1989

Revolutionary failure : the Spartacist in Berlin

Charles Dwight Remington
San Jose State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses

Recommended Citation

Remington, Charles Dwight, "Revolutionary failure : the Spartacist in Berlin" (1989). *Master's Theses*. 3106.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31979/etd.efsm-3nvu>
https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses/3106

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Master's Theses and Graduate Research at SJSU ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of SJSU ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@sjsu.edu.

INFORMATION TO USERS

The most advanced technology has been used to photograph and reproduce this manuscript from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book. These are also available as one exposure on a standard 35mm slide or as a 17" x 23" black and white photographic print for an additional charge.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

U·M·I

University Microfilms International
A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
313/761-4700 800/521-0600

Order Number 1337840

Revolutionary failure: The Spartacist in Berlin

Remington, Charles Dwight, M.A.

San Jose State University, 1989

Copyright ©1990 by Remington, Charles Dwight. All rights reserved.

U·M·I

300 N. Zeeb Rd.
Ann Arbor, MI 48106

REVOLUTIONARY FAILURE
THE SPARTACIST IN BERLIN

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of History
San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

Charles Dwight Remington

May, 1989

APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

Dr. George E. Moore
Chair, Department of History

Dr. Charles Burdick
Dean Emeritus, School of Social Science

Dr. Charles Kessler
Professor of History

APPROVED FOR THE UNIVERSITY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE ALIGNMENT OF FORCES	1
Secession of the Independent Socialists	
The Spartacist League	
The Revolutionary Shop Stewards	
The Impact of Bolshevism	
Brest-Litovsk: Annexations and Indemnities	
The January Strike, 1918	
Revolutionary Preparations	
The "Government Socialists"	
The Eve of Revolution	
The Ninth of November	
Coalition of the Majority and Independent Socialists	
Circus Busch (November 10)	
People's Commissioners Versus Executive Council	
Struggle for Control of the Army	
Program of the Provisional Government	
Spartacist Program	
National Congress of States' Delegates	
National Congress of Worker's and Soldier's Delegates	
"Bloody Christmas"	
Withdrawal of the Independent Socialists from the Government	
Inaugural Congress of the German Communist Party	

CHAPTER	PAGE
The Revolutionary Shop Stewards: The <i>De Facto</i> Revolutionary Organization of the Workers	
II. THE EICHORN CRISIS.....	48
Charges of Prussian Ministry of the Interior	
Deposition Order	
Appeal to Independents and Shop Stewards in Joint Session	
Joint Resolution to Resist and Appeal for Mass Demonstration	
Attitude of the Communist Party	
Abortive attempt to oust Eichhorn	
Mass Demonstration	
III. FROM DEMONSTRATION TO PUTSCH	57
Seizure of <i>Vorwärts</i> and Other Buildings	
<i>Agents Provocateurs</i>	
Attitude of the German Communist Party	
Meeting of Revolutionary Leaders	
Estimate of Military Support	
Decision to overthrow Government	
Revolutionary Committee	
Calling of General Strike, January 6	
Ultimatum to Ebert Government	
Majority Socialist General Strike in Counter Measure	
Noske in Supreme Command	
Plight of Government	

CHAPTER	PAGE
Manifesto of Revolutionary Committee	
Defection of People's Naval Division	
Lemmgen Incident	
Failure of Revolutionary Leadership	
IV. NEGOTIATIONS	74
Mediation of Independent Socialists	
Armistice Agreement	
Deadlock over Evacuation of Buildings as Precondition to Negotiations	
Kautsky and Freedom of the Press	
Failure to Reach Compromise	
Bilateral Breaches of the Armistice	
Offer to Evacuate All but <i>Vorwärts</i>	
Breakdown of Negotiations	
Improvement of Government Military Situation	
Humboldt Haim Mediation Proposal	
Government Obstructionist Tactics	
Press Workers' Negotiations due to Government Military Offensive	
V. THE LIQUIDATION	82
Military Situation on the Evening of the Tenth	
The Free Corps Intervention	
Battle of Belle-Alliance Square	
Noske's Proclamation to the Populace	
Occupation of Berlin by the Free Corps	

Atrocities	
The Trials	
Conclusion	
VI. ATTITUDE OF THE GERMAN COMMUNIST PARTY	108
Lack of Contact with Revolutionaries	
Meeting of Central Committee	
Conflict: Liebknecht versus Luxemburg	
Liebknecht's Withdrawal from Revolutionary Committee	
Advice of Karl Radek	
Luxemburg's Disagreement on Withdrawal	
Luxemburg: Determined Resistance with Limited Objectives	
Luxemburg on Reelection of Councils	
Weak Position of Communist Party vis a vis Revolutionary Leadership	
Luxemburg's Critique of Revolutionary Leadership	
Paul Frölich's Critique of Communist Party's Conduct during the Action	
VII. CONCLUSION	120
Illogical Alignment of Socialist Groups	
The Government's Calculated Risk	
The Revolutionary Committee's Momentous Decision	
Verdict of the Masses	
The Free Corps: The Third Force	

Role of the Communist Party of Germany	
Another Paris Commune?	
A Crucial Turning Point	
BIBLIOGRAPHY	133

CHAPTER 1

THE ALIGNMENT OF FORCES

According to Communist authorities, the term "Spartacist Week" as a designation for the January uprising in Berlin in 1919, was a misnomer.¹ The Spartacists never had the initiative. The uprising reposed first with the Shop Stewards and from them passed swiftly to the counterrevolutionaries, without the Spartacists ever once having had direction of the struggle. The Spartacists failed in their revolutionary attempt for a communist Germany mostly due to the illogical alignment of political forces.

In order to gain a better perspective on the alignment of forces during the German revolution one must go back to near the end of the World War. The first major rift in the ranks of the Social Democrats on the parliamentary level came in March 1916, when a minority of 18 deputies led by Hugo Haase refused to vote the military credits. Party disciplinary action being taken against the "rebels," the latter formed a separate parliamentary faction, the Social Democratic Labor Association. The final breach came in 1917, when, in an inaugural congress held at Gotha,

¹Paul Frölich, *Rosa Luxemburg, Her Life and Work*, tr. from the German by Edward Fitzgerald (London, 1940), p. 316.

April 6 to 8, a new party was formed, the Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany. Its program expressed opposition not only to the war policy of the government but also to the political regime itself; it represented a frontal attack on the Reich set up in 1871.²

An important component of the Independent Social Democratic Party was the Spartacist League, which later seceded from the parent organization and became the Communist Party of Germany. This group reserved for itself complete freedom of action to employ revolutionary tactics against the Government. The party to which the Spartacists adhered simply served as a roof over their head. As one of its leaders, Karl Liebknecht, later admitted, he hoped to keep the Independent Socialist leaders within the range of his whip, and convert the best of the party following to the Spartacist tactics.³

Another radical organization which joined the newly formed party--and soon dominated its left wing--was the Revolutionary Shop Stewards. The nucleus of this group was originally the officials of the turner's union, whose ranks were subsequently swelled by an influx of metal workers. Their organization

²Samuel W. Halperin, *Germany Tried Democracy: A Political History of the Reich from 1918 to 1933* (New York, 1946), pp. 23-24; Ernst Drahn, "Sozialdemokratie", *Handwörterbuch der Staatswissenschaften*, ed. by Ludwig Elster, Adolf Weber and Friedrich Wiesser (4th ed.; Jena, 1926), VII, 534.

³Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands, *Bericht über den Gründungsparteitag der Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands (Spartakusbund) vom 30. Dezember bis 1. Januar 1919* (Berlin, 1919), p. 4. (hereafter cited as KPD, *Grundungsparteitag*.)

consisted of a revolutionary committee at the top and strategically placed agents in the factories and barracks as a base of operations. Their aim was to prepare for revolution. They disbanded theoretical discussion and shunned mass meetings and demonstrations. They employed propaganda brought in unobtrusive fashion directly to the individual being solicited.⁴

The only important left-wing organization which refused to join this amalgamation was the party of the Bremen Left Radicals. In its theoretical position it followed closely that of V.I. Lenin, Nicolai Bukharin and Karl Radek. It advocated the dissolution of the Social Democratic Party and the organization of a new party and a new Communist International. The Bremen Left's organ was the *Bremer Bürgerpolitik*, edited by Johann Knief and Paul Frölich. The paper's influence was in Northern Germany, especially Bremen and Hamburg.⁵

The cleft in the Social Democratic Party was further widened by the divergence of attitudes toward the Bolshevist Revolution. The Majority Socialists denounced the Bolshevists for their terrorism and denial of democratic principles.⁶ The Independents,

⁴Halperin, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

⁵Ossip K. Flechtheim, *Die Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands in der Weimarer Republik* (Offenbach, 1948), pp. 12-13.

⁶Otto Braun, "Die Bolschewiki und wir", *Vorwärts*, Feb. 15, 1918, 2:1, Friederich Stampfer, *ibid.*, Feb. 24, 1918, 2:1; speech of Philipp Scheidemann on Feb. 26, 1918, Germany Reichstag, *Verhandlungen des Reichstages*, CCCXI, 4162 (Hereafter cited as *Verhandlungen*). Otto Wels, *Protokoll Über die Verhandlungen des Parteitages der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands, abgehalten in Kassel vom 10. bis 16. Oktober 1920* (Berlin, 1920), p.28.

encouraged by the Bolsheviks, advocated more radical tactics to end World War I and alleviate the plight of the proletarian masses. Democratization of the armed forces, workers' control of production and of the provision of the cities, transfer of the realities of power to local workers' and soldiers' councils--these were Bolshevik slogans which gained wide appeal among the Independents' mass following.⁷ However, the leading theoreticians, including the Spartacist Rosa Luxemburg, remained highly critical of Bolshevik tactics. By parcelling out the landed estates to peasants, they contended, the Bolsheviks had played into the hands of capitalism; for they had replaced a pre-capitalist agrarian economy with the foundation for a modern capitalist economy. Furthermore, these theoreticians drew a sharp distinction between socialism and "sovietism." They contended that socialism was a dictatorship of the proletariat based upon a democratic majority, that in socialism, the democratic republic was the specific form for the dictatorship of the proletariat. Sovietism, on the other hand, was the "Saber dictatorship" of a minority and was indistinguishable from that of Napoleon. Thus they distinguished sharply between Germany's scientific socialism and Bolshevism, which they termed an Asiatic caricature thereof.⁸

⁷Richard Müller, *Vom Kaiserreich zur Republik*, 2 vols. (Vienna, 1924-25), I, 96-97.

⁸*Ibid.*, II, 30-31; Eugen Prager, *Geschichte der U.S.P.D.: Entstehung und Entwicklung der Unabhängigen Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands* (Berlin, 1922), pp. 166-167, 191; Karl Kautsky, *Gegen die Diktatur* (Berlin 1919), pp. 3, 16; Rosa Luxemburg, *The Russian Revolution*, tr. from the German by Bertram D. Wolfe, (New York, 1940), pp. 23, 38, 53-54, 56.

However, most of the Spartacist theoreticians wholeheartedly approved of the Bolshevik coup, overlooking tactical mistakes and seeing only a successful proletarian action. The Spartacist League came to be regarded as the German wing of the Russian Revolution.⁹

The social democratic schism further widened due to a divergence of attitudes towards the Brest-Litovsk Treaty. The Majority Socialists refused to vote against this treaty, claiming that to do so would simply prolong the war.¹⁰ Only the Independents, speaking for the outraged workers of Germany, voted no, claiming it was an imperialist treaty which proved that the German government was waging an aggressive, not a defensive war, a war for annexation.¹¹

This issue points up fundamental differences in the tactics of the Majority Socialists, the Independents, and the Spartacists, with regard to the problem of pacifism versus humanitarianism and justice. The Majority Socialists contended that the differences which divorced the Independents from the parent party amounted to nothing less than the sacrifice of the vital interests of the

⁹Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands, *Spartakus im Kriege*, ed. by Ernst Meyer (Berlin, 1927), Document no. 29, pp. 179, 182-183. (Hereafter cited as *Spartakus im Kriege*); Franz Mehring, "Die Bolschewiki und wir", *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, June 3, 1918, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 17; Ludwig Bergstrasser, *Geschichte der politischen Parteien in Deutschland*, 6th ed. (Berlin, 1932), p. 146.

¹⁰Addresses of Philipp Scheidemann in the Reichstag, Feb. 26, 1918 and March 22, 1918, *Verhandlungen*, CCCXI, 4162, 4536-4537

¹¹Speeches of Independent Socialist leader Hugo Haase, Feb. 27 and March 19, 1918, *ibid.*, CCCXI, 4208, 4556; and speech of Georg Ledebour, March 19, 1918, *ibid.*, CCCXI, 4473.

German people. They argued that, by serving the interests of Germany first and socialism second, German Labor would benefit more than vice versa, for if Germany were defeated, labor's plight would be worse than ever.¹² The Independents countered that they knew of no German interests that were to be purchased at the price of sacrificing justice and humanity, that it might be necessary to sacrifice the immediate interests of one's own fatherland in order to establish lasting peace.¹³ The Spartacists made no pretense of serving the interests of Germany; their class consciousness was international, not national. They claimed that the German proletariat had forsaken its Russian brothers.¹⁴

On the workers' level the repercussions of the Russian Revolution and General Hoffmann's annexationist demands at Brest-Litovsk led to a great political mass strike which commenced on January 28, 1918. Led by the Independents on the parliamentary level and by the Shop Stewards on the worker's level, it started in Berlin among the workers and spread rapidly to other large

¹²Reichstag speech of Philipp Scheidemann, *Ibid.*, CCCVII, 894; Eduard David, *Die Sozialdemokratie im Weltkrieg* (Berlin, 1915).

¹³Reichstag address of Independent deputy Oskar Cohn, July 5, 1918, *Verhandlungen*, CCCXI, 5840; Independent deputy Vogtherr, March 1, 1918, *ibid.*, CCCXI, 4285.

¹⁴*Spartakus im Kriege*, doc. no. 47, p. 200; *Spartakusbriefe*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1921), no. 8 (Jan., 1918), II, 150.

cities.¹⁵ The first day, between 250,000 and 300,000 workers walked off the job.¹⁶

The strikers' demands, which tended to be of a political nature rather than economic, included speedy conclusion of peace without annexations or indemnities on the basis of the right of self-determination of peoples; invitation of workers' representatives to the peace negotiation table; more equitable distribution of food; immediate end to the state of siege; removal of censorship and all restrictions on freedom of assembly; restoration of legislation protecting women and children in industry; release of all political prisoners; and suffrage reform in Prussia.¹⁷

Despite the Shop Stewards' protest, Majority Socialist Representatives were invited to participate in the Strike Committee.¹⁸ They did so, as their spokesman acknowledged, in order to direct the action smoothly, moderating strike demands and safeguarding the war effort and the public interest.¹⁹

¹⁵R. Müller, *Vom Kaiserreich zur Republik*, I, 97-98, 101-102.

¹⁶*Vorwärts*, Jan. 29, 1918, 1:3.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, Jan. 29, 1918, 1:3; see also document quoted in R. Müller, *op. cit.*, I, 204 (appendix).

¹⁸*Ibid.*, I, 103.

¹⁹Resolution of the Majority Socialist Strike Committee, quoted in Philipp Scheidemann, *Der Zusammenbruch* (Berlin, 1921), pp. 77-78; see also the testimony of Otto Wels at the Ebert Trial, Karl Brammer, ed., *Der Prozess des Reichspräsidenten* (Berlin, 1925), pp. 88-89. (Hereafter cited as *Der Ebertprozess*).

On the extreme left, the Spartacists, excluded from the Strike Committee, were active in disseminating propaganda and sought to overbid the Shop Stewards for worker support. In order to steal credit for initiating the mass action, they issued strike summons leaflets three days ahead of schedule January 25. The issue, a dangerous move, jeopardized the action by forewarning the Government.²⁰ In their leaflets, the Spartacists advocated extending the strike into a revolution²¹ and warned against the presence among its leadership of Majority Socialists whom they marked as traitors to the cause of labor.²²

The Government, having adopted the opinion that the strike had inspired agents of enemy powers toward violence,²³ refused to negotiate political issues with strikers' representatives on the ground that to do so would recognize a criminal act (January 29, 1918).²⁴ This refusal led to the spread of the strike and to acts of violence.²⁵ The Government parried on January 31 with a decree of intensified state of siege, militarization of the seven largest

²⁰Emil Barth, *Aus Der Werkstatt der Deutschen Revolution* (Berlin, 1920), p.22.

²¹*Spartakus im Krieg*, doc. no. 42, p. 188.

²²*Ibid.*, doc. no. 40, p. 184.

²³Statement of Secretary of State for the Interior, Wallraf, before the Reichstag, Feb. 26, 1918, *Verhandlungen*, CCCXI, 4172.

²⁴*Vorwärts*, Feb. 4, 1918, 1:3.

²⁵Majority Socialist Strike Committee quoted in Scheidemann, *Zusammenbruch*, p. 78; see also R. Müller, *Vom Kaiserreich zur Republic*, I, 105, 107.

factories affected,²⁶ the alerting of formidable troop formations for anti-strike action,²⁷ and the arrest or induction into the army of over 50,000 metal workers, and of practically all of the Shop Stewards, and such leading figures as Leo Jogiches (head of the Spartacists), Wilhelm Dittmann (of the Independents) and Richard Müller (head of the Shop Stewards).²⁸ Under these circumstances the strike was called off on February 3, 1918; its failure to develop further being attributed to effective Government counter-measures and to the restraining efforts of the participating Majority Socialists.²⁹

Undaunted by this abortive action, the left-wing proletarians became convinced that only a revolution could end the war, and revised their tactics accordingly. In this sense the January strike provided a dress rehearsal for the subsequent November Revolution.³⁰ To exploit this revolutionary determination of the workers, cooperation between the Shop Stewards and the Spartacists would have been highly desirable; however, these two organizations could not agree on tactics.

²⁶*Vorwärts*, Feb. 1, 1918, 1:1-3 and Feb. 2, 1918, 1:1.

²⁷Decree of Lieutenant General von Kessel, Military Commander in the Mark, quoted in R. Müller, *op. cit.*, I, 206 (appendix).

²⁸Barth, *Aus der Werkstatt der deutschen Revolution*, pp. 23, 29-40.

²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 21.

³⁰R. Müller, *op. cit.*, I, 99.

The Shop Stewards' central plan called for a conspiracy reaching out to revolutionary proletarian *Vertauensleute*, in all parts of the Reich culminating in a sudden coup d'etat executed by heavily armed proletarian troops. The coup would seize control of the State by overcoming the police and winning over the garrison troops. As opposed to the Stewards, the Spartacists claimed it was Utopian to believe a successful revolution could be executed. They promoted a series of widely publicized risings, increasing in extent and intensity. They believed that each demonstration would result in a bloody suppression by the Government which, in turn, would produce a stronger reaction culminating ultimately in the disorganization of the army and revolution. The Stewards contended that such "revolutionary gymnastics" played into the hands of *agents provocateurs*, leading to premature putsches. They had proved abortive in the January Strike, resulting in loss of morale and leadership which would take months to repair.³¹

The Stewards were also unable to formulate joint plans with Hugo Haase and the right-wing Independents. The Independents desired non-Soviet Socialism, but wished not to be involved in conspiracies. Only from a few of the Left Independents, Georg Ledebour, Laudraut and Ernst Daumig, were they able to procure

³¹Barth, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-31; *Spartakus im Krieg*, doc. no. 55, p. 224.

cooperation. Damig joined the Stewards and did yeoman work in propagandizing the garrison troops.³²

By April the Stewards recovered membership and morale and pressed for action; but Emil Barth, their new leader, demurred, asserting that action would be feasible only when the German army had been defeated in the field. He was successful, however, in obtaining machine guns, grenades and ammunition and, by early August, shock troops formed in the factories.³³

At the same time, during the summer, the situation at the front deteriorated, leading to Ludendorff's revelation, on September 29, that the war was lost and to his demand for immediate armistice negotiations based on President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points and for the institution of a truly representative government to conduct these negotiations. This demarche started a chain of reactions culminating in the November Revolution.

The Hertling Government fell on September 30, and on October 4, Prince Max of Baden formed a coalition government which included members of the Majority Socialist Party. The latter's participation was strongly contested by some of its own leaders who argued that such action was party suicide to risk all in an attempt to help salvage a bankrupt regime. But the party leader,

³²Prager, *Geschichte der USPD*, p. 191; R. Müller, *op. cit.*, II, 30-31; Kautsky, *Gegen die Diktatur*, pp. 3, 16; Barth, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-31.

³³*Ibid*, pp. 32-33.

Friedrich Ebert, won out, maintaining that in such an emergency, patriotism transcended party interest.³⁴ Participation, however, was made conditional on Prince Max's acceptance of six demands which included establishment of universal, secret and direct franchise in all German federal states, ministerial responsibility in the Reichstag, and annulment of all restrictions on freedom of assembly and of the press and the lifting of censorship.³⁵

Prince Max's first action upon assuming office was to appeal to Woodrow Wilson to mediate an armistice on the basis of the Fourteen Points.³⁶ In reply, Wilson stated that he, in effect, must deal with a government truly representative of the German people and not with the authorities of the Empire who had so far conducted the war.³⁷

Prince Max pushed through the Reichstag sweeping constitutional reforms by virtue of which the chancellor became responsible to the Reichstag, the Bundesrat became an upper house of the national legislature instead of a federal council, and the emperor lost many powers, including authority to appoint the chancellor and the prerogative of declaring war, concluding peace

³⁴*Der Ebertprozess*, op. cit., p. 98.

³⁵Philipp Scheidemann, *The Making of New Germany: The Memoirs of Philipp Scheidemann*, tr. from the German by J.E. Mitchell (New York, 1929), II, 158-159. (Hereafter cited as Scheidemann, *Memoirs*).

³⁶United States, Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1918, Supplement I*, I, 338. (Hereafter cited as *Foreign Relations*).

³⁷*Ibid.*, I, 343.

and appointing naval officers. The Reichstag also gained control over the army since the state ministers of war were made responsible to that body. These reforms passed the Reichstag on October 26, the Bundesrat on October 28, and were signed by the Emperor on November 2.³⁸ Thus a political revolution was achieved two weeks before the November outbreak.

