

# German Social Democrat Crisis

This concluding instalment continues the story of the complete surrender of the German Social Democratic Party to capitalism. The betrayal of 9,000,000 workers, the warship program, are but a small part of the sordid story of Social Democratic treachery.

In view of the fact that the popular verdict given in the election was decidedly anti-monarchist (the monarchist nationalist party lost nearly two million votes and 30 seats, the fascists practically disappeared from the parliament) the Weimar coalition should be the constitutional government, if a coalition it must be. But the republican scruples of the social democratic leaders are not so exacting in their relation with the bourgeoisie, as they are when a revolutionary situation has to be met from the working class point of view.

To save the capitalist state, the social democratic leaders not only betrayed the working class voters; they even violated their cherished goddess of republicanism. At the behest of the monarchist president of the republic, Hindenburg, the social democratic leaders agreed to enter into coalition with the quasi-monarchist peoples' party.

## Big Industry Dominant.

The peoples' party, in spite of its defeat at the polls, dominates the political life of the country, not by virtue of its lingering homage to the decayed and discredited monarchy, but because it is the party of heavy industry. Through the policy of Gustav Stresemann, the leader of the peoples' party, Germany has regained her position inside the constellation of imperialist states (the League of Nations). Stresemann is the father and promoter of the policy of "west orientation" in German foreign relations, as against the former tendency of a rapprochement with the U. S. S. R. to resist the domination of Entente imperialism.

In view of this record of his, in addition to the fact that his Party represents the heavy industries closely connected with international trust and finance, Stresemann should conduct the foreign policy of any German government which wanted to defend the present order of things. And Stresemann would not enter a government except to dominate it in the interests of heavy industry and international trust-capital. So, the composition of the coalition was determined neither by the social democratic chancellor, nor even by the outcome of the election. It was dictated by the big bourgeoisie, through the monarchist president and the convenience of international finance.

## Complete Surrender on Program.

Next, the social democratic ministers surrendered themselves completely to the bourgeoisie on the question of the program of the government. Indeed, the social democratic minister had little to say about it, unless they were prepared to go out of the coalition, and travel the road of revolution. By their firm determination to shun that road themselves, and to mislead the working class away from it, the social democratic leaders had tacitly agreed that the program of the coalition government should be the promotion of the interests of the new German imperialism.

Masters of the situation, Stresemann and his party of heavy industry took the offensive. They refused to enter the coalition, unless the social democrats agreed to the subversion of the republican government of Prussia. These gave in, agreeing in principle to the recon-

## Complete Surrender to Bourgeois Parties On the Program of Government

ment from a Weimar coalition into a grand coalition.

### Act as "Individual" Socialists.

To free themselves from the responsibility to the party, the social democratic ministers accepted the suggestion of Stresemann that the members of the government should act not as representatives of their respective parties, but as individuals, pending the settlement of controversial questions as regards the composition and program of the coalition. The result of this arrangement was presently felt, particularly in relation to the construction of new battleships. The representative of the bourgeois parties in the coalition, of course, persistently defended the interests of their class; whereas on every controversial issue the social democratic ministers availed themselves of the freedom of responsibility to the party to betray the class whom they pretended to represent in the government.

### Betray 9,000,000 Workers.

To cover up their surrender on essential questions concerning the policy of the government, the social democratic ministers desired to have four points of minor importance settled. They had to do something about their election pledges. The points they raised were about (1) amnesty for political prisoners; (2) Legislation making the day of the adoption of the Weimar constitution a national holiday; (3) Educational reform; and (4) Construction of battleships. None of these are remotely connected with the burning economic demands of the working class, not to mention the realization of socialism. Nevertheless, even these points were not conceded by the bourgeois parties. Except partial amnesty, no agreement could be reached on the other items.

In deference to the sentiments of the not negligible monarchist elements among its supporters, the peoples' party, and even the center party, would not commit themselves as regards legislation about a republican national holiday. Still, the social democratic leaders did not hesitate to betray nine million working class voters for the bourgeois republic! The catholic center party was opposed to educational reform freeing the schools from the domination of the church.

