characterized not by bloody violence but by humanity, mercy and kindness.

### III. Democracy and Humanity

Whether a given group in society is peaceable and humane or violent and brutal depends in the last analysis on the social conditions in which it lives. Purely agricultural peoples often recoil from inflicting death not only on humans but even on beasts. Most conspicuous in this respect are the Hindus. Hunters and herdsmen on the other hand live by slaughtering animals. The habit of spilling blood and their skill in the use of weapons ultimately lead them to the slaying of human enemies without compunction.

Where such warlike people live next to peaceable soil-tillers, unaccustomed to bear arms, they end up by subjugating the latter. They thus become the founders of the state. They dominate it as a military aristocracy, enslaving and exploiting the peasantry and extending the field of exploitation by their military prowess. Violence and brutality become the normal conditions of life for the dominant classes of the state. This applies to the military nobility as well as to the monarchy which rises above it, and holds true of its agents – the army, the police and the judiciary.

Among the subjugated and exploited classes, on the other hand, there is created a mentality of two sorts. The peasants and burghers of the rising state, in harmony with their manner of production, tend toward peace and abhorrence of bloodshed. But at the same time the mistreatment from above creates among them a desire to rebel and to inflict vengeance. Thus from the brutality of the rulers and exploiters arises the brutality of the ruled and exploited, especially when the latter have some weapons at their disposal.

Following the period of the great migration of peoples in Europe there had raged at first those interminable petty wars characteristic of feudal monarchy and then, from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century, the frightful civil wars which we designate as the religious wars of the Reformation period, with every class fighting against the Catholic Church at one time or another and incidentally carrying out a campaign of massacre against its class enemies. The higher nobility, the lower nobility, the burghers, the peasants fought among themselves as well as with the representatives of state authority, kings and emperors. The result of this savage fury was the frightful brutalization of the masses of the people.

It all ended with the victory of the state power, mostly in the form of absolute despotism, which succeeded in rendering all classes of the population defenseless, limiting the opportunity of armed self-protection only to the organs of state power: the hired troops, the police and the judiciary. All these continued to deal with the masses of the people as brutally and mercilessly as before. In the rest of the population, now disarmed, there occurred a great mental change. It became unaccustomed to the use of weapons and violence. At the same time conditions were created – it would take us too far afield to describe them here – that made it possible for the subject classes to liberate themselves intellectually from the ruling classes, to even oppose them intellectually and to set up the ideal of popular freedom and the abolition of exploitation in opposition to the ideas of aristocracy and monarchy. This opposition created the tendency to associate the struggle against the ruling class with that directed purely against its brutality. – The new mode of thought developed in the eighteenth

century saw in war not heroism to be admired but criminal madness. It opposed duelling, torture, capital punishment. This humane striving attained its first and foremost expression among the intellectuals of the cities. Wherever these intellectuals made up a professional group that had the power to develop economically, independent of the ruling classes and without attaining a position of dominance itself, they invariably tended to fight their opponents with intellectual weapons instead of physical force. – In some of the large cities of Europe the intellectuals of the eighteenth century found such conditions available, and so they became the champions of the humanitarian ideal. They gradually drew toward it other groups of the oppressed and exploited people striving for emancipation. The humanitarian movement had its greatest success in the cities, and mostly among the proletarian elite. Wage-earners make up the least favorably situated class of the population. They suffer most from the brutality of the ruling class. As long as the workers remain hopeless, the weakest among them submit, while the more militant ones seek personal revenge: “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” Those capable of entertaining a higher hope, however, who look beyond the present and feel that they have in themselves the making of a better future put up a fight against not only every form of slavery and exploitation but also against every disregard of human life, including the life of the opponent.

The idea of humanity, of respect for human personality, which the enlighteners of the eighteenth century preached, found a quick response among all classes who opposed feudal absolutism, but mostly, again, among the proletarian elite. Of course, the proletariat of the eighteenth century had

not yet appeared as a separate class disassociated from the petty bourgeoisie.

Influenced by this humanitarian thought, the makers of the American Revolution in 1776 and of the French Revolution in 1789 strove to steer clear of every form of brutality. They succeeded perfectly in North America, although the revolution there fully coincided with the character of war. But the American revolutionists were fighters who had lived a free life before the revolution and who felt themselves capable of throwing off the last vestige of dependence that oppressed them. In France, on the other hand, there were millions of extremely poor and brutalized creatures whom an inhuman government had robbed of every hope and sense of human dignity. How could they be expected to respect such dignity in their tormentors, when once they had changed roles with the latter? Yet so strong was the influence of the humanitarian ideas that even in the French Revolution comparatively few outrages were committed against counter-revolutionists during the first stages of the upheaval.

A change occurred only in 1772 when war broke out, and that only in the early phase of it, which did not go well for France, when the foreign foe was supported by the French counter-revolutionists. This has already been referred to above, as well as the reign of terror resulting from it.