Though apprized of these reforms before their passage, Wilson was not satisfied with the reforms. In his note of October 23, he said, in effect, that the Emperor must go, or else the United States would have to demand not peace negotiations, but surrender.³⁹ The situation now became clear to the German people that tolerable peace terms depended on the Emperor's abdication.⁴⁰

As early as June 21, 1918, the Independents' Reichstag faction had opened a frontal attack on the Hohenzollern Dynasty.⁴¹ Following Wilson's note of October 23, the faction demanded the Emperor's abdication and the establishment of a socialist republic, a demand echoed by multiple Independent Socialist mass

³⁸Bliss to Lansing, Nov. 6, 1918, *ibid.*, I, 476; *Reichstag* Session of Oct. 26, 1918, *Verhandlungen*, CCCXIV, 6275-6297; *Vorwärts*, Oct. 26, 1918, 1:1, and Oct. 27, 3:1-2; Maximilian, Prince of Baden, *The Memoirs of Prince Max of Baden*, tr. from the German by W.H. Calder and C.W.H. Sutton, 2 vols. (London, 1928), II, 190-191. (Hereafter cited as Max, *Memoirs*).

³⁹Lansing to Solf, Oct. 23, 1918, *Foreign Relations*, 1918, I, 381.

⁴⁰Scheidemann, *Memoirs*, II, 224.

⁴¹Independent Socialist Georg Ledebour's speech in the Reichstag, June 21, 1918, *Verhandlungen*, CCCXIII, 5560.

meetings.⁴² It was taken up by elements of the Majority Socialist following, and the Majority Socialist leaders, seeing their hold on the masses jeopardized, sought to bring pressure on Prince Max to request the Emperor's abdication.⁴³ This effort availing nothing. On November 7 the Majority Socialists presented Prince Max with an ultimatum. Among other demands, such as reform of the Prussian government, they called for the Emperor's abdication and the Crown Prince's renunciation of the succession by midday, November 8; otherwise the Majority Socialists would withdraw from the Government.⁴⁴

On November 8, Prince Max tendered his resignation and asked the Emperor to abdicate. The Emperor, who had moved to Army Headquarters at Spa on October 30, replied that he would consider the request to resign only after conclusion of the armistice, and that in the meantime Prince Max should remain chancellor.⁴⁵

The Majority Socialists decided to postpone implementation of their ultimatum until after the signing of the armistice, since most of their terms had been fulfilled, leaving only the abdication question to settle. They urged their followers not to

⁴²Oskar Cohn, Oct. 25, 1918, *Ibid.*, CCXIV, 6268; for statement on mass meetings, see S. Joseph Berlau, *The German Social Democratic Party, 1914-1921* (New York, 1949), p. 186.

⁴³Scheidemann, *Memoirs*, II, pp. 200-202, 215; Max, *Memoirs*, II, 318.

⁴⁴*Vorwärts*, Nov. 8, 1918, 1:1.

⁴⁵See dispatches quoted in Max, *Memoirs*, II, 332-333, 336; Scheidemann, *Memoirs*, II, 243-244; see also, *Vossische Zeitung*, Nov. 8, 1918, eve. ed., 1:1.

go on strike, and only with superhuman efforts were their stewards able to restrain the workers on the eighth.⁴⁶

Relations between the Majority and Independent Socialists had deteriorated rapidly, especially after the former had joined Prince Max's Government.⁴⁷ The Majority Socialists, in coalition with the bourgeois parties, cooperated with the monarchy up to the last minute. The Independents, on the other hand, agitated for a socialist republic flatly rejecting coalition with the bourgeois parties.⁴⁸

Antagonism between the Majority Socialists, now called the Government Socialists, and the left-wing Independents started to grow. The Government Socialists felt that the October reforms would enable them to institute socialism by way of the ballot box and, in the meantime, were not averse to coalition with bourgeois parties. The left-wing Independents, on the other hand, considered the constitutional reforms of October a bourgeois fraud and agitated to carry the revolution forward into the socio-

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, Nov. 9, 1918, morn. ed., 1:2; Scheidemann, *Memoirs*, II, 245-246; *Protokoll Über die Verhandlungen des Parteitages der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands, abgehalten in Weimar vom 10. bis 15. Juni 1919* (Berlin, 1919), p. 10; Max, *Memoirs*, II, 338.

⁴⁷See Statement of Independent Party Leaders, Nov. 4, 1918, in *Bergische Arbeiterstimme* (Solingen), Nov. 6, 1918, cited in Eberhard Buchner, ed., *Revolutionsdokumente, die deutsche Revolution in der Darstellung der zeitgenössischen Presse* (Berlin 1921), doc. no. 62, p. 64. (Hereafter cited as *Revolutionsdokumente*.) Spartakus im Krieg, doc. no. 57, p. 229; Independent Socialist deputy Oskar Cohn's statements in the Reichstag, Oct. 25, 1918, *Verhandlungen*, CCCXIV, 6268.

⁴⁸*Loc. cit.*

economic field.⁴⁹ The left-wing Independents sought to maintain strong ties with Bolshevik Russia. The majority Socialists were strongly anti-Bolshevist, especially after the Russian Embassy flagrantly abused its extraterritorial immunity by distributing subversive literature throughout Germany, an activity which led to the break of Russian-German diplomatic relations on November 4.⁵⁰

The Independents disagreed not only with the Majority Socialists on basic issues, they also disagreed sharply among themselves. The right-wing Independents differed radically with the Spartacists as to the tactics to be employed in attaining the common goal, the socialist state. They contended that it was impossible for a small, resolute minority to seize political power and to hold that authority permanently. The Independents, they argued, must win over the proletarian masses to themselves and lead them into the struggle for socialism. The rule of the proletariat would come, but it must be based on democratic principles.⁵¹ The failure of these groups to evolve a well-defined and unified program was to be the prime factor in the subsequent victory of the Majority Socialists.⁵²

⁴⁹Bergstrasser, *Geschichte der politischen Parteien*, p. 163; Prager, *Geschichte der USPD*, p. 191; Barth, *Aus der Werkstatt der deutschen Revolution*, p. 36; *Spartakus im Krieg*, doc. no. 54, p. 223; H. Müller, *Vom Kaiserreich zur Republik*, II, 30-31.

⁵⁰*Vorwärts*, Nov. 6, 1918, 1:1-2; Philipp Scheidemann, *Memoiren eines Sozialdemokraten*, (Dresden, 1928), II, 283. (Hereafter cited as Scheidemann, *Memoiren*).

⁵¹Prager, *op. cit.*, pp. 166-167, 191; Kautsky, *Gegen die Diktatur*, pp. 1-16; *Spartakus im Krieg*, doc. no. 54, p. 223.

⁵²R. Müller, *op. cit.*, II, 31; Barth, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

Despite basic disagreements as to tactics, attempts at coordinating Spartacist and Shop Steward efforts were made as early as October 25, when Karl Liebknecht, one of the leading Spartacists, began attending the Stewards' policy meetings. His efforts to convert their followers to Spartacist tactics, however, proved abortive, as did his attempted mass demonstrations, thanks to the restraining influence of the Stewards, anxious to avert any premature putsches.

A tripartite meeting of the Stewards, right-wing Independents and Spartacists on October 30 led to the formation of a joint revolutionary committee on November 1. At the second session of this committee, on November 2, after the Stewards had detailed plans for revolution, Barth proposed that the revolution be staged on November 4, arguing that the mood of the masses was favorable and that only they could secure an armistice from the Entente. Dittmann, representing the right-wing Independents, accused him of criminal thoughtlessness, charging that it was a crime to talk of revolution at that juncture when the revolution's bloody suppression would be certain. Peace was essential first before they could talk of revolution. Liebknecht, too, opposed Barth's motion because it involved a battle. Liebknecht proposed not battle but daily demonstrations.

Barth's motion was rejected 21 to 19, and the revolution was postponed tentatively to November 11, by which time, it was

calculated, peace would have been concluded.⁵³ The adverse vote was due to uncertainty as to the mood of the Berlin garrison troops. Though Daumig's propaganda campaign among them had been successful, troop units were constantly being removed and replaced by units from other parts of the Reich. Reliable information as to the mood of the masses in the rest of Germany was lacking. With the exception of Munich, the mood of the masses was far more conservative than in Berlin.⁵⁴

Events moved too rapidly for planning purposes. The Kiel outbreak on November 4 and the capture of the Steward's plans for an uprising put the Government on guard in Berlin.⁵⁵ On November 6, it forbade the Independents to hold meetings, and on the seventh, Ernst Däumig, Georg Ledebour and Richard Müller were arrested.⁵⁶

Barth, realizing that the Government knew of his coup planned for November 11, advanced the date to November 9. He drafted for the workers and soldiers an appeal, of which he had 30,000 copies to be distributed in factories and barracks early in the morning of the ninth. A proclamation warned that the Government coup, followed by military dictatorship, was imminent and exhorted the masses to overthrow the Government and set up a

⁵³*Ibid.*, pp. 32-51.

⁵⁴R. Müller, *op. cit.*, I, 138-139.

⁵⁵Barth, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-53.

⁵⁶R. Müller, *op. cit.*, I, 141.

socialist republic. He signed it with "The Executive Committee of the Workers' and Soldier's Council" and used the names of Independent Socialist leaders, of whom only one was present to authorize the use of his name. Barth then issued final marching orders to his shock troops.⁵⁷

Fearing a mass uprising on the ninth, the Majority Socialist leaders held a meeting of their factory stewards on the night of the eighth. The leaders agreed that a final discussion should be held at 8 a.m. on the ninth and that the workers should remain at their jobs until the breakfast recess.⁵⁸

The Revolution of November 9 in Berlin consisted of a chain of reactions culminating in a change of government rather than a change in the realities of power. Barth's claims notwithstanding, the revolution was not precipitated by a conspiracy, but consisted of a spontaneous uprising of the masses to secure immediate peace by forcing the Emperor's abdication.⁵⁹ Until the ninth, the Majority Socialists' factory stewards and the *Vertrauensleute* of the Revolutionary Shop Stewards, counteracting the effects of Spartacist rabble rousing, had managed to restrain the masses from an action which might have proved bloody and premature, by promises of an immediate armistice and abdication of the

⁵⁷Barth, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-56.

⁵⁸SPD, *Parteitag*, 1919, p. 10.

⁵⁹R. Müller, *op. cit.*, I, 141.

Emperor.⁶⁰ By November 9, however, the masses could be restrained no longer.

Prince Max and the Majority Socialist leader, Friedrich Ebert, hoped to save the Monarchy by sacrificing the Emperor and to prevent a mass uprising by obtaining an abdication notice from William II before the masses moved toward the streets. The Emperor, however, proved obstinate, allowing the workers to leave their factories and be demonstrating in the streets by 9 a.m. The workers' defection was decisive in bringing about the fall of Prince Max's government.⁶¹

Even with the revolution in full swing, Prince Max still hoped to save the Monarchy. At 11 a.m. word came from Spa that the Emperor had decided to abdicate and that the document would be signed in half an hour. When thirty minutes had elapsed with no word from Spa, Prince Max anticipated the event and announced the abdication on his own responsibility.⁶²

Max planned to set up a regency with Ebert as Chancellor, call a national constituent assembly to determine Germany's future form of government, and remain as Chancellor himself until the

⁶⁰Scheidemann, *Memoiren*, II, 292; R. Müller, *op. cit.*, I, 137.

⁶¹Konrad Haussmann's account in *Vossische Zeitung*, eve. ed., Nov. 20, 1919, cited in Robert Piloty and Otto Koellreutter, eds., *Jahrbuch des öffentlichen Rechtes der Gegenwart* (Tubingen, 1920), IX, 5, (Hereafter cited as *Jahrbuch des öffentlichen Rechtes*).

⁶²*Ibid.*, IX, 4: Scheidemann, *Memoirs*, II, 253, 255; Max, *Memoirs*, II, 353. Actually the Emperor's abdication was not signed until Nov. 28, 1918. See *Jahrbuch des öffentlichen Rechtes*, IX, 19.

above matters had been settled.⁶³ However, between 12 and 1 p.m. Ebert, accompanied by Scheidemann, appeared at the Chancellery and demanded, on behalf of his party, that the conduct of the government be turned over to him in order to avoid bloodshed. On questioning from Vice-Chancellor Payer, Ebert stipulated that the new government would be in the framework of the Imperial Constitution and would not be responsible to the workers' and soldiers' councils. After a short discussion, the old cabinet handed over the conduct of affairs to Ebert. The decisive factor determining its decision was the defection of the garrison troops.⁶⁴

Ebert now regarded himself as the Reich Chancellor and intended to continue with the old cabinet, bringing in Independent Socialist representatives and appointing the Majority Socialists Otto Landsberg and Philipp Scheidemann Secretaries of State.⁶⁵ He appealed to the members of the imperial bureaucracy to remain at their posts, warning that an organizational breakdown at that critical juncture would spell anarchy and starvation.⁶⁶ His retention of the imperial bureaucracy was to have momentous consequences.

⁶³*Vossische Zeitung*, Nov. 9, 1918, eve. ed., 1:1-3.

⁶⁴Konrad Haussmann's article in *Ibid.*, Nov. 20, 1919, eve. ed., cited in *Jahrbuch des öffentlichen Rechtes*, IX, 5: *Vorwärts*, Nov. 10, 1918, 1:1-2; SPD, *Parteitag*, 1919, p. 10.

⁶⁵*Vossische Zeitung*, Nov. 9, 1918, eve. ed., 1:2.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, Nov. 10, 1918, Sun. ed. 1:1.

Although he would have liked to prevent a revolution of the masses in the first place, now that it had erupted Ebert had to insure that the Majority Socialists maintained a position of leadership vis-a-vis the Independents in the ensuing revolutionary developments.⁶⁷ He also wanted to prevent bloodshed, steer the action into safe channels and safeguard the public's food supply. Thus, under the joint auspices of the Majority and Independent Socialists, a Berlin workers' and soldiers' council was set up to receive deputations of workers and soldiers joining the revolution and to serve as a directory for revolutionary action. At 1 p.m. this body issued a proclamation calling a general strike, during which time only organizations maintaining public necessities, notably the food supply, would remain in operation.⁶⁸ Ebert admonished the strikers to leave the streets and maintain peace and order.⁶⁹

In the meantime, dangerous opposition to Ebert's government developed from the Spartacists and their left-wing Independent sympathizers, who aimed to replace Ebert's cabinet with a dictatorship of the proletariat, agitated for all power to be given to the workers' and soldiers' councils, now being formed in various parts of the city.⁷⁰ Philipp Scheidemann, formerly Social

⁶⁷Max, *Memoirs*, II, 312.

⁶⁸*Vossische Zeitung*, Nov. 9, 1918, eve. ed., 1:3, 2:1.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, Nov. 10, 1918, Sun. ed., 1:1.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, Nov. 10, 1918, Sun. ed., 2:1; *Rote Fahne*, Nov. 10, 1918, Sun. ed., 3:2.

Democratic representative in Prince Max's Cabinet, was apprized that Karl Liebknecht was about to make a speech proclaiming the "Free Socialist Republic of Germany," which would mean a dictatorship of the proletariat on the Russian model. At 2 p.m., in order to stall Liebknecht, Scheidemann, speaking to a huge crowd before the Reichstag, proclaimed the German Republic on his own initiative. Ebert was infuriated over this proclamation, maintaining that Germany's permanent form of government was a matter for the national constituent assembly to decide.⁷¹

On the morning of November 9, representatives of the Majority and Independent Socialist parties convened in the Reichstag building to discuss the formation of a new government. At 12 noon, Ebert invited the Independent Socialists to join the Majority Socialists in forming a cabinet. Liebknecht was also offered a ministerial post. The Independents' lack of a post-revolution program now became manifest. Wilhelm Dittman, Independent right-winger, was in favor of coalition, but Emil Barth, the Shop Steward leader, opposed dealing with traitors like Ebert and Scheidemann. Karl Liebknecht demanded, as a prior condition to coalition, that all power should be transferred to the workers' and soldiers' councils, and even under those conditions, he set a three-day time limit for collaboration. But the Independents' right-wingers opposed Liebknecht and his

⁷¹Berlin *Local-Anzeiger*, Nov. 9, 1918, cited in *Revolutionsdokumente*, doc. no. 133f, pp. 131-132; Scheidemann, *Memoiren*, II, 310-313.

dictatorship of the proletariat on the Russian model; they wanted socialism, not sovietism. Finally, toward evening, with the arrival of Hugo Haase, the Independent right prevailed, and Barth and his Shop Stewards agreed to short-term cooperation with the Majority Socialists.⁷²

The Independents made, as the price of their acceptance of a coalition, the following demands: (1) Germany was to become a "social" republic, with supreme authority vested in the representatives of all workers and soldiers; (2) middle class individuals were to be excluded from the cabinet; (3) the collaboration was to last only three days, just long enough to conclude peace with the Allies.

The Majority Socialists replied that they too favored a "social" republic, but that was a matter for the people to decide through a national constituent assembly. They rejected the dictatorship of the representatives of the workers' and soldiers' councils; the Majority Socialists stood for rule by the majority of the people, not dictatorship of the proletariat. They rejected the exclusion of middle class persons from the government. And they insisted that the time-span of the coalition should be until the convocation of the national constituent assembly.⁷³

⁷²SPD, *Parteitag*, 1919, pp. 10-11; R. Müller, *op. cit.*, II, 30-31; Scheidemann, *Memoirs*, II, 268; Barth, *Aus der Werkstatt der deutschen Revolution*, pp. 57-60; Prager, *Geschichte der USPD*, p. 191.

⁷³*Vossische Zeitung*, Nov. 10, 1918, 3:3.

In response to the Majority Socialists, the Independents replied that they insisted on all power to the representatives of the councils, and that the cabinet must be exclusively of socialists. They also said that there should be no constituent assembly until the socialist gains of the Revolution had been consolidated. The Independents yielded, however, on the matter of the time limit.

In their final reply, the Majority Socialists capitulated on the issue of the councils as proved by subsequent events. A six-man cabinet, the Council of People's Commissioners, was formed with Ebert, Scheidemann and Otto Landsberg representing the Majority Socialists, and Hugo Haase, Wilhelm Dittman and Emil Barth representing the Independents. This council was to be the national provisional government, but the Independents stipulated that the cabinet must be sanctioned by a national plenary session of delegates of the workers' and soldiers' councils.⁷⁴

The Spartacists, unrepresented in the Council of People's Commissioners, reacted to the coalition by planning a *coup d'etat* of their own. Late in the evening of November 9, they convened in the Reichstag Hall of Sessions a gathering of delegates representing the already existing Berlin workers' and soldiers' councils. To this group they announced that, on Sunday, November 10, elections would be held in all factories and troop units to

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, Nov. 11, 1918, morn. ed., 1:1; SPD, *Parteitag*, 1919, p.12.

select delegates to a plenary session to be held in Circus Busch for the purpose of electing a provisional government.⁷⁵

There was no announcement of, or preparations for, a pending election in any factory or troop unit. The Spartacists contemplated a "rigged" election with the whole move designed to exclude the Majority Socialists from the Government thereby giving the Luxemburg-Liebknicht-Ledebour faction the decisive influence.

The Majority Socialists, however, took timely precautions. On the night of November 9, they alerted their factory stewards, and on the afternoon of November 10, convened a gathering of 57,000 members of the Berlin garrison, who elected delegates to the Circus Busch meeting. The delegates pledged a speedy convocation of the national assembly and the election of an executive council of the workers' and soldiers' councils, in which the Majority and Independent Socialists, workers and soldiers, would be represented on a parity basis.

When the Circus Busch meeting convened at 5:30 p.m. on November 10, the Majority Socialists had their own instructed delegates to thwart the Spartacists' maneuver.⁷⁶ Barth, chairman of the meeting, accused them of packing the assembly, for there was no time for proper verification of credentials.⁷⁷

⁷⁵*Rote Fahne*, Nov. 10, 1918, 2nd. eve. ed., 1:1-4.

⁷⁶SPD, *Parteitag*, 1919, pp. 12-13.

⁷⁷Barth, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

The conference first proceeded with the election of an executive council of the Berlin workers' and soldiers' council to control the operations of the Council of People's commissioners pending the election of a national central council of workers' and soldiers' councils. The session grew tumultuous when Barth moved that only Independent Socialists should be eligible for election to this executive council. A soldier's delegate countered with the notion that the Executive Council should comprise ten worker representatives (of which five should be Majority and five Independent Socialists) and ten soldier representatives--which motion was carried with stormy approval.

After abortive efforts at adjournment and counter-proposals, Barth finally accepted this formula. Since the ten soldier members of the Executive council were Majority Socialists sympathizers, the Majority Socialists had a three-to-one majority in that body. Yet, ironically, the Spartacists had previously regarded it as the vehicle for their own assumption into power.

The session unanimously confirmed Ebert, Scheidemann, Landsberg, Haase, Dittmann, and Barth to head the provisional government as the Council of People's Commissioners. In a statement to the people it affirmed that the Council of People's Commissioners had been chosen by the workers' and soldiers' councils, and that in the latter resided all political power.⁷⁸

⁷⁸*Vossische Zeitung*, Nov. 11, 1918, morn. ed., 1:2-3; Barth, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

The Council of People's Commissioners derived its supreme central authority from two different sources: from the workers' and soldiers' councils of the Reich and from the former regime. In the former regime, the supreme central authority had resided in four agencies: the Bundesrat, the Reichstag, the Emperor and the Reich Chancellor. Now authority was concentrated in this all-socialist, six-man cabinet, whose decrees had the force of law.⁷⁹

At the beginning, its most dangerous rival in the exercise of central authority in the Reich was the Executive Council of the workers' and soldiers' council of Berlin. Not only did this body serve as an instrument to control the powers of the Commissioners, but, from the very outset, it regarded itself as vested with authority over the entire Reich and over the states.⁸⁰ In fact, the sphere of its competence was never clearly defined.⁸¹

The reason that the Council of People's Commissioners gained quick authority over the Executive Council and became the supreme central authority in the Reich was due primarily to three factors. First, with only one exception, Barth, the Council consisted of former Reichstag deputies. The Council was formed at least partly with the consent of the former regime and for that reason enjoyed the confidence of the overwhelming majority of the people throughout the Reich. The Berlin Executive Council, on the other

⁷⁹*Jahrbuch des öffentlichen Rechtes*, IX, 17.

⁸⁰*Vossische Zeitung*, Nov. 12, 1918, eve. ed., 1:2.

⁸¹*Jahrbuch des öffentlichen Rechtes*, IX, 21.

hand, consisted of unknown individuals. Second, the Council of People's Commissioners was in possession of a powerful organ of publicity, the *Reichsgesetzblatt*, in which the Council published its decrees. Hopeless confusion would have resulted if the Executive Council independently published decrees in this paper. In the rare instances when its member's names did appear as signatories of the laws, they were countersigned by People's Commissioners. Finally, the Council of People's Commissioners constituted a bulwark against a second revolution on the model of the Russian Bolshevik Revolution.⁸²

The composition of this cabinet was relatively conservative, despite its revolutionary origins. This conservatism may be attributed to the fact that, in the beginning, two of the three Independent commissioners, Hugo Hasse and Wilhelm Dittmann, were eye to eye with the Majority Socialists on nearly all major issues, with the consequence that the lone radical, Emil Barth, found himself outvoted five to one. This coagulation, however, was not destined to survive for long with the issue of the army splitting the cabinet open.

