

Robin Blick 1975

Fascism in Germany: How Hitler Destroyed the World's Most Powerful Labour Movement

Source: Published in two volumes in 1975 by Steyn Publications, 27 Rosemont Court, London W3, under the pseudonym Robert Black.

Transcribed: by Ted Crawford and Paul Flowers and prepared by Paul Flowers for the Marxist Internet Archive.

Contents

Introduction

Chapter I: The Roots of German Reaction

Chapter II: Marx and Engels on the German Question: Bonapartism and the Bismarckian Legacy

Chapter III: 'Blood and Iron': The Politics of German Heavy Industry

Chapter IV: The Heroic Age of German Labour

Chapter V: The Imperialist Crucible

Chapter VI: The First Seeds are Sown

Chapter VII: The First Betrayals: Social Democracy in War and Revolution

Chapter VIII: The Political Economy of National Socialism

Chapter IX: Hitler: The Formative Years

Chapter X: No Man's Land

Chapter XI: NSDAP

Chapter XII: Italy: The First Warning

Chapter XIII: From Kapp to Munich: Genesis of a Strategy

Chapter XIV: Big Business Rationalises

Chapter XV: Hitler Rebuilds

Chapter XVI: United Front from Below

Chapter XVII: The World Crisis and the Fall of Müller

Chapter XVIII: 14 September 1930

Chapter XIX: 'Toleration'

Chapter XX: Hitler's Road to Harzburg

Chapter XXI: 'Red Unions'

Chapter XXII: Stalin over Germany: From Rapallo to Red Referendum

Chapter XXIII: The Eighteenth Brumaire of Franz von Papen

Chapter XXIV: The Last Chance

Chapter XXV: National Concentration

Chapter XXVI: Capital and Labour in the Third Reich

Appendix I: German Fascism and the Historians

Appendix II: Social Democracy on the German Catastrophe

Appendix III: History Falsified

Appendix IV: Germany and the Fourth International

Author's Postscript

Fascism in Germany. Robin Blick 1975

Introduction

Trotsky once described Hitler's triumph as 'the greatest defeat of the proletariat in the history of the world'.

And despite 40 years more of imperialist wars, betrayed revolutions and ultra-rightist coups, we have no reason to revise this judgement. In the brief period between Hitler's terror election 'victory' of 5 March 1933, and 24 July, when Nazi Germany was officially declared a one-party state, the world's most powerful, disciplined, wealthy and politically cultured labour movement had been reduced to rubble. To grasp the sheer physical magnitude of this defeat, it is necessary to take an inventory of the assets assembled with such sacrifice and devotion by the German working class over three-quarters of a century which were pillaged by the Nazi looters.

On the eve of Hitler's victory, the Social Democratic Party published no fewer than 196 daily newspapers, 18 weeklies and one monthly theoretical journal. The German Trade Union Federation, allied with but officially independent of the SPD, also published numerous journals for its various affiliated unions. And with a membership of approximately five million workers, they commanded an entire parallel apparatus alongside that of the Social Democrats. Then there was the German Communist Party, whose membership at the end of 1932 was, at about 350 000, one-third of the SPD's. The Communist Party, apart from publishing nearly a score of daily papers, produced several weeklies and its own theoretical journal. And it too had its own trade union organisation, the Red Trade Union Opposition, which at its peak claimed about 320 000 workers. So allowing for the inevitable overlapping of membership in these organisations, we still have a compact and centrally-directed proletarian army of some six million troops, who at election times with clockwork regularity gathered around themselves a further six to seven million voters. Indeed, in the last free parliamentary elections of 12 November 1932, the combined Communist - Social Democratic vote exceeded by nearly 1.5 million that of the Nazis. Yet the Nazis won!

Clearly we will have to seek for the secret of Hitler's success, not on the plane of parliamentary vote-catching, nor even in the field of efficient party organisation and discipline, for here the German labour movement was more than a match for the motley columns who marched for a thousand and one motives behind the Nazi banner.

The answer lies in political strategy. Hitler, despite all the obvious contradictions within his movement, knew what he wanted and how to get it. The great tragedy of the German working class was that its leaders, without intending to, made his victory certain. The immense proletarian army that they commanded was ready to fight and, if necessary, to die in order that fascism should not triumph in Germany as it had in Italy 10 years previously. Numerous groups of workers throughout Germany had proved this, both before and after the Nazi seizure of power in bloody battles with the Nazis in defence of working-class meetings, demonstrations and party premises. The Nazi battalions, though led in the main by World War veterans and Free Corps officers, were composed almost entirely of third-rate human material - what Trotsky contemptuously termed 'human dust'.

What gave them the resolve to attack the citadels of the German working class was not just the tacit - and sometimes open - support of the police, though this was undoubtedly an important factor in transforming cowards into heroes.

Vacillation, confusion, demoralisation and downright treachery at the summits of the proletarian general staff - this more than anything else cemented the SA rabble with a murdered pimp as its martyred saint into an all-conquering avalanche of brown gangsters. Their true mettle became clear for all to see when, little more than a year after their orgy of pillage and plunder on the debris of the German labour movement, Hitler dispatched their leaders to eternity without so much as a protest or murmur from the ranks of this now four-million-strong swaggering horde. In both cases, Hitler's essentially middle-class army proved itself incapable of playing an independent political role. When the Nazi leaders - acting in close collaboration with the heads of industry, finance and the armed forces - gave the order to attack, they attacked. The very scope and impact of their enemies' defeat gave to the Nazi petit-bourgeois the illusion that the victory - and the spoils - were all his own.

Disabused of this fantasy by the continued and even greatly enhanced power of the trusts, banks and landowners, these millions of frustrated Nazi 'plebeians' were utterly incapable of converting their rage into action. They were, apart from the privileged elements siphoned off into the Nazi bureaucracy, the

discarded cannon-fodder of monopoly capitalism's counter-revolutionary army. They were only to be given arms again in 1939, when Hitler had found fresh fields to conquer and plunder. And once again, the brown-shirted warrior returned from battle - if he was fortunate enough to survive - empty handed. Again the spoils fell to the same giant trusts that had financed Hitler's march to power. For the first three years of the war, their investment in National Socialism proved to be the most lucrative in the entire history of German capitalism.

All too numerous are those who believe that because the German middle class earned little but kicks in the teeth, and bullets in the brain, in return for its services to German big business, then never again will the forces be found to rally a mass movement against the organisations of the working class. Pathetic delusion! As if political movements - and least of all fascist ones - evolved on the lines of abstract reason and formal logic. The example of Italy is before us all. There, even after 22 years of Fascist rule, and the untold destruction and misery it brought to the Italian people as a result of Mussolini's participation in Hitler's crusade against Bolshevism and the Western 'plutocracies', fascism is once again raising its head, attracting hundreds of thousands, even millions to its banner of militant anti-Communism and open right-wing dictatorship. Only fools or traitors can point to the numerically large Italian labour movement now and claim that it will never succumb, never permit another 'March on Rome'. We do not doubt for one moment the militant anti-fascist temper and resolve of the rank-and-file Italian trade unionist, Socialist Party or Communist Party worker. But just as surely as night follows day - and the Italian workers endured nearly a quarter of a century of political night - the 'peaceful road to socialism' policies of the Italian Stalinists, centrists and reformists will, unless countered and exposed as suicidal to the entire working class, lead to a new and unimaginably more ferocious reign of terror descending on the Italian proletariat.

Neither is this threat confined to Italy; in Britain the growth of ultra-rightist tendencies inside the Tory party around Enoch Powell and the Monday Club, not to speak of the considerable increase in the membership and activities of the National Front, are but the surface phenomena of a far deeper shift inside sections of the middle class and backward, unorganised workers and youth towards reactionary solutions to their problems.

At a certain stage in the development of the economic and political crisis in this country, these currents could be given organised form, and large forces mobilised by big business, as they were in Germany and Italy, as a battering ram against the labour movement. The main factor militating against such a turn of events today is not a devotion to parliamentary democracy on the part of either the Tories or their monopoly capitalist supporters.

The present Conservative government - these lines were written in June 1973 - has, despite its militantly anti-union programme, still found it possible to exploit the supine cowardice and class-collaborationist policies of the trade union bureaucracy.

While the TUC is still able to offer this collaboration, and proves itself able to sell it to sizeable sections of the working class as preferable to other, more militant lines of action, the ruling class has no need of a mass fascist movement.

Nor can fascist movements be manufactured overnight by mass propaganda. Like crucial strategic shifts in the ruling class, they are generated by powerful objective forces and events, international as well as national. Clearly, if fascism were simply something hatched up in boardrooms and barracks, then there would be very little to stop the bourgeoisie attempting to introduce its methods of rule whenever they felt the circuitous ones of parliamentary democracy irksome. ^[1]

Incidentally, this is what distinguishes fascism from military Bonapartist forms of dictatorship, that is, Greece. Fascism begins its bloody work after entrenching itself in power by means of a combination of manoeuvrings at the summits of the state and the methods of civil war on the streets. Its main combat troops are not professional soldiers, but disoriented petit-bourgeois and declassed workers and youth, driven crazy to the point of blindness by the crisis of capitalism; so crazy and blind in fact that they will follow anyone, however 'mad' - and many were the politicians and political journalists who called Hitler that! - who seems to offer them a clear-cut and swift solution to the crisis that is tormenting them.

No one can predict with any reasonable hope of accuracy the time-scale or sequence of events which could precipitate a massive break-up in the present two-party political system. But the elements of such a change are already visible in the rapid growth of the Liberal vote on a catch-all programme which,

according to informed sources within the party itself, is attracting former conservative voters who are looking for a leader well to the right of Edward Heath.

This work does not pretend to deal with this problem, vital though it is for the future of the British labour movement. Neither does *Fascism in Germany* intend in any way to supplant the many and brilliant writings of Leon Trotsky on the rise of National Socialism and the policies which facilitated its victory. Rather it seeks to place in the hands of the reader something that is not available in any other book in the English language - a thoroughly documented analysis, not only of German fascism itself, but its political antecedents dating from the failure of the 1848 Revolution, through the era of Bismarckian Bonapartism up to the outbreak of the First World War.

It also undertakes a detailed survey of the political trends and tensions present throughout the Weimar Republic, and which had their brutal and tragic climax in the victory of National Socialism. The many-sided and still controversial question of the relationship of big business with German fascism naturally occupies a prominent place in this work, and here again, the reader will encounter documentary evidence and material not readily accessible elsewhere. Finally - and from the point of view of the author - most important of all, there is the problem of the German workers' movement itself. Here an attempt is made to supplement the critique of its leadership undertaken by Trotsky during the last three years of the Weimar Republic, and to relate this in turn to the impact of the rise of Stalinism in the Soviet Union.

It is the author's considered opinion that Soviet foreign policy - and here, of course, we are referring exclusively to Stalin and his Bonapartist clique - played a vital, indeed decisive, role in the rise to power of German fascism. Naturally, a charge of this nature and dimension is hard to substantiate without access to materials that by their very nature have either been long ago dispatched to the incinerator, or are inaccessible to the genuine student of Soviet history. Thus the case rests to a certain extent on circumstantial evidence. It is up to those who still hold a brief for counter-revolutionary Stalinism to refute these charges. And they are far less fantastic today, when viewed in the light of the Kremlin's recently-kindled friendship for Fascist Spain, Colonels' Greece and the right-wing military regime in Indonesia, which has approximately one million Communist corpses to its credit. Nor should we belittle the political significance of similar policies pursued by Maoist China or its supporters in Albania. China now recognises General Franco as the legitimate ruler of Spain, while keeping the entire Chinese people in a state of total ignorance as to how he came to hold this position. Meanwhile, those militant upholders of the Stalin myth, the Hoxha clique, have on more than one occasion handed back to the Greek police pro-Moscow Communists who have sought political asylum in 'Communist' Albania. (It should also be noted that Bulgaria has performed a similar service for the Greek junta, only in this case the unfortunate victims of this act of 'proletarian internationalism' were pro-Peking Stalinists.

All these acts of treachery, revolting though they are, have as their precedent the collaboration by Stalin with the rulers of Nazi Germany, both in the first months of Hitler's victory, when his power was by no means secure, and during the period of the Nazi - Soviet Pact.

That is why this work concerns itself with these - for some at any rate - embarrassing historical questions. They take on a new relevance within the context of the Kremlin's accelerated tempo of collaboration with the leaders of world imperialism, and Peking's desperate attempts to outbid Moscow in slavish devotion to the status quo. A leopard cannot change its spots, and a Stalinist bureaucracy remains a Stalinist bureaucracy, counter-revolutionary through and through and prepared to commit any betrayal of the international working class in order to defend its own material and political privileges.

It is the hope of the author that this book will alert its readers - and he trusts that they will be found principally in the most politically-conscious sections of the working-class movement - to the real class meaning of fascism, and more than this, to indicate how it can be fought and defeated.

As far as is possible, the 'dramatis personae' in this book will speak for themselves. Industrialists, bankers, Junkers, labour bureaucrats and Stalinist functionaries, Comintern officials and Reichstag deputies, Nazi agitators and political wirepullers - their voices will be heard in this book. Where they speak with several voices - as was more often than not the case - then that too will become clear by use of the same method.

The reader may well be bemused by the space devoted to a critique of other accounts of National Socialism. In fact, any attempt to write a scientific history of German fascism without challenging those who in one way or another, and for one motive or another, have distorted and even repressed that history, would be simply an academic exercise. For these historians and sociologists, just as much as for Stalinists and reformists, a history of German fascism must have an element of an alibi. The liberal, while horrified

at what he sees in the Nazi death camps, recoils from the notion that this could in any way be the product of capitalism. Certain wicked and greedy businessmen (who are usually presented as being, at the same time, political babes-in-arms) may well have greased Hitler's path to power, and even crossed his palm with gold, but capitalism as a system cannot and must not be indicted for the unspeakable crime of Auschwitz. For the implications of such an admission are too awful to contemplate.

Then along comes the Stalinist, who can of course (when he is not currently engaged in inveigling sections of the ruling class into a 'broad alliance' for the defence of 'peace and democracy') undertake a far more serious class analysis of fascism. He can even trace - as did the veteran British Stalinist, R Palme Dutt, in his 1934 work *Fascism and Social Revolution* - the relationship between the betrayals of Social Democracy from 1914 to 1933 and the eventual victory of Hitler.

But precisely at this point, when the reader should ask himself: 'Since the reformists are congenitally unable to mobilise the workers to fight fascism, why could not the Communists do the job?', Dutt and his fellow Stalinist historians have to stop. Their relationship to Stalinism, past as well as present, drives them to distort the real relationship of forces in Germany, and in the end, to put the blame for the victory of the Nazis on the working class themselves. Social Democratic commentators on German fascism simply supplement the distortions of the Stalinists. They can write with great facility - and on occasions with formal correctness - on the ultra-left policies of the German Communist Party, on how it substituted abuse for analysis by labelling Social Democrats as 'social fascists' and how it split the working class by refusing, under any conditions, to enter a united front with the reformist workers' organisations.

This was one of the great crimes of 'Third Period' Stalinism, that it gave the reformists the totally undeserved opportunity to criticise purported Communist policies from a seemingly Marxist standpoint.

It enabled - as it still does to this day - reformism to divert attention away from its own complicity in the defeat of the German working class. Stalinism and reformism batten on each other in the realm of history as much as in the field of day-to-day political struggle. The exposure of this silent, but nevertheless very real collaboration is therefore a necessary part of the overall fight to defeat both these political tendencies. The author also considers it politically correct to take issue with organisations which while claiming to base themselves on Trotsky's writings, theory and general principles, have, in the author's opinion, departed from them in so far as they relate to the problem of fascism. Of course, this revision of Trotsky's analysis of fascism and the policies which he insisted should be adopted to combat it has gone much further in some organisations than others.

But unless there is a full and unfettered discussion within the ranks of the workers' movement on this question, the very right to discuss anything at all may well be put in jeopardy; above all else, the movement demands theoretical clarity.

Finally, a word of thanks to all those who helped make the publication of this book possible: to those who lent money with no certainty of seeing it returned, to the Weiner Library, whose staff gave me invaluable advice and assistance in my quest for elusive documents, to my wife Karen for meticulously checking the text at every stage in the book's preparation, to my dear daughter Katharine, who on more occasions than I care to remember, reluctantly but dutifully refrained from helping me type the copy, and finally to my father, Bill, from whom I first learned what socialism was, and who in ill-health and at the age of 70, unstintingly undertook the arduous task of translating vast tracts of the most un-Goethe-like German into perfect English prose. My thanks to them all. I hope they find their efforts and sacrifices worthwhile.

Robert Black

28 June 1973

Notes

1. Not to speak of the enormous resistance that such an unprepared coup would encounter amongst the working class. Viz the examples of the Franco uprising in Spain, which was not linked to any mass fascist movement, and the Kapp Putsch in Germany. The prospects of immediate success for a militarist-type putsch are obviously far greater where the working class is either poorly organised or numerically small, as in the case of the Greek military coup of April 1967. But even here, the treacherous leadership of the Stalinists, placidly awaiting the long-promised parliamentary elections that were to open the road to a democratic Greece, was decisive.

Chapter I: The Roots of German Reaction

England, and later France, were the only nations to enjoy the relative historical luxury of a thoroughgoing bourgeois-democratic revolution. For behind Cromwell and Robespierre there stood not a modern industrial proletariat, already taking its first steps towards political and organisational independence, but an amorphous plebeian mass which, because of its social and political heterogeneity, could the more easily be harnessed to the goals of an emergent bourgeoisie in its struggle against the nobility. This is not to deny that the revolutions of 1640-49 and 1789-94 projected a 'proletarian' wing with its own utopian-communist programme - we have the examples before us of Winstanley and the Diggers, of Babeuf and his 'Conspiracy of the Equals', proving that even the classic bourgeois revolutions contained within them the embryo of the modern proletarian movement and the socialist revolution.

Why, the reader might well ask, the preoccupation with France and England when the nation under discussion is Germany? The answer is quite simple. The modern class struggle is fought out under economic conditions dominated by a worldwide system - imperialism. But the classes - and this applies with particular force to Western and Central Europe - do battle on a national terrain steeped in the traditions, forms of thought, organisation and political culture generated by conflicts reaching back to the very dawn of capitalist society. Whether conscious of it or not, the combatants of the class war under imperialism, while responding to modern economic, social and political demands, pressures and crises, do so in a way which has been moulded to a considerable degree by the struggles of their ancestors. As Marx put it:

Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please: they do not make it under circumstances directly encountered, given from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just when they seem engaged in revolutionising themselves and things, in creating something that has never yet existed, precisely in such periods of revolutionary crisis they anxiously borrow from them names, battle cries and costumes in order to present the new scene of history in this time-honoured disguise and this borrowed language. ^[1]

Though financed, supported and armed by modern monopoly capitalism, enforcing its dictatorship through the most up-to-date techniques of propaganda, repression and mass mobilisation, and waging its wars with a truly formidable combination of military precision and political audacity, German fascism marched to power brandishing the symbols of ancient Aryan tribes, shrieking the curses of medieval pogromists and proclaiming the pagan myths of 'blood and soil'. The eastwards drive of German imperialism shrouded itself in the cloak and visor of the Teutonic Knights. From beginning to end, the counter-revolution of German finance capital decked itself out in the garb of the Dark Ages.

So the emergence (as distinct from victory) of National Socialism cannot be explained purely in terms of the 1929 economic crisis, nor by the inflation of 1923. Nor is it enough to refer to the failures of leadership on the part of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) from 1914 onwards, or the German Communist Party (KPD) in the post-1918 period. These are factors which, to a greater or lesser extent, contributed to the triumph of German fascism in 1933. They also help to explain why National Socialism found favourable conditions both politically and economically for winning the leadership of the middle class in the period immediately prior to its seizure of power. But they are in no way adequate in unearthing the *origins* of the social forces which predisposed the German petit-bourgeoisie to the programme of fascist counter-revolution. Nor do they tell us anything about the precise forms which Hitler's bloody crusade against Marxism and the workers' movement took. Yet without such a study in depth of German fascism, without a dimension which begins with the assembly of the major classes of German capitalist society in the period of the bourgeois revolution, a history of National Socialism must of necessity confine itself either to banal generalities about the 1929 crisis or the sophistries of 'cultural determinism'. ^[2]

These 'explanations' of German fascism - the 'general' and those that focus almost exclusively on the 'particular' - are the reverse sides of the same non-dialectical coin.

So too must we dismiss those superficial accounts which treat National Socialism as the creation of individual leaders or skilful propaganda. The most gifted leader, agitator or propagandist - and the Nazi Party certainly had its share of these - must still strike a chord in the hearts of the masses before they can stand at the head of a movement numbering millions. The seed requires fertile soil and the necessary

amounts of sunshine and rain. Thus the Nazi counter-revolution not only required a political camouflage to mobilise its petit-bourgeois and lumpen-proletarian battering-ram against the entrenched organisations of the German working class. The whole course of German history determined the form this onslaught took. The prime issue therefore is one of method, of analysis and synthesis, of delineation between form and content, between general and particular, between the subjective and the objective:

The difference between subjectivism (scepticism, sophistry, etc) and dialectics... is that in (objective) dialectics the difference between the relative and absolute is itself relative. For objective dialectics there is an absolute *within* the relative. For subjectivism and sophistry the relative is only relative and excludes the absolute... [In objective dialectics]... the opposites (the individual is opposed to the universal) are identical: the individual exists only in the connection that leads to the universal. The universal exists only in the individual and through the individual... ^[3]

So to laying bare those historical forces which nurtured National Socialism, we seek to throw fresh light on the possible - indeed probable - forms that counter-revolution might, given the opportunity, assume here in Britain. Not in the sense that German and British fascism will share many common points of social origin - the absence of a peasantry and artisan class in Britain suggests that mass movements of reaction will find other points of support than they did in Germany and, to a lesser degree, in Italy. No, the point is not to hunt for superficial historical parallels. Rather we should bear in mind Lenin's proposition that within every relative we can discern an absolute, that in probing German fascism to its deepest roots we can develop methodological concepts and tools of analysis which will enable us better to equip the workers' movement in this country for the inevitable struggle against those who seek its destruction. ^[4]

This now brings us to the problem of the relationship between National Socialism and the aborted bourgeois-democratic revolutions of 1848.

The ironies, paradoxes and tragedies of German history over the last 150 years only become intelligible when viewed within the larger context of the combined yet uneven development of capitalism in both its imperialist and pre-imperialist epochs. Indeed, Engels held that one of the two main causes of Germany's failure to emerge as a unified, modern state in the sixteenth century was the sudden shifting of the focus of European trade away from its traditional routes through Germany towards the maritime powers in the West. The discovery of the New World disrupted an entire network of commercial, social and political relations in Central Europe, draining the confidence of the German people and throwing the previously rich and politically aroused burghers into utter disarray. Lutheranism quickly lost its revolutionary cutting edge and evolved a quietist character which was to play a pernicious role in German politics for the next four centuries. The bourgeois-Protestant reformation was destined to find its truly democratic and plebeian expression in the 'Lunatics' of Cromwell's revolutionary army, the Ironsides.

The defeat of Germany's first attempt to carry through the bourgeois-democratic revolution doomed its people to more than a century of fratricidal conflicts as the cat's-paw of contending religious and dynastic factions, a decline which culminated in the Thirty Years War in which at least a third of the German population died and its meagre economic resources were pillaged or laid waste.

The only victors proved to be the petty and greater nobility and clergy. Unlike the burghers, peasants, artisans and workers, they had much to gain from a weak and divided Germany, torn by religious dissension and shattered into several hundred political fragments. The downward plunging curve of German history after the defeat of the 1525 Peasants' Revolt without doubt sapped the political fibre of the German bourgeoisie and kindled within it that trait of extreme conservatism and craving for an all-powerful protector which reached its malignant zenith under the regimes of Bismarck and Hitler.

Here we must warn against any tendency to adopt a 'unilinear' view of German history. Each nation, it almost goes without saying, has internal driving forces which develop characteristics and peculiarities which constitute precisely the concept of 'nation'. But the nations, and the classes which their boundaries encompass, are also the unique products of a much larger process of crystallisation and fermentation which, since the earliest phases of human history, has not only transcended national and continental barriers, but helped shape them. To return to our first methodological principle, 'the individual exists only in the connection that leads to the universal. The universal exists only in the individual and through the individual.'

So to understand the many vivid contrasts in the course of German, French and English history, it is necessary not only to familiarise oneself with internal developments, but their mutual interaction and penetration, as parts of a unified yet divided and contradictory whole. Concretely, in what ways did the multifarious layers of Germany's and Europe's past prepare the political soil for the seeds of fascist counter-revolution?

Let us take as our starting point a remark made by Nazi Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels during a broadcast speech on 1 April 1933, when he declared in all seriousness that with the formation of the Hitler dictatorship, 'the year 1789 is hereby eradicated from history'. ^[5]

The German bourgeoisie - and here we are speaking principally of its dominant industrial and banking segment - in 1933 found itself compelled to place in power a party and regime which stridently proclaimed its total repudiation of the bourgeois revolution! And yet beneath this paradox there is concealed a class logic which lies at the core of fascism. In order to retain power in periods of profound social, economic and political upheaval, in order to divide and destroy those class forces which threaten not only its profits but its very right to rule, the bourgeoisie has to declare war on all those ideals which it used in an earlier epoch to rally the people against feudalism, and those institutions with which it both buttressed and popularised its own rule. This is one of the universal aspects of fascism, one which can be detected in every particular national case. But the precise form and course of this reaction by a pro-fascist bourgeoisie against its own democratic-revolutionary past will vary widely according to both circumstances and history. In Germany, it was greatly conditioned both by the success of the French Revolution and the miserable fiasco of its own, not only in the sixteenth century, but far more important, in that of 1848-49. Trotsky aptly summed up the essential difference between the German and French bourgeoisie when he wrote that the latter:

... succeeded in bringing off its Great Revolution. Its consciousness was the consciousness of society and nothing could become established as an institution without first passing through its consciousness as an aim, as a problem of political creation. It often resorted to theatrical poses in order to hide from itself the limitations of its own bourgeois world - but it marched forward.

This bourgeois class confidence and aggression contrasted with that of the German capitalist class, which:

... from the very start, did not 'make' the revolution, but dissociated itself from it. Its consciousness rose against the objective conditions for its own domination. The revolution could only be carried out not by it but against it. Democratic institutions represented to its mind not an aim to fight for but a menace to its welfare. ^[6]

Great social and political upheavals mould all their participants, whether victor or vanquished, hero or traitor. Those industrialists and bankers who made their counter-revolutionary compact with Hitler in the last years of the Weimar Republic were acting as the heirs of a reactionary tradition reaching back to the very birth of German capitalism.

Enthusiasm for the ideals of the French Revolution - democratic republican government and a world ruled by reason - was to be found not in the propertied strata of the German bourgeoisie nor indeed its associated political circles, but among philosophers, musicians and writers. The young Beethoven (born 1770) was profoundly moved and artistically inspired by the political cataclysm across the Rhine from his native Bonn. At a time when fainter hearts were recoiling from the Jacobin 'reign of terror' the composer had written in the autograph of a friend:

I am not wicked - fiery blood
Is all my malice and my crime is youth.
To help wherever one can
Love liberty above all things
Never deny the truth
Even at the foot of the throne. ^[7]

Consciously a revolutionary in music, he readily identified with all those struggling to liberate mankind from the fetters of the past. His third symphony, the *Eroica*, which marks the explosive transition from Beethoven's youthful and more conventional First Period to the full maturity of his Second, was initially dedicated to Napoleon, whom the composer hero-worshipped as the liberator of Europe. But when Napoleon crowned himself as Emperor, Beethoven's rage knew no bounds. Tearing out the dedication page, he declared:

So he is no more than a common mortal! Now too, he will tread underfoot all the rights of man, indulge only his ambitions, now he will think himself superior to all men, become a tyrant. ^[8]

And although ambivalent in his attitude to the political methods of the Jacobins, Germany's great writer Johann von Goethe undoubtedly sympathised with many of their goals, and looked forward to the day when they would be realised in his own country:

I have no fear that Germany will not become one, for our good roads and our future railways will play their part. Above all, may it be the one in mutual love, may it always be one against the foreign foe. May it be one, so that the German thaler and the German groschen have the same value everywhere in the nation, so that my travelling bag can pass unopened through all the 36 states. May it be one, so that the municipal passport of a citizen of Weimar is not treated by the frontier officials of some great neighbouring state as invalid... Furthermore, may Germany be one in weights and measures, in trade and business and in a hundred similar things... ^[9]

Here one cannot help but detect an emphasis on those goals closest to the heart of the German bourgeoisie. Economic unity and nationalist fervour have crowded out those other essential elements of the classic bourgeois revolution which Goethe followed so closely in France: political freedom, equality before the law and staunchly republican government. In this respect, both Hegel and Kant, Germany's most outstanding philosophers, were Goethe's superiors.

The ageing Kant (born 1724), though opposed in principle to violent revolution, perceived in the struggle against French despotism and the solidarity it evoked throughout the civilised world proof 'that the human race... will henceforth improve without any more total reversals'. ^[10]

And Kant went further than this. He fervently hoped the French Revolution would establish new political and moral principles which could be emulated by all mankind:

For the occurrence in question is too momentous, too intimately interwoven with the interests of humanity and too widespread in its influence upon all parts of the world for nations not to be reminded of it when favourable circumstances present themselves, and to rise up and make renewed attempts of the same kind as before. ^[11]

Who can doubt that Kant had Germany most of all in mind when he advised his readers to prepare themselves for 'favourable circumstances'. This much must be granted the Koenigsberg philosopher - that he recognised the categorical imperative of the bourgeois revolution.

Hegel would seem an exception to this progressive trend, but this in fact is only partially true. While in his later years reconciled to the Prussian state bureaucracy as the political vehicle for the earthly rule of reason (at least in its Germanic form), ^[12] he too had been stirred to the depths of his being by the unprecedented historical drama of the French Revolution and the military exploits of Napoleon.

The latter's conjuncture with the pinnacle of his own philosophical development was as dramatic as it was symbolic.

Whilst staying in Jena, Hegel had just completed the final draft of his monumental *The Phenomenology of Mind* when Napoleon's armies entered the Thuringian city in their triumphant march across Europe. Hegel's work had ended with the following lines:

History intellectually comprehended forms the recollection and the Golgotha of absolute Spirit, the reality, the truth, the certainty of its throne, without which it were lifeless, solitary and alone.

Barely had the ink dried on the page when the author caught a glimpse of Napoleon himself:

... the soul of the world, riding through the town on a reconnaissance. It is indeed a wonderful sensation to see, concentrated in a point, sitting on a horse, an individual who overturns the world and masters. ^[13]

Here indeed was the world spirit, living flesh and blood, challenging and overturning all those social and political relations which Hegel lashed with such fiery eloquence in his *Phenomenology*. And it must have surely been with his own German bourgeoisie in mind that he wrote, in his chapter 'Lordship and Bondage', that:

... it is solely by risking life that freedom is obtained; only thus is it tried and proved that the essential nature of self-consciousness is not bare existence... is not its mere absorption in the expanse of life... The individual, who has not staked his life may, no doubt, be recognised as a Person; but he has not attained the truth of this recognition as an independent self-consciousness. ^[14]

Scorn for passivity in the face of great events found not only a philosophical expression. Exasperated by the utter political impotency of the German princes, Hegel wrote shortly after his confrontation with Napoleon:

The great teacher of constitutional law sits in Paris... The German princes have not yet grasped the concept of free monarchy, nor have attempted to realise it.

And he drew the sober conclusion that, as a consequence: 'Napoleon will have to organise all this.'^[15]

Certainly at this stage in his philosophical development, Hegel placed the modernisation of Germany above any narrow national pride. And although a devout Lutheran, his thoroughly bourgeois outlook enabled him to praise the French anti-clerical and materialist school of philosophy, the Enlightenment, which 'heroically and with splendid genius, with warmth and fire, with spirit and with courage... [maintained] that a man's own self, the human spirit, is the source from which is derived all that is to be respected by him'.

This 'fanaticism of abstract thought', which in its purest political form expressed itself in the rule of the Jacobins, Hegel contrasted sadly with the conduct of his fellow-countrymen:

We Germans were passive at first with regard to the existing state of affairs, we endured it: in the second place, when that state of affairs was overthrown, we were just as passive: it was overthrown by the efforts of others, we let it be taken away from us, we suffered it all to happen.^[16]

For Hegel, unlike so many German politicians of the period, had grasped the great truth that a thoroughgoing revolution functions like a broom, sweeping away all the accumulated backwardness and superstitions of previous epochs. Through its revolution:

... the French nation has been liberated from many institutions which the human spirit had outgrown like baby shoes, and which weighed on it, as they still do on others, as fetters devoid of spirit: and the individual has taken off the fear of death... This is what gives the French the great strength they are demonstrating against others.^[17]

And when the worthy burghers of his native Württemberg did eventually gather at Frankfurt to draw up and enact a German constitution, Hegel was rightly contemptuous of their puny, half-hearted efforts:

What we see in the behaviour of the Estates summoned in Württemberg is precisely the opposite of what started 25 years ago in a neighbouring realm [that is, the Revolution in France - RB] and what at the time re-echoed in all heads, namely, that in a political constitution nothing should be recognised as valid unless its recognition accorded with the right of reason.^[18]

It can be seen from these extracts alone that more than any other German thinker prior to Marx, Hegel was involved to the point of obsession with the problem of his nation's political backwardness. Time and again he found himself asking the question, why did the French 'pass over from the theoretical to the practical, while the Germans contented themselves with theoretical abstractions'?^[19] Personifying as he did the pinnacle of German - and indeed all - bourgeois thought, Hegel evolved a solution consistent with his entire objective idealist system. German unity had been delayed, and a rational form of government conducive to capitalist development thereby frustrated, 'because the formal principle of philosophy in Germany encounters a concrete real World in which Spirit finds inward satisfaction and in which conscience is at rest'. German 'revolutions' were, from Luther on, inner revolutions of the spirit: 'In Germany the enlightenment was conducted in the interests of theology: in France it immediately took up a position of hostility to the Church.'^[20]

Further than this essentially idealist explanation - containing nevertheless profound insights into the paradoxes of German history - Hegel could not go. He saw world history as the materialisation in time of the absolute idea, and was therefore driven to the conclusion that differences in the material and political circumstances of the European nations were but detours and skirmishes in the march of the world spirit to its final realisation in Hegel's own philosophical system - and the Prussian monarchy!^[21]

It fell to the young Marx, steeped in the Hegelian philosophical tradition, but already seeking to liberate its rational 'kernel' from its idealist 'husk', to begin the task of placing the 'German problem' in its true material setting and, more than this, to evolve a progressive practical solution.

We have already noted that Hegel, despairing of any viable political initiative for German unity from the burghers and princes, and unable, because of his very firm views on the rights of private property, to

welcome a 'plebeian' movement for German emancipation, ended his days as the official state philosopher of the Hohenzollerns.

Following Hegel, Marx recognised 'that the real life embryo of the German nation has grown so far inside its *cranium*', that 'in politics the Germans *thought* what other nations did'. ^[22] And also like Hegel, Marx was sceptical of the 'will to power' of the German bourgeoisie. But here their ways parted. Marx turned his back on his own class, and his face towards the emergent German proletariat:

In Germany emancipation from the Middle Ages is possible only as emancipation from the partial victories over the Middle Ages as well [that is, the half-hearted and belated reforms introduced in the wake of the French Revolution when popular support had to be rallied against Napoleon's invading armies - RB]. In Germany no kind of bondage can be shattered without every kind of bondage being shattered. The fundamental Germany cannot revolutionise without revolutionising from the foundation. The emancipation of the German is the emancipation of man. The head of this emancipation is philosophy, its heart is the proletariat. Philosophy [and here Marx is referring to that of Hegel - RB] cannot be made a reality without the abolition of the proletariat, the proletariat being made a reality. When all the inner requisites are fulfilled the day of German resurrection will be proclaimed by the crowing of the cock of Gaul. ^[23]

Four years after these lines were written, the German bourgeoisie was, for the third time, compelled by the force of events to supplement its 'weapon of criticism' with what Marx aptly termed 'the criticism of the weapon'. For in political and social, as opposed to intellectual revolution, 'material force must be overthrown by material force'. ^[24]

A detailed history of the 1848 Revolution lies outside the scope of this book. However, certain of its phases and unique features must be touched on in order to place the rise of German imperialism and the political strategy of the modern German bourgeoisie in its correct historical perspective.

As Marx had prophesied, the bulk of the bourgeoisie spurned consistent republicanism like the plague. Its political spokesmen in the Frankfurt Assembly (which, as it turned out, proved no more effective than its forerunner of 1815) would venture no further than a call for the establishment of an all-German constitutional monarchy, based on a franchise limited to the propertied classes. Yet this timid demand was advanced while the Prussian monarchy was reeling from its military defeat at the hands of the Berlin workers and artisans in the great uprising of 18-19 March. And within days of this initial success, the revolt had spread even to the villages, the backbone of old Prussia, with peasants seizing land wherever it was left undefended by its old owners.

Cromwell's Independents and Robespierre's Jacobins both leaned on the plebeian movements beneath them to settle accounts with the *ancien régime*. Without the Levellers and the Parisian *sans culottes* there would have been neither a 1649 nor a 1793. This is not to say that the English and French bourgeoisie entered such an alliance willingly or without misgivings. But the revolutionary front endured long enough to ensure the defeat of its common foes. The guillotining of the Hébertistes and Thermidor followed the fall of feudal power, just as in England, Cromwell's brutal repression of the Diggers and the most radical of the Levellers was undertaken after the execution of Charles I.

Treading in the footsteps of their ancestors of 1525, the German bourgeoisie retreated from their own revolution with every forward step of the plebeian masses. The sources of their fears were two-fold. Uppermost in their minds was undoubtedly an ever-present dread that the upsurge against feudal rule would not stop short at the boundaries of bourgeois political rights and property. Thus one 'democratic' spokesman - Paul Pfizer of Württemberg - warned:

Every demand to abolish existing feudal dues and revoke rights which have until now been recognised by the state... to break down by a stroke of the pen the distinction between right and wrong must be rejected. For we know that from the destruction of ledgers and registers [these were being burned with great relish by the oppressed and land-hungry peasants - RB] of landed holdings is but one step to the destruction of mortgage records and promissory notes, and from the destruction of promissory notes it is again but one step to the division of property or a common ownership of goods.

Pfizer's shrewd, if reactionary, class instinct differed but little from that of General Ireton who during the famous debate at Putney in the autumn of 1647 with Colonel Rainborough and other Leveller radicals, countered their claim for a voice in the government of England by arguing that:

... since you cannot plead to it by anything but the law of nature, or for anything but for the end of better being, and since that better being is not certain, and what is more, destructive to another; upon these grounds if you so, paramount to all constitutions hold up this Law of Nature, I would fain have any man show me their bounds, where you will end, and why you should not take away all property. ^[25]

But Ireton stayed his hand for more than a year, allying himself with his Putney antagonists to carry through the purging of Parliament and so clearing the political road for the trial and execution of the King. In Germany, far from the bourgeoisie seeking the removal (let alone execution) of their main enemy, the King of Prussia, they besought him to anoint himself the constitutional ruler of a united Germany. The cringing reformers of Frankfurt received the reply they deserved. Frederick William IV informed them that such a crown could be accepted only from the German princes. It was not the German bourgeoisie's to give. And furthermore, if such a state did come into being, it would stand not under their ineffectual protection, but that of 'the Prussian sword'. But before the Frankfurt leaders could grovel at the feet of the Prussian junkers, they had to create the necessary conditions for their own defeat. This they did under the lash of titanic battles fought out across the length and breadth of Europe, from Hungary in the East and Sicily in the South to Norway and Finland in the North, and Spain, France and England in the West. Germany (with Austria) was the vortex of a revolutionary whirlpool, and this fact, readily appreciated by all those involved in the unfolding drama, raised the already acute social and political tensions to fever pitch. And once again, France was the catalyst in transforming revolution into counter-revolution. Each of the 1848 revolutions began as a movement of the entire people against absolute monarchy and the many other residues of feudal rule, economic as well as political. This seeming unanimity of purpose was soon shattered by the unfolding of even more compelling contradictions between the various classes and leaderships of the revolutionary camp. And nowhere was this process of differentiation more rapid, clear-cut and violent than in France, where the great traditions of 1789 and 1830 lent the collisions between the classes an explosive quality they lacked in nations with a weaker revolutionary and democratic tradition. Events in France were therefore followed - as far as the rudimentary communications systems of the time allowed - with great avidity by the more conscious sections of every class. Nowhere was this more true than in Germany; a country which had not experienced a truly popular uprising of the people for more than three centuries. Each class looked to Paris for a mirror to the future of its own development and strategy.

And the great lesson was not long in coming. On 22 June 1848, the Paris proletariat, provoked beyond endurance by the repressive measures of the newly-entrenched bourgeoisie and the temporising of its own leaders, staged the first working-class insurrection against the rule of capital in human history: 'It was a fight for the preservation or annihilation of the bourgeois order. The veil that shrouded the republic was torn asunder.' ^[26]

The impact of this defeat reverberated from Frankfurt to Berlin. The scale and ferocity of the conflict rapidly convinced the German bourgeoisie, already in the process of damping down the revolutionary fires in their own country, that their main enemy was not the Prussian monarchy and the lesser kings and princes but the plebeian movement stirring into life and political consciousness beneath them. True, the plebeians were not spearheaded, as had been the case in Paris, by a large and compact industrial working class steeped in the tradition and well versed in the art of insurrection. The retarded industrial development of Germany - itself partly a consequence of past failures to consummate the national-democratic revolution - ensured that in 1848 a weak German bourgeoisie faced an equally weak, numerically speaking, proletariat. The major proportion of the mass movement was comprised in its early stages of artisans, with the most radical elements being drawn from the apprentices and journeymen. But it was more a question of quality than quantity.

The mere presence of an incipient proletarian movement on the extreme left of the democratic camp was sufficient to alert the Frankfurt parliamentarians to the dangers of another 1525. The savage battles in Paris convinced them that a bargain must be struck by all men of property in the face of this new and terrible foe, even if it meant repeating German history a third time by strangling the democratic revolution:

It became evident to everyone that this was the great decisive battle which would, if the insurrection were victorious, deluge the whole continent with renewed revolutions, or, if it was suppressed, bring about an at least momentary restoration of counter-revolutionary rule. The proletarians of Paris were defeated, decimated... And immediately, all over Europe, the new and

old Conservatives and counter-revolutionaries raised their heads with an effrontery that showed how well they understood the importance of the event. ^[27]

Treachery on the part of the upper bourgeoisie, and utter incompetence or cowardice within the petit-bourgeois democrats and republicans forced the German working class and those sections of the plebeian movement allied with it to strike out along its own political road. Theoretically, the first blows for the independence of the German proletariat from all other classes had been struck several months before the outbreak of the Berlin uprising with the completion and publication of that foundation stone of the modern revolutionary movement - the *Communist Manifesto* of Marx and Engels. In its closing section, the two authors made the following recommendation for the conduct of the working class in the bourgeois revolution which they knew to be imminent:

In Germany they [the Communists - RB] fight with the bourgeoisie wherever it acts in a revolutionary way, against the absolute monarchy, the feudal squirearchy and the petit-bourgeoisie. But they never cease, for a single instant, to instil into the working class the clearest possible recognition of the hostile antagonism between bourgeoisie and proletariat, in order that the German workers may straightway use, as so many weapons against the bourgeoisie, the social and political conditions that the bourgeoisie must necessarily introduce along with its supremacy, and in order that, after the fall of the reactionary classes in Germany, the fight against the bourgeoisie itself may immediately begin. ^[28]

It is clear from this passage that Marx and Engels expected the German bourgeoisie, supported 'by a much more developed proletariat than that of England in the seventeenth century and of France in the eighteenth', ^[29] to defeat its feudal enemies. And they made this assumption without any illusions about the political capacities or enthusiasm for struggle on the part of the German burgher. Marx and Engels also believed that because of the relative preponderance of the working class in comparison with France and England at the time of their bourgeois revolutions, the national-democratic uprising in Germany 'will be but the prelude to an immediately following proletarian revolution'. ^[30]

The events of the next few months proved this optimistic prognosis to be ill-founded. But the core of the perspective was sound, and has, despite its revisionist and Stalinist traducers, remained the bedrock of all revolutionary working-class strategy and tactics up the present day. That is, the working class, as the sole force capable of overturning all social systems based on private property in the means of production, must at all costs maintain its total political and organisational independence if it is to carry out this task. ^[31]

In the Revolution of 1848, sheer necessity, and not adherence to previously elaborated principles or strategy, compelled the German proletariat to make its first bid for political independence. The circumstances under which this took place had a particularly important bearing, not only on the future development of the workers' movement, but on relations between all the classes of German society.

Working-class disenchantment with the revolution's bourgeois leaders began to turn to anger when the Frankfurt Assembly agreed to exclude the property-less classes from the franchise. The true face of German liberalism was already becoming visible at a time when the workers were rightly regarding themselves as the real backbone of the revolution after their heroic fighting in the streets of Berlin in the March days.

Nor did the only threat to the revolution come from those bourgeois leaders seeking a compromise with the reaction. Contradictory political and social currents were also at work among all those intermediary layers between the big bourgeois and the industrial proletariat, from the richest of guild masters to the poorest of peasants.

For over the previous decade, Germany's ancient structure of trade and craft guilds, organised in the strict traditional hierarchy of master, journeymen and apprentices, had been subjected to increasingly bitter competition from large-scale production methods. Capitalist production, though still accounting for a relatively small proportion of Germany's national product - it should be remembered that Germany was still an overwhelmingly agricultural nation - had taken firm root in both textiles and mining, and had begun to spread its tentacles into other preserves of the medieval guilds. The Krupp dynasty had already established its first Essen factory 21 years previously, while in Berlin, the Borsig engineering works had been operating for 10 years when its workers took to the streets to overthrow the Prussian monarchy. (By one of history's ironies, both firms were destined to figure in a later era of violent class struggle as prominent supporters and financiers of National Socialism.)

This deep-seated antagonism between the pre-capitalist guilds, which were organised on corporative and not competitive principles, and the modern industrial and financial bourgeoisie differed in every essential from the struggle between the proletariat and the capitalist class. Unlike the working class, which at the time of the revolution numbered about 700 000, the far more numerous guild artisans saw in the upheavals of 1848 their opportunity to arrest the wheel of history and, if possible, set it trundling back to a supposedly idyllic past. Insofar as the guilds acted as a coherent force, they tended to regard the bourgeoisie, and not the princes and kings of feudal Germany, as their chief enemies. When under the leadership of their masters, artisans pressed for the restoration of the old but now threatened guild privileges and with them state restriction on the development of capitalist industry and commerce, theirs was an 'anti-capitalism' that looked back longingly - and hopelessly - to the Germany of the middle ages.

It had absolutely nothing in common with the anti-capitalism of the emerging industrial working class. In the 1848 Revolution, the bourgeoisie embodied the miserable present, the guilds the romantic but irretrievably distant past, and the proletariat all the hopes for a socialist future.

The impact of the revolution on the guilds has, though this may not be readily appreciated, a special significance for our study of the historical roots of German fascism. One of the most potent appeals of National Socialism among the German petit-bourgeoisie - and here we are referring mainly to either self-employed or small, independent producers or traders - was its virulent 'anti-capitalist' propaganda, especially when directed at banking capital or joint-stock industrial enterprises. Can it possibly be that the Nazis *themselves* injected this reactionary anti-capitalism into those millions of Germans tenaciously clinging to their status as independent - even if often semi-pauperised - property owners and producers?

Surely we must probe back into Germany's past, to a period when pre-capitalist layers of the population first engendered this fear and hatred of the big bourgeoisie, adapting their already established corporatist ideology and programme to explain and counter this new threat to their existence.

And because the bourgeois revolution provides the key to understanding so much of a nation's subsequent history, we must also look to 1848 for the origin of that classic petit-bourgeois fascist notion which lumps together the industrial proletariat and the capitalist as enemies of all that is decent and healthy in the body politic. For here we are dealing with ideological and social 'residues' which while lying dormant for long periods of relative class peace, can be capable of rearing their heads and seizing hold of millions in moments of great economic crisis and political stress.

In short, the betrayal of the revolution by the German bourgeoisie helped provide the raw political material which, eight decades and more later, the Nazi demagogues worked up into a machine of counter-revolution to rescue this self-same bourgeoisie. Such is the 'irony of history'!

The guilds, it should always be remembered, were more than simply economic organisations. They were woven into the very fabric of pre-capitalist German society. With their strict and highly ritualised rules of membership and codes of conduct, they were rightly regarded as pillars of stability by the rulers of feudal Germany. Their corporative ideology, which stressed the supposed (and generally accepted) harmony of interest between a master and his servants, penetrated deeply into the consciousness of all guild members, and reinforced by the church, percolated down through every level of the population. So although powerful economic forces were at work undermining the old predominance of the guild system and its medieval outlook, the entrenched forces of resistance were also strong, buttressed by literally centuries of backwardness. And once it struck, the counter-revolution gave them added nourishment.

But even in the revolution's early days, guild leaders were anxiously pressing their own 'anti-capitalist' but essentially reactionary views. The *Open Letter* of the Leipzig Masters of April 1848 expressed the growing concern of guild masters throughout Germany that their further economic decline would lead not only to the triumph of their hated capitalist rivals, but eventually to the establishment of communism. The guild system was lauded as the backbone of not only the family and Christian morality, but political stability. The Leipzig Masters roundly denounced the 'French' principle of free trade and economic competition, demanding instead that the entire German nation should be organised on guild or 'corporative' lines. The *Open Letter* - a truly significant historical document - ended by condemning liberal-inspired proposals for the 'emancipation of the Jews' whom the masters, entirely in keeping with both Germany's feudal past and fascist future, depicted as the 'greatest enemy' of the artisan and small property owner.

The guild masters found themselves battling on two fronts. On the one hand, they fought for economic survival against the political representatives of industrial and banking capital which, as the preceding example suggests, they tended to equate with the Jews; and on the other, the proletariat, whose struggle for democratic freedoms and, amongst its more advanced layers, for socialism, they saw as a challenge to the very foundation of the guild system.

Acutely aware of these threats, the masters were quick to organise on a national as well as local scale to combat them. The master-dominated Hamburg Artisan Congress in June adopted a declaration, condemning competition and calling on the Frankfurt Assembly to include the abolition of free trade in its projected German constitution. ^[32] The guild masters also kept a wary eye open for suspected troublemakers in their own ranks. At the next guild congress, which opened in Frankfurt a month later, attempts were made to exclude journeymen from the hall. One speaker, apparently labouring under the delusion that he was scolding unruly apprentices in his own workshop, suggested to the unwanted intruders that they should 'go quietly home and await written news, consoled in the expectation that the masters would look after their interests'.

The masters' concern for the welfare of their servants was well-founded. Journeymen and apprentices had fought shoulder to shoulder with the industrial proletariat in the March days, and had imbibed more than a little of their militant republicanism and radical social outlook. It was this which gave them their new-found confidence to challenge their masters. But their demands were still couched in the archaic language of the guilds, and were aimed at the reform rather than the abolition of the system. They would probably have found very little to criticise in the opening address of the chairman at Frankfurt, who defiantly declared:

We may be sure that speculation and usury will oppose us with all their resources, for what is at stake is their domination over industriousness. Yet the German handicraftsman has come of age, and he will no longer endure the yoke of slavery imposed by the money interests.

We must pause here to note the astonishing similarity between the anti-capitalism of the guilds and the 'National Socialism' of Gottfried Feder, who drafted the economic section of the Nazi Party's founding programme. Very much in the style of the Frankfurt Artisans, point 11 demanded the 'abolition of incomes unearned by work' and the 'abolition of the thralldom [that is, slavery] of interest'. Point 18 called for 'ruthless war upon all those whose activities are injurious to the common interests' including under this heading 'usurers, profiteers, etc', whose sins were to be 'punished with death'. Elsewhere, in a work expanding on the main planks in the Nazi platform, Feder declared quite unambiguously that 'the abolition of the Thralldom of Interest' was 'the Kernel of National Socialism'. ^[33] Yet this is precisely the slogan which the guild masters employed to rally their servants behind a programme of backward-looking utopian anti-capitalism and against an industrial working class seeking to break the back of feudal rule and thus releasing Germany from the fetters of the past. Even as early as 1848, the ideology and organisations of the guilds were serving as tools of reaction, though in this instance their wielders were not the bourgeoisie but the rulers of pre-capitalist Germany.

And as was the case with those millions of deluded petit-bourgeois followers of National Socialism before 1933, the guild master - and indeed many a journeyman and even apprentice - interwove their fear of big capitalism with a contempt for the industrial working class.

The first threatened him with economic strangulation from above, the latter with revolt and expropriation from below. A class thrown into panic by what it takes to be its impending doom can quite readily lump its real and imagined enemies together and depict them as it sees them in the distorting mirror of its own bewildered consciousness. Thus a petition drawn up by the artisans of Bielefeld complained bitterly that:

... recent times have wounded the artisans deeply, the limitless freedom of industry, the production of handicraft goods in factories, the superior power of capital which enslaves the artisan, threatens to destroy the position which the artisans have held up to now and to make them into a proletariat, will-less tools in the hands of the capitalists.

And the proletarianisation of the artisans would not merely be a disaster for the guilds, but for all Germany, as upon the guild:

... rests the actual power of the cities: it is the core of the state. It is called to end the great schism which separates the property-less from the property owners... it stands between, the scales of justice in its hand.

Far from siding with the proletariat, into whose ranks many artisans feared they might be thrust, the guilds harboured a deeply-felt contempt for those it termed 'the property-less'. The entire guild tradition militated against such an orientation, and it was one that could only be shattered through decisive victory in the struggle against the entire structure of feudal reaction. ^[34] The leaders of the 1848 Revolution rendered this impossible. The lower ranks of the guilds were thus driven back into the clutches of their exploiters, only in rare cases fighting their way towards a lasting alliance with the industrial proletariat and a perspective oriented towards the future. Repudiation and even open hatred of all forms of class struggle were endemic to the guilds' self-appointed role as arbiter between the various strata of German society, and the masters therefore looked with grave disquiet upon all those economic policies which threatened to disturb the social equilibrium in favour of the proletariat.

We see this clearly in a petition submitted by the artisans of Prussia. It voiced alarm that Prussia's recent rapid industrial growth had 'called forth so great a number of proletarians through the freedom of trade that in fact the Prussian state does not know how it is to satisfy them even slightly'.

Historians of National Socialism often stress those facets of its ideology and propaganda which, on the surface at least, seem to militate against the role, ascribed to fascism by Marxists, of a bulwark of capitalism. Thus they point to the 'ruralism' of Nazi leaders such as Walter Darre (Hitler's Minister of Agriculture), Himmler and Rosenberg as proof of this tendency, ignoring the fact that their deep-seated mistrust of large cities and romanticised view of country life is itself a petit-bourgeois fear of the organised proletariat, mediated and refracted through the particular forms of consciousness inherited by the modern German middle classes from their guild ancestors.

And insofar as Nazi ruralism and anti-industrialism helped mobilise the petit-bourgeoisie of town and country alike against the workers' movement - and there is ample evidence at hand to prove that it did - this apparent historical throwback, far from colliding with the strategic plans of German monopoly capitalism, actually supplemented them. We shall have cause to return to this theme more than once, but here it is sufficient to stress that the role played by political 'residues' in the rise of National Socialism is unique to Germany only in form. As regards content, fascism possesses a universal character, battenning as it does on all that is backward in human consciousness and demagogically combining with it a seemingly radical programme of demands aimed at the most depressed and politically immature sections of the population.

Nazi agitators were only able to make the absurd synthesis of Marxism and economic liberalism seem plausible to their petit-bourgeois audiences because this fantasy - the 'Jewish conspiracy' of 'international loan capital' and 'international Marxism' had - in a less developed form, it is true - gripped a numerically large and politically important section of the German nation in the period of the 1848 Revolution. Subsequent chapters will trace the development of this reactionary anti-capitalism, how it became saturated with an equally potent tradition of anti-Semitism, and how, at every crucial stage of German history, the ruling classes fostered and exploited this counter-revolutionary ideology to further their imperialist aims abroad and their anti-working-class strategy at home.

But first we must complete our balance sheet of the 1848 Revolution. On the debit side, we must record the revolution's defeat, in so far as its goal of a united, democratic German republic was frustrated by the timidity, cowardice and even downright treachery of the leadership which gathered at Frankfurt. They debated while dynastic Prussia armed itself. And we must add to this the consequent reactionary modes of consciousness which were either generated or strengthened by the dashing of countless hopes for a brighter future. Every profound social upheaval - irrespective of its outcome - brings about equally profound shifts in the thinking of those who, at whatever level of awareness, take part in them. This process is at its most intense in periods of revolution, when every established idea and institution is subjected to the closest scrutiny and fiercest criticism. So it was in the England of 1640-49, the France of 1789-94, and the Germany of 1848. But in raising the masses to this fever pitch of moral and political passion, the revolution also poses and creates problems which it cannot possibly solve:

Revolution is impossible without the participation of the masses. This participation is in its turn possible only in the event that the oppressed connect their hopes for a better future with the slogan of revolution. In this sense the hopes engendered by the revolution are always exaggerated... from these same conditions comes one of the most important and moreover one of the most common elements of the counter-revolution... The disillusionment of these masses, their return to routine and to futility is as much an integral part of the post-revolutionary period as the

passage into the camp of 'law and order' of those 'satisfied' classes or layers of classes, who have participated in the revolution. ^[35]

Trotsky is here writing specifically about the political and social basis of the Stalinist bureaucratic counter-revolution in the Soviet Union, but his remarks about the process known as *Thermidor* (after the anti-Jacobin reaction in the French Revolution) are equally valid for the period of counter-revolution which sets in after a successful bourgeois-democratic revolution.

But what are we to say of the political aftermath of a revolution which, after carrying all before it, fails ignominiously; and, if, together with the peasants' revolt, we include the feeble post-Napoleonic attempts at political and economic union (the Württemberg Estates and the *Zollverein*) fails not once but thrice?

In this case, the masses do not even enjoy the vicarious thrill of victory. The very notion of revolution becomes discredited where and when its erstwhile advocates capitulate miserably, as they did in Germany before the Prussian sabre: revolution's defeat affected different classes in different ways. It certainly gave new life to the guilds, by thrusting those they exploited back into the shadows of the past. But it also forced the German working class out along the road of independent political organisation and action. This we must put on the credit side of the revolution's balance sheet. Beginning with the Mainz print-workers' congress in June, ^[36] the most advanced elements of the proletariat began to develop their own programme in conflict with the demands of both the guild masters and their own employers.

The climax of the workers' struggle for political independence came in August, at a time when the bourgeoisie was in full-scale retreat before the gathering forces of counter-revolution in Prussia. Consciously inspired by the example of English Chartism (the movement had just reached the zenith of its power, and was about to plunge into headlong decline), the organisers of the Berlin Workers' Congress declared that the delegates should have as their sole aim 'the expression of the material interest of the working classes', and would seek to draw up a 'social people's charter of Germany'.

Prominent in the charter were demands for the right to work, state care of the sick and aged, public education, progressive income and inheritance taxes, legal limits on hours of work and finally the abolition of feudal land taxes, a demand which made explicit working-class solidarity with the cause of the oppressed rural population. This socially advanced programme was worlds apart from the demands being formulated at that time by the guild masters. Indeed, as if to underline the point, the convenors of the congress declared in their 'Appeal to the German Workers' that it had been summoned explicitly 'in opposition to the Masters' Congress' (this being the Masters' Congress in Frankfurt).

Under attack from Junker, bourgeois and master alike, the workers' leaders were making a determined bid to win allies from among the lower ranks of the artisans in the towns and the peasants in the countryside. But in both cases, their efforts met with failure. The German proletariat simply lacked the political experience and social weight to achieve such an enormous task. Although containing within it the embryo of a future powerful workers' movement, the revolution was essentially bourgeois in both content and goals, and it stood or fell according to the calibre of the leadership the bourgeoisie gave it. But even here, there was a positive side to things. The course of the German Revolution provided Marx and Engels, as active participants, with ready-made laboratory conditions to test out, modify, enrich and codify their scientific theory of class struggle. And it not only enabled Marx and Engels to draw conclusions of a general nature concerning bourgeois revolutions and the role of Communists within them, but compelled them to examine even more closely those political features which were unique to Germany.

These are the two opposites which emerged out of the defeat of the 1848 Revolution. At one pole, the initial steps of the German proletariat along the road of political and organisational independence, and with it an added material impulse to the development of Marxism; and at the opposite pole, the strengthening of the ideology and mass basis of reaction.

From 1848 to 1933, German history is at its core a history of the clash of these polar opposites, their conflict being driven to a brutal and tragic climax both by their own mutually contradictory nature and a series of varied and powerful external impulses which ranged from the First World War and the Russian Revolution to the rise of Stalinism and the Wall Street Crash.

This is why a real history of German fascism must begin with the year of 1848.

Notes

1. K Marx, 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte', *Marx-Engels Selected Works*, Volume 1 (Moscow, 1962), p 247.
2. Exponents of the latter theory, which tends to regard the triumph of National Socialism as an inevitable outgrowth of cultural patterns and derived political structures developed in Prussian-dominated Imperial Germany, are not confined to bourgeois sociology. Thus the Hungarian Stalinist George Lukács has argued that the German bourgeoisie was not so much a prime mover in the assumption of power by Hitler (a claim flatly refuted by all the historical evidence) as an unwitting agent in an irresistible historical process, and finds in one of Thomas Mann's novels (*Mario*) 'all the kinds of helplessness with which the German bourgeois faces the hypnotic power of fascism' (G Lukács, *Essays on Thomas Mann* (London, 1963), p 37).
3. VI Lenin, 'Philosophical Notebooks', *Collected Works*, Volume 38 (Moscow, 1961), pp 360-61.
4. The old Engels made precisely this point, although from another angle, in a letter to Conrad Schmidt, a leader of the German Social Democratic Party: 'In general, the word "materialistic" serves many of the younger writers in Germany as a mere phrase with which anything and everything is labelled without further study... they stick on this label and then consider the question disposed of. But our conception of history is above all a guide to study, not a lever of construction after the manner of the Hegelian. All history must be studied afresh, the conditions of existence of the different formations of society must be examined individually before the attempt is made to deduce from them the political, civil-law, philosophic, religious, etc, views corresponding to them... too many of the younger Germans simply make use of the phrase historical materialism... only in order to get their own relatively scanty historical knowledge... constructed into a neat system as quickly as possible...' (London, 5 August 1890, *Marx-Engels Selected Correspondence* (Moscow, nd), pp 494-95)
5. Nazi and anti-Semitic diatribes against the French Revolution are legion. For example, that infamous forgery *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* has the archetypical 'Jewish conspirator' reveal that it was 'wholly the work of our hands' (*Protocols* (London 1960), p 25). And the quack Nazi 'philosopher' Alfred Rosenberg, who first encountered the *Protocols* whilst a student in Moscow at the time of the 1917 Revolution, divided his racially-inspired hatred equally between the Jacobins - 'raving philistines, vain demagogues and... hyenas of political battlefield who rob the abandoned of their belongings' - and the Bolsheviks - 'Tartarised sub-humans [who] murdered anyone who by his tall form and confident gait could be suspected of being a master.' (A Rosenberg, 'The Myth of the Twentieth Century', *Alfred Rosenberg: Selected Political Writings* (London, 1970), pp 78-79)
6. LD Trotsky, *Results and Prospects* (1906) (London, 1962), p 188.
7. L van Beethoven, *Letters, Journals and Conversations* (London, 1951), pp 22-23.
8. Beethoven, *Letters, Journals and Conversations*, p 47.
9. Conversation with Johann Eckermann, 23 October 1828.
10. E Kant, *The Contest of Faculties*, 1798.
11. Kant, *The Contest of Faculties*.
12. Thus Hegel writes, in his *Philosophy of Right* (1820): 'The development of the state to constitutional monarchy is the achievement of the modern world, a world in which the substantial Idea has won the definite form of subjectivity. The history of this inner deepening of the world mind... the history of this genuine formation of ethical life is the content of the whole course of history.' (G Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right* (London, 1962), p 176) That he had a bourgeois monarchy in mind when he wrote these lines is evident from the many attacks on feudal economic and political institutions which can be found in this work, that is, in the section 'Alienation of Property', where Hegel writes: 'Examples of the

alienation of personality are slavery, serfdom, disqualification from holding property... and so forth...' (p 53) And elsewhere, he repudiates the religious institutions and relations generated by feudalism: 'It is in the nature of the case that a slave has an absolute right to free himself and that if anyone has prostituted his ethical life by hiring himself to thieve and murder... everyone has a warrant to repudiate this contract. The same is the case if I hire my religious feelings to a priest who is my confessor, for such an inward matter a man has to settle with himself alone...' (p 241) The analogy between murders and thieves and catholic priests was not, for Hegel the Lutheran, an accidental one!

13. Letter to FI Niethammer, Jena, 13 October 1806.

14. G Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind* (London, 1961), p 233.

15. Letter to FI Niethammer, Bamberg, 29 August 1807.

16. G Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Volume 3 (London, 1955), pp 390-91.

17. Letter to CG Zellmann, Jena, 23 January 1807.

18. G Hegel, *The Württemberg Estates* (1815-16). Hegel added the scathing comment that the Estates, like the returned French *émigrés*, had 'forgotten nothing and learnt nothing. They seem to have slept through the last 25 years, possibly the richest that world history has...'

19. G Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* (London, 1956), p 444.

20. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, p 444.

21. Johann Fichte, a follower of Kant, was the third great German idealist philosopher to be caught up by the French Revolution and driven to formulate a political, economic, social and constitutional programme for the bourgeoisie. Thus in his *The Science of Rights* (1796) Fichte seeks, very much in the Kantian tradition, to devise a German constitution with the aid of 'pure reason' alone. Certainly the most radical of the three, Fichte laid down specific situations where the people had the right to overthrow their rulers when they deviated from the dictates of pure reason. The people had this right because they were 'in fact and law, the highest power and the source of all power, responsible only to God'. He also made plans for a body of 'elders', the 'Ephorate', which would check on the activities of the government, and be empowered to bring a charge of treason against it should the government, in its eyes, be guilty of breaking the spirit and letter of the constitution. And here Fichte, like the Jacobin offspring of the Enlightenment, understood that even the power of pure reason had its limits: 'It is... one of the chief aims of a rational constitution to provide that when the people are called together in convention by the Ephorate, larger masses of people shall congregate in different places, ready to quench any possible resistance on the part of the government.' (J Fichte, *The Science of Rights* (London, 1970), p 161)

22. K Marx, 'Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right' (1844), K Marx and F Engels, *On Religion* (Moscow, 1957), p 44.

23. Marx, 'Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right', Marx and Engels, *On Religion*, p 58.

24. Marx, 'Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right', Marx and Engels, *On Religion*, p 50.

25. ASP Woodhouse (ed), *Puritanism and Liberty* (London, 1965), p 58.

26. K Marx, 'The Class Struggles in France', *Marx-Engels Selected Works*, Volume 1, p 160.

27. K Marx, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution* (London, 1952), p 70. (Engels is now generally recognised to be the author of this series of articles on the course of the German and Austrian revolutions of 1848.)

28. K Marx and F Engels, 'The Communist Manifesto', *Marx-Engels Selected Works*, Volume 1, pp 64-65.

29. Marx and Engels, 'The Communist Manifesto', *Marx-Engels Selected Works*, Volume 1, p 65.

30. Marx and Engels, 'The Communist Manifesto', *Marx-Engels Selected Works*, Volume 1, p 65.

31. With the German experience fresh in their minds, the authors of the *Manifesto* enriched this principle in their *Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League* (of Germany). Written in March 1850, the *Address* scolded the leaders of the German workers' movement for allowing it to come 'completely under the domination and leadership of the petit-bourgeois democrats'. Instead of which the proletariat should have 'marched together with them against the faction which it aims at overthrowing', and 'opposed them in everything whereby they seek to consolidate their position in their own interests'. In all future revolutions which found either bourgeois or petit-bourgeois parties allied, however fleetingly, with the proletariat, Marx and Engels warned that unless the workers established 'an independent secret and public organisation of the workers' party alongside of the official democrats', they would inevitably 'lose its whole independent position and once more sink down to being an appendage of official-bourgeois democracy'. Neither was political independence enough. In a period of revolutionary ferment, the working class must seek to secure and retain arms, forming its own proletarian (that is, Red) army and military command. Under this banner of intransigent opposition to all other class interests and political movements, Marx and Engels summoned the German working class to prepare, in the next revolutionary upheaval, for their own emancipation and not to serve as cannon fodder for their bourgeois 'allies': 'Their battle cry must be: The Revolution in Permanence.' (K Marx and F Engels, 'Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League', *Marx-Engels Selected Works*, Volume 1, pp 106-17)

32. Whatever other issues the Frankfurt Parliamentarians might be expected to compromise on, this one was excluded. Earlier government legislation repealing many of the old laws protecting the guilds had helped prise open the doors barring the road to Germany's industrial expansion. Between 1825 and 1850, pig iron production leapt by 500 per cent while coal output had tripled. Even the most passionately-worded appeals were powerless in the face of this upsurge.