The terror created the illusion among the champions of the lower classes that no revolution could prove victorious without bloodshed, that it could maintain its superiority over its enemies only by depriving them of life or an opportunity to sustain it.



Nevertheless, the idea of humanity continued to make Progress among the laboring classes, especially the proletariat. The form of society that came as a result of the Great French Revolution favored this idea, in spite of the State of war which burdened the nations of Europe from 1792 to 1815 and the bloody reaction which set in France in 1814 after the return of the Bourbons.

When revolution broke out again in that country in 1830, in which the proletariat played a most prominent role, it Proceeded not only along lines entirely different from those of the reign of terror of 1792-1794, namely, under conditions of peace instead of war, but was helped along by a proletariat more highly developed. No blood was shed this time, except in struggle with an armed enemy to protect the people against violence. As victor the revolution proved magnanimous and kind, cherishing no thought of attacking its enemies in person or depriving them of their property. It permitted the overthrown king to depart in peace.

The leaders of the reaction, while in power, had often used their instrument of authority in the most cruel manner. Nevertheless no act of political or personal revenge was perpetrated against them by the proletarian victors.

This charitableness was prompted not by fear or weakness, but by a feeling of superiority over the opponent. The victors did not wish to stoop to the level of their enemies' brutality and personal greed.

The same was true of the victorious fighters on the barricades in January and February, 1848, in Paris; in March of the same year in Vienna, and Berlin, etc. Quite different was the attitude of the intellectually backward

proletariat of the large Italian city, Naples. In 1830, incited by King Ferdinand, it carried out a surprise attack upon the liberals and democrats, belonging mostly to the bourgeoisie, killed many of them and plundered and destroyed their dwellings.

That such methods are abhorred by an intellectually developed proletariat, morally uplifted by its Socialist convictions, was shown anew by the workers of Paris when Thier's attempt to disarm them led in March 1871 to their uprising and the overthrow of the reactionary government. The victors did not give vent to their fury through robbery and murder directed against the Bonapartist and liberal bourgeois who happened to remain in Paris. These latter were not molested. And that in spite of the fact that Paris was at that time surrounded by troops of the government. In the midst of this struggle the Paris workers burned the guillotine (April 6). The government forces engaged in daily executions of defenders of the Commune who happened to fall into their hands. The latter answered merely by ordering the arrest of a few hostages. But as long as the Commune lasted, no harm was done to these hostages. It was only when it was crushed and the government troops were given free reign in Paris that it occurred to some of the Socialists driven to despair to avenge themselves on the hostages. All of these Socialists were Blanquists. The Internationalists, learning of the fate threatening the hostages, tried to do everything to protect them.

It is a noteworthy fact that the willing perpetrators of these Blanquist cruelties were half-grown youths. Fiaux, the historian of the Paris Commune, says of the executioners of the hostages:

In most of these crimes the accomplices were young people not quite of marriageable age, spurred on by the vices and passions of city life which had grown in them before their beards had had a chance to sprout and which had left no room for a sense of responsibility. (*Guerre Civile*, p.528)

Who in reading this description can fail to be reminded of the black and brown shirts of today?

Just as in earlier revolutions the proletariat after its victory showed its magnanimity and humanity, so in more recent times, during the March revolution in Russia in 1917, in the revolutions in Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia in October and November 1918, in Spain after the overthrow of the monarchy in 1931, the working class displayed the same attitude.

It is simply untrue that the proletariat triumphant in a revolution must always assume a murderous pugnacity. The very opposite is true. Not the proletarian revolutionists but their opponents and their armed hordes of followers give vent to savage fury wherever they happen to defeat the proletariat, either through the direct use of arms or by resorting to the insidious methods of demagogy.

It was not the victors of February 24, 1848, in Paris, who soiled themselves with blood, it was those of June 23 of the same year. Not the victors of March 12, 1848, in Vienna, but those of October 31, of the same year. And in 1871 it was not the victors of March 18 but those of the bloody week in May (May 21-28) who abandoned themselves to a frenzy of murder. Terroristic principles in the Paris Commune and the relationship between terrorism and revolution are fully treated in the book *Terrorism and Communism*.

The magnanimity and humanity of the more highly developed proletariat did not originate in the special theory advanced by it or by order of its leaders, but in the conditions of life wherever these were effective enough to imbue the proletariat with a high idealism. This idealism inspires unselfishness and enthusiasm as well as humaneness and generosity in an oppressed class only when the class becomes conscious of its power and its duty to set up a higher order of society in place of the existing conditions of misery, so that it does not regard its victory as a means to personal aggrandizement and revenge. On the other hand, persons who in political struggles set themselves the last mentioned objectives are always mean and cruel to their defeated opponents.

The same is true of parties and classes who are able to rule over the masses of the people only as minorities and are in a position to maintain their rule not by the aid of enlightened measures but through fear and terrorism.