The Majority Socialist commissioners were of the opinion that a military force must be forged from the existing Imperial army. The government possessed only as much authority as it possessed power and therefore, in order to suppress Bolshevik

⁸²*Ibid.*, IX, 7.

disturbances, an army was needed. The main advocates of this view were Friedrich Ebert and Otto Landsberg.⁸³

Whether Ebert and the High Command ever reached any formal agreement remains a mystery. At least a tacit agreement was made manifest by the pronouncements both of Hindenburg and the Council of People's Commissioners. Hindenburg declared in his proclamation to the troops on November 11 that the High Command would collaborate with the new government.⁸⁴ On November 12, in answer to the left-wing demand that the command be transferred from the officer caste of the former regime to the newly formed soldiers' councils, the Council of People's Commissioners ordered that the officers' position of command should remain unchanged. They advised that the soldiers' councils should act merely in an advisory capacity in matters of food, clothing, leaves and disciplinary punishments.⁸⁵ Thus, in effect, the High Command would support the Council of People's Commissioners in return for the latter's retention of the officer caste system in the army and the relegation of the soldiers' councils to a merely advisory function in certain specified matters.

⁸³Barth, *Aus der Werkstatt der deutschen Revolution*, p. 68.

⁸⁴Kurt Ahnert, ed., *Die Entwicklung der deutschen Revolution und das Kriegsende in der Zeit vom 1. Oktober bis 30. November 1918*, in *Leitartikeln, Extrablättern, Telegrammen, Aufrufen und Verordnungen nach den führenden deutschen Zeitungen* (Nuremberg, 1918), p. 217.

⁸⁵*Berliner Tageblatt*, Nov. 13, 1918, cited in *Revolutinsdokumente*, doc. no. 209, p. 195.

General Wilhelm Groener, who succeeded Ludendorff as Chief of Staff, testified later in the "Stab-in-the-Back Trial" (Dolchstoßprozess) that on December 8 he convinced Hindenburg of the necessity of an alliance between the High Command and the Majority Socialists for the purpose of combating Bolshevism, restoring order and insuring the convocation of a national constituent assembly. He testified over a private telephone line that Hindenburg and Ebert had agreed upon a secret military undertaking, to which ten divisions were allocated, by the Government, for the purpose of divesting the Berlin councils of their power.⁸⁶

Whatever its exact origin, the alliance between Ebert and the General Staff, like Ebert's retention of the old imperial bureaucracy, was to have momentous consequences. The retention of the status of the officer caste and the relegation of the soldiers' councils to a merely advisory function, evoked the army regulations as proof positive of the counterrevolutionary character of the Council of Peoples's Commissioners.⁸⁷ With the alleged purpose of defending the Revolution against such counterrevolutionary developments, on November 13 the Executive

⁸⁶Ewald Beckmann, ed., *Der Dolchstoßprozess in München vom 19. Oktober bis 20. November 1925* (Munich, 1925), pp. 223-224.

⁸⁷*Leipziger Volkszeitung*, Nov. 13, 1918, cited in *Revolutionsdokumente*, doc. no. 21, p. 195; *Hamburger Nachrichten*, Nov. 18, 1918, cited in *Revolutionsdokumente*, doc. no. 250b, p. 224; Barth, *Aus der Werkstatt der deutschen Revolution*, p. 68.

Council began forming a proletarian red guard.⁸⁸ On the same day, however, the Berlin soldiers' councils, in plenary session, denounced this formation, forcing the Executive Council to suspend it.⁸⁹ They also forced the Executive Council to dissolve the action committee which it had set up as a revolutionary military high command with supreme authority over all troops.⁹⁰ Thus, as at Circus Busch, the Berlin soldiers' councils supported the Majority Socialists against leftist machinations.

While consolidating their position of supreme central authority, the People's Commissioners formulated a program of reform, consisting of decrees and promises, which they promulgated on November 12, 1918. As had been done in the French Revolution of 1789 and the German Revolution of 1878, the new government, of 1918, promulgated a bill of fundamental human rights before embarking upon the making over of the state. Reforms in this category included: freedom of assembly, association, speech, press and religion; amnesty for all political offenders; abolition of the national service law, of all regulations as to domestic servants and of the special laws regulating agricultural laborers;

⁸⁸*Deutsche Tageszeitung*, Nov. 13, 1918, cited in *Revolutionsdokumente*, doc. no. 210, p. 195.

⁸⁹*Acht-Uhr-Abendblatt* (Berlin), Nov. 13, 1918, cited in *Revolutionsdokumente*, doc. no. 210-a, p. 196; *Vossische Zeitung*, Nov. 14, 1918, morning ed. 1:2.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, Nov. 12, 1918, evening ed., 1:2 and Nov. 14, morning ed., 1:2.

protection of private property; and guarantee of the freedom of the individual.

In the category of civil rights, it decreed that all elections to public bodies would henceforth be conducted according to equal, secret, direct and universal suffrage, based on proportional representation, for both sexes 20 years of age and over. This electoral law would apply to the elections for a national constituent assembly, concerning which instructions would follow.

Concessions to socialism were more apparent than real. They comprised promises and decrees of the Bismarckian state socialism variety rather than commitments for a change in the realities of socio-economic power through socialization of the means of production, for example, or division of Junker estates.

The preamble to the program stated that the Government created by the Revolution, whose policy was purely socialistic, was setting for itself the task of carrying out the Socialist program. Its provisions included a decree of resumption of workers' insurance, in abeyance during the war, promises of an eight-hour-day law, unemployment relief ordinances, extension of coverage in sickness insurance, a housing program, a scheme for regular food supply, and an assurance that the government would do its utmost to provide work and maintain regular production.⁹¹

⁹¹*Ibid.*, Nov. 13, 1918, morning ed., 1:1-2.

To the above program the left-wing Independents were hostile. They wanted not merely bourgeois political democracy, but social democracy as well. They demanded immediate socialization of the nation's economy.⁹² Independent Socialists such as Hasse, Dittmann and Kurt Eisner, who had set up a Soviet Republic in Munich on November 7, were also for socialization, but contended it was foolish to try it at that time. The first task was to revive the country's economy. The Independent Socialists opposed rash experiment and drastic innovations.⁹³ Ebert declared that socialism was his ultimate goal also, but that socialism must come about through the ballot box.⁹⁴

On the extreme left, the Spartacists published a program of their own, in sharp rebuttal to that of the Provisional Government. It also foreshadowed the Spartacist secession from the Independent Socialist Party, with whose leadership the Spartacists were at loggerheads and whose mass following they hoped to capture. On November 18, Rosa Luxemburg outlined this program in *Rote Fahne*: (1) Abolition of capitalist rule and the creation of a socialist order of society; (2) all power to be in the hands of the masses, that is, the workers' and soldiers'

⁹²Leipziger Volkszeitung, Nov. 15, 1918, cited in *Revolutionsdokumente*, doc. no. 251, p. 225; Barth, *op. cit.*, 68; *Rote Fahne*, Nov. 18, 1918, 2:1.

⁹³Bergstrasser, *Geschichte der politischen Parteien*, p. 163; *Vorwärts*, Nov. 26, 1918, 3:2.

⁹⁴Deutscher Geschichtskalender, *Die Deutsche Revolution* (Leipzig, 1919), I, 153-154.

councils; (3) the extension and re-election of local workers' and soldiers' councils; (4) convening of the national parliament of workers' and soldiers' representatives as soon as possible; (5) organization of the rural proletarians and small holders, a social stratum which as yet had remained outside the Revolution; (6) formation of a proletarian red guard and the training of the workers' militia for the defense of the Revolution; (7) exclusion from all share in state administration, the judiciary and the army, of the old absolutist military and police organs taken over by the Revolution; (8) immediate confiscation of all dynastic wealth and property. On the international level, she advocated the immediate convocation of a world congress of workers to stress the socialist and international character of the revolution, because the future of the German Revolution could be guaranteed only in the International, in the world revolution of the proletariat.⁹⁵

The Spartacist League wanted a showdown with the right wing of the Independents led by Haase, which, it contended, had become the willing tools of the counter-revolution and had thereby confused and lost the confidence of the workers. The Spartacist League, therefore, demanded that the Independents hold a national conference to heal the growing schisms in its ranks and formulate a definite policy so that the workers would know where they stood. In such a conference the Spartacists hoped to discredit and cause

⁹⁵Rosa Luxemburg, "Der Anfang", *Rote Fahne*, Nov. 18, 1918, 1:3-2:1.

the overthrow of Haase and his followers. The Independents' party leadership, however, refused to convoke such a conference until after the National Assembly meeting. The Spartacist League determined, then, to declare its independence of the Independent Social Democratic party and set December 30 for the convening of an inaugural congress to form a separate party.⁹⁶

In addition to the menace of Bolshevism, the provisional government confronted a new danger in the form of separatism in Bavaria and in the Rhineland. To combat this menace, Ebert convened a Congress of States' Delegates on November 25. In the course of the proceedings, delegates subjected the central government to sharp criticism who inveighed against the "dictatorship from Berlin" and the alleged counterrevolutionary policy of the Council of People's Commissioners, and many advocated the institution of socialization prior to convocation of the national assembly. Nevertheless the congress resulted in a modest victory for the Majority Socialist; for the right-wing Independents endorsed the Majority Socialist policy of postponing socialization during the current period of economic dislocation, and the majority of the delegates advocated speedy convocation of a national assembly as the best antidote to separatist tendencies.⁹⁷

⁹⁶*Illustrierte Geschichte der Deutschen Revolution* (Berlin, 1929), p. 264. (Hereafter cited as *Illustrierte Geschichte*.)

⁹⁷*Vorwärts*, Nov. 26, 1918, 1:1-3.

Though, on the whole, the conference resulted in a victory for the Majority Socialists, more tribulation lay ahead. On December 6, an incident took place which further aggravated the growing tension between right and left. Left-wing extremists under Spartacist leadership, believing a counterrevolution was under way, started a march on Berlin. They were intercepted by troops of the Ebert Government commanded by the Berlin Town Commandant, Otto Wels. Several of the leftists were killed by Government troops. The Spartacists used the incident to show that Ebert was guilty of counter-revolutionary activity and proclaimed the need for a social revolution. Haase and Dittmann and their followers were put under renewed pressure from the Independents' left-wing for their collaboration with the Majority Socialists.⁹⁸

The Spartacists counted on the National Congress of Workers' and Soldiers' Delegates to insure the triumph of sovietism in Germany. This body convened in the Prussian Chamber of Deputies (*Abgeordnetenhaus*) from December 16 through 19, and comprised 878 delegates: 405 from workers' councils; 84 from soldiers' councils; 288 from the Majority Socialists; 80 from the Independent Socialists; 11 United Revolutionaries (Heinrich Laufenberg's party); and 10 Spartacists. The Independents were represented by such leaders as Richard Müller, Ernst Dumig and Georg Ledebour, the Spartacist League by Eugen Levine and Fritz Heckbert. Dämuig's motion to convoke a new congress of workers' and

⁹⁸Halperin, *Germany Tried Democracy*, pp. 113-114.

soldiers' delegates was rejected 344 to 34. The Constituent Assembly was approved 400 to 50 and elections set for January 19.⁹⁹

The first day's session opened with Richard Müller's attack on Haase and Dittmann for their cooperation with the Majority Socialists. Ledebour made a speech excoriating Ebert.

The second day Barth made a speech threatening to resign from the Council of People's Commissioners. He demanded an immediate understanding with Russia and accused the Majority Socialists of conniving with the military *camarilla* to bring about a reaction. It was time to do away with the officer corps at once. Haase moved that action be delayed on Barth's demand for abolition of the officer corps.

At this juncture a group of sailors of the People's Naval Division, led by Dorrenbach, intruded and demanded: (1) that the officers be disarmed; (2) that all insignia of rank be abolished; (3) that control of the armed forces be entrusted to a council of soldiers. Such tumult resulted that the congress was forced to suspend its session.

When it reconvened, on December 18, Walter Lampl, a Majority Socialists delegate from Hamburg, made common cause with Dorrenbach, demanding: (1) transfer of the powers of the Supreme command to the Council of People's Commissioners and to the Executive council of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils; (2)

⁹⁹Flechtheim, *Die Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*, p. 45.

elimination of all rank and insignia; (3) the election of officers by the soldiers; (4) the abolition of the standing army; (5) speedy creation of a people's militia. Lampl's motions were adopted by an overwhelming majority, showing that fear of the military counterrevolution was not confined to the radicals, but had taken hold of important sections of the Majority Socialists as well. This action of the Congress changed nothing due to Ebert's clever evasiveness. Control of the army remained in the hands of Hindenburg and Groener. Nothing was done to implement the other resolutions.

On December 19, the session opened with a speech by Scheidemann, advocating the abolition of the workers' and soldiers' councils and warning that otherwise German industry and commerce would be undermined and the Reich reduced to ruin. The left-wing Independents and the Spartacists made a motion that the supreme legislative and executive authority be vested in the councils. The motion was beaten 344 to 98. Thereby the representatives of the industrial masses proved their unwillingness to countenance a dictatorship of the proletariat. The left-wingers, then, made a second motion that the Central Council, which was to be elected by the congress and would exercise the latter's powers until the convocation of a national constituent assembly, be authorized not only to supervise the work of the Council of People's Commissioners, but also to determine the formulation of government policies. A large majority rejected this demand. The radicals declared that they would have nothing

to do with the election to the Central Council. Thus a Central Council composed exclusively of Majority socialists was chosen. With this action, the meeting broke up, Ledebour issuing the warning that he would rally the masses to his side.¹⁰⁰

The outbreak of armed conflict on December 23 further aggravated the antagonism between right and left. Three thousand sailors of the People's Naval Division under Dorrenbach were quartered in the Royal Palace and Imperial Stables (*Marstall*), ostensibly to protect the Revolutionary Government. Owing to thefts committed by some members of this division, the sailors were ordered, by the Government, to vacate the palace, and upon their refusal to do so, their back pay was cut off. In retaliation they took captive the Town Commandant, Otto Wels, as hostage for reinstatement of their pay. Ebert appealed to Gröner for aid. In the meantime, Georg Ledebour prevailed upon Dorrenbach to release Wels, but could not reach Ebert to persuade him to halt punitive measures by the military. On December 24, General von Lequis with a regular army division opened fire on the palace and *Marstall*. After a three-hour fight, negotiations were instituted by the two sides and an agreement consummated whereby the sailors agreed to remove Wels from his post of Town Commandant.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰Halperin, *op. cit.*, pp. 114-116.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, p. 117.

The repercussions of this incident were far reaching. The incident led to the eventual withdrawal from the Ebert government of the Independents, whose left-wing strongly supported the People's Naval Division, thus greatly widening the schism in the proletarian ranks and increasing the chance of civil war.

In the meantime, on December 24, the Bremen Left Radicals held a national conference in Berlin to decide whether to remain independent and found their own party or to unite with the Spartacist League. Thanks to the persuasiveness of Karl Radek, the conference resolved, in principle, that they would join the Spartacists. On the question of participation in the elections for the National Assembly, there was an even split. The members were then sent home to consult their constituencies, and when they reconvened on December 30, only one member still voted for participation.¹⁰²

On Christmas Day, 500 leftists occupied the *Vorwärts* building, an act which had to be countered immediately by the Majority Socialists, lest Ebert suffer an irreparable loss of prestige and authority in his party. When the Independents had seceded from the parent party in 1916, they had regarded the property as their own and no longer belonging to the Majority Socialists, because presumably the Independents represented the majority of the workers in Berlin, and the establishment was the property of the workers. The leftists, therefore, regarded their

¹⁰²*Illustrierte Geschichte*, p. 264.

occupation of *Vorwärts* as an act to get the property back to its rightful owners. Through mediation of the Independents, however, *Vorwärts* was returned to the Majority Socialists, on condition that the editor, Friedrich Stampfer, publish a written apology for the venomous articles against the left-wingers which had been appearing in *Vorwärts*.¹⁰³

In the meantime German armed intervention in Russia in cooperation with the Entente, and armed activities on the Polish frontier had brought relations between the Majority and Independent Socialists close to a rupture. On December 27, Haase, Dittmann and Barth addressed the following questions to the Central Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils: (1) whether the Council disapproved of the Majority Socialists' behavior on December 23 and 24; (2) whether the Majority Socialists were prepared to insist on the enforcement of the Lampl resolutions; (3) whether the Ebert government would continue to place its reliance on old-line generals and units of the Imperial army; (4) whether it intended to speed the replacement of the old army by a people's militia. In answering these questions, the council ranged itself squarely on the side of the Ebert-Scheidemann government. Thereupon, Haase, Dittmann and Barth withdrew from the Council of People's Commissioners, that is, withdrew from the Ebert Government.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³Ruth Fischer, *Stalin and German Communism: A Study in the Origins of the State Party* (Cambridge, Mass., 1948), p. 82.

¹⁰⁴*Illustrierte Geschichte*, pp. 267-268.

No sooner had the Independents seceded from the coalition with the majority than the Spartacists, in turn, seceded from the Independents, and, in a three-day congress, December 30, 1918, to January 1, 1919, reconstituted themselves as the German Communist Party (*Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands [Spartakusbund]*).¹⁰⁵

The congress formally repudiated the Independent Social Democratic Party, which had forfeited the right to be recognized as a standard bearer of the revolution of the masses. Liebknecht charged that it had served as cover-up for the counterrevolutionary machinations of the Ebert Government, and had thereby confused the masses and shaken their faith in the party leadership.¹⁰⁶

The seceding Spartacists, of course, sought to take with them as much of the Independents' following as possible, and in pursuance of this plan, sought unity with the Shop Stewards. Liebknecht's efforts to come to terms with the Stewards' negotiating committee (Ledebour, Däumig, Richard Müller, Nowakowski, et al.) were in vain. The Shop Stewards set six conditions as the price of unification. These conditions were: (1) participation in the elections to the Constituent Assembly; (2) renunciation of putschist tactics; (3) election of a joint program commission on a parity basis; (4) precise instructions concerning street demonstrations; (5) joint editing of propaganda

¹⁰⁵KPD, *Grundungsparteitag*, p. 1.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, p. 6.

literature; and, (6) deletion of *Spartakusbund* from the party name. Liebknecht acceded only to the last demand. At Richard Müller's suggestion that Spartacus renounce its alleged putschist activities, Liebknecht told him he talked like the *Vorwärts* people.¹⁰⁷

In the congress proper, the first hotly debated issue was over whether the new party should participate in the impending elections for the national constituent assembly. A minority led by Rosa Luxemburg and Paul Levi advocated participation. This minority argued that the constituent assembly would serve the party as an excellent propaganda instrument and as an opening wedge for gaining control of the government. Furthermore participation had cost the German Socialists a 50-year struggle to gain the electoral franchise, and why should they now renounce that hard-earned privilege? The majority, on the other hand, argued that participation would be tantamount to a political endorsement of the constituent assembly and would be suicidal. Instead of participating in the assembly, the party should build up the workers' and soldiers' councils to replace it. Participation was rejected by a vote of 62 to 23.¹⁰⁸

In the debate over putschism, Rosa Luxemburg again found herself in the minority. She opposed both putschism and coalition with the other left-wing groups in order to come into power.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, p. 46.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 11-13.

Already, on November 18, she had stated that the Spartacist League would never assume governmental power unless supported by the clear, unambiguous will of the great majority of the German proletariat, and in no other way than with their conscious acceptance of the ideas, aims and fighting methods of the Spartacist League. Hence the victory of the Spartacist League would not stand at the beginning but at the end of the revolution and would be identical with the victory of the overwhelming majority of the proletariat.¹⁰⁹

She now argued further that action to seize power at that time would be criminal, for the workers were not ready for such an act; they were neither ready nor able to organize Germany. Until they were prepared to assume power, they should wage their fight within the factories and on the streets in strikes and mass demonstrations. Moreover, the rural proletariat was as yet untouched by the revolution. So, she contended, the new stage of the revolution should be organized from the bottom up, that is, 16 by forming the workers into councils, which, when the time was correct, would take over the government automatically.¹¹⁰ She admitted her program was a long-term proposition, but she contended that time was on the side of the revolution.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹*Rote Fahne*, Nov. 18, 1918, 2:1.

¹¹⁰KPD, Grndungsparteitag, pp. 39-41.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 31.

The majority of the delegates, headed by Karl Liebknecht and Wilhelm Pieck, were diametrically opposed to many of her basic concepts. They flatly rejected her premise that time worked in favor of the revolution. They believed that a coalition must be formed with the other left-wing groups, namely, the Shop Stewards, the left-wing Independents and the People's Naval Division. What they wanted was a putsch, and they wanted it right away.¹¹²

The lack of popular appeal of the Communist program came from the fact that, after the Communist secession from the Independent Social Democratic Party, ninety-five per cent of the proletariats remained with the latter organization.¹¹³ When the final showdown with the Government Socialists did come, the Independent Socialist left-wing and the Shop Stewards, representing the *de facto* revolutionary organization of the workers, took the initiative, not the Communists. In fact the initiative did not rest with the Communists. There was insufficient time to implement Rosa Luxemburg's long-range program for assumption of power. Before such a move could even get under way, the Shop Stewards and left-wing Independents seized the initiative from the Communists and passed the initiative to the counterrevolution.

By the turn of the year, the two opposing camps were poised for a showdown. The Ebert government desperately tried to

¹¹²Fischer, *Stalin and German Communism*, pp. 76, 79.

¹¹³Flechtheim, *Die Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*, p. 47.

assemble loyal old-army troops to put the quietus on the revolutionary elements preparatory to holding elections for the Constituent Assembly. The revolutionaries were striving to consolidate their hard won gains against the encroachments of the counterrevolution. Already in the Congress of Delegates of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils, December 16 to 19, the revolutionaries had suffered a severe defeat. The "Bloody Christmas" collision, December 24, had constituted a setback for the Government Socialists, who lost the support of the Independents and a large portion of the proletariat. They had found to their consternation the extent to which the personnel of the old-line regiments had been infected by the revolutionary virus and thus rendered useless for action against the radical left.¹¹⁴ Thus both sides confronted each other for a final battle. All that was needed was the spark to set off the powder keg.