33. G Feder, *Hitler's Official Programme* (English Edition, 1934), p 44.

34. In sharp contrast with England, where the shell of the old guilds, their economic and political power eroded by the Cromwellian Revolution and the industrial revolution which followed, became encrusted on the first independent organisation of skilled workers, notably printers. The guild socialism of Fabian radicals like GDH Cole can therefore not be compared in any sense with the Nazi 'guild socialism' of Feder and company, for theirs was a 'socialism' that presupposed the wholesale destruction of the working-class movement and the establishment of a state based - in form alone - on the medieval corporation or guild. Hence the term, which has become identified with the Italian species of fascism, 'corporate state'.

35. LD Trotsky, Extract from his Diary, 26 November 1926, *Workers International News*, October-November 1942. [LD Trotsky, 'Thesis on Revolution and Counter-Revolution', *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1926-27)* (New York, 1980), p 166 - MIA]

36. As is so often the case, print-workers were the pioneers of an independent workers' movement in Germany.

Chapter II: Marx and Engels on the German Question: Bonapartism and the Bismarckian Legacy

The recapture of Berlin by monarchist forces in October 1848, and the final defeat of the republican forces in the spring of 1849, set the stage for the piecemeal unification of Germany under the hegemony of Prussian Junkerdom - the so-called Bismarckian 'revolution from above'. This, the transition of Germany from the brief period in which it attempted a plebeian solution to its problems of backwardness and fragmentation, to the dictatorship of 'blood and iron', occupied a central place in the theoretical, historical and political writings of both Marx and Engels.

And in attempting to lay bare the social and economic forces beneath the governmental forms in Germany, they evolved concepts which are of enormous value in grappling with the theoretical problems posed by the rise of fascism during the last years of the Weimar Republic.

For if Marx and Engels, as committed proletarian revolutionaries, were to map out a realistic road of struggle for the German working class, they were obliged to fill out their general theoretical abstractions on the basic laws of motion of capitalism and the role, nature and origin of the state, with a concrete, historical content; and to apply them to the living and contradictory reality of post-1848, Prussia-dominated Germany. Thus we return once more to the central problem of method, which in its turn revolves around the antagonistic yet unified relationship between the abstract and the concrete, the general and the particular, between theory and practice. Marx said this about the method he was seeking to apply in his study of previous schools of political economy:

The economists of the seventeenth century... always started out with the living aggregate: population, nation, state, several states, etc, but in the end they invariably arrived by means of analysis at certain leading abstract general principles such as division of labour, money value, etc. As soon as these separate elements had been more or less established by abstract reasoning, there arose the systems of political economy which start from simple conceptions such as labour, division of labour, demand, exchange value and world market. The latter is manifestly the scientifically correct method. The concrete is concrete because it is a combination of many determinations, that is, a unity of diverse elements. In our thoughts it therefore appears as a process of synthesis, as a result, and not as a starting point and, therefore, also the starting point of observation and conception. By the former method the complete conception passes into an abstract definition; by the latter the abstract definitions lead to the reproduction of the concrete subject in the course of reasoning. ^[1]

Thus an abstraction, while being an opposite of concrete reality from which it is distilled, is at the very same time an integral part of this reality, and serves to illuminate it to the degree that this relationship - one of the mutual interpenetration of opposites - is understood.

Applied to history and politics, this methodological principle demands of the investigator that, in applying his abstract concepts to the problems of a particular nation, he takes care to avoid the twin pitfalls of either failing to explain why the development of nation 'A' differs so radically from that of nations 'B' and 'C' - and in so doing simply remains at the level of abstraction - or becomes so immersed in the concrete and the particular that he obscures the workings of those general laws which govern the development of society as a whole.

The many writings of Marx and Engels on Germany are exemplars of how to surmount this double obstacle.

On the plane of pure theory, after 1848 there emerged an ever-widening gap between the schema presented in the *Communist Manifesto* of an aggressive and confident bourgeoisie seizing the machinery of state power and refashioning the world in its own image, and the living, if pitiful, reality of a Germany, where the bourgeoisie had voluntarily surrendered the state power to the Prussian aristocracy and yet, despite this, entered upon an epoch of unprecedented industrial and technological expansion.

Marx himself was acutely aware of this contradiction, for in the wake of the Berlin counter-revolution, he attempted to concretise the general propositions in the *Manifesto* about the historical role of the bourgeoisie by drawing attention to the uneven way in which the bourgeois revolution had unfolded in the various major European nations. In the Germany of 1848, the bourgeoisie:

... was hurled to the height of state power... not in the manner it desired, by a peaceful bargain with the crown, but by a revolution. It was to defend not its own interests but the interests of the people, versus the crown, that is, against itself, for a popular movement had paved the way for the bourgeoisie... hence the ecstatic fondness of the German and especially the Prussian bourgeoisie for constitutional monarchy. ^[2]

The great English and French bourgeois revolutions also passed through phases where advocates of a constitutional monarchy held the upper hand amongst the leadership of the revolution. But in both cases, when repeated attempts at compromise had failed, the most resolute wing of the bourgeoisie were pushed by the plebeians along the road of republicanism. This transition was marked in England by Cromwell's victory over the Presbyterians in the period of the second civil war, and in France, by the expulsion of the Girondins from the Convention in June 1793. Marx was therefore correct in saying that, in both these revolutions, 'the bourgeoisie was the class that really formed the van of the movement' and that even when the plebeians clashed with the bourgeoisie:

... they fought only for the realisation of the interests of the bourgeoisie, even if not in the fashion of the bourgeoisie. The whole French terrorism was nothing but a plebeian manner of settling accounts with the enemies of the bourgeoisie... ^[3]

This was the universal character of the two revolutions. They:

... were not English and French revolutions; they were revolutions of a European pattern. They were not the victory of a definite class of society over the old political order; they were the proclamation of political order for the new European society.

The Revolutions of 1789 and 1848 heralded:

... the victory of the bourgeoisie over feudal property, of nationality over provincialism, of competition over the guild, of partition over primogeniture, of the owner of the land over the domination of the owner by the land, of enlightenment over superstition, of the family over the family name, of industry over heroic laziness, of civil law over medieval privilege. ^[4]

It is at this point that Marx modifies and concretises the perspective which, with Engels, he evolved a year earlier in relation to Germany. Then, he had anticipated that the approaching bourgeois revolution would be more thoroughgoing than either the English or the French because of Germany's more advanced state of industrialisation. Now, in the light of the living experience of the revolution, Marx quickly saw that events had taken an opposite course for precisely that reason:

The German bourgeoisie had developed so slothfully, cravenly and slowly that at the moment when it menacingly faced feudalism and absolutism it saw itself menacingly faced by the proletariat and all those factions of the burghers whose interests and ideas were akin to those of the proletariat. And it saw inimically arrayed not only a class behind it but all of Europe before it. ^[5]

Marx concludes this short article on the German Revolution with a savage onslaught on the class which betrayed it, branding it with such epithets as could only come from one who had only recently severed the political umbilical cord with this self-same German bourgeoisie:

... no energy in any respect, plagiarism in every respect; common because it lacked originality, original in its commonness, dickered with its own desires, without initiative, without faith in itself, without faith in the people, without a world history calling; an execrable old man, who saw himself doomed to guide and deflect the first youthful impulses of a robust people in its own senile interests - sans eyes, sans ears, sans teeth, sans everything - such was the Prussian bourgeoisie that found itself at the helm of the Prussian state after the March Revolution. ^[6]

It is completely legitimate to ask: but did not the political supineness of this class invalidate one of the most fundamental propositions of historical materialism? Did not the failure of the German bourgeoisie to rise to the abstract or generalised norms ascribed to it in the *Communist Manifesto* overthrow the entire theoretical basis from which Marx and Engels had derived this norm? This was possibly the first, but most certainly not the last, occasion on which this problem was to confront the revolutionary movement. Trotsky had to deal with it in his last theoretical struggle, against the Shachtman - Burnham opposition in the American Socialist Workers Party. They declared that the Stalin - Hitler pact of August 1939 offered proof that the USSR had so degenerated from the 'abstract norm' of a healthy workers' state that Marxists were no longer obliged to defend it against the attacks of imperialism. Trotsky replied in the following way:

In the question of the social character of the USSR, mistakes commonly flow... from replacing the historical fact with the programmatic norm. Concrete fact departs from the norm. This does not signify, however, that it has overthrown the norm; on the contrary, it has reaffirmed it, from the negative side... The contradiction between concrete fact and the norm constrains us not to reject the norm but, on the contrary, to fight for it by means of the revolutionary road... we do not say: 'Everything is lost. We must begin all over again.' We clearly indicate those elements of the workers' state which at the given stage can be salvaged, preserved and further developed. ^[7]

And this - with the important proviso that Marx was concerned with the degeneration of a bourgeoisie, and Trotsky with the bureaucratic decline of a state established by a proletarian revolution - was precisely the methodological approach of Marx and Engels to post-1848 Germany. They did not permit their political perspectives to be distorted 'by opposing a good programmatic norm to a miserable, mean and even repugnant reality', ^[8] no more than Trotsky did the 'bureaucratic collectivists' with their cynical references to the USSR as a 'counter-revolutionary workers' state'. The German bourgeoisie - not the generalised, abstract and supra-national bourgeoisie of the *Communist Manifesto*, but the one subjected to Marx's withering contempt after its betrayal of the March Revolution - still remained a bourgeoisie. All its political sins did not negate its historical role as the vehicle in Germany of a revolutionary mode of production. The political failings of the German capitalist class certainly undermined its ability to carry through this task in the way that the French and English bourgeoisies had done before it, but this did not mean at all that Germany's economy would go into decline as a result of the defeat of the 1848 Revolution.

What the setback of 1848 did mean was that the economic development of the bourgeoisie in Germany would now take on forms not previously experienced by the class, and that, in turn, this would create new political forms arising on the foundations of this unique combination of social and economic forces. Again we must stress: the deviation of Germany from the classic 'European' norm in no way invalidates that norm, it dialectically complements it, just as the June insurrection of the Parisian workers entered into and helped shape the course of the revolution across the Rhine. Historical materialism does not 'provide the answers'; it is a theoretical and methodological key - and an inexact one at that - for unlocking the doors which conceal the mysteries of the past and forces which have gone to shaping the present.

For it would be the height of anti-Marxism to suppose that Marx and Engels either took their world outlook and method ready-made from the pinnacles of bourgeois culture (that is, German idealist philosophy, French utopian socialism and English political economy) without recasting it in a new mould, or that they were confronted with no problems or experiences which demanded its amendment and enrichment. Opponents of Marxism seize on this ever-present contradiction between abstraction and reality to challenge the need for any form of theory. Trotsky answered these sceptics by taking their arguments to their logical conclusion:

Inasmuch as the economic basis determines events in the superstructure not immediately; inasmuch as the mere class characterisation of the state is not enough to solve the practical tasks, therefore... therefore we can get along without examining economics and the class nature of the state... But why stop there? Since the law of labour value determines prices not 'directly' and not 'immediately'; since the laws of natural selection determine not 'directly' and not 'immediately' the birth of a suckling pig; since the laws of gravity determine not 'directly' and not 'immediately' the tumble of a drunken policeman down a flight of stairs, therefore... let us leave Marx, Darwin, Newton and all the other lovers of 'abstractions' to collect dust on a shelf. This is nothing less than the solemn burial of science for, after all, the entire course of the development of the sciences proceeds from 'direct' and 'immediate' causes to the more remote, and profoundness from multiple varieties and kaleidoscopic events - to the unity of the driving forces. ^[9]

Trotsky was compelled, by the unfavourable course of events in the Soviet Union after 1923, to explain the contradiction between the Bolshevik 'norm' of 1917 and the bureaucratized reality of a Stalin-ruled USSR. Marx and Engels, also working in conditions of political reaction after the defeat of a whole series of European revolutions, likewise were confronted with similar theoretical and political problems in Germany. At first, the course of German development was unclear. The Prussian nobility, the real power behind the Hohenzollern throne, in turn rested on the rich farmers or Junkers of the East. This class of landowners stood in a highly contradictory relationship to the German industrial bourgeoisie. Many of

them, while imbibing the values and political outlook of the Prussian monarchy, were at the same time highly competitive and profit-conscious producers and exporters of rye and wheat. There was therefore the possibility of a 'bloc' with the defeated industrial bourgeoisie in which the Junkers continued to hold the main levers of state power through their control of the army and government bureaucracy, while permitting and even encouraging the industrialists and bankers to expand Germany's economic wealth in such a way that would not undermine the predominance of the old ruling élites.

Of course, such a combination could not unfold immediately in the wake of the revolution, no more than it could be from the very outset a consciously evolved strategy on the part of its major participants.

The 'pact of steel and rye', as the bloc between the Ruhr and East Prussia became known in the last years of Bismarckian Germany, only came to fruition after a long process of improvisation and adaptation.

Indeed, in the wake of the defeated revolution, when the Junkers were seeking every possible means to batten down the political hatches on a still-restless proletariat, Bismarck tended to side with those who preferred an economically stunted Germany to one which, alongside a flourishing industry, would be at the mercy of a large and radical proletariat:

Factories enrich the individual, but they also breed a mass of proletarians, a mass of undernourished workers who are a menace to the state because of the insecurity of their livelihood. Handicraftsmen, on the other hand, constitute the backbone of the burgher class, of an element whose survival is essential to a healthy national life... It is true that industrial freedom may offer the public man advantages. It produces inexpensive goods. But to this inexpensiveness the misery and sorrow of the artisan are poisonously bound, and I believe that the inexpensive garments from the clothing shop may after all lie uneasily on our backs, when those who make them must despair of earning their daily bread honestly. ^[10]

Not that the young Bismarck had any real sympathy for the plight of the German artisan, threatened with ruin by the onward march of industrialisation. The future 'Iron Chancellor' was, in his characteristically shrewd fashion, casting around for points of support for the Junker regime, to balance against the emergent bourgeoisie and industrial working class. And the pro-Junker economist Hermann Wagener argued very much along the same lines when he declared in the Prussian legislature:

I believe that the events of the years 1848 and 1849 have taught us that the artisan class desires not political but social improvements. If we want to wean the artisans from the political theory of subversion, then we can do so only by improving their social condition in accordance with the proper theory.

Advocates of such a policy clearly had the sympathetic ears of ruling government circles, because in the year that followed the defeat of the revolution, most anti-guild legislation enacted in the previous period of economic liberalism was reversed. And while government edicts could at most retard the tempo of Germany's industrialisation, it certainly did much to create a political climate of support for Junker rule amongst those either organised in, or influenced by the guilds.

And it without doubt engendered, after years of traumatic uncertainties, the utterly false hope that the artisan would be permitted to perform this role of 'backbone' of the Prussian state into the indefinite future. The shattering of this illusion in the period of imperialism and post-world-war economic crisis unleashed a ferocious despair within this economically impotent, but numerically large class, and provided fascism with just the disoriented social material it required to hurl against the organisations of the German proletariat. The role - and art - of National Socialism lay in setting in motion on behalf of monopoly capital precisely those classes which it dooms to economic strangulation. The basis for this petit-bourgeois 'backlash' had been created in the period of deep political reaction after the defeat of the 1848 Revolution. So, too, had the seeds been sown, in the same social classes, of deep contempt for the most modest forms of democracy and individual freedom. These had been demagogically lumped together with capitalist free trade, and denounced by the Junkers as an alien importation from France. This strategy, directed as much against the bourgeoisie as the proletariat, drew heavily on the historical fact that bourgeois democracy and economic reform had been brought to Germany on the bayonets of Napoleon's army, and that for this reason had provoked hostility in quarters which might, in other circumstances, have been sympathetic to the ideals of the French Revolution. But because of the already-discussed uneven development of the bourgeois revolution in Europe, its concrete juxtaposition led to the national cause becoming identified with political reaction in Germany, and support for democracy with treason. In France, ironically, the reverse was the case. Patriotism and 1789 became interwoven to such

an extent in the French body politic that the bourgeoisie was able, through the leaders of French socialism and syndicalism, to march the proletariat off to the trenches without the slightest organised resistance from within the ranks of the French labour movement.

Unevenness *and* combination - here is one of the most vital keys to grasping the contradictory development of European, and especially German history. We have repeatedly stressed the unique role of the guilds in providing Junker reaction with a counter-weight to the working class and bourgeoisie. But, in the case of England, the artisans played a leading part in spearheading Chartism. They were to be found, not in the ranks of the reaction, or even as sympathisers of the London-based moderates, those who followed Lovett's philosophy and political strategy of 'moral force'.

In complete contradiction to the majority of their German counterparts, they fought as partisans of the most militant, 'physical force' wing of Chartism, under the leadership of its northern leader, Fergus O'Connor. And this can only partly be explained by their different economic circumstances. It is true that the power of the guilds had long been in decline since the onset of the industrial revolution nearly a century before, and that the consequent process of the separation of the individual artisan from his own instruments of production was nearer completion. These factors would help to account for the English artisan's readiness to identify his own cause with that of the industrial proletariat. But we must also take into consideration the question of political tradition which also played such an important part in the behaviour of the German guilds during 1848. Two centuries before Chartism reached its apogee, feudal institutions had been dealt a death blow by the military and political defeat of the Stuart monarchy. This single act did more to cleanse England of rural and guild idiocies than any amount of radical pamphleteering and agitation. The millions-strong supporters of Chartism trod, however dimly they perceived it, in the footsteps of their victorious revolutionary ancestors. This is what gave them their great strength, and this is what the German revolutionaries lacked. The role of tradition in politics can never be given too much attention, and this applies as much to movements of reaction as to those with a revolutionary goal. Prussia's ruling Junker caste, once under the astute leadership of Bismarck, based itself on a very real, if distortedly perceived, tradition of reaction in Germany which reached back over three centuries to the epoch of Luther. And within this Junker-bureaucratic-monarchist shell, the bourgeoisie was still able to develop Germany's productive forces at an unprecedented tempo. Far from relapsing into a rural European backwater, those German states organised in the 'Zollverein', or customs union, enjoyed over the decade which followed the bourgeoisie's political defeat a threefold increase in pig iron production, and an even greater expansion in coal mining. Already the basic outlines of the German economy - and its bourgeoisie - were becoming well-defined. And Junkers like Bismarck who had in the immediate post-revolutionary period tended to look askance at these developments, began to revise their opinions.

It was one thing to lecture the German bourgeoisie on the moral necessity of paying through the nose for their Sunday finery, but something entirely different when it came to equipping an army for war. The Prussian sword - or rather cannon - could hardly see the light of day in a dingy guild master's workshop. Prussia's wars of German unification could only be fought with weapons forged in the furnaces of Krupp, Stinnes and Mannesmann.

This thought may well have lurked at the back of the mind of the future victor at Sedowa and Sedan when he confided to Hermann Wagener in 1853 that his faith in the efficacy of the guilds was being undermined:

... we are spared none of the disadvantages which it brings, that is, excessive prices for manufactured articles [including, presumably, those offensive 'inexpensive garments from clothing shops' - RB], indifference to customers and therefore careless workmanship, long delays on orders, late beginning, early stopping and protracted lunch hours when work is done at home, little choice in ready-made wares, backwardness in technical training, and many other deficiencies... ^[11]

Repudiation of the guilds, save as a demagogic ploy to retain their political loyalty, drove Junkerdom willy-nilly towards an alliance with the industrial and financial bourgeoisie. The content of this combination with its implications for the German labour movement engrossed Marx and especially Engels for the next two decades.

After four years of Bismarck's rule (he was appointed Chancellor in 1862) Engels undertook an important, if partial, revision of their conception of the European bourgeoisie as enunciated in the *Communist Manifesto*:

It is becoming ever clearer to me that the bourgeoisie has not the stuff in it for ruling directly itself, and that therefore where there is no oligarchy, as there is in England, to take over, for good pay, the manning of the state and society in the interests of the bourgeoisie, a Bonapartist semi-dictatorship is the *normal form*. It upholds the big material interests of the bourgeoisie even against the will of the bourgeoisie, but allows the bourgeoisie no share in the power of government. The dictatorship in its turn is forced against its will to adopt these material interests of the bourgeoisie as its own. ^[12]

As a species of state power, Bonapartism derives its name from the military dictatorship established by Napoleon Bonaparte after his coup of 9 November 1799, this being 18 Brumaire of the year VIII by the French revolutionary calendar. It brought to a close a decade of political conflict and social tension in which the state power had oscillated - often violently - between a multiplicity of parties, factions and individual leaders. The exhaustion of the plebeians, and the yearning of the big bourgeoisie for political stability to enjoy the fruits of victory created the conditions for the entry of the army, with Napoleon as its most illustrious and politically astute leader, as the supreme arbiter of the nation. His rear consolidated and made secure from either fresh revolutions or attempts at feudal restoration, Napoleon felt free to embark on his wars of conquest. Marx and Engels were the first to see that within certain historically conditioned limits, the original Bonapartist model could be employed to unravel the complexities of later episodes in European history where state forms deviated sharply from the classic bourgeois-democratic 'norm'. And this was to prove the case not only with France, where Bonapartism reappeared in the guise of Napoleon's nephew Louis, but in Bismarckian Germany. ^[13]

This is the first occasion, to the author's knowledge, on which either Marx or Engels sought to explain the unique political development of Germany by reference to Bonapartism. However, the one-sided, politically stunted evolution of the German bourgeoisie had been commented on by Engels some seven years earlier, in his review of Marx's *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, where he points out that the defeat of 1848 forced the capitalist class to concentrate its energies along lines most directly related to productive techniques:

Germany... applied itself with quite extraordinary energy to the natural sciences, in accordance with the immense bourgeois development setting in after 1848; with the coming into fashion of these sciences, in which the speculative trend had never achieved anything of real importance, the old metaphysical mode of thinking... gained ground rapidly. Hegel was forgotten and a new materialism arose in the natural sciences; it differed in principle very little from the materialism of the eighteenth century... ^[14]

This passage is highly significant in that it once again refines earlier formulations made by Marx and Engels on the bourgeois revolution in Germany. After its defeat, Marx's initial reaction was to denounce the German bourgeoisie as incapable of *any* progressive work - 'sans eyes, sans ears, sans teeth, sans everything' - and yet here is Engels, 10 years later, writing of 'the immense bourgeois development setting in after 1848', which included important advances in the field of natural science.

A large part of the problem lay not with the German bourgeoisie, but with their half-protectors, half-tormentors, the Prussian Junkers. This class was particularly well suited to its role of mediator between rising industrial capitalism and the old, declining rural Germany, as it had much in common with both. Long before the 1848 Revolution, it had begun to adapt the forms of feudal tenure and peasant bondage to a market economy, and after 1848 showed an equal capacity for directing Germany's industrial and financial bourgeoisie into channels which aggrandised its own power and made possible the realisation of its dynastic and military goals.

In inheriting the social and political situation bequeathed to him by the defeat of 1848 (Bismarck had been among the revolution's most fanatical enemies), the 'Iron Chancellor' exploited this unique balance of class forces to the maximum. And here the limitations of historical analogies become all too obvious, since the two periods of Bonapartist rule in France arose on bourgeois state foundations, and under conditions where the role of feudal residues, either in the form of a politically active aristocracy or monarchist peasantry, was virtually non-existent. German Bonapartism followed the defeat of the bourgeois revolution, and herein lies its unique feature, one which posed so many political problems for both Marx and Engels. Engels especially, since Marx throughout this period, though of course active in the work of the First International, was deeply involved in the production of his *Das Kapital*, and tended to leave to Engels the task of following the day-to-day events and broader political trends in Germany.

^[15]

Thus, of Bismarck's early attempts to secure his domestic rear before undertaking his wars of German unification, he writes:

Politically, Bismarck will be compelled to rely on the bourgeoisie, because he needs them against the Princes... as soon as he wants to secure from parliament the conditions necessary for central governmental power, he will have to make concessions to the bourgeois. And the natural course of events will compel him or his successors to appeal to the bourgeoisie again and again. This means that even if for the moment Bismarck does not make more concessions than he absolutely must, he will nevertheless be driven more and more into a bourgeois direction... [16]

But Bismarck proved to be a driver of hard bargains - harder even than Engels had anticipated. He still believed that because of the bourgeoisie's indispensable economic role in Prussia's unification of Germany, its parliamentary leaders would exploit their strong position by extracting political concessions from the Junkers. In fact, nothing of the kind happened. They were permitted to cheer Bismarck's military victories - after all, they had supplied the arms that alone made them possible. Neither could they complain of their share in the loot. Bismarck's wars were the making of many an industrial fortune, and many were the firms launched on the proceeds of French war reparations, which amounted to the astronomical sum of five milliard francs. But as for a share in the guidance of the sacred Prussian State - never.

Nevertheless, Engels had grasped an essential element of Bismarck's strategy. In dealing with the petty-minded princes, whose particularist tradition and outlook made the cause of German unity anathema for them, Bismarck most certainly did lean for support on the more 'national-minded' bourgeoisie. But leaning did not - at this stage at least - necessarily involve sharing. For Bismarck also had his answer ready for those amongst the bourgeoisie who might exploit this alliance to their own advantage. This consummate tactician did not hesitate to lean, however fleetingly, even on the German proletariat if this ruse could have the effect of bringing the more adventurous elements of the bourgeoisie to order.

Certainly at this time, the bourgeoisie was beginning to flex its rather flabby political muscles. The year of 1867 saw the foundation of the National Liberal Party, a right-wing breakaway from the more democratically-oriented Progressives, and it was this party, based on the coal and iron interests of the Ruhr and Germany's other industrial regions, which allied itself with Bismarck in the latter's struggle for a strong central state overruling both provincial and religious particularism.

(This coalescence of the Prussian Protestant bourgeoisie with Bismarck resulted, three years later, in the formation of the exclusively Catholic Centre Party, which at once identified itself politically with provincial centres of resistance to rule from Prussian Berlin. Thus the religious question - yet another historical 'residue' from the defeat of the sixteenth-century revolution - became a further element in the Bonapartist structure of German politics. In this sense, too, it differed from both varieties of French Bonapartism.)

Bismarck had the measure of his bourgeois allies-cum-opponents from the very outset of his political career. He well understood their inbred fear of thoroughgoing democracy, and their distaste for any reliance on the poor of town and country. This was one of the central political lessons of 1848. Bismarck now applied it in his Bonapartist strategy after the victory over France. It was he, and not the timid bourgeois democrats, who introduced manhood suffrage, converting it into a bulwark of Junker rule. [17]

Bismarck had been attempting to convert the Prussian king to this policy for some time before the adoption of the German constitution in 1871. In 1866, he confided to Kaiser William I that he believed that far from undermining the foundations of the Prussian monarchy, as many Junkers feared, it would 'raise the kin high up on a rock which the waters of revolution would never touch'.

Engels undertook a lengthy study of these problems of German politics in his uncompleted work *The Role of Force in History*, written in the winter of 1888-89. But he also touched on them in his voluminous correspondence with Marx, and his 1874 Preface to *The Peasant War in Germany*.

Here we find him recoiling in disgust from the pusillanimous conduct of the German bourgeoisie in the newly-created Reichstag:

I do not want to blame the poor National-Liberals in the Chamber more than they deserve. I know they have been left in the lurch by those who stand behind them, by the mass of the bourgeoisie. This mass does not want to rule. It has 1848 still in its bones.

Engels explained this previously unknown phenomenon in the following way:

It is the misfortune of the German bourgeoisie to have arrived too late, as is the favourite German manner. The period of its florescence occurs at a time when the bourgeoisie of the other Western European countries is already politically in decline. In England, the bourgeoisie could get its real representative, Bright [a leading advocate of free trade - RB], into the government only by an extension of the franchise... In France, where the bourgeoisie as such, as a class in its entirety, held power for only two years, 1849 and 1850, under the republic, it was able to continue its social existence only by abdicating its political power to Louis Bonaparte and the army. And on account of this enormously increased interaction of the three most advanced European countries, it is today no longer possible for the bourgeoisie to settle down to a comfortable political rule when this rule has already outlived its usefulness in England and France.

Engels, employing the concept of uneven and combined development, ^[18] then reaches the nub of his argument:

It is a peculiarity of precisely the bourgeoisie, in contrast to all former ruling classes, that there is a turning point in its development after which every further increase in its agencies of power, hence primarily its capitals, only tends to incapacitate it more and more for political rule. *'Behind the big bourgeois stand the proletarians.'* ... At a certain point - which need not be reached everywhere at the same time or at the same stage of development - it [the bourgeoisie] begins to notice that this, its proletarian double, is outgrowing it. From that moment on, it loses the strength required for exclusive political rule, it looks around for allies, with whom it shares its rule, or to whom it cedes the whole of its rule, as circumstances may require. In Germany, this turning point came for the bourgeoisie as early as 1848. ^[19]

Then we have, dating from a year earlier, Engels' equally perceptive analysis of the 'social' side of Bismarck's Bonapartism, namely, his flirtations with the so-called 'state socialism'. To those social reformers who argued that the Bismarck regime could solve the 'social question' because it did not rest directly on any single exploiting class, Engels replied:

That is the language of reactionaries... the state as it exists in Germany is... the necessary product of the social basis out of which it has developed... there exists side by side with a landowning aristocracy, which is still powerful, a comparatively young and extremely cowardly bourgeoisie, which up to the present has not won either direct political domination, as in France, or more or less indirect domination, as in England. ^[20]

Engels then points out how the growth of the industrial proletariat introduced a third prop into the Bonapartist state structure:

Side by side with these two classes... there exists a rapidly increasing proletariat which is intellectually highly developed and which is becoming more and more organised every day. We therefore find here, alongside of the basic condition of the old absolute monarchy - an equilibrium between the landed aristocracy and the bourgeoisie ^[21] - the basic condition of modern Bonapartism - an equilibrium between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. But both in the old absolute monarchy and in the modern Bonapartist monarchy the real governmental authority lies in the hands of a special caste of army officers and state officials. In Prussia this caste is replenished partly from its own ranks, partly from the lesser primogenitary (hereditary) aristocracy, more rarely from the higher aristocracy, and least of all from the bourgeoisie. The independence of this caste, which appears to occupy a position outside and, so to speak, above society, gives the state the semblance of independence in relation to society. ^[22]

Here Engels at last concretises in relation to Germany the general theory of the state which both he and Marx had been evolving over the previous 20 years. It was by no means the rule for the bourgeoisie to exercise direct state power, in the sense of holding all or most of the key governmental and departmental posts in a particular country where the capitalist mode of production had become dominant. In fact Engels could only point to France - and for brief period of two years at that - where the entire bourgeoisie had held the reins of state power firmly in its own hands. In every other case, capitalist class rule had been, to one degree or another, exercised by proxy, had been mediated either through a faction of the bourgeoisie itself, or through a caste selected and trained for this task from other social classes. This caste, which has as its sole or central task the exercising of direct state power, can be drawn from the most varied layers of society, according to both immediate circumstance and political tradition.

In Bismarck's Germany, it was the Junkers who provided this governing stratum, thus at the same time extending the historical life of a class that would otherwise have ossified and withered away as an economic anachronism. They did not simply and mechanically occupy a political vacuum that the bourgeoisie was unable to fill. They actively fought to defend their role as the sole wielders of state and military power. The Junkers sensed that, in post-1848 Germany, they had no other right to existence save as this.

And it is no mere coincidence that Germany - only on this occasion Hitler's Germany - provides us with the reverse case of a bourgeoisie being ruled not 'from above', by the landed aristocracy, but 'from below' by the petit-bourgeois Nazi leadership. Invoking the aid of other classes or layers of classes to ward off the threat of proletarian revolution - for such was the basis of its pact with both Bismarck and Hitler - is therefore very much an integral part of the political make-up of the German bourgeoisie. And we may, with the reservations that are necessary with all such parallels, also point to the early days and months of the German Republic as proof that this same bourgeoisie was even prepared to delegate power to the leaders of its old enemy, the Social Democrats, if that was the only means of averting the socialist revolution.

None of these cases is unique to Germany. Marx shows in his *Eighteenth Brumaire* how Louis Bonaparte's *coup d'état* of 2 December 1851 became possible through the mobilisation of the 'lumpen-proletariat' against the institutions of bourgeois parliamentary democracy, and also how once firmly in power, Louis Bonaparte secured the mass support of the French peasantry by exploiting the heroic aura around the name of his dead uncle:

The French bourgeoisie balked at the domination of the working proletariat; it had brought the lumpen-proletariat to domination, with the chief of the Society of 10 December at the head... A bunch of blokes push their way forward into the court, into the ministries, to the head of the administration and the army, a crowd of the best of whom it must be said that no one knows whence he comes, a noisy, disreputable, rapacious bohème that crawls into gallooned coats with the same grotesque dignity as the high dignitaries of Soulouque. ^[23]

The political rule of the monarch, the aristocrat, the labour bureaucrat, the gutter - or even the priest - these are some of the forms which the dictatorship of capital can assume at various periods of its rise and decline. In fact, as a general rule, it is true to say that the greater the political crisis facing the bourgeoisie, the more ready it will be to cede its power to these strata, and the more necessary it becomes for other social groups to screen the bourgeoisie's own rule. And the tenacity with which these governing castes defend the rule of capital hinges to a large degree on the extent of their own stake - material as well as 'moral' - in the existing system.

Hence the acquiescence of the German bourgeoisie in the penetration of their own élites by the top Nazi cliques, and their readiness to accept a considerable degree of graft and self-aggrandisement by the upper circles of the party leadership and bureaucracy. It was not, as some historians claim, 'protection money', but more a means of ensuring Nazi loyalty to their own class goals and interests by integrating them into the capitalist system of property ownership. Leaders such as Goering, Hitler and Goebbels became capitalists in their own right, as did many hundreds of lesser party officials beneath them.

Engels noted this process of fusion and mutual interpenetration of classes in Bismarckian Germany. Industrialists aped the mores and manners of the aristocracy, and hunted titles that would prefix their surname with the almost holy 'von'; while, on the other hand, 'the nobility, who have been industrialists for a long time as manufacturers of beet sugar and distillers of brandy, have long left the old respectable days behind and their names now swell the lists of directors of all sorts of sound and unsound joint-stock companies...' ^[24] This process of the 'bourgeoisification' of an aristocracy had of course been noted by Marx and Engels in the case of Britain, but here it took place on a solidly capitalist state foundation, and under conditions where the bourgeoisie was not lacking in either political experience or aggression.

In Germany, despite the impression created by Engels of the two classes meeting in mid-stream, the political initiative remained with the Junkers, for the reasons already alluded to. Engels was quite correct when he insisted that 'the transition from the absolute monarchy to the Bonapartist monarchy is in full swing', but more than a little over-optimistic when he added 'with the next big business and industrial crisis not only will the present swindle collapse ^[25] but the old Prussian state as well'. ^[26]

This he acknowledged in a note to the 1887 edition of the work in question, where he stated that the bourgeois-Junker alliance had remained intact chiefly by virtue of 'fear of the proletariat, which has

grown tremendously in numbers and class consciousness since 1872'. Nevertheless, Engels' hatred for the Junker caste, which stifled German politics and gravely hindered the unfolding of an open struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, often led him either to exaggerate the tempo of its political demise, or detect oppositional trends within the German bourgeoisie where there were none. For example, in 1886 he wrote to August Bebel, joint founder with Wilhelm Liebknecht of the German Social Democratic Party, that he had again detected signs 'that the German bourgeois was once more being compelled to do his political duty, to oppose the present system, so that at long last there will be some progress again'. ^[27]

Bebel had the doleful duty of reporting that this was not so, and that in fact the bourgeoisie remained loyal almost to a man behind Bismarck's programme of anti-socialist persecution. ^[28]

Not that Engels had any illusions in the possibility of a bourgeois political renaissance in Germany. Far from it. Rather he understood that in the context of Bismarckian Germany, there was absolutely no likelihood of a successful proletarian bid for power. ^[29] So while consolidating its own positions and preparing for a future period when the struggle for power was on the agenda, the German workers' movement searched for chinks in the armour of its enemy. Engels considered a fully bourgeois government not only inevitable but, as far as the political education of the German working class was concerned, necessary: 'Our turn can only come when the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois parties have openly and in practice proved their inability to govern.' ^[30]

How could Engels have anticipated that 32 years later, when this situation did arise, the main instrument in handing state power back to the bourgeoisie would be the now utterly degenerated party of Bebel?

Engels never lived to see even the most theatrical of revolts by the German bourgeoisie against its Junker overlords. Bismarck's decision in the mid-1880s to go over to an aggressive colonial policy, coupled with his support for protectionism, cemented the 'pact of steel and rye'. In turn, it hardened their united resolve to ward off at all costs the threat posed by the irresistible growth of Social Democracy. To a certain extent, this clearly minimised the Bonapartist manoeuvres which the regime could undertake, as the two warring factions based on private property were now beginning to sink their differences. There still remained, however, the 'proletarian' card, and on occasions Bismarck - and even the young William II - were not averse to playing it. It was not so much the content of Bismarck's social policy that was significant - the reforms were in themselves trifling and did very little to alleviate the plight of the proletariat - but the political thinking behind them:

... if legislation in the economic field since 1866 has not been even more to the interests of the bourgeoisie than has actually been the case, whose fault is that? The bourgeoisie itself is chiefly responsible, first because it is too cowardly to press its own demands energetically, and secondly because it resists every concession if the latter simultaneously provides the menacing proletariat with new weapons. And if the political power, that is, Bismarck, is attempting to organise its own bodyguard proletariat to keep the political activity of the bourgeoisie in check, what else is that if not a necessary and quite familiar Bonapartist recipe which pledges the state to nothing more, as far as the workers are concerned, than a few benevolent phrases and at the utmost to a minimum of state assistance for building societies *à la Bonaparte*? ^[31]

Engels undertakes his most thoroughgoing analysis of Bismarck's policy in *The Role of Force in History*, a work which makes extensive use of analogies between Bonapartist France and Prussia-dominated Germany: 'Bismarck is Louis Napoleon translated from the French adventurist Pretender to the Throne into the Prussian Junker squire and German cadet officer.' But he scored over his French counterpart in that he was not only 'a man of great practical understanding and immense cunning', but a statesman capable of restraining his ambition within the limits of what was realisable. Unlike so many would-be Bonapartes, he spurned adventures, and when the going was hard 'his willpower never deserted him. Rather was it the case that it was often suddenly translated into open brutality.' ^[32] And this, stresses Engels, 'was the secret of his success':

All the ruling classes in Germany, Junkers and bourgeois alike, had so lost all traces of energy, spinelessness had become so much the custom in 'educated' Germany, that the one man amongst them who still had the willpower thereby became their greatest personality and a tyrant over them. ^[33]

So how, then, are we to describe the Germany of Prince Otto von Bismarck, and how should we evaluate the political legacy bequeathed to the bourgeoisie he both ruled for and over? Confronted by the

contradictory and still-evolving phenomenon of Stalinist Russia, Trotsky found that the Soviet Union could not be accurately depicted in a phrase. In his *Revolution Betrayed* (1937) he found it necessary to devote more than half a page to the apparently simple task of defining the Soviet state and economy. To those who demanded a clear cut 'yes-no' formula, Trotsky replied:

Sociological problems would certainly be simpler, if social phenomena had always a finished character. There is nothing more dangerous, however, than to throw out of reality, for the sake of logical completeness, elements which today violate your scheme and tomorrow may wholly overturn it. ^[34]

And despite their occasional lapses into unfounded optimism - which always had as its basis an irrepressible revolutionary spirit, and not any lack of scientific objectivity - Marx and Engels employed precisely this method in their analysis of Germany. Engels always approached the Germany of Bismarck as a contradictory whole (which in turn was part of a greater whole) whose development was determined by the perpetual conflict between its antagonistic parts. The real theoretical complexities which arose in the case of Germany (reflected in the extreme hazardous nature of any predictions concerning its future political development) were due to the superimposing of one historical epoch, together with its constituent classes, institutions and ideologies, over another, rather than the new driving out the old. Thus the three-fold nature of Bismarckian Bonapartism, and the two-fronted war which each class waged against the others - Junkers against bourgeois and proletariat, proletariat against Junkers and bourgeoisie, and bourgeoisie against Junker and proletariat.

Like Trotsky, who was grappling with an entirely new historical process - the degeneration of the first successful workers' revolution, and the political usurpation of the proletariat by a ruthless and rapacious bureaucracy - Marx and Engels could have legitimately claimed that in Junker Germany, they were faced with 'dynamic social formations which have no precedent and have no analogies'. ^[35]

But that did not deter either Trotsky or Engels and Marx from searching for them. France, the nation where the class battles were 'fought to finish', so rich in its violent political oscillations from revolution to counter-revolution and back again, provided the best available models from which to work. In the case of Trotsky's analysis of the Soviet Union, he sought an historical parallel for the degeneration of the October Revolution in the period of bourgeois reaction which followed the overthrow of the 'Committee of Public Safety' headed by Robespierre and Saint Juste. They were guillotined on 27 July 1794 - 9 Thermidor by the revolutionary calendar - and it is this month which has given its name to the process of reaction which sets in after the period when a revolution is in the ascendant and then reaches its peak of radicalism.

Trotsky transposed this 'model' to the Soviet Union of the period immediately following the end of the Civil War, the illness and death of Lenin, and the aborting of the 1923 revolutionary situation in Germany.

But while making the all-important distinction between the predominant property forms in Napoleonic France and the Soviet Union, he depicted as the Russian equivalent of Thermidor the restoration of bourgeois property forms, whereas in the case of France, the fall of the Jacobins did not mark the beginning of a reversion to feudalism, but the consolidation of the newly-established state on political lines more amenable to the big bourgeoisie. Thus for a time Trotsky was tending to equate a *social* counter-revolution in Russia (that is, the overthrow of the proletariat as the ruling class, and the restoration of capitalist forms of property ownership) with a *political* counter-revolution in France, where power shifted between segments of the bourgeoisie (in this case from the middle bourgeoisie and its petit-bourgeois allies) into the hands of the biggest capitalists and bankers. Every shift in power under the Thermidorians, the Directorate and finally Napoleon himself took place upon the capitalist property relations established in the course of the first years of the revolution.

The flaws in this analogy soon became evident to Trotsky, and he revised it in 1935, when he wrote:

We can and must admit that the analogy of Thermidor served to becloud rather than clarify the question... In the internal controversies of the Russian and the international Opposition we conditionally understood by Thermidor, the first stage of the bourgeois counter-revolution, aimed against the social basis of the workers' state... the historical analogy became invested with a purely conditional, and not realistic character, and this comes into ever increasing contradiction with the demands for an analysis of the most recent evolution of the Soviet state. ^[36]

For if Stalin had assumed the mantle of a Soviet Bonaparte, and ‘since there has been no Soviet “Thermidor”^[37] as yet, whence could Bonapartism have arisen?’^[38] By ‘radically revising’ his analogy, Trotsky was able to come to the conclusion that the real ‘Thermidor’, a political reaction corresponding to the anti-Jacobin coup of July 1794, was already more than 10 years old:

The smashing of the Left Opposition implied in the most direct and immediate sense the transfer of power from the hands of the revolutionary vanguard into the hands of the more conservative elements among the bureaucracy and the upper crust of the working class. The year 1924 - that was the beginning of the Soviet Thermidor.^[39]

This brief survey of Trotsky’s employment and re-evaluation of the ‘Thermidorian’ and ‘Bonapartist’ episodes of the French and Russian Revolutions is by no means a diversion from our main theme, as it may indeed appear at first sight. Trotsky paid such close attention to the complexities of Soviet reality, amending and revising his concepts and conclusions where and when the facts demanded it, because he was constantly seeking a correct political orientation for the Left Opposition, and after 1933, the Fourth International. That is why he could not remain content with bald abstractions and banal generalities, with categories that allowed for only a clear-cut black or white, a yes or no. Along this methodological line lay the path to capitulation either to Stalinism (that is, totally identifying the Stalinist bureaucracy with the progressive nationalised property relations on which it rests) or capitulation to imperialism, that is, since Stalin has strangled the last remnants of Soviet democracy, the USSR is no longer a workers’ state and therefore should not be defended against imperialism).^[40]

Now this was precisely the motive which guided Marx and Engels in their theoretical work on the German question. At stake was the future of the SPD and, with it, the outcome of the struggle for socialism not only in Germany but throughout the continent of Europe. Any tendency to ignore the concrete and highly peculiar state forms and social structures engendered by Germany’s past development could have either thrown the working class into the arms of the bourgeoisie in an unprincipled bloc against the Junkers, or led to the equally suicidal course of allowing the proletariat to serve as a bargaining counter in Bismarck’s Bonapartist manoeuvres with the bourgeoisie.

Both these strategies were canvassed and even employed during the lifetime of Engels. Thus a section of the SPD leadership sought to placate the wrath of the German bourgeoisie during the initial period of Bismarck’s anti-socialist laws by playing down the party’s proletarian basis and programme, and emphasising in its stead the necessity of winning ‘the so-called upper strata of society’. This opportunist trend occasioned an angry rebuff from both Marx and Engels in their famous *Circular Letter* to the SPD leadership.

But Marx and Engels were equally opposed to the type of backstairs dealing engaged in by Ferdinand Lassalle - one of the great pioneers of the German labour movement - with Bismarck on the basis of their mutual hostility to the bourgeoisie. Lassalle also had illusions in the socialist character of Bismarck’s programme of social reform, a mistake which flowed from his idealisation of the Prussian state. Their negotiations - cut short by Lassalle’s tragic death in a duel in 1864 - revolved around a deal whereby Lassalle would attempt to rally the workers behind Bismarck’s policy of a Prussian-dominated greater Germany, while in return, the Chancellor would introduce manhood suffrage and a programme of social legislation protecting the workers against the profit-hungry German bourgeoisie.

And one of Engels’ last disputes with the leadership of the German party arose over this same vexed question of the nature of the German state and the attitude the working class should adopt to the more liberal elements among the bourgeoisie and petit-bourgeoisie.

Engels strongly objected to the use of the phrase ‘one reactionary mass’ to describe all the other political parties in Germany. This term, which appeared in the draft of the SPD’s 1891 Erfurt Programme (it was excluded from the final version), Engels considered to be ‘extremely one-sided... and hence entirely wrong in the apodictically absolute form in which alone it rings true’.^[41] And very much in the same way as Trotsky warned against regarding the Soviet Union of the middle 1930s as a finished social formation, Engels went on:

Wrong because it enunciates an *historical tendency* correct in itself as an *accomplished fact*. The moment the social revolution starts all other parties appear to be a reactionary mass *vis-à-vis* us. Possibly they already are such, have lost all capacity for any progressive action whatsoever, although not necessarily so. But at the *present moment* we cannot say so...^[42]

So right up to the end, Engels refused to state categorically that the German bourgeoisie had exhausted its meagre revolutionary energies:

Even in Germany, conditions may arise under which the left (bourgeois) parties, despite their miserableness, may be forced to sweep away part of the colossal anti-bourgeois, bureaucratic and feudal rubbish that is still lying there. And in that event they are simply no reactionary mass. ^[43]

So much for the peculiarities of Bismarckian Germany, which if we wished to paraphrase a formulation employed by Trotsky to describe the Soviet Union, could be termed variously a ‘Junkerised bourgeois state’ or a ‘bourgeoisified Junker state’ according to its stage of evolution.

The impact of the Bismarck era on the consciousness of Germany’s main classes, and the ways in which it influenced the political strategy of the bourgeoisie under the Weimar Republic, will be constantly recurring themes in this work.

Notes

1. K Marx, *Grundrisse* (London, 1971), pp 34-35.
2. K Marx, ‘The Bourgeoisie and the Counter-Revolution’ (Cologne, 11 December 1849), *Marx-Engels Selected Works*, Volume 1 (Moscow, 1962), p 66.
3. Marx, ‘The Bourgeoisie and the Counter-Revolution’, *Marx-Engels Selected Works*, Volume 1, p 67.
4. Marx, ‘The Bourgeoisie and the Counter-Revolution’, *Marx-Engels Selected Works*, Volume 1, pp 67-68.
5. Marx, ‘The Bourgeoisie and the Counter-Revolution’, *Marx-Engels Selected Works*, Volume 1, pp 68-69.
6. Marx, ‘The Bourgeoisie and the Counter-Revolution’, *Marx-Engels Selected Works*, Volume 1, p 69.
7. LD Trotsky, ‘The USSR in War’, *In Defence of Marxism* (London 1966), p 3.
8. LD Trotsky, ‘Again and Once More Again on the Nature of the USSR’, *In Defence of Marxism*, p 30.
9. LD Trotsky, ‘From a Scratch - To the Danger of Gangrene’, *In Defence of Marxism*, pp 146-47.
10. Speech to Prussian Parliament, 18 October 1849.
11. Letter to H Wagener, Frankfurt, 27 April 1853.
12. F Engels, letters to K Marx, 13 April 1866, *Marx-Engels Selected Correspondence* (Moscow, nd), p 214, emphasis added.
13. Marx’s immortal study of this second edition of French Bonapartism, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* and his complementary work *The Class Struggles in France* are absolutely essential reading for an understanding of Bismarckian Germany, not to speak of the role of the semi and full Bonapartist regimes of Brüning, von Papen and Schleicher which preceded Hitler’s assumption of power in January 1933.
14. F Engels, Review of K Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, *Das Volk*, 6 August 1859.
15. In fact this had been the case for some time. It was Engels who wrote a history of both the German revolutions: his *The Peasant War in Germany* (1850) and *Revolution and Counter-Revolution* (1852). But these must be balanced by Marx’s brilliant and profound studies of French revolutionary history.
16. F Engels, ‘Preface’, *The Peasant War in Germany* (Moscow, 1956), p 18.
17. While making sure that in his own Prussia, the cornerstone of the new Germany, the votes of the propertied classes outweighed the far more numerous votes of the workers and rural poor. This was the infamous system of the Prussian ‘Three-Tier Franchise’, only demolished by the Revolution of November 1918.

- 18.** This passage alone renders absurd Stalin's claim that it was Lenin who 'discovered' the 'law of uneven development' (JV Stalin, 'The Social-Democratic Deviation in our Party', being a report delivered to the Fifteenth Conference of the CPSU, 1 November 1926, *Works*, Volume 8, p 261). In defending his nationalist and reformist theory of 'socialism in one country', against the attacks of Trotsky, Stalin was obliged to declare as 'no longer correct' the unequivocal statement by Engels in his *Principles of Communism* (1847) that the socialist revolution could not triumph in a single country. Stalin argued that uneven development was unique to the monopolist, imperialist stage of capitalism, and that therefore, 'in these conditions the old formula of Engels becomes incorrect and must inevitably be replaced by another formula, one that affirms the possibility of the victory of socialism in one country' (p 261). How much sympathy Lenin had for this 'formula' can be seen from the comprehensive selection of Lenin's writings and speeches on world revolution reproduced in the author's *Stalinism in Britain* (London, 1970), pp 41-50.
- 19.** Engels, 'Preface', *The Peasant War in Germany*, pp 21-22.
- 20.** F Engels, 'The Housing Question' (1872-73), *Marx-Engels Selected Works*, Volume 1, p 605.
- 21.** The classic form of Bonapartism under the absolute monarchy evolved first in England under the Tudors, which leaned for support alternately or even simultaneously upon the old aristocracy and the rising commercial classes, and later in France under the Bourbons.
- 22.** Engels, 'The Housing Question', *Marx-Engels Selected Works*, Volume 1, p 605.
- 23.** K Marx, 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte', *Marx-Engels Selected Works*, Volume 1, pp 330-43.
- 24.** Engels, 'The Housing Question', *Marx-Engels Selected Works*, Volume 1, p 606.
- 25.** Engels refers here to the involvement of the more avaricious layers of the government bureaucracy in dubious stock exchange dealings.
- 26.** Engels, 'The Housing Question', *Marx-Engels Selected Works*, Volume 1, p 606.
- 27.** Letter to A Bebel, 13 September 1886.
- 28.** This was of course the period of Bismarck's anti-socialist law, which ran from 1878 to 1890. It secured the eager support of the National Liberals in the Reichstag.
- 29.** In the 1884 Reichstag elections, the outlawed SPD secured 549 990 votes and 12 deputies; Bismarck's parliamentary allies, the Conservatives, 861 063 votes and 78 deputies; the right-wing '*Reichspartei*' 387 687 votes and 78 deputies; the National Liberals 997 033 votes and 51 deputies; the Progressives 1 092 895 votes and 74 deputies; and the Centre Party, 1 282 006 votes and 99 deputies. The balance of power as refracted through the parliamentary prism was overwhelmingly tilted against the SPD, and the party leaders adjusted their tactics accordingly.
- 30.** Letter to A Bebel, 13 September 1886.
- 31.** Engels, 'The Housing Question', *Marx-Engels Selected Works*, Volume 1, pp 606-07.
- 32.** F Engels, *The Role of Force in History* (1887-88) (London, 1968), pp 56-57.
- 33.** Engels, *The Role of Force in History*, p 57.
- 34.** LD Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed* (London, 1967), p 255.
- 35.** Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, p 255.
- 36.** LD Trotsky, *The Workers' State and the Question of Thermidor and Bonapartism* (1935) (London, 1968), p 41.
- 37.** This is, Thermidor as conceived under the old and faulty schema, in which it represented a capitalist restoration.
- 38.** Trotsky, *The Workers' State and the Question of Thermidor and Bonapartism*, p 48.
- 39.** Trotsky, *The Workers' State and the Question of Thermidor and Bonapartism*, p 49.

40. This is the position held by the ‘International Socialism’ group, which publishes the weekly *Socialist Worker*.

41. F Engels to K Kautsky, London, 14 October 1891, *Marx-Engels Selected Correspondence*, p 514.

42. Engels to Kautsky, 14 October 1891, *Marx-Engels Selected Correspondence*, p 514.

43. Engels to Kautsky, 14 October 1891, *Marx-Engels Selected Correspondence*, p 514. Yet only a year later, Engels was to concede the point, if not the method employed to argue it. In a letter to Paul Lafargue, he noted that ‘in France too, Lassalle’s “one single, compact reactionary mass”, the coalition of all the anti-socialist parties, is beginning to form. In Germany we have had that for years... The whole of official history in Germany, apart from the very heterogeneous camarilla which surrounds young Wilhelm and leads him a dance, is made, on the one hand, by socialist action which causes all the bourgeois parties to merge into one large party of straightforward resistance, and, on the other, by the play of the divergent interests within these parties themselves, which drives them apart from each other. Reichstag legislation is nothing but the product, the outcome of the conflict of these two opposing trends of which the secondary, the tendency to split up, grows weaker and weaker...’ (F Engels to Paul Lafargue, London, 19 May 1892, Frederick Engels, Paul Lafargue and Laura Lafargue, *Correspondence*, Volume 3 (Moscow, nd), p 173) Here Engels still speaks of a ‘tendency and not a completed, cut and dried state of affairs’. And this, the method, is what is most important.

Chapter III: 'Blood and Iron': The Politics of German Heavy Industry

Lenin once said that politics were 'concentrated economics'. Not that he believed there was a mechanical, automatic or unmediated relationship between economics and politics, or that political structures could not at certain times play an important role in shaping economic events. We only have to recall the economic consequences of the English and French Revolutions, and compare them with the negative example of Germany in 1525, 1815 and 1848, to appreciate that the calibre of a class' political leadership in a revolutionary situation can have economic repercussions over a much longer period of time. But we should also remember that these variations in the political make-up of the European bourgeoisies were themselves a product of their uneven and combined economic development over the preceding epoch. So, after sifting through all the mediations and processes of reciprocal action and mutual interpenetration, we are obliged to return to one of the most basic of Marxist propositions - the primacy of economics. And it is in the economic structure of the German bourgeoisie that we shall find at least some of the factors which shaped its reactionary political outlook.

First some statistics, for they speak louder and more clearly than can any words about the transformation of the rural, small-town Germany of princedoms and guilds into a nation which in a matter of 40 years rivalled England as the 'workshop of the world'. In 1815, 73.5 per cent of the Prussian population lived in the countryside. And in Germany's 12 largest towns dwelt only double the number of people inhabiting Paris. Even as late as 1846, when industrialisation had begun to accelerate in several regions, the percentage of persons officially classified as rural had declined by a mere 1.5 per cent. Meanwhile, in France, and of course above all in Britain, an enormous exodus from the countryside into the towns - many of them relatively new - was in full swing. Germany's industrial revolution only really began as those of France and England were drawing to a close. Much has been said and written about Germany's late arrival as an industrial nation, and the economic advantages which accrued to its bourgeoisie as a result of its own tardy maturation. German industry culled from the largely empirical evolution of English technology all that it required to make the Ruhr, greater Berlin, Saxony and Hamburg the most feared rivals of the Black Country, Lancashire, South Wales and Liverpool. How effectively it did so can be gauged from the following indexes of industrial growth:

Production (million tons)	1871	1910
Pig Iron	1.5	14.8
Iron Ore	5.3	28.7
Steel (1880)	1.5	13.1
Coal	37.9	279.0

Never has there been a comparable industrial upsurge in the entire history of capitalism! English expansion over the same period, formidable though it was, never approached such a giddy tempo:

Production (million tons)	1871	1910
Pig Iron	7.8	10.1
Steel	3.7	7.6
Coal	118.0	268.7

In coal and steel - the economic language not only of heavy industry, but of the machines of war - Germany was, by 1910, the master of Europe. The same process was at work in other fields. Thus in 1861, Germany's minuscule machine production industry employed only 51 000 workers. Yet by the turn of the century, this branch of the labour force had multiplied twentyfold. Here too, planning and plagiarism played their part, with Bismarck's emphasis on industrial espionage and technical training in the education of the young. Neither were transport and communications permitted to respond to the expansion of industry in a pragmatic, planless and exaggerated way, as had earlier been the case in England. State investment in and control over Germany's rail network flowed not only from Prussian conceptions of an economy oriented towards war, but also from the industrial requirements of the

bourgeoisie itself. The English railway slump of 1848, bringing in its wake a series of spectacular bankruptcies, underlined the speculative nature of much railway investment. Far better to leave this risky field clear for state intervention and investment, and reap the rewards which a centrally-organised and non-profit-making railway system had to offer for the industrialist and manufacturer. The Junkers proved themselves to be as efficient railway pioneers and managers as they had army officers and state bureaucrats. During a period when the expansion of the English railway system had already begun to slow up, the length of Germany's network increased from 16 560 kilometres in 1871 to 60 521 in 1912. Likewise with shipping; before her industrial boom, Germany - and here we are speaking principally of Prussia - had been an exporter of cereals and an importer of machinery and other industrial products. After 1871, and with the rapid shift in population balance from the countryside to the towns, from agriculture to industry, Germany became an industrial exporter and importer of foods and raw materials. In 1873, only 38 per cent of German exports were finished goods, while on the eve of the First World War, this percentage had nearly doubled. Germany's enormously enhanced ties with the world market both as an importer and exporter created a vast demand for merchant shipping, one that could not initially be met by its domestic ship-builders. Soon however, the North Sea yards of Hamburg, Bremen and Kiel were launching some of the world's fastest, strongest and largest merchant vessels. In 1871, the newly-founded German Empire inherited from its constituent states a puny merchant fleet of 147 ships with a gross tonnage of 82 000. By 1914, German ships ploughed the oceans' trade routes in a fleet of 2000 vessels weighing 4.4 million tons.

In the 20 years between 1880 and 1900, Germany had in effect overhauled both France and Britain as an exporter nation, and stood second only to that other titanic 'late arrival' the United States. Yet all these achievements, truly astounding not only in their quantity and tempo, but also in scope and quality, were accomplished in a period when the German industrial and financial bourgeoisie were almost totally excluded from the summits of political power. The most tempestuous epoch of capitalist development had been paralleled by an equally unprecedented epoch of political emasculation on the part of this very same bourgeoisie! Yet when we look closer at the relationship which evolved between the capitalist class and state power, we see that, in a certain sense, it had little need or incentive to compete with the Junkers for government office. Despite and even against his own subjective feelings, Bismarck, stage by stage, carried out its economic programme. And while he did so, those sections of the bourgeoisie who identified themselves politically with the National Liberals had no compelling motives to break with him because of his high-handed and even contemptuous political methods. They adapted to and even to a certain extent absorbed the feudal residues of Junker rule, while carving out for themselves a position of European economic and technological supremacy. It redounded to the German bourgeoisie's advantage that its energies and individual talents were concentrated towards that one single goal rather than being simultaneously dispersed in several directions. The philistinism and apparent political backwardness of the German capitalist class under the Empire are only one side of its development, and should be seen as the dialectical complement to its truly monumental industrial fanaticism. This class, politically crushed and apparently demoralised after 1848, nevertheless clung on to several important economic conquests which it made during the revolution. The Frankfurt of 1848 not only witnessed the ludicrous spectacle of the bourgeoisie's parliamentarians fiddling while Prussia loaded its cannons, but the foundation of Germany's modern banking system, which in its turn provided much of the funds for the expansion of industry after 1871. Though he would have been loath to admit it, Bismarck had as much need of the House of Rothschild as of the Prussian Officer Corps. Without a modern industry, no cannons and no shells. And without a Rothschild or Gustav von Mevissen, ^[1] no capital for modern industry. Both in an historical and economic sense, German capitalism began its forwards leap with massive accumulation of money capital, the 'abstract' form of capital as opposed to industrial capital in the form of raw materials, machines, etc. In this, it was typically 'German'. The year of the great reaction, 1849, also saw the formation of Germany's first joint stock mining company, the '*Kolner Bergwerksverein*'. This revolutionary type of capitalist organisation was soon rapidly extending to other branches of heavy industry, including steel and machine manufacturing. Closely allied to the joint stock company, upon whose foundation would shortly be erected the trust, and to a large extent initiating it, were a series of new industrially oriented banks: the Disconto-Gesellschaft (1851), the Darmstadter (1853), the Berlin Handelsgesellschaft (1856), the Deutsche Bank (1870), and finally the Dresdner (1872). With the exception of the Dresdner, these banks, the financial giants not only of Bismarck's Germany but Hitler's Third Reich, *were founded prior to the formation of the Empire in 1871*. They provided the indispensable springboard both for the growth of monopoly capitalism in the last decade of the nineteenth century, and

subsequently that of German imperialism itself. How false then is the oft-encountered view, which in turn is frequently based on a one-sided and shallow reading of the writings of Marx and Engels on Germany, of a German bourgeoisie devoid of any overall class strategy or political programme. In the later years of imperial Germany, it became evident that reliance on mediating agencies such as the ruling Junker caste was an integral part of its political strategy, and not, as some have claimed, a substitute for it.

In 1862, Bismarck shocked all but the most intransigent members of the Prussian parliament when he made his first speech as the kingdom's new Chancellor. His brutal words may have outraged liberal conventions and democratic sensibilities, but they became a programme around which the entire industrial bourgeoisie was soon to rally:

Germany looks not to Prussia's liberalism, but to her force... The great decisions of the day will not be settled by resolutions and majority votes - that was the lesson of 1848 - but by iron and blood.

Iron and blood: if ever the history of a class could be summed up in that brief aphorism, it was that of the German bourgeoisie. How little Bismarck cared for the niceties of parliamentary majority rule can be gleaned from the contrast between the formal balance of party forces in the Reichstag and the composition of his own administration. In the founding Reichstag elections of 1871, the bourgeois parties - National Liberals and Progressives - sent 171 deputies into a 397-seat chamber. Ranged against them were Bismarck's closest allies, the Conservatives, with only 57 deputies, and the Reichspartei, with 67. The Catholic Centre could also be relied upon to cast its 63 mandates against the Protestant - Prussian bloc, giving the potential bourgeois opposition a theoretical majority in the first Reichstag of at least 110 over the Bismarck bloc. Yet the 'Iron Chancellor' reigned supreme, suffering only one serious parliamentary reverse in his 28 years of office. ^[21] The simple fact was that despite its rapidly accumulating economic wealth and technological prowess, the German bourgeoisie had utterly failed to acquire the most rudimentary forms of statecraft, without which a class cannot successfully hold the reins of power. Thus there could exist an enormous and, for considerable periods of time, unbridgeable gap between a bourgeoisie's economic vitality and its possibility of translating this into the language of direct state power. Contrast Germany's development with that of England, where Tudor Bonapartism permitted the leaders of the merchant bourgeoisie, allied with sections of the new aristocracy, to acquire considerable experience in influencing and even shaping governmental policies. This they did not only in repeated clashes with the royal power in Parliament, but through the evolution of a series of religious reform movements and by exercising control over their own economic institutions. The German bourgeoisie enjoyed no such rich tradition of internal self-government, let alone one of courageously challenging the institutions and representatives of absolutism. The economic decline of the sixteenth century, the relapse into semi-barbarism which followed the Thirty Years War, paralleled by the evolution of the 'Germanic' form of Protestantism, Lutheranism (which on the bones of the slain anabaptist peasant revolutionaries, and in vivid contrast to its French and English varieties, rapidly revealed a facility for adapting the language of religious revolt to the rigidly dictatorial structures of feudal Germany) all now became negative factors in the bourgeoisie's struggle for governmental power. The result, as we have already had occasion to stress more than once, was a unique species of state power based on a tacit and ever-fluctuating compromise between two distinct classes; the very nature of which forced them to fuse with one another:

The abolition of feudalism, expressed positively, means the establishment of bourgeois conditions. As the privileges of the nobility fall, legislation becomes more and more bourgeois. And here we come to the crux of the relation of the German bourgeoisie to the government... the government is *compelled* to introduce these slow and petty reforms. As against the bourgeoisie, however, it portrays each of these small concessions as a *sacrifice* made to the bourgeoisie, as a concession wrung from the crown with the greatest difficulty, and for which the bourgeoisie ought in return to concede something to the government. And the bourgeoisie, though the true state of affairs is fairly clear to them, allow themselves to be fooled. This is the origin of the tacit agreement which is the mute basis of all Reichstag and Chamber debates in Berlin: on the one hand, the government reforms the laws at a snail's pace in the interests of the bourgeoisie, removes the feudal obstacles to industry as well as those which arose from the multiplicity of small states, establishes uniform coinage, weights and measures, freedom of occupation, etc, puts Germany's labour power at the unrestricted disposal of capital by granting freedom of movement, and favours trade and swindling. On the other hand, the bourgeoisie leaves all actual political

power in the hands of the government, votes taxes, loans and soldiers, and helps to frame all new reform laws in such a way that the old police power over undesirable characters remains in full force and effect. The bourgeoisie buys its gradual social emancipation at the price of immediate renunciation of its own political power. Naturally the chief motive which makes such an agreement acceptable to the bourgeoisie is not fear of the government but fear of the proletariat.^[5]

The wretched conduct of the bourgeoisie in Bismarck's Reichstag drove many voters away from the National Liberals towards the more democratically inclined (but still not consistently republican) Progressives, generally regarded as the legitimate inheritors of the 1848 tradition. In the 1881 elections, their verbal opposition to Bismarck's persecution of the Social Democrats swelled the Progressives' votes to nearly 1.2 million, as compared with little more than 600 000 three years previously. Meanwhile, the National Liberals, who had dutifully toed the Bismarck line, lost heavily, falling from 1.3 million votes and 99 deputies to 746 000 votes and a mere 47 deputies. Undoubtedly, a big segment of Progressive support came from workers who had yet to identify their class interests with the Marxist-influenced Social Democratic Party, but who were determinedly opposed to the fundamentals of Bismarck's anti-democratic regime.^[4] Even though the National Liberals were later able to regain much of the ground lost during this period, they never succeeded in re-establishing their position as the largest parliamentary party. Bismarck's gamble on manhood suffrage had paid off handsomely. The bourgeoisie, faced by the ever-rising tide of Social Democracy, pulled in its blunted political horns and delegated the arduous and time-consuming task of policing the German working class to the Junker bureaucracy. But in doing so, it never for one moment abdicated the struggle for supremacy in its own domain - the factory, mine or mill. Here, at the physical point of extraction of surplus value from the proletariat, the class war was waged with true Prussian thoroughness and without a trace of the compromise that characterised industry's relations with Bismarck. The factory politics of the leaders of German heavy industry, as they evolved under Bismarck, provides us with many insights into the crucial alliance forged between Hitler and the coal, steel and chemical kings in the last years of the Weimar Republic. The firm of Krupps^[5] by its very nature drew close to the Junker state power, as its main business was the manufacture of weapons of war. Its reactionary pedigree had been established during the 1848 Revolution at a time when the owners of several other similar enterprises were, however briefly and hesitatingly, drawn into the movement for democratic reform. Alfred Krupp summarily dismissed any of his workers whom he suspected of democratic sympathies, instructing his management to keep revolutionary agitators out of his Essen plant by the crude but effective method of shutting the factory gates for the duration of the upheaval. Krupps employees were marched in strict Prussian formation from the workers' quarters in the town to the factory gates in the morning, and back again at night, for fear that despite their employer's every precaution, the revolutionary contagion might infect his traditionally loyal workforce. Foremen at the plant were told to ensure their charges were kept busy throughout the day so as, in the words of Alfred Krupp himself, to 'keep them out of mischief'. Krupp's loyalty was well rewarded by the Junkers, who never really forgave those bourgeois who flirted with the 'alien' ideologies of republicanism and parliamentary democracy. Bismarck himself maintained close personal and political relations with the Krupps, first visiting the Essen works in October 1864, when he discussed with Alfred his future plans for Prussian foreign policy. The Krupp dynasty also evolved its own brand of 'corporative' ideology, much of which reappeared in the guise of the National Socialist 'works community' of Dr Robert Ley and company. 'The goal of work shall be the general welfare' was one of Alfred Krupp's pet homilies, and he saw to it that it was inculcated into his entire labour force.^[6] The year of 1872, one year after the establishment of the German Empire, saw the appearance of Krupp's *General Regulations*, being a code of labour, social and political discipline for the Krupp workforce not one wit less dictatorial than any imposed by a German government prior to victory of the Nazis. Bismarck's anti-socialist laws were mild in comparison. Following a miners' strike which hit Krupp's own collieries in July 1872, Alfred Krupp instructed his subordinates that 'neither now nor at any future time' should a former striker 'be taken on at our works, however shorthanded we may be'. Krupp had also been outraged - like all good 'national' Germans - by the courageous stand of the two SPD deputies Bebel and Liebknecht in the Prussian parliament against Bismarck's annexation of Alsace and Lorraine. Then came the Paris Commune, electrifying the most advanced German workers and rousing their class enemies to a white heat of terror and fury. When the first ripples from these titanic events lapped against the Krupp fortress, its sole proprietor struck back savagely: 'When a strike appears to be imminent in any clique, I shall come there at once', he warned the Krupp management. '... then we shall see about settling the lot. I intend to act

quite ruthlessly, for there is, as I see it, no other possible course.’ And then he added, ominously: ‘What does not bend can break.’^[7] Krupp then immediately dispatched to every one of his 16 000 workers the new *General Regulations*. They are historic for several reasons, not least because they provided both ideas and even slogans which the Nazis later adopted as their own:

The full force of authority must be used to suppress disloyalty and conspiracy. Those who commit unworthy acts must never be permitted to feel safe, must never escape public disgrace. Good, like wickedness, should be examined through a microscope. Even as a seed bears fruit in direct ratio to the nourishment or poison it is given, so it is from the spirit that an act, benign or evil, arises.^[8]

Krupp demanded of his workforce (or ‘followers’, as the Nazi labour code was later to describe them) ‘full and undivided energy’, ‘loyalty’, love of ‘good order’ and freedom from what the *General Regulations* called ‘all prejudicial influences’.^[9] Strikes or any other form of resistance by the workers were to be regarded and punished as acts of treason towards the firm. Any worker adjudged guilty of such heinous crimes was ‘never again to become a member of the concern’. The *Regulations* also took care to exclude from Krupp’s employ all workers suspected of previous union activity or sympathies, for they stipulated that ‘no person known to have taken part in troublemaking of a similar kind elsewhere may be given employment in the firm’.^[10]

Such an all-embracing regime, which seeks not only to discipline the worker outwardly in the actual labour process, but also to control and regiment his innermost political thoughts, required a full-time staff of spies and informers. And Krupp set about creating one. Their instructions were to maintain:

... a constant quiet observation of the spirit of our workers, so that we cannot miss the beginning of any ferment anywhere; and I must demand that if the cleverest and best workman or foreman even looks as though he wants to raise objections, or belongs to one of those unions, he shall be dismissed as quickly as practicable, without consideration of whether he can be spared.