### Cruiser-Building Crisis.

But the first shock to the coalition, throwing the social democratic party in the throes of an unprecedented crisis, resulted from the controversy on the construction of new battleships. The previous government, in spite of the opposition of the social democrats, had decided to build four armored cruisers replacing the old ones left to Germany by the Versailles Treaty.

On the insistence of the bourgeois parties the settlement of the controversy over the construction of the battleships, together with all the other controversial questions, major or minor, were postponed until the grand coalition would be definitely constituted in the autumn after the republican government of Prussia had been adulterated with monarchist leaven. So, the social democrats entered the coalition unconditionally, on the terms dictated by the bourgeoisie, even by the monarchists.

### Permit Warship Building.

Presently, the bourgeois minister of defense, a general of the old

army, demanded the sanction of the government for the actual construction of the battleships, in spite of the fact that the settlement of this question had been postponed on the insistence of the bourgeois parties. The minister of defense made his demand on the ground that the decision had been made by the previous parliament, and the financial provision in the previous year's budget. The social democratic ministers were placed in a very awkward position. The previous parliament had decided to construct the battleships against their opposition. Then, to oppose the construction of new battleships was one of the main slogans in the election. Besides, nobody with the slightest regard for the interests of the German working class can approve of the expenditure of money for the construction of new battleships, when the money could be employed to reduce the heavy tax upon wages. Nevertheless, the social democratic ministers agreed to the construction of the cruisers, cynically violating their election pledges, the expressed anti-militarist sentiment of the working class and their own profession of disarmament and pacifism. They could not do otherwise, unless they were prepared to abandon the policy of coalition, and thereby cease to be social democrats. Their refusal to agree should be followed by their resignation, which would mean a return to the political crisis to solve which the coalition was formed.

### Cynical Deception.

The whole social democratic party and the masses were enraged by the action of the social democratic ministers. The demagogic talents of the leaders, the maneuvering ability of the party bureaucrats and power of persuasion of all, had to be taxed to the extreme to prevent that the revolt of the masses went beyond-control. In opposition to the Communist demand for a referendum, the social democratic ministers declared their intention to ask the Reichstag to prohibit the construction of all battleships.

By his maneuver they deceived the social democratic workers who were persuaded not to support the Communist demand for referendum. Their refusal to submit the question to a referendum revealed the hypocritical and demagogic nature of the dramatic move of the social democratic leaders bringing the following motion before the Reichstag: "The Reichstag prohibits the construction of all battleships." It was a foregone conclusion that the motion would be defeated in the Reichstag, as except the social democrats, Communists and perhaps a few democrats, all would vote against it. And precisely for this reason—the surety of its defeat—did the social democratic leaders table the motion. If they really meant to have the construction of battleships prohibited constitutionally, they would have supported the Communist demand for referendum.

The result of the election revealed that the roots of parliamentary democracy were decayed. The composition of the new Reichstag was such as made the formation of a majority government impossible without violating the verdict of the electorate. In the election, the voting had been clearly on class lines. In casting their votes by millions for the social democratic and Communist candidates, the working

class, even a certain section of the petty bourgeoisie, had expressed their will to fight the policies of capitalist stabilization. They wanted a government which would protect and promote the interests of the working class.

This was a repudiation of the policy of coalition; for those wishing to defend working class interests could not enter into coalition with the advocates of capitalist rationalization which had been realized and was to be further carried on, at the expense of the working class. The lessons of the election were: first, the rejection of the policy of coalition by the working class, and second, the inapplicability of parliamentary democracy in a situation characterized by sharpening class struggle.

### Insurmountable Crisis

After the election it became evident that the capitalist state was far from being stabilized. On the contrary, capitalist stabilization, effected through rationalization, had further accentuated the class conflict—which contributed to the decay of the bourgeois democratic state. Judged by the composition of the newly-elected Reichstag, the parliamentary democratic state is no more stable than it was in the revolutionary days of 1923. Indeed, it is less so, in spite of superficial appearances. Today, without the social democrats, there cannot be a government having a majority in the Reichstag.