The catalytic agent was furnished by the government's attempt to depose the Independent Socialist Berlin chief of police, Emil Eichhorn.

¹¹⁴See Lieutenant-General Ludwig R.G. Marcker, Vom Kaiserheer zur Reichswehr: Geschichte der freiwilligen Landesjgerkorps. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der deutschen Revolution, 2nd and revised ed. (Leipzig, 1927), p. 61.

CHAPTER II

THE EICHHORN CRISIS

From the time of his installation as Berlin Police Chief, November 9, to November 12, 1918, Emil Eichhorn had had no friction with the Ministry of the Interior of Prussia. On the latter date, however, he was astonished to read in the *Politisch-Parlamentarische Nachrichten* a notice to the effect that he had been transferred to the Ministry of the Interior and that Eugen Ernst had succeeded him in the Police Presidency. Realizing that he could best serve the cause of the revolution in the Police Presidency, he resolved to stay where he was unless the Executive Council of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils, to which he considered himself solely responsible, should decree otherwise. That body unanimously approved his retention of office. Thereupon the *Politische-Parlamentarische Nachrichten* published the statement that Eichhorn had forced Eugen Ernst out of the Police Presidency.¹

Friction with the Ministry of the Interior became constant, with the main bone of contention being the Security Police. Since

¹Emil Eichhorn, *Die Januar-Ereignisse: Meine Tätigkeit im Berliner Polizeipräsidium und mein Anteil an den Januar-Ereignissen* (Berlin, 1919), p.62.

Eichhorn was unable to furnish accurate reports as to the expenses incurred in its equipment, the Ministry of the Interior, on December 19, cut off the pay of that body. Eichhorn demanded reinstatement of Security Police pay with the threat that in the future he would refer complainants to the Ministry. Privy Councillor for Police, *Polizeidezernenten-Regierungsrat*, Doye, representing the Ministry, accused him of tactics of extortion and of insubordination and threatened to have him arrested by the Republican Constabulary of the Town Commandant's Office on December 19, 1918.²

In the ensuing days, Eichhorn's position became ever more untenable. On December 27, the Independent Socialist Commissioners, Hasse, Dittmann and Barth, withdrew from the Council of People's Commissioners in protest over the action of the Government in the "Bloody Christmas" episode, and, on January 3, the Independent Socialist representatives left the Prussian Ministry in protest over the naming of Colonel Reinhardt as Minister of War to succeed Scheuch.

On January 3, Eichhorn was asked to appear before a meeting in the Ministry of the Interior, attended by ministers Paul Hirsch and Eugen Ernst, Ministerial Director, Dr. Freund, Privy

²*Ibid.*, p. 63; *Bericht des Untersuchungsausschusses der verfassungsgebenden preussischen Landesversammlung über die Januar-Unruhen 1919 Berlin*, in Prussia, *Landesversammlung, Sammlung der Drucksachen der verfassungsgebenden preussischen Landesversammlung (Anglagen zu den Sitzungsverichten)*, XV, doc. no. 4121A, p. 7681. (Hereafter cited as Prussia, *Landesversammlung, Sammlung der Drucksachen.*)

Councillors for Police, Meister and Doye, and two members of the new Central Council, of whom one was councilman Heller. Doye accused Eichhorn of having armed the workers and having employed the Security Police in support of the People's Naval Division during the "Bloody Christmas" episode on December 24. Central Council member Heller questioned him about his utterances to the Vertrauensmanner of the Independent Socialists of Greater Berlin in the Sophia School on December 28, 1918. Here he allegedly stated that in the elections to the national constituent assembly agitation was of paramount importance and that whether the national assembly would convene at all must appear doubtful. Eichhorn allegedly declared himself opposed to further collaboration with the Majority Socialists and advocated revolutionary socialism. To this questioning Eichhorn replied that he did not feel obliged to give account of his political beliefs to the Ministry of the Interior. Whereupon Privy Councillor Meister retorted that as a political official he certainly was bound to give account of his political opinions. Minister of the Interior Paul Hirsch asked him why he had not arrested Karl Radek for his speech before the inaugural congress of the German Communist Party in which he demanded civil war. Witnesses, members of the Republican Constabulary, *Republikanische Soldatenwehr*, were called in to testify that Eichhorn had actively intervened on the side of the sailors in the December 24 struggle.

To these charges Eichhorn said he would give his answer in writing. Hirsch gave him until noon on January 4.³

On January 4, before the allotted time limit had expired, Eichhorn received a terse message from Paul Hirsch, informing him that he was herewith dismissed and that his successor, Eugen Ernst, would take over the functions of the Police Presidency that very day.⁴ It also happened that at that moment the Central Committee of the Independent Socialists of Berlin was in joint session with the Revolutionary Shop Stewards. To them Eichhorn presented his case. If they so decreed he would resign.⁵ Wilhelm Pieck, who, together with Karl Liebknecht, represented the Communist Party at this session, stated later in his reminiscences that the view prevailed that under no circumstances was Eichhorn to comply with the deposition order and that it was to be combatted even to the point of overthrowing the Government. Ernst Däumig voiced misgivings about this resolution because the workers were not sufficiently armed nor militarily organized and therefore might easily be defeated. If defeat occurred, the bourgeoisie would conduct a mass slaughter among the workers. He was also

³*Ibid.*, XV, doc. no. 4121A, p. 7681: Eichhorn, *op. cit.*, pp. 64-66.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 66; Prussia, Landesversammlung, *Sammlung der Drucksachen*, XV, doc. no. 4121A, p. 7681.

⁵*Ibid.*, XV, doc. no. 4121A, p. 7681.

opposed to Eichhorn's yielding to the deposition order, yet could suggest no feasible plan for resisting the government.⁶

Pieck argued that, on the contrary, either speedy action or complete capitulation was the only solution. The Government was trying to bring up huge masses of troops, and only by swift, determined action, could the Berlin workers anticipate the Government and overthrow it. Without this action the Government would impose its will under all circumstances.⁷

Bruhl, speaking in behalf of the Executive Committee of the Greater Berlin Election League of the Independents, declared that his organization, in a session just finished, had unanimously resolved to summon the workers to take strong action against the Government, and declared himself completely in accord with Pieck's views. Ledebour and Liebknecht expressed the same sentiment. It was thereupon resolved to summon the Berlin workers to a mass demonstration to start in the Siegesalle at 2 p.m., January 5. The shock troops in the factories, known as black cats, were to appear at the demonstration armed to meet any attack by Government troops.⁸

Pursuant to this resolution, the Independents arranged that a joint appeal should be published in *Rote Fahne* and in *Freiheit*, calling the masses to a peaceful demonstration. The Communist

⁶Wilhelm Pieck, *Die Grundung der K.P.D.* (Berlin, 1928), p. 24.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 25.

Party sought to point out that the blow against Eichhorn was not directed at him as an individual, but against the cause of the Revolution. The situation was clear now: Eichhorn had been a thorn in the side of the Government; he had disturbed the Ebert-Scheidemann-Wels trio in its intrigues and conspiracies. The Security Police had taken its duties seriously and defended the Revolution, instead of actively or passively serving the counterrevolution. Thus, in its counterrevolutionary machinations, the Government was obliged to reckon without the Police Presidency.

Rote Fahne went on to say that if the workers did not resist now, the Ebert Government would be encouraged to try new illegal measures. The Government intended to place those loyal to the Revolution under martial law. The Ebert Government understood that the abortive putsches of December 6 and 24 had greatly reduced the confidence reposed in it by its employer, the bourgeoisie, and was now militantly seeking new pretexts whereby it might rehabilitate itself as a government of strong men in the eyes of the bourgeoisie. The proletariat could not passively submit to this bold provocation; it must answer the attack with energetic revolutionary measures. The workers must disarm the counterrevolution, arm the proletariat, and unite all troops loyal to the revolution. If the Ebert-Scheidemann Government thought that with a mere decree it could take from the Revolution one of

its most important battle stations, Berlin, then the Government reckoned without the revolutionary proletariat of Berlin.⁹

Rote Fahne's warning was soon substantiated. About noon on Sunday, January 5, Eugen Ernst, accompanied by the Town Commandant, Anton Fischer, and a military escort, arrived to take over the Police Presidency. Eichhorn refused to leave. Eichhorn demanded that the reasons for his dismissal be submitted in writing so that he might answer in writing. He also demanded an opportunity to appear before the Berlin Central Council in order to defend his conduct in office personally.¹⁰

The Town Commandant, Fischer, threatened the use of force to carry out the orders of the Government. That Fischer did not use force against Eichhorn personally was due to the presence of huge labor deputations outside the Police Presidency urging Eichhorn to remain at his station. Paul Hirsch, at the same time, had circulated among the personnel of the Police Presidency leaflets urging them to refuse to serve under Eichhorn. Finally, after lengthy discussion with the leaders of the Security Police, Ernst and Fischer departed with their military escort, having failed to accomplish their mission.¹¹

⁹*Rote Fahne*, Jan. 5, 1919.

¹⁰Eichhorn, *op. cit.*, p. 69; Prussia, Landesversammlung, *Sammlung der Drucksachen*, XV, doc. no. 4121A, p. 7682.

¹¹*Ibid.*, XV, doc. no. 4121A, p. 7682; Anton Fischer, *Die Revolutionskonnandatur Berlin* (Berlin, 1922), p. 87; Eichhorn, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

Gustav Noske, then Commissioner for Armed Services in the Ebert Government, stated later in his memoirs that he tried to dissuade Ernst and Fischer from this premature demarche, warning that if they encountered resistance they would certainly lack the manpower to back up their pretensions with force. Fischer had countered that when Eichhorn saw he meant business, he would vacate the field, and in case he offered resistance, he, Fischer, had made his own preparations for that contingency.¹² Certainly this abortive attempt intensified the crisis. Eichhorn was to remain in office another week.

In the Siegesallee, the size of the mass turnout in response to the joint Communist and Independent Socialist appeals surpassed all expectations. Before the hour of foregathering, another demonstration had taken place, that of the classes of draftees of 1896-1899, who met to protest against the delay in their discharge. Speaking to these young men, Karl Liebknecht demanded their immediate demobilization. They then joined the demonstration for Eichhorn, strengthening him in his resistance to the Government.¹³

At 2:30 the masses formed a huge procession in the Siegesalle. Leading the procession was the Red Soldiers League, followed by the young classes of draftees, the Third Field Artillery of the Guard, the Two Hundred Sixty-First Imperial

¹²Gustav Noske, *Von Keil bis Kapp: Zur Geschichte der deutschen Revolution* (Berlin, 1920), p. 66.

¹³*Rote Fahne*, Jan. 5, 1919.

Rifles, complements of other regiments, the Young Guard of the Proletariat, and finally a long procession of workers and soldiers from various regiments.¹⁴

Many bore placards bearing inscriptions such as "Down with the bloodhounds Ebert-Scheidemann!" and "Long live Liebknecht, Luxemburg, Eichhorn!" The procession marched through the streets of Berlin; down Bellevue Strasse, Budapester Strasse, through the Brandenburg Tor, past the Schloss and Marstall, finally halting at the Police Presidency. "Is Eichhorn still there?" they shouted. The affirmative answer of the Security Police was greeted with thunderous applause. Eichhorn then addressed the multitude. He criticized the Independent Socialists for having participated in the Ebert Government. He said that he had been vested with his office by the revolutionaries and to them only would he relinquish it. He said that the Government intended to decree martial law in Berlin and set up military courts. The Government had regard only for the bourgeoisie and its own interests. Against it must be formed a resolute united front. He relied on the power of the proletariat. According to *Rote Fahne*, members of the mob replied: "Don't resign, we are here."¹⁵

¹⁴*Ibid.*, Jan. 5, 1919.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, Jan. 5, 1919.

CHAPTER III

FROM DEMONSTRATION TO PUTSCH

After the speeches and demonstrations at the Police Presidency, several processions of demonstrators set out in the direction of the newspaper quarter. Many participants were armed. Some people had brought their own weapons to the demonstration while others had obtained weapons from the nearby Alexander Barracks. These groups proceeded to occupy newspaper publishing buildings. The seizures were disputed by the guards in all cases, but no armed resistance was offered. At *Vorwärts* a large part of the garrison were on Sunday pass and those that remained did not resist the invaders. In like manner the newspaper house of Mosse, Ullstein, Buxenstien, Scherl, and Wolf's Telegraph Agency were occupied. Hasty defenses with machine guns were set up in the seized buildings.¹

The following day, a force of Security Police reinforced by armed civilians and supported by artillery, stormed the Engineer

¹See *Bericht des Untersuchungsausschusses der verfassunggebenden preussischen Landesversammlung über die Januar-Unruhen 1919 Berlin*, in Prussia, Landesversammlung, *Sammlung der Drucksachen der verfassunggebenden preussischen Landesversammlung (Anlagen zu den Sitzungsberichten)*, XV, doc. no. 4121A, p 7686. (Hereafter cited as Prussia, Landesversammlung, *Sammlung der Drucksachen*).

Barracks. The Engineers of the Guard operating from this base had been seizing convoys of munitions destined for the insurgents.² Also seized on this day were the Reich Stationery Office and the Silesian Railway Station.³

In the subsequent trial of Georg Ledebour there was testimony to the effect that Anton Fischer, who had replaced Otto Wels as Town Commandant, had sent *agents provocateurs* to incite the crowds and urge them to make these seizures.⁴ This *agent provocateur* charge was coupled with evidence that the Government Socialists in collaboration with the General Staff had set a trap for the labor left-wingers by drawing them into a premature putsch. According to the Italian newspaper *Avanti*, Eugen Ernst asserted that the Spartacist putsch was doomed from the outset, for the leftists were forced to strike prematurely and show their hand sooner than they had wished thereby putting the Government on alert to foil their plans.⁵

The *agent provocateur* argument rested partly on the premise that since agents were paid by the Town Commandant, Anton Fischer, according to the amount of information on revolutionary disturbances that they brought in, it was in their best interest

²*Ibid.*, XV, no. 4121A, p. 7691.

³*Ibid.*, XV, no. 4121A, p. 7686.

⁴Georg Ledebour, defendant, *Der Ledebour-Prozess: Gesamtdarstellung des Prozess gegen Ledebour wegen Aufruhr, etc. vor dem Geschworenengerichte Berlin - Mitte vom 19. Mai bis 23. Juni 1919, auf Grund des amtlichen Stenogramms bearbeitet mit einem Vorwort versehen von Georg Ledebour* (Berlin, 1919), pp. 483, 505.

⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.

to incite disturbances and thus draw higher pay. The hearings established that before the Investigating Committee of the Prussian Constituent Assembly Fischer's agents were paid a fixed salary, thus this particular motivation has been controverted.⁶ The main support for the secret-agent argument rested on the testimony of Julius Meyer in the trial of Georg Ledebour. Meyer testified that while the crowd was gathering before the police Presidency, Georg Ledebour had made a very conciliatory speech admonishing the crowds to preserve good order and return to their homes. Meyer continued saying that a member of the Red Soldier's League, Alfred Roland, shouted that since *Vorwärts* was a labor newspaper, *Vorwärts* ought to be occupied. This slogan took off instantly, precipitating the seizure of the printing establishment.⁷

Before the Investigating Committee of the Prussian State Constituent Assembly, Alfred Roland testified that he committed no excesses and that he could not have incited the attack on *Vorwärts* since at that time he was part of the group which captured Wolf's Telegraph Agency and was engaged there at the time of the *Vorwärts* episode. Roland also denied having shouted any instigation to attack *Vorwärts* when the mob was before the Police Presidency.⁸ Alfred Roland was employed by the Town Commandant's Office as a

⁶Prussia, Landesversammlung, Sammlung der Drucksachen, XV, no. 4121B, p. 7915.

⁷*Ibid.*, XV, no. 4121B, p. 7916.

⁸*Ibid.*, XV, no. 4121B, p. 7686.

messenger. When Anton Fischer replaced Otto Wels as Town Commandant, he utilized such messengers to keep him posted on the latest Spartacist and Red Soldiers' League maneuvers so that he could anticipate them. For this Fischer paid them a daily wage of 15 marks. They brought him oral reports of Communist gatherings and demonstrations. In order to obtain the most accurate information possible they joined revolutionary organizations themselves. Only to this extent might they be considered *agents provocateurs*.

In the middle of mob action one has difficulty accurately ascertaining what individual uttered what particular slogan calculated to incite mob violence. One must therefore take into consideration the possibility that Julius Meyer was mistaken. Even if Meyer was not mistaken, it is difficult to believe that the members of the mob would have undertaken such a momentous overt act if the mood and idea for such an act had not been already present. Even more difficult is establishing the motive for the act when one believes that the slogan voiced by an individual who was not a leader and was unknown to the group.⁹

Extrinsic evidence as to the probable mood of the crowd may be deduced from the proceedings of the Inaugural Congress of the German Communist Party and *Rote Fahne*. On December 27 *Rote Fahne* printed, "Next time we will not let it [the opportunity] slip from our grasp". Thus this overt act was completely in accord with the

⁹*Ibid.*, XV, no. 4121A, p. 7688.

line of thinking and sentiments of the radical leaders. Therefore the pre-history of the *Vorwärts* controversy would furnish evidence to support the conclusion that the seizures emanated from a spontaneous, elemental mass action by unruly elements of the radical left.¹⁰

Theodor Grant, who surrendered the Government Printing Office without a fight on the night of January 8, was also charged with being an *agent provocateur*. Prior to the January insurrection, a chance acquaintanceship with Eichhorn and Ledebour caused this politically ingenuous youth to become involved with Spartacus. Grant was chosen steward for the huge steel firm of Schwartzkopf, where he was employed as an engineer and foundry technician. He was present at the occupation of the Government Printing Office but did not instigate this act. Subsequently he was elected commander of its garrison. Later Grant had a falling out with Eichhorn, who ordered him to confiscate millions in treasury notes stored in a safe in the building. Grant refused to obey the order. Grant became convinced that the uprising was lost and the Police Presidency untenable.

Grant took the first opportunity to surrender the Government Printing Office to the Government forces and recommended to the Town Commandant a plan to capture Eichhorn. Forced out of Schwartzkopf under suspicion of being an *agent provocateur*, Grant took service in the Reichswehr and thus escaped prosecution for

¹⁰*Ibid.*, XV, no. 4121A, p. 7686.

participation in the capture of the Government Printing Office. His charge against Eichhorn that the latter sought to confiscate funds at the Government Printing Office was never substantiated, for Eichhorn was never obliged to confront him in the investigation by the Prussian State Constituent Assembly.¹¹

A similar case was that of Dreger of the Security Police. On December 29, Dreger joined the group of conspirators led by Gerken, second in command of the Security Police. The group pledged themselves not to act without Town Commandant Fischer's permission in return for retroactive extra pay. This pledge upon the basis of which Fischer made his fateful demarche was broken by Gerken, Dreger and confreres on January 5. Shortly after they had participated in the insurgent capture of the Engineer Barracks on January 6, Gerken and Dreger changed their allegiance back to the Town Commandant, where Gerken became the head of a new Security Police formation loyal to the Government.¹²

Leaders of other garrisons were charged at the Ledebour trial with being *agents provocateurs*. In no case, however, could these charges be proven in the subsequent investigation by the Prussian State Constituent Assembly.¹³ The allegation that the Government Socialists conspired with the General Staff to set a trap for the left-wingers, in order to crush them once and for

¹¹*Ibid.*, XV, no. 4121A, pp. 7690-7691.

¹²*Ibid.*, XV, doc. no. 4121B, pp. 7985-7991; for Fischer's attempted bribery of the Security Police, see no. 4121A, p. 7682.

¹³*Ibid.*, XV, no. 4121A, p. 7686.

all, seems equally ungrounded. The evidence would lead one to the conclusion that both sides stumbled into a conflict for which they were equally unprepared.

The Communist Party, through its paper *Rote Fahne*, strongly endorsed the seizure of *Vorwärts*. To leave such a dangerous weapon in the hands of the enemies of the Revolution any longer would constitute a betrayal of the interests of the workers. The recovery of this rightful possession of the Berlin proletariat, of which it had been proved, was a natural act of self-defense. The Communist Party hoped that this time the workers would not let it slip from their grasp. The other bourgeois newspapers seized by the workers and soldiers would continue to appear but under control of the workers' and soldiers' councils, which would use them to serve the interests of the threatened revolution.¹⁴

In his reminiscences, Hermann Müller pointed out that, with the occupation of the newspaper quarter, the German Revolution had entered its decisive week. In the eyes of the public this act of violence placed the revolutionaries in the wrong.¹⁵ The violence, however, gave the Government an adequate pretext to intervene with military force.

While the demonstrations and seizures were taking place, on Sunday evening, January 5, a most momentous meeting was in session at the Police Presidency to consider further prosecution of the

¹⁴*Rote Fahne*, Jan. 5, 1919.

¹⁵Hermann Müller, *Die November-Revolution: Erinnerungen* (Berlin, 1923), p. 251.

action. The Revolutionary Shop Stewards, members of the Executive committee of the Independent Socialists of Berlin, Karl Liebknecht, and Wilhelm Pieck, of the German Communist Party, participated in this meeting.

At his High Treason Trial in May and June, 1919, Georg Ledebour brought out what transpired in this meeting. According to his testimony, when he came away from the demonstrating masses, he was under the impression that they were ready to strike the decisive blow, but Ledebour was uncertain whether or not the revolutionary leaders could assume the responsibility for giving the signal to begin. The revolutionary leaders had not ascertained the military potential at their disposal. During the meeting, lasting several hours, Ledebour was not well enough informed as to the attitude and mood of the workers, let alone the opinion of the soldiers, to venture an opinion. The only time he spoke he stressed that if they decided to strike, the strike must happen quickly.¹⁶ Other friends and comrades, who were firmly convinced that the moment to strike was at hand, pressed the revolutionary leaders to summon action. To sustain this position, facts from allegedly reliable sources were presented.

Dorrenbach reported that the People's Naval Division and the Berlin garrison regiments were ready to overthrow the Government by force of arms, and that in Spandau 2,000 machine guns and 20

¹⁶Georg Ledebour, defendant, *Ledebour vor den Geschworenen: Seine Verteidigungsrede - eine Anklage gegen die Regierung Ebert-Scheidemann* (Berlin, 1919), p.32. (Hereafter cited as *Ledebour-Prozess*.)

cannon were available for the struggle against the Government. Similar reports of armed assistance came from Frankfurt on the Oder.¹⁷ All this was effective in bringing the meeting to adopt the resolution to suppose the government's attempt to depose Eichhorn, since the revolutionary masses would not understand any yielding in this showdown. If strong measures were not taken, the masses would lose confidence in the revolutionary leadership.