Even Krupp’s much-vaunted standards of workmanship were therefore to be sacrificed in the struggle to root out what Alfred once called the ‘devilish seed’ of Social Democracy. But in vain. The huge industrial concentrations of the Ruhr region were a fertile breeding ground for political radicalism and militant trade unionism, and though at first held back by both Bismarck’s anti-socialist laws and the strong grip of ‘social’ Catholicism in this predominately Catholic area, the SPD began to break down the barriers erected against it by Krupp and the other leaders of heavy industry and mining. Despairing of ever cleansing his workers’ minds of ‘prejudicial influences’, Alfred Krupp wrote some 15 years later: ‘I wish somebody with great gifts would start a counter-revolution for the best of the people - with flying columns, labour battalions of young men.’ Little wonder that all the Nazi leaders, from those closest to big business like Funk and Goering, to the self-styled radicals such as Feder and Goebbels, not only carefully eschewed all demagogic attacks on Krupp, but went out of their way to praise the firm’s traditions and style of management.^[11] For it had given National Socialism something far more valuable than cash for election campaigns. It had helped provide them with a programme of political, social and economic counter-revolution. It is worth bearing in mind a certain phrase which occurs in the Krupp *General Regulations*, for it not only became a slogan of German heavy industry, but found its explicit recognition and implementation in the ‘Labour Front’ of Dr Robert Ley. Krupp’s letter to his workers advised them that if they disliked his new regime, they had better leave his employ, ‘the sooner the better’. He was, he stressed, determined ‘to be and remain master in my own house’.^[12] Let us now jump over the intervening 61 years to the spring of 1933. The Nazis have on 2 May seized the assets and premises of the entire German trade union movement, and arrested its leaders. Gustav Krupp, the son of Alfred, a fanatical enthusiast of Hitler’s anti-labour policies, has already made haste to introduce Nazi methods into his own plants. And as head of the former ‘German Federation of Industry’ he will shortly take his place as head of the new regime’s Provisional Supreme Economic Council. Robert Ley, butcher of the trade unions, steps forward and declares his party’s economic programme fulfilled. Employers (now, in Nazi parlance, ‘Leaders’) were at last restored to their place as ‘natural leaders’ of the factory. ‘Many employers’, Dr Ley recalled, ‘have for years had to call for the “master in the house”. Now they are once again to be the “master in the house”...’ Alfred Krupp had taken his posthumous revenge on those feared and hated ‘poisoners’ of the Essen workers. The ‘flying columns’ - the SA and the SS - had triumphed where even Alfred Krupp’s plant police and Bismarck’s repressive legislation had failed. After a siege lasting more than half a century, the fortress of German labour was reduced to rubble. For Krupp had been one of the most outspoken and active supporters of Bismarck’s bid to strangle the

Marxist movement in its infancy. Parallel with the Berlin government's nationwide campaign to extirpate the Social Democratic hydra, Alfred Krupp stepped up his own private war against the workers of Essen. Potential employees were obliged to give an oath of personal loyalty to their employer. If they submitted to this unprecedented act of self-abasement, they were, on engagement, subjected to a non-stop barrage of directives and harangues from Alfred Krupp on their alleged slothfulness, greed and other moral deficiencies. On one occasion he informed his workers:

I expect and demand complete trust, refuse to entertain any unjustifiable claims, and will continue to remedy all legitimate grievances, but hereby invite all persons who are not satisfied with these conditions to hand in their notices, rather than wait for me to dismiss them...

And in a fit of pique after losing a local election battle against a pacifist-inclined and SPD-backed Catholic candidate, he ordered that all known or suspected Social Democrats be dismissed from his plants:

The next time I go through the works I want to feel at home and I would rather see the place empty than find some fellow with venom in his heart [sic!], such as every Social Democrat is...

It could be argued that the case of Krupp is not typical of the German bourgeoisie as a whole, and that is of course perfectly correct. ^[13] But then, since this class, like all bourgeoisies, comprised itself of many economic, political and social groupings, no single firm, family dynasty or individual capitalist could in this sense serve as an example for the entire class. We are not searching for arithmetical averages or means, but for the *political core* of that class which, under the stress of Germany's and the world's most profound economic crisis, turned to Fascism as a means of averting disaster. In this historical sense, the example of Krupps is of enormous significance. Neither is it an isolated one. The Ruhr concerns of the Stumm, Stinnes, Kirdorf and Thyssen families certainly rivalled that of Krupp in their authoritarian attitude towards trade unions and socialism, even if perhaps they did not share its intimacy with Berlin. Together with the big banks, these firms comprised the hub of German heavy industry around which revolved not only the entire economy of Germany but its very existence as a nation. Therefore it is to the political make-up of this numerically insignificant but economically preponderant grouping that we must turn if we wish to establish an historical continuity between the Empire of Bismarck and Wilhelm II and the Third Reich of Hitler. Karl freiherr von Stumm-Halberg, proprietor of a massive Saar-based iron and steel empire, held political and social views which in their form and mode of expression owed more to feudalism than modern industrial capitalism. Yet in content, they were but a projection of this all-consuming drive by the leaders of German heavy industry to be 'masters in their house', and had absolutely nothing to do with any yearning for an idyllic and regimented pastoral past. The homilies of Krupp and Stumm were delivered amidst the smokestack forests and slag heap hills of the world's most concentrated industrial complex. Von Stumm used to summon all his workers to regular meetings, at which he would harangue them on the evils of democracy, trade unionism and socialism. One such speech, delivered in 1889, catches well the flavour of this 'Junkerised' industrial serfdom:

... in the Stumm kingdom, as our enemies sarcastically call our community, only one will prevail, and that is the will of his Majesty the King of Prussia... Wherever we look authority is maintained in the case of need by penalties, imposed on those who do not submit to necessary authority... If an industrial enterprise is to flourish it must be organised in a military, not parliamentary fashion... Just as military discipline includes all the members of any army from the field marshal down to the youngest recruit and all take the field against the enemy united when the king calls them, so do the members of the Neunkirch Factory stand together as one man when it is a matter of combating our competitors as well as the dark forces of revolution... Any decline in the authority of employers... appears to me to be the more dangerous since in the long run it will confine itself to those sections of the population which are under discussion here. Once the worker has overthrown the authority of the employer, if he no longer submits to it, if he simply ridicules him when he intends to punish him... then authority in other fields, in state and church, will follow very soon. But if this happens, if authority is destroyed all along the line in all branches of business... then it will not be long before it is undermined even there where it is most necessary, in the army... I should not remain at your head one moment longer if I were to replace my personal relationship with each of you by negotiations with an organisation of workers under outside leadership. Such a relationship with, as it were, a foreign power, would violate my moral sense of duty and my Christian convictions. ^[14]

Now what is most interesting about this speech is not the highly 'teutonic' conceptions of loyalty and discipline, but the amazing degree of *bourgeois* class consciousness that they overlay. Von Stumm perceived that the crystallisation of any independent working-class organisation and the development of the least political awareness in the proletariat placed in jeopardy not only the stability of his own 'Kingdom', but the Empire of his sovereign. The 'front line' of the Second Reich ran right through the blast furnaces of Essen and Neunkirch.

Striking too is the resemblance between von Stumm's notion of the 'works community' which he shared with Alfred Krupp, and that of the Nazis. In both cases, the driving force of the capitalist mode of production, the quest for profit through the extraction of surplus value from living human labour-power, is shrouded and in fact concealed from the politically naive by a web of non-economic values, many of them being ideological 'residues' from Germany's feudal and guild past, and overlaid with the militarised conceptions of government evolved by the Junkers. The goal of von Stumm's production is nothing so vulgar and 'materialistic' as personal profit, no more than his ruthless repression of all dissident views reflects any desire for personal power. Each member of the factory community has his allotted place, and a duty to perform it to the best of his - unequal - capacities. Neither did this regimentation cease when the worker left the gates of the Stumm kingdom behind him at night:

An employer who is indifferent to how his worker behaves outside his factory is not living up to his most important duties. I could name a whole series of actions by workers outside the factory which I regard it as an absolute duty of an employer fully conscious of his moral task to prevent... Every master and worker must behave even outside his work in such a manner as to bring honour to the firm of the brothers Stumm; they should be aware their private life is constantly supervised by their superiors.

Here too, Stumm, Krupp and several other leaders of German heavy industry were already indicating, albeit in somewhat archaic language and style, the road later taken by the Nazi 'Labour Front' to its goal of the total atomisation of the German working class. For like the Jesuits, Stumm and Ley both desired 'the whole 'man'.^[15] Stumm naturally indignantly repudiated charges that it was a class regime which ruled in his kingdom:

We all belong to one estate, and that is the honourable estate of blacksmiths... This fiction of the existence of a fourth estate in contrast to property [the three 'estates' of pre-revolutionary France had been the aristocracy, the clergy and the bourgeoisie, all based on private property - RB] is also the basis of the insidious attempts to organise the workers against their employers and to place them under the leadership of people who lack any knowledge of their conditions, such as wages, hours, etc...

Stumm shared with Krupp an intransigent hostility to trade unionism, which, as we have already seen, he regarded as the agent of 'a foreign power,' much as his King, Wilhelm II, depicted the Social Democrats as 'vagabonds without a country', 'a gang of traitors' who did not 'deserve the name of Germans'. This was also, as is well known, a constant theme of Nazi propaganda directed against the leaders of the German labour movement. And we are far from exhausting our inventory of what, for want of a better term, we shall call 'proto-Nazi' employers. In fact, in the person of Emil Kirdorf, the Westphalian coal magnate, we have at the same time an industrialist cast in the Stumm - Krupp mould, being a fanatical opponent of trade unionism and socialism, and also one of the key figures in Hitler's strategy to win the adherence of heavy industry to the Nazi cause. Kirdorf's long reign as one of the barons of the Rhine-Westphalian coal basin spanned both the era of Bismarck's anti-socialist laws and the early years of the Nazi Third Reich. His views on trade unions are therefore invested with a double significance. As was the case with Alfred Krupp, nothing enraged him so much as the supreme act of proletarian insubordination - a strike. A wave of stoppages in his coalfields provoked this onslaught from Kirdorf at the 1905 Mannheim conference of the Association for Social Policy:

It is regrettable that our workpeople are able to change their positions at any time. An undertaking can only prosper if it has a stationary band of workers. I do not ask that legislation should come to our help, but that we must reserve to ourselves the right to take measures to check this frequent change of employment. The proposal has been made that all workpeople should be compelled to join organisations and that employers should be required to negotiate with these organisations. For myself, I would remark that I refuse to negotiate with any organisation whatever.

Kirdorf even refused to treat with the Catholic unions, which were set up in direct opposition to those under the leadership of the SPD:

While the Social Democratic organisations at least say openly at what they are aiming - viz, the subversion of the present social order - the Christian unions fight under a false flag. They know well that the subversion desired by the Social Democrats cannot be brought about, so they seek to place capitalism under the domination of the clergy.

And for good measure, Kirdorf also criticised the Berlin government for its half-baked attempts to introduce a programme of social reforms and factory legislation: 'I regret, too, that the state interferes at all in labour relationships.' It was, of course, a different matter when some 28 years later the state, under the leadership of his Nazi allies, intervened on the side of the employer against the trade unions! Barbarism in fact lay very close to the surface of German heavy industry. At a time when large sections of British capitalism were being compelled to retreat from their previous position of intransigent opposition to factory legislation, the steel and coal kings of Germany were not merely standing firm, but taking the offensive. The Rhine iron producers banded together in 1873 in the '*Centralverband deutscher Industrieller*' precisely to block all attempts at social reform by the Bismarck government. It opposed restrictions on the exploitation of child labour with the altruistic argument that 'it seems to be more reasonable to set children to work at pleasant jobs and let them make money [sic!] than to allow them to go idle and become wild'. ^[16] Similarly a ban on night work for women was denounced in the name of 'liberty of the people to work whenever they want to'. This intransigent attitude was not confined to the Ruhr, though this region undoubtedly contributed more than its fair share of anti-labour warriors. Everywhere that large-scale industry had arisen, there were to be found the spokesmen and practitioners of unremitting class warfare against the proletariat. In 1907, the director of the principal Saxon employers' organisation declared at its annual conference that:

... the military state of Germany owes the supremacy of its industry in the world market to the discipline asserted in its factories. The authority of the employer is a precious possession, to defend which is our most immediate duty. We shall never yield when it is a question of a test of power on the part of the workman, where the authority of the employer might be menaced.

And then, as if to mitigate, or rather justify, the harshness of this policy, he proceeded to use the same 'corporatist' ideology so favoured by Stumm and Krupp, and later plagiarised by Dr Ley:

For this authority is not merely the possession of the individual, *it is a common good*. Modern economic development has brought to the front the estate of the industrialists, who have superseded the old feudal landed proprietors as employers. Upon the efficiency of the industrialists depend the nation's power and progress. It is the duty of the industrialists not merely to provide the increasing millions of the population with a livelihood, but it must *primarily* wage war against subversive endeavours in every form. Our battle against the trade unions is at the same time a battle against Social Democracy. [Emphases added]

The same view was expressed by the most powerful of the pre-Weimar employers organisations, the Central Union of German Industrialists, which in a policy statement on labour-capital relations declared:

The conclusion of wages agreements between employers' organisations and the organisations of the workers is altogether injurious to German industry and its prosperous development. The agreements not only deprive the individual employers of the liberty of deciding independently as to the employment of their workpeople and the fixing of wages... but they inevitably bring the work people under the domination of the labour organisations. The agreements ^[17] are, according to the conviction of the Central Union, fully confirmed by the experience of England and the United States, serious obstacles in the way of the progress of German industry in technical matters and in organisation.

How can we explain this organic tendency of German heavy industry towards political and social reaction? Is it a purely German or 'Prussian' phenomenon, a product of a prolonged economic liaison with and political dependence on the East Elbian Junkers? Surely not, for the magnates of coal and steel have been traditionally aligned with extreme right-wing political trends not only throughout Europe, but also in the United States and Japan. This general and for imperialism, universal, trend can only arise on the foundations of the nature of heavy industry itself, its irresistible drive towards concentration and monopolisation, its ever-present concern to keep at maximum production the vast fixed capital installations which are unique to heavy industry. The very nature of large-scale iron and steel production, with its continuous processes and delicate chemical combinations, also places a premium on a workforce which is disciplined to the rhythms of the production cycle and which will not be prone to strikes and other interruptions of an 'external' nature. With this in mind, we can well appreciate the oft-expressed

desire of the leaders of German heavy industry for a workforce which would, willingly or otherwise, subordinate itself entirely to the dictates of the employer. The high organic composition of capital in the 'heavy' industries - that is, the ratio between capital expended on means of production and on labour power (wages) - also means that the employer finds the vast bulk of his capital costs do not lend themselves to reduction. Unless he has already secured the advantages of 'vertical integration', ^[18] he will be compelled to pay the market price for all his constant capital. Thus enormous pressure is brought to bear on variable capital, as the only element in a heavy industrialist's costs which can, given a suitable political and economic climate, be attacked with any prospect of success. The leaders of German heavy industry may not, necessarily, have seen the problem in this clinical light in the period under discussion, but it was undoubtedly one of the most powerful factors driving them to seek a confrontation with the labour movement. To these factors we must, of course, add the well-known but often vulgarly interpreted relationship between heavy industry and militarism. A desire for government arms contracts is obviously an important motive amongst industrialists for supporting movements and regimes which will, because of their imperialist orientation, undertake extensive armaments programmes. But the mistake is sometimes made of deducing from this that imperialist war is little more than the outcome of a conspiracy on the part of the arms manufacturers and those industries allied with them. Rather we should seek the origins of political reaction in the overall relationships engendered by the rise of heavy industry. Small wonder that a German commentator on the Wilhelmian industrial scene noted that:

... the decisive battles of German politics will be fought neither on the Neckar (Baden) nor on the Isar (Bavaria) but in the district of the Elbe (Prussia). For in North Germany capitalism has attained the gigantic expression which is characteristic of the world market; there classes oppose each other so nearly and so roughly that one disputant can look into the white of his enemy's eye: there amiability long ago disappeared from politics.

Yes, Munich witnessed the birth of the 'National Socialist German Workers Party', but to the north, in the heartland of not merely Germany, but all Europe, there smouldered and raged the class forces which were to raise it to the pinnacles of state power.

Notes

1. Von Mevissen was the founder of the Cologne A Schaaffhausensche Bankverein. Set up in 1848, it subsequently received Prussian government backing for its policy of promoting industrial development and innovation.
2. This defeat arose over Bismarck's bid in 1890 to renew and strengthen his notorious anti-socialist legislation, first introduced in 1878. Bismarck staked his continued tenure of office on it, and lost.
3. F Engels, 'Preface', *The Peasant War in Germany* (Moscow, 1956), pp 29-30.
4. The German working class sent but two deputies into the 1871 Reichstag - August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht. Then, with the exception of the first two elections under Bismarck's anti-socialist legislation, the SPD climbed steadily: 124 000 in 1871, 352 000 in 1874, 493 000 in 1877, 437 000 in 1878, 312 000 in 1881, 550 000 in 1884, 763 000 in 1887, and after 12 years of unrelenting state persecution, an astounding 1.4 million in 1890.
5. The then head of the Krupp dynasty, Gustav von Krupp, von Bohlen und Halbach, is usually quite incorrectly depicted as being strongly opposed to the Nazis right up to the formation of the Hitler government in January 1933. In fact, there is formidable evidence that the Nazi leadership had begun negotiations with the firm of Krupps as early as the summer of 1931. This question will be dealt with in much greater detail at a later stage.
6. In a letter to Kaiser Wilhelm I, Alfred Krupp describes his concern as 'a national workshop' whose factories were 'in a certain degree inseparable from the conception of the growth and importance of the state, and consequently indispensable'. Although Alfred had good cause to stress the 'national' character of his undertaking - he was petitioning the Kaiser for state assistance after the collapse of the speculative boom in 1873 - this is, nevertheless, an accurate picture of the intimate relationship which had evolved between the 'Cannon King' and the men of 'blood and iron'.
7. Quoted in W Manchester, *The Arms of Krupp* (London, 1969), p 178.
8. A Krupp, *General Regulations*, 9 September 1872.

9. Krupp, *General Regulations*.

10. Krupp, *General Regulations*.

11. Thus Feder, in his official commentary on the Nazi Party programme of 1920, writes: 'The true employer must be a man of moral worth. His task is to discover the real economic needs of the people... He must keep his costs as low as possible in order to get his goods out on to the market, must maintain both the quality and quantity of his output, and must pay his employees well, so that they may be able to purchase goods freely; and he must always be thinking of improvements of his plant and his methods of trading. If he puts these things first in his business, he is "supplying the necessaries of life" in the best, highest sense, and his profits will come of themselves without his making them his first objective. The finest and most universally known example of this kind of manufacturer is Henry Ford. There are other names in our own heavy industries which stand equally high - Krupp, Kirdorf, Abbe, Mannesmann, Siemens and many more.' (G Feder, *Hitler's Official Programme* (English Edition, 1934), pp 84-85.) Ford's place in the Nazi pantheon had little or nothing to do with his pioneering in methods of assembly line production. Ford was not only the most rabid of American union-busting bosses - he only recognised the UAW in 1940 - but also an avowed anti-Semite, and it was on this basis that the early Nazi movement approached him for funds shortly after the fiasco of the Munich Putsch. Kirdorf, the coal king, was an early supporter and financier of the Nazi Party, while Mannesmann's backing came at a later stage.

12. Krupp, *General Regulations*.

13. Unlike many German employers, Alfred Krupp was not a supporter of the National Liberals. He identified himself with the pro-Bismarck Conservatives.

14. The Stumm tradition lived on long after the death of Karl in 1901. His son, F von Stumm, was a vehement supporter of the Third Reich, and a raging anti-Semite to boot. He also undertook reconnaissance missions on behalf of Nazi diplomats while on business trips, as can be seen from the following extract from a letter to the Nazi ambassador in London, Herbert von Dirksen, written after Stumm's visit to Britain: 'About Sir NSS. I should like to add that he is thoroughly pro-Franco and thoroughly anti-Semitic. He has a soft spot for us and is at least objective...' (*Dirksen Papers*, Volume 2 (Moscow, 1948), p 202)

15. See the statement by Nazi Front chief Robert Ley, that 'we begin with the child when he is three years old. As soon as he begins to think he gets a little flag put in his hand; then follows the school, the Hitler Youth, the SA and military training. We don't let him go; and when adolescence is past, then comes the Labour Front, which takes him again and does not let him go till he dies, whether he likes it or not.' Elsewhere Ley wrote that a worker escaped the Third Reich only in his sleep: 'There are no more private citizens. The time is past when anybody could or could not do what he pleased.' Ley's organisation even calculated the number of non-working and non-sleeping hours the average worker 'enjoyed' in a year, and then attempted to fill them via the 'Strength Through Joy' movement. All these techniques originated with the 'social' employers of German heavy industry.

16. Contrast this lofty, 'non-materialistic' justification for child labour with unashamed claims by English manufacturers that Factory Acts shortening the working day for juveniles would rob them of their profits. Thus 'Senior's "Last Hour"', immortalised by Karl Marx in Volume 1 of *Capital* (pp 224-30).

17. The agreements referred to are those which were, at the turn of the century, sponsored by the government between employers and trade unions.

18. Germany pioneered this type of industrial organisation, which involved a concern extending 'vertically' by absorbing those enterprises which either supplied it with raw materials, or purchased its own product. Kirdorf was a leading advocate of the vertical monopoly: 'All economic development necessarily leads to integrated undertakings, for a company can only prosper permanently when, besides manufacturing finished goods, it also produces its own raw materials.'

Chapter IV: The Heroic Age of German Labour

Thus far we have focused on those social, economic and political factors, international as well as national, which contributed to the formation and development of the political consciousness of the propertied classes in Germany. We have also sought to show how these forms of consciousness comprised an alloy of many elements, which in turn were the complex outcome of a whole series of interwoven historical processes and events dating back, in effect, to the very dawn of the modern era. Finally, the trajectory of these developments was projected towards the future rise of fascism, and some of the constituent elements of its programme and ideology located, even if in an embryonic form, in post-1848, Bismarckian Germany. ^[1] Now it is necessary to analyse and synthesise developments at the other pole, that of the German proletariat. For here too we shall discover that tradition played its full part in the shaping of the present and the future, and that the life and death struggles of the infant German labour movement against its Junker, bourgeois and petit-bourgeois enemies came to overshadow so many of the class battles under the Weimar Republic. And here it must be said without any reservations that the reaction, personified by Adolf Hitler, absorbed the lessons of this period far more tellingly than any leader of German Social Democracy.

Initial attempts to found a stable working-class movement in Germany proved short lived. The defeat of 1848 cast its long shadow over the working class. Its most radical elements found refuge in the camp of bourgeois left-liberalism, while others, temporarily disillusioned with politics, emigrated to the New World. ^[2] But these workers, who had lived and fought in the crucible of revolution, and had witnessed at first hand the fruits of the bourgeoisie's cowardice, could never be reconciled to a long sojourn in the parties of petit-bourgeois democracy. Unlike England, where the working class underwent a protracted and convoluted experience of supporting two openly bourgeois parties, the Liberals and the Conservatives, before striking out along an independent political path, the German working class was driven to a split from Liberalism in little more than a decade. And the manner in which this was done was very different from the route taken by workers in England. There, the impetus to form a class party came from an attack on the trade unions, whose leaders had traditionally given their electoral support to the Liberals. And these unions had a history in some cases reaching back to the middle of the nineteenth century and even earlier. How different from Germany, where it was workers and intellectuals influenced by various schools of socialist thought who broke from Liberalism to found first an independent political party, and only then a trade union movement. The contrasting series of steps whereby the German and English working classes established their organisational and political independence ^[3] from all other classes and parties is of enormous importance for comprehending the subsequent histories of both nations. And precisely because the German labour movement originated in the development of diffuse and divergent schools of socialism, and not in the economic organisations of the class, which by their very nature embrace workers of all political views, it was from its very inception confronted by profound theoretical problems. Contrary to what the dictates of 'common sense' might suggest, this gave the movement its one great strength, and even though compromises over principle and programme were sometimes effected to achieve organisational unity, the German working class of necessity became drawn into these doctrinal disputes, and, as a result, underwent a political education unrivalled by any other proletariat. And here too, just as was the case with their class enemies, the development of the German working class was profoundly influenced by the combined and uneven development of capitalism. Engels observed that the German workers enjoyed two enormous advantages over their class brothers in the rest of Europe:

Firstly they belong to the most theoretical people of Europe and they have retained that sense of theory which the so-called 'educated classes' have almost completely lost. Without German philosophy, which preceded it, particularly that of Hegel, German scientific socialism... would never have come into being. ^[4] Without a sense of theory among the workers, this scientific socialism would never have entered their flesh and blood as much as is the case. ^[5]

This instinctive feel for theory Engels contrasted with 'the indifference towards all theory' which he had encountered at first hand in the English labour movement. It was a powerful retarding factor in its development, 'in spite of the splendid organisation of the individual unions'. ^[6] And the second advantage was that:

Chronologically speaking, the Germans were about the last to come into the workers' movement and for this reason were able to climb to the political heights attained by German Social Democracy by resting on the shoulders of Saint-Simon, Fourier and Owen... it has developed on the shoulders of the English and French movements... it was able to utilise their dearly-bought experience... Without the precedent of the English trade unions and French workers' political struggles, without the gigantic impulse given especially by the Paris Commune, where would we be now? ^[7]

The modern German workers' movement dates from the year of 1863. The brilliant but erratic dramatist and Hegelian philosopher Ferdinand Lassalle attracted a small group of workers around him after they had been denied full membership of the Progressive Party's National Association. Later, that year, on 23 May 1863, these workers founded, under the rigidly-centralised personal leadership of Lassalle, the General German Workers Union. Based on the Saxon city of Leipzig, its declared aim was the achievement of universal suffrage and the establishment of socialism through direct action by the state. ^[8] Lassalle's idealisation of the state, his view of it as an organisation above classes and existing purely for purposes of rational government and 'cultural progress', he undoubtedly owed to his uncritical assimilation of the Hegelian heritage. This was the central issue dividing Lassalle from Marx. It was not, as some biographers of the latter suggest, a clash of personalities or a question of political rivalry and prestige. Both men were constructed on too grand a scale for such petty concerns. Lassalle's Hegelian theory of the state was destined to lead him astray also in the field of political tactics and strategy. Burning with hatred for the German bourgeoisie, which he saw as not just the principal but the only enemy of the working class, Lassalle allowed himself to be trapped into making an alliance with Bismarck on the questions of national unity and universal suffrage. When the affair became known after Lassalle's death, it did great harm to the young workers' movement in Germany, for it enabled its bourgeois and petit-bourgeois opponents to portray Social Democracy as an agent of feudal reaction. All the biting invective hurled against Lassalle by Marx and Engels was therefore fully justified, as the essence of all their theoretical work was directed towards establishing the political premise of the socialist revolution - the complete independence of the working class from all other classes, together with an intransigent opposition to all the state machinery of class oppression. ^[9] The other wing of the movement was founded by Wilhelm Liebknecht, a revolutionary student of 1848, and August Bebel, a wood-turner by trade. Their organisation, the League of German Workers' Clubs, also dates from 1863, but did not sever its umbilical cord with liberalism until 1866, when Liebknecht and Bebel broke their loose association with the German People's Party to create their working-class-based Saxon People's Party. And it took another two years of fierce internal struggles with the more backward political elements in the party finally to launch the Social Democratic Labour Party in the south German town of Eisenach, from which they derived their popular soubriquet of 'Eisenachers' to distinguish them from Lassalle's movement, which was now under the leadership of Johann von Schweitzer. The new party, though it differed on many important points from the Lassalleans, was also far from complete agreement with Marx and Engels, a state of affairs which became glaringly obvious when merger moves between the two movements were consummated by the unity congress at Gotha in 1875. The criticisms made by Marx of the Gotha Programme have more than an historical interest, as they underlined theoretical and political weaknesses in the new German party which were never truly mastered, and which played a central part in its degeneration in the years immediately preceding the First World War. If we have to single out two issues around which the capitulation of German Social Democracy in 1914 revolved, then they would be the attitude of its leadership to working-class internationalism and the capitalist state - precisely those questions which Marx considered to be either watered down or distorted in the unification programme. ^[10] Thus Marx took issue with the fifth point of the Gotha Programme, which couched its internationalism in all too feeble terms:

Lassalle, in opposition to the *Communist Manifesto* and to all earlier socialism, conceived the workers' movement from the narrowest national standpoint. It is altogether self-evident that, to be able to fight at all, the working class must organise itself at home as a class and that its own country is the immediate arena of its struggle. In so far its class struggle is national, not in substance, but, as the *Communist Manifesto* says, 'in form'. But the 'framework of the present day national state', for instance, the German Empire, is itself in its turn economically 'within the framework of the world market... of the [world] system of states'... ^[11]

What Marx is insisting here, against the Lassalleans especially, is that there can be no 'socialism in one country', that the very international nature of capitalist economy and world political relations presupposes an international struggle by the working class to take state power and begin the construction of socialism. By implicitly rejecting thoroughgoing internationalism, the programme was placing at risk the fighting unity of the entire European working class:

And to what does the German workers' party reduce its internationalism? To the consciousness that the result of its efforts will be 'the international brotherhood of peoples' - a phrase borrowed from the bourgeois League of Peace and Freedom, which is intended to pass as equivalent to the international brotherhood of the working classes in the joint struggle against the ruling classes and their governments. Not a word, therefore, about the international functions of the German working class! ^[12]

And these functions were, and remained, onerous indeed. It was the German proletariat, whose first struggles for political and social emancipation had pumped blood into the Hegelian schemas of the youthful Marx and Engels, which gave the initial impetus for the writing of the landmark in socialist literature, the *Communist Manifesto*. Also it was the German working class, whose best elements were brought together in the Lassallean and Eisenacher movements, which comprised the politically most strategic and theoretically advanced detachment of the First (Workingmen's) International. And when the International went into decline and liquidation after the defeat of the Paris Commune, it was the German movement which stood firmest against the anarchist attack on Marxism. Neither was it an accident that the Social Democratic Party later provided the biggest and theoretically most weighty battalions of the Second International after its foundation in 1889. The dominant position of German industry and arms in the period of the Second International's prime compelled the German working class to take up a position of leadership within the international movement, and this it held right up to the outbreak of war in 1914. Strategically speaking, there could be no successful socialist revolution anywhere in Europe without the active solidarity of the German working class. This Marx understood only too well, having still fresh in his memory the recent tragic defeat of the Paris Commune, drowned in the blood of thousands of Paris workers under the protective and approving gaze of Bismarck's Prussian general staff.

Therefore to fulfil its international obligation, the German working class had to be broken from all forms of nationalism, however refined and however much dressed up in the language of democracy and even socialism. This was a task only a small minority of the SPD leadership took up in earnest, as the drift towards chauvinism in the imperialist epoch was to testify. Marx was equally biting in his criticism of the programme's section devoted to democratic demands. He poured scorn on the notion, derived as much from the Eisenach as the Lassallean wing of the party, of a 'free state'. Such a vague, non-class formulation in effect served to obscure the repressive functions of any state, be it feudal, capitalist or the state power established after a victorious workers' revolution:

The German workers' party - at least if it adopts the programme - shows that its socialist ideas are not even skin-deep; in that, instead of treating existing society (and this holds good for any future one) as the *basis* of the existing state... it treats the state rather as an independent entity that possesses its own intellectual, ethical and libertarian basis. ^[13]

Thus, far from idealising the state, the task of German socialists was to prepare for its overthrow, and the creation of the new state power based on socialist, and not capitalist property relations:

Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. There corresponds to this also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but *the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat*. ^[14]

Marx and Engels, while being frank to the point of bluntness with the leaders responsible for the adoption of the Gotha programme, never abused their position of political and theoretical authority to bludgeon Bebel, Liebknecht and Bracke into unthinkingly and uncritically accepting their proposed revisions of the draft. The German movement was an autonomous one, and both Marx and Engels saw their role in relation to it as one of comradely critics and advisers. Their greatest concern was that in their desire to abolish the 12-year-old organisational cleavage in the German workers' movement the Eisenachers would conclude a rotten compromise with the Lassalleans over vital programmatic issues. Far better, wrote Engels to Wilhelm Bracke, that the Eisenachers 'should simply have concluded an agreement for action against the common enemy'. But by trading programmatic points with the Lassalleans:

... one sets up before the whole world landmarks by which it measures the level of the party movement... One knows that the mere fact of unification is satisfying to the workers, but it is a mistake to believe that this momentary success is not bought at too high a price. ^[15]

Engels made the same point even more forcefully in a letter to Bebel. After reiterating Marx's criticism of the 'free people's state', which he called 'pure nonsense', ^[16] Engels warned what the adoption of such a programme would mean:

Marx and I can *never* give our adherence to the *new* party established on this basis, and shall have very seriously to consider what our attitude towards it - in public as well - should be... you will realise... that this programme marks a turning point which may very easily compel us to refuse any and every responsibility for the party which recognises it. ^[17]

In the event, Marx and Engels were not driven to a public break from the new German party. Not because they were reconciled to its programme, but because within three years, the course of the class struggle in Germany took such a sharp turn that a whole new set of problems and disputes was created both inside the SPD and between the newly-founded party and Marx and Engels in England. The new situation was, of course, Bismarck's determined bid to crush the German labour movement. Bismarck's decision to outlaw the SPD and its allied organisations, although implemented in 1878, had been made much earlier. The first serious repressions began in the wake of Prussia's victorious war against France, when Bebel, Liebknecht and other leaders of the infant workers' movement were jailed on the Chancellor's orders for opposing his annexation of Alsace and Lorraine. Every other party, from the Progressives through the National Liberals to the Conservatives, unleashed an unprecedented barrage of chauvinist invective against the Social Democrats, and both Liebknecht and Bebel were subsequently re-arrested after serving their four-month jail term, and tried for treason at Leipzig in March 1872. This time, the sentence was two years, for intervening between the two verdicts was not only the Reichstag elections of 1871, where the party of Bebel and Liebknecht succeeded in returning them as deputies, but also the Paris Commune. Its impact on the propertied classes in Germany was truly traumatic, far more so even than the Paris June uprising of 1848. What made the Commune even more horrific in the eyes of Germany's rulers was the unequivocal support given to the heroic Parisian proletariat by the leaders of the German workers' movement. Bismarck himself subsequently recalled that he saw the Commune as 'a flash of light: from that moment I saw the Social Democrats as an enemy against whom state and society must arm themselves'. All the old fears of a possible working-class revolution now surfaced again after lying dormant since the defeat of 1848. The years of political reaction had masked the emergence of a powerful industrial working class in the main cities of west and central Germany, and both Junkers and bourgeoisie suddenly realised that here, in Berlin, Leipzig and Essen, they stood on alien soil. ^[18] The coming together of the two wings of the socialist movement in 1875, together with their respective trade union organisations, heightened apprehensions that the revolution was drawing near. It is easy to see now that these fears were unfounded, and that the development of the German proletariat into a class numerically and politically capable of seizing state power had barely begun. *In this sense*, the class consciousness of both bourgeoisie and Junkers was false. But this is hardly the point, since propertied, exploiting classes are always, to one degree or another, motivated by false consciousness, and are organically incapable of seeing things and relations as they really are. Their false consciousness is indeed one of the most powerful factors in sustaining their rule in defiance of all but the most powerful and correctly-led challenges from the working class. The conviction that the bourgeoisie (and even more so, the Junkers) represented doomed modes of production was hardly calculated to give it the class confidence required to combat the threat of expropriation! Instead the German ruling classes saw every movement of the proletariat towards its emancipation, however modest, through counter-revolutionary spectacles. The experiences of 1525, 1789, 1815 and 1848 had become so fully absorbed into the consciousness of the bourgeoisie, and had so sapped the political confidence and skill necessary to undertake an 'English' policy of compromise and manoeuvre with the leaders of the working class, that it demanded and supported measures which were from a 'rational' point of view quite excessive. ^[19] But the class struggle does not proceed according to the dictates of Kantian pure reason, but through the clash of material forces as they are mediated through the consciousness of those who participate in the conflict. As Engels expressed it:

Ideology is a process accomplished by the so-called thinker consciously, it is true, but with a false consciousness. The real forces impelling him remain unknown to him, otherwise it simply would not be an ideological process. Hence he imagines false or seeming motive forces. Because it is a

process of thought he derives its form as well as its content from pure thought, either his own or that of his predecessor. He works with mere thought material, which he accepts without examination as the product of thought, and does not investigate further for a more remote source independent of thought: indeed, this is a matter of course to him, because, as all action is *mediated* by thought, it appears to him to be ultimately based on thought. ^[20]

Thus individuals and even entire classes can be driven into actions not as a direct reflex of a real and clearly comprehended economic, social or political stimulus, but at varying degrees of *a tangent* to these material forces. To say otherwise is to believe that all human beings act at all times with a total consciousness of what they are doing. ‘Over-reaction’ to an imagined or exaggerated threat is as much a part of history as the ‘under-reaction’ by classes or individuals to warnings of dangers that were all too real. ^[21] All are moments in a total process of class struggle, in which between its polar opposites there are ranged out an infinite series of shadings in constant motion and conflict. Bismarck’s war on the German labour movement can be understood in no other way, for though it ended in humiliating defeat and resignation for the Junker of iron and blood, it established a precedent on which others were later to build with devastating success.

Evidence that Bismarck had been preparing his blow against the Social Democrats ever since the Commune is to be found in a letter written to him by his old Conservative friend and political adviser, Hermann Wagener. Warning against any hasty attempts to outlaw the socialists, he said:

... it seems to me to be an exceedingly dangerous undertaking to wish to combat the Ultramontane ^[22] and the Socialist parties at the same time and thereby to drive the Socialists even more irrevocably into the clerical camp. Even though it may be justified and necessary to enforce existing laws energetically and thereby to keep away from the Socialist movement foreign elements and all others who are pursuing anti-national goals, nevertheless I regard it as definitely a political mistake to subject the Socialist leaders to exceptional laws solely on account of their social aspirations, particularly if one does not, at the same time, do anything to satisfy the justified demands of their supporters.

The debate raged inside both the bourgeoisie and the Junker landowners for several years before a decision was finally arrived at, with both classes being split on the issue from top to bottom. Ironically (but very much in keeping with the German tradition), some of the most vehement opponents of anti-socialist legislation were to be found amongst Bismarck’s fellow Junkers. They instinctively (and in some cases quite consciously) felt that too harsh a repression of the workers’ movement would destroy the delicate balance between the classes which, under Bismarck, had become a central factor in Junker political strategy and tactics. They also believed that persecution would only strengthen the most radical elements in the movement, and render any compromise between it and the government impossible. This was a view expressed by the monarchist historian and economist Gustav Schmoller, who in 1874 wrote his highly polemical *The Social Question and the Prussian State*, setting out his programme for a ‘social monarchy’; and the case for a policy of tolerating, and not provoking, the Social Democrats:

Social Democracy represents merely the youthful exuberance of the great social movement which we are entering. Our Social Democracy is a little different but it is hardly worse than English Chartism was in its time and I hope that like the latter it will prove to be merely a transitional phase of development... The social dangers of the future can only be averted by one means, by the monarchy and the civil service..., the only neutral elements in the social class war, reconciling themselves to the idea of the liberal state, absorbing into their midst the best elements of parliamentary government and taking a resolute initiative towards a great venture in social reform...

This represented what was quite an advanced view for the German bourgeoisie, and it was immediately countered by the highly influential nationalist historian, Heinrich von Treitschke, who in his *Socialism and its Sympathisers* (1874) denounced those who advocated political reform and toleration of socialism as traitors to their own class:

Envy and greed are the two mighty forces that it [socialism] employs to lift the old world from its hinges; it thrives on the destruction of all ideals... The very foundation stones of all community life are endangered by Social Democracy... The doctrine of the injustice of society destroys the firm instincts that the worker has about honour, so that fraud and bad and dishonest work are scarcely held to be reprehensible any longer...

And in a direct riposte to the 'liberal' Gustav Schmoller, von Treitschke went on:

The learned friends of socialism are in the habit of pointing to the Chartists, ^[23] who also began with cosmopolitan dreams but nevertheless in the end learned to accommodate themselves to their country. This overlooks the fact that the English island people possessed an age-old resistance which is lacking in our unfinished country open to all foreign influences. It also overlooks the fact that Chartism was in its origins English, whereas German Social Democracy is led by a mob of homeless conspirators. With every passing year Social Democracy has become more antagonistic toward the idea of the national state...

The political consequences of Germany's long-delayed national unification were now assuming malignant forms which the bourgeoisie and Junkers employed skilfully to whip up chauvinist hatred against the 'anti-national' leaders of the German working class. As was later the case with the Nazis, Marxism was not attacked before the masses on the grounds that it sought to better the conditions of the workers - quite the contrary, lip service was always paid to this principle - but because of its 'foreign' origin, even though both Marx and Engels were Germans. ^[24] Thus von Treitschke, like the counter-revolutionaries of 1848 and before, detected a French element in German Social Democracy:

Socialism, therefore, alienates its adherents from the state and from the fatherland and in place of community of love and respect which it destroys it offers them the community of class hatred amongst the lowest classes... powerful agitators seek to encourage a boastful class pride... No Persian Prince was ever so flattered and fawned upon as 'the real people' of Social Democracy. All the contemptible devices of French radicalism in the 1840s are called upon in order to awaken among the masses an arrogance that knows no bounds.

These extracts - and we could provide many more - illustrate perfectly Engels' contention that class interests and actions are mediated through modes of consciousness which the present is constantly inheriting and adapting from the past. The class struggle is therefore fought out under all manner of strange banners and devices - individual liberty, the divine right of kings, the right of 'freeborn men' to choose their own government, the right to work and the rights of property. In Germany, both bourgeoisie and Junkers waged war on the proletariat in the name of the 'nation' and this became, from very early on, the rallying point of all those forces who sought to crush Marxism. It even became the accepted convention to refer to the bourgeoisie, petit-bourgeoisie and Junkers as Germany's 'national classes', and the proletariat as 'the international class'. ^[25]

Von Treitschke rounded off his diatribe against Marxism with a warning. The Social Democrats would be suppressed unless they 'submitted themselves to the traditional order of society... this demand means, first you must become the opposite of what you are today!' And then he gave an even graver warning to the rulers of Germany. If they 'allowed the masses to become too powerful', and 'if the masses succeed in taking power directly for themselves, then the whole world is turned upside down, state and society are dissolved and rule by force sets in'. Publicists like von Treitschke, who enjoyed an enormous standing amongst bourgeois intellectuals, were closer to the pulse of political life than the moderates. The election returns of 1877 confirmed Bismarck's worst fears. The SPD's vote not only held up against this ferocious anti-socialist barrage, but actually increased from 351 000 to 493 000. Now there were 12 Social Democratic deputies, 'aliens', in the Imperial parliament. This electoral success was largely the outcome of the newly united movement's tremendous strides forward in organisation and its dissemination of socialist propaganda and agitation. Before the anti-socialist laws banned all left-wing literature, the SPD published no fewer than 24 journals with some 100 000 regular subscribers, and was now beginning to develop a powerful trade union movement under direct Social Democratic leadership and control. ^[26] It too had a flourishing press, with 16 union journals. The most far-sighted members of the ruling classes could see that this, the education of the most advanced layers of the workers in the basic principles of socialism, was the most serious and permanent challenge to their rule, even though it was a work which could only begin to reap its rewards after long years of patient toil. Bismarck now decided to act before it was too late. Early in 1878, he wrote to a National Liberal Reichstag deputy: 'If I don't want any chickens, then I must smash the eggs.' But first a suitable climate had to be created before the Chancellor could begin to wield his sledge-hammer. And it seemed that fate was determined to assist him. On 11 May, an unsuccessful attempt was made on the life of William I whilst he was riding in an open carriage along the fashionable Berlin Street, Unter den Linden. The would-be assassin turned out to be a plumber, one Max Hoedel, who had only the previous month been expelled from the Leipzig branch of the SPD for embezzling its funds. Bismarck gleefully seized on this coincidence - for that was all it proved to be -

to press home his attack in the Reichstag, where he was battling against an obdurate majority which would not endorse his *carte blanche* for repressions against the SPD. ^[27] On 20 May, Bismarck's draft bill outlawing the SPD was presented to the Reichstag, and on the 24th, was rejected by a crushing vote of 251 to 57, with the bourgeois National Liberals split. It seemed as if Bismarck had run into a brick wall. Then, one week after his Reichstag reverse, another gunman fired at the Emperor in the Unter den Linden, inflicting serious wounds. Now Bismarck acted. With patriotic and monarchist sentiment outraged by the two assassination attempts, Bismarck found it a simple matter to direct it against the Social Democrats, whose views on royalty were only too well known. The shrewd Bismarck also exploited the new political situation to put fresh pressure on the recalcitrant National Liberals, who now ran the risk of being branded with the SPD as 'anti-national'. The new elections, called for 30 July, were conducted in an atmosphere of reactionary frenzy. The 'Progressives' made haste to separate themselves from any supposed connection with the despised socialists, while all the major parties vied with one another to appear the most patriotic and loyal to the throne. This was truly a baptism of fire for the young workers' party. It spoke volumes for the heroism, devotion and political consciousness of its activists and supporters that the SPD withstood the assault, kicking Bismarck and his 'liberal' allies in the teeth by returning only three fewer deputies to the new Reichstag. The popular vote for the party fell by 10 per cent - a matter of 56 000 votes. In the circumstances, it was an inspiring political victory. ^[28] Bismarck smarted for revenge, and he was soon to have it. On 19 October 1878, the new Reichstag, with the far right now greatly strengthened, ^[29] passed Bismarck's anti-socialist bill by 221 votes to 149, although the Centre Party and the National Liberals succeeded in weakening it somewhat by declining to endorse Bismarck's demand for a total ban on all activity of the SPD, including its participation in elections. This single loophole enabled the SPD to maintain a legal foothold in the Reichstag, where their deputies were protected by parliamentary immunity, and at election times, when the SPD was permitted to campaign for votes along with Germany's legal parties. At this stage, it will be fruitful to compare Bismarck's anti-Marxist strategy with that adopted by Hitler nearly six decades later. Firstly one is struck by the uncanny similarity - indeed, almost identity - between the highly fortuitous assassination attempts on the Kaiser and the Reichstag Fire of 27 February 1933, which the Nazis exploited to mobilise the middle-class masses against the 'red peril' in the elections of 5 March. True, in the former case, no links have as yet been established between the two assassination attempts and Bismarck, whereas with the Reichstag fire, the evidence pointing towards Nazi complicity is weighty. But it cannot be denied that both Bismarck and Hitler proved themselves master tacticians in exploiting these incidents to create the political atmosphere in the more backward masses and small propertied classes necessary for an all-out war against the workers' movement. And it is only at this point - the methods employed to destroy the organisations of the proletariat - that the great divide opens up between Bismarck and Hitler. While Bismarck sought and secured a national mandate to destroy Social Democracy, from the moment his bill became law, the task of making it effective rested solely in the hands of the police, the judiciary and the organs of government rule. Hitler had grasped from quite early on in his political career, and not only from his own experiences, but from examining the history of Bismarck's anti-socialist legislation, that the modern workers' movement, especially in a country like Germany where the proletariat had developed such powerful and disciplined organisations, and where Marxism had become flesh of their flesh, could never be destroyed by pure police methods, or even by the use of the armed forces. And it is possible to see how Hitler evolved his conception of a *mass* counter-revolutionary, intensely nationalistic and at the same time 'socially'-oriented movement, from the negative example of Bismarck's 12-year war to extirpate Marxism from the consciousness of the German working class. On paper, Bismarck's new law was truly formidable. Apart from the already referred to loophole of parliamentary and electoral immunity, the SPD and all its allied organisations had quite literally been rendered seditious overnight. Here there was complete identity of purpose with Hitler's repression of the German workers' movement. The sweep of Bismarck's legislation can be appreciated from the following extracts. Entitled *Law Against the Publicly Dangerous Endeavours of Social Democracy*, its clauses were directed against 'societies which aim at the overthrow of the existing political or social order through Social Democratic, socialistic or communistic endeavours...'. Clause four gave to the government and its agents the right:

... to attend all sessions and meetings [of the organisations in question], to call and conduct membership assemblies, to inspect the books, papers and cash assets, as well as to demand information about the affairs of the society, to forbid the carrying out of resolutions which are apt to further the endeavours [of the said organisations], to transfer to qualified persons the duties of the officers or other leading organs of the society, to take charge of and manage the funds.

And in the case of the officers or membership of such a society resisting such measures, 'the society may be prohibited'. Authority to implement these clauses of the law was vested in the State Police. If the State Police Authority prohibited any society, its 'cash assets, as well as the objects intended for the purposes of the society are to be confiscated'.

Those aspects of the law dealing with freedoms of speech, press and assembly were equally harsh:

Meetings in which Social Democratic, socialist or communistic endeavours which aim at the overthrow of the existing political or social order are manifested are to be dissolved... Public festivities and processions shall be treated the same as meetings...

And as for the thriving socialist press:

Publications in which Social Democratic... endeavours aimed at the overthrow of the existing political and social order are manifested in a manner calculated to endanger the public peace, and particularly the harmony among all classes of the population, are to be prohibited.

The State Police were also responsible for the implementation of these aspects of the law, which, in effect, imposed a total censorship on all socialist and trade union publications in Germany. And the law went even further than censorship:

... the publications concerned are to be confiscated wherever found for the purpose of distribution. The confiscation may include the plates and forms used for reproduction, in the case of printed publications in the proper sense, a withdrawal of the set types from circulation is to be substituted for their seizure, upon the request of the interested parties. After the prohibition is final, the publication, plates and forms are to be made unusable.

So it was also a question of the physical destruction, as well as seizure of the assets of the workers' movement. Here too, Bismarck was blazing a trail later to be followed with far greater success by the Nazis. Finally the act laid down penalties for breaches of the anti-socialist laws:

Whoever participates as a member in a prohibited society, or carries on an activity in its interest, is to be punished by a fine of not more than 500 marks or with imprisonment not exceeding three months. The same punishment is to be inflicted on anyone who participates in a prohibited meeting, or who does not depart immediately after the dissolution of a meeting by the police. Imprisonment of not less than one month and not more than one year is to be inflicted on those who participate in a society or assembly as chairman, leaders, monitors, agents, speakers or treasurers, or who issue invitations to attend the meeting... Whoever distributes, continues or reprints a prohibited publication is to be punished with a fine not exceeding 1000 marks or with imprisonment not exceeding six months.

All appeals against the infliction of these penalties were to be heard before a special Commission of five members, whose chairman was to be appointed by the Emperor, along with one other member. There was no appeal from this body to a higher court. Such was Bismarck's anti-socialist legislation, the most draconian body of repressive law enacted against the working class by a European state since the English Combination Acts of 1799. Under them, every single independent workers' organisation from the SPD to the trade unions and numerous cultural and educational societies were placed outside the law. One hundred and twenty-seven periodicals were compelled by the police to cease publication, along with 278 less regular publications. Even seemingly 'innocent' bodies such as workers' singing clubs and theatrical societies were deemed subversive of the social and political order, and forced to close down. Nothing except the party's nine lonely Reichstag deputies remained above the legal surface of German political life. At first, the party was stunned by the sheer suddenness and severity of Bismarck's law. The trade unions either collapsed or dissolved themselves, the SPD press wound itself up or was banned, and, under one of the act's clauses, entire groups of militants were banished from their hometowns. ^[30] There is considerable evidence to suggest that the vast majority of party members, from the highest to the lowest levels, entered their 12-year period of illegality under the illusion that any ban on their activities would be largely formal. So disoriented were they by the ruthless efficiency of Bismarck's police under the leadership of his Minister of the Interior, Robert von Puttkamer, that an official year book for 1878 jubilantly announced that 'the execution of the Socialist Law is taking a completely successful course'. The enemies of the SPD, its editor reported, were already beginning 'to breathe easier...'. The next year - 1879 - saw the party begin to pull itself together. A centre was established in Zurich, conveniently close to the German frontier, where leading Social Democrats could edit and publish the party's clandestine press and direct the underground movement in Germany itself. Enormously encouraged by

the creation of this new centre of resistance to the Bismarck regime, the party's staunchest members and supporters quickly began to reorganise their activities on an illegal basis. These largely revolved around the smuggling of the party press across the Swiss frontier and its distribution throughout the industrial centres of Germany. By 1884, around 9000 copies of each number of the new party weekly, *Sozialdemokrat*, were reaching workers in Germany by one means or another. Apart from the sheer technical feat of maintaining this circulation under such adverse conditions, the Zurich leadership were able, by means of their regular weekly contact with their comrades in Germany, to sustain the morale and political consciousness of a movement which in the early months of Bismarck's repressions had seemed on the point of disintegration. Neither should all the credit for this achievement be awarded to the Zurich-based exile leadership. Marx and Engels were both highly critical of some of its members, notably Karl Hoehberg, whose own private journal, the *Jahrbuch*, published an article calling for a policy of conciliation towards the 'upper strata of society'. This brought forth the *Circular Letter* of Marx and Engels to the leaders of the SPD, attacking the 'manifesto of the three Zurichers'.^[31] They warned that such views were a direct result of the party's revolutionary perspectives and proletarian basis becoming undermined by the growing influence of bourgeois and petit-bourgeois intellectuals in its ranks. And they issued a warning to Bebel, Liebknecht and Bracke:

For almost 40 years we have stressed the class struggle as the immediate driving force of history... it is therefore impossible for us to cooperate with people who wish to expunge this class struggle from the movement... The emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves. We cannot therefore cooperate with people who openly state that the workers are too uneducated to emancipate themselves and must be freed from above by philanthropic big bourgeois and petit-bourgeois.

And they concluded on this sombre note; one which they had had caused to strike on the occasion of the Gotha unity congress:

If the new party organ adopts a line that corresponds to the views of these gentlemen... then nothing remains for us... but publicly to declare our opposition to it, and to dissolve the bonds of solidarity with which we have hitherto represented the German party abroad.^[32]

The SPD leadership were halted in their tracks, such was the theoretical authority of Marx and Engels within the German movement. But neither had they given the party any 'orders' - that was neither their right, nor their political method. Their shafts struck home, and stung the sound core of the SPD leadership into action against the opportunists. Bebel visited Marx in London, bringing the erring Bernstein with him. After a series of searching discussions, it was agreed that Bernstein should take over the editorship of the party organ, and should work in the closest possible liaison with Bebel and Liebknecht inside Germany.^[33] There, the movement was experiencing a true rebirth. The Hamburg organisation, traditionally a stronghold of German labour, raised its membership to 6000, while Berlin was not far behind. The first national trial of strength came in 1881, with new elections to the Reichstag. The result was an overwhelming reverse for those parties which had voted for the anti-socialist law three years previously. The returns were:

Party	1881	1878
Conservatives	50	59
Free Conservatives	28	57
National Liberals	47	99
Progressives	115	39
Centre	100	94
SPD	12	9
Others	45	40

Viewed in purely parliamentary terms, Bismarck's position had become untenable. His majority for the anti-socialist law, based on a combined right-wing vote of 215, had now dwindled to a minority of 125. And even if Bismarck rarely, if ever, concerned himself with the preservation of parliamentary majorities, he could scarcely afford to ignore the voting returns for the imperial capital, where the Progressives captured all six seats. And he could draw precious little comfort from the decline in the SPD vote,^[34] for

this could be put down entirely to the cumulative effect of three years' unremitting government persecution.

And at the next Reichstag elections of 1884, this trend was not only halted but reversed. The SPD vote now leapt to a record high of 550 000, doubling its quota of deputies. It was becoming glaringly obvious to Bismarck's Junker and bourgeois supporters that unless far sterner measures were taken, the Social Democratic 'eggs' would shortly be hatching out all over industrial Germany. Even more disturbing from their point of view was that this sudden electoral upsurge was immediately followed by an unprecedented wave of purely spontaneous strikes. The year of 1886 saw this movement reach its highest point, ^[35] and the government decided that the time had now come to legislate directly against strikes, which had, as a comparatively rare occurrence in the German labour movement, been ignored in the laws of 1878. On 11 April, less than two weeks before the scheduled renewal of the anti-socialist laws, Puttkamer promulgated a decree outlawing all strikes, linking them directly to the activity of the already banned SPD. Police were authorised to expel strike leaders from the area of the dispute, and to intervene in any stoppage which allegedly contained 'tendencies serving upheaval'. And, in the now immortal words of Puttkamer himself, this could mean any and every strike:

Behind the large labour movement, which at the present time calculates by means of force and agitation, namely through work stoppages, to bring about an increase in wages, and which draws many branch trades into the same misery, behind every such labour movement lurks the Hydra of violence and anarchy. [Shouts of 'absolutely correct!' from the Right.] ^[36]

But this measure, like its predecessors, was powerless to halt the advance of German labour. The 1887 Reichstag results told their own story. While the pro-Bismarck Right regained much of its former support (the Conservative - National Liberal bloc, or 'cartel' as it became known, held 220 seats), the SPD also gained, at the expense of the mushy liberal centre, epitomised by the Progressives. Its vote had now passed the three-quarters of a million mark, and the tempo of its increase revealed no signs of diminishing. What could Bismarck do? He had tried the demagogic manoeuvre of 'State Socialism', which entailed little more than the most moderate programme of social reforms coupled with purely verbal recognition of the 'rights' of labour to minimum standards of living and working conditions. As we have already seen, powerful leaders of German industry, together with several important employers' organisations, utterly repudiated these principles in practice. After a brief period of success, candidates claiming to stand for various breeds of 'state' or 'Monarchical Socialism' failed to woo significant sections of the socialist-oriented working class away from their allegiance to Social Democracy. The final act in this drama opened with a new strike wave in 1889, whose most violent expression was a near-complete stoppage of Ruhr miners for shorter hours in the May of that year. In a bid to prevent the miners' movement turning towards the SPD for leadership, ^[37] the new Emperor Wilhelm II agreed to receive a deputation from the strikers, whose organisational affiliations were entirely Catholic.

The new king was anxious, in the best Bonapartist traditions, to win a reputation for himself as protector of the workers from a rapacious bourgeoisie, and saw himself, at least in the early years of his reign, as 'king of the beggars'. But this policy explicitly ruled out any toleration of Social Democracy, a fact which he made abundantly clear to the miners' delegation:

If... any excess be committed against public order and tranquillity, or if it should become evident that Social Democrats are connected with the agitation, I shall not be able to take into consideration your wishes with my royal favour; for to me the word Social Democrat is synonymous with enemy of empire and fatherland. If, therefore, I observe that Social Democratic opinions are concerned in the agitation and incitement to unlawful resistance, I will intervene with unrelenting vigour and bring to bear the full power which I possess and which is great indeed.