The danger of such minority terrorism does not exist in the case of Social Democracy, which aims to attain power only as the representative of the majority of the population and believes that its program assures the welfare and freedom of the entire collective body of toiling humanity, wherever conditions favor carrying this program into effect.

## IV. The Brutality of Latter-Day Capitalism

During the past century, along with the progress of democracy grew also those social elements who professed pacifism and abhorred violence. One might have expected that these elements would ultimately influence the entire character of social life, despite existing class contradictions. And these, too, it was thought, might assume a milder form, even though exploitation continued.

But these tendencies soon met with strong influences tending in the opposite direction. Among these was the universal compulsory military service that grew out of democracy. The professional armies of the eighteenth century were small and had no appreciable influence upon the character of the population. But following the wars of the French Revolution these armies became larger and larger in size. They comprised an ever increasing portion of the population and infected it with the spirit of violence and brutality, which military service and the preparation for war naturally encourage. At the same time this development was counteracted by the fact that economic circumstances compelled the constant shortening of the term of service in the standing army. The ideal arrangement for a democracy is the militia where service is reduced to a few months of training in barracks, and the soldier is in no manner separated from the rest of the population and thus not exposed to influences making for the development of a peculiar militaristic psychology and its spread among the masses.

Still more damaging than the extension of military service was another tendency that manifested itself: the change in the mentality of the bourgeoisie. In the eighteenth century and in the major part of the nineteenth century the bourgeoisie was outspokenly pacifist. Not alone the intellectuals in it but the capitalists as well, at least the industrial capitalists. Nothing is more erroneous than the view expressed as a self-evident truth that war is the result of capitalism. War is very old. It became a permanent institution with the rise of a military nobility in the State ruled by despots and defended by hired troops. Financial and commercial capital do not oppose military adventure, on the contrary they often derive profits from it. Industrial capital, on the other hand, during its period of growth, is opposed to it. For long periods of time, therefore, it professes pacifist views, that is to say as long as it fights the nobility and absolutism and sees in free competition and free trade the best condition for its prosperity, and as long as it is thoroughly convinced that it is the most serviceable of all modes of production, which in comparison with pre-capitalistic practices it most assuredly is. The present generation of industrial capitalists think quite differently, since their social position has within the last fifty years changed profoundly.

Since the days of the world crisis of 1873, which lasted almost twenty years, capitalists have come to question more and more the blessings of free competition and free trade. They seek to replace the two by organizing production in the form of private monopolies. For this they need high tariffs and other things. These are granted by the state, which likewise has become dependent upon capital. The capitalists no longer fight the state but make use of it. To be able to do

this they make common cause with the large land-owners whom they have formerly opposed. To the monopolization of the home market they seek to add the monopolization of the foreign markets. This leads to a revival of colonial expansion – imperialism – which had become quite dormant in the period of Manchesterism.

At the same time the part played by heavy industries in industrial economy becomes more and more prominent, while that of the textile industries less and less so. The heavy industries, however, are interested in armaments. The armaments race assumes unheard of proportions, having already been brought about by the constant growth of national armies and colonial expansion.

The expense of this entire development is borne by labor. The spirit of violence engendered by it is directed first of all against the laboring classes.

It is enhanced by the fact that the capitalists are losing their assurance that their mode of production is best for the welfare of the nation, and seeing that it is merely tolerated, seek to carry it on and maintain it at all costs. They see the belief rapidly gaining ground now that the socialization of production in an ever increasing number of industries in a democratic state will create a mode of production superior to that of capitalism. The capitalists are less and less in a position to disprove this belief on theoretical grounds, while practically the idea is gaining strength in the measure that the workers are not only increasing in number and broadening their capacity for mass organization. Forcible destruction of proletarian organizations and of democracy in

which they thrive becomes more and more the objective of the capitalists, whose liberalism is now fast disappearing.

Simultaneously with this there arises among the intellectuals the desire of winning a privileged monopoly position, which inspires also the determination to keep competitors out of the privileged category by some means of compulsion. As long as higher education was something that was not common it alone gave the man who possessed it a preferred standing among the working population. It was thought at the time that all that the workers had to do was to obtain a higher education and they would then rise to a position of esteem and prosperity. This illusion has long since vanished. The state-established institutions of higher learning have been ever growing in number, with the result that the professions requiring a scientific training have become overcrowded. This has created an important social problem. The victory of the workers will solve it through the building of a socialist society. Intellectuals who do not believe in this victory or fear it, and expect to secure, instead, some preferment from the ruling classes, seek a solution of the problem more convenient to them, namely, by establishing guilds which shall control the right to seek a higher education or apply it only to a restricted number of citizens. This means the degradation of those desiring an education. In some intellectual groups there has developed within the last half-century a philosophy of brute force which is in dismal contrast with the philosophy of humanity that characterized the enlighteners of the eighteenth century and the liberals and democrats of the nineteenth. Liberalism and democracy are steadily losing ground among the bourgeoisie, especially in those countries where this class



has not been rooted in the traditions of liberalism and democracy by centuries of struggle for freedom.