Inspired by these reports, the assembled revolutionary leaders were not content merely to oppose by force of arms the removal of Eichhorn. A majority of the leaders went all out by adopting a resolution to overthrow the Ebert-Scheidemann Government. Pursuant to this aim, further preparatory steps had to be taken. The representatives of the revolutionary proletariat therefore appointed a provisional committee of 53 persons to serve as the leadership of the revolutionary movement and, if necessary, to take over all functions of government and administration pending election of workers' and soldiers' councils. The councils would in turn elect a Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies as the definitive government of the Reich. Ledebour, Liebknecht and Scholze were elected joint presidents of the Revolutionary Committee.¹⁸

The resolution to overthrow the Ebert-Scheidemann Government was passed by a vote of 70 to 6, with only Dumig, Eckard, Malzahn,

¹⁷Richard Müller, *Der Bürgerkrieg in Deutschland* (Berlin, 1921), pp. 32-33.

¹⁸R. Müller, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-35.

Richard Müller, Neuendorff and Rusch dissenting. Stoll and Albrecht pointed out in vain that judging from the experiences of the past weeks, the troops were not to be relied upon. Müller pointed out the consequences of a premature putsch limited to Berlin alone. Dumig, who regarded the putsch as lost before it had begun, took no further part in the action. Richard Müller did likewise.¹⁹

One must note that the putschist acts of the workers in occupying the *Vorwärts* and other buildings occurred independently of the putschist resolution of their leaders. According to Ledebour's testimony, the *Vorwärts* and other newspaper buildings were occupied wholly without the knowledge or complicity of himself or the Revolutionary Committee. Only after they had adopted the resolution to resist Eichhorn's deposition and overthrow the Ebert- Scheidemann Government, did they receive the news of these seizures by the workers. By this action of the masses the leaders were confronted with a *fait accompli*.²⁰

In pursuance of its resolution, the Revolutionary Committee called for a general strike to begin on January 6 at 11:00 a.m. in the Siegessallee. "All is at stake! All counterrevolutionary machinations must be thwarted," the leadership published in *Rote Fahne*.²¹

¹⁹R. Müller, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-35.

²⁰Ledebour-Prozess, p. 40.

²¹*Rote Fahne*, Jan. 6, 1919.

The revolutionary leadership served an ultimatum on the Ebert Government encompassing the following eight demands: (1) Immediate disarming of all officers; (2) doing away with all military rank; (3) local authority over troops to be in the hands of the workers' and soldiers' councils; (4) troops to elect their own leaders; (5) complete dissolution of the old army; (6) immediate disarming of reactionary special formations; (7) institution of a real people's army; (8) resolutions doing away with the War Ministry and Army High Command, with these resolutions declared null and void by the Congress of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils, to be put into effect immediately.²²

In response to the strike summons on the following day, January 6, the revolutionary workers left their factories and streamed into the center of the city. In the Marstall, Police Presidency and at other points, weapons were issued to the workers, so that the demonstrators might have armed protection. From the Action Committee of the Revolutionary Shop Stewards numerous agents were sent to the barracks to persuade the soldiers to join the action.²³ The mass of demonstrators stretched from Roland to Victoria and extended as far back as the middle of the Thiergarten.

Gustav Noske, who had to pass through the mass of demonstrators, was impressed by the number who bore arms, and

²²*Ibid.*, Jan. 5, 1919.

²³Wilhelm Pieck, *Die Grundung der K.P.D.* (Berlin, 1928), p. 25.

especially by the accompanying trucks bristling with machine guns. In his memoirs, Noske commented that if these hosts had had resolute, purposeful leaders instead of blusterers, Berlin would have been theirs by noon.²⁴

The Government, having no reliable troops at its immediate disposal, called on its party followers for a general strike. By doing so, the Government countered the revolutionaries with their own tactics. The Majority Socialists' followers were summoned to assemble in the Wilhelmstrasse where they were told not to support the bandits of the Spartacus League, but to protest against the violence by leaving their work and appearing before the Government Building.²⁵ From ten a.m. Monday through Tuesday the Majority Socialists followers stayed in the Wilhelmstrasse presenting, though unarmed, a solid wall of men denying the insurgents access to the government buildings. Ebert was thus saved by his party followers. In certain streets such as the Leipzigerstrasse, the two rival forces marched past each other, not knowing which was stronger, though, of course, the revolutionaries were armed. Eberts' people clamored for weapons. Scheidemann asked the people for patience saying that he would arm them, and not with clubs either.²⁶

²⁴Gustav Noske, *Von Kiel bis Kapp: Zur Geschichte der deutschen Revolution* (Berlin, 1920), p. 69.

²⁵R. Müller. *op. cit.*, p. 254.

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 254.

Inside the Chancellery, a most important meeting of the Government Commissioners was taking place. The situation confronting them was critical. The revolutionaries had occupied many buildings, yet the Government had no reliable troops with which to retake the buildings. Eichhorn's Security Police were not available. The Town Commandant said that the Republican Constabulary was also not available since it would not respond to the Government's call. The soldiers in the barracks were out of the question. Gustav Noske, the newly appointed Commissioner for Armed Services, expressed the opinion that order would have to be restored by force of arms. To this end the others agreed. Colonel Reinhardt, the Prussian Minister of War, proposed that General von Hoffmann, who commanded several loyal formation not far from Berlin, be placed in command of a relieving force. This idea was rejected since the workers would have great misgivings about the appointment of an old-line general for such a mission. When Noske demanded an immediate decision someone suggested that he do it. Noske replied that he was willing. He was not afraid of the responsibility. An oral resolution was then formulated that the Government and Central Council should extend to Noske the most sweeping powers for restoring order in Berlin.

Noske betook himself to a meeting in the General Staff building, in front of which was a demonstrating mob of revolutionaries who could easily have captured it. At his suggestion, the headquarters of his command was transferred to Dahlem, a suburb, where headquarters was set up in the girl's

school, Luisenstift. It was from the Luisenstift that Noske conducted the preparations for the counter-offensive.²⁷

In Berlin, the only armed soldiers at the Government's disposal were a small number of troops guarding the Chancellery Building. Insurgents armed with machine guns could easily have captured the government buildings. In view of these circumstances, Ebert summoned Hermann Müller to a secret conference. He told him that five or six days would elapse before Noske could collect enough reliable troops outside the city for a counter-blow. Until then, the Reich Chancellery might be captured at any time. If the worst occurred, he, Müller, should form a government outside of Berlin, perhaps in Weimar.

One hopeful factor was that though the *Vorwärts* building was occupied by the insurgents, the Majority Socialists were able to have their printing done by other presses. The Majority Socialists were able to distribute millions of handbills along with a special issue of *Vorwärts*.²⁸

In the insurgents camp, the Revolutionary Committee transferred its quarters to the Marstall. In this new headquarters appeared many deputations from regiments, declaring themselves ready to join the uprising, if they could be assured that the government to which they had already pledged their

²⁷Noske, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

²⁸H. Müller, *op. cit.*, p. 257.

allegiance no longer existed.²⁹ Under these circumstances Pieck typed up a document which declared the Ebert-Scheidemann Government deposed and appointed Ledebour, Liebknecht and Scholze temporarily in charge of government affairs. A soldier deputation demanded that valid signatures be affixed to the document, which was done by Liebknecht and Scholze, with Liebknecht signing for Ledebor, who was absent at the time. The document served the purpose of inducing vacillating soldiers to join the uprising by overcoming their scruples about their oath to the Ebert-Scheidemann Government. Owing to the general irresoluteness of the leadership, this attempt of persuasion proved a failure.

Sailors of Dorrenbach's People's Naval Division, which he had pledged to the insurgents' cause, left the revolutionary workers in the lurch. The majority of the members of this division decided to abide by their agreement of December 24 that they would support no further actions against the Government. The sailors declared themselves neutral and wanted to arrest Dorrenbach. Finally they evicted the Revolutionary Committee from the Marstall.³⁰

Shortly before this upheaval, a sailor named Lemmgen was put in charge of 300 armed men and ordered to occupy the War Ministry. His evidence of authority was a copy of the document drafted by Pieck. When he demanded the surrender of the War Ministry in the

²⁹Pieck, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

³⁰Pieck, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

name of the Provisional Revolutionary Government, Lieutenant Bruneo, representing Commander Paul Gorre, examined the document and declared it invalid without the proper signatures. Bruneo promised that as soon as the signatures were supplied, he would surrender. Lemmgen thus returned to the Marstall and obtained the proper signatures from Liebknecht and Scholze, but in the meantime the People's Naval Division had decided to remain neutral. Lemmgen put the document in his pocket, went home for eight days sick leave, returned when the fighting was over and used the signed document in the trial against Ledebour.³¹

Though the War Ministry escaped seizure, irresponsible mobs, under the authority of no one, seized Reid's Printing Establishment, the Railway Directory, the food warehouse in the Kopernickerstrasse, among other buildings. The crowds pillaged the Majority Socialist Propaganda Office from which the propaganda campaign for the election to the National Assembly was being conducted, and burned the election materials in the street.³²

The Revolutionary Committee, now returned to the Marstall, still proved incapable of giving direction to the action.³³ Hundreds of thousands of revolutionaries thirsting for action and inspired for the putsch waited in vain in the streets for the word

³¹Ledebour-Prozess, pp. 34-35.

³²H. Müller, *op. cit.*, p. 259.

³³Ledebour-Prozess, p. 43.

from the Revolutionary Committee ordering the next move. Däumig, the military expert, and Richard Müller, the two leaders who were expected to lead an all-out attack, separated themselves from the action completely. If Berlin had been taken over, there was still to be reckoned with the rest of Germany which, under bourgeois leadership, would have starved out Berlin in a short time. With this realization in mind, the members of the Revolutionary Committee were hoping the masses would not seize Berlin. The Revolutionary Committee tried to deliberate until in final desperation they grasped the one line remaining, negotiations. The Committee therefore entered negotiations with the Government that they had so confidently set out to overthrow.

CHAPTER IV

NEGOTIATIONS

On the evening of Monday, January 6, the Independent Socialists Breidscheid, Dittman, and Karl Kautsky, supported by Cohn-Reuss, the president of the Central Council, offered the Ebert Government their services as mediators and suggested the appointment of a commission for the settlement of existing differences. The Ebert Government agreed in principle to entering into negotiations with the insurgents. The Central Council declared itself unanimously in favor of negotiations.

Simultaneously, Oskar Cohn sought to induce the left-wing Independent Socialists to accept mediation. In reply the Revolutionary Committee voted 51 to 10 in favor of negotiations. Only the Communists expressly declared themselves opposed and refused participation. The Berlin Executive Committee of the Independent Socialists and the Revolutionary Shop Stewards each appointed six members to represent them in negotiations. At midnight on the sixth, these twelve representatives, under the chairmanship of Georg Ledebour,

met with Ebert, Landsberg, Scheidemann, Wissell and five mediators, under the chairmanship of Wilhelm Dittmann.¹

The first business at hand was to formulate preconditions on which the basis of negotiations could be entered upon. Pursuant to this the twelve Revolutionary Committee representatives proposed the following four-point armistice agreement: 1. Bilateral cessation of hostilities. 2. Bilateral cessation of further massing of troops. 3. Bilateral withdrawal of troops already brought in to the action. 4. Bilateral cessation of further amassing of weapons and materiel.² In response to the Revolutionary Committee proposal, Ebert declared that the Government would only use force for self-defence, and not for offensive purposes. Ebert added that only after the subversives evacuated the building occupied on January 5 and 6 could any settlement be reached.³ The mediators thus obtained from both sides the pledge that they would order their respective followers to desist from further use of weapons for offensive purposes.⁴ This was the only gain derived from the meeting.

Negotiations were resumed at 11 a.m., Tuesday January 7, in the chamber of the Executive Council. The five Government

¹Georg Ledebour, defendant, *Ledebour vor den Geschworenen: Seine Verteidigungsrede - eine Anklage gegen die Regierung Ebert-Scheidemann* (Berlin, 1919), p. 32. (Hereafter cited as *Ledebour-Prozess*.)

²*Rote Fahne*, Jan. 9, 1919.

³*Illustrierte Geschichte der Deutschen Revolution* (Berlin, 1929), p. 284. (Hereafter cited as *Illustrierte Geschichte*.)

⁴*Rote Fahne*, Jan. 9, 1919.

commissioners did not appear again in person, but in their stead were members of the Central Council. Those members were Hermann Müller and Cohen-Reuss, among others.⁵ The Revolutionary Shop Stewards maintained that the evacuation of the buildings as a precondition to negotiations amounted to a complete capitulation, and that evacuation of the buildings should come only as a result of negotiations.

At this time in the meeting, mediator Karl Kautsky jumped into the breach of the negotiations with a proposal that the Central Council and the Council of Peoples' Commissioners should declare at the very outset that they would regard the negotiations as a failure unless they led to complete restoration of freedom of the press.

In response to Kautsky, the revolutionary representatives declared that they regarded the newspaper buildings, which had fallen into the hands of the revolutionaries in the course of the fighting, merely as pawns for the further prosecution of the struggle. A compromise satisfactory to both sides, therefore, would include the surrender of the occupied newspaper buildings.⁶

This declaration was unsatisfactory to the Government. The Government entertained doubts as to whether the declaration implied inclusion of the *Vorwärts* Building or whether the authority vested in the Revolutionary Representatives was

⁵Ledebour-Prozess, p. 43.

⁶Hermann Müller, *Die November Revolution: Erinnerungen* (Berlin, 1928), p. 262; see also *Rote Fahne*, Jan. 9, 1919.

sufficient to empower them to surrender the newspaper buildings. Negotiations were postponed to Wednesday, January 8, at 10 a.m.⁷

An outbreak of fighting early Wednesday morning prejudiced the revived negotiations. Armed mobs of revolutionaries broke into the Majority Socialist printing establishment on Schiffbauerdamm where the *Ersatz-Vorwärts* was being printed. The mob forcibly prevented the further printing of the newspaper, and hurled bundles of papers ready for distribution into the Spree River. The Government was placed in *pari delicto* when one of its engineer formations, on its own initiative, stormed the Railway Directory, which the putschists regarded as a breach of the armistice agreement.

Mutual distrust thus pervaded the meeting. The putschists felt the Government was stalling for time. The Government considered that the obstructions to progress were due to the putschists' refusal to accede to the preconditions necessary for fruitful negotiations; namely the evacuation of the buildings occupied by the revolutionaries. The Government and the Central Council entertained the suspicion that the putschists wanted to keep the occupied buildings as pawns for the enforcement of demands to which the Government could not accede without losing all prestige within Germany.

Finally the putschists issued a declaration calling for the release of the bourgeois press only if after the execution of the

⁷H. Müller, *op. cit.*, p. 262.

release the Government and the Central Council declare themselves ready to enter into continuing negotiations. The one remaining issue of great concern to the putschists was that of the *Vorwärts* building.⁸

The Government rejected the putschists declaration. The Government thought it insolence that the putschists propose that the bourgeois press be liberated while the organ of the Majority Socialists be kept under control of the revolutionaries. Negotiations thus broke off abruptly.⁹

In the meantime, the situation of the Government improved day by day. Recruiting offices were set up in the Wilhelmstrasse. Publisher Baumeister and Editor Kuttner did yeoman's work in organizing and equipping regiments from the ranks of the Majority Socialists. Such were the Reichstag, Liebe and Grautoff Regiments, which successfully combatted the insurgents at the Brandenburg Gate. By January 9, whole battalions of Eichhorn's security Police had gone over to the Government. In Dahlem and other outlying areas, Noske was recruiting and equipping loyal old-line troops in preparation for an all-out counter offensive.

On January 9, thousands of workers from the Allgemeine Elektriainsts-Gesellschaft and Schwarzkopf, after a demonstration gathering in Humbolt Hain, resolved to form a new negotiating commission with the aim of concluding an armistice to avoid civil

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 263.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 263.

war. It was proposed that preliminary to entering into negotiations, the Vorwärts Building should be evacuated, provided that the Government and Central Council assured the workers of both factories that the negotiations would be conducted in a socialist, conciliatory spirit. The Government and Central Council would submit to a commission, composed of equal representation from all three contracting parties, the points of controversy. They also assured the workers that the final occupation of the Police Presidency should be carried out through agreement with the Independent Socialists.¹⁰

Emil Eichhorn saw in this proposal a capitulation to the Government. From the Government standpoint the proposal had two flaws. The first flaw was that the Government entertained doubts as to whether the proposed negotiating commission would be able to effect the evacuation of *Vorwärts*, for on January 10, the insurgent garrison had told a labor deputation from the Ludwig Lowe firm that they would sooner be buried under the wreckage of the *Vorwärts* building than voluntarily vacate it. The second flaw was that the Government could not submit to a commission in which they were in a two-to-one minority *vis-a-vis* the Independent Socialists and Communists.¹¹

The Negotiating Commission of the Revolutionary Committee, however, accepted the proposal of the Humbolt Hain Deputation. On

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 264; see also Wilhelm Pieck, *Die Grndung der K.P.D.* (Berlin, 1928), p. 27.

¹¹H. Müller, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

Friday morning, in the Chamber of the Executive Council, they met with representatives of the Government, which was again represented by members of the Central Council, and also members of various labor deputations. The fact soon became apparent that the Government, whose chief spokesman was Hermann Müller, was simply stalling for time. At twelve noon Hermann Müller suddenly declared that the meeting must be broken off at once, because the Central Council was about to hold an important discussion. To the other deputations this appeared a fictitious reason for adjournment. The other deputations, however, reconvened for an afternoon session, but the members of the Central Council failed to appear. The former were kept waiting until five o'clock that afternoon, when they were informed that negotiations would be resumed at 9:30 a.m. Saturday, January 11. Thus the Friday meeting was adjourned without result.¹²

The same day, Friday, a deputation representing 40,000 laborers and salaried employees of the press establishments occupied by the insurgents entered upon negotiations with Eichhorn in his new headquarters in the Bützow Brewery. Eichhorn declared he would free the bourgeois press only on condition that it be placed under a censor and that the Government Commissioners and Central Council pledge themselves in writing not to place in these

¹²*Ledebour-Prozess*, p. 44.

liberated establishments any troops who might hinder the censor in his work. *Vorwärts* he refused categorically to evacuate.¹³

The time was already too late for negotiations. Late that evening Ledebour, the chief of the Revolutionary Negotiating Commission, was arrested. Simultaneous with the arrest, the Government Potsdam Regiment opened a full-scale offensive against the *Vorwärts* Building. The long-awaited Government counter stroke had begun.

¹³H. Müller, *op. cit.*, p. 264.

CHAPTER V

LIQUIDATIONS

The main question which arises with reference to the liquidation of the putsch is whether the Government could have prevailed without recourse to the Free Corps. Arthur Rosenberg, noted German chronicler of the history of the Weimar Republic, answers that question most emphatically in the affirmative. He maintains that a careful analysis of the military action shows that the Government could have won with republican forces alone. Rosenberg is able to cite rightist writers who corroborate his contention.¹

A brief resume of the military developments up to the evening of January 10, tends to support his thesis. In discussing the military aspect of the putsch the essential point to bear in mind is that neither side was prepared for armed conflict. The encounter was not the result of a trap set by one contender for the other, but the result of two blundering sides. Town Commandant Fischer's false estimate of the pro-Eichhorn loyalties

¹Arthur Rosenberg, *A History of the German Republic*, tr. from the German by Ian F.D. Morrow and L. Marie Sieverking (London, 1936), p. 83.; Erich Otto Volkmann, *Revolution over Germany* (Oldenburg, 1930), pp. 185-187.

of the Security Police after his attempted bribery of the latter, had caused the Majority Socialists Government to overplay its hand in attempting to depose Eichhorn.²

The leftists countered with an appeal for a mass demonstration, but it was to be a demonstration only, since the appeal was not intended as an incitement to overthrow the Government.³ The seizure of buildings by the rioters could have been disavowed by the leftist parties, but the decision of the Revolutionary Committee to overthrow the Ebert-Scheidemann Government was a move of incredible rashness which sealed the doom of a left-wing radicalism already seriously jeopardized by the Independents' withdrawal from the Central Council and the Council of People's Commissioners. Even though the Spartacist Central Committee and the bulk of the Revolutionary Shop Stewards' mass following held aloof from this venture, they nevertheless had to atone for the sins of their more impetuous comrades.⁴

On the morning of the sixth, the Revolutionary Committee realized that the movement was doomed to ultimate disastrous defeat, even though a temporary local success might be easily

²Anton Fischer, *Die Revolutions-Kommandatur Berlin* (Berlin 1922), pp. 56-58; *Bericht des Untersuchungsausschusses der Verfassunggebenden Preussischen Landesversammlung über die Januar-Unruhen 1919 Berlin*, in Prussia, *Landesversammlung, Sammlung der Drucksachen der Verfassunggebenden Preussischen Landesversammlung (Anlagen zu den Sitzungsberichten)*, XV, doc. no. 4121A, p. 7682. (Hereafter cited as *Pressia, Landesversammlung, Sammlung der Drucksachen*.)

³Rosenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

⁴Richard Müller, *Der Bürgerkrieg in Deutschland* (Berlin, 1925), p. 35; Rosenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

attainable.⁵ To this consideration must be credited their unwillingness to order their mobilized masses to an all-out attack on the government buildings on January 6.

On the sixth, under the Revolutionary Committee's express orders, the insurgents captured the Wolf Telegraph Office on Charlottenberg Strasse and the Engineer Barracks on Köpernick Strasse, which latter were stormed by Security Police and supporting formations of armed civilians sent out from the Police Presidency. This seizure was deemed necessary because the loyal cadres of the Engineers of the Guard operating from this base had captured munitions convoys destined for the insurgents. The adjacent food warehouses, however, were seized by rioters without orders. Also under the Committee's orders, the insurgents made the abortive attempt to seize the War Ministry. Rioters without orders seized the Silesian Railway Station, but failed in an attempt to take the Anhalt Station, from which Government forces threatened the *Rote Fahne* printing establishment.