The strike ultimately failed to gain any of its objectives, but Wilhelm was shrewd enough to see that unless some of the wind was taken out of the Social Democrats' sails, events would move towards a nationwide and not localised confrontation between capital and labour, and it would be one which the cautious SPD leaders would scarcely be able to ignore. The tactical conflict between Bismarck and his new king therefore dates from the miners' strike, as, very rapidly, the chancellor found himself at odds with Wilhelm's proposals for legislation to mitigate the incredible harshness of conditions in German industry. Bismarck, while agreeing the ways had to be found to counter the seemingly unstoppable rise of socialist influence among the masses, favoured even stronger repression. The failure of his own attempts to buy proletarian support for the government undoubtedly turned his thoughts in such a direction, and as

the date for the new Reichstag elections approached (20 February 1890), he reached the momentous decision for a convinced monarchist that he must defy his king. Backed only by his die-hard Conservative allies, Bismarck refused to accept amendments to the anti-socialist law which would have had the effect of weakening it. When the amended bill was finally presented to the full Reichstag, Bismarck's Conservatives joined with the centre and left deputies in voting it down, with only the National Liberals voting for. This, according to the best informed sources of the period, was just what the wily old Bismarck wanted. Now he hoped the SPD leaders would be tempted to stage a militant action against the obviously divided ruling classes and government, perhaps even an insurrection. This would then provide Bismarck with the long-awaited opportunity to drown the Marxist 'hydra' in its own blood. Here Bismarck's own distorted view of Social Democracy played an important role in his own downfall. Nothing was further from the minds of Bebel, Liebknecht and the other SPD leaders than a revolutionary uprising against the Bismarck regime, and not only for subjective reasons, but because the relationship of forces rendered such a development impossible. The German proletariat was concentrating all its forces towards two goals, the steady and unspectacular rebuilding of its own organisations, and the maximum mobilisation of support for its party candidates at elections. And on 20 February, the results in this sphere can only be described as spectacular! After nearly 12 years of illegality, police persecution, arrests and jailings of its leaders and activists, banning of its publications, confiscation of its funds and the daily vilification of its principles from pulpit, university professorial chair, officers' mess and company boardroom, the despised 'vagabonds without a country' emerged from the election as Germany's largest party, with an incredible 1 427 298 votes. ^[38] The magnitude of the party's victory and of Bismarck's humiliation, was so great that no one - not Bebel, Liebknecht nor even Engels - knew either precisely what to do with it or what this triumph implied for the future of the class struggle in Germany. It became an accepted canon of party doctrine that Social Democracy was invincible, that since the SPD had parried all the blows hurled at it by the formidable Iron Chancellor, then the movement would inevitably arise, phoenix-like, from the ashes of any future period of persecution. This utopian theory was soon to become intertwined with several other integral strands of what eventually became the SPD's opportunist adaptation to German imperialism. It flowed from the failure of German Social Democracy to grasp what was implied historically by Bismarck's attempt to destroy the party and trade unions. He failed, not because the task itself was impossible (as the SPD leaders fondly believed), *but because the attempt was undertaken at the wrong time and with the wrong methods*. Furthermore, German Social Democracy made the fatal error of presuming that the reforms undertaken after the fall of Bismarck represented the beginnings of a change of heart on the part of the ruling classes and their government, this false estimation being reflected in a growing willingness of the SPD Reichstag fraction to amend, rather than oppose outright, proposed government legislation. Electoral combinations with radical bourgeois politicians necessarily flowed from this perspective, and were well under way before the lapsing of the anti-socialist legislation in 1890. We have said that Engels too cannot be regarded as blameless in this regard, and the evidence to uphold this contention is formidable. ^[39] In his still controversial introduction to Marx's *The Class Struggles in France*, Engels devotes a passage to the successful struggle of German Social Democracy against the anti-socialist laws. Correctly pointing out that since the defeat of the Paris Commune in 1871, the centre of gravity of the European workers' movement had shifted to Germany, he then draws political lessons from the defeat of Bismarck which are utterly mistaken:

There is only one means by which the steady rise of the socialist fighting forces to Germany could be temporarily halted, and even thrown back for some time: a clash on a big scale with the military, a blood-letting like that of 1871 in Paris. In the long run that would also be overcome. To shoot a party which numbers millions out of existence is too much even for all the magazine rifles of Europe and America. ^[40]

Yet Hitler did precisely that! And furthermore, he too studied closely the experience of Bismarck's anti-socialist laws ^[41] and drew political conclusions that not only differed greatly from those of Engels, but which proved to be closer to historical reality. One might argue that Engels could not possibly have anticipated the political treachery which would make Hitler's victory possible, or that Engels died in 1895 (the year he wrote these lines), two full decades before the birth of fascism. But that is no real answer. Firstly Engels did indeed foresee possible political errors which could be committed by the SPD leadership on the threshold of a revolutionary situation, and secondly, Hitler drew his own lesson from Bismarck's struggle against socialism at least 10 years before applying them in practice. We should not be astonished when we see a leader of the counter-revolution grasping, however distortedly, or however reactionary his motives, a fundamental political truth more quickly and effectively than a leader of the

revolution. Instead this should alert us to the immense perils which can be obscured from the working class and its leadership by the rigid employment and repetition of formulas and slogans which while correct in a certain period and for a certain country, are, by the emergence of new forces and class relationships, rendered not only powerless to grasp and change reality, but even transformed into their opposite, becoming vehicles for disorienting the most advanced elements of the proletariat. Such was the 'Old Bolshevism' of the 'democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasantry', pitilessly discarded by Lenin in the spring of 1917 in the teeth of determined opposition from, among others, Stalin. In the case of post-Bismarckian Germany, this qualitative leap in Marxist theory was not carried through with anything like the same severity and clarity, with devastating results for not only the SPD, but the entire German, and indeed, European proletariat. But how did the young Hitler, as an ardent chauvinist, fanatical anti-Marxist and vehement Jew-baiter, assess the failure of Bismarck's anti-socialist crusade? We know, chiefly from his own testimony in *Mein Kampf*, but also from other evidence, that Hitler first seriously studied past attempts to destroy Marxism when he arrived in Munich from Vienna in May 1913. What he says about this period of his life is so important that we reproduce it here in its near entirety:

For the second time I dug into this doctrine of destruction - this time no longer led by the impressions and effects of my daily associations, but directed by the observation of general processes of political life. I again immersed myself in the theoretical literature of this new world [that is, of Marxism - RB] attempting to achieve clarity concerning its possible effects, and then compared it with the actual phenomena and events it brings about in political, cultural and economic life. Now for the first time I turned my attention to the attempts to master this world plague. I studied Bismarck's Socialist Legislation in its intention, struggle and success. Gradually I obtained a positively granite foundation for my own conviction, so that since that time I have never been forced to undertake a shift in my own inner views on this question. Likewise the relation of Marxism to the Jews was submitted to further thorough examination. Though previously in Vienna, Germany above all had seemed to me an unshakable colossus, now anxious misgivings sometimes entered my mind. I was filled with wrath at German foreign policy and likewise with what seemed to me the incredibly frivolous way in which the most important problem then existing for Germany, Marxism, was treated. It was really beyond me how people could rush so blindly into a danger whose effects, pursuant to the Marxists' own intention, were bound some day to be monstrous... In the years 1913 and 1914 I for the first time in various circles which today in part faithfully support the National Socialist movement expressed the conviction that the question of the future of the German nation was the question of destroying Marxism. [42]

What we should note here is not only the very obvious fact that Bismarck's anti-socialist legislation became a component part of Hitler's counter-revolutionary 'granite foundation' but his perception from quite early on that the survival of German imperialism was, in the long term, incompatible with the existence of a thriving German labour movement. The number of SPD leaders who shared this view - from the other side of the class trenches - could at this time be counted on the fingers of one hand! Hitler's respect for Bismarck was by no means a show of reverence staged to impress the 'national classes' who still idolised him - far from it. The anti-socialist legislation was a recurring and central theme in a series of important speeches which he delivered to leaders of German industry and finance at various times during the life of the Weimar Republic. Thus in his speech to the Hamburg '1919 National Club', made on 28 February 1926 before leading right-wing politicians and businessmen of the city, Hitler outlined his view of the causes of Germany's defeat in the First World War, the most important being the existence of the SPD:

On that day when a Marxist movement was allowed to exist alongside the other political parties the death sentence was passed on the Reich... Already in 1870-71 there was put forward the Marxist opposition to the national preservation of the Reich at the end of the then war. [43] This opposition was ignored as only three men were involved. Nobody grasped the greater significance that it was in fact possible for these representatives of a movement to dare to come out against national defence... It appeared to be overcome without danger... the success of the war led to the belief that the ideas of these three men had been defeated... Then there were the so-called election victories of the bourgeois parties, often resulting in a loss of votes by the left, but never a reduction in their support. There was perhaps an exception in the period of the socialist legislation, which was later dismantled. They had cut down the number of Social Democratic

supporters, or so it seemed. Then as soon as the anti-socialist laws were repealed as impracticable, these numbers automatically grew again... [44]

In other words, Bismarck had driven the Marxists underground, but he had not broken their will to fight, or severed their links with the masses. Neither had he succeeded in counterposing an alternative and combative 'social' ideology to the programme, principles and theory of the banned party. Hitler was determined not to make the same mistake. And here again we must quote at length from Hitler's autobiography, written, it should always be remembered, a full eight years before his movement seized power:

Any attempt to combat a philosophy with methods of violence will fail in the end, unless the fight takes the form of an attack for a new spiritual attitude. Only in the struggle between two philosophies can the weapon of brutal force, persistently and ruthlessly applied, lead to a decision for the side it supports. This remains the reason for the failure of the struggle against Marxism. This was why Bismarck's socialist legislation finally failed and had to fail, in spite of everything. Lacking was the platform of a new philosophy for whose rise the fight could have been waged. For only the proverbial wisdom of high government officials will succeed in believing that drivell about so-called 'state authority' or 'law and order' could form a suitable basis for the spiritual impetus of a life and death struggle. Such a real spiritual basis for this struggle was lacking. Bismarck had to entrust the execution of his socialist legislation to the judgement and desires of that institution which itself was a product of Marxist thinking. By entrusting the fate of his war on the Marxists to the well-wishing of bourgeois democracy, the Iron Chancellor set the wolf to mind the sheep. All this was only the necessary consequence of the absence of a basic new anti-Marxist philosophy endowed with a stormy will to conquer... [45]

Thus, arising out of the negative as well as positive experiences of Bismarck's anti-socialist legislation was the lesson drawn by Hitler that the masses can never be mobilised on behalf of reaction under the banner of defending the status quo. Hence the unavoidable need for slogans and programmes of a 'socialist' and even, when the situation demanded it, 'revolutionary' hue. Not that Bismarck had considered such a strategy, and then rejected it in favour of his police-parliamentary methods. The option had not even arisen, save in the appearance of a handful of anti-Semitic agitators during the middle period of Bismarck's rule. And these he treated with a truly patrician scorn as contemptible plebeian rabble rousers, little better than the Marxists they claimed to be fighting. Hitler therefore set out three main desiderata of a successful counter-revolutionary movement. It must set out to win broad layers of the masses to its side by employing social demagoguery on the broadest and most uninhibited scale; it must not shrink from using the most extreme methods of violence to cow its opponents, and finally, it must spurn the pussy-footing methods of bourgeois parliamentary democracy like the plague. These were the three lessons which Hitler drew from the failure of Bismarck's war against German socialism. They also comprise, when allied to an all-pervading nationalism, the main components of Nazi political strategy. To use a Hegelian construction, the German Social Democrats 'negated' Bismarck's anti-socialist laws, and for the next 14 years experienced a period of almost continuous organisational and electoral growth. But since the political and theoretical implications of this 'negation', with all its contradictory elements, were not plumbed to their depths by the leaders of the victorious party, a process set in which began to undermine it. In turn, the betrayal of German Social Democracy in 1914 and 1918-19 enabled reaction to regroup its forces under a new banner, a movement which based itself on the lessons of the Bismarck period, finally 'negated' German Social Democracy, and with it, the flower of the entire proletariat. This proves the philosophical truth that dialectical development proceeds by regression as well as progression, and that the degree of regression is in its turn not an automatic reflex of social-economic conditions, but also bound up with how deeply the leadership of the workers' movement is able to extract from its own experiences and those of others the dangers as well as the revolutionary possibilities created by a defeat of the class enemy. Bismarck's law of 1878 ended up in the Reichstag dustbin, [46] but so, 55 years later, did the SPD. And that, perhaps, is the most important lesson of all.

Notes

1. Fascism is, of course, first and foremost a movement of imperialist reaction and counter-revolution, and can only rise to maturity in an epoch where the threat of proletarian revolution has become an actuality. The movements led by Hitler and Mussolini were unthinkable in the Germany of Bismarck or William II. But this by no means negates the fact that even at this early date the deep-going shifts in petit-bourgeois consciousness, partly

reflected in the activities of anti-Semitic and pseudo-socialist demagogues, were the first stages of a process which culminated in the formation and development of the Nazi Party. Even more important were the parallel developments among the leaders of heavy industry, which were discussed in the previous chapter. What makes fascism so potent, and therefore so dangerous, is that it is not simply an artificial creation of a clique of reactionary businessmen, but the product of a long historical process. Only when this is understood can it be effectively combated.

2. Many were destined in later years to play a significant part in pioneering the American socialist movement.

3. This is not to say that the vast majority of workers in England and Germany had broken free from the grip of bourgeois ideology. As Lenin pointed out in his famous polemic against the Russian 'Economist' school, which advanced a schema of spontaneous working-class development towards and into socialist consciousness, 'trade union consciousness is bourgeois consciousness'. And, as first conceived by its founders, the Labour Party was little else but the political party of the trade unions. This is not to deny that it also contained another element pregnant with revolutionary implications - the groping of the working class towards political power.

4. Hegelian philosophy was itself a product of the uneven, or one-sided, development of the German bourgeoisie (see Chapter One).

5. F Engels, 'Preface', *The Peasant War in Germany* (Moscow, 1956), p 32.

6. Engels, 'Preface', *The Peasant War in Germany*, pp 32-33.

7. Engels, 'Preface', *The Peasant War in Germany*, p 33.

8. This emphasis on 'State Socialism', as opposed to the achievement of socialism by the independent revolutionary action of the working class itself, was enshrined in the Lassallean *Workers' Programme*, which declared: 'Thus the purpose of the state is to bring about the positive unfolding and progressive development of man's nature, in other words, to realise the human purpose.' Elsewhere he wrote that 'the task and purpose of the state consists exactly in its facilitating and mediating the great cultural progress of humanity... That is why it exists; it has always served, and always had to serve, this very purpose.'

9. Yet Lassalle's futile death in a duel deeply grieved Marx and Engels. The bitter words they had exchanged were exclusively about how best to fight and defeat the class enemy. Marx and Engels now saluted him as a fallen comrade: 'No matter what Lassalle may have been personally, and from a literary and scientific standpoint, politically he was certainly one of the finest brains in Germany... it hits one hard to see how Germany is destroying all the more or less capable men of the extreme party. What joy there will be amongst the manufacturers and the Progressive swine after all. Lassalle was the only man in Germany of whom they were afraid.' (Engels to Marx, 3 September 1864) To which Marx replied: 'Lassalle's misfortune has been worrying me damnably during the last few days. After all, he was one of the old guard and an enemy of our enemies.' (Marx to Engels, 7 September 1864) Perhaps it is significant that neither of these letters, which bring out the warm, human side of their authors, is in the current Moscow edition of the *Marx-Engels Selected Correspondence*. These qualities, and not the cynical ersatz version presented in pictures of Stalin hugging little children at the height of his blood-purge, have been rare commodities in the Soviet Union for many decades.

10. Marx challenged cloudy and false formulations on the nature and difference between bourgeois and communist conceptions of 'right' in relation to the distribution of the produce of labour. Here the Lassallean heritage made itself felt most strongly, as it did with the well-known formulation in the programme that in relation to the proletariat, 'all other classes are only one reactionary mass'.

11. K Marx, 'Critique of the Gotha Programme' (1875), *Marx-Engels Selected Works*, Volume 2 (Moscow, 1962), p 27.

12. Marx, 'Critique of the Gotha Programme', *Marx-Engels Selected Works*, Volume 2, p 27.

- 13.** Marx, 'Critique of the Gotha Programme', *Marx-Engels Selected Works*, Volume 2, p 32.
- 14.** Marx, 'Critique of the Gotha Programme', *Marx-Engels Selected Works*, Volume 2, pp 32-33.
- 15.** F Engels, Letter to W Bracke, London, 5 May 1875, *Marx-Engels Selected Works*, Volume 2, p 16.
- 16.** This notion of the 'free people's state' is by no means a Lassallean or Eisenacher preserve. It has been resurrected by Soviet Stalinism in the guise of Khrushchev's celebrated 'state of the whole people'. No Stalinist ever succeeded in explaining away the all-too-obvious contradiction between the state as an instrument of class rule and its survival in a country where all the people allegedly ruled.
- 17.** F Engels, Letter to A Bebel, London, 18-28 March 1875, *Marx-Engels Selected Works*, Volume 2, pp 42-43.
- 18.** This had been instinctively understood by Bismarck from very early on in his political career. In 1852, he vehemently denied 'that the true Prussian people' lived in the cities. If the city were ever to revolt again, the true Prussians would know how to make them obey, even though it had to erase them from the earth. This revealing remark also gives us an insight into the political and historical pedigree of Nazi ruralism. And in the year of this anti-socialist legislation, Bismarck described the working class as 'that menacing band of robbers with whom we share our largest towns...'
- 19.** There is a certain parallel between Bismarck's anti-socialist laws and the anti-trade-union Combination Acts passed by the English Parliament in 1799. Both were responses by the ruling classes to the rise of organised labour, and both were related indirectly to revolutionary events in France. But the German labour movement was already being influenced by Marxism, and was largely based on a modern industrial proletariat.
- 20.** F Engels, Letter to F Mehring, London, 14 July 1893, *Marx-Engels Selected Correspondence* (Moscow, nd), p 497.
- 21.** Thus a rationalist could argue that the massacre of the Communards was unnecessary and therefore illogical since the Paris workers had no hope of extending their revolution to the remainder of France.
- 22.** A reference to the Catholic Centre Party, founded in 1870 and strongly opposed to Bismarck's Prussian and Protestant-based regime. It drew most of its support from the Catholic regions of the Rhine and Bavaria. Led by the hierarchy and the Catholic bourgeoisie, it drew in its tow the overwhelming majority of Catholic workers, peasants and petit-bourgeoisie, for many years serving as a strong bulwark against the spread of socialist ideas and genuine trade unionism among the Catholic proletariat of the Ruhr.
- 23.** Like Schmoller, and indeed many other bourgeois and Junkers, von Treitschke followed the development of the international workers' movement with an eagle eye.
- 24.** Naturally, the most extreme anti-socialist resorted to anti-Semitism, claiming that Marx's Jewish origins were proof that German socialism was the product of an alien 'race'. This too became a central theme of Nazi agitation against Marxism.
- 25.** Hitler followed this usage, especially when addressing meetings of industrialists.
- 26.** In the two brief years since their own unity conference at Gotha (25 May 1875) the trade unions had drawn more than 50 000 workers into their ranks, with the ubiquitous printers well to the fore with 5500 members.
- 27.** The 1877 elections had distributed the 397 seats thus: Conservatives 40; Reichspartei 38; National Liberals 128; Progressives 52; Centre 93; Social Democrats 12; others (based on national minorities, and thus opposed to Bismarck) 34. Thus the hard-core pro-Bismarck vote was a mere 78 mandates.
- 28.** In fact the party had gained ground in its industrial strongholds. In the city districts, the SPD rose from 220 000 to 240 000 on the 1877 elections, while in Berlin, Social Democracy

scored an amazing victory over all its opponents, increasing its vote from 31 500 to more than 56 000. This was evidence that while the middle classes gravitated away from the party to the right, the hard-core socialist proletariat clung more than ever to the party which defended them against their bourgeois and Junker enemies. Such traditions of loyalty die hard. In the Reichstag terror elections of 5 March 1933, the SPD, already on the verge of a new and far more crushing illegality, polled 7 181 000 votes, a fall of less than 66 000 on the previous elections, held in November 1932, when there was no state-organised anti-socialist terror. The great tragedy lay in that this truly heroic class loyalty was utterly perverted and betrayed by the leaders of the SPD, whose capitulationist policies contrasted so miserably with the courageous example of those who pioneered the party in the teeth of Bismarck's repression.

29. Election returns gave both the Conservatives and the Reichspartei, or 'free Conservatives', an extra 19 seats, while the National Liberals and Progressives, who had been branded by Bismarck and his supporters as allies of Social Democracy, lost heavily, the former dropping 29 deputies, and the latter, 13. Obviously a large section of the middle class had swung over sharply to the far right under the impact of Bismarck's carefully stage-managed anti-socialist crusade.

30. These were the three co-authors of the article in question: Hoechberg, Carl Schramm and Eduard Bernstein, the last named being destined to earn eternal notoriety as the pioneer of revisionism.

31. In the first two months of the Law's operation, the police closed down 17 central trade union committees and 22 local union branches. The SPD avoided this fate only by voluntarily liquidating itself two days before the anti-socialist bill became law.

32. K Marx and F Engels, 'Circular Letter', London, 17-18 September 1879, *Marx-Engels Selected Correspondence*, p 395.

33. As Reichstag deputies enjoying parliamentary immunity, Bebel and Liebknecht were able to operate far more openly than other party members.

34. It fell by 125 000 to an all-time low of 312 000.

35. Bismarck's surveillance of the international workers' movement was greatly intensified and systematised in this period of continent-wide industrial and political unrest. For example, the German ambassador in London sent regular reports on the activities of the English labour movement, then engaged in a bitter struggle for universal suffrage and basic trade union rights. Reports were also received in Berlin of a nationwide strike movement in Belgium in March 1886. The intensity and scope of these strike movements beyond Germany's frontiers did much to exacerbate political tensions in the Reichstag, and certainly played a part in bringing forth Puttkamer's anti-strike decrees. For all the strident nationalism of its rulers, imperial Germany could never escape the disintegrating effect of the international class struggle.

36. Speech in Reichstag debate on the Strike Decree, 21 May 1886.

37. Government fears were, as it turned out, groundless. Approaches had been made by miners to the SPD for financial support, but had been shamefully snubbed on the dogmatic grounds that trade union struggle was of little significance when compared with the political activity of Social Democracy. Much to his discredit, Bebel turned down the request for aid, and advised the miners' leaders to seek an 'acceptable compromise'. He seemed to overlook the fact that the raw Ruhr miners were striking powerful blows against the same enemy.

38. By combining against the SPD in run-off ballots, the right-wing parties managed to hold down the number of Social Democratic Reichstag deputies to 35.

39. And not only after 1890. Thus in a dispute within the SPD Reichstag fraction over whether to call for the creation of state-assisted farm cooperatives in East Prussia, Engels wrote to Bebel on 30 December 1884, that with guaranteed trade union and political freedoms, such a policy would 'lead gradually to a transition of the total production into cooperative production'. On this occasion, Bebel found himself defending Marxist

orthodoxy against one of its two creators, for he replied a year later that ‘with this proposal you make a regrettable concession to Lassalleianism’.

40. F Engels, ‘Introduction’ to *The Class Struggles in France* (London, 6 March 1895), *Marx-Engels Selected Works*, Volume 1 (Moscow, 1962), p 136.

41. So much for the theory that Hitler was a power-hungry madman.

42. A Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (London, 1943), pp 154-55.

43. The Franco-Prussian War of 1870, opposed by the SPD after the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine.

44. Translated from Werner Jochman, *Im Kampf um die Macht. Hitlers Rede vor dem Hamburger Nationalklub von 1919* (Frankfurt, 1960).

45. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, pp 172-73.

46. Attempts to crush German labour did not end with the fall of Bismarck’s anti-socialist legislation. In 1894, Kirdorf and Stumm headed an industrial alliance to secure the passing of their so-called ‘Umsturzorlage’ or ‘anti-revolution’ bill. They even succeeded in deposing Chancellor Count Caprivi, whom industry regarded as being too soft on labour, and installing in his place Prince Hohenloe, who supported the bill. And although it failed to win a majority in the Reichstag, the Ruhr barons continued to press for legislation restricting the right to strike. They returned to the offensive three years later, when with the support of the Kaiser, they introduced a new bill, the ‘Penal Servitude Bill’ which, in the words of Count Possadowksy, the German Home Secretary, sought to ‘give those who are willing to work better protection against the terrorism of strikers and agitators’. Earlier in 1897, none other than the Kaiser, that self-proclaimed ‘king of the beggars’, declared in a speech that ‘the heaviest punishment should be meted out to the man who is audacious enough to hinder his fellow man from working when he desires to do so’. Shortly after the bill was defeated in the Reichstag, it came to light that the government had accepted a secret donation of 12 000 marks from industry to publish printed propaganda against the trade unions and the right to strike. Only a massive nationwide counter-offensive by the SPD and the trade unions compelled wavering elements in the Reichstag to vote the bill down on its second reading.

Fascism in Germany. Robin Blick 1975

Chapter V: The Imperialist Crucible

I employ the word 'State'; it is easy to see what I mean - a band of blonde beasts, a race of conquerors and masters organised for war and strong enough to organise in their turn, seizing without qualms in their terrible grip a population that is perhaps enormously superior in numbers but that still lacks cohesion... (Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*)

'The political structure... of monopoly capitalism', Lenin wrote in 1916, 'is the change *from* democracy to political reaction.'^[1] Corresponding, though not directly, immediately or mechanically, to the transition from free capitalist competition ('Manchester capitalism') to monopoly capitalism dominated by the big trusts and banks, is the trend away from classical liberalism and parliamentary democracy towards authoritarian, extra-parliamentary, militarist, Bonapartist or even fascist forms of rule. Lenin, who made this observation six full years before Mussolini's 'March on Rome', had grasped more clearly than any other contemporary workers' leader the political implications for the international labour movement of the imperialist era ushered in by the war of 1914. And it is the only methodological approach which enables us to discover how and why certain ideological and philosophical trends which began to emerge in the middle and late nineteenth century subsequently crystallised and fused together in the formation of fascist movements in the three main nations of continental Europe - Italy, France and Germany.

In so doing, we must guard against any tendency to simplify and vulgarise the highly complex skein of dialectical relationships which exists between the economic 'base' and the ideological 'superstructure' of capitalist (or indeed any) society. Several of Engels' last letters warn precisely against this eagerness to explain *every* movement and conflict in the realm of ideas by seeking out - or even inventing - an economic or class origin for such phenomena:

According to the materialist conception of history, the *ultimately* determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life. More than this, neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic element is the *only* determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure - political forms of the class struggle and its results, to wit: constitutions established by the victorious class after a successful battle, etc, juridical forms, and even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brains of the participants, political, juristic, philosophical theories, religious views and their further development into systems of dogmas - also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles, and in many cases preponderate in determining their form.^[2]

Thus far, we can agree with Engels completely. Unless the importance and origin of form is given its due weight, historical materialism, which is the application of *dialectical* materialism to the study of human history and specifically the struggle of classes, is vulgarised and reduced to mechanical materialism, to a social variant of Newtonian mechanistic physics. But it is only honest to state that when Engels, in his anxiety to combat the mechanist approach, states that 'history is made in such a way that the final result always results from conflicts between many individual wills, of which each in turn has been made what it is by a host of particular conditions of life',^[3] he introduces a formulation which can weaken the materialist content of the Marxist historical method. True, the form in which classes and nations act is through the medium of the 'individual will'. But the content is the movement of collective material forces, unified in moments of historical crisis and decision through the medium of parties and leaderships to forge and wield a collective will. Without such a transition from the molecular and 'individual' in periods of relative tranquillity to the united action of millions in situations of profound tension, revolutions would be impossible.^[4]

What Engels says about this problem is, in some ways, almost indistinguishable from Hegel's 'cunning of reason' or the 'hidden hand' of Adam Smith:

Thus there are innumerable intersecting forces, an infinite series of parallelograms of forces which give rise to one resultant - the historical event. This may again itself be viewed as the product of a power which works as a whole unconsciously and without volition. For what each individual wills is obstructed by everyone else, and what emerges is something that no one willed...^[5]

By so dwelling on the mediating factor in human action, that is, the ideological residues and their distillation through the individual consciousness, Engels here almost liquidates class action and class consciousness, though that is obviously completely alien to his purpose. For the proletarian class struggle, the highest form of human action and consciousness, cannot be reduced to a lower form, that of individual actions and wills, even though, on an *arithmetic* plane, the class is the sum total of its component individual parts. Hegel's law of the transformation of quantity into quality, developed by Marx (and Engels!) in a materialist fashion, holds that higher forms of motion cannot be reduced to lower, that they contain new opposites, new forms of conflict and tension which are not present in the old.

The reader will, it is hoped, see the relevance of these remarks, not only in the following discussion of the politics of imperialism, but throughout the remainder of the book.

Lenin never fell into the tempting trap of drawing an absolute parallel between imperialism and political reaction. He spoke and wrote only of tendencies and trends, of an overall, but contradictory and oscillating drive of monopoly capitalism to undermine and overturn the most important democratic victories which had been won, under the leadership of an earlier, pre-imperialist bourgeoisie, against the forces of feudalism. He by no means excluded the possibility that, in a given conjuncture of domestic and international forces, an imperialist bourgeoisie could adapt itself to the forms of parliamentary democracy. Thus against those within the international Marxist movement (and also the Russian Bolshevik Party) who argued that since imperialism suppressed all democratic and national rights, there remained little purpose in struggling for them, ^[6] Lenin wrote:

... in general, political democracy is merely one of the possible *forms* of superstructure *above* capitalism (although it is theoretically the normal one for 'pure' capitalism). The facts show that both capitalism and imperialism develop within the framework of *any* political form and subordinate them *all*. It is, therefore, a basic theoretical error to speak of the 'impracticability' of *one* of the forms and of *one* of the demands of democracy. ^[7]

In fact, the rise of imperialism took place, in the cases of France and England, in countries where parliamentary and democratic traditions had sunk deep roots into the petit-bourgeois and proletarian masses, and where parliamentary institutions had evolved into the customary vehicle for the resolution of political differences within the possessing classes. Therefore the imperialist-oriented sections of the bourgeoisie were, whether they liked it or not, compelled to take these traditions and institutions into account when shaping their own political strategy. Not so in Germany, where, as we have already noted, democratic traditions were almost entirely lacking in the big and petit-bourgeoisie. Added to this, of course, was the aristocratic contempt felt by the Prussian Junker caste for anything which remotely smacked of popular rule and wide-ranging democratic liberties. The German bourgeoisie therefore not only found itself politically and psychologically predisposed towards a consistently anti-democratic imperialist policy at home as well as abroad, it encountered scant resistance to such a course amongst any class of the population save the proletariat.

Britain had its highly vocal bourgeois - and even aristocratic - critics of imperialism and colonialism, and the bourgeoisie learned to live with them. They were minor irritants, and only in the war of 1914-18 did they suffer serious persecution for their views. But in Germany, the picture was entirely different. There, the opposition to imperialism, chauvinism, racialism and militarism was confined almost exclusively to those workers organised within the SPD and affiliated bodies such as the trade unions.

So it was inevitable that the main offensive of the emergent imperialist bourgeoisie should be directed against Social Democracy, the movement led by 'aliens' and 'traitors'. As Germany moved into the imperialist epoch and towards the explosion of 1914, the bourgeoisie was faced with two alternative methods of achieving the same political goal. Either it would have to attempt to reimpose a new and far more rigorous version of Bismarck's anti-socialist laws (and now at a time when the SPD numbered millions amongst its supporters), or seek a rapprochement with the more 'moderate' and 'nationally-minded' elements of its leadership. History tells us that it was the second option which won out in 1914. But this should not be allowed to obscure those political forces and ideas which, while pushed to one side in the period of enforced collaboration with Social Democracy during the world war, ^[8] were not only indicative of ultra-reactionary trends inside the German bourgeoisie, but re-emerged with tenfold vigour and eventual triumph in the final years of the Weimar Republic. However before examining the origin, function and development of these 'proto-fascist' ideologists, it will be necessary to discuss briefly the important changes which were taking place in the economic base of German society.

Lenin and Bukharin, the two principle theoreticians of the Bolshevik Party prior to 1917, only began a serious and detailed study of imperialism after the outbreak of the First World War, yet their works, together with Rosa Luxemburg's *The Accumulation of Capital* (1913) remain the most penetrating and politically valuable contributions in this field. Both emphasised the qualitative changes that had taken place in capitalism during the last quarter of the nineteenth century - the transition from '*laissez faire*' to monopoly capitalism - and understood this as the bedrock of what Marxists term imperialism. We shall employ the works of Lenin and Bukharin on imperialism to illuminate the many and profound economic transformations which were underway in Germany from the 1870s onwards, and how they made themselves felt at every level of society.

Lenin denoted five salient features of imperialism. They were, in their order of chronological appearance:

1. The concentration of production and capital has developed to such a high state that it has created monopolies which play a decisive role in economic life.
2. The merging of bank capital with industrial capital, and the creation, on the basis of this 'finance capital', of a financial oligarchy.
3. The export of capital as distinguished from the export of commodities acquires exceptional importance.
4. The formation of international monopolist capitalist associations which share the world among themselves.
5. The territorial division of the whole world among the biggest capitalist powers is completed. ^[9]

Elsewhere in the same work, Lenin stresses that imperialism, being the highest stage of capitalism, remains subject to its laws of development and that it is therefore, like the preceding capitalism of free competition, always developing at an uneven tempo, both with regard to rival imperialist states and internally *vis-à-vis* the various branches of national economy. This is especially true in the case of Germany, which, as we have so often had cause to stress, was the 'late arrival' on the stage of European capitalism. The 'late developer' learnt his economic and technological lessons from his English and French tutors so well and rapidly that by the turn of the century, Germany was in many ways the best prepared of the major imperialist powers to wage a struggle for continental supremacy. Let us see precisely how swift and thoroughgoing this development was. Beginning with Lenin's first ingredient of imperialism, we see that German capitalism pioneered the large-scale transition from competitive to monopoly capitalism, and that it did so in a semi-planned fashion. We are referring of course to the emergence of the 'Cartel' system within German industry in the early years of the Empire. The initial impulse towards the creation of cartels was undoubtedly the economic crisis which hit German industry and finance in 1873. The largely speculative boom nourished by the French war indemnity collapsed after two years of feverish stock exchange activity and dubious financial transactions, and the leaders of heavy industry especially sought to protect their markets and profits by entering into agreements with concerns operating in the same sphere. Prices were maintained and markets divided up between the major companies to the exclusion of the less powerful, thus greatly accelerating a trend towards concentration already under way as a result of business bankruptcies. Thus by 1877, 14 such cartels had been formed, embracing the coke, pig iron, sheet steel and potash industries. Agreements to restrict production were also common, as in the case of the Rhenish-Westphalian coal-owners, who when faced with a contraction of demand, jointly cut output by 10 per cent. In this way they hoped to - and largely succeeded in - maintaining existing price levels. These working agreements contained within them the seeds of a more permanent union, since they recognised the advantages of large-scale, planned production geared to the maximisation of profits. And so, slowly at first, and at an uneven tempo in each sector of industry, firms already organised in cartels began to merge into integrated monopolies, sometimes, as in the case of the Rhenish-Westphalian coal syndicate, through the intermediate stage of a marketing union. This process is reflected statistically in the changing ratio of workers employed in large and small-scale enterprises. Thus in 1882, when the cartel system was in its infancy, the number of workers employed in manufacturing industry was divided almost evenly between large firms on the one hand (166 500) and firms classified as small and medium on the other (189 500). Twenty-five years of capital concentration, cartelisation and monopolisation then greatly undermined the position of the small and medium firm. They now employed 231 500 workers, an absolute increase of a mere 65 000, while the labour force of large-scale manufacturers had swollen more than fourfold to 788 800! Taking German industry overall, 0.9 per cent of firms employed 39.4 per cent of Germany's total workforce. Capital concentration was even more

intense, with 75 per cent of the nation's industrial energy supply being used by these same 0.9 per cent of firms.

By this time - 1907 - the number of cartels had risen to nearly 500, and had embraced every important sector of the economy, ^[10] This was the period of the formation and consolidation of the industrial giants which little more than two decades later swung their enormous economic power and political influence behind Hitler. The same is true of the big banks. Established, as we have seen, in the period of reaction following the defeat of 1848, they very quickly became closely involved in the investment policies of German heavy industry, and used their indispensable role as a financier of industry to secure key positions on the boards of the largest concerns. This is, of course, Lenin's second feature of imperialism, the union of banking and industrial capital. The extent of this fusion can be depicted graphically, as can the degree of dominance which banking capital assumed over industry as a consequence of this process.

In the following chart, column A denotes the number of firms where the big banks held a place on the managing board, column B the number of bank directors holding such positions, and column C the branch of trade or industry where the bank in question had its strongest interests.

Bank	A	B	C
Bank fur Handel and Industrie	93	102	Transport, commerce, metal, mining
Berliner	88	100	Transport, commerce, metal, mining
Commerz und Disconto	32	35	Engineering, commerce
Deutsche	1160	128	Metal, mines
Disconto-Gesellschaft	92	126	Metal, mines
Dresdner	87	102	Mines, engineering, transport, catering
Nationalbank	96	102	Mines, engineering, commerce
Schaffhausen	94	111	Mines, metal, commerce, trade

Several of these banks were later to fuse, finally comprising the 'big six' of German finance, but even here, before 1914, we can see the basic economic structure of German imperialism already solidified. Looking more closely at the interests of the banks, we find that the immensely powerful Deutsche Bank (several of whose directors later helped to finance Hitler's bid for power) held important positions on the boards of Siemens and Halske (electrical), Norddeutscher Lloyd ^[11] (shipping) and Oberschlesische Kokswerke (coke). Moreover, the Deutsche was banker to the giant Krupps concern. The Berliner Handelsgesellschaft was firmly ensconced on the board of Siemens' chief rival, AEG, while the Darmstaedter had important interests in the Luxembourg mining industry.

Looking even more closely at the structure and leadership of German monopoly capitalism in the immediate pre-1914 period, certain highly interesting and significant factors emerge. Firstly, there was the enormous economic power concentrated, not simply in the hands of a trust or bank, but single individuals. In effect, a tiny group of monopoly capitalists, by virtue of their grip on entire sections of industry and finance, exploited and dominated socially literally millions of German workers. Thus in the Ruhr, the future backer of National Socialism, the coal magnate Emil Kirdorf through his association with the Discontogesellschaft Bank and fellow tycoon Hugo Stinnes employed either directly or indirectly no less than 69 000 of the region's 354 200 miners. Altogether, only 10 banking and industrial families accounted for 89.3 per cent of Ruhr coal output! (These 10 also included the future Nazi tycoons Thyssen and Krupp.) Looked at from the standpoint of the big banks, who held the purse strings of nearly all the large mining concerns, we see that the Deutsche Bank controlled 20 mines employing 72 600 workers and producing 19.3 million tons per year, out of a total 89.3 million tons. No bank could match the Deutsche's degree of penetration into Ruhr coal mining except the Discontogesellschaft, whose operations were linked with Stinnes ^[12] and Kirdorf.

In the other main branch of Ruhr heavy industry - iron and steel production - the same picture emerges. And even the same names, for here too Thyssen and Krupp were among the leaders of the trust, together with Stumm, Kirdorf and Stinnes. Taken overall, the nerve centres of German monopoly capitalism - the electrical, chemical, mining and steel industries, together with shipping and banking, were ruled, at the outbreak of the First World War, by no more than 13 groups or trusts. And in their turn, these

associations were dominated either by single families, as was the case with Stumm, Stinnes, Krupp and Thyssen, or by the biggest banks. The German economy therefore presented the appearance of an inverted pyramid of a few score monopoly capitalists supporting - or rather seeming to support - an immensely broad and variegated industrial, commercial and agricultural base. This economic tyranny could not but have its repercussions in every facet of Germany's political and social life.

For as regards both the process of monopoly concentration and the fusion of industrial with banking capital, Germany had, by the turn of the century, advanced further along the imperialist path than any of its world rivals. But this immense strength at the industrial base did not find an immediate and direct reflection in the external position of German imperialism. And the main reason for this was once again the uneven nature and tempo of world capitalist development. France and England, Germany's two main continental competitors, had already carved out vast colonial empires many decades before capitalism in these countries began its transition into the monopoly stage. ^[13]

Whereas in 1876, the British Empire ruled over 250 million colonial subjects, Germany had yet even to stake a claim for its first overseas possession. Everywhere it turned, German capital came up hard against the already firmly established 'zones of influence' of either British, French or Russian imperialism. There could be no question of peaceful or evolutionary development towards a position of European predominance commensurate with its burgeoning economic might. Right from the outset, German capitalism was confronted with the stark alternatives: either prepare for war, or accept the status quo and be slowly ground down by the combined pressure of its French, English and Russian enemies.

It is essential to see how this strategic relationship between the major European capitalist powers accentuated the already powerful trend towards reaction within Germany's possessing classes, and how it found a peculiar echo among wide layers of the petit-bourgeoisie. The German bourgeoisie found itself, as it entered the imperialist epoch, fighting a war on two fronts; against the workers' movement, now emerging triumphant and unscathed from its 12 years of illegality under Bismarck's anti-socialist laws, and against its foreign capitalist rivals, France, Britain and, to a lesser extent, the United States. Indeed, the first shots in this war had been fired some years before when after a prolonged and at times bitter debate within ruling political and economic circles, Bismarck agreed to institute legislation to protect German industry from foreign competition. And significantly, this change of heart coincided with Bismarck's equally momentous decision to drop his earlier opposition to colonialism, and come out firmly in favour of fighting for Germany's place in the imperial sun. The great concern felt by the bourgeoisie for Germany's weak international position *vis-à-vis* the main colonial powers was expressed very cogently by Friedrich Fabri in his *Bedarf Deutschland der Kolonien?* of 1879:

Should not the German nation, so seaworthy, so industrially and commercially minded, hew a new path on the road of imperialism? We are convinced beyond doubt that the colonial question has become a matter of life or death for the development of Germany. Colonies will have a salutary effect on our economic situation as well as on our entire economic progress.

And in words which were later to become all too familiar for the peoples of Europe, Fabri went on:

If the new Germany wants to protect its newly-won position of power for a long time, it must heed its Kultur-mission, and, above all, delay no longer in the task of renewing the call for colonies.

In the same year, on 2 May 1879, Bismarck addressed the Reichstag on the allied question of protection:

... we are slowly bleeding to death owing to insufficient protection. This process was arrested for a time by the five milliards which we have received from France after the war: otherwise we should have been compelled five years ago to take those steps we are taking today... I see that those countries which possess protection are prospering, and that those countries which possess free trade are decaying. Mighty England, that powerful athlete, stepped out into the open market after she had strengthened her sinews, and said, 'Who will fight me? I am prepared to meet everybody.' But England is slowly returning to protection, and in a few years she will take it up in order to save for herself at least the home market.

Fabri and Bismarck here summed up succinctly the problems facing German capitalism on the eve of the imperialist epoch, and in fact correctly indicated the strategy it later adopted to overcome them. In 1885, Bismarck declared a German 'protectorate' in the East African region subsequently known as Tanganyika, and the bid for empire was on. The industrialists of the National Liberal Party and agrarians of the Conservatives submerged their political and economic differences in the imperialist-oriented and

anti-socialist ‘pact of steel and rye’, which functioned as a parliamentary ‘cartel’ for all governments up to the outbreak of the First World War. Unity against the working-class movement at home, unity in the struggle for domination abroad - this was the driving force of ruling-class politics from the mid-1880s onwards. These important policy shifts made themselves felt at every level of German society, and not least amongst intellectuals most closely linked with the bourgeoisie. For to them fell the task of evolving a theoretical justification for the aggressive and dictatorial course upon which the regime had embarked in all fields of policy.

This development reached its nadir with the *Manifesto of the Ninety-Three German Intellectuals*, published on the outbreak of hostilities by leading university professors and scientists in support of German imperialism’s war aims. ^[14] But the subordination of ‘official’ intellectual life and cultural activity to the Second Reich began much earlier, and it leaned heavily in its turn on those reactionary, subjectivist and pessimistic trends which had emerged out of the ruins of the classical Hegelian school. In many cases, these philosophers began by regressing to the position adopted by Kant, that the objective world of ‘noumena’ was by its very nature unknowable (the thing-in-itself) and that mankind was forever limited in his knowledge to the world of appearances, ‘phenomena’, which were filtered through from the noumenal world by the subjective categories of mental perception: that is, causality, quantity, quality, etc.

Now while Kant’s philosophy marked a clear step forward from the scepticism of the later English empiricists Berkeley (who held an extreme solipsist ^[15] position) and Hume, it was also criticised by Hegel for inconsistency in its establishing an arbitrary limit to human knowledge. The contemporary and follower of Kant, Johann Fichte, gave his philosophy a highly humanistic and radical interpretation, holding that since the world existed only through man’s perception of it, then it was within his power, through the exercising of his will, to mould the world as he desired. Here the ‘will’ played a relatively progressive role, as it was the philosophical refraction of the desire by an historically progressive class to create a modern, rationally-governed and united German state. But we can see how this same notion of the will underwent a dramatic transformation in the hands of those philosophers who took part in the anti-Hegelian reaction of the 1840s, a movement that was later given added impetus by the political reaction which followed the defeat of the 1848 Revolution. The main links in this chain, which in fact reaches from the post-Napoleonic reaction to the ideologues of National Socialism, are Arthur Schopenhauer and Friedrich Nietzsche.

How Schopenhauer became instrumental in evolving an utterly reactionary philosophical and political system out of elements of Kantianism can be seen from his most famous work, *The World as Will and Idea*. Written in 1818 when the philosopher was 30 years of age, it explicitly sets out to undermine the prevailing Hegelian influence in Germany, a fact which Schopenhauer openly acknowledged in the preface to the book’s second edition, which he wrote in 1844:

... my writing bears the stamp of honesty and openness so distinctly on the face of them, that by this alone they are a glaring contrast to those of three celebrated sophists of the post-Kantian period. ^[16]

He roundly condemned Hegelian dialectics as ‘bombast and charlatanism’, and Hegel himself as an ‘intellectual Caliban’. (Caliban, derived from a Shakespearian character, denotes someone who is ‘degraded and bestial’.) Ironically, it was Schopenhauer’s subjectivist antidote to Hegelianism which, in a later historical epoch, became an integral strand in the web of that greatest bestiality and degradation known to man, National Socialism.

Central to Schopenhauer’s philosophy was the repudiation of an external, material world existing prior to and independently of human consciousness. ‘Idea’ and ‘Will’ - these were the driving forces of all development:

It is palpable contradiction to call the will free, and yet to prescribe laws for it according to which it ought to will... it follows from the point of view of our system that the will is not only free, but almighty. From it proceeds not only its action, but also its world; and as the will is, so does its action and its world become... The will determines itself, and at the same time both its action and its world; for besides it there is nothing, and these are the will itself. ^[17]

So intuition and instinct, rather than analysis, synthesis and reflection, should serve as modes of thought for confronting and understanding reality:

... whoever supposes that the inner nature of the world can in any way, however plausibly disguised, be *historically* comprehended, is infinitely far from a philosophical knowledge of the

world... The genuine philosophical consideration of the world, that is, the consideration that affords us a knowledge of its inner nature, and so leads us beyond the phenomenon, is precisely that method which does not concern itself with the whence, the whither, and the why of the world, but always and everywhere demands only the what, the method which considers things not according to any relation, not as becoming and passing away..., but, on the contrary, just that which remains when all that belongs to the form of knowledge proper... has been abstracted, the inner nature of the world, which always appears unchanged in all the relations, but is itself never subject to them, and has the Ideas of the world as its material object or material. ^[18]

The breakdown of the Hegelian school led, through the material intervention of the German and international working class, to Marxism. The disintegration of Kant's system, on the contrary, brought forward all those elements within it that left a door ajar for mysticism and extreme subjectivism, the denial of objective, law-governed processes and the material, social basis of human consciousness. Thus empiricism, however 'rational' in its assumptions and method, does not stand at the opposite pole to subjectivism, but can, in certain conditions, pass over into it. And though the work in question does not treat directly with the political implications of Schopenhauer's philosophy, they nevertheless intrude in a disguised form. In discussing the concept of 'freedom of the will', Schopenhauer carefully qualifies it when applied to individual human beings:

... we must be aware of the error that the action of the individual definite man is subject to no necessity... The freedom of the will as thing-in-itself... does not extend to the rational animal endowed with individual character, that is, the person. The person is never free although he is the phenomenon of a free will... ^[19]

How far have we travelled from the bourgeois-revolutionary ideal of the free, rational autonomous individual in a free and rational society where the interests of each coincide with the interests of all. Schopenhauer's political ideas, which are very clearly derived from his subjectivist philosophy, show how profound was the reaction in German intellectual circles against this bourgeois-democratic Utopia. Here too his main target was Hegel, who, as we have previously observed, was profoundly moved and influenced by the philosophical ideals and government principles of the French Revolution. Not reason, but brute force, was the means by which men and nations should be governed. He looked with favour on the doctrine of Machiavelli, which Schopenhauer interpreted thus:

What you wouldn't like done to yourself, do to others. If you do not want to be put under a foreign yoke, take time by the forelock, and put your neighbour under it himself... ^[20]

And of the notion that the people had the right to choose their own form of government and control its leaders, he wrote:

The people, it must be admitted, is sovereign; but it is a sovereign who is always a minor. It must have permanent guardians. And it can never exercise its rights itself, without creating dangers of which no one can foresee the end; especially as, like all minors, it is very apt to become the sport of... what are called demagogues. ^[21]

This thoroughgoing anti-democratic contempt for the masses runs like a thread through all Schopenhauer's political writings, exemplified by his essay 'Government', from which these extracts have been taken:

... the great mass of mankind, always and everywhere, cannot do without leaders, guides and counsellors, in one shape or another... their common task is to lead the race, for the greater part is incapable and perverse, through the labyrinth of life... That these guides of the race should be permanently relieved of all bodily labour as well as of all vulgar need and discomfort; nay, that in proportion to their much greater achievements they should necessarily own and enjoy more than the common man, is natural and reasonable. Great merchants should also be included in the same privileged class, whenever they make farsighted preparations for national needs... It is physical force alone which is capable of securing respect. Now this force ultimately resides in the masses, where it is associated with ignorance, stupidity and injustice. Accordingly the main aim of statesmanship in these difficult circumstances is to put physical force in subjection to mental force - to intellectual superiority, and thus to make it serviceable. But if this aim is not itself accompanied by justice and good intentions, the result of the business, if it succeeds, is that the state so erected consists of knaves and fools, the deceivers and the deceived. That this is the case is made gradually evident by the progress of intelligence amongst the masses, however much it

may be repressed; and it leads to revolution... No doubt it is true that in the machinery of the state the freedom of the press performs the same function as a safety valve in other machinery... On the other hand, the freedom of the press may be regarded as a permission to sell poison - poison for the heart and the mind. There is no idea so foolish but that it cannot be put into the heads of the ignorant and incapable multitude especially if the idea holds out some prospect of any gain or advantage. And when a man has got hold of any such idea, what is there that he will not do? I am, therefore, very much afraid that the danger of a free press outweighs its utility... A peculiar disadvantage attaching to republics... is that in this form of government it must be more difficult for men of ability to attain high position and exercise direct political influence than in the case of monarchies. For always and everywhere and under all circumstances there is a conspiracy, or instinctive alliance, against such men on the part of all the stupid, the weak, and the commonplace; they look upon such men as their natural enemies... There is always a numerous host of the stupid and the weak and in a republican constitution it is easy for them to suppress and exclude the men of ability... They are fifty to one; and here all have equal rights at the start. In a monarchy, on the other hand, this natural and universal league of the stupid against those who are possessed of intellectual advantages is a one-sided affair; it exists only from below, for in a monarchy talent and intelligence receive a natural advocacy and support from above... intelligence has always under a monarchical government a much better chance against its irreconcilable and ever-present foe, stupidity and the advantage which it gains is very great... In general, the monarchical form of government is that which is natural to man, just as it is natural to bees and ants, to a flight of cranes, a herd of wandering elephants, a pack of wolves seeking prey in common, and many other animals, all of which place one of their number at the head of the business in hand. ^[22] Every business in which men engage... must also be subject to the authority of one commander, everywhere it is one will that must lead. Even the animal organism is constructed on a monarchical principle; it is the brain alone which guides and governs, and exercises the hegemony. Although heart, lungs and stomach contribute much more than the continued existence of the whole body, these philistines cannot on that account be allowed to guide and lead. That is a business which belongs solely to the brain; government must proceed from one central point. Even the solar system is monarchical. On the other, hand, a republic is as unnatural as it is unfavourable to the higher intellectual life and the arts and the sciences... How would it be possible that, everywhere and at all times, we should see many millions of people... become the willing and obedient subjects of one man... unless there were a monarchical instinct in men which drove them to it, as the form of government best suited to them? ^[23]

It is hardly surprising therefore that Schopenhauer should declare himself for a monarchical solution to the problem of German national unification:

... if Germany is not to meet with the same fate as Italy, it must restore the imperial crown, which was done away with by its arch-enemy, the first Napoleon, and it must restore it as effectively as possible. ^[24]

Although Schopenhauer died some four years before Bismarck took the helm of the Prussian state, we would be completely justified in regarding him as Germany's first philosopher of 'blood and iron'. And we can go much further, and indicate the many remarkable points of contact between Schopenhauer's reactionary political ideology and that enunciated by Hitler in his semi-autobiographical *Mein Kampf*. Hitler's attack on parliamentary democracy, like that of Schopenhauer, had absolutely nothing in common with the Marxist critique of the same political system. Marx and Lenin stressed time and again that bourgeois democracy, while in its time representing an enormous advance on feudal despotism, still denied the working masses real access to the levers of state power. However wide-ranging the political and social concessions which the bourgeoisie might be obliged to make to the working class either in its struggle against feudalism or as a means of buying temporary class peace from the proletariat, bourgeois democracy remains a form of the dictatorship of big capital. This does not, however, lead Marxists to deny the importance of those political social and economic concessions which the proletariat has wrested from the bourgeoisie. On the contrary, they must be defended strenuously, not only for their own sake, but as those fortified proletarian positions within capitalist society which must serve as powerful material and moral levers for the overturn of capitalist rule. ^[25]

Both Hitler and Schopenhauer, along with an entire range of reactionary German ideologists, instinctively grasped this two-sided nature of bourgeois democracy, and denounced it accordingly. They saw it as a

potential doorway to revolution, for it conceded the principle first enunciated in the French Revolution, that the masses are sovereign. Of course, with Hitler, the connections between democratic government and the dangers of socialist revolution are made much more explicit, but this is hardly surprising in view of the fact that, unlike Schopenhauer, he had witnessed at first hand German Social Democracy's skilful exploitation of manhood suffrage and the many varied political freedoms which accompany the existence of parliamentary democracy. Thus he writes:

The Western democracy of today is the forerunner of Marxism without which it would not be thinkable. It provides this world plague with the culture in which its germs can spread. [26]

And here Hitler develops precisely the same line of argument as Schopenhauer to discredit the notion of popular rule, even under capitalism:

The Jewish doctrine of Marxism rejects the aristocratic principle of Nature and replaces the eternal privilege of power and strength by the mass of numbers and their dead weight. Thus it denies the value of personality in man, contests the significance of nationality and race, and thereby withdraws from humanity the premise of its existence and culture. [27]

This was the classic programme of German reaction - the élite must assert its right to rule over the 'dead weight' of the inert masses, whose only task is to work, fight and obey. And Hitler proceeds to elaborate on this theme at some length and with even more vehemence:

Isn't the very idea of responsibility bound up with the individual? But can an individual directing a government be made practically responsible for actions whose preparation and execution must be set to the account of the will and inclination of a multitude of men? Or will not the task of a leading statesman be seen, not in the birth of a creative idea or plan as such, but rather in the art of making the brilliance of his projects intelligible to a herd of sheep and blockheads, and subsequently begging for their kind approval? Is it the criterion of the statesman that he should possess the art of persuasion in as high degree as that of political intelligence in formulating great policies or decisions? Is the incapacity of a leader shown by the fact that he does not succeed in winning for a certain idea the majority of a mob thrown together by more or less savoury accidents? Indeed, has this mob ever understood an idea before success proclaimed its greatness? Isn't every deed of genius in this world a visible protest of genius against the inertia of the mass? ... Mustn't our principle of parliamentary majorities lead to the demolition of any idea of leadership? Does anyone believe that the progress of this world springs from the mind of majorities and not from the brain of individuals? ... By rejecting the authority of the individual and replacing it by the numbers of some momentary mob, the parliamentary principle of majority rule sins against the basic aristocratic principle of nature... [28]

Here, derived from the philosophic tradition pioneered by Schopenhauer, with its reliance on pseudo-scientific parallels from the world of nature, is a worked-out system of counter-revolution and naked dictatorship over the masses, who are derided variously as 'sheep', 'blockheads', 'mob' and 'inert'. Hitler's ideal was a regime which paid absolutely no attention to the desires or feelings of the masses, and which put down with ruthless severity any attempt to challenge its authority. Such a system of government Hitler chose to call 'truly Germanic democracy' in which once its leader is elected, 'there is no majority vote on individual questions, but only the decision of an individual who must answer with his fortune and his life for his choice'. [29]

Hitler's views on 'genius' are also remarkably similar to those of Schopenhauer, betraying the same contempt for the vast majority of mankind unable to rise to the same heights - or rather sink to the same depths - as the so-called gifted few. This élitism also became the point of departure for Nietzsche's evolution from a highly gifted writer into a bitter foe of democracy and socialism. Schopenhauer says of genius that it distinguishes 'the countless millions who use their head only in the service of their belly', and:

... those very few and rare persons who have the courage to say: No! It is too good for that; my head shall be active only in its own service; it shall try to comprehend the wondrous and varied spectacle of this world, and then reproduce it in some form, whether as art or as literature, that may answer to my character as an individual. These are the truly noble, the real *noblesse* [aristocracy] of the world. The others are serfs and go with the soil. Great minds, of which there are scarcely one in a hundred millions, are thus the lighthouse of humanity; and without them mankind would lose itself in the boundless sea of monstrous error and bewilderment. [30]

On this theme, the equally anti-Hegelian Nietzsche wrote:

... the hope is that with the preservation of so many blanks one may also protect a few in whom humanity culminates. Otherwise it makes nonsense at all to preserve so many wretched human beings. The history of the state is the history of the egoism of the masses and of the blind desire to exist; this striving is justified to some extent only in the geniuses, inasmuch as they can thus exist. Individual and collective egoisms struggling against each other - an atomic whirl of egoisms - who would look for aims here? Through the genius something does result from this atomic whirl after all, and how one forms a milder opinion concerning the senselessness of this procedure...
[31]

And here too we find, in an even more explicit and violent form, Schopenhauer's contempt for the masses, which with Nietzsche, who wrote with the example of the Paris Commune present in his mind, assumed the proportions of an all-pervading fear of revolution:

I simply cannot see what one proposed to do with the European worker now that one has made a question of him. He is far too well off not to ask for more and more, not to ask for more immodestly. In the end, he has numbers on his side. The hope is gone for ever that a modest and self-sufficient kind of man... might develop here as a class... But what was done? Everything to nip in the bud even the precondition for this... The worker was qualified for military service, granted the right to organise and to vote: is it any wonder that the worker today experiences his own existence as distressing? ... one wants an end, one must also want the means: if one wants slaves, then one is a fool if one educates them to be masters. [32]

What was implicit in Schopenhauer now becomes explicit in his most dedicated follower. The crucial factor in this transition was not the more morbid or unstable personality of Nietzsche, nor even the progressive internal degeneration of a reactionary idealist philosophical school, but rather the intervention of the German and international proletariat as a force in its own right. Nietzsche's reaction to the rise of the German workers' movement was, in fact, a brilliant negative verification of the immortal words of Karl Marx written, ironically, in the year of that avowed anti-Hegelian's birth:

... theory... becomes a material force as soon as it has gripped the masses... Philosophy cannot be made a reality without the abolition of the proletariat, the proletariat cannot be abolished without the philosophy being made a reality. [33]

Theory had gripped the German working class and raised it from an inarticulate and unorganised mass to a movement, despite the repressions of Bismarck, numbering millions. *This* was the force that Nietzsche, like so many German bourgeois intellectuals, feared above all else. The 'will to power' was the will and desire to rule and exploit the proletariat without mercy. Hence Nietzsche's anger with those governments who, out of a mistaken sense of political finesse, conceded to the workers the right to be treated as other citizens. If one teaches a worker how to use a gun, allows him to organise in parties and unions, and then permits him to vote for leaders of his own choice, then the worker is being permitted to forge the weapons which can transform him from a slave into a master. In other words, the bourgeoisie was simply committing class suicide. And this, as we shall see, was the central theme of Hitler's critique of political currents prevailing in the German ruling class in the period prior to the crisis of 1929. We also find in Nietzsche, as in so many of the philosophical antecedents of National Socialism, a craving for a rigidly hierarchical society based on the now familiar élitist principles of 'genius' and 'will':

The *order of castes*, the supreme, the dominant law, is merely the sanction of a *natural order*... over which no arbitrariness, no 'modern idea' has any power. In every healthy society there are three types which condition each other and gravitate differently physiologically; each has its own hygiene, its own field of work, its own sense of perfection and mastery. Nature, not Manu [hand], distinguishes the pre-eminently spiritual ones, those who are pre-eminently strong in muscle and temperament, and those, the third type, who excel neither in one respect nor in the other, the mediocre ones - the last as the great majority, the first as the élite. The highest caste - I call them *the fewest - being perfect, also has the privileges of the fewest, among them, to represent happiness, beauty and graciousness on earth...* *The most spiritual men, as the strongest, find their happiness where others would find their destruction: in the labyrinth, in hardness against themselves and others, in experiments; their joy is self-conquest...* They rule not because they want to but because they *are*; they are not free to be second. The *second*: they are the guardians of law, those who see to order and security, the noble warriors, and above all the king as the highest formula of warrior, judge, and upholder of the law... The order of castes, the *order of rank*,

merely formulates the highest law of life; the separation of the three types is necessary for the preservation of society, to make possible the higher and then the highest types. The *inequality* of rights is the first condition for the existence of any rights at all. ^[34]

Nietzsche went further than sketching the outlines and principles of his reactionary utopia, which in several ways was a crude plagiarism of Plato's 'Republic'. It also signposted the road towards the future fascist strategy of securing a basis for their policies and regime in the many-millioned petit-bourgeoisie and aristocracy at the one pole and the industrial proletariat at the other. Nietzsche, as the following extract shows, had begun to grasp one of the essentials of this strategy: namely, that in the era of the masses, the old-style absolutism was utterly unable to repress the rising workers' movement. Thus his already quoted remark that 'in the end', the worker 'has numbers on his side'. Mass must be pitted against mass, and for this a wide layer of the population must be given either a real or illusory stake in the status quo.

A culture is a pyramid: it can stand only on a broad base: its presupposition is a strong and soundly-consolidated mediocrity. Handicraft, trade, agriculture, *science*, the greatest part of art, the whole quintessence of professional activity... the instinct required here would contradict both aristocratism and anarchism. ^[35]

Standing between the ruling élite, the 'aristocrats' of 'genius', and the 'rabble' - Nietzsche's third caste - is therefore the 'soundly consolidated mediocrity' of the petit-bourgeoisie, ranging from government officials, professional workers, scientists and artists, to its lowermost reaches: among the artisans, shopkeepers and farmers. It is this class, multifarious in its sub-divisions but capable of great homogeneity in political questions when reaction holds sway, that was to serve as the base of Nietzsche's capitalist 'pyramid'. And this strategically important counterweight to the menace of the 'rabble' must be courted and flattered accordingly, very much after the style of the later fascist demagogues:

To be a public utility, a wheel, a function, for that one must be destined by nature: it is not *society*, it is the only kind of *happiness* of which the great majority are capable that makes intelligent machines of them. For the mediocre, to be mediocre is their happiness; mastery of one thing, specialisation - a natural instinct. ^[36]

These supports of the aristocratic apex are happy in their mediocrity - such is the cynical view Nietzsche takes of them. But it would not do to treat them publicly as such:

It would be completely unworthy of a more profound spirit to consider mediocrity as such an objection. In fact, it is the first necessity if there are to be exceptions: a high culture depends on it. When the exceptional human being treats the mediocre more tenderly than himself and his peers, this is not mere politeness of the heart - it is his simple duty. ^[37]

We can better understand the élitist Nietzsche's toleration of 'mediocrity' when we turn to his overt expressions of hatred for and fear of socialism which were, as we have already noted, far more clearly articulated than was the case with Schopenhauer, who died three years before the formation of the German socialist movement and 11 years before the Paris Commune:

Whom do I hate most among the rabble of today? The socialist rabble, the chandala apostles, who undermine the instinct, the pleasure. The workers' sense of satisfaction with his small existence - who make him envious, who teach him revenge. The source of wrong is never unequal rights but the claim of 'equal' rights. ^[38]

At this juncture we should refer to Nietzsche's tendency to lump together and then denounce Christianity with socialism, or what he sometimes calls 'anarchism'. He saw them as linked ideologies and movements in that they both advocated a world free from violent or repressive social relations, ^[39] and espoused the cause of the weak and poor and against the rich and powerful. Both were therefore branded and condemned as spokesmen of the 'rabble' and enemies of 'genius':

What is *bad*? ... all that is born of weakness, of envy, of revenge. The anarchist and the Christian have the same origin... One may posit a perfect equation between *Christian* and *anarchist*: their aim, their instinct, are directed only toward destruction... [Nietzsche cites as proof of the Christian 'instinct toward destruction' the decline and disintegration of the Roman Empire after its rulers embraced the faith - RB] The Christian and the anarchist: both decadents, both incapable of having any effect other than disintegrating, poisoning, withering, blood-sucking, both the instinct of mortal hatred against everything that stands in greatness, that has duration, that promises life a future. ^[40]

In fact Nietzsche's critique of Christianity led him directly to his celebrated cult of the 'superman' with his irresistible and utterly amoral 'will to power'.

What is good? Everything that heightens the feeling of power in man, the will to power, power itself. What is bad? Everything that is born of weakness. What is happiness? The feeling that power is *growing*, that resistance is overcome. Not contentedness but more power; not peace but war, not virtue but fitness... The weak and the failures shall perish: first principle of *our* love of man. And they shall be given every possible existence. What is more harmful than any vice? Active pity for all the failures and all the weak: Christianity.

Repudiating the Christian message of the 'meek inheriting the earth', Nietzsche called instead for the creation of a new race of supermen to rule over and exploit the socialist-led 'rabble':

... what type of man shall be *bred*, shall be *willed*, for being higher in value, worthier of life, more certain of a future? Even in the past this higher type has appeared often - but as an accident, as an exception, never as something *willed*. In fact, this has been the type most dreaded - almost the dreadful - and from dread the opposite type was willed, bred, and attained: the domestic animal, the herd animal, the sick animal - the Christian. ^[41]

Is this so far removed from the pagan cults of Himmler's SS and the rambling anti-Christian, but equally mystical diatribes of Rosenberg - or indeed, the selective breeding indulged in at Nazi stud farms by blond and blue-eyed SS stallions?

And we should also mark well his use of the term 'decadent' ^[42] to denote political, philosophical or cultural trends which undermined the rise and rule of the 'superman.' It was taken over, first by Hitler in his attacks on what he termed 'cultural Bolshevism' and then, ironically, by the 'Bolshevik' but in reality counter-revolutionary Stalinist bureaucracy to slander modernist cultural tendencies in the Soviet Union or the capitalist world which clashed with the official cannons of 'socialist realism'.

Another target of Nietzsche's invective is the French Revolution, with its attendant schools of rationalist and materialist philosophy. Here his *bête noire* is that ardent champion of 'liberty, equality and fraternity', Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whom he vilified as:

... this first modern man, idealist and rabble ^[43] in one person - one who needed moral 'dignity' to be able to stand his own sight, sick with unbridled self-contempt... I still hate Rousseau in the French Revolution: it is the world-historical expression of this duality of idealist and rabble. The bloody farce which became an aspect of the Revolution, its 'immorality', are of little concern to me: what I hate is its Rousseauian *morality* - the so-called 'truths' of the Revolution through which it still works and attracts everything shallow and mediocre. The doctrine of equality! There is no more poisonous poison anywhere... ^[44]

This total rejection of bourgeois rationalism and humanism necessarily led Nietzsche to an equally final rupture with the moral philosophy of Kant, notwithstanding those subjectivist notions which he had, partly via Schopenhauer, inherited from the author of the maxim 'act as though you would create a moral law for all men'. Thus he writes:

Did not Kant find in the French Revolution the transition from the inorganic form of the state to the *organic*? Did he not ask himself whether there was any event which could be explained only in terms of a moral disposition of mankind, an event which would demonstrate once and for all the 'tendency of mankind toward the good'? Kant's answer: 'This is the Revolution.' The instinct which errs without fail, *anti-nature* as instinct, German decadence as philosophy - *that is Kant!* ^[45]

And so we could go on, citing example after example of how, in a variety of ways, Nietzsche both anticipated much of the ideology of German fascism, and also helped to shape it. Thus while openly contemptuous of the state of German politics under Bismarck, he nevertheless sang the virtues of 'iron and blood' politics, both in relation to domestic affairs, where his demand was for a ruthless dictatorship, and in foreign policy, which he saw as simply a preparation for war. By 'freedom' - and what reactionary ideologue or politician has not waged his battles in its name? - Nietzsche explicitly meant the freedom of the few to tyrannise the many. This idea runs like a thread through all his major writings and even his private notes:

... what is freedom? That one has the will to assume responsibility for oneself. That one maintains the distance which separates us. That one becomes more indifferent to difficulties, hardships, privation, even to life itself. That one is prepared to sacrifice human beings for one's

cause, not excluding oneself. Freedom means that the manly instincts which delight in war and victory dominate over other instincts, for example those of 'pleasure'... [46]

And elsewhere, he writes: 'I welcome all signs that a more manly, a warlike age is about to begin, an age which, above all, will give honour to valour once again.' [47] Nietzsche saw the question of war and colonial conquest, as did the English imperialist Cecil Rhodes, [48] as very much related to the fight against revolution at home:

Do your ears ring from the pipes of the socialistic pied pipers, who want to make you wanton with mad hopes? ... until this waiting turns into hunger and thirst and fever and madness, and finally, the day of the *bestia triumphans* rises in all its glory? Against all this, everyone should think in his heart: sooner emigrate and in savage fresh regions seek to become *master* of the world... but no more of this indecent serfdom, no more of this becoming sour and poisonous and conspiratorial... the workers... should introduce an era of vast swarming out from the European beehive the like of which has never been experienced, and with this act of emigration in the grand manner protest against the machine, against capital [shades of Nazi 'ruralism'! - RB], and against the choice with which they are now threatened, of becoming *of necessity* either slaves of the state or slaves of a revolutionary party. Let Europe relieve itself of the fourth part of its inhabitants... What at home began to degenerate into dangerous discontent and criminal tendencies will, once outside, gain a wild and beautiful naturalness, and be called heroism... [49]

We are in no sense arguing that the political ideology evolved by Nietzsche in the Bismarckian era corresponded in every respect either to that of National Socialism or indeed, the outlook of the German bourgeoisie. For very much to his credit, Nietzsche went completely against the prevailing anti-Semitic trend in reactionary circles by coming out firmly in defence of the Jews. When his sister became involved in the activities of the German anti-Semites, he wrote to her:

Your association with an anti-Semitic chief expresses a foreignness to my whole way of life which fills me again with ire or melancholy... It is a matter of honour with me to be absolutely clean and unequivocal in relation to anti-Semitism, namely, *opposed* to it, as I am in my writings... [50]

And, in another direction, we can see that his frontal attack on Christianity could alienate him from bourgeois, petit-bourgeois and Junker circles which would otherwise have embraced his political ideas with very few reservations. But here, even here, Nietzsche's barbs struck home, for his onslaughts on the pacifist-humanist interpretation of Christianity were partially echoed in the turn of extreme reaction in Germany towards what was euphemistically called 'positive Christianity', a creed that adapted itself with the greatest facility to militant chauvinism, militarism, unbridled anti-Semitism and even paganism! [51]

It would be the greatest folly to imagine that the political ideas articulated by Nietzsche were the property only of a small circle of isolated intellectuals. The collapse of genuine liberalism in Germany under Bismarck threw entire generations of students, writers and scientists into the arms of the most extreme reaction, and at precisely a time when the rise of the workers' movement and the growth of colonialist tendencies in Germany's foreign policy were posing political decisions point-blank to all intellectual strata between the proletariat and the big bourgeoisie. The case of Bismarckian Germany's most celebrated historian, Heinrich von Treitschke, is highly instructive here. Treitschke was an utterly committed scholar, being not only a Reichstag deputy but an ardent propagandist in his earlier years for the cause of German unity. This was the period of his liberalism, of his opposition to Bismarck's undemocratic and arrogant disdain for parliamentary conventions and procedures. But since Treitschke was, like so many of his ilk, a nationalist first and foremost, he rapidly made his peace with Bismarck once it became clear that no other force could unify Germany. From this time on, which dates from the mid-1870s, von Treitschke became a spokesman for the most reactionary elements of the big bourgeoisie, dabbling not only in extreme chauvinism but even anti-Semitism. In this sense, he was closer to the pulse of German imperialism than Nietzsche, whose social and political ideas he otherwise shared. Treitschke's onslaught on Marxism, *Socialism and its Sympathisers*, written in 1874, was directed not only against the fledgling workers' movement, but those within the liberal camp who were not prepared to sanction an all-out war of extermination upon it. Universal suffrage was denounced as a sin almost commensurate with that of socialising private property. And he also made the by now familiar claim that 'class rule... follows from the nature of society as the contrast between rulers and ruled follows from the nature of the state...'. But what predominates is fear of revolution. Awarding the vote to the workers had:

... immeasurably encouraged the fantastic over-estimation of their own power and their own value among the masses. The irreconcilable contrast between the democratic equality of political suffrage and the necessary aristocratic structure proves to the dissatisfied little man with all possible clarity the social decadence [and again! - RB] of the present and makes him a credulous dupe of demagogues... universal suffrage means organised ignorance, the revolt of the soldier against his officer, of the journeyman against his master, of the worker against his employer.