But the proletariat itself has not fully escaped the influence of the cult of violence which in the last fifty years has been continually growing among the middle class groups, previously the champions of humanitarianism and world peace.

The discovery of the historical significance of classes and class struggle was one of the greatest contributions to human thought made by Marx and Engels. In practice, however, one must not stop at the abstractions, the simplifications with which the inquirer starts in order to facilitate the discovery of the laws that govern the phenomena in question. In reality things are much more complicated than in theory.

Therefore, we must not content ourselves with the mere recognition of the class contradictions between capital and labor established by Marx in his *Capital* if we wish to understand the social and political struggles of our time. And we must not only keep in mind the fact that besides capitalists and workers there are other classes in modern society, but also consider the differences existing between the various groups within the capitalist class on the one hand and those between the various groups within the proletarian class on the other.

I have already alluded to the fact that it makes a tremendous difference whether we are dealing with a highly developed proletariat or with a backward one. The workers of Paris in 1848 behaved in a manner quite different from that of the workers of Naples.

Marx and Engels themselves were compelled to recognize the difference between the working proletariat and the low rabble proletariat. But within the working proletariat itself there are manifold differentiations occasioned by the differences in working conditions as well as by the various strata from which the workers are recruited. Some of them are less difficult to organize, others are more so; some are capable of acquiring a higher education, others again are hardly able to read an article, etc.

At the beginning of the labor movement it was only the elite among the workers who possessed enough energy and understanding to take up the political and economic class struggle. It was only through a slow and difficult process that these self-sacrificing pioneer fighters of the proletariat, thirsting for knowledge as much as for freedom, were able to draw wider circles of workers into the ranks of the class conscious, fighting working class.

For a long time attention was paid only to these fighting proletarians and their organizations. They alone presented a threat to the bourgeoisie. But as the spirit of violence awakened within the bourgeoisie, and at the same time the ranks of the fighting proletarians continued to swell while the number of peasants and petty bourgeois diminished (at least relatively, and often absolutely) there arose the need, well recognized by not a few of the capitalists, not to leave the backward portion of the proletariat entirely to itself until it should become infected with the propaganda of the Social-Democrats and the free trade unions. By granting certain advantages and sometimes by intimidation it was sought to bring the ignorant or economically timorous or unprincipled elements of the proletariat together and organize them into a

body of defenders of capitalism. Already prior to the world war favorable circumstances made it possible to arm them and use them as private armies of the capitalists. This was especially true in the United States, in the case of the so-called Pinkertons, who were organized, armed bands of strikebreakers. There was an extensive growth of what are known as "yellow" or company unions, organized and led by the hirelings of capital.

Since they regarded themselves as a legitimately functioning minority within the working class, the "yellow" trade unionists felt constantly menaced by the majority of their colleagues. Their one aim became to protect themselves against that majority, to keep it down with the aid of their employers and the police. Thus there came into existence a new subdivision of the proletariat professing a philosophy of violence and submissive to capital.

To the classes and groups who have always been brutal and belligerent, such as the nobility, the monarchs and their agents, there have been added since the end of the last century more and more elements hailing from the rank and file of the population who previously believed in democracy and humanity but now are for absolutism, violence and war.

Yet, on the whole, humanitarian ideas have continued to grow among the peoples of capitalist states.

In no small measure this may be ascribed to the fact that from 1815 on, for a whole century, Europe was enjoying a period of almost complete peace. This condition characterized the rise of industrial capitalism. In the pre-capitalist era war had been going on almost uninterruptedly. This was true not only of the period of feudal monarchy and

later of the religious movements but also of the time when absolutism was already established.

Consider, for example, the eighteenth century. It opened with a great war of France against Austria which was allied with England and the Netherlands. It lasted fourteen years, from 1701 to 1714. Simultaneously there was a war in progress between Sweden and Russia and other powers (1700-1718). From 1716 to 1718 there was a war between Austria and Turkey; from 1717 to 1720 between Spain and France and her allies. This was followed by the war for the Polish succession between France and Austria (1733-1735), as well as a struggle between the Turks and the Russians and Austrians (1736-1739). After this interlude of small wars came the tremendous contest between Frederick II of Prussia and Austria, in which France associated herself first with one side and then with the other. England, too, was drawn in, always taking sides against France. Then there was the war of the Austrian succession, 1740-1748, followed by the Seven Years war of 1756-1763. Then came the wars of the Russians with the Poles, starting in 1768, which led to the first partition of Poland in 1772, and the Russo-Turkish war of 1768-1774.