This political crisis would be insurmountable within the limits of parliamentary democracy, should the social democrats act according to the will of their electors. The result of the election placed the social democratic party before two alternatives, namely, (1) either to make parliamentary government impossible, thereby beginning the struggle for the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist state, or (2) to enter into coalition with the bourgeoisie to help the stabilization of the capitalist state.

### Saviors of Capitalist State

The social democratic leaders, however, had their course previously decided. They are hostile to revolution, and, therefore, were only too eager to assume the responsibility of forming a coalition government which would steer the ship of the capitalist republic out of the troubled waters of a political crisis fraught with revolutionary possibilities. What else could they do? The other course would be to join forces with the Communists in a determined opposition to the possible conflict of bourgeois block with a very precarious majority, causing a permanent parliamentary crisis. The inevitable result would be dissolution of the Reichstag and new elections before long.

In the new election taking place under such circumstances, the social democrats and communists would be sure to be returned in still greater number. With a possible working class majority in the Reichstag, the social democratic leaders would have no more excuse for delaying the enforcement of the Socialist program. The illusions of parliamentary democracy, with which the social democratic theorists have misled and betrayed the masses for years, would, in that case, be rudely shaken.

It would become clear that there is no gradual and peaceful way between bourgeois democracy and Socialism. The two are mutually exclusive. The bourgeoisie would begin the civil war. They would not have their property, power and privileges taken away by acts of parliament. As intelligent people, the social democratic theorists an-

...the top car, taking away the waste and ore that were sent to the surface. The Brooklyn was an inclined shaft fourteen hundred feet deep, in which there was a skip that was hauled up by the engine for which I was firing the boilers. For a while I worked in what was called the Mormon stope; it had been given this name because several of the men employed there were from the San Pete valley, a strictly Mormon section. I worked in several different places in this mine, which was producing lead. There were men going to and coming from the hospital all the time, suffering from lead poisoning. This is one of the serious vocational diseases with which the workers have to contend, but there was no provision made for them. In that part of the country the miners were sent to hospitals in Salt Lake City which they themselves maintained. Every miner had one dollar a month taken out of his wages by the company for hospital services. Their transportation to and from the hospital the workers had to pay themselves. A crowd of lead miners presents a ghastly appearance, as their faces are ashen pale.

There are many dangers to which a miner is exposed besides rheumatism, consumption, lead poisoning, and other diseases. One of these is the constant danger of falling rock when a mine is not kept closely timbered. I was working but a short distance from Louis Fontaine when he was killed by a slab of rock from the roof that crushed his head on the drill that he was holding. We got the body out of the stope on a timber truck, ran it to the station, and put all that was left of Louis in the skip. We rang three bells for the surface. Some of us laid off to go to the funeral.

The men rode on the skip coming up to dinner at quitting time. Four could sit in the skip on either side, two on the crossbar, and one on the angle to which the steel cable was fastened. One day I got on the cable behind the man on the angle and rode all the way to the top. It was one of the most hair-raising experiences of my life. The cable was whipping the timbers at the top and the rollers on which the skip ran up the steep incline. I was afraid every second that my hands would be caught as I held on to the cable behind my head, and I gripped the

...ticipated long ago such a sharpening of the situation. And, in order to hinder the development of the class struggle to such a pitch, they formulated the policy of coalition.

### Afraid of Revolution

The counter-revolutionary purpose of coalition was still more revealed in the process of its formation. The theory that coalition government can serve as the instrument for the realization of Socialism makes one expect that the social democrats, while entering them, would make conditions guaranteeing the promotion of working class interests. But the social democrats entered the present coalition government (as all of them do everywhere) on the terms dictated by the bourgeois parties. The latest instance in Germany is the worst, for all the bourgeois parties had been heavily beaten at the polls. Fear of revolution, anxiety to save the capitalist republic, obliged the social democratic leaders to forego their electoral triumph, to betray the nine million voters.

### Not Even Republicans

The first stage of the negotiation for the formation of the coalition cabinet was concerned with its composition. Should it be a Weimar coalition or a grand coalition? The former is a cabinet based upon the parties that unconditionally accept the republican constitution of Weimar. The latter includes the people's party, which has never adhered fully to republican principles.