Social Democracy, railed Treitschke, consisted of nothing else but 'envy and greed'. Marxism's 'doctrine of the injustice of society destroys the firm instincts that the worker has about honour, so that fraud and bad and dishonest work are scarcely held to be reprehensible any longer...'. This is, almost word for word, the credo of Krupp, Stumm *et al*, as is the assertion that:

... such a crudely materialist doctrine can know no fatherland, can know no respect for the personality of the national state. The idea of nationalism, the moving force of history, in our century, remains incompatible with socialism. Socialism is everywhere in league with unpatriotic cosmopolitanism ^[52] and with a weakness of loyalty toward the state.

Trade unionism was singled out as a particularly pernicious enemy of 'national' Germany, not least because it excluded employers from membership! Its only aim was to 'inflame class hatred to fury, getting people unaccustomed to loyalty during their work, of confusing the masses in their adherence to the law by breaches of contract which occur in every cessation of work...'. Now the ascendancy of views such as those canvassed by Treitschke and Nietzsche among wide segments of the upper and middle bourgeoisie in the final quarter of the nineteenth century was, without the least doubt, related both to economic and political developments within Germany and the heightening of the contradiction already referred to between Germany's industrial strength and its position of relative backwardness as an imperialist power.

The year of 1873 marked a turning point and watershed in German right-wing politics. It was not only the year of intensified propaganda against Social Democracy and demands for its suppression, but a year of profound economic crisis for every section of the propertied classes. Beginning in Austria and New York, a banking and industrial crisis spread rapidly to Germany, where it found hordes of Junkers, bourgeois and even petit-bourgeois engaged in an orgy of speculation on the Berlin stock exchange with inflationary money originating in the indemnity levied on France after the defeat of its armies in the war of 1870. Numerous speculative firms collapsed overnight, including real estate, railway, building, banking and brewing companies. Of 50 real estate businesses established in Berlin between 1871 and 1873, only seven survived. The petit-bourgeois would-be parvenus were thrown into utter disarray by the cruel dashing of all their hopes, and became an easy prey for those with a simple - and traditional - remedy for their distress. ^[53] Anti-Semitic agitators quickly seized on the involvement of a Jewish financier in the crash - one Henry Bethel Strousberg - to paint a lurid picture of a nation-wide and even international 'Jewish conspiracy' to destroy the German economy and its industrious burghers. In the uppermost levels of the bourgeoisie, steps were taken to protect industrial interests from the worst effects of the crisis by forming cartels and supporting moves in the Reichstag for protectionism. The politically and economically impotent petit-bourgeois had no such easy access to the levers of power, and lacked the resources to insulate themselves from the buffetings of a market economy. Neither could the infant workers' movement hope to attract large numbers of the middle class and peasantry to its side when it had only just begun the long and arduous task of organising the industrial proletariat. So Germany's artisans, traders, small businessmen and professional strata were drawn in their hundreds of thousands into the trap of those backward-looking, guild-oriented solutions which were prevalent at the time of the 1848 Revolution, and which were consciously fostered by the Junkers as means of counteracting the political influence of both the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Now this same ideology, after slumbering for more than a decade beneath the surface of German political life, re-emerged in an entirely new situation, invested with the viciously sharp cutting edge of anti-Semitism.

Let us trace the progression of events from the 1873 crisis. It was followed in the same year by Bismarck's first speech in support of protection, and the formation of the first industrial cartels. Treitschke's already quoted polemic also dates from this year. Then there ensued a veritable spate of anti-Semitic pamphlets and articles whose central theme was that the Jew, either in the guise of the banker, money-lender, stock-exchange manipulator or workers' leader, was seeking to destroy the fabric of German society by pitting one class against another. The prime target of this mythical plot was, of course, the petit-bourgeoisie trapped between the two contending class giants and threatened with destruction by

both. The usurer threatened him with bankruptcy, the Marxist-led worker with expropriation. Either way, the argument ran, the middle class was rendered property-less and converted into the dreaded and despised proletariat. The year of 1873 saw the publication of the first of these anti-Jewish, middle-class-oriented tracts, Wilhelm Marr's *The Victory of Judaism Over Teutonism*, which not only coined the term 'anti-Semitism' but initiated an infamous *canard* of the Nazi era that Germany had been converted into a 'New Israel' through Jewish control over its government and press. There then followed in 1874 a book specifically about the crisis of the previous year entitled *The Stock Exchange and Founding Swindle in Berlin* by Otto Glakua. Its message, manna to the floundering and enraged petit-bourgeois speculator with burnt fingers, was that 'Jewish capital' had begun to destroy the middle class, using liberalism as its political weapon. Other anti-Jewish broadsides from this period included *The Jewish Question* by Eugen Dühring (which claimed that anti-Semitism was democratic since it was directed at a minority!), *The Anti-Semitic Catechism* of Theodor Fritsch and, in 1910, Werner Sombart's *The Jews and Capitalism*, which attempted to prove that the Jews pioneered capitalism, and therefore by implication were responsible for its sins. (Sombart's work was later used by the Nazis to embellish their anti-capitalist demagogy.) This was also a time for founding anti-Jewish organisations, such as Marr's 'Anti-Semitic League' of 1879, which used biblical texts to justify its attacks on Jews, and the Gobineau Society of Ludwig Schemann, named after the French racist ideologist who, it is believed, influenced Hitler and many other Nazi leaders in their evolution towards fanatical hatred of the Jews. But the most significant movement of this period, and one which pointed towards the rise of mass-based counter-revolutionary politics in the imperialist epoch, was Pastor Adolf Stöcker's 'Christian Social Party'. Stöcker, originally a member of the Conservatives, ^[54] enjoyed far-reaching political influence and patronage as Court Chaplain to the Kaiser, and he undoubtedly enjoyed the support of both the monarchy and Bismarck in his initial attempts to woo workers away from the atheistic and internationalist SPD by a clever mixture of anti-capitalist demagogy, anti-Semitism and 'social' Christianity.

Stöcker - and Bismarck - hoped that the new party would be able to exploit the tremendous difficulties experienced by the SPD as a result of the anti-socialist laws. As it turned out, this strategy, like Bismarck's 'State Socialism', proved a total failure, but it did reveal that there was a previously untapped reservoir of support for 'social' anti-Semitism amongst wide layers of Germany's petit-bourgeoisie. Early in 1880, after repeated attempts to rally the workers of Berlin to the party's banner had failed, ^[55] Stöcker dropped all pretences at being a workers' leader and directed his propaganda towards the middle class. A speech from this period warned of the dangers of Social Democracy in Germany, which he correctly saw as a part of a far larger international revolutionary movement: 'Nihilism in the East, the Commune in the West, the whole great revolutionary movement in Germany all show that we in fact are on volcanic ground...'

Such statements were attuned to the nationalist, bitterly anti-Marxist middle-class masses of Bismarckian Germany, as was his insistence that, contrary to bourgeois democratic opinion:

Social Democracy is not just a movement for social reforms... it is a new conception of the world... which once it has taken hold of people prises them away from Christianity, patriotism and German morality... and directs them down a road... which can only lead to an abyss.

But it was not enough to attack the workers' movement. The German petit-bourgeoisie, especially those most dependent on the ownership of small property for their livelihood, also feared and detested the power of big business and high finance, and this had to be attacked too if Stöcker's brand of reaction was to win mass support. In the same speech he emphasised that unrest in the working class was not simply the reaction of 'evil agitators', but that it was also caused 'by the present form of business life, by large industry in combination with free competition, by the alternation of boom and bust'. Here we have the age-old yearning of the small producer for the regulated, crisis-free pre-capitalist economy of the guilds. And even though the social and economic conditions which engendered this longing were fast dying away, the mode of consciousness not only lingered but proved itself remarkably adaptable to the political currents of Bismarckian and, subsequently, imperialist Germany.

Yet while functioning as an ideology of capitalism, it necessarily, because of its function as a political diversion for the anti-capitalist petit-bourgeois masses, had to take a firm line against the 'excesses' of the big bourgeoisie. Private property must be defended - it was after all the very foundation of middle-class existence - but it 'carried with it heavy duties, just as wealth carries with it heavy responsibilities. If property abandons the foundations on which it rests... then it is itself conjuring up the dangers of revolt...'. Also anticipating the future German fascism, and distinguishing his brand of reaction from that

of Treitschke and other advocates of rule by a bourgeois Junker élite, was Stöcker's attempt to steal the clothes of his Marxist opponents by professing a 'national' (and therefore utterly spurious) socialism:

... the social conception has something to be said for it. For socialism does not mean only the idea of converting all private property into state property, but it contains as well the demand that business life should be made into something social and organic... we can deal with the socialist fantasy of abolishing private property only if we take up very seriously two ideas of socialism. One, to cast economic life in an organic [that is, corporative - RB] form, and two, to narrow the gap between rich and poor.

Armed with this, for its time, quite sophisticated political demagoguery, Stöcker's party, allied with the like-minded 'Social Conservatives', gathered 46 228 votes in Berlin at the Reichstag elections of 1881. The high point was reached in 1887, with 72 000 votes, and then came the decline of 1890, when Stöcker, now deprived of much of his previous ruling-class support, saw his party crushed in Berlin by the hated Marxists, who recorded 125 000 votes to his own 34 000. This reverse marked the end of Stöcker's own political career, but not that of militant anti-Semitism. His pledge, made in 1883, to 'offer battle to the Jews until final victory has been gained' was to be honoured, with devastating results for all mankind, by his Nazi successors. ^[56]

And Stöcker also, despite his fiery anti-capitalist propaganda, endorsed the same views on work discipline which were concurrently being advocated by industrial leaders like Krupp, Stumm and Kirdorf. There was to be 'no meddling by the worker in the technical, financial or economic policy of the enterprise...', while the employer was to be the 'leader' and the workers his 'followers', terms and concepts plagiarised and enforced by Ley's Labour Front in the Nazi Labour Law of 1934.

Support for Stöcker's ideas reached far beyond his party. In April 1881, he succeeded in collecting no fewer than 225 000 signatures for an 'Anti-Semitic Petition' presented to Bismarck demanding a halt to Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe, their exclusion from teaching and high public office, and a *numerus clausus* in schools, universities and the legal profession. And even more ominously, there were anti-Semitic riots and demonstrations in Berlin and Pomerania, with mobs attacking synagogues to the chant of 'out with the Jews'. For the first time since the Middle Ages, pogromists ran amok in the streets of Germany, egged on by a man who enjoyed the confidence of the highest court and government circles. The long and bloody march to Auschwitz had begun. Stöcker's reactionary work was carried on by the Anti-Semite Party, which from a modest 12 000 votes in 1887, rallied 264 000 avowed Jew-baiters to their racialist banner six years later. The party then lost ground slightly over the next two elections of 1898 and 1903, only more than to recoup it in the election of 1912, when 357 000 Germans - mainly artisans, peasants, shopkeepers and backward, unorganised workers, cast their votes for a party which boldly proclaimed its intention of hounding the Jews from public life. Just as in the first months of the Third Reich, bourgeois Jews sought to deflect this anti-Semitic offensive by proclaiming from the rooftops their loyalty to the Hohenzollerns, but to little effect. There was scarcely a single university which did not have its ban on Jewish membership of student associations, while more than 80 per cent of Wandervogel branches (the mainly petit-bourgeois and highly romantic German youth movement) excluded Jews from their ranks. Our survey of chauvinist and anti-socialist tendencies in Imperial Germany does not end here. Many were the illustrious names of German culture, letters and science who lent their prestige and talents to the cause of extreme reaction, thus helping to render respectable not only militarism and anti-democratic theories, but open racialism. There is the illuminating case of Ernst Haeckel, the celebrated biologist and philosopher whom Lenin, Engels and Plekhanov quoted with approval in polemics against various schools of idealism. But Haeckel's materialism was not enriched by the dialectical method, and as a result, degenerated when applied to social questions into a most reactionary mystical philosophy. Haeckel's mechanistic outlook led him utterly to negate the active role of human consciousness in historical development, depicting man as a merely transient and passive phenomenon in the totality of the universe. Thus he declared that 'the great struggle between the determinist and the indeterminist, between the opponents and the sustainers of the freedom of the will, has ended today, after more than 2000 years, in favour of the determinist'. This position is far removed from that of the great Marxist thinkers, who never ceased to stress the dialectical relationship between man and the material world around him. Since man is himself a part of that world - a fragment which being the highest and the most complex product of the process of evolution is capable of abstract thought through the material organ of the brain - he has the potentiality of discovering through practice the nature of the world outside him, and of changing it in accordance with both natural laws and his own

needs. This Haeckel emphatically denied. His was as one-sided a world outlook as that of the subjectivists Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, who erected an entire system on the foundation of the will. And indeed, as is so often the case, these two apparent philosophical extremes merged on the important political questions of the day. Haeckel's rejection of traditional Christianity in the name of science did not lead him to a consistent materialist outlook, but towards a romantic nature worship (pantheism) and the crudest attempts to transpose theories derived from the world of the lower animals to human society ('Social Darwinism').^[57] How popular this notion was among the German bourgeoisie, currently engaged in a desperate struggle for mastery over both its internal and external foes, is illustrated by the theme set for an essay competition in 1900. The chosen topic was: 'What can we learn from the principles of Darwinism for application to inner political development and the laws of the state?' The sponsor of this highly ideological literary event was none other than... Alfred Krupp! So great was the response from the German intelligentsia that the essays filled 10 large volumes, with the first prize going to William Schallmayer, a protege of Ernst Haeckel. Some six years afterwards, Haeckel founded the 'Monist League' to spread his pantheist gospel among German scientists and men of letters. In politics, it rapidly emerged as a pro-imperialist, anti-socialist force, employing the language of science to justify the most blatant dictatorial and racialist views. Haeckel himself once declared that 'woolly-haired Negroes are incapable of true inner culture and of a higher mental development', thereby anticipating future Nazi 'racial science', while the Monist League's vice-president, Dr Johannes Unold, justified violence in human relations in rhetorically asking: 'Does not human nature lose its best character and fall into weakness... when there is general happiness and a termination of the struggle for existence?' Unold, who shared Haeckel's elitist prejudices, held that 'unlimited freedom leads to a lack of regard for the minority and the progressive degeneration of the majority'. For under democracy, the 'poorest' had power: 'Won't they give their approval to those who charm by their eloquence and win over the masses by promises?' Democracy led to the 'exploitation of quality by quantity, the best by the majority, the fit and the conscientious by the unfit and the frivolous, the expert by the inexpert, the prudent by the covetous'. Unold was scandalised that the rise of Social Democracy in Germany had resulted in a situation where 'the opinion of a 26-year-old labourer can mean as much as that of a 60-year-old owner of a factory...'. The universal franchise had 'restrained and excluded' the political influence of the 'educated and property-owning bourgeoisie, the middle class, which was the true backbone of every state'.

And nothing aroused the ire of German academics more than the rise of the untutored worker in the historic old cities of Germany. 'Who can justifiably explain', thundered Unold, 'that cities like Munich, Nuremberg and Stuttgart should be represented exclusively by members of the workers' party?'

Haeckel's attacks on socialism and the working class were no less trenchant. In the year of the anti-socialist legislation, he poured scorn on the scientific claims of Marxism:

The equality of individuals which socialism strives after is an impossibility... it stands in fact in irreconcilable contradiction to the inevitable inequality of individuals which actually and everywhere exists... The theory of selection teaches that in human life, as in animal and plant life everywhere... only a small and chosen minority can exist and flourish, while the enormous majority starve and perish miserably and more or less prematurely.^[58]

This last is nothing more nor less than naked justification of imperialism, of 'chosen minorities' to conquer and exploit the 'enormous majority'. And indeed, the German Haeckels and Unolds put their theories into practice as ardent members of numerous patriotic societies, the most important undoubtedly being the Pan-German League. Founded in 1891, it was the most representative and influential of imperial Germany's many nationalist organisations agitating in favour of an aggressive military and colonial policy. (Precursors of the League included the Colonial Society (1882) and the Association for German Colonisation (1884), fusing in 1887 to form the German Colonial Society.) The Pan-Germans not only espoused the cause of all-German unity, a demand which involved the incorporation of all German-speaking peoples within a Prussian-dominated 'greater Germany', but following this, German imperialist world domination. Just as Nazi domestic political strategy originated in the activities and theories of such racialists as Stöcker and anti-Marxist statesman like Bismarck, so too did the Pan-Germans, a thoroughly 'respectable' clique of imperialists, father Hitler's foreign policy.^[59]

Leading Pan-Germans included Haeckel of the Monist League, the industrialists Krupp and Kirdorf, Admiral Tirpitz (later a fervent Nazi) and numerous government officials, academics and school teachers (36 per cent of the League's branch chairmen were school teachers; they were instrumental in poisoning

entire generations of petit-bourgeois with the doctrines of racialism and militarism). The Bavarian Social Democrat Kurt Eisner was not exaggerating when he wrote in 1914:

Behind the programme of the Pan-German League and its manifold branches and daughter associations stand the Land League, the Central League of Industrialists and other employers' associations, a part of the finance capital interests, especially the shipping interests, and finally, an executive of former generals and admirals...

Under its President Heinrich Class, the League moved steadily towards the ultra-chauvinist, racist right, making a bid for petit-bourgeois support by attacks on 'international finance', while taking care to demarcate it from model 'national' capitalists like Krupp. Class set out the Pan-German case for a right-wing dictatorship in his book *If I Were the Kaiser*, published in 1912: 'A powerful leader is necessary who will enforce the steps necessary for our recovery...' This 'saviour of the Reich' must be a dictator 'who uncompromisingly resists the democratisation of the state'. Under this regime, Jews would be treated 'without pity'. Small wonder that Hitler was later to declare that this work, which anticipated so much of the Nazi programme, 'contained everything that was important and necessary for Germany'. The activities of the Pan-Germans were supplemented by a proliferation of societies ostensibly pursuing purely 'cultural' causes. Such were the Gobineau Society, founded by the leading Pan-German Ludwig Schemann, and the 'Wagner Circle', established by the composer's wife Cosima after his death in 1883. Arthur de Gobineau was the French exponent of racist ideology who, it is considered by most authorities, enjoyed the greatest influence among German anti-Semites, Hitler included. Gobineau's political and philosophical writings were clearly a reaction against the rationalist and humanist traditions of the French Revolution, holding as he did the convictions that:

... the racial question overshadows all other problems of history, that it holds the key to them all, and that the inequality of the races from whose fusion a people is formed is enough to explain the whole course of human destiny... everything great, noble and fruitful in the works of man... derives from a single starting point, is the development of a single germ and the result of a single thought; it belongs to one family alone, the different branches of which have reigned in all the civilised countries of the universe. ^[60]

Gobineau was, of course, referring to the so-called 'white races', of whom pride of place went to the 'Germanic race..., endowed with all the vitality of the Aryan variety'. ^[61] For unlike France, 'a country where the nobility does not exist, where the bourgeoisie is no more preponderant as a political class', ^[62] Germany remained relatively free from the democratic virus. This cult of the mythical 'Aryan', with its emphasis on the 'civilising' world mission of the higher 'white races', enjoyed an enormous vogue among bourgeois intellectual and artistic circles as Germany entered upon the imperialist phase of its development. Wagner himself in his later years degenerated into a rabid anti-Semite and religious mystic, in sharp contrast to the militant socialist who in 1849 charged, musket in hand, to the barricades of revolutionary Dresden. Politically disoriented by the defeat of the revolution, the composer turned his back on the working class, the only force capable of modernising and democratising Germany in a thoroughgoing fashion, and delved deep into his nation's mythical past in a search for artistic and philosophical inspiration. The result was, in the sphere of pure music, often superlative. But in the realm of ideology - and Wagner would never have denied the importance of this side of his work - it was utterly escapist, grist to the cultural mill of those in Germany who sought to embellish the nauseous doctrines of racialism with a veneer of great art. Was it just mere coincidence that Hitler's favourite composer was Wagner, or that even in the pre-1914 period, the circle dedicated to preserving his works and memory became a meeting point for the ideologues of German racialism? ^[63]

The most influential among these was undoubtedly Houston Stewart Chamberlain, the Portsmouth-born natural historian and physicist who became enmeshed in the politics of German reaction through his almost religious conversion to the cult of Wagner at the 1882 Bayreuth Festival. He soon settled permanently in Germany, branching out from his activities on behalf of the Wagner Circle to a rabid propagandist of all things German. Nearly all things, we should have said, for it was Kant and Schopenhauer, not Hegel, whom Chamberlain took as his philosophical mentors. From Kant he took his criticism of the 'exact sciences'. The unknowable nature of the external world, the world of 'things-in-themselves', lay beyond reason's reach. If this noumenal world was to be grasped at all, then it would be by means of what he called the 'world of the eye', or, more prosaically, intuition. And so he passed over the Kantian threshold into the subjectivist, mystical world of Schopenhauer and his successors. Chamberlain sought to employ the 'world of the eye' ^[64] in his main work, *The Foundations of the*

Nineteenth Century, which he completed in 1898. It shares with de Gobineau's essay on race the idea that human history is the history of racial struggle, and that the German or 'Aryan' race is the highest point of this process. (Chamberlain was probably the first 'scientific' racialist to assert that Christ was not a Jew, but an 'Aryan'. His hero Wagner had pointed the way for this ludicrous contention in *Religion and Art*, where the composer declared he was 'more than doubtful whether Jesus was a Jew'. This issue was of profound importance for those imperialists and racialists seeking to ground their theories in traditional Christian teachings.) Chamberlain's intellectual pretensions enhanced the acceptability of his views in ruling-class circles. Kaiser Wilhelm II not only read the *Foundations* but distributed it amongst his immediate political and court associates. The two then conducted a voluminous correspondence which ended only in 1923. Long before this, Chamberlain had lost faith in the ability of the Hohenzollern dynasty to fulfil Germany's racial destiny, and in his last years he became an open supporter, and finally a member, of the Nazi Party. Hitler, who first met Chamberlain at the 1925 Wagner Bayreuth Festival, paid him the highest possible compliment by attending the latter's funeral in 1927 as the official representative of the Nazi Party. The Nazis recognised their own.

The point therefore being made is that the precursors of National Socialism were by no means 'cranks' on the margin of German intellectual or political life, but men at its very centre. And neither is it a question of Germany alone. True these ultra-reactionary and racialist tendencies assumed their most developed form in the country where the problem of national unification had loomed largest, and where the ruling class was faced point-blank with the necessity of outright military conflict with the major European capitalist powers if German imperialism was not to be strangled at birth. And nowhere more than in Germany was the working class better organised and politically educated to thwart the reactionary strategy of its enemies. These contradictions, taken together with the entire tradition of counter-revolutionary politics, became a forcing house for the growth of anti-Semitic, anti-Marxist and imperialist ideology amongst the German middle class. But basically the same process was at work in all the imperialist nations. The form it took depended to a great degree on already-established political, philosophical and cultural patterns. But the content embodied within these diffuse forms was precisely that described by Lenin: away from classical bourgeois democracy and liberalism towards reaction, towards open dictatorial rule over the working class and the waging of imperialist war. And in almost every case, the spokesman for this tendency began by challenging, very much in the manner of Schopenhauer, the rational world outlook developed by the bourgeoisie in its struggle for class hegemony over the forces of feudal and Catholic obscurantism. In other words, intuition is substituted for reason, faith for knowledge, 'action' for theory. This is already evident in the writings of Schopenhauer, who argued that:

The aim of our life... is a practical one: our actions, not our knowledge, appertain to eternity. The use of the intellect is to guide our actions, and at the same time to hold up the mirror to our will...
[65]

This notion, which seems to begin from the obvious proposition that theory is derived from practice, and in the last analysis must therefore be subordinate to it, is carried much further in the philosopher's essay on genius, where he contends that:

... if man's grasp of the universal is so deep as to be *intuitive*, and to apply not only to general ideas, but to an individual object by itself, then there arises a knowledge of the *Ideas* in the sense used by Plato. This knowledge is of an aesthetic character; when it is self-active, it rises to genius, and reaches the highest degree of intensity when it becomes philosophic; for then the whole of life and existence as it passes away, the world and all it contains, are grasped in their true nature by an act of intuition, and appear in a form which forces itself upon consciousness as an object of mediation. [66]

With Nietzsche, the role of intuition is even more explicit, being counterposed not only to natural science but the study of history. Man can only act freely when he forgets the past - such is the thesis of Nietzsche:

Forgetfulness is a property of all action... life in any true sense is absolutely impossible without forgetfulness... there is a degree of sleeplessness, of rumination, of 'historical sense', that injures and finally destroys the living thing, be it a man or a people or a system of culture. [67]

Nietzsche had sound class motives for opposing any serious and objective study of the past:

Monumental history loves by false analogy; it entices the brave to rashness, and the enthusiastic to fanaticism by tempting comparisons. Imagine this history in the hands - and head - of a

gifted egoist or an inspired scoundrel; kingdoms would be overthrown, princes murdered, war and revolution let loose... [68]

And this, Nietzsche considered, was a special danger in Germany, where the people were inclined to theory and an historical approach towards political problems. Instead, men should be guided and motivated by what the self-appointed theoretician of French syndicalism Georges Sorel called 'myths':

The unrestrained historical sense, pushed to its logical conclusion, uproots the future, because it destroys illusions and robs existing things of the only atmosphere in which they can live.

Historical justice... is therefore a dreadful virtue, because it always undermines and ruins the living thing - its judgement means annihilation... the creative instinct is sapped... the historical audit brings so much to light which is false and absurd, violent and inhuman, that the condition of pious illusion falls to pieces. *And a thing can only live through a pious illusion.* [69]

And of necessity, this war on historical objectivity on behalf of the philosophy of myth and so-called intuitive knowledge - in other words, in defence of the 'big lie' - demanded a total renunciation of the Hegelian heritage:

I believe there has been no dangerous turning point in the progress of German culture in this century that has not been made more dangerous by the enormous and still living influence of the Hegelian philosophy. [70]

In France, where the rationalist tradition was far more deeply embedded in the bourgeoisie, open adherents of subjectivist and intuitionist theories of knowledge were fewer, but not a wit the less vocal and persistent for all that. Their most gifted representative was undoubtedly Henri Bergson, who evolved the notion of the *élan vitale* as the driving force of human evolution. In the case of Bergson, who although conservative in outlook took little interest in politics, [71] we have a philosopher who epitomises the state of flux in all branches of intellectual and cultural activity predominating in the last years of the nineteenth century as the old mechanist conceptions of change and reality, in particular those derived from Newtonian physics, began to disintegrate under the weight of fresh scientific inquiry and evidence. Bergson's argument contained a particle of truth: that since the real world was in a constant state of motion, it could not accurately be depicted by even the most sophisticated of representational models or symbols. These remained at best tools of analysis, and not reality itself. But Bergson went further than this. Working from an essentially Kantian position, he came to the conclusion that the wall between human consciousness and reality could only be breached by intuition, by an act of will. The old models of the world and the universe were breaking down - this was most certainly the case. Bergson's answer to this problem was not, like that of Lenin, to view the contradictory development of human knowledge about the world as an eternal process of finer and finer approximations to a reality infinite in both space and time. Instead, a short cut to infinity was proposed, as subjective as the earlier methods had been mechanical and empirical: 'There are things that intelligence alone is able to seek, but which, by itself, it will never find. These instinct alone could find, but it will never seek them.' [72] Instinct or intuition was therefore the higher form of understanding, for it could reach, according to Bergson, beyond the shadowy world of phenomenon to the ultimate reality of noumenon:

We see that the intellect, so skilful in dealing with the inert, is awkward the moment it touches the living. Whether it wants to treat the life of the body or the life of the mind, it proceeds with rigour, the stiffness and brutality of an instrument not designed for such use... We are at ease only in the discontinuous, in the immobile, in the dead. The intellect is characterised by a natural inability to comprehend life, instinct, on the contrary, is moulded on the very form of life. While intelligence treats everything mechanically, instinct proceeds... organically. [73]

Bergson's subjectivist method hinged on the belief that one can, by an act of will, place oneself 'inside' a process, and by so doing, discover total, absolute and perfect truths. The political implications of such a notion are as obvious as they are reactionary. It places in the hands of government leaders a theory to justify their riding ruthlessly over the most elementary democratic wishes of the people, on the grounds that they alone can grasp and interpret the true 'will of the people'. Ordinary mortals, the 'herd' to use Hitler's terminology, are not capable of such intuitive perception and decision-making. The power and right to act reside in the hands of an élite gifted with Bergson's 'sixth sense', the inner eye which can penetrate the fog created by the human intellect to the real world of instinct beyond. And it is doubly reactionary because such a method recognises no objective criteria of proof:

... an absolute could only be given in an *intuition*, whilst everything else falls within the province of *analysis*. By intuition is meant the kind of *intellectual sympathy* by which one places oneself within an object in order to coincide with what is unique in it and consequently inexpressible. [74]

Bergson had stumbled across the basic flaw in the rationalist and empirical methods, but instead of seeing them as historical moments in the evolution of human consciousness towards a more and more scientific world outlook, an outlook which, with the theoretical work of Marx and Engels, reached its highest point in dialectical materialism as a theory of knowledge, he eclectically combined the most 'useful' elements of rationalism and empiricism with his own intuitionist method of perception. [75]

Bergson counterposed to the objective materialist dialectic of Marxism a subjective and intuitionist dialectic which reconciled opposites in the mind through an act of will, and not by acting on and changing material reality:

There is hardly any concrete reality which cannot be observed from under two antagonistic concepts. Hence a thesis and an antithesis which endeavour in vain to reconcile logically, for the very simple reason that it is impossible, with concepts and observations taken from outside points of view, to make a thing. But from the object, seized by intuition, we pass easily in many cases to the two contrary concepts; and as in that way thesis and antithesis can be seen to spring from reality, we grasp at the same time how it is that the two are opposed and how they are reconciled. [76]

In a future chapter on Italian fascism, we shall seek to show how the reaction to French rationalism led, in the case of Sorel, to theories which directly served the imperialist counter-revolution against the European workers' movement. Here we can see that a perfectly sincere attempt to overcome practical and theoretical problems posed by the inadequacies of mechanical materialism, rationalism and empiricism, because it remained indifferent or even hostile to the Marxist world outlook, passed imperceptibly but inexorably over to extreme mysticism. The end product, when combined with the ideas of the other main subjectivists, Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, was a school of philosophy and theory of knowledge which proved itself highly adaptable in a period of intense class and national conflict to the most reactionary political tendencies. At the base of this development were two related and converging processes - the break-up of the mechanist - rationalist world outlook in the physical and natural sciences, and a profound crisis in bourgeois democracy as colonial rivalries intensified and the proletarian movement began to stake its claim for political power. Naturally, this process did not evolve uniformly in each country, or necessarily penetrate into the same branches of science, the arts and philosophy. But a general trend does emerge. The reaction in each and every case both preceded and anticipated the rise of imperialism as a world system, but followed and flowed from the decline of the bourgeoisie as a revolutionary class. We can see this even in the case of England, where parliamentary traditions had deep roots, a country where only with the Reform Act of 1832 did the industrial and banking bourgeoisie finally succeed in widening its political base by extending the franchise to the urban propertied classes. Yet even as the bourgeoisie was celebrating its victory over the landed aristocracy, a new and far more dangerous enemy was already assembling its forces under the banner of Chartism. It was to this threat that the political writer and essayist Thomas Carlyle addressed himself. His writings, spanning the period between the rise of the English workers' movement and the dawn of imperialism, contained none of that so-called 'Victorian optimism' which is said to be typical of bourgeois thought in that era. Sceptical of democracy, profoundly distrustful of the proletariat, and fanatical in his opposition to what he termed 'Mammonism' - worship of money - Carlyle's thought moved along lines which we have already traced in Germany, [77] as can be seen from a reading of his *Lectures on Heroes* (1840), where he seeks to replace bourgeois democracy by the cult of hero worship. But his most revealing remarks arise in the course of his essays on Chartism and the problems of contemporary English politics. It is here that Carlyle, with a precision that is, in the light of subsequent developments, almost uncanny, anticipates the economic programme of National Socialism. Firstly there is Carlyle's mystique of work, a concept which the Nazis employed to dupe backward workers and artisans into believing that fascism was a unique, idealist species of socialism that returned to the worker the 'dignity of manual labour' without challenging the rights of private property. This was a constant theme of Labour Front and Labour Service propaganda, and we can also see strong elements of this notion in the writings of Carlyle counterposed, as it was with the Nazis, to 'Mammonism', or what Feder termed the 'thralldom of interest':

... there is a perennial nobleness and even sacredness in Work... there is always hope in a man that actually and earnestly works... Work, never so Mammonish, mean, *is* in communication with

Nature; the real desire to get work done will itself lead one more and more to truth, to Nature's appointments and regulations, which are truth... Consider how, even in the meanest sorts of labour, the whole soul of man is composed into a real kind of harmony... [78]

The reader can also see here how, very much in the manner of the German pantheists, labour becomes a quest for 'harmony' with 'nature'. [79] And here too we find ourselves in the world of instinct and intuition, of pure 'action', labour divorced from its economic function as the source of value and profit. And like the petit-bourgeois quack economists of National Socialism, Carlyle always depicted labour as struggling to break free from capital in its money form, while remaining intransigently opposed to the socialisation of industrial capital:

Industry still under bondage to Mammon... is a tragic spectacle... Labour is not a devil, even while encased in Mammonism... The unredeemed ugliness is that of a slothful people. Show me a people energetically busy; heaving, struggling, all shoulders at the wheel, their heart pulsing, every muscle swelling, with man's energy and will; I will show you a people of whom a great good is already predictable... By very working they will learn; they have Anteus-like, their foot on Mother Fact: how can they but learn? [80]

Carlyle's panegyric to work as a means of communion with nature obscured, as did Nazi talk of labour as an expression of 'national solidarity', the real motive force of capitalist production through all phases of its cycle from money capital, through productive capital to commodity capital. That is, it concealed or rather sought to conceal, the quest for profit and the origin of profit in capitalist production. Stripped of its high-flown phrases and mystical language, this is the essence of what we might call 'labour romanticism'. For despite his alleged heroic and mystical qualities, the worker was, under Carlyle's regime, to be kept firmly in his place. Power was to be wielded exclusively by an 'Aristocracy of Talent', [81] to be found chiefly among 'captains of industry' - who had the task of 'managing' what Carlyle called the 'alarming problem of the working classes'. [82] Worker and employer were, he argued, parts of an organic whole, and instead of pitting their strengths against each other, should be joined together in the pursuit of 'holy' work. Only one detail marred this picture of idyllic harmony - the worker was to be totally subordinated to his employer:

The leaders of Industry, if Industry is ever to be led, are virtually the Captains of the World; if there be no nobleness in them, there will never be an Aristocracy more... Captains of Industry are the true Fighters, henceforth recognisable as the only true ones... [83]

But nothing so sordid as profit should serve as their goal. Neither should workers seek their own monetary advancement in the form of higher wages. All this was 'Mammonism', or what the Nazis called 'Jewish-Marxist materialism':

Love of men cannot be bought by cash payment... You cannot lead a fighting world without having it regimented, chivalried: the thing, in a day, becomes impossible; all men in it, the highest at first, the very lowest at last, discern consciously or by noble instinct, this necessity. [84]

Unless such a relationship between worker and employer was substituted for that of classical 'Manchester' *laissez faire*, which Carlyle despised, then revolution would certainly ensue:

... dark millions of God's human creatures [will] start up in mad Chartisms, impracticable Sacred Months and Manchester Insurrections: and there is a virtual Industrial Aristocracy as yet only half alive, spellbound amid moneybags and ledgers... no working world, any more than a Fighting World, can be led on without a noble Chivalry of Work, and laws and fixed rules which follow out that... As an anarchic multitude on mere supply and demand, it is becoming inevitable that we dwindle in horrid, suicidal convulsion... will not one French Revolution and Reign of Terror suffice, but must there be two? [85]

Military regimentation embellished by a little 'love' and 'chivalry' - this was Carlyle's recipe for the 'problem of the working classes'. For 'on the present scheme and principle, work cannot continue. Trades' strikers, Trades' Unions, Chartisms, mutiny, squalor, rage and desperate revolt, growing ever more desperate, will go on their way.' [86] It is easy, in the light of historical experience, to dismiss Carlyle as a gifted writer obsessed by the threat of a Chartist-led revolution which never materialised. But that is not the point. Far more significant is that here, in the homeland of liberalism and free trade, in a nation noted for its tradition of compromise, was a publicist feeling his way towards an outlook which in so many ways foreshadowed the political and economic ideology of fascism. Which underlines our contention that several important ingredients of fascism originated in the pre-imperialist phase of

capitalism, and then underwent a qualitative transformation under the impact of the intense social, political and economic crises and upheavals engendered by the development of monopoly capitalism. Just as elements of monopoly are present even in the period of free competition, so, in different ways and at varying tempos in each capitalist country, did the ideologists of extreme reaction and chauvinism, of fulminating hatred against socialism and the workers' movement, begin to evolve their theories at a time when bourgeois democracy seemed to be in the ascendant. And just as we saw that the so-called era of optimism contained within it the forces which unleashed the most terrible global slaughter, so the philosophers of optimism and rational, ordered progress were powerless, despite their worship of the power of reason and science, to prevent the rise of the most horrific manifestations of wild subjectivism and barbaric mysticism. The diffuse - and indeed contradictory - elements which eventually comprised the alloy of fascism were fused in the imperialist crucible.

Notes

1. VI Lenin, 'A Caricature of Marxism' (August-October 1916), *Collected Works*, Volume 23, p 43.
2. F Engels, Letter to J Bloch, London, 21-22 September 1890, *Marx-Engels Selected Correspondence* (Moscow, nd), p 498.
3. Engels to Bloch, 21-22 September 1890, *Marx-Engels Selected Correspondence*, p 499.
4. More in keeping with the historical materialist method is Bukharin's formulation on the same problem: 'Marxism teaches us that the historical process... is a necessity. To deduce political fatalism from this doctrine is absurd, for the simple reason that historic events are taking place not outside of but through the will of the people, through the class struggle... The will of the classes is in every instance determined by given circumstances: in this respect it is not at all "free". However, that will becomes in turn a conditioning factor of the historic process.' (N Bukharin, *Imperialism and World Economy* (1915) (London, 1972), p 131)
5. F Engels, Letter to J Bloch, London, 21-22 September 1890, *Marx-Engels Selected Correspondence*, p 499.
6. This tendency Lenin dubbed 'Imperialist Economism', after the Russian 'Economists' who abjured the political struggle against Tsarism as a diversion from the fight for socialism.
7. VI Lenin, 'The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up' (July 1916), *Collected Works*, Volume 22, p 266.
8. Even this is not strictly true, for it was the war which greatly accelerated the evolution of ultra-chauvinist and anti-socialist groups and ideologists into fully-blown fascism. Thus the 'Fatherland Front', a super-patriotic offshoot from the Conservatives founded by industrialists and military leaders to press for a 'victor's peace' in the World War, spawned in its turn the Munich-based 'German Workers Party' of Anton Drexler. It was this tiny sect which Hitler joined in 1919 and subsequently transformed into the 'National Socialist German Workers Party'.
9. VI Lenin, 'Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism' (Spring 1916), *Collected Works*, Volume 22, p 266.
10. It is important to note that German technology was far ahead of other nations in several key branches of industry, notably chemicals and electricity production and traction. Monopoly was here the rule from the very outset. A full decade before the outbreak of war, Germany's electrical industry was dominated by two giants: Siemens and AEG. Concentration in chemicals was also well advanced, en route to its consummation in the IG Farben monolith of Nazi infamy.
11. Also a supporter of the Nazi cause well before 1933.
12. Hugo Stinnes, Germany's largest ever industrial tycoon, was sympathetic to Hitler in the months preceding his abortive 'Munich Putsch' of November 1923. He died in 1926.
13. Contrary to 'vulgar' Marxists, and their equally vulgar critics, Lenin never claimed that *colonialism* was the product of capitalism in its monopoly stage. Marx shows in *Capital* how the seizure and exploitation of the first colonies comprised, together with the domestic

expropriation of non-bourgeois propertied classes, the phase of early capitalist development described as 'primitive capital accumulation'.

14. Written in the spirit of blind chauvinism which characterised nearly all wartime propaganda, it nevertheless also revealed something unique to German bourgeois intellectuals, a quality which the novelist Thomas Mann once aptly called 'power-protected inwardness': 'It is not true that the combat against our so-called militarism is not a combat against our civilisation... Were it not for German militarism, German civilisation would long since have been extirpated.' Its signatories were numbered among Germany's intellectual and cultural élites, and included Emil von Behring, Professor of Medicine, Marburg; Professor Paul Ehrlich, Frankfurt on Main; Fritz Haber, Professor of Chemistry, Berlin; Ernst Haeckel, Professor of Zoology, Jena; Professor Adolf von Harnack, General Director of the Royal Library, Berlin; Karl Lamprecht, Professor of History, Leipzig; Max Lieberman, Berlin; Max Planck, Professor of Physics, Berlin; Professor Max Reinhardt, Director of the German Theatre, Berlin; Wilhelm Roentgen, Professor of Physics, Munich; and Gustav von Schmoller, Professor of National Economy, Berlin.

15. Subjective idealism carried to its logical conclusion, namely that the external world exists only in so far as the individual perceives it: 'That neither our thoughts, nor passions, nor ideas formed by the imagination, exist without the mind is what everybody will allow. And to me it seems no less evident that the various sensations or ideas imprinted on the Sense... cannot exist otherwise than in a mind perceiving them... For as to what is said of the *absolute* existence of unthinkable things, without any relation to their being perceived that is to me perfectly unintelligible. Their *esse* is *percipi* (being is to be perceived); nor is it possible they should have an existence out of the minds or thinking things which perceive them. It is indeed an opinion strangely prevailing amongst men, that houses, mountains, rivers, and in a word all sensible objects, have an existence, natural or real, distinct from their being perceived by the understanding.' (G Berkeley, 'Principles of Human Knowledge' (1710), *Berkeley: Selections* (New York, 1957), pp 125-26)

16. A Schopenhauer, Preface to Second Edition, *The World as Will and Idea*, Volume 1 (London, 1957), p xxi. The 'three celebrated sophists' are Hegel, Fichte and Schelling.

17. Schopenhauer, Preface to Second Edition, *The World as Will and Idea*, Volume 1, p 351.

18. Schopenhauer, Preface to Second Edition, *The World as Will and Idea*, Volume 1, pp 352-53.

19. Schopenhauer, Preface to Second Edition, *The World as Will and Idea*, Volume 1, p 372.

20. A Schopenhauer, 'Government', *Human Nature* (London, 1951), p 30.

21. Schopenhauer, 'Government', *Human Nature*, p 35.

22. Scientific tests have shown that schools of dolphins do not have a 'leader' but coordinate their movements by means of highly sophisticated and complex sound signals. And this highly democratic animal is renowned both for its high intelligence (in some ways approaching that of man) and its utterly pacific nature.

23. Schopenhauer, 'Government', *Human Nature*, pp 37-42.

24. Schopenhauer, 'Government', *Human Nature*, p 44.

25. In the *Communist Manifesto* Marx and Engels make clear that while in Germany Communists 'fight with the bourgeoisie wherever it acts in a revolutionary way, against the absolute monarchy, the feudal squirearchy, and the petit-bourgeoisie... they never cease, for a single instant, to instil into the working class the clearest possible recognition of the hostile antagonism between bourgeoisie and proletariat, *in order that the German workers may straightaway use, as so many weapons against the bourgeoisie, the social and political conditions that the bourgeoisie must necessarily introduce along with its supremacy, and in order that, after the fall of the reactionary classes in Germany, the fight against the bourgeoisie itself may immediately begin.*' (K Marx and F Engels, 'Manifesto of the Communist Party', *Selected Works*, Volume 1 (Moscow, 1962), pp 64-65, emphasis added)

Whether Hitler, Schopenhauer or Nietzsche had ever read these lines is not important. They were well aware of the revolutionary implications of a thoroughgoing struggle for bourgeois democracy in Germany.

26. A Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (London, 1943), p 78.
27. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 65.
28. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, pp 79-81.
29. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 91.
30. A Schopenhauer, 'On Genius', *The Art of Literature* (London, 1951), p 83.
31. F Nietzsche, 'Notes' (1873), *The Portable Nietzsche* (New York, 1962), pp 40-41.
32. F Nietzsche, 'Twilight of the Idols' (1888), *The Portable Nietzsche*, p 545.
33. K Marx, 'Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right' (1844), K Marx and F Engels, *On Religion* (Moscow, 1957), pp 50-58.
34. F Nietzsche, 'The Anti-Christ' (1888), *The Portable Nietzsche*, pp 644-46. Here the reader can compare Nietzsche's conception of a society rigidly ordered along hierarchical lines with that of Hitler: 'Organising the broad masses of our people which are today in the international camp into a national people's community does not mean renouncing the defence of justified class interests. *Divergent class and professional interests are not synonymous with class cleavage, but are natural consequences of our economic life. Professional grouping is in no way opposed to a true national community, for the latter consists in the unity of a nation in all those questions which affect this nation as such.*' (Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 339, emphasis added) So the 'national people's community' accepted as 'natural' the existence of class divisions. So much for Hitler's 'socialism'!
35. Nietzsche, 'The Anti-Christ', *The Portable Nietzsche*, p 646.
36. Nietzsche, 'The Anti-Christ', *The Portable Nietzsche*, pp 646-47.
37. Nietzsche, 'The Anti-Christ', *The Portable Nietzsche*, p 647.
38. Nietzsche, 'The Anti-Christ', *The Portable Nietzsche*, p 647.
39. This is, of course, Nietzsche's, and not the author's, conception of Christianity.
40. Nietzsche, 'The Anti-Christ', *The Portable Nietzsche*, pp 647-48.
41. Nietzsche, 'The Anti-Christ', *The Portable Nietzsche*, pp 570-71.
42. For example: 'The Christian and the anarchist are both decadents. When the Christian condemns, slanders and besmirches "the world", his instinct is the same as that which prompts the socialist worker to condemn, slander, and besmirch *society*. The "last judgment" is the sweet comfort of revenge - the revolution, which the socialist worker also awaits, but conceived a little further off.' (Nietzsche, 'Twilight of the Idols', *The Portable Nietzsche*, p 535)
43. In his literary masterpiece *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche likens 'the rabble' to pigs, with 'grinning snouts and the thirst of the unclean'.
44. Nietzsche, 'Twilight of the Idols', *The Portable Nietzsche*, pp 552-53.
45. Nietzsche, 'The Anti-Christ', *The Portable Nietzsche*, p 578.
46. Nietzsche, 'Twilight of the Idols', *The Portable Nietzsche*, p 542.
47. F Nietzsche, 'The Gay Science', *The Portable Nietzsche*, p 97.
48. In 1895, Rhodes told his friend, the journalist W Stead: 'I was in the East End of London yesterday and attended a meeting of the unemployed. I listened to wild speeches, which were just a cry for "bread! bread!" and on my way home I pondered over the scene and I became more than ever convinced of the importance of imperialism... My cherished idea is a solution for the social problem, that is, in order to save the 40 million inhabitants of the United Kingdom from a bloody civil war, we colonial statesmen must acquire new lands to settle the surplus population... If you want to avoid civil war, you must become

imperialists.’ (Quoted in VI Lenin, ‘Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism’, *Collected Works*, Volume 22, pp 256-57)

49. F Nietzsche, ‘The Dawn’, *The Portable Nietzsche*, pp 90-91.

50. F Nietzsche, Letter to his sister, Christmas, 1887, *The Portable Nietzsche*, pp 456-57.

51. Point 24 of the founding Nazi Party programme declared its support for ‘positive Christianity’, but did not ‘bind itself in the matter of creed to any particular confession. It combats the Jewish-materialist spirit within and without us...’

52. Another term from the vocabulary of reaction later appropriated by Stalinism. As was the case with Treitschke and his nationalist contemporaries, it was used in the immediate post-1945 period in the Soviet Union to denote Jews who were deemed disloyal to the state. The obligatory term was ‘cosmopolitans without kith or kin’, as in the editorial of *Questions of History*, no 2, 1949, entitled ‘On the Tasks of Soviet Historians in the Struggle with Manifestations of Bourgeois Ideology’, where unabashed great Russian chauvinism is raised to a semi-official canon of Stalinist ideology: ‘A bunch of nationless cosmopolitans have been preaching a national nihilism hostile to our world view... have slandered the great Russian people and have propagated a false assertion about its centuries-old backwardness.’ Imperialism and Stalinism, though operating from different economic bases, share an intense hatred of internationalism.

53. A contemporary report from Austria spoke of the ‘calamity which overwhelmed the Vienna Bourse... It involved not merely stock-gamblers, but the representatives of every class who had trusted them..., and the wild frenzy of the miserable crowd who had assembled when their bubble burst threatened tumult and riot, forcing the bearers of the greatest financial names in the Empire to flee for their lives, compelling the Bourse temporarily to close its doors...’ Of the 1005 joint stock companies formed between 1867 and 1873, more than half folded almost at once.

54. The Conservatives’ founding programme of 1859 upheld a corporatist view of state and society, opposing what it called ‘the increasing and destructive Jewish influence in our national life’. Note the similarity on this question to point 24 of the Nazi programme.

55. In early 1880, police reports revealed that less than 20 per cent of this ‘socialist’ party’s 1000 members were workers. They also spoke of ‘better educated persons’ predominating at its public meetings.

56. Stöcker was rightly regarded by the Nazis as a pioneer of German fascism, his memory being celebrated in a biography by Walter Funk which went through several editions.

57. Just as Schopenhauer and later Hitler had done. Of mechanical and crude attempts, usually politically motivated, to project Darwin’s theory of evolution onto human society, the Italian Marxist pioneer Antonio Labriola wrote: ‘Darwinism, political and social, has, like an epidemic, for many years invaded the mind of more than one thinker, and many more of the advocates and declaimers of sociology, and it has been reflected as a fashionable habit and a phraseological current even in the daily language of the politicians.’ (A Labriola, *Essays on the Materialist Conception of History* (New York, 1966), p 114)

58. Haeckel lived just long enough to witness the revolution of November 1918, an event which occasioned the characteristic comment ‘no one knows the kind of new folly that will be perpetrated by the ordinary German citizen - the least politically educated in the world’. Kurt Eisner, murdered leader of the short-lived Bavarian Soviet Republic, was derided as a ‘Galacian Jew’ and ‘degenerate swindler’. Haeckel’s last political act before his death in August 1919 was to curse ‘those damned shop committees’. The Nazis closed them down 14 years later.

59. Not that the League was indifferent to domestic political questions. From its very foundation, it called for a government ban on Jewish immigration, and under its second President, Heinrich Class, evolved a consistently anti-Semitic programme which included demands for the exclusion of Jews from teaching and public offices, and the compulsory display of the Star of David on the masthead of all publications employing Jews in their editorial offices.

- 60.** A de Gobineau, 'Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races' (1853-55), *Selected Political Writings* (London, 1970), pp 41-42.
- 61.** Gobineau, 'Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races', *Selected Political Writings*, p 170.
- 62.** A de Gobineau, 'France in 1870', *Selected Political Writings*, p 208.
- 63.** Wagner's contradictory evolution from revolutionary democrat to German mystic and chauvinist is discussed in the thought-provoking essay on the composer by Anatoly Lunacharsky, the Soviet Union's first People's Commissar of Education. He makes the telling point that like so many great minds trapped by German reaction, Wagner was a follower of the neo-Kantian Schopenhauer (A Lunacharsky, *On Literature and Art* (Moscow, 1965), p 349).
- 64.** Chamberlain coined the term *gestalt* to distinguish his intuitive methods from those of the orthodox scientist.
- 65.** A Schopenhauer, 'The Failure of Philosophy', *Religion: A Dialogue* (London, 1951), pp 80-81.
- 66.** Schopenhauer, 'On Genius', *The Art of Literature*, pp 82-83.
- 67.** F Nietzsche, *The Use and Abuse of History* (New York, 1957), pp 6-7. Or as Henry Ford, the super-pragmatist, put it: 'History is bunk.'
- 68.** Nietzsche, *The Use and Abuse of History*, p 16.
- 69.** Nietzsche, *The Use and Abuse of History*, p 42, emphasis added.
- 70.** Nietzsche, *The Use and Abuse of History*, p 51.
- 71.** Though Bergson did hold strong and ultra-reactionary views on war, which he regarded as a strong antidote to revolution: '... the only principle capable of neutralising the tendencies of societies to disintegration is a warlike virtue, which may be tinged with mysticism, which mingles no calculation with its religion, which overspreads a great country, which is slowly and reverently evolved out of memories and hopes, out of poetry and love, with faint perfume of every moral beauty under heaven.' (H Bergson, *Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (New York, 1954), p 277)
- 72.** H Bergson, *Creative Evolution* (London, 1960), p 159.
- 73.** Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, pp 173-74.
- 74.** H Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (New York, 1955), pp 23-24.
- 75.** And here again it must be stressed that Bergson praised Kant as the pioneer in this respect: 'He affirmed, against his immediate predecessors, that knowledge is not entirely resolvable into terms of intelligence. He brought back into philosophy - while modifying it and carrying it on to another plane - that essential element of the philosophy of Descartes which had been abandoned by the Cartesians [that is, dualism - RB]. Thereby he prepared the way for a new philosophy which might have established itself in the extra intellectual matter of knowledge by a higher effort of intuition.' (Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p 378)
- 76.** Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, p 38.
- 77.** Carlyle was an avid student of German philosophy, especially Schopenhauer. And in his turn, he influenced Nietzsche in the latter's elaboration of the 'superman' concept.
- 78.** T Carlyle, *Past and Present* (London, nd), p 223.
- 79.** How close the Nazis later came to Carlyle's labour mystique can be seen from a speech by Hitler quoted by 'Reich Labour Leader' Muller Brandenburg in an article on the State Labour Service in Germany: '... we want the Labour Service to compel every young German to work with his hands at least once and thus to contribute to the progressive development of his people. Above all, we want those Germans who are in sedentary occupations to learn what manual work means, so that they may find understanding and sympathy for those of their comrades whose lives are spent in the fields, the factory or the workshop... The whole idea underlying the Labour Service is to promote understanding

between all classes and thus strengthen the spirit of national solidarity... In our camps, class distinctions are overcome by the facts of experience... we abolish them with the aid of the spade...' (*Germany Speaks* (Berlin, 1938), pp 193-95)

- 80.** Carlyle, *Past and Present*, p 231.
- 81.** Carlyle, *Past and Present*, p 93.
- 82.** Carlyle, *Past and Present*, p 280.
- 83.** Carlyle, *Past and Present*, pp 281-82.
- 84.** Carlyle, *Past and Present*, p 282.
- 85.** Carlyle, *Past and Present*, p 283.
- 86.** Carlyle, *Past and Present*, p 299.

Fascism in Germany. Robin Blick 1975

Chapter VI: The First Seeds are Sown

With the SPD's triumphant emergence from illegality in 1890, the leaders of German Social Democracy faced a series of political and theoretical problems which were in many ways similar to those which confronted Marx and Engels after the defeat of the 1848 revolutions. In a superficial sense, the historical situations were diametrically opposed. The authors of the *Communist Manifesto*, which predicted for Germany an immediate proletarian revolution, now had to deepen and ground in political economy the brilliant generalisations and insights of their earlier writings. This essential theoretical work, undertaken in the great political trough which lay between the decline of the movements of 1848 and the Paris Commune of 1871, was of necessity divorced to a great degree from the day-to-day struggle of the international working class. The central task which Marx and Engels set themselves in this period was to lay bare the basic laws of motion of capitalist production, thereby providing the essential theoretical key to understanding and intervening in the struggle of classes. In 1890, the SPD leaders - and here we can include Engels among their number - stood at the head of a movement numbering more than a million members and supporters. The proletariat was very much in the ascendant, not only in Germany but throughout Europe. Yet precisely this upwards movement tended to obscure the enormous theoretical tasks, and indeed immense political dangers, which this new situation contained. Complacency, passivity, even smugness - these were characteristics which steadily gained the upper hand over the pugnacity and political sharpness that, despite occasional backslidings and waverings, set the tone for the party's 12-year fight against the anti-socialist laws. In both cases, the main task was to accomplish the transition to a qualitatively new economic and political situation. Marx, principally with his *Capital*, did precisely this. He recognised that far from standing on the verge of a socialist revolution, Germany was experiencing the birth pangs of modern industrial capitalism. His studies of English capitalism, then the most advanced in the world, convinced him that 'the country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future'.^[1] This conclusion, which in 1848 he would probably have dismissed as the prediction of an incurable pessimist, necessitated a wholesale reorientation of revolutionary programme, strategy and tactics. Perspectives were no longer to be reckoned in months or even years, but decades, as he and Engels warned those in the leadership of the German movement who in 1850 were still blithely proclaiming the imminent arrival of a new revolutionary wave:

The minority replaces critical observation with dogmatism, a materialist attitude with an idealist one. It regards its own wishes as the driving force of the revolution instead of the real facts of the situation. Whilst we tell the workers that they must go through 15, 20, perhaps even 50 years of war and civil war, not only in order to alter existing conditions, but even to make themselves fit to take over political power, you tell them, on the contrary, that they must seize political power at once or abandon all hope.^[2]

Yet now, when new developments within German and international capitalism foreshadowed these very struggles, almost without exception the SPD leadership remained trapped by its past thinking and experiences, unable to detect what was emerging out of the old *laissez faire* capitalism and then to draw the necessary political conclusions. All around the party, signs were visible of a qualitative shift in ruling-class circles and among the middle ranks of the bourgeoisie towards an imperialist orientation, expressing itself as much in the language of subjectivist, anti-rational philosophy as in the soaring output of Krupp's gun shops and the North Sea shipyards. Almost mesmerised by the party's spectacular election successes, and the equally impressive growth of members and party resources, the SPD leadership tended to see only the movement's strengths, and allowed these to cloud over its very real - and growing - theoretical deficiencies. And although Engels for one was well aware of this problem, he too allowed himself to be carried away by the post-Bismarckian euphoria which had virtually engulfed the entire leadership. Thus after noting how:

... too many of the younger Germans simply make use of the phrase historical materialism... only in order to get their own relatively scanty historical knowledge... constructed into as neat a system as possible... [he then concludes]... all this will right itself. We are strong enough in Germany to stand a lot. One of the greatest services which the Anti-Socialist Law did us was to free us from the obtrusiveness of the German intellectual who had got himself tinged with socialism. We are now strong enough to digest the German intellectual too, who is giving himself great airs again.^[3]

But it was not a simple question of ‘digestion’, but an active and unrelenting struggle against the revision of Marxism by these alien elements, such as had been earlier undertaken by Engels himself in his famous polemic against Dühring, the anti-Semitic and idealist university professor who was unaccountably permitted to remain within the SPD for a period of several years. Judged by the evidence of his writings, the old Engels did not measure up to this task, which, like that of the post-1848 period, was in essence one of transition, of preparing the party for a leap in its development from a movement geared to quantitative growth and peaceful, if periodically sharp, political campaigns, to a mass revolutionary party capable of fighting for state power in an epoch of profound national and international turmoil, revolutionary upheaval and war. In the period of the anti-socialist laws, Engels had warned on more than one occasion that the party could find itself propelled by such events into political situations where it could completely lose its bearings. In 1884, he wrote to Bebel pointing out the dangers implicit in limiting the party’s demands to that of bourgeois democracy, ending with this truly remarkable anticipation of the German bourgeoisie’s political tactics in the revolution of November 1918:

... our sole adversary on the day of the crisis and on the day after the crisis will be *the whole of the reaction which will group around pure democracy*, and this, I think, should not be lost sight of. ^[4]

Yet lost sight of it was, with even Engels suffering in his last years from blurred vision. We saw how in the criticism of the Gotha unity programme of 1875, Marx and Engels directed their most pungent polemics against the newly-formed party’s attitude towards proletarian internationalism and the state. Beginning with the last writings of Engels, there was after 1890 a slow but nevertheless steady retreat from the positions established in 1875, and it was one which met with firm opposition only from a tiny section of the German movement headed by Rosa Luxemburg and, though not on the same plane of theoretical profundity, Karl Liebknecht. The nature and tempo of this decline is well brought out in the international sphere by the party’s attitude towards national defence. Here it was simply not enough for the SPD to rehash and embellish everything written by Marx and Engels on this question, if only because without exception these writings pertained to an epoch that knew no imperialism in the sense that Lenin and Bukharin understood it. Marx died in 1883, when the problem facing socialists was nowhere one of directly preparing to take power, but rather of pursuing policies which while favouring the most rapid development of capitalist social relations, would also defend the interests of the working class and preserve its political independence from all other classes. It was this realistic, as opposed to utopian, conception which governed Engels’ approach to the problems of the workers’ movement in Germany, where he constantly cautioned against any tendency to ignore potential or actual conflicts between the bourgeoisie and the Junker agrarians. For while the working class remained incapable, for objective historical reasons, of taking power into its own hands, it had no other alternative than to husband and expand its forces until the objective contradictions of a fully-developed capitalist system placed revolution on the order of the day. (This was also the position of the first Russian Marxists in their struggle against the utopian and terroristic Populists, who held that Russia would bypass the capitalist stage of development and proceed directly from feudalism to socialism.) The same conceptions necessarily applied to relations between states. The Leninist tactic of defeatism, of desiring the military defeat of one’s ‘own’ bourgeoisie in an imperialist war both as a lesser evil than its victory, and as a means of accelerating the onset of revolution, simply could not have arisen in Marx’s day, any more than could have Bolshevism, being the theory and practice of proletarian revolution in the imperialist epoch. Marx had instead to lend his critical support to whichever warring nation he considered to be serving, however unconsciously, feebly, reluctantly or inconsistently, as the vehicle of historical progress. So in the Crimean war, Marx ‘supported’ capitalist England against Tsarist Russia, for despite his loathing of the English bourgeoisie, with its unmerciful exploitation of child and female labour, Marx desired the defeat of Russian despotism, the counter-revolutionary gendarme of continental Europe. ^[5] Marx and Engels adopted an identical line in relation to Germany, supporting that country in all its wars which facilitated the achievement of national unification (1864 against Denmark, 1866 against Austria, and 1870 against France). Only when Bismarck began to transgress the limits of the nation state did Marx and Engels raise their voices in protest, as they did following Prussia’s annexation of Alsace and Lorraine after the French defeat at Sedan. From this point onwards, they saw as the main danger in Europe a war between Russia, acting as an agent of a revenge-seeking French bourgeoisie, and Germany. And in the event of such a war, Marx and Engels declared they would be unequivocally on the side of Germany, despite its vehemently anti-socialist, Junker-based government. Preoccupation with this threat from Russia led Engels in particular to employ phrases and formulations which were, to put it mildly,

insensitive to the national rights of the Balkan Slavs, whom he tended to regard as mere pawns and tools of Tsarist foreign policy. ‘The principle of nationalities’, Engels wrote in 1866, ‘is nothing but a Russian invention to destroy Poland. Russia has absorbed the greater part of Poland on the plea of the principle of nationalities.’^[6] But because the principle had been exploited and perverted by reaction, that did not necessitate its repudiation by revolutionaries, rather its consistent application. The same must be said of Engels’ disparaging comments on Slavic peoples incorporated against their will in the Austro-Hungarian empire:

The so-called democrats among the Austrian Slavs are either scoundrels or visionaries, and the visionaries are constantly being led by the nose by the scoundrels. To the sentimental slogans offered in the name of the *counter-revolutionary peoples of Europe* we reply that the hatred of Russia was, and still is, the first revolutionary passion of the Germans; and that since the revolution [of 1848] a hatred of the Czechs and Croats has been added... We and the Poles and the Magyars [Hungarians] will only be able to safeguard the revolution through the most determined terror against these Slavic peoples.^[7]

This tendency to view German foreign - and sometimes even domestic - policy from the standpoint of relations with Russia remained with Engels until his death in 1895. It was, without doubt, responsible for the articles the SPD leadership cynically exploited in 1914 to justify their support for the Kaiser’s imperialist war against France and Russia. They were, they claimed, merely carving out Engels’ policy to its logical, if bloody, conclusion. No blame attaches to Engels for this perversion of his work. Where he did certainly err was in failing to detect the first manifestations of imperialism in German economic politics and philosophy. In 1891, at a time when German finance capital had already embarked on a series of colonial adventures in Africa and the Pacific, and when chauvinist writers and anti-Semitic demagogues were proclaiming Germany’s racial supremacy and god-given right to rule Europe and even the world, Engels still continued to discuss German-Russian relations in the old way, identifying the military defeat of Imperial Germany with the destruction of the SPD. He considered that if in a war with Russia, Germany is beaten, ‘we will be beaten with her...’.^[8] That same year, Engels wrote to Bebel just prior to the SPD congress at Erfurt on the same question, once again making the connection - this time far more explicitly - between the fate of Imperial Germany and German Social Democracy:

A war against Germany... would be, above all, a war against the strongest socialist party in Europe. And there would be nothing left for us but to fight with all our might any aggressor who helped Russia. For either we would be defeated, and then the socialist movement in Europe would be done for for 20 years, or we ourselves must aim to take the helm.^[9]

Now what Engels had in mind when he wrote these words of advice was a national uprising against the invader after the example of the Jacobin *levée en masse* of 1793, when revolutionary France took to arms against the coalition of powers seeking to restore the Bourbon monarchy. But Engels was transposing this policy into a considerably changed situation, into a country which had not only completed the ‘national’ aspects of its bourgeois revolution, but was already actively engaged in repressing the democratic rights of other peoples, from Poland and Alsace-Lorraine to Africa and Oceania. The cloudiness of Engels’ formulation, while militant in spirit, left itself open to widely differing interpretations, ranging from unconditional defence of the Kaiser’s empire against any invasion, whether from east or west, to a revolutionary bid to seize power and wage a ‘plebeian’ war against Germany’s enemies. As far as most of the party leadership were concerned, there was no doubt whatsoever. Bebel roundly declared at the Erfurt Congress:

... if Russia, that bulwark of savagery and barbarism, that enemy of all human culture, were to attack Germany in order to dismember and destroy her - then we are as much, and indeed more concerned than those who lead Germany, and we shall oppose it.

No question then of overthrowing the Kaiser and ‘taking the helm’ in order better to defend the fatherland. The job of the SPD was to prove itself more patriotic than its class enemies! There is evidence suggesting that Engels disapproved of such excesses, and not only in the German party. Some two years later he had cause to chide Marx’s son-in-law Paul Lafargue for employing the term ‘true patriot’ to distinguish the French Socialist Party’s national loyalties from those of bourgeois chauvinists. Engels said that the term ‘patriot’ had ‘a limited meaning - or else such a vague one, depending on circumstances - that for my part I should never dare to apply that title to myself’. Further on in the same letter, he made the revealing admission that the French party was not the only one to have ‘overshot the mark a little’ in this respect, for ‘our worthy Germans have not always been correct, either, in their

expressions'. ^[10] His unease was certainly justified, and would have multiplied greatly had he lived to witness the nationalist utterances of the SPD leadership not only at party congresses, but in the Reichstag itself. Only a few weeks before his death in 1913, Bebel informed the German parliament that 'there is not a single person in Germany who would surrender the fatherland to an enemy without a fight. This is particularly true of the Social Democrats.' Bebel, who must certainly be numbered amongst the very finest leaders of the German proletariat, never explained how his unashamedly patriotic stand could be reconciled with his justly famed slogan: 'Not a man, not a farthing for this system.' (This can only mean that had Bebel lived another year, he would have thrown his enormous political influence and prestige behind a policy of support for German imperialism in its war against Russia, France and Britain.) Bebel was particularly sensitive to charges that the party leadership were failing to combat militarism amongst the youth, and when challenged on this issue at the 1906 Party Congress by Karl Liebknecht, who praised the Belgian Socialist Party for its work in this field, Bebel replied:

It is incomprehensible to me how he can hold up to us as the example of Belgium, a country which signifies nothing, and whose army cannot be compared to Prussian military organisation.