The struggle for American independence initiated a period of wars in Western Europe: between France and Spain and later between England and the Netherlands (1778-1782). After that, war broke out again between the Austrians and the Russians allied with the Turks in 1787 and lasted five years, at the conclusion of which there was another war between Russia and Poland.

In 1792 there began the war of the monarchies of Europe against revolutionary France which, with short interruptions, lasted until 1815.

Thus in the period from 1700 to 1815 few years passed without war; almost half of it is given over to fierce contests between the great powers.

How different is the century from 1815 to 1914! In Europe there was not a single important war between the years 1815 and 1854. And none between 1878 and 1914. The period between 1854 and 1878 saw indeed not a few wars of the first magnitude. But two of them were waged in Asia Minor – the Crimean war and the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78. They affected Europe but little. In Europe proper there were during this period only three important wars: the Italian war between Austria and France (1859), the Austro-Prussian war of 1866, and the France-German war of 1870-71. They all occurred within the short period of a dozen years. Nine-tenths of the century between 1815 and 1914 passed without any great wars in Europe proper. And those that occurred during the remainder of the period were short. In Italy the first battle was fought on May 20, 1859, and the last on June 24, of the same year. In the war between the Prussians and the Austrians in 1866 the first encounter occurred on June 26, and the last on July 22. These wars were too short to have any corrupting influence on the minds of the people of the contending powers. The France-German war, too, would have ended quickly. The first battle was fought on August 2, 1870. By September 1, Napoleon III had already been taken prisoner, his armies defeated and the war virtually terminated. France sued for peace, Germany could have had it immediately after attaining everything she could through

war, namely, the assurance of her unity and in addition a huge war indemnity. But Bismarck, spurred on by the generals and professors influenced by the customary hurrah-patriotism of the Philistines among the joy-intoxicated victors, insisted upon the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine, whose population was vehemently opposed to the step. This led to a new outbreak of war which lasted until the end of January 1871, which cost both nations rivers of blood, and brought Germany no appreciable improvement. Of her strategic position, as was clearly proved in August, 1914, but a profound change for the worse in her world standing: the hatred of France, the antipathy of the entire civilized world, and, in addition to that, the domination of militarism at home. But despite the evils it left behind, the war of 1870-71 was unable to undo the total effect of the warless period which, with but a few interruptions, lasted from 1815 to 1914.

And because there was this period of almost uninterrupted peace, the economic life of Europe during the century after 1815 developed tremendously. But with it grew the power of the proletariat. The proletariat grew not only in number but in influence as well. Peace brought increasing prosperity, a large and constantly growing share of which went to the working class. Like peace, prosperity makes rough tempers less harsh, at least such is the effect of prosperity on the workers. Upon the employers, on the other hand, increasing wealth does not always have a softening effect, especially if this wealth has been acquired in a bitter struggle or when it is believed to be in danger from some source.

The yearning for "the good old days" is now general. Compared with the present they constituted indeed a happy

period. But only the ignorant can believe the happiness of the past was due to the monarchs. It sprang from the blessing of a long period of peace. On the other hand, the World War that followed the period of peace and lasted four years proved such a calamity that not even the great achievements of the working class at the time of the revolution of 1918 could fully assuage the anguish created by the war and the terms upon which it was concluded.

The state of peace that lasted from 1815 to 1914 owed its existence in the last analysis to the growing power of the democratic and liberal classes, and from the end of the nineteenth century almost exclusively to the growing power of the Social Democratic working class. The war of 1914 and the misery which it brought in its train on the other hand were the outcome of the union of the old militaristic classes with the bourgeoisie that had turned anti-democratic and anti-pacifist.

## V. The Period of Dictatorship

The tendency to resort to violence which modern capitalism had developed as early as in the last decade preceding the World War was greatly enhanced by the world struggle itself. The influence of a century of almost uninterrupted peace was destroyed by the four years of international butchery which in extent and intensity had no parallel in human history, since the entire population of the belligerent countries able to bear arms was drafted into service.

The effects of military devastation among the vanquished were augmented by the misery and despair occasioned in large measure by the treaties of peace which had not been dictated by reason but rather imposed by force. And finally the cult of violence was greatly strengthened in Eastern countries by the huge migrations which war and defeat had brought about.

Military authority which had supported the exploiting classes collapsed along with its armies. The exploiting classes sought other military support, at first not of government origin but of a private character.

On the other hand, the war considerably reduced, at least relatively and often also absolutely, the number of educated and organized workers and increased the number of uneducated and unorganized proletarians. It diminished the number of those who were sufficiently developed to set themselves a new goal for which they were ready to put up a long and stubborn fight. It enlarged the number of those who could not wait and were often looking for immediate spoils.



The disintegration of the lower middle class groups added to the number of proletarians of the latter type, while at the same time the war was responsible for the great decrease in the number of educated workers of mature age, thereby impeding the proper political training of the new generation of workers and furthering their brutalization.