If the insurgents faced ultimate doom, then the Social Democratic Government's position at Berlin appeared completely untenable. Town Commandant Anton Fischer was held prisoner in the Marstall, forced to resign his command and countermand his alert to the garrison troops. *Vorwärts* publisher Kuttner, who had been held captive in his publishing house, effected his escape at noon

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 78; Paul Frölich, *Rosa Luxemburg, Her Life and Work*, tr. from the German by Edward Fitzgerald (London, 1940), p. 321.

but did not begin recruiting his Reichstag Regiment until noon of the following day.⁶ The only armed force upon which the Government could rely was the 300 Free Corpsman of Major Reinhard, of whom 150 repulsed an insurgent assault on the Moabit Barracks Block, and 150 under one Suppe guarded the Reich Chancellery with masked machine gun nests in the Friedrich Leopold Palace opposite.⁷

What saved the Government were the unarmed throngs of the SPD party followers whose serried ranks denied the insurgents access to the Government Buildings. By evening *Vorwärts* editor Baumeister had begun arming a small republican volunteer force in the Reichstag Building. Sergeant-Major Klawunda, Commandant of the Potsdam garrison, elected by a group of soldiers' councils to succeed Anton Fischer as Town Commandant of Berlin, pledged 800 men to defend the Government. By evening too, negotiations had begun, and the resulting quasi-truce gave the Government another day of grace, January 7. Thus the sixth was a crucial day with reference to the military situation inside Berlin. From then on the fortunes of the insurgents began to wane, as the Government grew stronger.

On the seventh, despite the truce, the Government was not idle. Kuttner began at noon to organize his Reichstag Regiment of

⁶Prussia, Landesversammlung, *Sammlung der Drucksachen*, XV, 4121A, p. 7691.

⁷Colonel Wilhelm Reinhard, *1918-1919: Die Wehen der Republik* (Berlin, 1933), p. 67.

Social Democratic volunteers. The Engineers of the Guard, who had been interned in their barracks, liberated themselves from their captors and placed themselves at the disposal of the Government.

Early on the morning of the eighth, these troopers, on their own initiative, broke the truce by recapturing the Railway Directory.⁸ Later that evening Sergeant-Major Schulze with cadres of the Fusilier Guards and formation of the Republican Constabulary occupied the Government Printing Office.⁹ Even the *Rote Fahne* offices were occupied a short time by a Government patrol.¹⁰ At the same time the Government Commissioners issued a proclamation declaring that the hour of reckoning was at hand and that force could only be met with force; an announcement interpreted as heralding a grand-scale offensive.¹¹

Government forces under Sergeant Klawunda's none too able direction nevertheless suffered set-backs. Cadres of the Third Guard Infantry Regiment supported by heavy machine guns failed to capture Wolf's Telegraph Office, and an attack of the Reichstag Regiment on Rudolf Mosse's printing establishment on Jerusalem Strasse was repulsed with heavy losses. The above-mentioned buildings had been converted into veritable fortresses. The

⁸Prussia, Landesversammlung, *Sammlung der Drucksachen*, XV, 4121A, p. 7689.

⁹*Vorwärts*, Extra-Blatt, Jan. 9, 1919, 1:2.

¹⁰Frölich, *op. cit.*, p. 326.

¹¹*Rote Fahne*, Jan. 8, 1919, 1:3, Jan. 9, 1:2, 2:1, Jan. 11, 1:1; Friedrich Wilhelm von Oertzen, *Die deutschen Freikorps, 1918-1923*, 5th ed. (Munich, 1939), p. 276.

Reichstag Regiment had used gas grenades and artillery to no avail. The Government forces attempting to halt an insurgent demonstration were defeated in a skirmish at the Brandenburg Gate.¹² The insurgents also made a successful raid on the establishment printing the *Ersatz-Vorwärts*.¹³ Belatedly the Communist Party issued a manifesto declaring its solidarity with the fighting workers, which it had hitherto withheld despite Liebknecht's and Pieck's participation in the action.¹⁴

On the ninth, the *Ersatz-Vorwärts* was published, and it contained the proclamation of the previous day heralding the imminent counterblow. On this day skirmishing continued at the Brandenburg Gate and in the Wilhelmstrasse sector and newspaper quarter. The Government enlarged its sphere of control around the Government buildings. In the evening, von Stephani's Potsdam Free Corps Regiment entered the city and took up quarters in the Mosbit Barracks Block.¹⁵

On the tenth, Major Reinhard with a Government force spearheaded by his First Guard Infantry cadre, liquidated the insurgent forces threatening the strategic Spandau munition

¹²*Vorwärts*, Extra-Blatt, Jan. 9, 1919, 1:2.

¹³Prussia, Landerversammlung, *Sammlung der Drucksachen*, XV, 4121A, p. 7690.

¹⁴Ruth Fischer, *Stalin and German Communism, A Study in the Origins of the State Party* (Cambridge, MA, 1948), p. 86.

¹⁵Major von Stephani, "Der Sturm auf das Vorwärtagebude", in *Deutsche Soldaten, vom Frontheer und Freikorps über die Reichswehr zur neuen Wehrmacht*, ed. by Hans Roden (Leipzig, 1935), p. 39. (Hereafter cited as *Deutsche Soldaten*.)

factories.¹⁶ Government forces also occupied the offices of *Rote Fahne*, preventing its publication for that day. That evening, von Stephani's Potsdam Regiment occupied assault positions on either side of *Vorwärts* in the Dragoon Guards Barracks in front and in the Patent Office Building behind.¹⁷ At the same time, Anton Fischer, appointed Noske's deputy inside Berlin, conducted raids in which Ledebour and Ernst Meyer were arrested.¹⁸

One might conclude from the foregoing resume that without the Free Corps intervention the struggle would have been longer and bloodier, but the Majority Socialist Government would have won out in the end. The Government outwitted their adversaries in political maneuvering, and in the decision of arms they were quick to improvise adequate forces for their defense. Moreover, public opinion was mobilized on their side, the insurgents having discredited themselves by unlawful seizures, rioting and looting. In the course of the fighting the People's Naval Division, the Security Police and the garrison troops had either declared themselves neutral or joined the Majority Socialist Government forces, so that the few thousand militant armed radicals found themselves practically deserted. Only Depot Six of the Security

¹⁶*Illustrierte Geschichte der deutschen Revolution* (Berlin, 1929), p. 285; Robert G.L. Waite, *Vanguard of Nazism: The Free Corps Movement in Postwar Germany, 1918-1923* (Cambridge, MA, 1952), p. 60; *Deutscher Geschichtskalender, Die Deutsche Revolution*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1919), I, p. 411. (Hereafter cited as *D. G. Revolution*.)

¹⁷*Rote Fahne*, Jan. 11, 1919, 1:1; Stephani, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

¹⁸Prussia, *Landsversammlung, Sammlung der Drucksachen*, XV, 4121A, pp. 7691-7692.

Police joined the insurgents, with the rest going over to the Government forces.¹⁹

The problem of the Free Corps, then, is worth some investigation. The Free Corps cadres are too often confused with other volunteer formations such as those raised by Kuttner and Baumeister from SPD workers or those raised by Sergeant-Major Schulze from the Fusilier Guards. The personnel of the Free Corps had been carefully screened on a ideological basis and tended to represent the officers and non-commissioned officers of the disbanded old-line regiments, with cadets, students and youthful hyper-patriots as replacements. Ideologically, they were authoritarian and anti-democratic. Those who did not conform to this yardstick were excluded. Hence, there was to be no repetition of "Bloody Christmas." The old line divisions had been too susceptible to leftist propaganda to prove useful in internal undertakings.²⁰

What identified the Free Corps even more than their ideology was their military organization, training, and equipment. In their organization, the Free Corps were the precursors of the future Reichswehr and of the German armies of the Second World War. The Free Corps were originally employed as border guards in the Baltic and along Germany's eastern frontiers, to replace the

¹⁹*Ibid.*, XV, 4121A, p. 7688.

²⁰Lieutenant-General Ludwig R.C. Märcker, *Vom Kaiserheer zur Reichswehr: Geschichte des freiwilligen Landesjägerkorps. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der deutschen Revolution*, 2d. ed. (Leipzig, 1927), pp. 43, 61, 63.

demobilized old-line divisions. Lieutenant General Ludwig von Märcker was the first to apply the Free Corps idea to the internal situation of December 14, 1918.²¹ Märcker's "Founding Order Number 1" contained the regulations for restoring the officer caste system and prescribing the sphere of competency of the soldiers' councils.²²

The fundamental philosophy behind the Free Corps was that small self-sufficient cadres, each with their own supply system and supporting artillery batteries, cavalry squadrons, machine gun and heavy weapons companies, and supporting tanks and airplanes were best adapted to warfare consisting of many small widely-scattered, isolated actions demanding a high degree of self-sufficiency and mobility. A Free Corps section, *Abteilung*, consisted of three infantry companies, one machine gun company, one artillery battery of three platoons and one cavalry squadron of three platoons. Of the latter two categories, platoons could be detached for separate missions.²³

On December 17, General Von Märcker organized the first section of his Free Corps, the Volunteer Rifles, *Das Freiwillige Landesjägerkorps*, formed almost exclusively from his own former 214th Infantry Division, which had been deactivated in

²¹Oertzen, *op. cit.*, p. 260.

²²Märcker, *op. cit.*, pp. 45-47.

²³*Ibid.*, (folding chart, rear cover, "Gliederung der Landesjägerkorps"); Oertzen, *op. cit.*, p. 266.

Westphalia.²⁴ Following the "Bloody Christmas" fiasco, on December 24, Groener decided on exclusive use of Free Corps formations for internal undertakings.²⁵ On December 26, Schech, Prussian Minister of War, authorized Major Wilhelm Reinhard to form a Free Corps inside Berlin. This he organized on December 28, from cadres of the Fourth Foot Guards Regiment, amounting to 300 men, of which he detached 150 under Suppe on January 2 to guard the Reich Chancellery and the Foreign Office.²⁶

On December 12, von Stephani activated his Potsdam Free Corps from the First Foot Guards Regiment, to which he added cadres from other disbanded Potsdam Guard units. By January the Corps amounted to about 1200 men.²⁷ After "Bloody Christmas", General Walther Freiher von Lüttwitz replaced Lequis as commander of the troops around Berlin. He collected a separate group around him loosely called the Lüttwitz Free Corps. Lüttwitz' Corps consisted of the Horse Guards, *Guarde-Kavallerie-Schützen-Division*, under his direct command, the Potsdam Free Corps, Roeder's Scouts, *Landesschützen*, the Kuntzel Free Corps, the

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 267.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 260.

²⁶Reinhard, *Die Weben der Republik*, pp. 60-63.

²⁷Major von Stephani, "Freikorps Potsdam", in *Deutsche Soldaten*, p. 44.

Reinhard Brigade, and smaller formations, amounting to about 10,000 men, and soon increased by the accession of volunteers.²⁸

When the relief army was collected by Noske, the Free Corps at his disposal comprised three groups: The Märcker Rifles, the Lüttwitz Free Corps, and his own Iron Brigade which he had brought with him from Kiel. Major von Stephani's Free Corps occupied the Moabit Block on the evening of the ninth, and on the evening of the tenth, his cadre of the First Foot Guards occupied the Dragoon Barracks in front of *Vorwärts*, with his Jägers of the Guard the Patent office behind. These assault troops, supported by flame-throwers, machine guns, trench mortars and howitzers, captured *Vorwärts* by 8:15 a.m., January 11.²⁹ Major Reinhard had ordered Stephani not to negotiate and to win unconditional surrender with or without mercy.³⁰

The same day, while Stephani cleared the establishments of Büxenstein and Scherl, the Reichstag Regiment recaptured the firm of Mosse. The latter was evacuated by most of its defenders, only a few falling into the hands of the attackers. The garrison of Ullstein withdrew over the roof tops, weapons in hand. The garrison of the Bützow Brewery, whither the insurgent leaders had fled from the Police Presidency, also evacuated their building

²⁸General Walther, Freiherr von Lüttwitz, *Im Kampf gegen die November-Revolution* (Berlin, 1933), p. 25.

²⁹Major von Stephani, "Der Sturm auf das Vorwärtsgebäude", in *Deutsche Soldaten*, pp. 39-44.

³⁰Reinhard, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

weapons in hand. That of Wolff's Telegraph Office was allowed free egress without weapons. The Silesian Railway Station also fell to the Government. The battle of Belle-Alliance Square concluded, the Potsdam Regiment withdrew to the Moabit Barracks, leaving the temporary occupation of the publishing houses to the Reichstag Regiment.³¹

On the same January 11, simultaneously with the above exploits, Noske made his triumphal re-entry. His Iron Brigade, Märcker's Volunteer Rifles and Roeder's Scouts converged on the city from the South and West, together totaling 3,000 men with artillery and machine guns.³² In a proclamation he announced that he would bring the Berliners peace and freedom as the head of a young republican army. In composition these units were certainly not republican, nor were they reactionary, but rather the precursors to the future Nazi legions. Furthermore Noske pledged he would avoid all unnecessary bloodshed and would cleanse not annihilate. In this connection he expressed the hope that the Spartacists would evacuate without a fight the publishing firms and the other buildings they had seized. The uprising was not a political movement but a pretext for extensive looting and armed

³¹Stephani, *op. cit.*, p. 44; *Rote Fahne*, Jan. 12, 1919, 1:2, Jan. 13, 2:2; Oertzen, *op. cit.*, pp. 277-278.

³²*D.G. Revolution*, I, 411; Gustav Noske, *Von Kiel bis Kapp; Zur Geschichte der deutschen Revolution* (Berlin, 1920), p. 74; Waite, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

robbery. The unified front of the working class against Spartacus must be achieved if democracy and socialism were not to perish.³³

On the very same day the Communist head office in Friedrich Strasse was seized and Leo Jogiches was arrested. Hugo Eberlein, however, escaped. In a secret party meeting that night, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht decided that it was unsafe to remain in their Hallisches Tor refuge and thus removed to the proletarian Neukölln District where they found sanctuary with a working class family.³⁴

Early on the morning of the twelfth, the last important focus of insurgent resistance was liquidated when Sergeant-Major Schulze, with cadres of the Fusilier Guard and formations of his Security Police, stormed the Police Presidency. In this operation howitzers, mortars, and flame-throwers were employed to soften up the defenses prior to assault.³⁵ The Revolutionary Shop Stewards went underground and were hunted by Government troops.³⁶ The only insurgent reaction was a strike of railway workers and desultory firing on the captured newspaper buildings. The fire was quickly silenced by Government troops.³⁷

³³*D.G. Revolution*, I, 411-412.

³⁴Förlich, *Rosa Luxemburg*, p. 328.

³⁵Prussia, *Landesversammlung, Sammlung der Drucksachen*, XV, 4121A, p. 7681; *D.G. Revolution*, I, 412.

³⁶R. Fischer, *Stalin and German Communism*, p. 86.

³⁷*D.G. Revolution*, I, 412.

Thus, by January 13, the insurgent centers of resistance had been crushed. Conceding defeat, the Revolutionary Shop Stewards ordered their followers to return to work.

By a secret order of January 13, the various Free Corps were assigned to different parts of the city.³⁸ The People's Naval Division, the Security Police and the citizens police organizations were combined into the Republican constabulary. The Free Corps were subordinated to Noske. The People's Commissioners ordered all weapons and ammunition in the hands of private citizens to be turned in under pain of a 10,000 mark fine and five years in prison.

The leftists sought to enlist mass support by atrocity charges against the Government troops. Negotiations between the Independent and Majority Socialists were resumed. The Independents wanted the Central Council to be reconstituted so as to reflect a majority-Independent coalition chosen on a parity basis. In caucus, the Shop Stewards and Independents agreed to demand that the Central Council should depose the incumbent Peoples' Commissioners, who, they charged, had compromised themselves by lining up with the forces of reaction.

On January 14, the railway strike ended, signaling another insurgent admission of defeat. Noske made a second appeal to the populace, emphasizing that the government troops were not counterrevolutionary, and that they brought freedom from terror

³⁸Waite, *Vanguard of Nazism*, p. 62; Märcker, *Vom Kaiserheer zur Reichswehr*, pp. 70-72.

and guaranteed security of the individual and of property, freedom of the press, and, above all, unhindered free elections to the National Assembly. To this appeal, Noske appended a five-point program embodying: collection of weapons by the troops and house-to-house searches, prohibition of assembly in the streets, a strict limitation on traffic in the streets and on private use of telephone communications in order to keep the lines free for official use. In pursuance of this program, the Horse Guards Division joined in the occupation of Berlin in order to carry out general disarmament of those not authorized to possess weapons and to afford protection for the elections to the National Assembly.³⁹ By midnight, the occupation had been carried out according to plan.⁴⁰

In the meantime, negotiations between the Majority and Independent Socialists continued. The Independents opposed the disarmament of the populace; the Central Council rejected the Independent's parity plan. The Independents proposed that the Police Presidency be made a municipal institution and that Eichhorn be replaced by a new appointee whose choice must be concurred in by the Independents. The Independents declined to enter the Government which would imply joining the Majority Socialists in a program that was still to be determined. They denied any complicity in the Liebknecht-Ledebour-Scholze attempt

³⁹*D.G. Revolution*, I, 412, 414-416.

⁴⁰Waite, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

to overthrow the Government. Significantly, the Revolutionary Shop Stewards made no such denial.⁴¹

As late as January 15, Karl Liebknecht's article in *Rote Fahne* breathed defiance to the Government and promised ultimate victory for Spartacus; however, at the same time the article seemed to foreshadow the imminence of the author's own immolation.⁴²

The elections to the National Assembly took place without incident. Following the elections of January 19, the Free Corps were withdrawn to the outskirts of the city and the People's Naval Division was reactivated and rearmed by Noske with the assent of Lüttwitz. Major Reinhard had strong objections to the rearming.⁴³ Thus concluded the first chapter of leftist insurrection and Free Corps intervention in Berlin. The second and more sanguinary episode would follow in March.

As indicated above, publicizing atrocity charges was one of the chief methods employed by the leftists in their efforts to turn mass opinion against the Government forces. These charges, though in many instances greatly exaggerated, were certainly not without foundation.

⁴¹D.G. *Revolution*, I, 415.

⁴²Ossip K. Flechtheim, *Die Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands in der Weimarer Republik* (Offenbach, 1948), p. 49; *Illustrierte Geschichte*, p. 308.

⁴³Reinhard, *Die Wehen der Republik*, pp. 83-85.

The first instance of atrocities occurred at the battle of Belle-Alliance Square, when seven prisoners from *Vorwärts* were brutally murdered by the Free Corps. Of the seven, one was a messenger, another a medical corpsman, and the remaining five were emissaries who had issued forth under a flag of truce to ask for surrender terms. While being escorted to the Dragoon Guards Barracks, the prisoners were beaten with whips and gun-butts, and on arrival they were stood against a wall and shot without a court martial. In the investigation of the incident by a committee of the Prussian Constituent Assembly, these details were thoroughly corroborated.⁴⁴

The Committee was unable to prove Major Stephani's complicity in the event. He admitted that he had declared in the Barracks Court of the Dragoon Guards "Whoever emerges from *Vorwärts* will be shot," and later, "They have forfeited their lives; I assume the responsibility." However, the weight of proof showed that Major von Stephani was working at the Regimental Office during the episode itself.

Stephani testified that he called Ebert three times for instruction as to what to do with the prisoners. The first instruction was that they should all be shot. The second instruction was that they should be hailed before a court martial; and the third that they should be treated as prisoners and handed over to the office of the Public Prosecutor. The last order was

⁴⁴Prussia, *Landesversammlung, Sammlung der Drucksachen*, XV, 4121A, p. 7693; 4121B, p. 7779.

confirmed by reliable witnesses including *Vorwärts* editor Stampfer. The first two orders are unconfirmed. Stephani had no discretion to act on unascertainable authority in so vital a matter as the killing of prisoners. The third answer arrived when it was a question of what to do with over three hundred prisoners of the garrison of *Vorwärts*. In the drafting of false death certificates for the seven victims, Stephani was not implicated. In the same committee investigation, the alleged shooting of four prisoners from the Police Presidency, on January 12, in the Alexander barracks, could not be substantiated.⁴⁵

The *cause celebre* of the atrocities, however, and one which threatened dire political repercussions, was the murder of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht by officers and men of the Free Corps. On the evening of January 15, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were arrested without warrant in their Neukölln hideout by members of the Civil Guard, *Einwohnerwehr*, conducting a house-to-house search for weapons. They were brought to the Eden Hotel, Divisional Headquarters of the Horse Guards.⁴⁶ On January 17, *Vorwärts* published the Free Corps version of what then happened. According to this account, Horse Guard troopers, in order to save Karl Liebknecht from the vengeance of angry mobs outside the hotel, sought to spirit him away in an automobile to the protective custody of the Moabit Prison. En route, the car

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, XV, 4121A, p. 7692.

⁴⁶*Vorwärts*, Jan. 16, 1919, 1:1

allegedly had engine failure, and Liebknecht, while being escorted on foot, was shot while trying to escape. Rosa Luxemburg was lynched by the infuriated mob in front of the hotel. This version was confirmed by Friedrich Wilhelm von Oertzen, at the time of the murder of officer of the intelligence section of the Horse Guards.⁴⁷

The Council of People's Commissioners and the Central Council, in joint session, promised they would institute a strict investigation. The question posed for the investigation augered ill: why did the officer conducting the escort not order the use of weapons to protect the prisoners? Worse yet, Otto Landsberg turned the investigation over to the Horse Guard Division.

Freiheit, on the other hand, demanded investigation by a proletarian commission, and, failing that, by a mixed commission, but under no circumstance by a military one. In the course of succeeding days and weeks, *Freiheit* and *Rote Fahne* published accounts of eye witnesses who gave a very different version of the murders from that of Oertzen and *Vorwärts*.

The account published in *Freiheit* on February 12 is not substantially different from the testimony brought out in the court martial proceedings of the following May. The account may be summarized as follows: Corroborating testimony had established the fact that the square before the hotel was empty at the time of

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, Jan 17, 1919, 1:1-3, 2:1; Friedrich Wilhelm von Oertzen, *Kamerad, reich mir die Hände: Freikorps und Grenzschutz Baltikum und Heimat* (Berlin, 1933), pp. 49-55.

the victims' arrival. This disproved the lynching version from the outset. Karl Liebknecht was escorted out of the hotel into a waiting automobile. He was clubbed twice on the head from behind by sentry Otto Runge with a rifle butt. Officers standing about made no move to intervene. Liebknecht collapsed half conscious and was shoved into the automobile by officers and men, and instead of proceeding to Moabit, the car headed for the Charlottenburg Causeway. At a sequestered, unlighted spot in the Thiergarten, the car's engine allegedly failed, and Liebknecht was asked if he could walk. He proceeded a few steps and was shot from behind by Captain von Pflugk-Hartung. The car restored to working order, the body was delivered to the morgue as that of an unknown.