And this was a debate on anti-militarist propaganda! ^[11] Bebel's militantly nationalist tone was grist to the mill of opportunist elements in the French Socialist Party, who eagerly cited such speeches as proof of the need to adopt a line of national defence in France against an SPD-backed invasion by Germany. At the party congress in 1907, held at a time when strenuous attempts were being made in the Second International to achieve a united front of all its sections against a possible European war, Bebel again declared himself unconditionally for national defence:

If we really have to defend our fatherland, then we shall defend it because it is our fatherland, the soil on which we live, whose language we speak, whose customs are our own: because we want to transform this, our fatherland, into a country which has no equal in perfection and beauty anywhere on earth.

The goal of a socialist Germany in the indefinite future was therefore employed - seven years before the actual outbreak of war - to justify defence of the Kaiser's Germany of the present. It was as if Bebel and his fellow SPD leaders made a mental distinction between the material Germany exploited and ruled by the Junkers and bourgeoisie, and an ideal, almost mystical Germany which existed outside of space and time, and believed that by defending the former they were also protecting the latter. Bebel's exposition of this notion was certainly eloquent, but it had nothing in common with that celebrated dictum of the *Communist Manifesto*: 'The working men have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got.'

It would, however, be quite wrong simply to single out Bebel for criticism. ^[12] Eduard Bernstein, the pioneer of revisionism, was well to the fore in justifying and embellishing the foreign and even colonial policy of Imperial Germany. In his first broadside against Marxism, published in 1899, he wrote that 'only a conditional right of savages to the land can be recognised, the higher civilisation ultimately can claim higher right'. ^[13] The same Bernstein supported the SPD right wing in its demands for a 'realistic' colonial policy at the 1907 Stuttgart Congress of the Second International with the most cynical sophistries:

All the earth has been taken for colonies, and with the increasing power of the socialist fractions in the different parliaments socialist responsibility has increased. They must oppose the bourgeois colonial policy, but they cannot wash their hands like Pilate and say, 'We will have none of the colonies.' To do that would be to deliver the natives over to their exploiters.

Bernstein was more honest when he stated, later in the same speech, that 'however much damage the colonies might have caused, our economic life largely depends on them'. Equally reactionary views on the military and colonial questions appeared regularly in the SPD press, especially that right-wing preserve, the *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, where in November 1905 Richard Calver wrote:

Today, when Germany is the equal, economically, of England and the United States, and is compelled to take up an attitude towards all questions of world politics in the interest of its industry, the naval policy of modern industrial states may indeed be severely condemned, but it cannot be expected of one's own country that it should take up an exceptional position which might be fatal. As matters are today the prestige of a state abroad depends on its readiness for war both on sea and land.

Elsewhere Calver recommended - in language utterly alien to the Marxist tradition - that:

German socialists should not ignore the fact that our capitalists and employers are compelled to colonise if Germany's economic future is to be secured against competing countries abroad... We see how the enterprise of all other powerful industrial lands... appropriates the globe. Social Democrats cannot expect German enterprise to stay quietly at home and renounce the aims of a world policy. Should not and must not capitalism first bring the world under subjection before a socialistic organisation of economics will be possible? ... it follows that capital - including German capital as well - must go forth and subdue the world with the means and weapons which are at its disposal. There will still be ample room for criticism of capitalistic colonial policy.

These amazing lines, justifying to the hilt the rapacious policies and actions of German imperialism, were written at a time when Bernsteinian revisionism had been formally ostracised from the SPD, when it was official party policy and practice solemnly to affirm the revolutionary and internationalist principles of German Social Democracy. What a wretched farce, when out-and-out chauvinists like Calver could sully the columns of the official party press month after month with propaganda which did not merely justify imperialist war, but actually *demand*ed it on behalf of 'German capital'. And presiding over this disgusting spectacle was none other than Karl Kautsky, regarded not only in Germany but throughout Europe as the foremost theoretician of the Second International! But before turning to Kautsky's responsibility for the degeneration of the SPD, we must examine the party's attitude to the question of the state, an issue which bedevilled relations between Marx and Engels and the German movement from its very inception in 1863.

Again we must return to Engels, this time to his introduction to Marx's *The Class Struggles in France*. This essay has a history all of its own. Engels makes a sober analysis of the prospects for a successful street insurrection against the best-equipped armies of the day, and comes to the realistic conclusion that the old-style barricade fighting of 1848 can no longer be conducted with reasonable hope of victory. These lines were eagerly seized on by the SPD leadership when the article was published in *Vorwärts* in March 1895 as Engels' endorsement of the party's rejection of all violent means to achieve its goal. But that was not at all the intention of the author who also appended to this judgement the opinion:

Does that mean that in future street fighting will no longer play any role? Certainly not. It only means that the conditions since 1848 have become far more unfavourable for civilian fighting and far more favourable for the military. In future, street fighting can, therefore, be victorious only if this disadvantageous situation is compensated by other factors. Accordingly, it will occur more seldom in the beginning of a great revolution than in its further progress, and will have to be undertaken with greater forces. ^[14]

Precisely these lines, which spoke of future, better organised and wider supported insurrections, were deleted from the article by the *Vorwärts* editor, Wilhelm Liebknecht. Engels was naturally furious, and wrote to Kautsky asking that the whole introduction be published in the SPD theoretical journal, *Die Neue Zeit*, lest he appear as a 'peaceful worshipper of legality at any price!'. ^[15] Engels was never this, and yet there are other sections of this same essay which convey the impression that he had been carried away by the electoral successes of the SPD - to such an extent that Engels saw in them not only evidence of the party's growing support in the working class, but a political factor in its own right:

Its growth proceeds as spontaneously, as steadily, as irresistibly and at the same time as tranquilly as a natural process. All government intervention has proved powerless against it... If it continues in this fashion, by the end of the century we shall conquer the greater part of the middle strata of society, petit-bourgeois and small peasants, and grow into the decisive power in the land, before which all other powers will have to bow, whether they like it or not. To keep this growth going without interruption until it of itself gets beyond the control of the prevailing governmental system... to keep it intact until the decisive day, that is our main task. ^[16]

Again, as was the case with his letter to Bebel on a possible Russo-German war, Engels combines semi-reformist concepts with revolutionary ones, the idea of peaceful, gradual and irresistible progress towards an unchallengeable parliamentary majority interwoven with the notion of a 'decisive day', which, in the discreet language imposed on Engels by the German censors, can only mean revolution. Then there is the formulation concerning the winning of the petit-bourgeoisie to socialism, which is conceived of as an inevitable outcome of the SPD's triumphal parliamentary march, and not as the result of a combative anti-capitalist policy which detaches, by virtue of its resoluteness, the middle-class masses from their allegiance to the main bourgeois parties. Finally there are the less well known but equally ambiguous statements made by Engels in an interview with the French newspaper *Le Figaro* in 1893, where he

predicted: 'The time is drawing near when our party will be called upon to take over government... Perhaps towards the end of the century you will see this event occur.' Since there was 'a constant increase at each election', it would soon lead to at least 'half the army' being on the side of the SPD: ^[17] 'On the day when we shall be in the majority, what the French army did by instinct by not firing on the people will be done by our people in a conscious way.' ^[18]

A rationalist, as distinct from a dialectical materialist, approach can also be detected in remarks made to the English *Daily Chronicle* about the ease with which the notoriously reactionary German petit-bourgeoisie could be won to the side of the proletariat:

The small tradesman, crushed out by the big store, the clerk, the artisan... are beginning to feel the pinch of our present capitalist system. And we place a scientific remedy before them, and as they can all read and think for themselves, they soon come round and join our ranks. ^[19]

In fact, the SPD never made any real headway amongst these layers under the German Empire. Its steadily mounting vote came from new generations and sections of workers freshly won to the socialist cause, and not from a petit-bourgeoisie converted by the 'scientific remedies' of Marxism. Here too, the old Engels departs from ideas which he himself developed in an earlier period, for he was, with Marx, the most trenchant critic of the German petit-bourgeoisie, with its inbred philistinism and distaste for even the most modest democratic reforms. Also at variance with the younger Engels is his reply when asked if the SPD hoped to form a government in the near future: 'Why not? If the growth of our party continues at its normal rate we shall have a majority between the years 1900 and 1910.' ^[20] Here the formation of an SPD government is predicated quite unambiguously on the achievement of a parliamentary majority, ^[21] which in its turn devolved on a 'normal' growth of the party's vote. Although Engels' predictions went sadly astray - the SPD won only 34.8 per cent of the total poll in the 1912 Reichstag elections, with 4.25 million votes and 110 deputies - this is not really the point. As in questions of German foreign policy, Engels erred in his method, which while capable of illuminating a whole range of political, economic and philosophical problems as few other Marxists could, failed to penetrate to the very depths of the new relations evolving between classes and nations in Europe. The burning necessity of 'rearming' the party theoretically to enable its members to make the transition from the old situation under illegality, to one where the movement was becoming a serious contender for state power, was simply not appreciated either by Engels or the established leaders of the SPD in Germany. And here too we see the same process of combined and uneven development, now working itself out in a highly original - and ironic - way. Germany - the land of Hegel, Marx and Engels and the SPD, the historical inheritors of the revolutionary legacy of German idealist philosophy - began to lose its place as the theoretical fountainhead of the international workers' movement. Just as the nation's political backwardness had thrust the young German proletariat forward as the sole protagonist of democracy and national unification, the theoretical 'leap' that this development involved was in its turn transformed into its opposite. The movement rested on its laurels - Engels included - and gradually began to adapt to the political status quo. Of course, this process was based upon the rapid growth of a conservative, nationalist party and trade union bureaucracy - ideas must be nourished and sustained by the sap of material conditions - but in saying this we must not delude ourselves that the degeneration of the SPD has therefore been fully explained.

There exist tendencies towards conservative thinking and bureaucratic practices in the healthiest of revolutionary workers' parties. And it could not be otherwise, because such parties comprise both a unity and a struggle of opposites where the entire membership, at widely differing levels of consciousness, participates to one degree or another in the fight to combat these political and theoretical weaknesses. However, in Germany the party used its strengths to *conceal* its growing weaknesses, while in Russia, principally under the leadership of Lenin, but also in its early period under Plekhanov, the movement employed its strong points to expose, combat and overcome its deficiencies. Compelled to wage the sharpest philosophical and political battles against the Populists, 'Legal Marxists', Economists and after 1903, Mensheviks, ultra-lefts and 'conciliators', Lenin and the pioneers of Russian Marxism raised the theoretical level of the Russian revolutionary movement from an abyss of backwardness born of centuries of ignorance and oppression to a peak which even the most clear-sighted German Marxists never attained. And they did this by absorbing all that was finest in the international workers' movement:

Russia achieved Marxism... through the *agony* she experienced in the course of half a century of unparalleled torment and sacrifice, of unparalleled revolutionary heroism, incredible energy, devoted searching, study, practical trial, disappointment, verification and comparison with

European experience. Thanks to the political emigration caused by Tsarism, revolutionary Russia in the second half of the last century acquired a wealth of international links and excellent information on the forms and theories of the world revolutionary movement, such as no other country possessed. ^[22]

By contrast, the days of agony for German Social Democracy were receding into the past. Its leadership, while paying lip service to the heroic traditions of that era, were steadily adapting themselves both theoretically and politically to the peaceful expansion of German capitalism, a growth which permitted sizeable layers of the proletariat to win living standards unthinkable in the early years of the Empire. Instead of waging war against the illusions of these 'labour aristocrats' in the viability - or even desirability - of German capitalism, as Lenin had combated the Economist protagonists of the possibility of spontaneous working-class development into socialist consciousness, the SPD bureaucracy was allowed by the top party leadership to adapt to these tendencies. Fearing a conflict with the entrenched trade union apparatus, Kautsky delegated the handling of all tactical and political questions to Bebel, who in his turn sought to balance himself between the SPD right and left wings. Thus there evolved a series of unprincipled combinations at almost every level of party activity. Until his death in 1895, Engels was seen as the interpreter of Marxist 'cannon' especially in philosophy and economics, while within Germany, 'theory' was handled by Kautsky, and the practical questions by Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht. Yet even while Engels lived, this 'division of labour' contained dangers which both Trotsky and Lenin later came to recognise, for the main theoretical burden was carried by an exile who in his last years was unable to grasp the transition already well under way from pre-monopoly capitalism to imperialism, foreshadowed in Germany by the growth of the cartel system and the seizure of colonies. Both these processes were, as we have noted, initiated 10 full years before the death of Engels, yet they seem to have made little, if any, impact on his thinking. Trotsky was fully justified in taking Engels to task for having:

... visualised the future course of revolutionary development too much along the straight line. Above all he did not foresee the mighty capitalist boom which set in immediately after his death and which lasted up to the eve of the imperialist war. It was precisely in the course of these 15 years of economic full-bloodedness that the complete degeneration of the leading circles of the labour movement took place. This degeneration was fully revealed during the war and, in the last analysis, it led to the infamous capitulation to National Socialism. ^[23]

So we are completely justified in concerning ourselves with the problems of German Social Democracy prior to 1914, for it was in this period that the traitors of 1933 experienced their formative years and underwent their political training. And we are equally justified in seeking to contrast this process of degeneration, whose hallmark was theoretical compromise, with the struggle for revolutionary leadership - firmly grounded in revolutionary theory - waged by Lenin in the Russian workers' movement. Lenin, like Trotsky, was not uncritical of Engels' last writings, especially on the question of war. Although more guarded than Trotsky (he never voiced these differences publicly) his private correspondence and notebooks contain remarks which are either direct or implied criticisms of Engels. Beginning in the autumn of 1916, Lenin conducted a lengthy correspondence with his old friend Inessa Armand on the seemingly abstruse question of the periodisation of imperialism. Seemingly, because Armand claimed that imperialism had already become a predominant trend in world capitalism before the death of Engels, and that consequently, he shared, to however small an extent, the blame of the SPD leadership for failing to reorient the German working class on the question of national defence. Looking only at Lenin's replies - Armand's letters are reputedly under lock and key in some Moscow vault - it becomes clear that Lenin was hard pressed to defend Engels against this charge. He nevertheless upheld him on the question of a possible war between Russia and Germany:

In 1891, the German Social Democrats' really should have defended their fatherland in a war against Boulanger and Alexander III. This would have been a peculiar variety of a national war. ^[24]

This reply clearly did not satisfy the insistent Inessa, for we find Lenin still trying to convince her a month later with the bold assertion that 'in 1891 no imperialism, existed *at all*', and that therefore, 'there was no imperialist war, therefore could not be, on the part of Germany'. ^[25] Finally, Lenin concedes, after several more exchanges, that Engels had possibly failed to detect the new political forms which were emerging in the last years of his life. Further than this Lenin would not go. But in his *Notebooks on Imperialism* compiled mainly in the First World War, we find him making critical remarks in the margin

of Engels' pamphlet *Can Europe Disarm?*, published in 1893. Despite his almost reverential attitude towards the lifelong comrade and friend of Marx, Lenin could not refrain from quizzical annotations in passages where Engels revealed a truly rationalist belief in the possibility of 'a gradual reduction of the term of service by international agreement', when he stated 'I maintain disarmament, and thereby the guarantee of peace, is possible' and that Germany had the 'power and vocation' to achieve it. ^[26] An uncritical and unthinking acceptance of the Marxist heritage was utterly alien to Trotsky, Lenin, Plekhanov and Luxemburg. How different with Kautsky, who in seeking to defend Marxism from its opponents, degenerated into a custodian of 'orthodoxy', a populariser of Marxism who was, in the words of Trotsky, 'never a man of action, never a revolutionist, or an heir to the spirit of Marx and Engels'. ^[27] We can see the truth of this judgement in Kautsky's role in two great theoretical controversies which burst upon the international movement in the first decade of the twentieth century.

The first, and far more well known, concerned Bernstein's attempt to adjust the SPD's formally revolutionary theory and programme to its increasingly reformist practice. Kautsky, the recognised leading theoretician of German Social Democracy, was at first extremely reluctant to cross swords with Engels' literary executor, even when Bernstein was quite openly departing from and challenging both Engels and Marx on every basic question of Marxist political strategy, tactics, programme and philosophy. In 1898, *Die Neue Zeit* published an article by Bernstein pointing out - with some justification - that the SPD was concealing its reformist activity beneath a façade of revolutionary phrases, and it was high time the party acknowledged this publicly. Excluding the younger generation of lefts personified by Rosa Luxemburg, Bernstein's onslaught on revolutionary Marxism aroused genuine anger and concern only in the Russian movement. Plekhanov, not Kautsky or Bebel, was the first to hit back in print, and even then Kautsky submitted him to the same indignity as the older Liebknecht had inflicted on Engels - that of censoring those sections of his article which were sharpest in their criticisms of Bernstein. Plekhanov had originally hoped to persuade Kautsky to spearhead the counter-attack, and to this purpose wrote to him on 20 May 1898:

If Bernstein is right in his critical endeavours, one may ask what remains of the philosophical and socialist ideas of our teachers? What remains of socialism? And in truth, one would have to reply: not very much!

Unable to understand Kautsky's aloofness from what Plekhanov rightly saw as a life and death battle for the future of the revolutionary movement, he bluntly asked him:

Can you be in agreement with Bernstein? It would be too painful for me to believe that. If not, why do you not answer? It is you who are attacked... yes, we are going through a crisis, and this crisis is making me suffer very much.

In fact, Plekhanov's half-rhetorical question was far nearer the mark than he would have suspected, for once combat with the revisionists had been joined it emerged that Kautsky did indeed share much common ground with those whom he had been reluctantly compelled to do battle. Kautsky felt himself on firm ground when rebutting Bernstein's reformist perspectives, which the latter summed up in his well-known aphorism: 'To me that which is generally called the ultimate aim of socialism is nothing, but the movement is everything.' ^[28] Crushing majorities were amassed at a succession of SPD congresses in support of resolutions declaring Bernstein's theories incompatible with Social Democracy, yet when the dust had settled, revisionism emerged stronger and more entrenched than ever. The answer lies only partly in the immense preponderance of the conservative party and trade union machine in determining day-to-day policies and activities of the movement. It undoubtedly both nourished and responded to Bernstein's revision of Marxism, as did the growing band of bourgeois intellectuals who flocked to the party's banner once it became a major force in German political and cultural life. Neither was it a simple matter of Kautsky being able, single-handed or with the support of the party's left wing, to stem the rising flood of opportunism. This was a product of deep-going, objective processes in both the German and international economy, an ideological refraction of the material privileges which a relatively broad layer of the most skilled workers had secured for themselves in the period of pre-1914 capitalist expansion. Only the most profound and violent convulsions could - and in fact did - undermine the reactionary role of the Social Democratic bureaucracy and the social stratum upon which it rested. The great political treason committed by Kautsky was his utter failure to penetrate to the core the methodological roots of Bernstein's revisionism, to show how his political programme of capitulation to German imperialism flowed from his philosophical rejection of dialectical materialism and his reversion to the subjective idealism of the neo-Kantians.

Bernstein ended his *Evolutionary Socialism* with the recommendation that the socialist movement should no longer base itself on the materialistic world outlook of Marxism, but the morality of Kant:

A class which is aspiring needs a sound morale and must suffer no deterioration. Whether it sets out for itself an ideal ultimate aim is of secondary importance if it pursues with energy its proximate aims... And this in mind, I... resorted to the spirit of the great Königsberg philosopher, the critic of pure reason, against the cant ^[29] which sought to get a hold of the working-class movement and to which the Hegelian dialectic offers a comfortable refuge. I did this in the conviction that Social Democracy required a Kant who should judge the received opinion, and examine it critically with deep acuteness, who should show where its apparent materialism is the highest - and is therefore the most easily misleading - ideology, and warn it that contempt of the ideal, the magnifying of material factors until they become omnipotent forces of evolution, is a self-deception... ^[30]

All Bernstein's previous - and subsequent - attacks on Marxism paled before this bid to drag the German workers' movement back, not only to a pre-Marxist but even pre-Hegelian philosophical foundation. In doing so, he acted in concert with all those ideologues of German reaction from Schopenhauer to Nietzsche who recoiled from the revolutionary implications of the Hegelian dialectic and constructed out of Kant's subjective theory of knowledge a series of apologias for mysticism and in the last analysis, political reaction. But amazingly, Kautsky regarded Bernstein's Kantianism as the least objectionable feature of his revisionist system. Evidently Kautsky saw nothing revolting in this humbug preaching a higher morality to the German working class while at the same time denying the right of land ownership to 'savages'. Plekhanov, whose knowledge of German philosophy dwarfed that of any leading German Social Democrat save Franz Mehring, wrote once more to Kautsky imploring him to open the pages of the SPD theoretical journal to a discussion on philosophy. And when the editor of *Die Neue Zeit* lamely replied that only a handful of readers could hope to follow what Kautsky regarded as an esoteric debate, Plekhanov made the admirable retort: 'It is essential *to force* the readers to interest themselves in philosophy... *it is the science of sciences.*' Such an aggressive approach was utterly alien to the increasingly complacent Kautsky. The idea of actually disturbing, provoking and even angering one's readers in order to raise their level of political consciousness shocked him deeply. Undismayed by Kautsky's coolness, Plekhanov directly addressed the SPD *Die Neue Zeit* in the same querulous tones:

I am always and always will defend the outlook of Marx and Engels with passion and conviction, and if some readers shrug their shoulders over the fact that I am so heated in a polemic, which concerns the most important questions of human knowledge and at the same time touches upon the most essential interests of the working class... then I say, shrugging my shoulders in turn: *so much the worse for such readers.*

The great tragedy was that, ultimately, it was not the slothful readers of *Die Neue Zeit* who paid the supreme penalty for their disinterest in philosophy, but the entire German proletariat. As Kautsky sowed, so the Weimar leaders of German Social Democracy - Müller, Wels, Severing, Braun and Leipart - reaped. Their harvest was a bitter and bloody one. Kautsky's apologetic reply to the demand by Plekhanov that he wage war on Bernstein's philosophical idealism was not merely a confession of theoretical bankruptcy but downright treachery to both the German and international working class:

I must openly declare that neo-Kantianism disturbs me least of all. I have never been strong on philosophy, and although I stand entirely on the point of view of dialectical materialism still I think that the economic and historical viewpoint of Marx and Engels is in the last resort compatible with neo-Kantianism. If Bernstein was moulting only in this respect, it would not disturb me in the least.

Kautsky, the great populariser, was also the great vulgariser. He broke down what he took to be Marxism into a series of propositions on different fields of human activity and natural processes - much in the way now done by sociologists specialising in 'Marxism', overlooking their unified origin in a materialist world outlook. So it was quite possible on this eclectic basis, to find what appeared to be common ground between certain views of idealists and the practical sides of the socialist movement. The divergences deepen precisely when the ground is shifted from 'concrete political tasks' ^[31] to the seemingly rarefied atmosphere of method, theory of knowledge, and philosophy. So it was with Marx and Engels in their rupture from the young Hegelians, Trotsky in his fight against Stalin's metaphysical theory of 'socialism in one country', and so it should have been, but was not, in Kautsky's polemic with Bernsteinian revisionism.

Only in the Russian movement was the theoretical battle fought with the gloves off, first by Plekhanov, and then, following his decline into Menshevism and eventual support for the First World War, by Lenin. And it was a struggle which transcended national frontiers and rode rough-shod over smugness, prestige and backwardness. The fighting was at its most intense, and the knives at their sharpest, precisely in the domain of the highest abstractions. In Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks*, compiled during the war, we see why this was so:

Hegel is completely right as opposed to Kant. Through proceeding from the concrete to the abstract - provided it is correct... does not get away from the truth; but comes closer to it... all scientific (correct, serious, not absurd) abstractions reflect nature more deeply, truly and completely. From living perception to abstract thought, *and from this to practice* - such is the dialectical path of the cognition of *truth*, of the cognition of objective reality. ^[32]

The first salvoes of the October Revolution were not fired by the cruiser *Aurora* at the Winter Palace, but by Plekhanov and Lenin at the traducers of dialectical materialism! And Lenin did not suddenly come to the conclusion in 1914 that philosophy was all-important for the political struggle, nor even in the days of the struggle against Bernstein, when in his classic pamphlet on the trade union question *What Is To Be Done?* he made his famous declaration that 'without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement'. We find him, at the very outset of his political career as a professional revolutionary, seeking to probe political problems and differences to their philosophical roots, as in his long article, written in 1894 at the age of 24, 'What the "Friends of the People" Are, And How They Fight the Social Democrats'. In this youthful *tour de force*, Lenin already reveals a deep understanding of the Marxist classics, and employs it to counter the attack on the dialectical method then being launched by a section of the liberal Russian intelligentsia.

But he was far from being the Lenin of the *Philosophical Notebooks*. In the initial phase of the struggle against Bernstein, Lenin was content to lend his uncritical support to Kautsky, as can be seen from his review of the latter's *Bernstein and the Social Democratic Programme*, which Lenin drafted, but never published, in 1899. However, he soon struck a different note from Kautsky, who was concerned simply to restate, and not enrich, the theory and principles pioneered by Marx and Engels. For Lenin, this was not enough:

To defend such a theory, which to the best of your knowledge you consider to be true, against unfounded attacks and attempts to corrupt it is not to imply that you are an enemy of *all* criticism. We do not regard Marx's theory as something completed and inviolable; on the contrary, we are convinced that it has only laid the foundation stone of the science which socialists must develop in all directions if they wish to keep pace with life... ^[33]

So much for Lenin the 'dogmatist'! From the turn of the century, Lenin increasingly saw and combated opportunism in the Russian movement as an integral part of a wider offensive against revolutionary Marxism. The Russian Economists, Bernstein's revisionism and the openly reformist practices of English trade union leaders were all reflections and expressions of an international tendency which arose in response to the pressure, mediated through the radical petit-bourgeoisie and the labour aristocracy, exerted by imperialism on the workers' movement. The struggle against revisionism was therefore the theoretical expression of the struggle between classes, a fight not simply for correct formulations, important though these were, but for the destiny of the workers' movement and an integral part of the preparation for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. This urgency, this sense of the life-and-death nature of the theoretical struggle, was precisely that element in Kautsky's political make-up which was lacking: 'His character, like his thought, lacked audacity and sweep, without which revolutionary politics is impossible...' ^[34] Lenin, who for nearly two decades regarded himself as a pupil of Kautsky, was in this respect his polar opposite. He entered the fray bent on determining the inner forces of a problem, process or controversy, all the time gathering the forces in and around the Bolshevik Party for one single purpose - revolution. It was on this basis that he fought out his prolonged philosophical struggle within the Bolshevik faction against a tendency which, under the leadership of Alexander Bogdanov, sought to update Marxism by importing into it concepts derived mainly from modern physics, but also from the writings of various neo-Kantian philosophers. This new attempt to revise the dialectical materialist foundations of the Marxist world outlook, to replace it with a subjectivist theory of knowledge which harked back to the solipsism of Bishop Berkeley, arose in the conditions of pessimism created by the crushing of the 1905 Revolution. Mysticism in its various guises gripped wide sections of intellectuals who had either been sympathetic towards or committed supporters of Marxism in the previous period

when the workers' movement had been in the ascendant. In the Bolshevik Party, they eclectically combined the general propositions of Marxism about the class struggle and economics with a theory of knowledge which denied, after the manner of Kant's 'thing-in-itself', the possibility of cognising the world outside human consciousness; and even in extreme cases, in the tradition of the English sceptic David Hume, whether one could say with certainty that there was anything which lay beyond the data recorded by our senses. And here we find ourselves on familiar philosophical territory, that of the German subjectivist school which after rejecting Hegel, returned to Kant and eventually degenerated into the mystical power-worship and anti-socialist pathology of Nietzsche. The same Kantianism also succeeded - albeit in another guise - its penetrating into the very heart of the German workers' movement, and in Russia, Lenin found himself fighting the same philosophical opponents, this time dressed up in the garb of *Empirio-Criticism*.^[35] The result - after several years of intensive study - was his *Materialism and Empirio Criticism*, published in 1909 as a broadside against all those who were bending to the most reactionary philosophical theories yet evolved - namely the schools of subjectivism and mysticism. And for this very reason - not for its style and fierceness of polemic - the book has been more abused than almost any other in Marxist literature. Most of all its critics baulk at Lenin's concluding statement that:

... one must not fail to see in the struggle of parties in philosophy a struggle which in the last analysis reflects the tendencies and ideology of the antagonistic classes in modern society... the contending parties are essentially... materialism and idealism. The latter is merely a subtle, refined form of idealism, which stands fully armed, commands vast organisations and steadily continues to exercise influence on the masses, turning the slightest vacillation in philosophical thought to its own advantage.^[36]

Lenin could have been writing about the SPD! For here, reluctance to combat revisionism philosophically led in the first great historical test of the party to its utter capitulation to precisely those forces which had been seeking the movement's annihilation for more than half a century. Neither was this confined to the struggle against Bernstein. Kautsky also revealed a profound reluctance to become involved in the Russian party controversy between Lenin and Plekhanov as partisans of dialectical materialism and the Bolshevik 'Machists'.^[37] (Not that Lenin denigrated the work of non-Marxist or even idealist scientists in their own specialised fields. In his last article on philosophical questions, written in 1922, he stressed the importance of following every trend in modern science and philosophy, pointing out:

... that the sharp upheaval which modern natural science is undergoing very often gives rise to reactionary philosophical schools... Unless, therefore, the problems raised by the recent revolution in natural science are followed, and natural sciences are enlisted in the work of a philosophical journal, militant materialism can be neither militant nor materialism.^[38]

Ignoring this work - work that Kautsky considered irrelevant to the prosecution of the class struggle - necessarily led to reactionary ideologists and philosophers interpreting the findings of modern science in an idealist fashion, what Lenin called 'clutching at the skirts of Einstein', even though the pioneer of relativity theory was 'not making any active attack on the foundations of materialism'.)

Asked to comment on the dispute currently raging inside the Russian Marxist movement, Kautsky stated - for the record - that he was himself a dialectical materialist, adding that 'Marx proclaimed no philosophy, but the end of philosophy'. As in the debate with Bernstein, Kautsky went out of his way to emphasise that philosophical differences, however profound, could coexist with complete agreement on programme and indeed on Marx's proposition that social consciousness is determined by social being. Marxism was thus debased from a general world outlook and theory of knowledge into a theory concerned solely with society; in other words, historical 'materialism' without dialectical materialism:^[39]

Whether this conception (that of the social determinants of consciousness) is based on eighteenth-century materialism, or on Dietzgen's dialectical materialism, is not at all the same for the clarity of our *thought*; but it is a question that is entirely inconsequential for the clarity and unity of our *party*. Individual comrades may study this as private people, as they may the question of electrons or Weissmann's law of heredity; the *party* should be spared this.^[40]

Kautsky not only spoke for himself when he wrote these truly philistine lines, but an entire layer within the party and trade union bureaucracy who feared thoroughgoing theoretical and philosophical conflicts as much as an elemental movement of the masses which they could not control and guide into constitutional channels. Theoretical and organisational ossification went hand in hand, producing the

reformist adaptation to German imperialism which was revealed for the whole world to see on 4 August 1914, when the entire SPD Reichstag fraction voted for the Kaiser's war credits. So great was the class hatred of the overwhelming majority of bourgeois political commentators that they were blinded to this process at work within German Social Democracy. But it did not escape the most astute minds among the enemies of Marxism, notably the sociologist Max Weber. In some ways, he saw even more clearly than Lenin and Trotsky how far the SPD had deviated in practice from the revolutionary principles to which it subscribed, and what attitude the majority of its leaders would adopt when faced with a great political crisis. ^[41] Although a founder member of the Pan-German League - he later resigned in protest against its tendency to favour agrarian interests in preference to those of the industrial and banking bourgeoisie - Weber never allowed his partisan class position to prevent him from making a serious study of Marxism and the activities of those who claimed to be Marxists. In this sense, he was far ahead of his time in Germany, where only in 1914 did significant (and then by no means all) sections of the bourgeois intelligentsia reluctantly concede that the SPD had discarded at least some of its revolutionary rhetoric and was on the road to becoming 'national'. Weber was saying this as early as 1906, when in commenting on the SPD's Mannheim Congress of that year, he wrote:

I should like to invite our German princes on to the platform at the Mannheim party conference, just to show them how Russian socialists, sitting there as spectators, were horrified at the spectacle of this party! They had really believed it to be revolutionary... but now only the smug innkeeper face, the physiognomy of the petit-bourgeois, caught the eye... I think that no prince would continue to fear this party which has no real source of power, whose political impotence is manifest even today for all to see who choose to see.

But few at that early date chose to see. In vain, Weber addressed the liberal 'Society for Social Politics' the following year, imploring bourgeoisie and government to adopt a new policy of encouraging the 'realistic' and 'national' wing of the party to play an active, if subordinate, role in the various institutions of political life:

If the contradictions between the material interests of the professional politicians on the one hand and the revolutionary ideology on the other could develop freely, if one would no longer throw the Social Democrats out of the veterans' associations, if one admits them into church administrations, from which one expels them nowadays, then for the first time serious internal problems would arise for the party. Then it would be shown not that Social Democracy is conquering city and state, but, on the contrary, that the state is conquering Social Democracy.

And it is evident from these amazingly astute observations that Weber was working towards a policy of splitting the SPD, of winning its 'professional politicians' or, more accurately, bureaucrats to a programme of open reformism and defence of the nation state, at the same time isolating as far as possible those who still clung to the party's 'revolutionary ideology'. Presumably embarrassed by this all too accurate characterisation of the party's leadership Kautsky never replied to Weber's critique of German Social Democracy, any more than he took seriously the political implications of those philosophical tendencies hostile to dialectical materialism. Neither did he nor any other SPD theoretician make a serious analysis of Weber's sociology, which originated and evolved as an alternative theory of social development and theory of knowledge to that of historical and dialectical materialism. And because Kautsky's indifference towards the reactionary nature and role of Kantianism led him to turn a blind eye to its advocates within the SPD, he was utterly unprepared to combat its influence in the various branches of bourgeois thought and natural sciences. For while singing the praises of a supposed rationality in modern bourgeois politics (a rationality mediated through a rigidly organised bureaucracy), Weber nevertheless, like the neo-Kantian Schopenhauer and also Nietzsche, allowed the forces of irrationality, or intuition and instinct, to invade the world of morality:

Here we reach the frontiers of human reason, and we enter a totally new world, where quite a different part of our mind pronounces judgement about things, and everyone knows that its judgements, though not based on reasons, are as certain and clear as any logical conclusion at which reason may arrive. ^[42]

However much the devotees of Weber ^[43] may be outraged by the idea, this dichotomy between the rigidly rational functioning of the machinery of government and industry, which Weber saw as the heritage of what he called the 'Protestant ethic', and the highly subjective and irrational basis of 'moral' actions, is perfectly compatible with the SS bureaucrats, equipped with horse-whips, gas chambers, card indexes and ledgers, systematically organising the destruction of an entire people and then converting its

human remains and material possessions into lampshades, fertilisers, soap and a credit account with the Reichsbank amounting to RM 178 745 960.59. Weber saw as one of his main political tasks the weaning of the German proletariat from internationalism, without at the same time openly challenging its adherence to socialism. Once again, the SPD leadership seemed, on all the available evidence, to be blind to the dangers implicit in this policy. One of Weber's most enthusiastic and far-sighted supporters in this undertaking was Friedrich Naumann. Both bemoaned the political immaturity of the German bourgeoisie, yet shrank before the alternative of a Germany ruled by the proletariat. Neither did they relish Germany's continued domination by the Junker caste, which they saw as the surest means of alienating the worker and peasant masses from a policy of national defence. The only possible alternative, they both contended, was a 'power state' pursuing social policies which while defending the existing system of property relations, created a wider popular basis for the regime. In short, it was a combination of the old Bismarckian Bonapartism with elements of something new - a 'social' nationalism, with the emphasis strongly on the latter. This is how Naumann, one of the moving spirits behind the 'Society for Social Politics', described it in an article written in 1895:

Is he [Weber] not right? Of what use is the best social policy if the Cossacks are coming? Whoever wants to concern himself with internal policy must first secure people, fatherland and frontiers, he must first consolidate national power. Here is the weakest point of the SPD; we need a socialism which is administrable, capable of making a better policy than hitherto. Such a socialism still does not exist. *Such a socialism must be national.*

We are not condemning the SPD leadership, and principally Kautsky, for their failing to be political clairvoyants, for failing to detect in the ideas of those who were wooing the right wing of their party the embryo of a counter-revolutionary movement which arose several decades later. That would be an unjust and absurd charge. Kautsky's great betrayal, one that led to his support for the Kaiser's armies, was his neglect of the ideological struggle against those who, whether from seemingly 'liberal' positions, or from the extreme chauvinist and anti-Semitic right, were working towards the destruction of the workers' movement in Germany. All Kautsky's great erudition in historical and economic questions, and his defence of the SPD programme against its reformist critics, were undermined and in the end reduced to zero by this major weakness, which in its turn, became the Achilles heel of the entire party. He never mastered the art and science, so essential for a great theoretician and workers' leader, of making the transition from one form of activity to another, of raising, in line with the requirements of a new epoch, the ceiling of his own theoretical work and with it that of the entire party. It was a passive acceptance of Marxism, an acceptance which while even recognising that all change is the product of the conflict of opposites, remained on the level of what Hegel termed 'intelligent reflection', which 'consists in the understanding and enunciating of contradictions', but 'does not express the concept of things and their relations, and has only determinations of imagination for material and content'. This method of cognition and analysis Hegel contrasted with 'thinking reason' which:

... sharpens the blunt difference of variety, the mere manifold of imagination, into essential differences, that is, opposition. The manifold entities acquire activity and liveliness in relation to one another only when driven on the sharp point of contradiction: thence they draw negativity, which is the inherent pulsation of self-movement and liveliness. ^[44]

Lenin, in a notation on this passage, observed: 'Ordinary imagination grasps difference and contradiction, but not the transition from one to the other, this however is the most important...' ^[45] Had Kautsky pursued his revisionist quarry with the passion that must be the basis of all revolutionary activity he would not only have unearthed the manifold and complex relations which had evolved between opportunism within the SPD and the major ideological trends outside it, but in so doing, to use Hegel's expression, would have driven the entire party to 'the sharp point of contradiction', the point at which the transition begins from 'intelligent reflection' to where 'thinking reason' grasps reality in all its 'activity and liveliness', 'pulsation and self-movement'. Such a struggle does not of course take place in a vacuum, it develops not only on the basis of the experiences of leaders but of millions, and cannot provide advance guarantees of revolutionary success. The driving force for the theoretical struggle must be the objective movement of class forces, but in turn it can play a vital part in their future development, as witnessed in a positive sense by the October Revolution, which without Lenin's 20 years of unremitting struggle for theoretical clarity would have been impossible; and in a negative fashion, by the tragic experience of Germany, not merely in 1914 and again in 1918, but 1933. The revenge exacted by history for theoretical negligence is savage indeed.

Notes

1. K Marx, *Capital*, Volume 1 (Moscow, 1959), pp 8-9.
2. K Marx, *Neue Rheinische Revue*, November 1850.
3. F Engels, Letter to C Schmidt, London, 27 October 1890, *Marx - Engels Selected Correspondence* (Moscow, nd), p 497.
4. F Engels, letter to A Bebel, London, 11 December 1884, *Marx - Engels Selected Correspondence*, p 457.
5. Marx was also a life-long supporter of Ireland's right to independence from England.
6. Article serialised in the English radical journal *Commonwealth*, whose editors included Marx, Eccarius and Odger. [F Engels, 'What Have the Working Classes To Do With Poland?', K Marx, *The First International and After* (Harmondsworth, 1974), p 384 - MIA]
7. F Engels, *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, 16-17 February 1849. [F Engels, 'Democratic Pan-Slavism', K Marx, *The Revolutions of 1848* (Harmondsworth, 1973), p 240 - MIA]
8. F Engels to F Sorge, 24 October 1891.
9. F Engels to A Bebel, 29 September 1891.
10. F Engels to P Lafargue, London, 27 June 1893, *Frederick Engels, Paul and Laura Lafargue: Correspondence*, Volume 3 (Moscow, nd), pp 269-73.
11. Bebel's contemptuous opinion of Belgium and its armed forces were shared by the German High Command, as the first days of the war revealed.
12. Since this book is concerned chiefly with Germany, it obviously cannot examine similar and equally reactionary nationalist deviations in the other parties of the International.
13. E Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism* (New York, 1963), pp 178-79.
14. F Engels, 'Introduction' to K Marx, *The Class Struggles in France, Marx-Engels Selected Works*, Volume 1 (Moscow, 1962), p 133.
15. F Engels to K Kautsky, London, 1 April 1895, *Marx - Engels Selected Correspondence*, p 568.
16. F Engels, 'Introduction' to K Marx, *The Class Struggles in France, Marx-Engels Selected Works*, Volume 1, p 135.
17. Here Engels was mistaken. It was government policy to recruit their standing army from non-proletarian, preferably peasant, strata of the population, where socialist sympathies were weakest. On the eve of war only 6.14 per cent of army servicemen came from the large towns, whereas 19.1 per cent of the total German population lived in them. On the other hand, rural-born soldiers made up nearly 65 per cent of the army, while only 42.5 per cent of the population lived in the countryside. Thus even a sizeable SPD election majority would not necessarily have resulted in a socialist majority in the army.
18. F Engels, 'Conversations with Friedrich Engels', *Frederick Engels, Paul and Laura Lafargue: Correspondence*, Volume 3, p 393.
19. 'The German Elections', *Frederick Engels, Paul and Laura Lafargue: Correspondence*, Volume 3, p 399.
20. 'The German Elections', *Frederick Engels, Paul and Laura Lafargue: Correspondence*, Volume 3, p 400.
21. Yet in 1889 - one year before the fall of the anti-socialist legislation (an event which undoubtedly coloured Engels' strategic and tactical conceptions in the last years of his life) - Engels bluntly declared: 'The proletariat cannot conquer its political domination... without violent revolution.' (Letter to G Trier, London, 18 December 1889, *Marx-Engels Selected Correspondence*, p 492)
22. VI Lenin, "'Left-Wing" Communism: An Infantile Disorder' (April-May 1920), *Collected Works*, Volume 31, pp 25-26.

- 23.** LD Trotsky, 'Engels' Letters to Kautsky' (October 1935), *Leon Trotsky on Engels and Kautsky* (New York, 1969), p 18. Trotsky is of course in no sense implying that Engels was responsible for this degeneration, simply that he failed to detect its beginnings, which is another question.
- 24.** VI Lenin to I Armand, Zurich, 30 November 1916, *Collected Works*, Volume 35, p 251. Boulanger was a military contender for the Presidency of France. His plebeian-based, intensely nationalist movement had collapsed a full year before Engels wrote the article under discussion. Thus Lenin's argument in this respect does not stand up, hinging as it does on the existence of an anti-German alliance of two ultra-right-wing dictatorships.
- 25.** VI Lenin to I Armand, 25 December 1916, *Collected Works*, Volume 35, p 268.
- 26.** Quoted in VI Lenin, *Collected Works*, Volume 39, pp 499-500.
- 27.** LD Trotsky, 'Engels' Letters to Kautsky', *Leon Trotsky on Engels and Kautsky*, p 5.
- 28.** Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism*, p 202.
- 29.** A deliberate play on words.
- 30.** Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism*, pp 222-23.
- 31.** Max Shachtman, co-leader with James Burnham of the middle-class-based opposition in the American Socialist Workers Party in 1939-40, used this formulation to blur over their profound differences with dialectical materialism. They argued against Trotsky that agreement on 'concrete' questions transcended such differences. Both subsequently left the SWP, Burnham joining the extreme right wing of anti-Communist publicists, Shachtman becoming a 'State Department socialist'. Shortly before his clash with Trotsky, Shachtman wrote an article for the SWP journal *New International* where he used a formulation whose spirit, if not wording, had much in common with Kautsky's reply to Plekhanov: '... nor has anyone yet demonstrated that agreement or disagreement on the more abstract doctrines of dialectical materialism necessarily affects today's and tomorrow's concrete political issues and political parties, programmes and struggles are based on such concrete issues.' And Burnham, who later advocated 'preventative' nuclear war on the Soviet Union, shared with Bernstein both his aversion to Hegel, whom he once described as 'the century-dead arch-muddler of human thought', and, before his final defection to the far-right, the belief that 'socialism is a moral ideal, which reflective men choose deliberately by a moral act'.
- 32.** VI Lenin, 'Conspectus of Hegel's *Science of Logic*', *Collected Works*, Volume 38, p 171.
- 33.** VI Lenin, 'Our Programme' (1899), *Collected Works*, Volume 4, pp 211-12.
- 34.** LD Trotsky, 'Karl Kautsky' (1938), *Leon Trotsky on Engels and Kautsky*, p 26.
- 35.** The name given to his philosophy by the German follower of Spinoza, Richard Avenarius, who unwittingly provided the Bogdanov group with many of its anti-Marxist notions.
- 36.** VI Lenin, 'Materialism and Empirio-Criticism' (1908), *Collected Works*, Volume 14, p 358.
- 37.** After Ernst Mach, the physicist whose neo-Kantian interpretations of discoveries made by modern science were used by the Bogdanov group to bolster their own subjectivist theory of knowledge.
- 38.** VI Lenin, 'On the Significance of Militant Materialism' (12 March 1922), *Collected Works*, Volume 33, pp 232-33.
- 39.** The same position is now held by the French phenomenologist Jean-Paul Sartre, and was, before his recent death, by the Hungarian Stalinist Georg Lukács.
- 40.** K Kautsky, *Der Kampf*, no 10, 1909, p 452.
- 41.** As early as 1905, the year when the first Russian Revolution drove the entire SPD leadership to the left, compelling it to adopt resolutions endorsing the mass political strike as a means of achieving reforms in the Prussian electoral system (it was still based on the

'three-tier' class franchise of Bismarck's day), a prominent trade union leader defiantly wrote: 'What a change in our judgement of tactical questions has been produced by the continued practical and economic activity of the labouring masses... No negotiations with the employer, no contact with the bourgeois! That was the old slogan and the old tactic, meanwhile we have got away from it. The steadily increasing responsibility of the trade union leaders has forced a new tactic. One negotiates with the employer, utilises the state conciliation apparatus and - horror - tries to awaken understanding in the ministries for the demands of the workers.'

42. M Weber, letter to Emmy Baumgarten, 5 July 1887.

43. Who included, during the period of EP Thompson's editorship, a group of sociologists around the journal *New Left Review*.

44. GWF Hegel, *Science of Logic*, Volume 2 (London, 1961), pp 61-69.

45. VI Lenin, 'Conspectus of Hegel's *Science of Logic*', *Collected Works*, Volume 38, p 143.

Chapter VII: The First Betrayals: Social Democracy in War and Revolution

Unless the Kaiser abdicates, the social revolution is inevitable. But I will have none of it. I hate it like sin. (Friedrich Ebert, SPD Chairman, 7 November 1918.)

The milestones marking Hitler's victorious march to power are each marked with an historic date in the life of the German proletariat: August 1914, when on the fourth of that month, the entire Social Democratic Party Reichstag fraction voted its unconditional support to the Kaiser's imperialist war; November 1918, when the SPD leaders, headed by Ebert, entered into a secret pact with the rulers of old Germany to strangle a rising socialist revolution; October 1923, when a vacillating KPD leadership aborted the revolutionary situation which prevailed throughout the summer and early autumn of that year; August 1928, when the Stalinised Communist International embarked at its Sixth World Congress on the suicidal course of branding Social Democrats as 'social fascists' and consequently ruling out any possibility of forming a united front with reformist parties to fight fascism; October 1930, the month when the SPD Reichstag fraction made its fatal decision to 'tolerate' the anti-working-class semi-Bonapartist Brüning government; August 1931, when on Stalin's orders the KPD aligned itself with the Nazis in their referendum to depose the Prussian SPD government; July 1932, which found both the SPD and KPD powerless to resist Chancellor von Papen's military-backed coup in Prussia; January 1933, when the reformist party and trade union apparatus was employed to prevent the German workers from fighting back against the newly-installed and still uncertain Nazi - Nationalist coalition; and finally May 1933, when the trade union leaders unashamedly marched with the Nazi 'Labour Front' to Hitler's 'May Day' rally in Berlin, setting the seal on the ignominious capitulation of the leaders of the German working class to fascist counter-revolution.

It could of course be argued - and in fact has been - that each of these retreats necessarily led to the next, that Hitler's destruction of the German workers' movement was but a logical outcome of all that went before. Neat and seemingly historical though this line of reasoning is, it ignores one of the main factors in German political life throughout this period - the working class. Had there been on each occasion a leadership with deep roots in the masses capable of making a stand against these blunders and betrayals, and of devising revolutionary strategy and tactics appropriate to the prevailing situation in Germany and Europe, there is no room for doubt that Hitler's movement would never have achieved the proportions that it did, let alone conquer power. For unlike the defeat of the 1525 Peasants' Revolt and the bourgeois revolution of 1848, we are now dealing with reverses inflicted on the masses *as a direct consequence of the inadequacies of their own leadership*, be it Social Democratic, centrist or Stalinist. The entire course of the class struggle in Germany between 1914 and 1933 is the most tragic verification of Trotsky's assertion, written into the founding programme of the Fourth International, that 'the world political situation as a whole is chiefly characterised by an historical crisis of the leadership of the proletariat'.^[1] The dimensions of this crisis only became fully visible after the bankruptcy of the Stalinist-dominated Communist International was confirmed by the monumental defeat of the German proletariat in 1933, but its contours were already discernable in August 1914, when the leading party of the Second International not only failed to mount any serious opposition to the war, but actually threw its massive political and organisational weight behind the Kaiser's imperialist war machine. From being avowed enemies of militarism and capitalist exploitation, the SPD leaders almost without exception were transformed literally overnight into recruiting sergeants for the Prussian Officer Corps and strike-breakers for the Thyssens, Krupps, Stumms, Stinnes and Kirdorfs, the most implacable foes of the German working class. The magnitude and suddenness of this unprecedented *volte face* was a traumatic experience even for those in the international movement who had been the SPD's sharpest critics. Lenin for one simply refused to believe it had happened, telling his fellow exile and close comrade Grigory Zinoviev that the issue of *Vorwärts* which carried news of the war credits vote was a government forgery.^[2] Trotsky, who had spent several of his exile years working in close collaboration with the leaders of German and Austrian Social Democracy, held out less hopes for any anti-war stand on their part, even doubting whether had Bebel lived another year, he would have stood firm against a rising torrent of chauvinism which engulfed not only the German petit-bourgeoisie, but the overwhelming majority of the working class. Nevertheless:

... the telegram telling of the capitulation of the German Social Democracy shocked me even more than the declaration of war, in spite of the fact that I was far from a naive idealising of German socialism... I did not expect the official leaders of the International, in case of war, to prove themselves capable of serious revolutionary initiative. At the same time, I would not even admit the idea that the Social Democracy would simply cower on its belly before a nationalist militarism... the vote of 4 August has remained one of the tragic experiences of my life. ^[3]

This sense of shock and betrayal was understandable. At the Stuttgart (1907) Congress of the Socialist International, the SPD delegation - though not without considerable prodding from Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg and Martov - voted unanimously for a resolution which, after analysing the causes of militarism and national rivalries, ended with the following call:

If a war threatens to break out, it is the duty of the working class and of its parliamentary representatives in the countries involved, supported by the consolidating activity of the International Bureau, to exert every effort to prevent the outbreak of war by means they consider most effective... Should war break out none the less, it is their duty to intervene in favour of its speedy termination and to do all in their power to utilise the economic and political crisis caused by the war to rouse the peoples and thereby to hasten the abolition of capitalist class rule. ^[4]

This anti-war position was endorsed by subsequent Congresses at Copenhagen (1910) and Basle (1912), the latter adopting a manifesto *On the International Situation* which, in the light of imperialist rivalries in the Balkans, declared:

The most important task in the International's activities devolves upon the working class of Germany, France and England, and that proletarians consider it a crime to fire at each other for the benefit of the capitalist profits, the ambition of dynasties, or the greater glory of secret diplomatic treaties. ^[5]

So strongly-worded was it that Lenin, on reading the manifesto, remarked prophetically to Zinoviev: 'They have given us a large promissory note; let us see how they will meet it.' We recall these resolutions not out of antiquarian interest but to illustrate one of the most salient features of Social Democracy and centrism - their ability to adopt militant-sounding and even correct policies on the eve of a crisis while at the same time adapting to social forces which made capitulation inevitable. This Lenin understood even before 4 August, but not as clearly as Rosa Luxemburg, who had been engaged in a protracted battle with not only the SPD right wing, but the Kautsky - Bebel 'centre' from as early as 1905. It took Kautsky's refusal to denounce the war to convince Lenin that 'Rosa Luxemburg was right when she wrote, long ago, that Kautsky has the "subservience of a theoretician" - servility, in plainer language, servility to the majority of the party, to opportunism'. Lenin now saw his former teacher as 'the main representative of bourgeois corruption in the working-class movement'. ^[6] Yet right up to the last days of peace, the SPD maintained what appeared to be a firm anti-war stand. The Austrian ultimatum to Russia was denounced in fire-eating language on 25 July, the SPD manifesto directly calling upon all party members and supporters 'to express immediately in mass meetings the unshakable will to peace of the class-conscious proletariat'. It denounced the German bourgeoisie and Junkers 'who in peace-time oppress you, despise you, want to see you as cannon-fodder', and concluded with the rallying cry: 'We don't want war! Down with war! Long live international brotherhood!' As one by one the imperialist powers of Europe began to mobilise, the SPD line began to waver. Now, when it was no longer a question of protest demonstrations against a threat of war initiated by a foreign power's government, but of an actual struggle against one's own imperialist bourgeoisie, all the vacillations which had in the past manifested themselves in the party leadership on the questions of internationalism and the state were qualitatively transformed into factors determining the overall line of the party. On 31 July, *Vorwärts* reverted to the old patriotic formulation of Bebel when it declared:

If the fateful hour strikes the workers will redeem the promise made by their representatives on their behalf. The 'unpatriotic crew' will do their duty and will not be surpassed by any of the patriots.

The very next day, the German government declared war on Russia. The imperialist slaughter had begun. All the evidence suggests that right up to 4 August, the German government took the SPD's anti-war propaganda seriously, so much so that the general staff prepared a long list of party and trade union leaders who would be arrested in the event of war. ^[7] The irony was that these same party and union leaders were, within a matter of days, to be granted immunity from military service by their would-be

captors, on the grounds that their services were more urgently needed at home to boost war production and maintain 'social peace'. Naturally, those among the party leadership and its 110-strong Reichstag fraction who favoured the policy of national defence used the argument that any other course would mean suicide for the German socialist movement. In the words of the centrist Wilhelm Dittmann, who had witnessed patriotic demonstrations by Social Democratic workers on his way to the fateful fraction meeting on 3 August which committed the party to its pro-war line:

The party could not act otherwise. It would rouse a storm of indignation among the men at the front and people at home against the SPD if it did [vote against the credits]. The socialist organisation would be swept clean away by popular resentment.

However true this last statement was, it neither explained nor justified the conduct of the SPD majority who voted for imperialist war. Their motives may indeed have been mixed - a desire to preserve the legality and resources of the German labour movement obviously played no small part in swinging wavering sections of the middle leadership and lower cadres behind the official line, as did an inbred and on most occasions thoroughly correct reluctance publicly to flout majority decisions of party bodies. This weighed heavily in the thinking of even the anti-militarist activist Karl Liebknecht, who, though voting in the Reichstag fraction with 13 other deputies against the proposal to support the war credits, nevertheless, when it came to the actual Reichstag division, submitted to discipline. But what predominated in the minds of those who supported the war was a 'national' conception of socialism, that not only the establishment of a socialist government but even the building of a fully-developed socialist society could be carried out within the confines of a single nation state. ^[8] This had been implicit in much of the party's propaganda from 1890 onwards, and even explicit in the speeches and articles of the extreme right wing of the party headed by Georg von Vollmar, who 46 years before Stalin came to the utopian conclusion that socialism could be built in one country (only the country was not holy mother Russia but 'culture-bearing' Germany). The transition from what Trotsky called the SPD's 'legitimate patriotism to their own party' to a conception of 'national' socialism and finally, after 4 August 1914, to a position of national defence, was a complex process which had its roots not only in the treachery of leaders, but the evolution of an entire stratum of the German working class:

If we leave aside the hardened bureaucrats, careerists, parliamentary sharpers, and political crooks in general, the social patriotism of the rank-and-file Social Democrat was derived precisely from the belief in building German socialism. It is impossible to think that hundreds of thousands of rank and file Social Democrats... wanted to defend the Hohenzollerns or the bourgeoisie. No. They wanted to protect German industry, the German railways and highways, German technology and culture, and especially the organisations of the German working class, as the necessary and sufficient national prerequisite for socialism. ^[9]

The great tragedy was that their devotion to the goal of a future socialist Germany was cruelly and cynically exploited by both their class enemies and their own leaders to serve the ends of an all too real imperialist present.

Thus workers read in the German trade union journal *Correspondenzblatt* that:

... the policy of 4 August accords with the most vital interests of the trade unions; it keeps all foreign invasion at bay, it protects us against the dismemberment of the German lands, against the destruction of flourishing branches of the German economy, and against an adverse outcome of the war, which would saddle us with reparations for decades to come.

The political responsibility for such a line, which undoubtedly found an echo amongst wide layers of trade unionists in the early period of the war at least, lay largely with the Kautsky 'centre' which had mis-educated entire generations of workers to believe that patriotism and an evasive attitude towards the struggle for power could coexist with the SPD's formal adherence to socialist internationalism and the Marxist theory of the state. For as the preceding chapter attempts to show, the seeds which ripened into the fruit of 4 August were sown in the period of party expansion which followed the lapsing of the anti-socialist laws in 1890. When confronted by the magnitude of their betrayal, the more sophisticated party leaders attempted to evade their own responsibility before the German and international movement - one they had solemnly accepted at a succession of Socialist International congresses - by blaming the working class for a situation which they themselves had helped to create. And we must also look at the capitulation of 4 August from another angle, one which concerns our search for the root causes of German fascism. Firstly, the SPD's quite unabashed endorsement of the Kaiser's rapacious imperialist war policy, together with its acceptance of the utterly reactionary idea of 'social peace' at home, had the

effect of legitimising both nationalism and the notion of ‘national solidarity’ among wide strata of the working class, especially those whose class consciousness was at a low level. For years the SPD had proclaimed, both in its press and at public rallies, the international solidarity of the proletariat and the existence of an unbridgeable chasm between the worker and his exploiter. And workers grew to respect and assimilate these ideas, not only because of their inherent validity, but because they were learnt from a movement which enjoyed an enormous moral as well as political reputation amongst millions of German workers. It was a movement which had fought the redoubtable Iron Chancellor and won. Its voice deserved a hearing, and its opinions careful and sympathetic consideration. What, therefore, was the German worker to think and do when he saw these self-same leaders tearing up the resolutions of their own party and the International, eating their own revolutionary words and calling upon him, not only in the name of the fatherland, but socialism, to shoulder arms with the bourgeoisie against the invader? Only the most class-conscious, dedicated and courageous of proletarians could have hoped to withstand this double pressure of government-induced hysteria and duplicity on the part of his own trusted leaders. The fourth of August was therefore not only a victory for the Kaiser, who on that day declared that he recognised not parties, but Germans. It was the first step along the road to the even more humiliating capitulation 19 years later, when on 17 May 1933, the SPD Reichstag fraction again voted unanimously in support of the foreign policy of German imperialism. The only difference being that on this august occasion, Hitler, and not the Kaiser, was laying down the line. ^[10] The SPD was not to break from the foreign policy of the German bourgeoisie until the party’s suppression by the Third Reich on 22 June 1933. Neither was it ever again to advocate the revolutionary overthrow of German capitalism. The fourth of August was a political rubicon for German Social Democracy, and despite all the party’s twists and turns between November 1918 and the victory of the Nazis, it never retraced its steps. The new political situation created in Germany by the vote of 4 August also had a profound impact on the consciousness of those layers of the workers most closely bound up with the everyday life of the party, not to speak of the many thousands of petty and middle-ranking officials for whom it provided not only a political programme but a means of livelihood. ^[11] Their sudden acceptance into the bosom of the German Empire without doubt convinced the vast majority that the old class hatreds would be quietly laid to rest, that the industrial barons and Junkers had seen the error of their ways in waging war on Social Democracy as a subversive, anti-national force, and finally the conduct of the party’s leaders in the hour of the Kaiser’s greatest need would be rewarded with a permanent stake in the new Germany, which, they fondly hoped, would emerge after a victorious conclusion to the war. ‘We are defending the fatherland’, the right-wing SPD leader Philipp Scheidemann told the Reichstag, ‘in order to conquer it’, while a former party leftist, the journalist Konrad Haenisch, displayed more sophistication when he wrote:

What the Junkers are defending is at most the Germany of the past, what the bourgeoisie are defending is the Germany of the present, what we are defending is the Germany of the future. ^[12]

Even before the official declaration of war, the trade union leaders, on 2 August, pronounced an end to the class struggle, suspending all strikes in progress and withholding strike pay for the duration of hostilities which they now regarded as not only inevitable but desirable. This step had been precipitated by a meeting with Interior Ministry officials the previous day, one of whom assured them:

We do not think of going after you, provided that you make no difficulties for us, for we are glad to have the great labour organisations which can help the administration in necessary social work.

Just as in the early months of 1933, the trade union bureaucrats were ahead of the political wing of the movement in seeking an accommodation with the bourgeoisie and its state. The contrast between August 1914, when they were welcomed with open arms by a regime which sought their cooperation, and 2 May 1933, when after marching with the Labour Front in Hitler’s Nazi ‘May Day’ rally, their offices were occupied and themselves arrested by picked units of the SA, provides us with a deep insight into the unique role of fascism, a role which demarcates it from all other forms of political reaction. Bismarck repressed Social Democracy, while preserving the forms of parliamentary democracy and permitting only official state organs to apply his anti-socialist laws. There was no room in Bismarck’s anti-Marxist strategy for a plebeian-based terror directed against the workers’ movement. Neither can the ‘class truce’ concluded by the leaders of the SPD and the trade unions be compared in any sense to fascism, for it presupposed the continued existence of proletarian-based organisations, even though these were temporarily tied by the class-collaborationist policies of their leaders to a line of supporting the domestic and foreign policy of German imperialism. Repressions were carried out - as in the case of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, who were both jailed for their anti-war activities - only against those

who attempted to win workers for an alternative policy. And while German arms continued to meet with success, there was but little need for such a harsh regime. However unpalatable it might be to genuine internationalists, the fact remains that in the opening months of the war, the majority of the German working class was, like its counterparts in the other belligerent nations, enthusiastically behind its chauvinist leaders. The depths to which the Social Democratic and trade union bureaucracy had sunk is made clear in the following extracts from the trade union press of the period:

We were accustomed to regard war purely from the standpoint of its socially destructive forces... However, the facts have taught us differently. War creates situations which are not socially destructive but to the highest degree socially progressive, situations which awaken social forces in *all classes* of the population to an undreamt of degree, and eliminate anti-social tendencies. At this stage the war is an affair of the whole people and it is calculated to advance the cause of socialism to a degree attained by hardly any other event. People at war must feel socialist and above all act socialist... ^[13]

A new age has opened up. In a short space of time the war has made new men of us all. This is equally true of high and low or rich and poor. Solidarity and mutual assistance in bitter and undeserved distress, the principle of action which we have always hammered into the working masses and so often demanded without success from the rich, has become the common principle of a great and capable people, overnight. Socialism wherever we look. ^[14]

The villainous plans of the dishonourable, bloody and faithless Tsar and his allies, the cunning Japs, the perfidious Britons, the boastful French, the lying Belgians, the thankless Boers, the swaggering Canadians, and the enslaved kidnapped Indians, Zouaves, Niggers and the remaining scum of the earth, have broken against the strong wall set up by the implacable heroism of the German and Austrian troops... ^[15]

It is almost impossible to credit that these lines, all written in the first months of the war, came from the pens of men who had dedicated their lives to defending, even if in a reformist fashion, the interests of the German proletariat. Now this same reformism became a vehicle for inciting chauvinist contempt for the workers of the allied powers, and what is just as significant, an ideology which differed little from that of the so-called 'war socialism' of the Prussian general staff. These leaders of German trade unionism presented government regimentation of the economy and labour as giant strides towards socialism simply because these measures had been undertaken by the state and since they involved a certain degree of central planning and control, had encountered initial resistance by certain sections of industry.

The real nature and purpose of government control over industry was made clear in a report, dated 20 December 1915, by Walter Rathenau, ^[16] head of the war Raw Materials Department of the German War Office:

Coercive measures had to be adopted regarding the use of all raw materials in the country. No material must be used arbitrarily, or for luxury... The needs of the army are of paramount importance... 'sequestration' does not mean that merchandise is seized by the state but only that it is restricted, that it can no longer be disposed of by the owner at will... The system of war boards is based upon self-administration (in private industry) yet that does not signify unrestricted freedom... The boards serve the interests of the public at large; they neither distribute dividends nor apportion profits...

And, despite initial reluctance on the part of certain sectors of industry to work under this new regime (notably the chemical industry), an harmonious partnership was soon established between the state and the major, war-oriented monopolies. They understood that sectional interests and policies had to be subordinated to the overall, longer-term requirements of the big bourgeoisie as a whole. It was their war, and they would have to take the steps necessary to win it. The ghost of Lassalle's and Bismarck's 'state socialism' had returned to haunt not the bourgeoisie but the German proletariat! Neither did the services of the bureaucracy go unacknowledged by a grateful government. In a communiqué issued in November 1915, it declared in terms that would have been unthinkable before August 1914 that:

... the free trade unions have proved... almost indispensable to the economic and communal life of the nation. They have made numerous valuable suggestions in the military, economic and social fields, part of which were carried out. Their cooperation and advice were placed at the disposal of the military and civil authorities, and were gladly accepted. The gratitude of the nation

for the patriotic efforts of organised labour has been frequently expressed by the responsible authorities...

Perhaps the most amazing somersault of all was that performed by Erwin Belger, former General Secretary of the 'Imperialist Alliance Against Social Democracy'. In his pamphlet, *Social Democracy after the War*, published in 1915, he heaps the most fulsome praise on the party he and his colleagues had previously scourged for its lack of patriotism and revolutionary aspirations. Now he found the SPD leaders' conduct 'irreproachable' and 'honourable', their vote for the war credits giving him 'great joy'. Ludwig Frank, the right-wing leader of the Mannheim party organisation, he lauded as a 'hero', while Rosa Luxemburg was branded for her anti-war writings in what Belger described as the 'bandit party press'. Shrewdly sensing that the wartime policy of the party leaders was not simply a tactical adjustment, but a new stage in the party's evolution, he hoped the SPD would openly convert itself into 'a purely labour party... a national party', and that 'when they reach the point - and it will be reached eventually - of reshaping the entire obsolete Erfurt Programme, let them draw the necessary conclusions, and above all delete the international principles'.

Similar views were being expressed by some (though by no means all) sections of the bourgeoisie. A commentator on the wartime policies and attitudes of German employers' organisations noted:

The employers regard the effects of the war, insofar as they extend to the internal political situation, as predominantly favourable. This applies especially to its effect on the Socialist Party... For the war has led to unity of the nation and had cut the ground from under the most attractive socialist theories... The socialists of the opportunist trend see the war as an economic war. They take the view that the war is imperialist and even defend the right of every nation to imperialism. From that they deduce a community of interests between employers and workers within the nation; and that line followed consistently leads to their becoming a radical bourgeois reform party... ^[17]

As we have already suggested, this viewpoint, for all its prescience on the future evolution of German Social Democracy, was not shared by the bourgeoisie in its entirety. Emil Kirdorf for one fulminated against the prevailing policy of government and industrial collaboration with the Social Democrats, whom he still regarded as traitors and subversives, despite all their claims to the contrary. Scepticism about the conversion of the SPD to 'national' values was also expressed succinctly in the business journal *Deutsche Arbeitgebezeitung* for 15 August 1915. There, in an article warning against any serious democratic reforms in the German political system after the war, it was asserted that the SPD had still much to achieve in the way of casting off the old traditions of class struggle and internationalism. It would:

... above all have to show, after the war as well, whether the process of transformation to which it refers has really become part of *its flesh and blood*. Only if this has been decisively demonstrated for a fairly lengthy period will one be able to say, with due caution, whether some of these changes in Germany's home policy are feasible... the harsh school of war provides us with the strongest possible arguments against further democratisation of our state system.