This was no less true of the new generation of intellectuals, whose number increased in proportion to the proletarianization of the mass of craftsmen and small tradespeople, which stimulated the growth of the intellectual professions. The growing hopelessness of the latter caused the student youth to become rebellious, robbed them of their peace of mind and zeal in pursuing their favorite studies, increased the tendency, especially among the least gifted, to seek to establish for themselves by force a monopoly of privileged and gainful positions and to compel the dismissal of their socially weaker but much more accomplished competitors, namely, the Jews and foreigners.

All these elements opposed that state of freedom and equality i.e., democracy, which first came into existence in the European states located east of the Rhine after the collapse of the military order in that region and whose strongest champion was the most cultivated and socialist-minded portion of the working class. What the monopolists among the capitalists and the intelligentsia wanted to have instead of democracy was the settling of political and social differences by the methods of war; in other words they wanted civil war. Civil war not for the purpose of winning and defending freedom and equality, in other words democracy, which was the aim of the earlier revolutions beginning with the English in the seventeenth and the

French in the eighteenth centuries, but for the purpose of achieving the disfranchisement and enslavement of those defeated in the struggle, in other words oppression and inequality, which under the prevailing conditions of centralized government found their organized political form in dictatorship.

The tendencies manifested by this confusion of groups, all longing for a dictatorship and a regime of violence, are of a contradictory nature, differing mainly according to their being either capitalistic or anti-capitalistic in origin. The latter, however, should not be confused with socialist aims. The Socialism toward which the Social Democratic party is striving is a mode of production superior to capitalism. But the latter constitutes the highest of all modes of production yet developed: large industries with free workers who as yet have no authority over their means of production. Collective ownership and management of the large enterprises with fullest freedom for the workers is Socialism, which is superior to industrial capitalism. But this capitalism is superior not only to the small industry of the guild craftsman, but also to large industry with compulsory labor, as well as every form of state economy based upon conscript labor. Every economy of this sort must be rejected in spite of the fact that it is not capitalist. I do not agree with Max Adler who, arguing against me, once said that “for a Marxist the duty to participate in and sympathize with every movement against capitalism is a moral axiom.”

Our duty is not merely to abolish the capitalist order but to set up a higher order in its place. But we must oppose those forces aiming to destroy capitalism only in order to replace it with another barbarous mode of production.

It is for this reason that the democratically minded portion of the working class must oppose all tendencies toward a dictatorship threatening the freedom of the workers, tendencies manifested not only by the capitalists but also such as originate with anti-capitalist groups. And conversely, the anti-capitalist elements who seek their salvation in a dictatorship are just as much opposed to the democratic wing of the proletariat as is a dictatorship inspired by capital. Exposed on both flanks, from the right and from the left, the democratically minded portion of the proletariat, following the revolutions accompanying the collapse of 1917 and 1918, has here and there succumbed to the attack.

The authority and power of Social Democracy indeed came with the military collapse of the Central Empires. Wherever it was at the helm it acted with the same humanity and magnanimity as did the revolutions of 1830, 1848, 1871, 1905 and 1917. But owing to the war and the short-sightedness of the victors, the wholly socialist or semi-socialist governments in Germany and other countries were faced with problems which could not be solved overnight and the solution of which could not bring immediate prosperity. This quickly activated the bitter enmity of the disintegrating groups, with the result that the exercise of authority by either capitalist or anti-capitalist elements became a matter of mere chance. The outcome was a regime of dictatorship, of conscript labor, of terror, of arbitrary rule by a privileged minority.

History willed it that victory should go first not only to the anti-capitalist but also to anti-democratic elements of the politically untrained portion of the proletariat as against its

democratic groups. This happened in Russia, where it led to the dictatorship of the Bolsheviki.

The Bolshevik methods were everywhere eagerly studied and followed not alone by the Communists but by capitalists and reactionaries wherever the democratic wing of the proletariat was too weak to exert a decisive political influence.

Those methods were not only followed but accentuated by National Socialism. Its adherents developed to perfection and applied at one stroke all those methods of oppression which it had taken the Bolsheviki years to bring to fruition and which even Mussolini did not find ready at hand. And yet the Bolsheviki constituted a party that had taken an active part in the class struggles of a highly developed proletarian vanguard whose traditions continued to exert an influence upon the Bolsheviki for many years even when these openly embraced the policy of letting themselves be carried along by the backward portions of the working classes and the most barbaric instincts, and ended up by establishing a system of government maintained entirely by an all-powerful political police. Nevertheless, they have remained a party striving toward a higher order of society.

Mussolini, too, had served his apprenticeship in the Social Democratic party. But the leaders of the brown gangs have only one purely personal ideal, which may be expressed thus: "Be off, so I can get your place!" This mode of thinking and feeling on the part of the National Socialists is the result exclusively of the demoralizing effects of the World War and the hopeless conditions following it, conditions which not only killed every vestige of idealism among large numbers of

people but destroyed every feeling of consideration for human life and human dignity and extolled infamy and brazenness.