Later, when Rosa Luxemburg was escorted out through the main entrance, the same Otto Runge stood sentry at the door. He had been ordered by Captain Pabst not to permit Rosa Luxemburg to reach the jail alive. As she emerged from the revolving door, he struck her down with his rifle butt. First Lieutenant Vogel, who was in charge of the escort, did nothing to interfere. Her limp body was loaded into a car and, as the car departed, First Lieutenant Vogel sprang onto the running board and shot Rosa Luxemburg through the head. The car stopped by a group of soldiers at the Landwehr Canal, and, on Vogel's orders, the corpse was hurled in.

On February 12, *Freiheit* charged Captain Von Pflugk-Hartung with the murder of Karl Liebknecht, First-Lieutenant Vogel with

the murder of Rosa Luxemburg, and mounted riflemen Otto Runge, Dräger, and Gottinger, with attempted murder, murder, and with having been accessories before the fact. The Divisional Adjutant, Captain Pabst, and the Hotel Manager, Ott, were charged with having been instigators and accomplices. *Freiheit* demanded an impartial investigation and the arrest of the suspects. Lieutenant General von Hoffmann refused this demand, and the suspects were allowed to escape.⁴⁸

Such furor was caused by *Freiheit's* revelations that the Government ordered a trial of the suspects. The trial, however, was once again turned over to the Horse Guard Division. Lieutenant Vogel was arrested on February 20. Otto Runge, supplied with false papers by Lieutenant Liebmann, fled and was not arrested until mid-April. On May 8, the trial commenced before the military court of the Horse Guard Division.

In the course of the proceedings, Captain von Pflugk-Hartung confessed that he had loaned 500 marks to enlisted man Pesche, the driver of the vehicle in which Karl Liebknecht had taken his death ride.⁴⁹ Enlisted men Grantke and Weber testified under oath that First Lieutenant Vogel had fired the shot into Rosa Luxemburg, and

⁴⁸*Der Mord an Karl Liebknecht und Rosa Luxemburg, zusammenfassende Darstellung des gesamten Untersuchungsmaterials mit ausführlichem Prozessbericht, mit Portrats der Ermordeten und Bildern der Angeklagten* (Berlin, *Freiheit*, 1920), pp. 15-28, 93, 95, 100. (Hereafter cited as *Mord an Liebknecht und Luxemburg.*); *Rote Fahne*, Feb. 8, 1919, 2:1-2, Feb. 12, 1:1-3, Feb. 15, 1:1-3; E.J. Gimbel, *Vier Jahre politischer Mord*, 5th ed. (Berlin, 1922), p. 11.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

had had her body thrown into the canal.⁵⁰ Vogel himself, along with two other witnesses, contested this testimony.⁵¹

Otto Runge was sentenced to two years imprisonment and dismissal from the service for aggravated desertion of his sentry post in the field, attempted homicide in connection with dangerous bodily injury and misuse of his weapon, and use of false documents of identification. Lieutenant Vogel was sentenced to two years and four months imprisonment and dismissed from the service for aggravated desertion of his sentry duty in the field, misuse of his authority, concealment of a corpse, and willfully falsifying a report in line of duty.⁵² The Court assumed that Otto Runge had acted on his own initiative. He was granted mitigation of sentence because the court physician had pronounced him a feeble-minded psychopath.

Five days before the beginning of the trial, Captain Pabst, the Divisional Adjutant, had procured for First Lieutenant Vogel a passport to Holland. This procurement was worked through the Berlin Police Presidency and the Passport Bureau of the Foreign Office. On May 17, with the aid of Captain Jansen of the Investigating Commission, Vogel escaped to Holland. Vogel was granted amnesty on November 23, 1920.

⁵⁰*Mord an Liebke und Luxemburg*, pp. 93-95.

⁵¹Gumbel, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

⁵²Germany, Reichsjustizministerium, *Denkschrift des Reichsjustizministers zu "Vier Jahre politischer Mord"*, ed. by E.J. Gumbel (Berlin, 1924), pp. 13-14.

On January 6, 1920, Otto Runge made a full confession in prison which was taken down verbatim in shorthand and came out in full detail in *Vorwärts* a year and a half later. With regard to Karl Liebknecht, he declared that he had strict orders to club the man down with his gun butt. Runge could not recognize the lieutenant who gave the order, for he, Runge, was new in the unit. Runge had ascertained that the lieutenant was one of the defendants in the trial. As for Rosa Luxemburg, Pflugk-Hartung told Runge that Lieutenant Vogel would lead her right past him so that he could strike her down with his gun butt. When the officers returned from disposing of Liebknecht, they boasted of shooting him, of the fictitious engine failure, and the alleged attempt at escape.

According to Runge, the trial was a well-rehearsed farce. The Trial Judge Advocate Järns told him repeatedly to let himself be convicted and that he would serve four months only. After those four months, if Runge ever needed help, Järns and the rest of the staff would stand at his service. At the same time, Runge was warned that if he did not give the right answers he would find himself sleeping on a live handgrenade some night.

In a later deposition, published in *Vorwärts* on May 29-30, 1922, Runge testified that he had been given false papers by members of the Rossbach Free Corps and coerced into giving a series of false testimonies in court. Lieutenant Krull, he declared, had also shot a bullet into the head of Rosa Luxemburg while in the car.

Krull was tried for murder on August 22, 1922. He confessed that he had participated in the murder of Rosa Luxemburg, then denied the charge. The trial was suspended owing to lack of evidence, then resumed at a latter date. While Krull was on trial, First Lieutenant Siegfried Bracht appeared in the *Rote Fahne* editorial office and offered Rosa Luxemburg's watch and papers for a certain compensation. He asserted that German National Party members had offered him 12,000 marks for them.

On May 30, 1922, before the Court of Assizes No. II, Krull was charged with theft and Bracht with receiving stolen property. Krull asserted that the watch was ownerless property and had passed from hand to hand at the Eden Hotel.⁵³ In the course of the proceedings, Krull delivered a speech in which he said: "The Fatherland owes us its thanks for dispatching those two scoundrels. Lynch law must be applied against such scoundrels." Krull was sentenced to three months prison for theft, Bracht to a 500 mark fine for attempted fraud.⁵⁴

Thus ended a protracted travesty of justice. The Government's powerlessness to prosecute the culprits had a calamitous effect on the German working class, millions of whom turned their backs on the Social Democratic Party.

One might suppose that the loss of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, by weakening the German Communist Party, would

⁵³Gumbel, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-13; *Illustrierte Geschichte*, pp. 298-307.

⁵⁴*Berliner Tageblatt*, June 2, 1922.

correspondingly have strengthened the Majority Socialists through the removal of such dangerous competition. Paradoxically, the death of Rosa Luxemburg was to signify in the long run the weakening of the SPD and the strengthening of the Bolshevik elements in the German labor movement. These two trends, in turn, contributed to the strengthening of the Fascists in German society.⁵⁵

The decision to use the Free Corps instead of republican troops to suppress the January uprising provided the opening wedge for these freebooters whose cadres mushroomed after January 13 until republican Germany found itself at the mercy of a non-republican army. What condemned the Government was not the use of force against the insurgents, but the kind of force the Government used.

The Social Democrats were only the apparent victors in the struggle. They were discredited in the eyes of millions of workers with a resulting failure to gain a majority in the national assembly. This failure forced the Social Democrats to form a coalition with the parties to their right. The real victors in this struggle for power were the

⁵⁵Flechteim, *Die Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*, p. 49.

proto-Nazis, whose alleged indispensability paved the way for the ultimate National Socialist domination of Germany.

CHAPTER VI

THE GERMAN COMMUNIST PARTY

According to Wilhelm Pieck's reminiscences in his *Gründung der K.P.D.*, the Central Committee of the Communist Party was not in touch with the joint session of the Shop Stewards and the Berlin Independent Socialists on Saturday January 4, or with the Sunday afternoon and evening session, on January 5, when the putsch was voted and the Revolutionary Committee formed. Not until January 8, in a meeting in Puttdamerstrasse, did the Central Committee have a chance to ratify or reject the implied commitments of Pieck and Liebknecht. The Central Committee on that occasion agreed with the demonstration and the decision for all-out struggle to resist the Eichhorn deposition order, but it was opposed to the declared objective of the overthrow of the Ebert Government. The Party believed that it should have an action for limited objectives. In Pieck's estimation, the lack of leadership on the part of the Independents and Shop Stewards, their lack of resolution and their interest in negotiations instead of expending their energies in intensifying the action,

all contributed to the Central Committee's opposition to ratifying the Liebknecht-Pieck commitment.¹

According to Paul Levi's reminiscences, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht came into sharp conflict in the Revolutionary Committee meeting. Liebknecht was so adamant in his adherence to the Shop Stewards' position that Leo Jogiches wanted to publish in *Rote Fahne* a declaration to the effect that Karl Liebknecht no longer represented the Spartacus League at the Revolutionary Committee meetings. Rosa Luxemburg entertained the idea at that time that she could not continue to collaborate with Karl Liebknecht.²

According to Pieck, Jonigiches and Rosa Luxemburg sharply criticized the action and categorically demanded that he and Liebknecht withdraw from the Revolutionary Committee. Liebknecht was loath to comply with this order, for he was strongly attached to the revolutionary workers. Liebknecht realized, however, that his remaining in the Revolutionary Committee could not rescue the action.³

The Central Committee of the Communist Party thus had decided to remain aloof from a coup d'etat to overthrow the Ebert-Scheidemann Government. The Central Committee was still

¹Wilhelm Pieck, *Die Gründung der K.P.D.* (Berlin, 1928), p. 26.

²Paul Levi, *Was ist das Verbrechen?* (Berlin, 1921), pp. 33-34.

³Pieck, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

confronted with the problem of what policy it should adopt toward an action which involved the revolutionary workers of Berlin.

At one extreme was the opinion expressed in a letter of Central Committee member Karl Radek, written on the ninth of January, in which he advocated that the workers break off the action completely. He reminded the Communist Party of its declaration in *Was will der Spartakusbund* to the effect that the Party would not attempt the seizure of power until it had the majority of the proletariat behind it. Without the masses of the proletariat, the rule of the proletariat would be unthinkable. At that time the workers' and soldiers' councils represented but a small portion of the German Proletariat. The councils had as yet led no struggles which could have proved the strength of the masses. The Majority or Independent Socialist Party, not the Communist Party was in the lead of the struggles. Even if Berlin should be taken by a revolutionary putsch, it would be cut off and throttled to death in a matter of days by the forces outside. Under these conditions, the action initiated on January 4 should have been an action of protest only. A handful of revolutionary leaders, misled by the Shop Stewards and lacking in political experience, had transformed what should have been a movement of protest into a coup d'etat, whose failure would set the revolutionary movement back many months. Only the German Communist Party had insight enough into the situation to perceive its futility, and only it could apply the brakes and prevent such a disaster. There was nothing to forbid a weaker adversary from

withdrawing before superior force. In July 1917 the Bolsheviki, though at that time much stronger than the German revolutionaries, strove with all their might to restrain the masses, and when all restraints failed, intervened ruthlessly to extricate them from the futile battle that threatened.

As a solution for the crisis, Radek recommended the following moves: summoning the Shop Stewards to break off the battle; withdrawal of the fighting workers' weapons in hand if any easy disengagement from the enemy were possible, if not, then by surrendering their weapons; the subsequent publication of a manifesto establishing the necessity for this withdrawal and demanding the immediate election of a new Council of Soldiers' and Workers' Deputies. Should the Shop Stewards refuse to comply with these proposals, the Communist Party should explain the situation to the masses and, by means of a new election to the councils, give the masses effective leadership to replace the conventicle of the Shop Stewards. Throughout the Reich the movement must now be shifted to the struggle for the councils.⁴

Rosa Luxemburg agreed with Karl Radek that a struggle for power under the existing conditions was futile, but she felt unable to call for a breaking off of the struggle then in progress. The workers would refuse to comply with such a summons. The workers would continue grimly with the struggle, feeling themselves betrayed by the Communists as well as by the Shop

⁴Quoted in *Illustrierte Geschichte der Deutschen Revolution* (Berlin, 1929), p. 282.

Stewards and the Independents. Utter loss of confidence in the Communist leadership and complete demoralization would result.⁵

The action spread to other parts of Germany. In the Rhineland, counterrevolutionary troops had been beaten in a pitched battle. Düsseldorf and Bremen were under the rule of workers' and soldiers' councils. Hence a struggle conducted with determination and energy in Berlin would compel the Government to make concessions and would win new ground for the revolution.

In January 1919, furthermore, the German Communist Party was by no means as well organized, disciplined and consolidated as the Bolshevik Party had been in July 1917 when it had carried out a dangerous but successful retreat from a similar precarious situation. The Communist Party was not strong enough in Germany to take over the leadership in an advance or a retreat for it did not have undisputed leadership of the workers.⁶

Rosa Luxemburg's position is further elucidated in a letter from Leo Jogiches to Klara Zetkin published in the latter's book, *Um Rosa Luxemburgs Stellung zur russischen Revolution*. Jogiches explained that Rosa Luxemburg's demand for the overthrow of the Ebert-Scheidemann Government was a propaganda slogan to rally the revolutionary proletariat rather than a tangible object of revolutionary action. Such a revolutionary act, if it succeeded, would simply make of Berlin another Paris Commune. Rosa

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 283.

⁶Paul Frölich, *Rosa Luxemburg, Her Life and Work*, tr. from the German by Edward Fitzgerald (London, 1940), p. 324.

Luxemburg's slogans, therefore, were defensive: the repulse of all counterrevolutionary attacks, withdrawal of the counterrevolutionary troops, arming of the workers, transfer of all executive military power to the revolutionary political representatives of the proletariat. These demands, however, were to be won by action and not by negotiation. The Communist Party could not accept the objective of the movement, the overthrow of the Government, as its own, but at the same time the Party could not let itself be separated from the masses who had joined in the movement. The Party had to remain with the masses in order to strengthen them in their struggle against the counterrevolution and to further the process of revolutionary maturity by making the circumstances and significance of their action abundantly clear to the masses. Thus the Communist Party had to make its own position crystal clear without breaking the revolutionary solidarity it owed to the fighting workers.⁷

Rosa Luxemburg, therefore, advocated determined resistance to the counterrevolutionary attack, but under slogans which would not frighten off the vacillating sections of the workers and soldiers, but actually bring them into the struggle. In *Rote Fahne*, Luxemburg demanded: disarming of the counterrevolution, arming of the workers, unification of all troops loyal to the

⁷Quoted in *Ibid.*, pp. 323-324.

revolution, and new elections for the workers' and soldiers' councils.⁸

Concerning new elections for the workers' and soldiers' councils, Rosa Luxemburg had much to say in *Rote Fahne*. She stated that the most important permanent lesson to be learned from the crisis was that the working masses of Berlin had no organized center ready for action and capable of directing and utilizing the completely aroused energies of the masses. The Revolutionary Shop Stewards were a mere improvisation born with the revolution, doubtless of great service in the previous mass action of the Berlin workers, but nevertheless just a makeshift of the preliminary stages of revolutionary development. As for the Berlin Executive Committee of the Independent Socialists, the Committee was blighted with the same duplicity and incapacity to act as its parent organization.

Rosa Luxemburg pointed out that the center for organized proletarian action should have been the Executive Council. Thanks to the parity principle, the Ebert Socialists had half the membership of the Workers' Council which, together with their majority in the Soldiers' Council, gave them the majority in the Executive Council as a whole. The revolutionaries experienced the happy-sad situation that while the Berlin workers mobilized in the streets and risked their lives at the barricades under the cry of "Down with Ebert-Scheidemann," in their own revolutionary organ,

⁸*Rote Fahne*, January 5 and 9.

the Executive Council, the same Ebert-Scheidemann held the majority and dominated. This situation had been in accordance with Ebert's plans to make the Central Council a rubber stamp and the Executive Council a barrier to the revolution, thus rendering the masses leaderless and without organization. Those were the natural consequences of the parity principle. Rosa Luxemburg demanded a new election to the workers' and soldiers' councils, thus providing the Executive Council with new membership under the slogan of "Out with the followers of Ebert!" She knew that they must beat Ebert-Scheidemann in the very foundation of the revolution, in the workers' and soldiers' councils, so that the masses throughout the Reich would have in those bodies revolutionary organs, which in all decisive moments would furnish them with effective leaders, centers of action, struggle and victory.⁹

Rosa Luxemburg went on to state that if the Communist Party thus placed itself at the side of the fighting workers and assumed responsibility for their action, the Party must also vigorously intercede for the intensification of their efforts. The Party must push for resolutions and measures which would exploit the opportunities at hand. To accomplish such goals by itself, the party was too weak. Party influence on the masses was too tenuous. The responsibility was upon the Shop Stewards and the Berlin Independents, who assumed the leadership and enjoyed the

⁹*Ibid.*, January 9, 1919.

confidence of the working masses, since the Stewards were in a position to discharge the duty. With all its might, the Communist Party had striven to scourge these leaders to action, as precious time was irreparably lost.¹⁰

While Rosa Luxemburg praised the conduct of the workers during the action, she took the revolutionary leaders severely to task. The workers had in large measure learned to act. They had responded whole-heartedly to the appeal of their leaders, and by their own power brought about the reinstatement of Eichhorn. On their own initiative they occupied *Vorwärts*, Wolff's Telegraph Office, among other buildings, and armed themselves with all available weapons. Now the workers awaited further instructions from their leaders.

Rosa Luxemburg doubted whether these leaders, the executive organs of the will of the masses, were equal to the situation and whether their capacity for action had kept pace with the growing energy of the masses. The leaders had learned little since the November Revolution. Twenty-four hours had elapsed since the Ebert Government's attempt to depose Eichhorn. The leaders had deliberated long enough. Now was the time for action. Only through vigorous, decisive action could the vacillating elements among the troops be won over to the sacred cause of the people. Any loss of time might prove disastrous; for in terms of world

¹⁰Frölich, *op. cit.*, pp. 322-323.

history, in times of revolution, hours counted for months and days for years.

By action, Luxemburg did not mean storming into the Reich Chancellery and evicting or arresting Ebert and Scheidemann. She meant seizing, securing and utilizing all strategic positions. Such seizures by the spontaneous action of the masses had been carried out at *Vorwärts*, Wolff's Telegraph Office, the bourgeois publishing establishments and the railway stations. They should have supplied editorial leadership to utilize *Vorwärts* and the other captive publishing houses. Wolff's Telegraph Office should have been used to disseminate to the revolutionary comrades throughout the Reich news of what was going on in Berlin, in order to establish intellectual liaison with the movement throughout Germany. In times of revolution the masses belonged in the streets. The masses were the only safeguard of the revolution. When the masses had been summoned forth in a state of alert, however, they should have been clearly briefed on what to do or, at least, on what was going on. The masses needed to know what was planned by both sides.

The cardinal blunder which Luxemburg attributed to the revolutionary leaders was that of entering into negotiations with the Ebert-Scheidemann Government. These negotiations could have led to but one of two things, a compromise or a delay which the

Ebert people would utilize to prepare the most brutal coercive measures.¹¹

Paul Frölich, at the time a member of the Central committee of the Communist Party and representative of the Bremen Left Radicals, later criticized the role of the Communist Party in the action. He argued that whereas Rosa Luxemburg criticized the Revolutionary Committee in the *Rote Fahne* the Communist Party still was actively engaged in the struggle, too. The Communist Party, because of their activity in the struggle and their representatives in the leadership of the struggle, thus bore joint responsibility together with the other bodies engaged. Frölich said that it was impossible to discover what influence the Central Committee of the Communist Party exercised on the leadership of the movement if any at all, or if any party decisions were taken and what was done to carry them out if any decisions were made.

Throughout the fighting, according to Frölich, Liebknecht was with the workers, giving advice and moral support but acting the whole time as if he were out of touch with the Party leadership. Frölich also stated that there was no documentary evidence, beyond the letter of Leo Jogiches to Klara Zetkin, concerning the opinions, intentions, and measures of the Central Committee of the Communist Party during the fighting.

Paul Frölich further criticized the Party tactics, which consisted merely in defending the revolution. He stated that the

¹¹*Rote Fahne*, January 8, 1919.

defense should have been conducted actively not passively, and that the defense should have consisted of mobilizing every possible resource of the revolutionary proletariat for an offensive to compel the enemy to retreat both politically and militarily. Only when the situation was clear that this mobilization was impossible and that a military offensive was impossible also, should pressure have been brought to bear on the Revolutionary Committee. This pressure should have been brought in the interests of the thousands of workers occupying strategically very unfavorable positions in order to arrange for their retreat to safety.¹²

¹²Förlich, *op. cit.*, p. 325.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS DRAWN

The war gave the German Social Democratic Party its golden opportunity and, at the same time, weakened the Party so that it could not take full advantage of that opportunity. The schism in the Party's ranks over war credits resulted in the formation of the Independent Social Democratic party, whose component groups constituted a complete misalliance. This party contained widely divergent ideological elements held together only by opposition to the war and to the monarchy. With the war over and the monarchy deposed, the Independent Social Democratic Party, USPD, soon showed signs of disintegration. The major rift within the USPD was caused by its attempted coalition with the Majority Socialists, November 10 through December 27, 1918.

The right wing of the Independents should have adhered to the policy of coalition with the Majority Socialists instead of permitting itself to be pulled away by its radical wing, the Left Independents led by Ledebour and Eichhorn, and the Revolutionary Shop Stewards led by Müller, Däumig and Barth. The right-wing Independents stood for substantially the same tactics as the Majority Socialists. The right-wing Independents advocated

eventual socialism attained by democratic processes and were of the opinion that drastic socialist experiments should not be instituted until the nation's economy had recovered from war dislocations. Had the right-wing Independents and the Majority presented a united front against the revolutionaries, there would have been no January uprising and the Majority would never have had to resort to collaboration with the proto-Nazis. In the ensuing election such a socialist block would have gained a clear-cut majority, and the Majority Socialists would never have been obliged to form a coalition with the parties to their right.

At their inaugural congress, the same swing to the left occurred in the Communist Party. Rosa Luxemburg, Leo Jogiches, Paul Levi and the Central Committee permitted themselves to be overruled by the radical extremist majority and adopted a platform opposing participation in the National Assembly and favoring putschist tactics. This program prevented coalition of the German Communist Party with the Revolutionary Shop Stewards and the Left Independents.

The logical alignment of forces on a cohesive ideological basis would have been, first, a coalition of the right-wing Independents (Haase, Dittman, Kautsky and Bernstein) with the Majority Socialists (Ebert, Scheidemann, and Landesberg) to form a Revisionist Social Democratic Party, dedicated to postponement of the socialist state and to an interim program of social amelioration within the capitalist order. The second grouping should then have comprised the conservative wing of the K.P.D.