So we have here two diametrically opposed tactical lines. One - the line that prevailed throughout the war, and for the period of revolutionary upheaval which followed - favoured intimate collaboration with the leaders of the SPD right wing as a means of splitting the working class and establishing a new basis in the masses for capitalist rule. (Endorsement of this tactic in no way implied or involved any conversion on the part of the German bourgeoisie to democracy, even less the slightest sympathy for the social and political aspirations of the working class.) Ranged against the liberals were the 'hard-liners'. They feared that this policy of concessions would be interpreted by the workers as an admission of ruling-class weakness, serving not as a diversion from revolution, but rather as the gateway to it. Naturally, both these trends had their echoes in the petit-bourgeoisie, with, on the one hand, the beginnings of a regroupment in the old liberal camp for a policy of alliance with the SPD right wing against the radical elements of the workers' movement, ^[18] and on the extreme right the crystallisation of fanatically anti-Marxist, chauvinist groupings which called for a war unto death against the enemies of the Reich, internal as well as external. ^[19] So if the leaders of Social Democracy believed their post-August course had disarmed their former enemies - and their entire conduct up to Hitler's victory suggests that they did - they were very much mistaken. What Hitler has to say on the conduct of the SPD in the war period is highly revealing in this respect. (We should bear in mind that throughout these extracts, Hitler means by 'Marxism' the ideology of the official SPD, and not that of the party left wing which opposed the war!)

What]... angered me was the attitude which they [the authorities] thought fit to take to Marxism. In my eyes, this only proved that they hadn't so much as the faintest idea concerning this pestilence. In all seriousness they seemed to believe that by the assurance that parties were no longer recognised, ^[20] they had brought Marxism to understanding and restraint. They failed to understand that here no party was involved, but a doctrine that must lead to the destruction of all humanity... It was an unequalled absurdity to identify the German worker with Marxism in the days of August 1914, in those hours the German worker had made himself free from the embrace of this venomous plague, for otherwise he would never have been able to enter the struggle. The authorities, however, were stupid enough to believe that Marxism had now become 'national'... which only shows that in these long years none of these official guides of the state had even taken the trouble to study the essence of this doctrine, for if they had, such an absurdity could scarcely have crept in. Marxism, whose goal is and remains the destruction of all non-Jewish national states, was forced to look on in horror as... the German working class it had ensnared, awakened and from hour to hour began to enter the service of the fatherland with ever-increasing rapidity... suddenly the gang of Jewish leaders stood there lonely and forsaken... it was a bad moment for the betrayers of the German working class, but as soon as the leaders recognised the danger which menaced them they... insolently mimicked the national awakening. ^[21]

On the surface, viewed from the standpoint of formal logic, we have two mutually exclusive positions. Lenin, Trotsky, Luxemburg and all those who followed them in their opposition to the war rightly regarded the SPD leaders as 'betrayers of the German working class' - but for their capitulation to chauvinism, and their failure, in the prewar period, to prepare the party and the entire working class for this crisis. Yet we find Hitler (in company with the chauvinists of the Fatherland Front, to name but one organisation) still depicting the SPD leadership as dyed-in-the-wool internationalists and revolutionaries, pawns in the hands of a mythical 'world Jewish conspiracy' to subjugate and exterminate the 'Aryan race'. But if we move from the plane of formal logic to that of the real movement of classes in history, the contradiction can be resolved.

We must return to the proposition of Engels that individuals and classes do not perceive their interests in a clear-cut way, nor do they necessarily derive their political ideas and programmes purely from problems immediately confronting them. The process of the formation of consciousness is far more subtle, protracted and many-sided. The false notion of a homogeneous bourgeois class-consciousness is belied by the controversy which raged inside the German capitalist class over the nature of Social Democracy, a debate which began some years before the war and which continued right up to its destruction by Hitler in 1933. Writing on this very problem some four years before the outbreak of the war, Lenin noted:

If the tactics of the bourgeoisie were always uniform, or at least of the same kind, the working class would rapidly learn to reply to them by tactics just as uniform or of the same kind. But, as a matter of fact, in every country the bourgeoisie inevitably devises two systems of rule, two methods of fighting for its interests and of maintaining its domination, and these methods at times succeed each other and at times are interwoven in various combinations. The first of these is the method of force, the method which rejects all concessions to the labour movement, the method of supporting all the old and obsolete institutions, the method of irreconcilably rejecting reforms... The second is the method of 'liberalism', of steps towards the development of political rights, towards reforms, concessions, and so forth. ^[22]

We could add, with the example of wartime Germany very much in mind, that these two trends are by no means confined to the upper reaches of the propertied classes, but penetrate down through the middle bourgeoisie and the professional and intellectual strata to the lowest layers of the petit-bourgeoisie. In doing so, these tactical conceptions undergo all manner of mutations, which derive not only from the particular political and cultural medium through which this process is taking place, but which are even affected by the personalities and prejudices of individuals. Thus the 'accidental' is at bottom no more than the unique but nevertheless law-governed interpenetration and working out of a more broad historical process. Hitler's alleged 'lunacy' has long been the subject of debate amongst politically-oriented psychologists. Though their findings are useful for filling in some of the details of Hitler's character and in providing possible motives for his raging prejudices against Jews and other minorities, they bring us no nearer the solution of the major theoretical problem which has bedevilled so much of the writing on German fascism: how could someone who for the major part of his early years existed on the

‘margin’ of Austrian and German society, who embraced such an outrageously mystical and distorted ideology, possibly be said to represent the political interests of the German bourgeoisie? The answer lies partly in his comments on the wartime conduct of the SPD, which, though couched in the language of a totally unhinged Jew-baiter and demented anti-Marxist, so blinded by his hatreds that he could not see the Social Democrats were instrumental in aiding the war effort of German imperialism, contained more than a grain of political sense when viewed from the long-term strategic interests of the imperialist bourgeoisie. If Lenin was right when he said that reaction was the political expression of monopoly capitalism, then Hitler’s refusal to admit that the opportunist SPD deserved a favoured role in German politics must be viewed as part of his wider political strategy of destroying every vestige of bourgeois democracy. He quite correctly saw the SPD as an essential prop of such a parliamentary system; a system which, since it permitted workers to organise in parties and unions, yielding to them the same formal political rights as the bourgeoisie, left the door ajar for the propagation and implementation of revolutionary ideas. With this in mind, let us return to Hitler’s account of the early war days:

... now the time had come to take steps against the whole treacherous brotherhood of these Jewish poisoners of the people. Now was the time to deal with them summarily without the slightest consideration for any screams and complaints that might arise... It would have been the duty of a serious government, now that the German worker had found his way back to his nation, to exterminate mercilessly the agitators who were misleading the nation. If the best men were dying at the front, the least we could do was to wipe out the vermin. Instead of this, His Majesty the Kaiser himself stretched out his hand to the old criminals, thus sparing the treacherous murderers of the nation and giving them a chance to retrieve themselves... While the honest ones were dreaming of peace within their borders, ^[23] the perjuring criminals were organising the revolution. ^[24]

Hitler only saw subterfuge in the pro-war line of the Social Democrats, it is true. But he also understood that while the SPD was permitted to function legally, the danger of revolution was that much greater. True, he was completely wrong in believing that the 1914-18 war could have been prosecuted more effectively by arresting the SPD leaders and banning all socialist and trade union organisations - the very organisations which were, through the nationalist orientation of their leaders, harnessing the entire German proletariat to the war effort. Such a policy would have been suicide for the government, as it would certainly have alienated millions of socialist and trade union workers from the regime and taught them a bitter lesson in the class basis of the imperialist war. But looked at from a longer perspective, Hitler’s desire to exploit the nationalism aroused by the war to destroy the workers’ movement contained the germ of the tactics the Nazis were later to employ in isolating, weakening and then smashing the organisations of the German proletariat. While the First World War could not have been fought in Germany without the active collaboration of Social Democracy, the Second World War could only be waged after its total extirpation. Like Bismarck’s bid to strangle the still-youthful party, Hitler’s initial notions of how to wage the class war were not immediately applicable, though now the degree of error was to be measured, not in quarter centuries, but a mere decade:

What then, should have been done? The leaders of the whole movement should have at once been put behind bars, brought to trial, and thus taken off the nation’s neck. All the implements of military power should have been ruthlessly used for the extermination of this pestilence. The parties should have been dissolved, the Reichstag brought to its senses, with bayonets if necessary, but, best of all dissolved at once... ^[25]

These lines were written, it should never be forgotten, around 1924-25, a full eight years before the Nazi regime acted out this scenario almost to the letter! Let no one say that Hitler was a political madman, that fascism is a species of social pathology, or that National Socialism was a product of the ‘German psyche’!

Precisely the same observations apply to Hitler’s seemingly half-demented ravings against the SPD leaders for their conduct in the revolutionary upheaval of November 1918. For once again we are confronted by the problem of reconciling Hitler’s passionate diatribes against the reformists with the irrefutable historical fact that these same Social Democratic leaders were instrumental in rescuing the German bourgeoisie from revolution when even the bourgeoisie itself had begun to give up all hope of survival. By relying on formal logic alone, one can come to the conclusion - as do so many liberal historians - that since both Hitler and the Bolsheviks employed the epithet ‘traitor’ to describe the SPD leadership, and since both fascism and Communism seek to destroy Social Democracy as a tendency in

the workers' movement, then they are, subjective intentions notwithstanding, essentially similar political ideologies. ^[26] This type of formalist thinking, which seizes hold of superficial and transitory similarities between opposed phenomena, and then takes this fleeting identity as proof of an overall convergence, is utterly unable to grasp the real class nature and role of either Social Democracy, Stalinism, Communism or fascism.

Let us examine the sequence and inter-relationship of the main events leading up to the establishment of the Ebert government on 9 November, and attempt to see how Hitler and his co-thinkers came to the conclusions that far from being mainstays of German capitalism, the SPD leaders were 'November criminals'.

On 3 October 1918, moves were initiated by the newly-installed Chancellor Prince Max of Baden to sue the allies for peace. With the war in the west clearly lost, the main concern of the High Command and the bourgeoisie was to free their hands to fight the growing menace of revolution at home. But this could not be done without broadening the base of the Imperial government, which, though eagerly accepting the support of the Social Democrats, had steadfastly refused to include their representatives in the cabinet. The SPD press had already prepared the ground for such a step by muting its strident nationalism, which would have been out of place in a party seeking to enter a peace-making cabinet. Even here, the SPD leaders proved to be little more than the obedient echo of the General Staff and the bourgeoisie. On 20 October, *Vorwärts* conceded defeat, and on 28 October, with the anti-war mood of both workers and front-line servicemen running high, began to adopt a pacifist line. Gone were the chauvinist intoxications of August 1914. Now the paper which for four years had summoned its proletarian readers to the trenches declaimed: 'Enough of death, not one more man must fall.' The very next day, negotiations commenced which ended with two Social Democrats, Scheidemann as Minister without Portfolio and trade union leader Otto Bauer as the inevitable Minister of Labour, being coopted into Prince Max's cabinet. The alliance between old Germany and the Social Democracy against the revolution had been forged. But the bourgeoisie and Junkers had to pay a price for the services of the SPD and now, unlike August 1914, when the bulk of the masses were behind the war, their bargaining position was desperately weak. If the opportunists were to deliver the goods, then the masses had to be split and the revolutionary elements, the still-small 'Spartacists' led by Luxemburg and Liebknecht, isolated from the less politically advanced workers and servicemen. All this both parties to the deal understood perfectly. But the German proletariat, steeped in a 50-year tradition of socialism and now utterly alienated from a regime for which they had given their blood and sweat, could be induced to follow a non-revolutionary path only if it appeared to be leading to socialism. The example of revolutionary Russia was a constant reminder - if any were needed - that unless the old ruling classes were for the first time prepared to make a series of wide-ranging political and social concessions to the beleaguered Social Democrats (and therefore, in the final analysis, to the workers who followed them) they would forfeit not only their Prussian class franchise and beloved monarchy, but their infinitely more precious private property. The issue was nearly as stark for the SPD and trade union bureaucracy. Having raised itself on the backs of the labour aristocracy far above the material level of the mass of German workers, it constituted an intensely conservative social caste which having solved its own 'social question' now became bitterly hostile to revolution, which it quite correctly feared as a threat to its own social and political privileges. What emerged from this purely tactical alliance was a clear-cut division of labour. The Social Democrats' task was to erect a 'socialist' façade on the foundations of the old regime, defending the property of the bourgeoisie and Junkers while simultaneously indulging in endless rhetoric about the merits of 'socialisation'. To facilitate this role, the SPD leaders deemed it essential to secure the abdication of the Kaiser - but not, incredibly, the creation of a republic! - since millions of workers would never accept a government, however radical its pledges, which permitted the Kaiser to remain on his throne. As an SPD deputation expressed it in their crisis talks with Prince Max on 7 November, 'the Kaiser must abdicate at once or we shall have the revolution'. ^[27] Ebert made it quite clear that unless the SPD ultimatum on the Kaiser was made known to the workers of Berlin that very evening 'the whole lot will desert to the Independents'. ^[28]

The other partner in this counter-revolutionary pact - the leaders of the now threatened bourgeois state - hoped that behind Ebert's 'socialist' screen, they could begin to rebuild their temporarily shattered forces. They planned to assemble sufficient politically reliable troops to crush those sections of the working class that had not been deceived by the SPD's false pledges of radical social and political change, or confused by the continual vacillations of the USPD. Thus there was employed a combination of the two trends in bourgeois state policy of which Lenin wrote in 1910 - the 'stick' and the 'carrot'. Events were unfolding

just as Engels had anticipated 34 years previously in his letter to Bebel, when he warned him that ‘our sole adversary on the day of the crisis and on the day after the crisis will be the whole of the reaction which will group around pure democracy’. And with the revolution spreading hourly towards the capital from the North Sea ports via the industrial west and Saxony, the counter-revolutionary plotters had to move with even greater speed and determination. On 9 November, Prince Max came to the conclusion that ‘we can no longer suppress the revolution by force, we can only stifle it’. Workers’ and soldiers’ councils were being elected all over Germany, and would soon be preparing to convene a national congress in Berlin to decide the country’s future political and social structure. ‘Council rule’ spelt Bolshevism for Junkers, bourgeois and Social Democrats alike, so it was necessary, while permitting the councils to function (there was in any case no means of disbanding them violently), to use political methods to prevent a majority emerging within the councils which would opt for a soviet-style system in Germany. So on 9 November, the Kaiser’s abdication was announced, and Ebert proclaimed as the new Imperial Chancellor. But these two moves, essential though they were for alleviating the crisis, only had the effect of heightening it. Thousands of Berlin workers took to the streets, believing that, at last, the socialist republic was at hand. They milled around the steps to the Reichstag building where the SPD leaders were lunching. Learning from a workers’ deputation that Karl Liebknecht was about to proclaim the republic at a mass meeting outside the royal palace, Scheidemann rushed to the window and much to Ebert’s consternation, launched himself into a demagogic speech which ended with the cry: ‘The people have won all along the line. Long live the German Republic!’^[29] Despite Ebert’s fury - he shouted to Scheidemann that he had ‘no right to proclaim the republic’ - their differences were purely tactical. Scheidemann had turned republican not out of conviction but because he ‘saw the Russian folly staring him in the face - supreme authority for the workers’ and soldiers’ councils’.^[30] And the SPD leaders were to adopt an even more radical stance over the next few crucial days, a manoeuvre epitomised by their proclamation of 12 November, which flatly stated ‘the government created by the revolution, the policy of which is purely socialist, is setting itself the task of implementing the socialistic programme’. Yet such pledges, no less revolutionary in their phraseology than undertakings given in the summer of 1914 to combat the menace of imperialist war, were made against a well-concealed background of collusion with the forces of reaction. It was perhaps the crowning irony of German history that its first parliamentary system of government could only be established under the direct protection of the bayonets of those died-in-the-wool anti-parliamentarians the Prussian general staff. On the night of 9 November, with countless thousands of workers celebrating the creation of the republic in the streets of Berlin, Chancellor Ebert rang the headquarters of the High Command at Spa on a secret line. At the other end was Lieutenant-General Wilhelm Gröner, First Quartermaster-General of the Imperial High Command - hardly a man who could be expected in normal times to sympathise with a Social Democrat in distress. But these were no ordinary days. The hourly-increasing threat of proletarian revolution made them comrades in arms, just as had the war. Their conversation was terse and to the point, with Chancellor Ebert very much assuming the role of supplicant. Gröner first demanded that Ebert pledge his party to ‘fighting anarchy’ and ‘restoring order’, which Ebert did with great conviction. ‘Then’, Gröner replied, ‘the High Command will maintain discipline in the Army and bring it peacefully home.’ In return, Gröner expected the new government ‘to cooperate with the Officer Corps in the suppression of Bolshevism, and in the maintenance of discipline in the Army’.^[31] And so, on the very day which witnessed unprecedented revolutionary scenes and the formation of Germany’s first SPD government, there was forged by its head a secret and traitorous pact to prepare the counter-revolution.

All the subsequent crimes committed against the German working class, culminating in the victory of Hitler, flowed from this initial act of perfidy - the formation of Noske’s counter-revolutionary cut-throats, the ‘Free Corps’, the liquidation of the workers’ and soldiers’ councils in favour of a bourgeois parliamentary republic, the murder of Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht and countless less celebrated revolutionary fighters, the abandonment of the SPD’s solemn pledge to ‘socialise’ heavy industry - thereby giving a fresh and, for many, largely unexpected lease of life to the tycoons who later showed their gratitude by aiding Hitler to outlaw Ebert’s own party! - the protection and continued employment given to the bitterly anti-socialist officials of the old imperial regime, and last, but by no means least, the steadfast refusal of the SPD leaders to ally Germany with the embattled Soviet Union in a proletarian alliance directed against the imperialist West. These were and remain monumental crimes, and no worker should ever forget them. Yet Hitler was still not satisfied. Ebert and company he brands as ‘miserable and degenerate criminals’, while even the Kaiser is depicted as a political dupe, ‘the first German Emperor to hold out a conciliatory hand to the leaders of Marxism, without suspecting that scoundrels have no

honour'. He should have realised that 'while they still held the imperial hand in theirs, their other hand was reaching for the dagger' and that 'there is no making pacts with Jews; there can only be the hard: either - or'. ^[32] In fact it was precisely the formation of the Ebert government which decided Hitler that he had to 'go into politics'. ^[33] And why? Because, like countless other reactionary German or Austrian petit-bourgeois, Hitler saw only those sides of Social Democracy which were, of necessity, sensitive to the pressure and demands of the workers. In August 1914, they justified their pro-war line by depicting it as a war by 'revolutionary' Germany against 'reactionary' England, by claiming that it was not being fought on behalf of the bourgeoisie and Junkers, but to defend the achievements of the German labour movement. Thus there was more than a grain of sense in Hitler's contention that the SPD leaders were posing as loyal patriots. For all their undoubted chauvinism, they remained tied to organisations built and maintained by millions of workers, a relationship which established certain limits to the distance they could travel in company with the bourgeoisie. The bureaucracy, in order to preserve its position in the working class, was obliged to maintain a certain political distance between itself and the bourgeoisie even when committing the most revolting betrayals, as on the occasion of the January 1918 anti-war strike of Berlin engineering workers. Ebert later stated quite frankly that he and his fellow SPD leaders 'supported' the strike precisely in order to take the movement over and wind it up as quickly as possible. This tactical nuance escaped many reactionaries, who never tired of upbraiding Ebert for what they sincerely considered to be an act of unspeakable treachery. Similarly with Hitler's endless ravings against the 'November criminals'. Ebert *did* place himself, however reluctantly, at the head of a mass revolutionary movement; Scheidemann *did* attempt to outbid the Spartacist Liebknecht by proclaiming the republic to thronging Berlin workers; the SPD government *was* instrumental in bringing about the abdication of the Kaiser; it *did* pledge itself to socialise Germany industry and introduce a thoroughgoing reform of Germany's semi-feudal political system. And because the Social Democrats did and said these things, Hitler saw in them the refracted power of the masses. Obsession with the danger of revolution led Hitler to depict not only the SPD and the USPD, but even the KPD, as sharing the same socialist goal:

In the course of the war a small but ruthlessly dedicated corps had been formed. These later enabled the revolution to take place... when the Independents were formed, the bourgeoisie thought the Social Democrats were becoming weaker... They forgot that both sections had the same objectives, that the Social Democrats, the Independents and the Spartacists, the trade unionists and the Russian Bolsheviks all shared the same Marxist world outlook... It was quite wrong for certain circles to be pleased in 1917 that the Marxist movement had split into two sections... both had the same final objective and one of them was only the advanced guard... when the Independent section of the Marxists attacked the citadel, the hitherto majority socialists would not fail to follow. ^[34]

Perhaps we are now closer to an understanding of why fascism differs qualitatively from all other methods of bourgeois rule, and above all, why the Social Democrats found it impossible, despite their craven capitulation to Hitler in 1933, to coexist peacefully with the Third Reich. Precisely because fascism makes a clean sweep of bourgeois democratic rights and institutions, it must of necessity root out every last vestige, both ideological and organisational, of an independent workers' movement. Neither the SPD's chauvinist conduct in the war nor its collaboration with the forces of reaction afterwards redeemed the party in the eyes of Hitler and his accomplices. ^[35] For all their revisionist theories and opportunist practice, the leaders of Social Democracy stood at the head of massive, proletarian-rooted organisations, and while the SPD and the trade unions were permitted to exist, there always remained the danger for Hitler that a bold lead from the Communists would pull the helm over to the left. The leaders of German Social Democracy without doubt genuinely believed that by ditching the party's Marxist 'ballast' and undertaking an unlimited period of collaboration and coalition with the bourgeoisie, they had laid forever the ghost of Bismarck's anti-socialist laws. In truth they were digging - in some cases quite literally - their own graves.

Notes

1. LD Trotsky, *The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International* (1938) (London, 1972), p 11.
2. Zinoviev recalled four years later that he and Lenin had bet on the outcome of the Reichstag vote. Lenin believed the SPD fraction would not lead an opposition to the war, but would, to salve their consciences, vote against the war credits. Although Zinoviev was

nearer the mark in predicting an abstention, he frankly conceded that ‘neither of us had taken the full measure of the flunkeyism of the Social Democrats’ (G Zinoviev, *Lenin: A Speech to the Petrograd Soviet*, 6 September 1918 (London, 1966), p 33).

3. LD Trotsky, *My Life* (1930) (New York, 1960), pp 236-37.

4. *Internationaler Sozialisten-Kongress zu Stuttgart*, 1907, p 102.

5. *Ausserordentlicher Internationaler Sozialisten-Kongress zu Basle*, 1912, pp 23-27.

6. VI Lenin, Letter to AG Shlyapnikov, Berne, 27 October 1914, *Collected Works*, Volume 35, pp 167-68.

7. Their opposite numbers in France had also taken identical precautions with what proved to be as little justification - the so-called ‘carnet B’.

8. In setting their sights on the creation of a socialist economy independent of the world division of labour, the SPD leaders were overlooking the principle contradiction, which provided the impulse towards imperialist war, complemented and intensified the already-existing contradiction between the productive forces developed by capitalism and the social nature of the productive process, and the basis of this process in the private ownership of the means of production. Fascism is an attempt by capitalism to overcome both these contradictions without challenging the domination of capital, while Stalinism, basing itself on the property relations, seeks to maintain the nation state.

9. LD Trotsky, ‘The Draft Programme of the Communist International - A Criticism of Fundamentals’ (1928), *The Third International After Lenin* (New York, 1957), p 70.

10. The SPD fraction took this decision to support Hitler’s foreign policy by a vote of 48 to 17. Most of the party’s remaining 55 deputies were either in hiding from Hitler’s thugs or in jail, though this did not seem to have had any bearing on the outcome of the vote!

11. On the eve of war, the SPD owned 90 daily papers and 62 printing offices. The party employed 267 editors, 89 office managers, 273 business officials, 140 administrators, 85 propagandists, 2640 technicians and 7589 news agents. Its assets were valued at 21 514 546 marks. The unions employed an even larger full-time staff; and owned assets worth 80 million marks.

12. Haenisch headed the extreme right wing of the SPD which was openly demanding the fusion of nationalism and socialism. He argued that Germany embodied the revolutionary forces in Europe, and England those of reaction. Hence the need to prosecute not a ‘defensive war’, as most SPD apologists of imperialism advocated, but a ruthlessly offensive one. The chauvinist ideas of the Haenisch group were propagated in *Die Glocke*, the journal of that other renegade from the SPD left, Alexander Helphand, better known by his pseudonym Parvus. Another contributor to *Die Glocke*, Ernst Heilmann, quite frankly declared that ‘the idea of a catastrophe of revolution as a means of building a socialist society should be discarded once and for all, and not from a particular day, but as a matter of principle. *To be socialist means being in principle an anti-revolutionary.* The opposite conception is merely a carry-over from the emancipatory struggle of the bourgeoisie, from which we have not yet completely freed our minds.’ So in the extreme right wing of the SPD flourished tendencies which even repudiated the feeble democratic traditions of the liberal bourgeoisie of 1848! Socialism was conceived of more in terms of ‘socialising’ the worker than the property of the ruling classes: ‘Socialism is increasingly realised from day to day because of the growing number of people who do not make their living from private economic activity, or receive wages or salaries from private hands. The worker in a state, municipal or cooperative enterprise is socialised just as is the health insurance doctor or trade union official.’ (*Die Glocke*, no 20, 12 August 1916) The similarity of these ideas with English Fabianism is obvious. Finally there was Paul Lensch, another right-wing Social Democrat who sought to lend his party’s pro-war policy a radical and even revolutionary tinge. Employing the argument that Germany, as a nation deprived of its imperialist ‘rights’, represented the forces of change and revolution as against the established and conservative Anglo-Saxon imperialist powers, he claimed Germany’s workers should back the war to break England’s ‘class domination’ over world economy. Germany’s was a revolutionary

war in which ‘the rise of this class [that is, the proletariat] is taking place... amid the thunder of a revolutionary world war, but without the lightning of a revolutionary civil war’ (P Lensch, *Social Democracy: Its End and its Successes*, Leipzig, 1916).

13. *Correspondence of the General Commission of the ADGB*, no 35, 5 September 1914.

14. *Metallarbeiter-Zeitung* (organ of the German Metal Workers Union), 7 November 1914.

15. *Courier* (organ of the German Transport Workers Union), 25 October 1914.

16. Rathenau was undoubtedly one of the most astute leaders of the German bourgeoisie. A director of the electrical giant AEG, he was constantly faced with the problem of how to deal with the huge concentrations of workers brought together by the growth of monopoly capitalism. In 1911, he revealed his well-grounded fear that the prewar capitalist boom was in its turn preparing a new crisis pregnant with revolution: ‘I see shadows wherever I turn. I see them in the evening when I walk through the noisy streets of Berlin, when I perceive the insolence of our wealth gone mad, when I listen to and discern the emptiness of big-sounding words.’ An architect of Weimar’s social and economic policy, Rathenau also served the Republic as Foreign Minister, meeting his death at the hand of a band of pro-fascist assassins weeks after concluding in April 1922 the Rapallo Treaty establishing more harmonious relations between Germany and the Soviet Union.

17. *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, Volume 41, no 1, September 1915.

18. Max Weber, who personified this trend in the immediate prewar period, was partly instrumental in founding, at the end of 1918, the Democratic Party (DDP), which stood for a liberal capitalist Germany ruled by a coalition of moderate bourgeois parties and a thoroughly ‘reformed’ and ‘nationalised’ SPD.

19. The ‘Fatherland Front’ brought many such individuals and groupings together under the leadership of rabidly chauvinist military leaders and industrialists.

20. An allusion to the already-quoted statement by the Kaiser which he made after the unanimous Reichstag vote granting him his war credits.

21. A Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (London, 1943), pp 167-68.

22. VI Lenin, ‘Differences in the European Labour Movement’ (December 1910), *Collected Works*, Volume 16, p 350.

23. The ‘social peace’ (*Burgfrieden*) concluded on the outbreak of war between the SPD and ADGB leaders on the one side and the government and employers on the other.

24. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 169.

25. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 169.

26. Distortions of this type were greatly assisted by the Stalinist theory of ‘social fascism’, which, because it placed the SPD firmly in the camp of fascist counter-revolution, and even depicted it as the main enemy of the working class, led to tactical alliances being formed with the Nazis, who were of course determined to smash the SPD as the largest single organisation of the German proletariat. Hence the Nazi - KPD block against the Prussian SPD government in the so-called ‘Red Referendum’ of August 1931.

27. Max, Prince of Baden, *Memoirs*, Volume 2 (London, 1928), p 318.

28. The Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany (USPD), which had split from the SPD early in 1917 over the pro-war policy of the official party. Its right wing included Kautsky and Bernstein, their old battles over revisionism long since forgotten. The USPD centre was dominated by Hugo Haase, Wilhelm Dittmann and Emil Barth, who committed the fatal blunder of joining the Ebert cabinet, thereby lending it their prestige among the radical workers. The USPD left was led by Rosa Luxemburg, Franz Mehring, Clara Zetkin and Karl Liebknecht who waited until the end of December before separating themselves from the centrists to form the Communist Party of Germany (KPD).

29. P Scheidemann, *The Making of New Germany*, Volume 2 (New York, 1929), p 261.

30. Scheidemann, *The Making of New Germany*, Volume 2, p 261.

31. Regular nightly conversations were conducted over the secret line between Ebert and Gröner reviewing, in the words of the latter, ‘the situation from day to day according to developments’.

32. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 206.

33. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 206.

34. A Hitler, *Im Kampf um die Macht* (Frankfurt, 1960).

35. Though in unguarded moments even Hitler was prepared to paint certain of the ‘November criminals’ in colours other than black: ‘Amongst the men who became conspicuous during the events of 1918 I draw certain distinctions. Some of them, without having wished it, found themselves dragged into the revolution. Amongst these men was first of all Noske, then Ebert, Scheidemann, Severing, and in Bavaria, Auer.’ (*Hitler’s Secret Conversations* (New York, 1953), p 220) Praise indeed!

Chapter VIII: The Political Economy of National Socialism

Hitler frequently and vehemently denied the primacy of economics and the class struggle in human affairs and history. ^[1] Yet together they shaped not only the ideology and programme of National Socialism, but determined the rise and fall of its leader, Adolf Hitler. For as Marx and Engels pointed out in their youthful *tour de force*, *The German Ideology*: ‘... the phantoms formed in the human brain are... necessarily sublimates of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises.’ ^[2] Returning to this problem - the determinates of human consciousness - some 20 years later, Marx insisted that:

... just as one does not judge an individual by what he thinks about himself, so one cannot judge such a period [that of the transition from one social and political order to another - RB] by its consciousness, but, on the contrary, this consciousness must be explained from the contradictions of material life, from the conflict existing between the social forces of production and the relations of production. ^[3]

Such is the task we have set ourselves in seeking to trace the origins of what subsequently became the ideology of National Socialism back to the transition in Germany from feudal to capitalist economy in the first instance, and from pre-monopoly to finance monopoly capitalism in the second. So before embarking on the central section of this book, which deals with the principle events leading up to the victory of the Nazis in 1933, we must draw these various strands together and attempt to delineate the main features of what might be termed the ‘political economy’ of National Socialism.

This requires a two-tier analysis along the lines indicated by Marx. We must not only present the conceptions of National Socialism as its own originators conceived them, but show how this ideology, with all its anti-capitalist pretensions and invective against bourgeois society and values, nevertheless came to function as a unique species of bourgeois consciousness. Firstly then the Nazi programme as presented in the party’s public propaganda. ^[4]

One of the most characteristic expositions of Nazi ‘anti-capitalism’ is the pamphlet *Hitler’s Official Programme*, written as a commentary on the original 1920 party programme by the one-time Nazi economic ‘expert’, Gottfried Feder. The following extracts illustrate not only how little Feder’s ‘socialism’ had in common with that of any tendency to be found in the workers’ movement, but the way in which Nazi anti-capitalism fastened onto one aspect of capitalist production - interest and credit (personified by the ubiquitous Jew) - thereby abstracting it from every other phase and aspect of the capitalist mode of production:

The farmer is forced to run into debt and to pay usurious interest for loans, he sinks deeper and deeper under this tyranny, and in the end forfeits house and farm to the moneylender, who is usually a Jew... The sham state of today, oppressing the working classes and protecting the pirated gains of bankers and stock exchange speculators, is therefore the most reckless private enrichment and the lowest political profiteering... the power of money, most brutal of all powers, holds absolute sway, and exercises a corrupting and destroying influence on state, nation, morals, drama and literature, and of all moral imponderables... ^[5]

And while industrialists are not held to be blameless for this state of affairs, Feder presents them as men led astray by their quest for profit, which results in their being ensnared by the anonymous forces of finance and the stock exchange:

The industrialists, great or small, have but one end in view - profits; only one desire - credits; only one protest - against taxations: they fear and respect only one thing - the banks: they have only a supercilious shrug of the shoulders for the National Socialist demand for the abolition of the thralldom of interest... The producers have surrendered to high finance, their greatest enemy. The employers in factories and offices, deeply in debt, have to go content with the barest pittance, for all the profits of labour go into the pockets of the impersonal money power in the form of interest and dividends. ^[6]

Feder is then able to make the leap, characteristic of all fascist propagandists, of depicting industrial capitalists as honest, if sometimes misled, ‘producers’, exploited and cheated out of the fruits of their toil by parasitic moneylenders and dividend-drawers. And he also at this stage introduces that other familiar weapon in the fascist arsenal: the notion of an industrious middle class, ‘crushed from above by taxation

and interests, menaced from below by the subterranean grumblings of the workers'. The pursuing of 'self-interest' - the employers' in the form of bigger profits, the workers' in the shape of higher wages - is depicted as the source of all evil. The result is a divided nation and 'race', with only the Marxist-cum-stock-exchange Jew the victor:

Employer against employee, merchant against producer and consumer, landlord against tenant, labourer against farmer, officials against the public, worker against 'bourgeoisie', Church against state; each blindly hitting out at his particular adversary and thinking of his own selfish interests... No one thinks of his neighbours' welfare, or of his higher duties to the community. A breathless chase after personal gain... That is the spirit of modern business. ^[7]

And because Feder equates a worker's struggle for a living wage with his employer's determination to exploit the worker's labour power, he is then able to draw the utterly absurd conclusion that:

Marxists, capitalists and the leaders of public life all worship the same god - individualism. Personal interest is the sole incentive - the advantage of one's own narrow class the sole aim in life.

Instead of fighting each other, employers and workers should be united in battle against their common enemy:

... the capitalistic finance which overshadows the world, and its representative, the Jew. All classes of people have felt the scourge of interest; the tax collector bears heavily on every section of the population - but who dares oppose the supreme power of the Bank and Stock Exchange? ... The devilish principle of falsehood has triumphed over the ordered principle of creative labour... What do we mean by the 'Thralldom of Interests'? The condition of the nations under the money domination of Jewish high finance. The landowner is subject to his thralldom who has to raise loans to finance his farming operations - loans at such a high interest as almost to eat up the results of his labour... So is the wage-earning middle class, which today is working almost entirely to pay the interest of bank credits... So is the industrialist, who has laboriously built up his business and turned it in the course of time into a company. He is no longer a free agent, but has to satisfy the greedy board of directors, and the shareholders also, if he does not wish to be squeezed out... The thralldom of interest is the true expression of the antithesis: 'Capital against Labour, Money against Blood, Exploitation against Creative Work.' ^[8]

The struggle of 'races' is substituted for the struggle of classes, and the fundamental conflict between wage labour and capital dissolved into a purely mythical battle of both labour and industrial capital against 'Jewish' usury. The bogus nature of Feder's anti-capitalism is well brought out in his other commentary on the Nazi Party programme, *Der Deutsche Staat*. Here the attempt to construct a catch-all programme pledged to defend the interests of not only the middle class, but workers and employers, is even more flagrant:

National Socialism recognises private property on principle and gives it the protection of the state. The national welfare, however, demands that a limit shall be set to the amassing of wealth in the hands of individuals... Within the limits of the obligation of every German to work, and the fundamental recognition of private property, every German is free to earn his living and to dispose of the results of his labour... All existing businesses which until now have been in the form of companies ^[9] shall be nationalised... Usury and profiteering and personal enrichment at the expense of and to the injury of the nation shall be punished with death. ^[10]

Even when indulging in such radical-sounding phraseology, the Nazi leaders almost without exception ensured that their 'anti-capitalism' remained highly selective. Their definition of capitalism and capitalists made it possible to exonerate some of Germany's most rapacious and reactionary employers from the charge of profiteering:

The true employer, he who is conscious of his high task as an economic leader, is a very different person. He must be a man of moral worth - in the economic sense at least, his task to discover the real economic needs of the people... He must keep his costs as low as he can, and lay them out to the best advantage, must keep prices as low as possible in order to get his goods on to the market, must maintain both the quality and quantity of his output, must pay his employees well, so that they may be able to purchase goods freely, and he must always be thinking of improvements of his plant and his methods of trading. If he puts these things first in his business, he is 'supplying the necessaries of life' in the best and highest sense, and his profits will come of

themselves without his making them his first object. The finest and most universally known example of this kind of manufacturer is Henry Ford, there are other names in our own heavy industries which stand equally high: Krupp, Kirdorf, Abbe, Mannesmann, Siemens, and many more. ^[11]

So after all the high-flown, moral-toned diatribes against grasping capitalism and greedy profiteers, the National 'Socialist' Feder ends up by singing the praises of the Ruhr industrial tycoons, the very men who stood at the head of the entire structure of German finance capitalism!

Astute propagandists and political tacticians, the Nazi leaders preferred, even in their wildest demagogic moments, to fire off verbal salvos at less formidable targets, ones that also had the advantage of being far more unpopular among the mass of the petit-bourgeoisie, the Nazis' main source of support and recruitment:

The large retail stores [are] all in the hands of Jews... the large stores spell ruin to the small shopkeeper... We regard them as a special form of the capitalistic idea in practical operation, which does not provide necessities of life, but exists for the purpose of producing huge profits for the shareholders. ^[12]

Feder's writings, which until his fall from favour after 1933 were taken as authoritative statements on Nazi economic policy, abound with such appeals to the middle class, constantly harping on its simultaneous dislike of large, especially banking, capital on the one hand and organised labour ('Marxism') on the other. The end product is a crazy, topsy-turvy world in which millionaire bankers (almost never named) are linked with Jewish labour leaders in a conspiracy to subvert the German body politic and plunder the industrious of all classes. The following extract is a typical example of this propaganda, totally unsupported by any facts, and yet capable of gripping literally millions, when all other methods of solving their economic problems seem to have failed:

Class war as a political principle - this is to preach *hatred* as a guiding principle. 'Expropriation of the expropriator' makes *envy* a principle of economics, and 'socialisation' means striking down personality and leadership and setting up material, the mass, in the place of interest and efficiency... This pseudo-socialism, born of Marxism, is not founded on common sense... it is based on the crass individualism and the chaotic structure of society... Can we be surprised that the social question is not, and cannot be solved by this means, and that the sole response is hatred and the desire for loot? No living state could result from the Marxist Stock Exchange revolt, but only a heap of ruins. Marxism is an obvious capitalistic bogey, capitalistic, because when a society founded on individualism has fallen into chaos, it falls of necessity under the sway of the great financial magnates... Capitalism and Marxism are one! They grow on the same intellectual base. There is a whole world of difference between them and us, their bitterest opponents. Our whole conception of the construction of society differs from theirs, it is either a class struggle or class selfishness; our supreme law is the general welfare... They are not inspired by the wish to construct an organic, articulate order, to amalgamate... the various industrial classes under the high conception of national unity. ^[13]

The same notions, though with a less 'radical' and 'anti-capitalistic' tinge, run through Hitler's speeches and writings on economic questions. ^[14] What they certainly do not lack is a virulent anti-Semitism, which for Hitler was the key to all economic wisdom. A speech made on 12 April 1922 employed Feder's device of depicting the Jew in his twin guise of capitalist and revolutionary:

Christian capitalism is already as good as destroyed, the international Jewish stock exchange capitalist gains in proportion as the other loses ground... [The Jews also act]... as 'leaders of the proletariat'... in this capacity you might see the millionaire, the typical representative of capitalist exploitation, in a culture of the utmost purity... The same Jew who, whether as majority socialist or Independent, led you then [in the November Revolution] leads you still, whether as Independent or as Communist, whatever he calls himself, is still the same. And just as then in the last resort it was not your interests which he championed, but the interests of capital which supported him, the interests of his race; so now will he never lead you in an attack on his race, an attack on capital. On the contrary, he will prevent you from waging war against those who are really exploiting you... It was only the Jews who succeeded, through falsifying the social idea and turning it into Marxism, not only in divorcing the social idea from the national, but in actually representing them as contradictory.

This theme was developed at even greater length and complexity in another speech on 28 July of the same year. Drawing heavily on the forged *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, which had recently been published for the first time in German, Hitler exposed to his credulous, mainly petit-bourgeois audience how the Jews went about their conspiratorial work, fomenting class strife where there had once been peace and harmony between worker and employer - or rather guild master and his journeyman and apprentices:

The immense industrialisation of the nations meant that great masses of workers streamed together in the cities... Parallel to this ran a tendency to turn all labour to money. There was a sprouting of stocks and bonds, and little by little the stock exchange began to run our whole national economy, and the owners of this institution, then as today, were without exception Jews... By press propaganda and educational work, they succeeded in forming the big classical parties. Even then, they cleverly formed two or three groups which apparently combated one another, but actually hung by the same gold thread... Then Jewry took a step which showed political genius. This capitalist people... found a way to lay hands on the leadership of the fourth estate [the proletariat]. The Jew founded the Social Democratic, the Communist movement... On the Right, he attempted to intensify all existing wrongs to such an extent that... [the worker]... would be provoked beyond measure... It was he [the Jew] who fostered the idea that the unscrupulous use of all methods in business dealings was a matter of course, and by his competition forced others to follow suit... On the Left, he was the common demagogue... Well he knew that, once he taught the workers the international viewpoint as a self-evident premise of their existence and their struggle, the national intelligentsia would shun the movement... and... as soon as the Jews declared that property was theft,... as they departed from the self-evident formula that only natural resources can and should be common property, but that what a man honourably creates and earns is his own; from that moment on, the nationally-minded economic intelligentsia was again unable to follow... he... succeeded... in influencing the masses to such an extent that the errors of the Left were viewed by people on the Right as the errors of the German workers. While to the German worker the errors of the Right seemed nothing other than the errors of the so-called bourgeoisie... Only now do we begin to understand the monstrous joke of world history, the irony that stock exchange Jews could become the leaders of a German workers' movement... While Moses Kohn sits in the directors' meeting, advocating a policy of firmness... his brother, Isaac Kohn, stands in the factory yard, stirring up the masses: take a good look at them; all they want is to oppress you.

Hitler's anti-Semitism was clearly not a simple theory of 'race', but embraced an entire mystical view of history and economics, which, as we shall see, he did not invent himself but eclectically plagiarised from earlier protagonists of an 'anti-capitalist', corporative social structure. Hitler frankly admitted that until he became familiar with the ideas of Feder, whom he first met on joining the Munich-based German Workers Party in September 1919, he:

... had been unable to recognise with the desired clarity the difference between... pure capital as the end result of productive labour and a capital whose existence and essence rests exclusively on speculation... In my eyes Feder's merit consisted in having established with ruthless brutality the speculative and economic character of stock exchange and loan capital; and having exposed its eternal and age-old presupposition, which is interest. ^[15]

This entirely arbitrary distinction had considerable political advantages for the Nazi's strategy of extending their mass basis by anti-capitalist demagoguery while preserving and strengthening their connections with leaders of the German business world, as the following comment makes clear:

As I listened to Gottfried Feder's first lecture about the 'breaking of interest slavery', I knew at once that this was a theoretical truth which would inevitably be of immense importance for the future of the German people. The sharp separation of stock exchange capital from the national economy offered the possibility of opposing the internationalisation of the German economy without at the same time menacing the foundations of an independent national self-maintenance by a struggle against all capital! ^[16]

So there was capital and capital...

We also find in his random comments on economics the same moralist outbursts against money and a highly romanticised nostalgia for Germany's pre-industrial past which were common to nearly all *volkisch* ideologists of this period. Again we can see that this revolt against urban, highly industrialised

society dominated by the 'cash nexus' is not so much a fear of large-scale capitalism - even Feder accepted that it was necessary in certain branches of the economy ^[17] - but of the huge concentrations of industrial workers brought about by the decline of a guild system of production and the movement of impoverished and expropriated peasants into the towns:

Proportionally as the peasant class diminished, the mass of the big city proletariat increased more and more, until finally the balance was completely upset. Now the abrupt alternation between rich and poor became really apparent. Abundance and poverty lived so close together that the saddest consequences could and inevitably did arise. Poverty and frequent unemployment began to play havoc with people... the consequence of this seemed to be political class division... In proportion as economic life grew to be the dominant mistress of the state, money became the god whom all had to serve and to whom each man had to bow down... ^[18]

Even a nodding acquaintance with the economic facts of life would seem adequate intellectual equipment to punch holes through the theories of Feder and Hitler. Yet this is hardly the point, for they were shared by men of far higher academic standing, publicists, historians and even economists, who peddled in the guises of scholarship and profundity the Nazi credo that proletarian socialism and the stock exchange were linked in a conspiracy of global proportions, whose aim was to subvert the existence of the Germanic people. One example will suffice - that of the idealist historian Oswald Spengler. He was in the process of completing his epic *The Decline of the West* at about the time Hitler was becoming involved in the activities of Feder's small group, the German Workers Party. Spengler spells out at some length the fundamental contradiction between his, so-called 'Prussian socialism', and the socialism of the workers' movement:

Not Marx's theory, but Frederick William's Prussian practice which long preceded Marx and will yet displace him - the socialism, inwardly akin to the system of old Egypt, that comprehends and cares for permanent economic relations, trains the individual in his duty to the whole, and glorifies hard work as an affirmation of Time and Future. ^[19]

Spengler's cyclical theory of historical development saw mankind as in the final stages of its approach to 'the last conflict... in which Civilisation reaches its conclusive form - the conflict between money and blood'. ^[20] And so we are back to Feder, Hitler - and indeed Carlyle. The forces of 'blood' were to be spearheaded by what Spengler termed a new 'Caesarism' which would, he prophesied, triumph over and destroy the 'dictature of money and its political weapon, democracy'. ^[21] He therefore shared with the Nazis and their immediate forerunners their total identification of political democracy with an economy dominated by production for profit; a conception which, as we saw in Chapter I, originated in the struggle of the guilds against the rise of large-scale capitalism and the individualist outlook inspired by the French Revolution of 1789. Spengler's 'socialism' is a highly mystified version of a traditional distaste encountered among wide sections of the German intelligentsia for a society overtly based on monetary values and a class structure manifestly derived from relations of production and not on 'status' or alleged intellectual and moral worth:

After a long triumph of the world city, economy and interests over political creative force, the political side of life manifests itself after all as the stronger of the two. The sword is victorious over the money, the master will subdues the plunder will. If we call these money powers 'capitalism', then we may designate as socialism the will to call into life a mighty politico-economic order that transcends all class interests... Money is overthrown and abolished only by blood. ^[22]

Having made definitions of socialism and capitalism, Spengler is then able to arrive at the conclusion reached by Hitler, Feder and company: namely that the rubric 'money powers' incorporates the 'interest politics of workers' movements... in that their object is not to overcome the money values, but to possess them'. ^[23]

Unlike Feder and Hitler, who, despite their claims to the contrary, were profoundly ignorant of Marxist literature, Spengler did attempt to refute the economic theories of Marx. Value did not originate in human labour power, he argued, but in what Spengler considered to be the genius of industrial leaders:

... as every stream of being consists of a minority of leaders and a huge majority of led, so every sort of economy consists in leader work and executive work [Spengler's term for manual labour - RB]... The inventor of the steam engine and not its stoker is the determinant. ^[24]

‘Prussian socialism’ turns out to be little different from Carlyle’s fawning hero-worship of aggressive industrial tycoons. All that is of lasting economic value derives from their activity alone. By a sheer act of will, they can create money - what Spengler calls ‘Faustian money’:

Thinking in money generates money - that is the secret of world economy. When an organising magnate writes down a million on paper, that million exists, for the personality as an economic centre vouches for a heightening of the economic energy of his field... But all the gold pieces in the world would not suffice to invest the actions of the manual labourer with a meaning, and therefore a value, if the famous ‘expropriation of the expropriators’ were to eliminate the superior capacities from their creations; were this to happen these would become soulless, will-less, empty shells. [25]

Spengler’s veneration for the leaders of industry naturally is no obstacle to his indulging in the cult (common to most German rightists) of the peasant, who was depicted in *volkisch* and Nazi writings as a bulwark against proletarian revolution and a repository of traditional ‘German’ values:

All higher life develops itself on and over a peasantry... It is, so to say, race-in-itself, plant-like and history-less, producing and using wholly for itself, with an outlook on the world that sweepingly regards every other economic existence as incidental and contemptible... [26]

The enemies of the peasant were to be found not amongst the class of rich landowners, but in the big city, for Spengler the source of all evil:

There is little to choose in this respect between Versailles and the Jacobin club, business bosses and trade union leaders, Russian governors and Bolshevists. And in the maturity of democracy the politics of those who have ‘got there’ is identical, not merely with business, but with speculative business of the dirtiest sort of great-city sort. [27]

And so the stage is set for the arrival of Spengler’s ‘Caesarism’, destined to lay low the world of money and greed, which he artfully links with rationalism and political democracy:

Everything in order of dynastic tradition and old nobility that has saved itself up for the future, everything that is intrinsically sound enough to be, in Frederick the Great’s words, the *servant* - the hard-working, self-sacrificing, caring *servant* - of the state... all this became suddenly the focus of immense life forces. Caesarism *grows* on the soil of Democracy, but its roots thread deeply into the underground of blood tradition... there now sets in the final battle between Democracy and Caesarism, between the leading forces of dictatorial money-economics and the purely political will-to-order of the Caesars. [28]

This massive, brooding, highly esoteric work, written for the most part in a period of profound social unrest and permanent political tension, ends with a strangely calm confidence that the redeemer is at last at hand, the ‘Caesar’ who ‘approaches with quiet, firm step... We have not the freedom to reach to this or to that, but the freedom to do the necessary or to do nothing.’ And he closes with these ominous words: ‘... a task that historic necessity has set *will* be accomplished with the individual or against him.’ [29]

Spengler never became a member of the Nazi Party [30] - he distrusted their plebeian methods and style, and had the utmost contempt for their philosophical pretensions. Nevertheless, we can detect a clear affinity with their conceptions of ‘socialism’, with its emphasis on rigid rank and ‘service’. In his more popularly-written *Prussianism and Socialism* (1919) Spengler declared that Germany:

... needs hard men... a class of socialist natural lords... might, and ever-more might... Socialism as I understand it presupposes individual proprietorship with its old-German enjoyment of power and booty... Everybody is put in his place. There are commands and there is obedience. [31]

This differs little from the definition of Nazi ‘socialism’ given by that master of demagogy, Josef Goebbels:

Socialism is Prussianism. The conception ‘Prussianism’ is identical with what we mean by socialism... Or socialism is that which animated the kings of Prussia, and which reflected itself in the march-step of the Prussian Grenadier regiments; a socialism of duty.

And it is to Germany’s past - back in fact to the age of Luther - that we must now turn in our attempts to unravel the secrets of the Nazi ‘philosophy of history’, and its evolution into a highly individual branch of vulgar bourgeois political economy. Listing the main features of what passes for National Socialist political economy, we find the following: an identification of capitalism with ‘loan capital’, ‘usury’, ‘international finance capital’, ‘stock exchange speculation’ or joint stock companies; an attitude of moral

disapproval towards economic activities conducted, whether by workers or employers, for the purpose of monetary reward rather than 'service' to the 'community'; the notion of a strictly hierarchical society with its ranks based more on economic function than the simple ownership or non-ownership of productive property; and, flowing from this, an equally guild-derived or 'corporative' rejection of the class struggle; the counterposing in quasi-religious terms of the 'creative' forces of 'blood and soil' to the parasitic and life-sapping evils of 'pure' money, personified in the Jew; a romantic yearning for a long past 'golden age' when production was based on handicrafts and not mass mechanisation, and was designed to fulfil a need and not create a profit; and finally, an unequivocal defence of private property as the basis of a 'healthy' and 'national' economy. What emerges from this compilation is that none of these economic notions is unique to National Socialism. Certainly, the Nazi movement succeeded in exploiting and welding together these irrational prejudices and fantasies into a programme and ideology which exerted an enormous attractive power amongst the German petit-bourgeoisie and peasantry, especially in the two periods of economic crisis of 1922-23 and 1929-33. But the potency of these illusions, as we have already stressed more than once, cannot be explained purely in terms of these two crises, the first inflationary, and the second deflationary in nature. The prejudices and distortions which comprised the social outlook of the Nazified petit-bourgeoisie had undoubtedly been accumulated over many generations and propagated through an entire spectrum of political, cultural, religious, philosophic and economic agencies.

Marx and Engels on the Nazi Precursors

Since neither Marx nor Engels lived in the epoch of fascist counter-revolution nor even in the period of National Socialism's formative years, we would on immediate reflection hardly expect their writings to illuminate many of the central problems concerned with the origin or role of fascism. Yet this is far from being so. Firstly there is their famous criticism in the *Communist Manifesto* of various schools of non-proletarian 'socialism' prevalent in pre-1848 Germany and Europe. Each of them displayed features which, to one degree or another, were later to be absorbed into National Socialism. 'Feudal Socialism' originated in the fear of the landed aristocracy of the emergence of a usurping industrial bourgeoisie, a fear which in order to conceal its own reactionary class interests, took the form of a spirited defence of the industrial working class against its bourgeois exploiters:

In this way arose Feudal Socialism: half lamentation, half lampoon, half echo of the past, half menace of the future; at times, by its bitter, witty and incisive criticism, striking the bourgeoisie to the very heart's core; but always ludicrous in its effect, through total incapacity to comprehend the march of modern history... What they upbraid the bourgeoisie with is not so much that it creates a proletariat, as that it creates a revolutionary proletariat. In political practice, therefore, they join in all coercive measures against the working class; and in ordinary life, despite their high falutin phrases, they stop to pick up the golden apples dropped from the tree of industry, and to barter truth, love and honour for traffic in wool, beetroot and potato spirits. ^[32]

'Feudal Socialism' describes perfectly the ideology and political strategy of the Prussian Junkers, ^[33] even though these lines were written some years before Bismarck began to borrow heavily from its repertoire in his Bonapartist manoeuvres between the German Junkers, bourgeoisie and proletariat. Indeed, it is even accurate down to the Junker's support for Bismarck's anti-socialist laws! Feudal socialism also anticipated the 'social clericalism' of the Junker-based Conservatives, with their programme's emphasis on 'positive Christianity' and a corporative economy:

As the parson has ever gone hand in hand with the landlord, so has clerical socialism with Feudal Socialism. Nothing is easier than to give Christian asceticism a Socialist tinge... Christian Socialism is but the holy water with which the priest consecrates the heart-burnings of the aristocrat. ^[34]

The next variant, 'Petit-Bourgeois Socialism', though originating in the same historical period - that of the transition from feudal to capitalist economy - appeals to a different social stratum; not the industrial working class, but the middle class of town and country:

In countries where modern civilisation has become fully developed, a new class of petit-bourgeois has been formed, fluctuating between proletariat and bourgeoisie and ever renewing itself as a supplementary part of the bourgeois society. The individual members of this class, however, are being constantly hurled down into the proletariat by the action of competition, and, as modern industry develops, they even see the moment approaching when they will completely disappear as

an independent section of modern society... this form of Socialism aspires either to restoring the old means of production and of exchange, and with them the old property relations, and the old society, or to cramping the modern means of production and of exchange, within the framework of the old property relations that have been, and were bound to be, exploded by those means. In either case, it is both reactionary and Utopian. Its last words are: corporate guilds for manufacture, patriarchal relations in agriculture. ^[35]

These were of course the precise demands of the petit-bourgeois-oriented Nazi 'guild socialists' under the leadership of Adrian von Renteln's 'Fighting Organisation of the Industrial Middle Class', which after serving to penetrate and Nazify Germany's guild organisations in the period prior to the seizure of power, was wound up as part of Hitler's big-business-inspired campaign against the so-called 'second revolution'.

Just as reactionary was 'German' or 'True' Socialism, which arose in Germany in the pre-1848 period as 'philosophers, would-be-philosophers and *beaux esprits*' attempted to graft the teachings of French socialism, directed against an already well-established ruling bourgeoisie, onto a political movement which had barely begun to challenge the rule of the Prussian landowning aristocracy. This eclecticism - an ever-present feature of reactionary politics in Germany - entirely emasculated the revolutionary content of French socialism, which when subsumed under the categories of German idealist philosophy, served instead as a weapon of feudal reaction against those among the bourgeoisie struggling for political and constitutional reforms. The 'True Socialists', who recognised not classes but an abstract 'Human Nature', were political opponents of the liberal German bourgeoisie, railing against its demands for freedom of the press, representative government, and all the other bourgeois democratic rights established by the French Revolution. It warned the people 'that they had nothing to gain, and everything to lose, by this bourgeois movement'. ^[36] Superficially radical in its opposition to the demands of the bourgeoisie, 'True Socialism' served 'the absolute governments, with their following of parsons, professors, country squires and officials... as a welcome scarecrow against the threatening bourgeoisie'. ^[37] Marx and Engels located the main social basis of this particular variety of 'socialism' in the backwardness of the German petit-bourgeoisie:

a relic of the sixteenth century, and since then constantly cropping up again under various forms... To preserve this class is to preserve the existing state of things in Germany. The industrial and political supremacy of the bourgeoisie threatens it with certain destruction; on the one hand, from the concentration of capital; on the other, from the rise of a revolutionary proletariat... It proclaimed the German nation to be the model nation, and the German petty Philistine to be the typical man. To every villainous meanness of this model man it gave a hidden, higher character. It went to the extreme length of directly opposing the 'brutally destructive' tendency of Communism, and of proclaiming its supreme and impartial contempt of all class struggles. ^[38]

It is a sobering thought that these lines, depicting as they do the salient features of a petit-bourgeois predisposed towards fascism, were penned more than 70 years before the foundation of the Hitlerite movement. And elsewhere in the *Manifesto*, Marx and Engels had accurately depicted the potentially reactionary role of this class, even before they witnessed it at first hand in the German Revolution of 1848:

The lower middle classes, the small manufacturer, the shopkeeper, the artisan, the peasant, all these fight against the bourgeoisie, to save from extinction their existence as fractions of the middle class [that is, the bourgeoisie]. They are therefore not revolutionary, but conservative. Nay more, they are reactionary, for they try to roll back the wheel of history. If by chance they are revolutionary, they are so only in view of their impending transfer into the proletariat, they thus defend not their present, but their future interests, they desert their own standpoint to place themselves at that of the proletariat. The 'dangerous class', the social scum, that passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of old society, may, here and there, be swept into the movement by proletarian revolution, its conditions of life, however, *prepare it far more for the part of a bribed tool of reactionary intrigue*. ^[39]

Of course, we must not fall into the trap of equating the German petit-bourgeoisie of 1848, or even of half a century later, with that of Britain today. The last remnants of pre-capitalist classes - peasants, artisans and similar independent producers - were eliminated more than a century ago by the early development of English capitalism. The British petit-bourgeoisie, a stratum tapering off at each extremity into the

proletariat and the medium and big bourgeoisie, is an exclusive creation of capitalism. It has neither a 'pre-capitalist' past nor, therefore, any ideological residues associated with such a history. This is of enormous importance for the future of British politics, as it will greatly influence the forms assumed by a genuine, mass-based fascist movement. Once again therefore we have occasion to emphasise the methodological principle with which we began this study of German fascism: the importance of grasping the unique, concrete refraction of the general and universal by and through the particular and the relative.

Such was the accuracy of their analysis of the petit-bourgeoisie in the *Manifesto* that Marx and Engels did not find it necessary to revise it in their subsequent writings on Germany. In his 1870 Preface to *The Peasant War in Germany*, Engels continued to characterise the German petit-bourgeoisie as politically unstable, as hoping 'to climb, to swindle their way into the big bourgeoisie' and afraid of 'being plunged down into the proletariat. Between fear and hope, they will, during the struggle, save their precious skin, and join the victor when the struggle is over. Such is their nature.'^[40] And such, as the history of Stalinist Popular Frontism has proved, it remains.

Engels' comments on the role of the 'lumpen-proletariat' are equally far-sighted, not only in view of its subsequent role as one of the main sources of recruitment for the Nazi Storm Troops (SA), but the repeated attempts by the Stalinist KPD leadership to 'capture' this hopelessly disoriented layer by engaging in unprincipled manoeuvres with allegedly 'radical' elements in the SA and NSBO:^[41]

... this scum of the depraved elements of the big cities, is the worst of all possible allies. This rabble is absolutely venal... If the French workers, in every revolution, inscribed on the houses: *Mort aux voleurs!* Death to thieves! and even shot some, they did it, not out of enthusiasm for property, but because they rightly considered it necessary above all to keep that gang at a distance. Every leader of the workers who uses these scoundrels as guards or relies on them for support proves himself by this action alone a traitor to the movement.^[42]

But we must return to our main theme, which is the nature and origin of Nazi 'political economy'. How and why did its specious anti-capitalism become intertwined with a very real anti-Semitism? To answer this question, we must retrace our steps to the very dawn of the modern era.

Early Christian doctrine forbade its followers to engage in money-lending for gain.^[43] So by a process of elimination and natural selection, the indispensable role in medieval Europe of usurer fell to the only sizeable non-Christian minority culturally and economically capable of fulfilling it - the Jews of the Diaspora. Rejected culturally, socially and religiously by the host nation, the Jews existed and functioned 'like pores'^[44] in the fabric of pre-capitalist Europe. Because of their social role as providers of credit, the Jews inevitably became everywhere identified with all the nefarious moral qualities traditionally associated with money: greed, avarice, sharp practice and so on. These prejudices were compounded by the Jews' being treated as outcasts on account of both their alien origin and their religion. In every possible way, they were ready-made targets and receptacles for economic, social and political grievances, as is all too evident from much literature of the period, ranging from Chaucer to Marlowe and Shakespeare. But the money-lending Jew, despite his economic importance, was not functioning as a capitalist: 'In pre-capitalist stages of society commerce ruled industry. In modern society the reverse is true.'^[45] There was nothing productive about usury. While providing a service - at a price - it simply battered onto already existing relations, forces and levels of production. The most penetrating analysis of 'vulgar'^[46] theories about the relationship between interest-bearing capital and productive capital - the fulcrum of Feder's doctrine - is to be found in Volume 3 of Marx's *Capital*, and in his little-used *Theories of Surplus Value*, where in Volume 3 he examines in minute detail the historical and economic basis of the spurious socialism which hurls its bolts against 'loan capital' while leaving intact industrial or 'productive' capital. Marx begins with Luther's writings on usury, from which he quotes extensively. Like Feder (though of course in a completely different historical and political context) Luther depicts the moneylender as an enemy of all classes of society, as much capable of ruining a 'rich prince' as a 'peasant or a burgher... a squire or a rich gentleman,... a rich count' or 'the great merchant'.^[47] Marx saw in Luther's colourfully-imagined tirades against usury an intuitive grasp of its origin and role. Usurer's capital arises:

... through the ruination of the citizens (small townspeople and peasants) the gentry the nobility and the princes. On the one hand, the usurer [who, we should remember, was more often than not in this period - circa 1500 - a Jew - RB] comes into possession of the surplus labour and, *in addition, the conditions of labour*, of plebeians, peasants, members of craft guilds, in short, of small commodity producers who need money in order to make, for example, payments before

they convert their commodities into money, and who have to buy certain of their conditions of labour. On the other hand, the usurer appropriates rent from the owners of rent, that is, from the prodigal, pleasure-seeking rich. ^[48]

Thus it is easy to see how every propertied class of German society, where this state of affairs prevailed for far longer than in any other major European nation, evolved its own particular brand of 'anti-capitalism' intertwined in many cases with varying degrees of hatred for the Jews.

The earliest recorded attacks on usury were not only anti-Semitic in flavour, but couched in mainly religious terms, a tradition which the Nazis exploited to the full. ^[49] Economic motives were however clearly paramount with Peter Schwarz, a German burgher, who wrote in 1477 that the persecution of Jews was thoroughly justified:

They do not suffer innocently, they suffer because of their wickedness, because they cheat people and ruin whole countries by their usury... That is why they are so persecuted... There is no people more wicked, more cunning, more avaricious, more independent, more troublesome, more venomous, more wrathful, more deceptive and more ignominious...

More typical of Christian anti-Semitism were the opinions of the scholar Johann Reuchlin, for whom the Jews 'every day outraged, blasphemed and sullied God in the person of His son... They regard us Christians as stupid pagans'; and the theologian Geiler von Kaiserberg, who asked 'are the Jews then better than the Christians that they should be unwilling to work with their hands? ... To practice usury is not to work but to flay others, while wallowing in idleness.' (This worthy man of God knew full well that Jews were barred from membership of the guilds and denied the right to own land - the two main spheres of productive labour.) Since these attacks on the Jews were launched ostensibly on behalf of the 'productive class' - chiefly artisans and peasants - it is easy to see why and how anti-Semitism acquired a pseudo-radical character and populist idiom. In doing so, it provided the richer elements of the propertied class - the Princes, big landowners, merchants, guild masters and the like - with a convenient means of diverting the anger of the oppressed artisans and peasants away from their real exploiters towards a readily identifiable and 'alien' scapegoat - the Jew. Here too, churchmen were well to the fore. 'The learned and the naive, the princes and the peasants', wrote the theologian Johannes Trithemius, 'are filled with animosity against the usurious Jews, and I approve all legal measures taken to protect the people against such exploitation... are these people to grow fat with impunity on the labour of peasants and artisans?' Luther proved in his later years to be no exception to this tradition. In fact his political degeneration underlines the well-established truth that at all times and in all places, the prevailing popular attitude towards the Jews is a most reliable political barometer. Prior to the defeat of the 1525 peasants' uprising, Luther had been most stubborn in his defence of the Jews, pointing out to their detractors that it was the Church itself which compelled them to follow the trade of money-lending:

I advise being considerate to them. So long as we use violence and lies... so long as we keep them from living and working among us... and force them to practice usury, how can they come to us... we must welcome them in friendship, let them live and work with us, and they will be of one heart with us.

This is clearly not the Luther whom Hitler numbered, with Wagner and Frederick the Great, among those 'great warriors' whose 'life and work are followed with admiring gratitude and emotion, and especially in days of gloom... have the power to raise up broken hearts and despairing souls'. ^[50] Hitler revered Luther the anti-Semite; the Luther who recoiled in horror from the plebeian revolt called forth by his own passionate invective against the tyranny of Rome and its clerical agents in Germany. ^[51] We find him in the period of post-1525 reaction moving over rapidly to a position of compromise with state authority, be it Protestant or Roman Catholic, and employing the most scurrilous slanders against those he had previously defended, the Jews. 'If I find a Jew to baptise [Luther wrote in 1532], I shall lead him to the Elbe bridge, hang a stone around his neck, and push him into the water. These dogs mock us and our religion.'

Nine years later he wrote his most extended anti-Semitic tract, *Against the Jews and Their Lies*, in which he declared that the Jews:

... being foreigners, should possess nothing and what they do possess should be ours... they do not work, nonetheless they keep our money and our goods, and have become our masters in our own country... O adored Christ... you have no enemy more venomous, more desperate, more bitter, than a true Jew who truly seeks to be a Jew.

Luther's proposals for countering the 'Jewish conspiracy' included not only his already quoted demand for 'aryanisation' of Jewish property, but the burning of synagogues, the banning of Jewish prayers, the confiscation of Jewish books, and their deportation from German soil. All were carried out some four centuries later by the Nazis. But even in Luther's day, the support for his anti-Semitic diatribes was such that in Saxony, Brandenburg and Silesia, the 'Jewish question' was 'solved' by the wholesale expulsion of Jews from these largely Protestant regions of Germany.

From this time on, anti-Semitism, with its strong anti-usurious undertones, became not a prejudice amongst others, but an entire system of religious, political, social, cultural and economic illusions which penetrated into the very marrow of the bones of the German artisan and peasant classes. And because of his role as usurer, as a catalyst in the process of ruin of these classes, the Jew became identified in the petit-bourgeois consciousness with social change and the various philosophical and political ideas and institutions which facilitated the break-up of the guild and patriarchal order - democracy, liberalism, republicanism, rationalism, materialism, free trade, capitalism, socialism and revolution. All were tarred indiscriminately with the same 'Jewish' brush, heralding the day when Nazi demagogues could equate 'Jewish' Marxism with 'Jewish' international finance capital.