Among the countries ruled by dictatorship Germany was the last to succumb to it. She put up the longest and most stubborn resistance to it. But this only served to increase the fury of the gangs who for a long time had been vainly seeking power. Almost continuously since the termination of the war these bands had been conducting a civil war against democracy, but until recently only in disguised and insidious form. And civil war in a democracy where each party has full freedom of propaganda, is a war of malice which often requires base, criminal methods to advance the cause of dictatorship. National Socialism, therefore, needed criminals, attracted criminals and gave some of them political power.

Hitler's dictatorship may, therefore, claim the sad distinction of being superior to all the other dictatorships in bestiality. The fact that it takes no pride in its deeds, as did the champions of the reign of terror of 1792-1791, but on the contrary sheds tears over the ingratitude of a world that condemns the outrages committed by National Socialists, only adds disgusting hypocrisy and cowardice to the picture of bestiality. It makes the brown dictatorship not only abominable but contemptible.

The dictators of our time are falsifying history when they attempt to justify their bestiality by pointing to the example of previous revolutions. The revolutionists of the nineteenth century were humanitarian to the utmost, as we have already shown. They never soiled their victory with cruelty

and brutality. But even the reign of terror of 1792-1794 instituted by the French Revolution cannot with justice be cited as an excuse by the National Socialists. In the first place, it was not carried out in times of peace but in the midst of a war in which enemy armies had penetrated into the heart of the country and were assisted by numerous reactionary supporters inside the country. Even then the terror in time of war was less cruel than the present peacetime policies of the National Socialists in Germany.

The bloody insurrection of September 1792, the so-called September Massacres, comes nearest to the present furies of the brown hordes. At that time, when the foreign foe appeared to be standing at the gates of Paris, threatening to destroy it and to massacre its population, a portion of the latter rose up in arms. The jails were filled with people accused of being agents of the enemy. The courts of justice took their time in investigating the charges. Frantic with fear and fury, petty bourgeois and workmen, victims of the worst kind of war psychosis, gathered into mobs, broke into the jails and took justice into their own hands. Not a few ghastly deeds of vengeance were committed at which we now shudder.

But those were events of a passing character, they lasted only "one hundred hours" (for September 2 to 7).

The revolutionists themselves, the Jacobins as well as the Girondists, were greatly upset over this manifestation of popular fury. To prevent its recurrence they declared a special kind of martial law which we now call the reign of terror but which was more humane than the usual courts-martial and other military police measures. They appear

dreadful to us only when we compare them with the institutions of peace-time but not with the kindred measures resorted to in time of a desperate war.

Every military regime is abhorrent, but that of the French Revolution of almost 150 years ago was far more humane than the present civil regime of Hitler. It is true that every one who was considered an agent of the enemy, a “defeatist” or a profiteering exploiter of the people was arrested. It is true that every one found guilty by the courts was executed and that the growing war psychosis ultimately led to frightful mass executions, but at least the people who were imprisoned or condemned were not tortured. The fighters in the revolutionary and civil wars often acted like bloodthirsty animals, but at least they did not dishonor themselves by knavish mistreatment and humiliation of their opponents. They sought to render their opponents harmless, not to torment them. A true reign of terror on a mental level that permits the use of malicious knavery as a political method in time of peace has been introduced into world history only by the brown shirt heroes.

I am not so naive as to expect that this statement of fact will make any impression on these heroes. It is not for their benefit that I write but for the benefit of Socialists, whom I want to warn against regarding the methods of the National Socialists as worthy of emulation because at the moment these methods happen to be successful. Some Socialists regret the fact that we used no force in the November days of 1918 and believe that had we done so we would have now been in the saddle and our enemies destroyed.

It is a dangerous illusion to think that a movement rooted in a given set of circumstances can be destroyed by violence. I cannot pass over in silence this particular aspect of our attitude toward dictatorship, although to go into a detailed discussion of the question is beyond the scope of this article. I shall merely point out briefly that in studying the problem we must first of all make a distinction between the methods of arbitrary murder and plunder pursued with respect to opponents and the methods of the legitimate suppression of crime and brutal violence in political contests. There is yet another distinction that must be made. On the one hand we have the methods of the Nazis which assure every one of their party members a well paying government position, whether he is fit for it or not, and make every political or personal opponent of the Nazis ineligible for any kind of public service. On the other hand, we have the methods pursued by the Social Democrats, who seek to break the monopoly of the opponents of democracy in the control of the State and see to it that the laws of the state are applied to the enemies of democracy as strictly as they are to other elements of the population.

If we are to consider the carrying out of this part of the Social Democratic program alone then German Social Democracy has earned no reproach whatever. It did its utmost in this respect. If it did not accomplish more the fault lies in no small measure with those who make this reproach, above all the Communists who voted for the amnesty of murderers and incendiaries known to be opponents of democracy.