(Rosa Luxemburg, Leo Jogiches, and Paul Levi) in coalition with the Revolutionary Shop Stewards and the Left-Independents (Ledebour *et al.*) to form a party dedicated to the founding of a soviet republic by the will of the German people.

The radical extremists, the trouble makers whom Rosa Luxemburg and the Central Committee of the KPD permitted to overrule them in the inaugural congress, would then have been left for the police to control. These extremists wanted an immediate putsch by a small armed minority and to impose a dictatorship over Germany. The extremists problem was that they had little conception of the problems of organizing a new government "from scratch."

As the situation was, the Independent right wing seceded from the coalition government, and the Majority Socialists united with the German General Staff in order to suppress the Shop Stewards, Left Independents, and Communists. This alignment led to the January encounter, the advent of the proto-Nazis and the eventual control of Germany by a reactionary army.

By many authorities the situation is deemed ridiculous that Emil Eichhorn should have precipitated this fateful uprising. By his refusal to retire from office after all the other Independents in the Reich and Prussian governments had withdrawn, Eichhorn brought devastating results for proletarian democracy. By some

authorities, Eichhorn's holding out has been attributed to personal whim and caprice.¹

Eichhorn, however, justified his stand by his concept of the Police Presidency as a city office and not a state office under the Prussian Ministry of the Interior. He therefore considered himself responsible to the Executive Council of Berlin only and not to Paul Hirsch, the Prussian Minister of the Interior. Eichhorn said he would be willing to abide by the verdict of the Executive Council of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils of Greater Berlin, even though that body was controlled by an SPD Majority.² The Government retorted that the Central Council and the People's Commissioners were the agencies which ordered Eichhorn's deposition and since these were appointed or confirmed by the Congress of Workers' and Soldiers' Delegates, their deposition order was binding.³

The Government had good reason to seek Eichhorn's removal. Though the charges against his personal honesty could not be substantiated, politically he was one of the radical Left.

¹Arthur Rosenberg, *A History of the German Republic*, tr. from the German by Ian F.D. Morrow and L. Marie Sieverking (London, 1936), p. 75.

²*Bericht des Untersuchungsausschusses der verfassunggebenden preussischen Landesversammlung über die Januar-Unruhen 1919 Berlin, in Preussia, Landesversammlung, Sammlung der Drucksachen der verfassunggebenden preussischen Landesversammlung (Anlagen zu den Sitzungsberichten), XV, doc. no. 4121A, p. 7691. (Hereafter cited as Prussia, Landesversammlung, Sammlung der Drucksachen.); Illustrierte Geschichte der deutschen Revolution (Berlin 1929), p. 274.*

³See Prussia, Landesversammlung, Sammlung der Drucksachen, XV, doc. no. 4121A, p. 8685.

Eichhorn was a member of the Soviet Press Agency in Berlin, Rosta, and in the "Bloody Christmas" fracas had distributed arms to the proletariat to be used against the Government troops of Lequis. The Government Socialists' hold on Berlin was indeed precarious with a man of this political complexion in control of the city's police force.⁴ On January 5, Eichhorn told Town Commandant Anton Fischer that the new phase of the revolution had begun, and that he would build the new people's state.⁵ On December 27, Fischer had told the Government that with such a man as Eichhorn as police chief, he could no longer guarantee the safety of the city.⁶

The question arises: why did the Government try to depose Eichhorn without giving him a chance to present his case to the Executive Council? The reason stems from a personal rivalry between Anton Fischer, the Town Commandant, and Emil Eichhorn. Anton Fischer, had bribed a large portion of the Security Police under Gerkin to accept his jurisdiction instead of that of Eichhorn, by raising their pay to the level of his own Republican Constabulary and making the raise retroactive.⁷

Fischer furthermore had the pledge of the People's Naval Division to remain loyal to the existing government, and the Committee of Five, representing the soldier's councils of the

⁴*Ibid.*, XV, 4121A, 7682-7685.

⁵*Ibid.*, 7685.

⁶*Ibid.*, 7681.

⁷*Ibid.*, XV, 4121A, 7682.

garrisons of Greater Berlin, had pledged him its support.⁸ With this military backing, Fischer persuaded Eugen Ernst that they could coerce Eichhorn into voluntarily surrendering of his office without making an issue of it before the Executive Council. His calculations were foiled by Eichhorn's appeal to the joint meeting of the Independents of Greater Berlin, Revolutionary Shop Stewards and Communists, which resulted in the call for a mass demonstration of workers and soldiers. The issue confused the Security Police, People's Naval Division, the garrison troops, and even the Republican Constabulary, with the result that they initially refused support to the Government. The situation appeared to them that the Independents were opposing the Government Socialists over an issue in which the latter were supporting the forces of reaction. Thus Anton Fischer found himself without any military force with which to carry out the order to remove Eichhorn.⁹

Taken literally the wording of the joint appeal of the Stewards, USPD and KPD only exhorted the Berlin workers to a mass demonstration on January 5. Though ignorant workers might well have construed it as an exhortation to overthrow the Ebert-Scheidemann Government, the appeal was intended as nothing of the sort.¹⁰ The plan was that the demonstration would be so

⁸*Ibid.*, XV, 4121A, 7682.

⁹*Ibid.*, 7682.

¹⁰Rosenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

formidable that the Government would be forced to retract its deposition order and the Council of People's Commissioners would be discredited in the eyes of the workers. Thus the attainment of a limited objective only was anticipated. The demands for disarming the counterrevolutionary forces, the elimination of the officer caste and the arming of the workers they hoped to attain by subsequent negotiations.¹¹

The decision to extend the demonstration into a armed *coup d'etat* on the night of the fifth, which was taken by a caucus of extremist leaders of the Independent, Shop Stewards and Communists, brought a rift in the ranks of the leftists, who had hitherto been united by indignation over the deposition attempt. Müller and Däumig, the *de facto* leaders of the Revolutionary Shop Stewards, withdrew from this further move and carried most of the heavy industry workers with them, following the fiasco of the demonstration on the sixth.¹²

The Government thus overplayed its hand, owing to an erroneous estimate of the armed forces at its disposal, and the leftists, after a significant preliminary success, also overreached themselves, on the basis of a false estimate of their own military potential. A resolute action, with the backing of hundreds of thousands of workers and soldiers, thereby disintegrated and ended in a disastrous defeat for left-wing

¹¹*Rote Fahne*, Jan. 7, 1919.

¹²Rosenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

socialism and to the regrouping of the forces of militarism at the expense of the democracy then ostensibly in power.

From the minute it became known that an action supporting Eichhorn was being exploited by an extremist revolutionary committee to overthrow the Government, the ranks of labor and of the garrison troops quickly disavowed the movement and started going over to the Government.¹³ The Central Committee of the German Communist Party even sensed the folly of this coup and disavowed all connection with the action. Thus an action with a limited objective enjoying tremendous mass support was extended into a *coup d'etat* and thereby lost most of the popular following, condemning the whole action of labor to a crushing defeat.

The right-wing Independents mediated in order to save the proletarian cause from ultimate disaster.¹⁴ The Independents claim the Majority Socialists, owing to their alliance with the Free Corps, felt strong enough to sabotage negotiations and win all-out, unconditional victory by force of arms.¹⁵ The Majority Socialists refute this charge, claiming that the leftists hoped to force the Government into disastrous concessions by using the captive buildings as pawns for bargaining. The Government wanted negotiations to be conducted on the basis of the *status quo ante*

¹³Richard Müller, *Der Bürgerkrieg in Deutschland* (Berlin, 1925), p. 35.

¹⁴Erich Otto Volkmann, *Revolution over Germany* (Oldenburg, 1930), p. 183.

¹⁵Prussia, Landesversammlung, *Sammlung der Drucksachen*, XV, doc. no. 4121A, p. 7689.

and refused to bargain for what was rightfully theirs in the first place. The insurgents contended that this would deprive them of all bargaining power and put them at the mercy of the Government. Hence the negotiations were deadlocked and gave place to armed conflict.

With the change in sentiment of the masses against an action which had begun as a pro-Eichhorn demonstration, could the Government have suppressed the insurrection without recourse to the proto-Nazi Free Corps formations? The Government claimed that the garrison troops were wholly unreliable as were the People's Naval Division, the Security Police and even the Republican Constabulary. Moreover, even the regiments of Majority Socialist workers, such as those of Kuttner, Grautoff and Baumeister, could be relied on only to a limited degree.¹⁶

Certainly the course of events does not bear out this contention. The garrison troops under Schulze did yeoman's work in recapturing the Police Presidency. The Reichstag Regiment defended the government buildings and the Brandenburg Gate and recaptured two fortified publishing buildings on the eleventh. The People's Naval Division abided by its oath, disavowed Dorrenbach and ousted the Revolutionary Committee from the Marstall. The huge strike turnout of the Majority Socialist followers on the sixth and succeeding days saved the government buildings from the insurgents.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 7694.

For propaganda purposes, the Government singled out the Spartacists as the sole participants in the insurrection.¹⁷ As a matter of fact, the Central committee of the German communist Party voted against participation and threatened to disavow Pieck and Liebknecht as members of their party.¹⁸ The premature revolt was absolutely contrary to Rosa Luxemburg's program. She opposed any putsch as long as the Communist Party represented but a minority of the German population and above all, she opposed Communist coalition with other left-wing groups. Communist participation, thus, would have violated Luxemburg's basic program on two counts. The strength of the two mass demonstrations on January 5 and 6 was composed mainly of the Revolutionary Shop Steward's mass following in the heavy industry of greater Berlin.

When the Revolutionary Shop Steward leaders Richard Müller and Ernst Däumig refused to participate in the putsch, most of their followers in heavy industry abstained from participation, after the futile demonstration on January 6. Müller and Däumig could have led the demonstration to a seizure of Berlin, and their abstention doomed the action from the beginning.

Not until January 8, when the action was doomed, did the Central Committee of the German Communist Party and Rosa Luxemburg throw in their lot with the few thousand radicals who had persevered in the lost action. Rosa Luxemburg did this out of a

¹⁷Rosenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

¹⁸Ruth Fischer, *Stalin and German Communism: A Study in the Origins of the State Party* (Cambridge, Mass., 1948).

sense of honor, which forbade her leaving her comrades in the lurch, and not because it fitted her long-term strategy. The same sense of honor prevented her from fleeing Berlin, a refusal for which she paid with her life. Against her better judgement, she abided by the majority program in the inaugural congress of the German Communist Party, instead of leading the radicals out of the party.

By making the Communists the sole culprits in a movement of the Left Independent Socialists and Revolutionary Shop Stewards, the Government managed to isolate the Communist Party and pave the way for the elimination of other revolutionary groups later on. The ultimate effect was to wipe out the German brand of Communism and replace it with an organization run from Moscow.

Rosa Luxemburg was an evolutionary, not a revolutionary socialist. She did not want her party to come into power by a putsch or coalition but by democratic means backed by the overwhelming majority of the German people. The people could be won over by education and mass solidarity in mass actions, such as strikes and demonstrations, and not by violent means. On the other hand, she was certainly not a revisionist as were the Majority Socialists. Luxemburg believed that labor could never come into its own within the framework of a capitalist society.

One pertinent question remains: if the insurgents had taken Berlin on January 6, would the new revolution have swept all Germany and set up a Soviet Republic? Ruth Fischer contends that the mobilized workers of the Revolutionary Shop Stewards on

January 6 could easily have taken Berlin, marched on Potsdam and prevented the regrouping of counterrevolutionary forces, and that this victory could have served as a bellows to fan revolt all over Germany.¹⁹

In the light of the outcome of the Paris Commune in 1871, this conclusion appears doubtful. In 1871, under much more favorable auspices the insurgents were unable to withstand the counter-attack of the more conservative provinces. Even such left-wing writers as Paul Frölich acknowledge that under such circumstances Berlin would have been starved into submission by the rest of Germany.²⁰

In the context of modern German history, the insurrection marks an important turning point. Some historians have said that the January uprising was the Battle of the Marne in the German Communist Party's long struggle for power. For although the KPD made many subsequent bids for power, this decisive defeat was never reversed.²¹

It is true that after "Bloody Christmas" the German General Staff touched the absolute nadir of its power. If the radical left was to prevent a regrouping of the forces of militarist reaction, then was the time to strike. The old army was rapidly disintegrating, and the Free Corps were few and in their infancy,

¹⁹Fischer, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

²⁰Paul Frölich, *Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Work*, tr. from the German by Edward Fitzgerald (London, 1940), p. 323.

²¹Rosenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

with no domestic victories to give them a tradition of collective minds. Some individuals had espoused communism, others revisionist socialism; however, the majority remained aloof. But in that crucial week of January, the majority chose democracy and performed significant deeds in its defense.

The fact that the Government did not rely solely on these people and on its party followers without recourse to the Free Corps, nullified the effect of Government victory. It brought a third force into the struggle for power. The three-sided struggle among democracy, communism and proto-Fascism which began in that crucial week was to continue through the life of the Weimar Republic until Adolf Hitler became Chancellor January 30, 1933.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS

- Germany, Reichsjustizministerium. *Denkschrift des Reichsjustizministers zu "Vier Jahre politischer Mord"*. (Ed. by E.J. Gumbel). Berlin, 1922.
- Germany, Reichstag. *Verhandlungen des Reichstages*. Stenographische Berichte, Band 306. 1914; Band 314. 1918. Berlin, 1914-1918.
- Prussia, Landesversammlung. *Sammlung der Drucksachen der Verfassungsgebenden preussischen Landesversammlung (Anlagen zu den Sitzungs-Berichten)*. Band 15. Berlin, 1921.
- United States, Department of State. *Papers relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1918-1919*. Including 13 vols., *The Paris Peace Conference*. Washington, 1930-1947.

2. OFFICIAL PUBLICATIONS

- Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands. *Bericht ber den Grndungsparteitag der Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands (Spartakusbund) vom 30. Dezember bis 1. Januar 1919*. Berlin, 1919.
- Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands. *Protokoll ber die Verhandlungen des Parteitages der Sozisdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands*. 1890-1920. Berlin, 1890-1920.

3. COLLECTED DOCUMENTS

- Ahnert, Kurt, ed. *Die Entwicklung der deutschen Revolution und das Kriegsende in der Zeit vom 1. Oktober bis 30. November 1918, in Leitartikeln, Extrablättern, Telegrammen, Aufrufen und Verordnungen, nach den fhreden deutschen Zeitungen*. Nuremberg, 1918.

Beckmann, Ewald, ed. *Der Dolchstoßprozess in München vom 19. Oktober bis 20. November 1925*. Munich, 1925.

Brammer, Karl, ed. *Der Prozess des Reichspräsidenten*. Berlin, 1925.

Buchner, Eberhard, ed. *Revolutionsdokumente die deutschen Revolution in der Darstellung der zeitgenössischen Presse. Erster Band, im Zeichen der Roten Fahne*. Berlin, 1921.

_____. *Deutscher Geschichtskalender, Die deutsche Revolution*. 2 vols. Leipzig, 1919.

Hasse, Ernst, ed. *Hugo Hasse, sein Leben und Werken, mit einer Auswahl von Briefen, Reden und Aufsätzen*. Berlin, 1929.

Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands. *Spartakus im Krieg, die illegalen Flugblätter des Spartakusbundes im Krieg*. (Ed. by Ernst Meyer). Berlin, 1927.

Ledebour, Georg, defendant. *Der Ledebour-Prozess: Gesamtdarstellung des Prozesses gegen Ledebour wegen Aufruhr, etc. vor dem geschworengerichte Berlin - Mitte vom 19. Mai bis 23. Juni 1919, auf Grund des amtlichen Stenogramms bearbeitet mit einem Vorwort versehen von Georg Ledebour*. Berlin, Freiheit, 1919.

_____. *Ledebour vor den Geschworenen. Seine Verteidigungsrede Eine Anklage gegen die Regierung Ebert-Scheidemann*. Berlin, 1919.

Spartakusbriefe. 2 vols. Berlin, 1921.

4. NEWSPAPERS AND PERIODICALS

American Historical Review, 1950-1985. New York.

Berliner Tageblatt, 1922. Berlin.

Rote Fahne, 1918-1919. Berlin.

Vorwärts, 1918-1919, 1922. Berlin.

Vossische Zeitung, 1918, 1922. Berlin.

5. PAMPHLETS

Kautsky, Karl. *Gegen die Diktatur*. Berlin, E. Litfass' Erben, 1918.

Luxemburg, Rosa. *The Russian Revolution*. Tr. from the German by Bertram D. Wolfe. Viking Press: New York, 1940.

Der Mord an Karl Liebknecht und Rosa Luxemburg, zusammenfassende Darstellung des gesamten Untersuchungsmaterials mit ausführlichem Prozessbericht, mit Portraits der Ermordeten und Bildern der Angeklagten. Berlin, Freiheit, 1920.

6. ALMANACS, HANDBOOKS, AND ENCYCLOPEDIAS

Handwörterbuch der Sozialwissenschaften. (Edited by L. Elster, A. Weber, and F. Wieser). 8 vols. 4th ed. Jena, 1926.

Langer, William L., ed. *An Encyclopedia of World History*. Heritage: London, 1948.

Piloly, Robert, and Otto Koellreutter, eds. *Jahrbuch des öffentlichen Rechtes der Gegenwart*. Band IX, 1920. Tübingen, 1920.

7. MEMOIRS AND CONTEMPORARY ACCOUNTS

Barth, Emil. *Aus der Werkstatt der deutschen Revolution*. Berlin, 1920.

David, Eduard. *Die Sozialdemokratie im Weltkrieg*. Berlin, 1915.

Eichhorn, Emil. *Die Januar-Ereignisse: Meine Tätigkeit im Berliner Polizeiprsidium und mein Anteil an den Januar-Ereignissen*. Berlin, 1919.

Fischer, Anton. *Die Revolutions-Kommandatur Berlin*. Berlin, 1922.

Levi, Paul. *Was ist das Verbrechen?* Berlin, 1921.

Lüttwitz, Walther Freiherr von. *Im Kampf gegen die November-Revolution*. Berlin, 1933.

Märcker, Ludwig R. G. *Vom Kaiserheer zur Reichswehr: Geschichte des freiwilligen Landesjgerkorps. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der deutschen Revolution*. 2d and rev. ed. Leipzig, 1921.

- Maximilian, Prince of Baden. *The Memoirs of Prince Max of Baden*. Tr. from the German by W.M. Calder and C.W. Sutton. 2 vols., Viking: London, 1928.
- Müller, Hermann. *Die November-Revolution, Erinnerungen*. Berlin, 1921.
- Müller, Richard. *Der Bürgerkrieg in Deutschland*. Berlin, 1925.
- _____. *Vom Kaiserreich zur Republik*. 2 vols. Vienna, 1924-1925.
- Noske, Gustav. *Von Kiel bis Kapp: zur Geschichte der deutschen Revolution*. Berlin, 1920.
- Oertzen, Friedrich Wilhelm von. *Kamerad, reich mir die Hand: Freikorps und Grenzschtz Baltikum und Heimat*. Berlin, 1933.
- Pieck, Wilhelm. *Die Grndung der K.P.D.: Erinnerungen an die November Revolution*. Berlin, 1928.
- Reinhard, Wilhelm. *1918-1919: Die Wehen der Republik*. Berlin, 1933.
- Roden, Hans, ed. *Deutsche Soldaten, vom Frontheer und Freikorps ber die Reichswehr zur neuen Wehrmacht*. Leipzig, 1935.
- Scheidemann, Philipp. *Memoiren eines Sozialdemokraten*. 2 vols. Dresden, 1928.
- _____. *The Making of New Germany: The Memoirs of Philipp Scheidemann*. 2 vols. Tr. from the German by J.E. Mitchell. Doubleday: New York, 1929.
- _____. *Der Zusammenbruch*. Berlin, 1921.
- Stephani, Major von. "Freikorps Potsdam", in *Deutsche Soldaten* (Ed. by Hans Roden). Leipzig, 1935.
- _____. "Der Sturm auf das Vorwrtsgebude", in *Deutsche Soldaten*. (Ed. by Hans Roden). Leipzig, 1935.

8. MONOGRAPHS AND SPECIAL STUDIES

- Drahn, Ernst. "Sozialdemokratie". *Handwörterbuch der Sozialwissenschaften* (Edited by L. Elster, A. Weber, and F. Wieser), VII, 510-566. 4th ed. Jena, 1926.

- Lutz, Ralph Hasswell. "The German Revolution, 1918-1919." In *Stanford University Publications*, Vol. I, No. 1., Stanford University: Palo Alto, 1922.
- Rothwell, Charles Easton. "Rosa Luxemburg and the German Social-Democratic Party". Unpublished doctoral dissertation in the Hoover Library, Stanford University, 1938.

9. GENERAL WORKS

- Bergsträsser, Ludwig. *Geschichte der politischen Parteien in Deutschland*. 6th ed. Berlin, 1932.
- Berlau, S. Joseph. *The German Social Democratic Party, 1914-1921*. Columbia University Press, 1979.
- Eyck, Erich. *A History of the Weimar Republic*. 2 vols. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962.
- Fischer, Ruth. *Stalin and German Communism: A Study in the Origins of the State Party*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1948.
- Flechtheim, Ossip K. *Die Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands in der Weimarer Republik*. Offenbach, 1968.
- Frölich, Paul. *Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Work*. Tr. from the German by Edward Fitzgerald. Doubleday: London, 1940.
- Gumbel, E.J. *Vier Jahre politischer Mord*. 5th ed. Berlin, 1922.
- Halperin, Samuel W. *Germany Tried Democracy: A Political History of the Reich from 1918 to 1933*. New York, 1946.
- Illustrierte Geschichte der deutschen Revolution*. Berlin, Internationale Arbeiter Verlag, 1929.
- Oertzen, Friedrich Wilhelm von. *Die deutschen Freikorps, 1918-1923*. 5th ed. Leipzig, 1939.
- Prager, Eugen. *Geschichte der U.S.P.D.: Entstehung und Entwicklung der Unabhängigen Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands*. Berlin, 1922.
- Rosenberg, Arthur. *A History of the German Republic*. Tr. from the German by Ian F.D. Morrow and L. Marie Sieverking. London, N/D.

Schmidt-Pauli, Edgar von. *Geschichte der Freikorps, 1918-1924.*
Stuttgart, 1936.

Stampfer, Friedrich. *Die ersten 14 Jahre der deutschen Republik.*
Offenbach, 1967.

Volkmann, Erich Otto. *Revolution über Deutschland.* Oldenburg,
1930.

Waite, Robert G.L. *Vanguard of Nazism: The Free Corps Movement
in Postwar Germany, 1918-1923.* Cambridge: Harvard
University Press, 1952.