If, on the other hand, the Social Democracy is to be reproached for failing to institute a reign of terror against its



Political opponents after November 1918, then those who make the reproach should remember that such a reign of terror would have affected first of all the Communists, whose Bolshevik colleagues in Russia were then applying the most brutal methods against the Russian Socialists, and who sought to bring about the same thing in Germany. Attempts to bring about the establishment of an anti-Bolshevist reign of terror under a Social Democratic regime were not lacking, as was evidenced by the assassination of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, an assassination perpetrated by a group of reactionary army officers. But the Social Democrats must consider it fortunate that the Social Democratic government of that time repelled with horror every effort of the frenzied army officers to force it to adopt terroristic measures.

What would have happened if the German Social Democrats had permitted themselves to be driven to the setting up of a reign of terror against their political opponents?

What Germany needed most, after its military defeat and in the face of the hostility of the entire world, were moral conquests instead of military ones. The German people had to gain the good will of the world and end its isolation. Now, moral conquests, which alone are lasting and productive of good results, cannot be made by brutal force. Since the German Social Democracy had established a democratic republic and was determined to administer it on a democratic basis it tried to do its best to win back Germany's former moral and economic standing in the world.

Had the German Social Democrats established a system of terror in 1918 and 1919 it would have meant the isolation of

Germany and the stagnation of her economic life, as now brought about by Hitler, fifteen years ago under the most unfavorable conditions then prevailing in a country that had been bled white. The frightful blame which rests upon the brown shirts now would have been placed upon the German Social Democrats then, and with a vehemence ten times as strong. It would have flung the German people and above all its proletariat into an abyss of misery and filth and would have morally destroyed the Social Democratic Party.

To have paid for the short-lived illusion of absolute authority, based on blood and murder, with the price of such a frightful finale would have been too much. So that now when despite all our opposition the National Socialists have been given the power to put their party and their government into such a position of authority, we must not envy them and still less take them as our model. The "Third Reich" can end only in a condition of general decay.

Precisely what form this end will assume and how dictatorships will end generally cannot be discerned at the present time. In a period of continuous economic development, such as is represented by capitalism, and especially in a period of constant disturbances and insecurity, such as the war brought in its train, dictatorship cannot maintain itself indefinitely and must end in catastrophe. The choice of methods and weapons to be used by the champions of democracy will not depend upon our wishes but will be determined by political and social conditions. and especially by the methods and weapons of the enemy. Right now we can have no clear conception of what those conditions may be. It is possible, however, to consider now what political and economic methods we shall

pursue after the dictatorship has been overthrown. For these methods are closely bound up with the ultimate goal which we have already set before us now and for the attainment of which we are already fighting today. And conversely, the methods which we plan to pursue when we are victorious will reflect back upon our conception of the objectives which we can set out to achieve in the present. The end and the means are to a high degree conditioned by each other.

He who thinks that lasting peace can be brought about by means of war, "the last war," is wrong. Equally wrong are those who imagine that the working class can be assured prosperity and freedom by organizing economic life on a militaristic basis. No less erroneous is it to strive for a dictatorship for the purpose of crushing the enemy and establishing the proletariat in a privileged position in the state and Society while reducing the rest of the population to the position of pariahs as a means of establishing ultimately socialist equality for all. But most objectionable of all would it be to attempt to build a regime of humanity upon the basis of brutality, seeing that without the former no true Socialist commonwealth can exist. For this commonwealth must represent the realization of the slogan of the French Revolution, which was: "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity."

Dictators may torture or kill us, but they shall not succeed in demoralizing the soul of our movement, in bringing it to a state where for the sake of saving its life it is willing to renounce its ideal. Our cause will conquer in spite of everything, for in economic life as well as in politics the highest ability to accomplish and to advance things belongs to communities and organizations of free men working in free cooperation. These free communities will far outstrip

every collective body, every organization that is built on compulsion and that can be maintained only by brute force; and ultimately the communities based on oppression will perish.

The victory of Hitlerism for the moment does not in the slightest provide the occasion for us to become ruthless in our methods, as we are now frequently urged to become, if by becoming ruthless is meant to become bloodthirsty and unscrupulous, to adopt the Nazi methods of lying, intriguing, and torturing and slaughtering political opponents. The brown barbarians may arrest us, may throw us into concentration camps, may shoot us "in flight," but they shall not succeed in making us prisoners of their depravity. Under all circumstances we shall remain the champions of democracy and humanity. We reject as senseless and cruel and ruinous to both our cause and our nation the suggestion that we strive to arrive at humanity by the method of brutality.

The circumstances that made Hitlerism are temporary. The German working class, however, remains basically the same as it was before the World War and will again do its duty when circumstances change and make possible the overthrow of the Hitler regime.