Both in England and France, triumphant bourgeois-democratic revolutions had repealed legislation discriminating against the Jews. But in Germany, the long period of reaction, national disunity and economic stagnation which set in after 1525 stoked up enormous popular frustrations which often found their only outlet in either overt or covert persecution of the Jews. This fact has a special significance for our study, because precisely in this period were evolved the economic conceptions Marx analysed in *Capital* which he described as a 'religion of the vulgar'.^[52] The superficial similarity between the economic theories of Luther and Feder are too obvious to require repeating. But their protagonists are separated by nearly four centuries of German and world history. Therefore while the forms of anti-usury in 1530 and 1920 have much in common, their content differs qualitatively. Luther's attacks on usury - 'Jewish' or otherwise - were intended for the ears of pious peasants and artisans, feudal princes and the incipient German bourgeois, the burgher. His polemics were penned in a world witnessing the very dawn of modern capitalism, the rise of an economy whose motive force was not the production of use values, but exchange values for private profit, based upon the exploitation of free labour power. True, like the Nazi propagandists, Luther appealed to contradictory social strata and classes, to guild masters *and* their journeymen, to princes *and* their peasants; and, also like the Nazis, was well-versed in the art of exploiting wounded national sentiments. But there the analogy ends. The Nazis peddled their anti-Semitic poison and economic nonsense about 'loan capital' and the 'thralldom of interest' in the epoch of imperialist crisis, world wars and revolutions. Their political camouflage served other interests and classes than those of Princes and guild masters, budding burghers and turncoat clergy. Disguised at the heart of Nazi 'political economy' by all its anti-capitalist bluster, was a theory perfectly capable of adjustment to the strategic needs of German monopoly capitalism, and, in particular, its dominant, heavy industrial sector. How far the pioneers of the theory appreciated this fact when they first propagated it is hardly the most important question - though one thing is certain. Neither Feder, Hitler nor any other Nazi leader can in any sense be described as subjectively 'honest' socialists who went astray.^[53] What we have to remember is that the Nazi leaders did not devise their economic programme from scratch. We should not mistake their undoubted quackery and prejudice-ridden notions for the fumbings of those striving, with scant intellectual or academic equipment, to establish an entirely new school of economic theory and practice. That may well have been how Feder and his supporters in the party saw their role, but the reality was very different. The founders of the Nazi movement, thoroughgoing eclectics that they were, could not but help plagiarise the work of previous generations of 'anti-capitalist' and 'national' economists who voiced the aspirations of an industrial bourgeoisie struggling to free itself from the parasitic embrace of more primitive forms of economy where usury dominated production, and not production usury.

This conflict against the 'money power' produced its own unique form of bourgeois 'false consciousness'. The struggle between the productive capitalist and the money lender for the surplus value extracted by the former from human labour power was refracted in a highly distorted fashion in the thinking of the productive or industrial capitalist:

The form of revenue and the sources of revenue are the *most fetishistic* of the relations of capitalist production. It is their form of existence as it appears on the surface, divorced from the hidden connections and the intermediate connecting links... The distorted form in which the real

inversion is expressed is naturally reproduced in the views of the agents of this mode of production... the vulgar economists... translate the concepts, motives, etc, of the representatives of the capitalist mode of production who are held in thrall to this system of production and in whose consciousness only its superficial appearance is reflected. They translate them into a doctrinaire language, but they do so from the standpoint of the ruling section, that is, the capitalists, and their treatment is therefore not naive and objective, but apologetic. ^[54]

This is Marx's starting point for his analysis of apologists for industrial capitalism masquerading as socialists waging war on 'loan capital'. The origin of this mode of consciousness lies at the very heart of the process of capitalist production, a cycle which begins and ends with 'capital in its finished form' - interest-bearing capital, which Marx termed 'the perfect fetish'. ^[55] The 'loan capitalist' or in Nazi parlance the 'usurer' loans capital at a rate of interest to the productive capitalist, who then employs it to extract surplus value from the labour power of his workforce. A proportion of this surplus value - determined by the rate of interest agreed between the loaner and the borrower - does not however remain in the pocket of the productive capitalist, but returns to the loan capitalist in the form of interest. Objectively viewed, what takes place is a division of the spoils between two groups of capitalists, but the participants see matters differently. The productive capitalist's opinions are highly coloured by the fact that he sees himself - and even his workers - as the creative factor in the process, and the loan capitalist as a pure parasite. The loan capitalist's money seems to him to possess the mysterious quality of expanding its own value without any effort on the part of its owner, while the productive capitalist earns his profit, and the workers their wages, by mental and physical effort:

In the form of interest-bearing capital only this function [that of yielding a definite profit in a definite period of time - RB] remains, without the mediation of either production process or circulation process, memories of the past still remain in capital and profit although because of the divergence of profit from surplus value and the uniform profit yielded by all capitals - that is, the general rate of profit - capital becomes very much obscured, something dark and mysterious. ^[56]

The more we delve into this remarkably perceptive section, the more insights it provides into the origins and content of Nazi economic theory. Because the industrially-based segment of the capitalist class confronts interest-bearing capital as an opponent, it employs weapons derived from the past to characterise and fight it. Battle is waged in the name of 'creative' labour by 'hand and brain' - a favourite Nazi expression for the unity in production of worker and employer - against unproductive loan capital, which is even designated as capital itself. Capital in its most fetishistic, mystified form as 'pure' capital seemingly able to increase its value at will, is singled out by industrial capitalists as the enemy all 'productive' classes must combine against to defeat:

It is thus clear why superficial criticism - in exactly the same way as it wants to maintain commodities and combat money - now turns its wisdom and reforming zeal against interest-bearing capital *without touching upon real capitalist production*, but merely attacking one of its consequences. This polemic against interest-bearing capital, undertaken from the standpoint of capitalist production, a *polemic which today parades as 'socialism'*, occurs... as a phase in the development of capital itself, for example, in the seventeenth century, when the industrial capitalist had to assert himself against the old-fashioned usurer who, at that time, still confronted him as a superior power. ^[57]

And in Germany, as we have seen, this struggle unfolded within the context of a virulent anti-Semitic tradition lending the 'polemic' an anti-Jewish as well as a 'socialist' character. And though this specious 'socialism' shaded over into the petit-bourgeois variety described in the *Communist Manifesto*, a 'socialism' which opposed not only loan capital but industrial capital as a threat to the existence of the small independent producers, ^[58] it was in its developed form a creation and servant of large-scale, industrial capitalism:

It is clear that any other kind of division of profit between various kinds of capitalists, that is, increasing the industrial profit by reducing the rate of interest and vice versa, does not affect the essence of capitalist production in any way. The kind of socialism which attacks interest-bearing capital as the 'basic form' ^[59] of capital not only remains completely within the bounds of the bourgeois horizon. Insofar as its polemic is not a misconceived attack and criticism prompted by a vague notion and directed against capital itself, though identifying it with one of its derived forms [that is, petit-bourgeois socialism - RB] it is nothing but a drive, *disguised as socialism*, for the development of bourgeois credit and consequently only expresses the low level of development of

the existing conditions in a country where such a polemic can masquerade as socialist and is itself only a theoretical symptom of capitalist development... [60]

Marx also discusses another aspect of this branch of 'vulgar' political economy which later became a feature of the Nazi and especially the Italian fascist programme - the tendency to stress the community of interest (in reality of course fictitious) between workers and employers *vis-à-vis* the 'loan capitalist', the former being grouped under the rubric 'producers'. How this unreal alignment comes about is explained by Marx in the following way:

Whereas... *interest* and *interest-bearing capital* merely express the contradiction of materialised wealth as against labour, and thereby its existence as *capital*, this position is turned upside down in the consciousness of men because, *prima facie*, the *moneyed capitalist* does not appear to have any relations with the wage worker, but only with other capitalists, while these other (productive) capitalists, instead of appearing to be opposition to the wage workers, appear rather as *workers*, in opposition to themselves or to other capitalists considered as mere owners of capital, representing the mere existence of capital... *Industrial profit*, in contradistinction to *interest*, represents capital in the production process in contradistinction to capital outside the process, capital as a process in contradistinction to capital as property; it therefore represents the capitalist as functioning capitalist, as representative of *working capital* as opposed to the capitalist as mere personification of capital, as mere owner of capital. He thus appears as *working capitalist* in contrast to himself as capitalist, and further, as *worker* in contrast to himself as mere *owner*. Consequently, in so far as any relation between surplus value and the process is still preserved... this is done precisely in the form in which the very notion of surplus value is negated. *Industrial profit* is resolved into labour, not into *unpaid* labour of other people but into *wage labour*, into wages for the capitalist who in this case is placed into the same category as the wage worker and is merely a more highly paid worker, just as in general wages vary greatly. [61]

In Volume 3 of *Capital* (namely Part 5, 'Division of Profit into Interest and Profit of Enterprise') these observations are systematised into a lengthy analysis of the various misconceptions and false ideologies which arise under capitalism as a result of the inherently contradictory nature of its mode of production, especially the role played by money as the abstraction of value created by human labour-power; a role which in its turn further mystifies by obscuring the origin of profit. The productive capitalist:

... creates surplus value not because he works as *capitalist* but because he *also* works, regardless of his capacity of capitalist. This portion of surplus value [the portion falling to the productive capitalist after the loan capitalist has taken his cut - RB] is thus no longer surplus value, but its opposite, an equivalent for labour performed. Due to the alienated character of capital, its antithesis to labour, being relegated to a place outside the actual process of exploitation, namely to the interest-bearing capital, this process of exploitation itself appears as a simple labour process in which the functioning capitalist merely performs a different kind of labour than the labourer. [62]

The result in the realm of consciousness is a conception of production which German and Italian [63] fascism deliberately employed both in their propaganda and economic and social institutions (that is, Labour Front, Labour Service, 'Works Community', etc) to dupe the less politically aware sections of the working population that exploitation, profiteering and the class divisions that accompanied them had been overcome. Under the rule of National Socialism, all were 'workers of hand and brain', just as in the Italian 'corporate state', all were 'producers': '... the labour of exploiting and the exploited labour both appear as identical as labour. The labour of exploiting is just as much labour as exploited labour.' [64]

If indeed all were workers - and Nazi propaganda vehemently and incessantly asserted that they were - then there was no need for class organisations, whether they be economic, political or even cultural and sporting. A theory evolved by apologists for capitalism in the period of its ascendancy now served, in the period of its crisis, to justify the most ruthless repressions against the workers' movement. But of course, since the Third Reich claimed to be socialist, and its ruling party a 'workers' party, the destruction of the trade unions and the workers' parties had to be presented as a measure carried out *in the interests of the workers*, and accompanied by what was purportedly an equally firm treatment of the employers' organisations: [65]

One of the first necessities with which the Hitler government found itself faced was that of dissolving the organisations that kept alive the antagonism between employers and employees. They were replaced by the German Labour Front - a body comprising employers as well as

employees. At the same time, preparations were made for the creation of an entirely new system of social order based on the following principles: the solidarity of all persons working for their living; the idea of leadership; the recognition of the factory, etc, as a bond of union, and the ethical conceptions of honour and loyalty. All this preliminary work crystallised in the passing of the Act governing the regulation of national labour, 20 January 1934... [its object] is clearly set forth in Article 1 of the Act, according to which employers and employees are required 'to collaborate with one another to promote the objects for which the undertaking has been founded and for the common benefit of the people and the state'. The same principle of solidarity is given expression in Article 2, where it says that the employer - described as the 'leader' of the undertaking, is required to uphold the welfare of employees, whilst the latter are asked [sic!] to show that spirit of loyalty towards the employer which is founded upon the basis of their joint interest in the undertaking. ^[66]

This was how Robert Ley characterised the ethos allegedly underlining the activities of his own 'Labour Front'. A similar corporatist theme underlay the propaganda of the allied 'State Labour Service':

... all civilised countries since the coming of the machine age have greatly suffered from the erection of certain social barriers... populations have been divided into two great classes, bourgeoisie and proletariat. The bourgeoisie adopted, for the most part, a Liberal Capitalism which amounted to a recognition of the principle that 'those who have may do as they please' to which the proletariat replied by asserting that 'possession is theft'... both these ideas will finally lead to anarchy and Bolshevism. ^[67] Germany, because of her historical development and, above all, because of her rapid transition from an agricultural to an industrial country, suffered from class quarrels in their extremist form... When the Führer attained power, he was faced with the fact that the German people were divided into two sections neither of whom... could understand the other. Indeed, they were even prepared to fight one another to the death. The Führer and his movement succeeded in achieving the impossible by putting an end to class hatred... he instructed the Labour Service to be an instrument by which the lack of vision of the bourgeoisie and the class hatred of the proletariat should be counteracted, and a true community of all Germans should be created. ^[68]

This is the essence of corporatist ideology. It maintains an utterly spurious community of interest between the worker and his employer. But in one sense there is no deception. The creation of such a 'factory', 'works', 'people's' community is stated quite bluntly to follow the complete destruction of all working-class organisations. While their former members are 'coordinated', to use the Nazi term, within the new state and economic structure, the trade unions are by definition excluded from any role or place in the fascist corporate state. And this applies with just as much force to trade unions dominated by a reformist as by a centrist or even revolutionary leadership. The Social Democratic ADGB suffered exactly the same fate as the KPD-led trade union organisation, the RGO. There was no question of their being allowed to perform, in however humble or craven a posture, the role of bureaucratic policemen on behalf of the Nazis, even though a section of the ADGB leadership pleaded with Hitler in the first weeks of his rule to be permitted to carry out this task under the Third Reich. This gives the lie not only to the ultra-left claim, peddled by the Stalinists between 1928 and 1934, that Social Democracy is a variety of fascism, but that *bona fide* workers' organisations, however craven and class collaborationist their leadership, can somehow survive the introduction of corporatism, and even become part of its repressive machinery. Involved in this false presentation of fascism is the notion, based on superficial impressions of corporative ideology and organisation, that the corporate or fascist system rests upon the 'tying' of trade unions to the capitalist state, and that rather than marking the end of all forms of class collaboration as practised by the leaders of Social Democracy and reformist trade unionism, is indeed a continuation of this collaboration in new guises. (Hence the tendency to equate 'collaborationist' with 'corporatist' rather than to point out the all-important difference between them, namely that the former presupposes independent workers' organisations, the latter, their annihilation.) This confusion has even spread to organisations which claim to base themselves on Trotskyist principles. Thus the *Workers Press*, 'Daily Organ of the Central Committee of the Socialist Labour League' ^[69] has repeatedly attempted to draw direct parallels between the Tory government's incomes policy and what the *Workers Press* usually terms corporatism. One instance of this suggests how little the SLL leadership appears to have learned either from the history of fascism or Trotsky's many writings on the subject, even though in 1970 they published a sizable selection of them! ^[70]

An article taking Transport Workers' leader Jack Jones to task for solidarising himself with the struggle of Spanish workers against fascism while neglecting the fight against the danger of a similar regime in Britain makes the following false comparison between the two countries:

He [Jones] is now a leading trade union figure in the joint talks with the Tory government who want to make the corporate state legislation embodied in Phases One and Two of the pay laws a permanent feature of capitalist society. *The cardinal feature of Franco's fascism is corporatism - a structure of dictatorship which ties unions to the state and prevents them from making independent decisions.* ^[71]

One can only be amazed that this article appears in a journal which should be serving to equip theoretically the working class for struggle against any future fascist danger. Firstly, state control of wages is only *one* of the features of corporatism. It also involves - as the examples of Italy (the home of corporatism), Germany and Spain have long since proved - the total *destruction* of trade unionism. Because the Tories now begin to employ some of the weapons in the armoury of fascism, this does not make their government 'corporatist'. If we take state control of wages as the sole or decisive criterion of fascism, then many other capitalist countries can also be included under this heading; that is, the United States and West Germany. This false line of reasoning based upon a highly impressionistic, empirical method, recalls the KPD line between 1930 and 1932, which held that the semi-Bonapartist regime of Brüning, and the fully Bonapartist ones of von Papen and Schleicher, were varieties of fascism, as indeed was the preceding government headed by the Social Democrat Müller. Here too, government control - and cutting - of wages, on this occasion by Presidential decree, was presented as a fully-blown fascist measure. When they did come to power, the Nazis upheld the Brüning and Papen cuts, even extending them, but they did a lot more besides. For to make these cuts effective and safe from the threat of upwards pressure by the working class, the worker's means of fighting - the trade union - had to be torn from his hands. This was the essential distinction between the Hitler regime and the series of Bonapartist governments which both preceded and helped clear the road for it. And it is a distinction which the *Workers Press* has repeatedly overlooked. Equally disturbing is the description of Franco fascism as a system which 'ties the unions to the state and prevents them from making independent decisions'. Is it the position of the SLL that the fascist 'syndicates' in Spain are genuine trade unions, or even 'unions' that have become emasculated by Franco's corporatist legislation? Surely not, for in that case, what precisely are the illegal 'workers' commissions', which daily defy Franco's police terror in their fight to organise and defend the Spanish working class?

While on the one hand, certain TUC leaders are depicted in the *Workers Press* as either conniving at, supporting or even operating an already-existing or emerging corporate system in Britain, the utterly bogus 'unions', the fascist-dominated vertical syndicates in Spain are not only confused with genuine workers' organisations, but presented as 'unions' restrained from fulfilling the function of representing their members by the actions of a hostile government! For one only speaks of 'tying to the state' and 'prevention from making independent decisions' when and where there exists resistance to such government control. Again, is it the considered opinion of the SLL Central Committee that Franco's fascist syndicates (the bodies the *Workers Press* insists on calling 'unions') are *resisting* state control of their functions, when these functions are precisely to chain the Spanish workers to their employers and the state? ^[72] How alien this idea is to Trotsky's analysis of fascism is clear from his voluminous writings on the subject, from which we need quote only a few lines to prove the point:

According to Stalin they [Fascism and Social Democracy] are 'twins', not antipodes. Let us assume that the Social Democracy would, without fearing its own workers, want to sell its toleration to Hitler. But Hitler does not need this commodity: he needs not the toleration but the abolition of the Social Democracy. The Hitler government can only accomplish its task by breaking the resistance of the proletariat and by removing all the possible organs of resistance. Therein lies the historical role of fascism... fascism in no way threatens the bourgeois regime, for the defence of which the Social Democracy exists. But fascism endangers that role which the Social Democracy fulfils in the bourgeois regime and the income which the Social Democracy derives from playing this role. Even though the Stalinists forget this side of the matter, the Social Democracy does not for one moment lose sight of the mortal danger with which a victory of fascism threatens *it* - not the bourgeoisie, but it - the Social Democracy... If the Social Democratic leaders do not want to abandon compacts with the bourgeoisie, the fascist bourgeoisie does, however, abandon compacts with the Social Democracy... In the passage of power from

Papen to Hitler [this article - *The Only Road* - was written on 14 September 1932 - RB] the bourgeoisie will in no way be able to spare the Social Democracy. ^[73]

Elsewhere in the same article, Trotsky refers quite unambiguously to the ‘incompatibility of Social Democracy and fascism’, ^[74] which of course in no way implies that its leaders were, are or ever will be capable of leading the working class in a successful fight against fascism. So it is self-evident that when the SLL seeks - as it has done - to present not only the trade union leadership but that of the Labour and Communist Parties as ‘supporters of corporatism’, ^[75] it is substituting radical phraseology for sober Marxist analysis and policies.

The extent and possible causes of the SLL’s departure from Trotskyism in this field are the subject of an appendix at the end of this work. It has been raised at some length here in order to stress the enormous importance of a Marxist-based methodological and historical approach to what we have termed the ‘political economy’ of fascism. Without the theoretical understanding that such an approach helps provide, there can be no successful fight against fascism, either in Britain or anywhere else.

Appendix: A Note on the ‘Jewish Question’ in Modern Germany

This chapter cannot be complete without at least a brief comment on the changed structure of Jewry in modern Germany. Continued social, economic and political discrimination against the Jews during the rise of capitalism in Germany led to their more well-to-do elements who had previously been engaged in usury being excluded from a prominent role in those sectors of the economy which were expanding most rapidly and were proving themselves the most lucrative. All the advantages which their role as suppliers of credit had secured richer Jews in the pre-capitalist and early capitalist epochs now turned into almost insurmountable obstacles. ‘Gentile’-owned industrial concerns and finance houses steadily displaced the old Jewish banking families as the ‘powers behind the throne’ not only in Germany, but throughout Europe. (Church teaching on the iniquities of money-lending and profiteering began to make the necessary adjustments.) The rise of large-scale, and then monopoly capitalism therefore revolutionised both the internal social structure of Jewry and its relations to society as a whole. According to the Belgian Trotskyist authority on the history of Jewry, Abram Leon, ‘at least 90 per cent of the Jews were agents and merchants at the beginning of the capitalist era’. ^[76] He showed that of an estimated 15 800 000 Jews throughout the world, 36.4 per cent were engaged in industry, as compared with 38.6 per cent in trade, which included transportation and amusements as well as banking. There was a similar shift in the class, as distinct from occupational, structure of Jewry. Before the rise of industrial capitalism, the Jews taken as a group were among the richest communities in Europe, due to their role as holders and lenders of the means of exchange. The breakup of pre-capitalist economic relations - itself accelerated by usury - and the rise of monopoly capitalism expropriated and impoverished millions of Jews, thrusting them like their ‘gentile’ counterparts into the ranks of the modern industrial proletariat. By the first decade of the twentieth century, 62 per cent of Jews in Germany were either workers or employees, while the proportions for England, the USA and France were 77, 75 and 48 per cent respectively. While it is clear from these figures that the tendency for the Jews to become proletarianised was directly related to the degree of industrialisation and urbanisation in the countries concerned, the past history of the Jews as a highly cultured and persecuted people greatly influenced both the extent and nature of this process. Inclined toward radicalism by centuries of official and unofficial repressions, even many wealthy Jews looked towards the workers’ movement (and before its emergence, radical liberalism and republicanism) as the only force which could cleanse society of racial and religious prejudice. The high proportion of leaders of Jewish origin in the German and international workers’ and revolutionary movement was a natural and inevitable consequence of the persecution of Jewry by feudal and capitalist society. Those sections of Jewry unable to keep a foothold in their traditional spheres of banking and commerce tended to gravitate towards the so-called ‘free professions’, though even here barriers were erected against their advancement and publishing, where Jews achieved prominence in the bourgeois-democratic German press. Nazi propaganda eagerly seized on these linked phenomena - the ‘over-representation’ of Jews in the labour movement and the publishing world - as proof of a Jewish takeover of German business and political life. In fact both were due precisely to the centuries-old German tradition of anti-Semitism, of which the Nazis were the most systematic and hideous exponents.

A Jewish rebuttal of these charges, published in 1932 by the ‘Association to Counter Anti-Semitism’, naturally did nothing to abate Nazi attacks on Jews, but at the same time it provided revealing

information on who really owned the German economy, and therefore, by implication, who really stood to gain from inflaming hatred against the Jews as the personification of ‘Jewish world finance’:

Today, capital formation takes place in large industry. Its largest enterprises are almost entirely dominated by non-Jewish interests: Krupp, Vereinigte Stahlwerke, Kloeckner, Stinnes, Siemens, Stumm, Hugenberg, Hapag, Nordlloyd. International connections are concentrated most heavily in those industries in which Jews are without influence or altogether unrepresented: the German-French iron cartel, wooden matches trust, oil trust, potash industry, and shipping conventions are all ‘clean of Jews’ and so are the international chemical cartel, nylon production and all the other raw material and key industries in which Jews have no influence either as owners or directors... The 10 largest conglomerations of wealth are in the following hands: Ex-Emperor Wilhelm II, Count Albert von Thurn und Taxis, Mrs Bertha Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach, Fritz Thyssen, Otto Wolff, Johann Count zu Hohenlohe-Oehringen, Count Maximilian Egon zu Fuestenberg, Count Guidetto Henckel von Donnersmarck, Count Heinrich Von Pless, Prince Frederick of Prussia...

Aryans all! There was just as little substance to the Nazi claim that Weimar was a ‘Jewish republic’:

... the 10 postwar cabinets consisted of 237 ministers of whom three - Preuss and twice Rathenau - were Jews and four - Landsberg, Gradnauer and twice Hilferding - of Jewish descent... In the German provinces the situation is not different: none of the provincial cabinets contains a Jew. The administration is not full of Jews either... in Prussia, among the 12 chief Presidents, 35 government presidents and 400 provincial counsellors, there is not a single Jew.
^[77]

Nazi anti-Semitism permitted millions of German petit-bourgeois to brandish their fists at ‘finance capitalism’ only in the form of a Jew. As Trotsky pointed out:

The Nazis abstract the usurious or banking capital from the modern economic system because it is the spirit of evil; and, as is well known, it is precisely in this sphere that the Jewish bourgeoisie occupies an important position. Bowing down before capitalism as a whole, the petit-bourgeoisie declares war against the evil spirit of gain in the guise of the Polish Jew in a long-skirted kaftan and usually without a cent in his pocket. The pogrom becomes the supreme evidence of racial superiority.
^[78]

And we might add, of the German petit-bourgeoisie’s economic impotence.

Notes

1. ‘... the state has nothing at all to do with any definite economic conception or development. It is not a collection of economic contracting parties in a definite delimited living space for the fulfilment of economic tasks, but the organisation of a community of physically and psychologically similar living beings for the better facilitation of the maintenance of the species and the achievement of the aim which has been allotted to this species by providence. This and nothing else is the aim and meaning of a state. Economics is only one of the many instruments required for the achievement of this aim... Belief in the state-forming and state-preserving power of economics seems especially incomprehensible when it obtains in a country which in all things clearly and penetratingly shows the historic reverse. Prussia... demonstrates with marvellous sharpness that not material qualities but ideal virtues alone make possible the formation of a state...’ (A Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (London, 1943), pp 150-52)
2. K Marx and F Engels, *The German Ideology* (1845-47) (Moscow, 1964), p 38.
3. K Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859) (London, 1971), p 21.
4. We shall deal elsewhere with the real Nazi programme as it was unfolded to the leaders of the German economy in a series of meetings between 1926 and 1933. Sufficient to say here that the public face and private dealings of the Nazi leaders were frequently in diametric opposition to each other!
5. G Feder, *Hitler’s Official Programme* (English Edition, 1934), pp 44-45.
6. Feder, *Hitler’s Official Programme*, pp 48-49.

7. Feder, *Hitler's Official Programme*, p 52.
8. Feder, *Hitler's Official Programme*, pp 58-59.
9. Presumably as distinct from family enterprises of the Krupp - Stumm - Thyssen type.
10. Feder, *Hitler's Official Programme*, p 68.
11. Feder, *Hitler's Official Programme*, pp 84-85.
12. Feder, *Hitler's Official Programme*, pp 86-87.
13. Feder, *Hitler's Official Programme*, pp 100-01.
14. Once again, we make the exception of his private addresses to industrialists, where anti-capitalist demagoguery vanishes entirely.
15. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, pp 209-10.
16. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 213.
17. 'It is of course out of the question to run mines, blast furnaces, rolling mills, or shipyards on a small scale, but 100 000 free and independent master-shoemakers are better than five monster shoe factories.' (Feder, *Hitler's Official Programme*, p 90) Under Nazi rule, Feder's beloved guilds were subjected to ruthless periodic 'comb-outs' to provide labour for the rapidly expanding armaments industry. By this time, Feder had been pensioned off.
18. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 234.
19. O Spengler, *The Decline of the West* (1918), Volume 1 (London, 1959), p 138.
20. O Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, Volume 2 (London, 1959), p 506.
21. Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, Volume 2, p 138.
22. Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, Volume 2, p 507.
23. Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, Volume 2, p 506.
24. Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, Volume 2, p 493.
25. Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, Volume 2, p 492.
26. Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, Volume 2, p 474.
27. Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, Volume 2, p 476.
28. Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, Volume 2, pp 464-65.
29. Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, Volume 2, p 507.
30. Though he did vote for Hitler in the Presidential elections of 1932.
31. See the writings of the 'revolutionary conservative' Möller van der Bruck, who, while attacking rentiers and money-lenders as parasites, lauded the industrialists as 'creators of values'. He called for a 'German socialism', based on 'the ideas which have issued from the oldest tradition allied to the most frequent conception of the aim to be attained'. It was a 'socialism' of 'organic growth... hierarchy, membership. Marxism alone professes an international socialism.' Also the anti-Semitic economist Werner Sombart, whose *German Socialism* (1934) called for the unification, not abolition, of classes. Germany had to be freed from the 'disgusting faith in progress which dominates proletarian socialism'.
32. K Marx and F Engels, 'Manifesto of the Communist Party', *Selected Works*, Volume 1 (Moscow, 1962), pp 55-56.
33. The most sophisticated exponent of German 'state socialism' was the Pomeranian landowner, Johann-Karl Rodbertus. Engels likened him to the French utopian, petit-bourgeois socialist Proudhon in that he sought to ameliorate the evils engendered by large-scale capitalist production without abolishing their economic foundation - private ownership of the means of production. He devised a scheme whereby workers would be paid wages, not in money, but 'labour certificates', which would be presented to the worker by the employer on the former's completion of a 12-hour working day. These certificates would then entitle him to purchase products equivalent to the value of only four hours' labour. The

surplus would then be divided between capitalists and landowners. This system differed from that of Proudhon, who in true petit-bourgeois fashion envisaged the free exchange of equal values between independent small producers. Thus he hoped to abolish the ‘bad’ sides of capitalism - degradation of the worker by the machine, exploitation, crises, etc, while retaining its ‘good’ aspects - private property, competition, etc. Which led Marx to comment on Proudhon and his ilk: ‘They all want competition without the lethal effects of competition. They all want the impossible, namely, the conditions of bourgeois existence without the necessary consequences of those conditions... From head to foot M Proudhon is the philosopher of the petit-bourgeoisie. In an advanced [capitalist] society the petit-bourgeois is necessarily from his very position a socialist on the one side and an economist on the other; that is to say, he is dazed by the magnificence of the big bourgeoisie and has sympathy for the sufferings of the people. He is at once both bourgeois and man of the people...’ (K Marx, Letter to PV Annenkov, Brussels, 28 December 1846, *The Poverty of Philosophy* (Moscow, nd), pp 190-93) Marx and Engels regarded these two branches of non-proletarian ‘socialism’ as especially dangerous for the future of the workers’ movement in France and Germany in that they appealed to bourgeois intellectuals inclined towards socialism but reluctant to accept the full implications of the Marxist theory of class struggle. In Germany, followers of Rodbertus (who was himself a monarchist) wrote occasional articles for the SPD press, and were even permitted to become active party members! This enraged Engels and Marx, since this group had joined the SPD with the expressed purpose of weaning the movement away from internationalism and proletarian-based socialism. Marx also devoted considerable sections of *Capital* to a rigorous critical analysis of Rodbertus’ theories on rent and surplus value, which, Marx considered, reflected the viewpoint of a capital-starved ‘Pomeranian landowner who gets money on tick in order to improve his property and who, for theoretical and practical reasons, only wants to pay the money-lender the “customary interest”’ (K Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, Volume 2 (Moscow, 1968), p 158). Rodbertus attempted to counter Marx’s critique of capitalist production by claiming that it applied only to ‘the present form of capital’, but not to the ‘pure conception of capital’, which like Proudhon’s society of independent propertied producers, was free from the blemishes of capitalism as it had evolved in history. This quest for a ‘good’ or ‘pure’ capitalism lay at the back of the German petit-bourgeois predilection for quack remedies to economic problems, and certainly heightened its susceptibility to Nazi ‘anti-capitalist’ propaganda.

34. Marx and Engels, ‘Manifesto of the Communist Party’, *Selected Works*, Volume 1, p 56.

35. Marx and Engels, ‘Manifesto of the Communist Party’, *Selected Works*, Volume 1, pp 56-57.

36. Marx and Engels, ‘Manifesto of the Communist Party’, *Selected Works*, Volume 1, p 59.

37. Marx and Engels, ‘Manifesto of the Communist Party’, *Selected Works*, Volume 1, p 59.

38. Marx and Engels, ‘Manifesto of the Communist Party’, *Selected Works*, Volume 1, pp 59-60.

39. Marx and Engels, ‘Manifesto of the Communist Party’, *Selected Works*, Volume 1, p 44, emphasis added.

40. F Engels, ‘Preface’, *The Peasant War in Germany* (Moscow, 1956), p 22. See the remarks made by Engels in *The Peasant Question in France and Germany* on the rural counterparts of the artisan and small trader: ‘This small peasant, just like the small handicraftsman, is... a toiler who differs from the modern proletarian in that he possesses his instruments of labour; hence a survival of a past mode of production.’ And also like the artisan, the rise of large-scale capitalist production cuts the economic ground from under the small peasant’s feet: ‘Taxes, crop failures, divisions of inheritance, and litigations drive one peasant after another into the arms of the usurer... in brief, our small peasant, like every other survival of a past mode of production, is hopelessly doomed. He is a future proletarian. As such he ought to lend a ready ear to socialist propaganda. But he is prevented from doing so for the time being by his deep-rooted sense of property. The more difficult it is for him to defend his endangered patch of land the more desperately he clings to it, the more he regards

the Social Democrats, who speak of transferring landed property to the whole of society, as just as dangerous a foe as the usurer and lawyer...' (F Engels, 'The Peasant Question in France and Germany', *Selected Works*, Volume 2 (Moscow, 1962, pp 422-23) Engels was obviously no stranger to the canard that Marxism and 'loan capital' were united in their desire to strangle the independent producers of town and country. This article recommends a series of programmatic demands which could serve as a means of countering such propaganda by uniting the proletariat and small peasantry against the big urban and rural exploiters: '... we foresee the inevitable doom of the small peasant... it is not our mission to hasten it by any interference on our part, [and] it is just as evident that when we are in possession of state power we shall not even think of forcibly expropriating the small peasants... as we shall have to in the case of the big landowners [in vivid contrast with Stalin's policy of enforced collectivisation between 1929 and 1933 - RB]. Our task relative to the small peasant consists, in the first place, in effecting a transition of his private enterprise and private possessions to cooperative ones, not forcibly but by dint of example and the proffer of social assistance for this purpose. And then of course we shall have ample means of showing to the small peasant prospective advantages that must be obvious to him even today.' (p 433) Also of interest are Engels' observations on the anti-Semitism rife among wide sections of the German peasantry: '... it is not in our interests to win the peasant overnight only to lose him again on the morrow. We have no more use for the peasant as a party member if he expects us to perpetuate his property in his small holding than for the small handicraftsman who would fain be perpetuated as a master. These people belong to the anti-Semites. Let them go to them and let them promise to salvage their small enterprises. Once they learn there what these glittering phrases really amount to and what melodies are fiddled down from the anti-Semitic heavens they will realise in ever increasing measure that we who promise less and look for salvation in entirely different quarters are after all more reliable people.' (p 433)

41. The Nazi party's 'fifth column' inside the trade unions and factories.

42. Engels, 'Preface', *The Peasant War in Germany*, p 23.

43. Nicholas Oresme, Bishop of Lisieux, wrote in 1377 that: '... there are three ways... in which one may make profit from money, apart from its natural use. The first of these is the art of exchange... the second is usury, and the third is the altering of money. The first is base, the second is bad, and the third is even worse.'

44. K Marx, *Capital*, Volume 3 (Moscow, 1962), p 325.

45. Marx, *Capital*, Volume 3, p 325.

46. Marx's term for schools of political economy which begin from superficial impressions of the features of capitalist production, and treat them as fixed, permanent ahistorical categories.

47. Cited in K Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, Volume 3 (London, 1972), p 529.

48. Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, Volume 3, p 529.

49. 'I believe that I am acting in accordance with the will of the almighty Creator: by defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the work of the Lord.' (Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 65)

50. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 243.

51. Once the peasants advanced the struggle from a revolt against Roman rule to one against German princes and burghers, and under the leadership of the utopian communist Thomas Münzer, even to challenge the rights of private property, Luther's fury knew no bounds. He called upon the princes and burghers to 'stab, knock and strangle them... just as one must kill a mad dog... The peasants must have nothing but chaff. They do not harken to the Word, and are foolish, so they must harken to the rod and the gun, and that serves them right.' (T Luther, *Against the Murderous and Plundering Peasant Hordes*, 1525)

52. Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, Volume 3, p 453.

- 53.** One advocate of this theory - Peter Sedgwick of the International Socialists - is answered in the appendices at the end of this work.
- 54.** Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, Volume 3, p 543.
- 55.** Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, Volume 3, p 543.
- 56.** Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, Volume 3, p 454.
- 57.** Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, Volume 3, pp 454-55.
- 58.** As was the case with Proudhon.
- 59.** See the definitions of capital made by Feder and Hitler quoted above.
- 60.** Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, Volume 3, pp 467-68, emphasis added.
- 61.** Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, Volume 3, pp 477-90.
- 62.** Marx, *Capital*, Volume 3, p 375.
- 63.** Thus the attempt to present Italy as an exploited 'proletarian' nation waging a national 'class' war against the 'plutocratic' nations.
- 64.** Marx, *Capital*, Volume 3, p 375.
- 65.** This of course was far from being the case. While the Nazis outlawed the trade unions and either murdered or jailed their leaders, the disbanded employers' organisations soon reappeared - often with the same leadership - under new names. For a fuller discussion of this feature of Nazi 'anti-capitalism', see the chapter 'Capital and Labour in the Third Reich'.
- 66.** R Ley, 'Social Policy in the New Germany', *Germany Speaks* (1938 edition), pp 159-61.
- 67.** Once again, the claim that free trade, liberal capitalism and proletarian socialism are in collusion.
- 68.** Senior Labour Leader Müller-Brandenburg, 'The State Labour Service In Germany', *Germany Speaks*, p 190.
- 69.** At the time of writing, the SLL was in the process of transforming itself into a revolutionary party.
- 70.** LD Trotsky, *Germany 1931-32* (London, 1970).
- 71.** 'What About the Corporatist Threat Here Mr Jones?', *Workers Press*, 14 August 1973, p 11, emphasis added.
- 72.** As any militant Spanish worker or refugee from the civil war will tell the editor of *Workers Press*, Franco's so-called 'unions' were founded on the corpse of independent trade unionism in Spain. In every region occupied by Franco's fascist armies, the leaders of the workers' organisations were almost without exception shot on the spot, and their members herded at gun-point into the 'syndicates', headed by leaders of the Falange, the Spanish fascist party. How little these syndicates had in common with genuine trade unionism, even of the 'collaborationist' or 'corporatist' variety practised by Jones, Feather and company, can easily be appreciated from the following statement on the aims of the 'vertical syndicates' made by the Falange General Secretary Raimundo Fernandez Cuesta, upon the occasion of their official formation in the spring of 1938. He is at pains to point out that the Spanish version of 'national syndicalism' had even less to do with recognising the claims of the proletariat than Italian 'corporatism': 'In those countries which the governors have encountered, on coming to power, as in Italy, a class syndicalism that they could not dismantle [this is of course, false, Mussolini exploited only the *forms* of syndicalist organisation in building his corporate system - RB], they have seen themselves forced, as a lesser evil, to convert it into a state syndicalism and afterwards to create super-syndical organs of interconnection and self-discipline in defence of the totalitarian interest in production. Those organs are Corporations. The Corporation then, had a forced basis in class syndicalism. The Vertical Syndicate, on the other hand, is both the point of departure and of arrival. *It does not suppose the previous existence of other syndicates. Broad horizontal* [that

is, class - RB] *structures do not interfere with it.* It is not an organ of the state, but an instrument at the service of its utilitarian economic policy.' [Emphasis added] So not even the founders of Franco's 'unions' (to use the term employed by the *Workers Press*) attempted to depict them, for demagogic reasons, as in any way being class organisations. In fact, as the above quotation proves, they strenuously - and quite justifiably - denied it. This notion is all the more disturbing in that the ultra-opportunist Spanish Stalinist movement under the leadership of Santiago Carrillo has for some time now engaged in the treacherous policy of encouraging workers to 'reform' the fascist vertical syndicates and thus abandon the fight to create their own illegal organs of struggle. If this line is to be applied consistently, then one might have, under the Nazis, worked for similar 'reform' of the Labour Front. Indeed, taking the argument of *Workers Press* to its logical conclusion, since the TUC is 'corporatist' - or at any rate several of its leading members - then Robert Ley could be cast in the role of a German Vic Feather or Jack Jones. Either this, or *Workers Press* corrects its false analysis of Spanish fascism.

73. LD Trotsky, 'The Only Road' (14 September 1932), *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany* (New York, 1971), pp 278-93.

74. Trotsky, 'The Only Road', *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, p 288.

75. See 'Corporatism Accepted', *Workers Press*, 11 June 1973, p 2, and billed subject of a meeting of the Woolwich branch of the SLL-led 'All Trade Unions Alliance': 'TUC and Stalinists - Supporters of Corporatism', *Workers Press*, 12 June 1973, p 11.

76. A Leon, *The Jewish Question* (Mexico, DF, 1950), p 180. A leader of the Belgian resistance, Leon was arrested by the Gestapo in 1943 and, after repeated torturing, died in the Dora concentration camp.

77. *Abwehr-Blatter*, October 1932.

78. LD Trotsky, 'What is National Socialism?' (10 June 1933), *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, pp 404-05.

Chapter IX: Hitler: The Formative Years

German fascism was born out of two defeats: that of German imperialism in the First World War, and the defeat - or rather betrayal - of the revolution which followed it. Without the humbling of Prussian military might, and the resulting predatory treaties forced on the German nation by the victorious Allied powers, there would have been little basis for the chauvinist resentments and smouldering desires for revenge which National Socialism exploited so skilfully in its rise to power. And had the proletariat succeeded in its initial bid to create the necessary economic basis for a socialist society in Germany, there would have been no monopolist industrialists and bankers to subsidise Hitler's movement, and a far more favourable foundation established for undermining the hold of reactionary ideas among wide layers of the middle class and peasantry. Imperialist war and Social Democracy - these were the midwives of National Socialism. But if we are to sustain the analogy with childbirth - and to a certain extent the analogy is a serviceable one - then we must also look back through the process of gestation to that of conception and parentage.

We have already examined in detail some, though by no means all, of the political and philosophical ancestors of German fascism, while at the same time seeking the origins and class content of those reactionary schools of political economy which reappeared in a vulgarised and distorted form in the theories of the leading Nazi economist, Feder. There remains, however, the task of tracing the genesis of National Socialism through the period of its crystallisation out of the numerous and disparate ideologies and movements which begat it. This, the crucial point of transition, must be paid the closest attention since it reveals precisely that which is unique to fascism - a system of counter-revolution which seeks to destroy the working-class movement in its entirety and for all time by mobilising against it those very social layers which stand closest to the proletariat in their conditions of life. This is the service which fascism provides for monopoly capitalism, one which no other reactionary movement - let alone Social Democracy - can rival. In return for a sizeable share of the spoils, and a dominant position in the state, the leaders of fascism pledge themselves to cut out the proletarian cancer. The knife they wield is a sharp one, and sometimes the plebeian hands wielding it thrust at the wrong targets, but the overall result, as the record of big business under Mussolini, Hitler and Franco testifies, has given the monopolist bourgeoisie little to complain of.

Thus the two extremes of the process are clearly visible: firstly the traditionalist, religious, monarchist, imperialist, often anti-Semitic Right, which for all its claims to a 'social' policy, and disregard for the material interests of the bourgeoisie, never succeeded in rallying millions of petit-bourgeois to the good fight against the twin evils of godless proletarian socialism and internationalism. Indeed, with the possible exception of Stöcker, this was never its intention. Violence against the workers' movement, in the eyes of the 'old' Right, was the prerogative of the state. The exemplar of this attitude was Bismarck's legislation against the Social Democratic Party, which while receiving the enthusiastic backing of the main right-wing parties, was never supplemented by 'extra-parliamentary' activities even on the part of Social Democracy's bitterest enemies. At the opposite pole stands the organised mass terror of the Nazis, which reached its peak in the period between their assumption of power on 30 January 1933, and the destruction of the trade unions on 2 May of the same year. In two months, Hitler achieved something the most reactionary elements of the bourgeoisie had dreamt of for more than half a century, but failed to carry through - the shattering of the German workers' movement. And while no fully satisfactory answer will ever be given to the question of why Hitler, rather than some other equally obscure racist bigot and fanatical anti-Marxist, was raised from the depths of petit-bourgeois anonymity to the pinnacles of political power, much about the nature of National Socialism and those who supported it can be gleaned from the story of Hitler's early years. No less an authority on fascism than Trotsky made the point that while:

... there are naturally great objective causes which created the autocratic rule of Hitler... only dull-witted pedants of 'determinism' could deny today the enormous historic role of Hitler. The arrival of Lenin in Petrograd on 3 April 1917 turned the Bolshevik Party in time and enabled the party to lead the revolution to victory. ^[1]

Hitler's own account of his early years is highly interesting in that it both fills out and confirms the picture of the German - and here we must of course include German-speaking subjects of the Austro-Hungarian Empire - nationalist petit-bourgeoisie as it evolved in the last decades of the nineteenth

century - the period when the major European powers entered the imperialist phase of their development. Some might find it strange that Austria, rather than Germany, was destined to provide the Third Reich with its Führer. Yet it was precisely in Austria where the national question loomed largest in the thinking of the major bourgeois parties and among their middle-class following. This state of affairs was of course the direct historical legacy of the failures of 1848. Then the road had been opened up both in Berlin and Vienna by successful plebeian revolts to unify the German-speaking people in a thoroughgoing democratic and revolutionary fashion. In both cases, the bourgeoisie proved unequal to the task, and the conditions were created for the dynastic restorations and consolidations which sundered the German nation for 90 years. Unity, when it was finally achieved, took the form of Hitler's 'Anschluss', the complete negation of German unity as conceived and fought for by the revolutionaries of 1848. In this sense too, both Hitler and the movement he led were the malignant products of a defeated revolution. What the masses, betrayed by their leaders, failed to win for themselves 'from below', Hitler (and also Bismarck) distorted and perverted on behalf of the bourgeoisie 'from above'. Despite their many differences the two dictators were both bastard offspring of 1848.

Nationalism loomed large in the childhood of Hitler just as it did with countless other offspring of the Austrian middle class. Of peasant origin, Hitler's father served the Austro-Hungarian empire as a customs official, and by all accounts seems to have imbibed all the traditional values and attitudes associated with such a humble post in the state hierarchy. But as a German (rather than an Hungarian or Czech) his limited political and cultural universe would in all probability have revolved around Prussian Berlin rather than cosmopolitan Vienna. This was most certainly the case with his son Adolf:

Rummaging through my father's library, I had come across a... popular edition of the Franco-German War of 1870-71. It was not long before the great heroic struggle had become my greatest inner experience... But in another respect as well, this was to assume importance for me. For the first time, though as yet in a confused form, the question was forced upon my consciousness: Was there a difference - and if so what difference - between the Germans who fought these battles and other Germans? Why hadn't Austria taken part in this war... Are we not the same as all other Germans? ^[2]

Thus the young Hitler - barely into his teens - was already receiving a nationalist imprint upon his dawning social consciousness. This process was intensified at school as he relates with evident pride. His High School teachers at Linz indoctrinated their pupils with a fanatical hatred for all those whose native tongue was not German. The language question became the vehicle for the inculcation of chauvinism amongst middle-class youth, who lacked the internationalist outlook which enabled the organised working class to resist this deadly virus:

As everywhere and always, in every struggle, there were, in this fight for the language in old Austria, three strata: *the fighters, the lukewarm and the traitors*. This sifting process began at school. For the remarkable fact about the language struggle is that its waves strike hardest perhaps in the school, since it is the seed-bed of the coming generation. It is a struggle for the soul of the child, and to the child its first appeal is addressed: 'German boy, do not forget you are a German', and 'Little girl, remember that you are to become a German mother.' ^[3]

Hitler also recounts how fierce were the nationalist passions aroused in his fellow pupils by such methods:

They carry on this struggle in hundreds of forms, in their own way and with their own weapons. They refuse to sing un-German songs. The more anyone tries to alienate them from German heroic grandeur, the wilder becomes their enthusiasm... their ears are amazingly sensitive to un-German teachers... Thus on a small scale they are a faithful reflection of the adults, except that often their convictions are better and more honest... It goes without saying that even then I had become a fanatical 'German nationalist', though the term was not identical with our present party concept. This development in me made rapid progress: by the time I was 15 I understood the difference between dynastic 'patriotism' and folkish ^[4] 'nationalism', and even then I was interested only in the latter. ^[5]

Again under the impact of his chauvinist teachers, the young Hitler came to identify his nationalist-inspired hatred for the Austro-Hungarian empire with a populist, even revolutionary political outlook, since it was directed against a government and state which were founded on the very negation of the sacred principles of nation and 'race':

... it was then that I became a revolutionary. For who could have studied German history under such a teacher ^[6] without becoming an enemy of the state which, through its ruling house, exerted so disastrous an influence on the destinies of the nation? ... Immense were the burdens which the German people were expected to bear, inconceivable their sacrifices in taxes and blood... What pained us most was the fact that this entire system was morally whitewashed by the alliance with Germany, with the result that the slow extermination of Germanism in the old monarchy was in a certain sense sanctioned by Germany itself. ^[7]

It is impossible, due to the probably deliberate vagueness of his narrative, to place a precise date on the moment when Hitler first began to conceive of German nationalism in this '*volkisch*', as opposed to dynastic sense. However, the year 1904, when Hitler reached the age of 15, is as close as we can get. The year is significant in that it also witnessed the foundation of the organisation which, more than any other, can be justly considered to have spawned the Nazi Party. The 'German Workers Party' (DAP), despite its name, was not a creation of the proletariat, but of German-speaking artisans who were seeking means of maintaining their privileges against the supposed threats of 'Slavic' workers in Bohemia, where the party enjoyed its strongest influence. This is not to say that the DAP did not number industrial workers among its members and supporters - it certainly did, much to their discredit. But the prime movers in the creation of this nationalist, plebeian-oriented movement were artisans and master-craftsmen. Perhaps it is significant for a clearer understanding of Hitler's early political development that the party was particularly strong in Linz, where there had been a considerable migration of Czech workers in the previous few years. The DAP programme and its subsequent evolution indicates how little the movement had in common with the Austrian labour movement, which was under the leadership of Social Democracy. The founding manifesto of 1904 declared the DAP to be a 'liberal national party... fighting with all its strength against the reactionary tendencies, feudal, clerical and capitalist privileges as well as all foreign national tendencies'. It was pledged to combat 'the untenable conditions of the society of today' and to aiding 'the social rise of the workers'. These contradictory elements in the programme were soon resolved. While continuing to pay lip-service to the protection of working-class interests, the nationalist basis of the party turned it in a clearly anti-socialist direction. The 1913 programme denounced what it called 'the teachings of the Social Democratic Party Saint Marx', which it deemed 'wrong and of immeasurable damage to the Germandom of central Europe'. Especially distasteful was Austrian Social Democracy's attitude of class solidarity towards the Slavic workers of the empire. It violated the DAP's first principle of national solidarity: 'The German employer took the cheaper Slav workers; but the red organisation refuses to give the German party veterans the protection to which they are entitled.' This nationalistic line of argument led directly to the conclusions which we have already encountered in the writings of Feder and Hitler: that the Marxist movement 'is led by Jews and closely allied with the big mobile [that is, 'international finance' - RB] capitalists'.

It is therefore hardly surprising to discover that the DAP supplied not only the name but several of the cadres for the Munich-based movement which Hitler joined towards the end of 1919. But here we are chiefly concerned with the DAP inasmuch as it serves us as a political barometer for the nationalist tensions which were developing in the period of Hitler's formative years, and which on his own testimony convinced him of the necessity to evolve a populist racialism that would supplant the 'anti-national' and 'dynastic' patriotism of the Hapsburg monarchy and Austrian aristocracy. It is also important to bear in mind that Hitler's nationalism initially defined itself negatively, not against the Jews, who were domiciled chiefly in Vienna, but the Slavs, whom he despised as backward and devoid of 'culture'. Neither had the question of Marxism or the workers' movement arisen at this early stage, since his life had thus far been spent either in his tiny Upper Austrian home town of Braunau, or the classrooms of the High School at Linz. Hitler's move to Vienna, where he unsuccessfully sought a place at the city's Academy of Fine Arts, soon added several new dimensions to his developing nationalist outlook:

In this period my eyes were opened to two menaces of which I had previously scarcely known the names, and whose terrible importance for the existence of the German people I certainly did not understand: Marxism and Jewry... who knows when I would have immersed myself in the doctrines and essence of Marxism if that period had not literally thrust my nose into the problem.

^[8]

In fact Hitler admits that his first impressions of Austrian Social Democracy, formed at long distance, were on the whole favourable:

I was profoundly pleased that it should carry on the struggle for universal suffrage and the secret ballot. For even then my intelligence told me that this must help to weaken the Hapsburg regime which I so hated. Consequently this activity of the Social Democracy was not displeasing to me.
[9]

And Hitler also claims he approved of Austrian Social Democracy's goal of 'improving the living conditions of the worker,' since that appeared to accord with his own predilection for a populist-flavoured nationalism. But precisely at this point, the national question, Hitler and Social Democracy parted company for ever. Their roads led along opposed class paths: 'What most repelled me was its hostile attitude towards the struggle for the preservation of Germanism, its disgraceful courting of the Slavic "comrade"...' [10] The manner in which Hitler made his first real contact with Social Democracy, and the indelible imprint it left on his petit-bourgeois nationalist consciousness, is vividly described in the following passage:

... at the age of 17 the word 'Marxism' was as yet little known to me, while 'Social Democracy' and socialism seemed to me identical concepts. Here again it required the fist of Fate to open my eyes to this unprecedented betrayal of the peoples. Up to that time I had known the Social Democratic Party only as an onlooker at a few mass demonstrations, without possessing even the slightest insight into the mentality of its adherents or the nature of its doctrine, but now, at one stroke, I came into contact with the products of its education and 'philosophy'. And in a few months I obtained what might otherwise have required decades: an understanding of a pestilential whore, cloaking herself as social virtue and brotherly love, from which I hope humanity will rid this earth with the greatest dispatch... [11]

The incident to which Hitler refers is his confrontation with a group of trade union workers on a Vienna construction site: [12]

From the very beginning it was none too pleasant. My clothing was still more or less in order, my speech cultivated, and my manner reserved... Perhaps I would not have concerned myself at all with my new environment if on the third or fourth day an event had not taken place which forced me at once to take a position. I was asked to join the organisation. My knowledge of trade union organisation was at that time practically non-existent. I could not have proved that its existence was either beneficial or harmful. When I was told that I had to join, I refused. [13]

Hitler's first sally against the fortress of trade unionism ended - unlike his last - in fiasco:

At the end of two weeks, I could no longer have joined, even if I had wanted to... no power in the world could have moved me to join an organisation whose members had meanwhile come to appear to me in so unfavourable a light... what I heard was of such a nature as to infuriate me in the extreme. These men rejected everything: the nation as an invention of the 'capitalistic' (how often was I forced to hear this single word!) classes; the fatherland as an instrument of the bourgeoisie for the exploitation of the working class; the authority of law as a means for oppressing the proletariat; the school as an institution for breeding slaves and slaveholders; religion as a means for stultifying the people and making them easier to exploit; morality as a symptom of stupid, sheeplike patience, etc. There was absolutely nothing which was not drawn through the mud of a terrifying depth. [14]

His every ideal challenged, refuted and spat upon, Hitler determined to fortify his own feeble arguments with a study of the enemy's propaganda. The result was ever more heated conflicts, until Hitler was forced to leave the building site or risk being 'thrown off the scaffolding' by his trade union opponents. Nor was this the end of the future fascist's one-man crusade against Marxism:

I was determined to go to work on another building in spite of my experience... The same old story began anew and ended very much the same as the first time. [15]

Small wonder that this petit-bourgeois bigot, full of delusions in his own artistic genius, puffed up with a snobbish contempt for those less educated and well-born than himself, and now driven to sully his artist's hands in cement and brick dust, asked the question: 'are these people human, worthy to belong to a great nation?', and added:

... if it is answered in the affirmative the struggle for my nationality really ceases to be worth the hardship and sacrifices which the best of us have to make for the sake of such scum; and if it is answered in the negative, our nation is pitifully poor in human beings. [16]

As if this trauma was not enough, it was compounded by an even more devastating experience a short time after. Hitler's clashes with trade union workers had made him aware of the real nature of the Austrian and international workers' movement - its foundation on firm class lines, and its adherence - even though more often than not formally - to the principle of international working-class solidarity. Far from serving as an unwitting agent in the achievement of Pan-German goals, it now became a living and growing threat to all those values and institutions which Hitler and countless other middle-class nationalists understood by the term 'Germanism': 'I pondered with anxious concern on the masses of those no longer belonging to their people, and saw them swelling to the proportions of a menacing army.'

[17]

And that was certainly a justifiable impression. Although founded some 26 years after the SPD, the Austrian Social Democratic Party expanded rapidly in the industrialised regions of the country, and most of all in Vienna. A class-based franchise, much on the lines of the Prussian system, prevented the party from securing the parliamentary representation its votes merited, [18] but even so, it was feared and hated by the movement's monarchist, clerical and bourgeois enemies. And in the immediate prewar period, when Hitler witnessed the party's mass activities at first hand, Austrian Social Democracy was in its most radical phase. This helps us to appreciate more fully the political import for Hitler's subsequent development of the following event:

With what changed feeling I now gazed at the endless columns of a mass demonstration of Viennese workers that took place one day as they marched four abreast. For nearly two hours I stood there watching with bated breath the gigantic human dragon slowly winding by! [19]

Hitler now felt compelled to study the press of the movement responsible for such an awesome parade of proletarian power and solidarity. He came to the conclusion that it was possible to shatter the grip of Social Democracy on the masses only by emulating what he took to be its methods of organisation and propaganda:

I now understood the significance of the brutal demand that I read only Red papers, attend only Red meetings, read only Red books, etc. With plastic clarity I saw before my eyes the inevitable result of this doctrine of intolerance... the masses love a commander more than a petitioner and feel inwardly more satisfied by a doctrine, tolerating no other besides itself... *If Social Democracy is opposed by a doctrine of greater truth, but equal brutality of methods, the latter will conquer*, though this may require the bitterest struggle. [20]

And such a doctrine of necessity could not, if it sought to win a foothold in the masses till now regarded as the preserve of Social Democracy, afford to repudiate openly all the goals embraced by the workers' movement. Stridently 'national' in its aims, the new anti-Marxist ideology had to steal the 'social' clothes of the enemy, while repudiating its class and internationalist basis and principles:

By my twentieth year I had learned to distinguish between a union as a means of defending the general social rights of the wage-earner, and obtaining better living conditions for him as an individual, and the trade union as an instrument of the party in the political class struggle. [21]

Here is the germ-cell of the 'Labour Front', a 'union' which while paying lip-service to the rights of the worker and the obligations of the employer, served as an instrument for binding the proletariat ever more tightly to the requirements of capitalist production, since the very principle of the 'Labour Front' denied to the worker both the right and opportunity to organise as a class independently of and against his exploiters. Labour Frontism, 'corporatism' and 'national syndicalism' - these are the very negations of trade unionism, as the workers of Germany, Italy and Spain have learned at the cost of unprecedented suffering and oppression.

The real nature and object of Hitler's 'national trade unionism' is not immediately apparent from his comments on the trade union question in *Mein Kampf*. For example, he says:

... to call the trade union movement in itself unpatriotic is nonsense and untrue to boot. Rather the contrary is true. If trade union activity strives and succeeds in bettering the lot of a class which is one of the basic supports of the nation, its work is not only not anti-patriotic or seditious, but 'national' in the truest sense of the word. For in this way it helps to create the social premises without which a general national education is unthinkable. It wins the highest merit by eliminating social cankers, attacking intellectual as well as physical infections, and thus helping to contribute to the general health of the body politic. Consequently, the question of their necessity is really superfluous. [22]

And this remained the public position of the Nazis on trade unionism right up to, and even after, their seizure of power. ^[23]

Herein lies one of the greatest dangers that fascism poses to the workers' movement; it seeks to trap the less politically aware worker, or even those more radical elements disenchanted with the trade union, reformist (or Stalinist) bureaucracy who have yet to find their way to a viable revolutionary alternative leadership. Fascism does so by presenting its 'left' face, its 'social' programme, playing down or even at times neglecting entirely the 'national' and consequently more clearly discernible bourgeois aspects of its policies. How the Nazis accomplished this manoeuvre so essential for their success, and yet so fraught with the constant risk of alienating either the bourgeois or plebeian supporters of fascism, will be discussed at some length in later chapters. Here we are concerned primarily with the origin and evolution of this strategic and tactical conception, which Hitler first began to formulate in his prewar years spent first in Vienna and then Munich. If we study more closely what Hitler has to say about the nature of his projected 'social' policy, it begins to reveal, despite all his anti-bourgeois invective and cloudiness of language, a pro-capitalist orientation of a special and, indeed, unique variety. Firstly, Hitler undertakes his criticism of bourgeois policies which prevailed in pre-1914 Austria and Germany on the foundations of the defence of private property, a position he was to uphold both theoretically and with the utmost physical force to the end of his life. ^[24] Thus we find the main target of his barbs to be not the magnates of heavy industry, whom, as we have already seen, Hitler regarded as the custodians of 'national' capital, but what he termed the 'political bourgeoisie' - that section of the bourgeoisie which has the task of formulating and carrying out policies on behalf of the entire class. The nature of Hitler's attack on the 'political bourgeoisie' raises some critical points of theory pertaining to the nature of the state and the contradictory and unstable relationships which evolve between a class and its leadership. In one of their earliest major works - *The German Ideology* - Marx and Engels traced the origin of the 'political bourgeoisie' to the economic principle of the division of labour which:

... manifests itself also in the ruling class as the division of mental and material labour so that inside this class one part appears as the thinkers of the class (its active, conceptive ideologists, who make the perfecting of the illusion of the class about itself their chief source of livelihood) while the others' attitude to these ideas is more passive and receptive, because they are in reality the active members of this class and have less time to make up illusions and ideas about themselves. Within this class this cleavage can even develop into a certain opposition and hostility between the two parts, which, however, in the case of a practical collision, in which the class itself is endangered, automatically comes to nothing. ^[25]

Written between 1845 and 1846, this work, like the *Communist Manifesto*, contains generalised formulations that subsequent historical events and class battles were to fill out with a richer and more complex content. Thus in Marx's classic historical works, *The Class Struggles in France* (1850) and *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1851-52) we find their author tracing in the finest detail and complexity the fluctuating interplay of class, parties, leaders and the state as they respond not only to the imperatives of current economic and social pressures, but ideologies, programmes, illusions and prejudices inherited from the past. And in writing his study of the rise to power of Napoleon's nephew, Marx also seized the opportunity it presented to enrich earlier generalisations made with Engels about the nature of the bourgeois state and bourgeois politicians. The period between the revolution of February 1848 and the *coup d'état* of Louis Bonaparte on 2 December 1851 proved that there was nothing 'automatic' about the way the productive section of the bourgeoisie resolved its differences with the politicians and journalists who ostensibly represented its interests. Indeed, the rule of both Bonapartes ^[26] proved that in order to defend its economic right to exploit the proletariat, the French bourgeoisie had to surrender many of its cherished political rights, and in so doing throw to the wolves its literary and political representatives, who could obviously only function and flourish under a regime which recognised parliamentary democracy and the freedom of the press. What Marx has to say on this subject not only pertains to the form of rule known as Bonapartism, but to fascism, which, in a far more thoroughgoing and ruthless manner, also sets itself the goal of saving and defending the bourgeoisie from economic expropriation by the proletariat *by expropriating it politically*:

The aristocracy of finance... condemned the parliamentary struggle of the party of Order with the executive power as a *disturbance of order*, and celebrated every victory of the President over its ostensible representatives as a *victory of order*... The industrial bourgeoisie, too, in its fanaticism for order, was angered by the squabbles of the parliamentary party of Order with the executive

power... the struggle to maintain its public interests, its own *class interests*, its *political power*, only troubled and upset it as it was a disturbance of private business... Still more unequivocally than in its falling out with its *parliamentary representatives* the bourgeoisie displayed its wrath against its literary representatives, its own press. The sentences to ruinous fines and shameless terms of imprisonment, on the verdicts of bourgeois juries, for every attack of bourgeois journalists on Bonaparte's usurpationist desires, for every attempt of the press to defend the political rights of the bourgeoisie against the executive power, astonished not merely France, but all Europe. While the *parliamentary party of Order*... declared the political rule of the bourgeoisie to be incompatible with the safety and existence of the bourgeoisie... *the extra-parliamentary of the bourgeoisie*, on the other hand, by its servility towards the President, by its vilification of parliament, by its brutal maltreatment of its own press, invited Bonaparte to suppress and annihilate its speaking and writing section, its politicians and its *literati*, its platform and its press, in order that it might then be able to pursue its private affairs with full confidence in the protection of a strong and unrestricted government. It declared unequivocally that it longed to get rid of its own political rule in order to get rid of the troubles and dangers of ruling... Thus the industrial bourgeoisie applauds with servile bravos the *coup d'état* of 2 December, the annihilation of parliament, the downfall of its own rule... As the executive authority which has made itself an independent power, Bonaparte feels it to be his mission to safeguard 'bourgeois order'. But the strength of this bourgeois order lies in the middle class [bourgeoise]. He looks on himself, therefore, as the representative of the middle class and issues decrees in this sense. Nevertheless, he is somebody solely due to the fact that he has broken the political power of this middle class and daily breaks it anew. Consequently, he looks on himself as the adversary of the political and literary power of the middle class. ^[27]

And so we are brought back to the young Hitler, who without doubt saw himself, even in his Vienna days, as a future vanquisher of bourgeois politicians and 'literati', even though the methods he would employ differed in many ways from those of Louis Bonaparte. ^[28] He had nothing but scorn for what he considered to be their pusillanimous reluctance to wage a war of extermination against Marxism:

Before two years [in Vienna] had passed, the theory as well as the technical methods of Social Democracy were clear to me. I understood the infamous spiritual terror which this movement exerts, particularly in the bourgeoisie, which is neither morally nor mentally equal to such attacks... [Its tactics]... will lead to success with almost mathematical certainty unless the opposing side learns to combat poison gas with poison gas. It is our duty to inform all weaklings that this is a question of to be or not to be... Terror at the place of employment, in the factory, in the meeting hall, and on the occasion of mass demonstrations will always be successful unless opposed by equal terror. ^[29]

With his reference to social democratic or trade union 'terror at the place of employment, [and] in the factory,' Hitler ranges himself quite openly on the side of the bourgeoisie - not its political or literary wing, but the industrial, whom the former by their political ineptitude or cowardice, were abandoning to the Marxist-led masses. And even when, out of demagogic considerations, he finds it expedient to criticise the lack of a 'social' attitude on the part of the employers, he still manages to divert his polemic away from the real culprits towards the same 'political bourgeoisie':

Since on innumerable occasions the bourgeoisie has in the clumsiest and most immoral way opposed demands which were justified from the universal point of view... even the most self-respecting worker was driven out of the trade union organisation into [Marxist] political activity. Millions of workers... started out as enemies of the SPD in their innermost soul, but their resistance was overcome in a way which was sometimes utterly insane; that is, when the bourgeois parties adopted a hostile attitude toward every demand of a social character... ^[30] Never can our political bourgeoisie make good its sins in this direction, for by resisting all attempts to do away with social abuses, they sowed hatred and seemed to justify even the assertions of the mortal enemies of the entire nation, to the effect that only the SPD represented the interests of working people. Thus... they created the moral basis for the actual existence of the trade unions, the organisation which has always been the most effective pander to the [Marxist] political party... Proportionally as the political bourgeoisie did not understand... the importance of trade union organisation, and resisted it, the Social Democrats took possession of

the contested movement. Thus, far-sightedly it created a firm foundation which on several critical occasions has stood up when all other support failed. ^[31]

So the main - in fact it would seem only - blame for the rise of a Marxist-influenced trade union movement lay with the bourgeois political parties, the so-called 'political bourgeoisie'. The actual beneficiaries and instigators of this harsh industrial regime - big employers of the Krupp - Stumm - Kirdorf variety - were completely overlooked. And well they might be, for it was here that Hitler sought to win support for his policy of all-out struggle against the workers' movement, a strategy he was in the process of formulating when he wrote these lines. To return to Hitler's early opinions on 'political' trade unionism, his Vienna experiences convinced him that under the leadership of the Austrian Social Democrats, it:

... had no use except as a battering ram in the class struggle. Its purpose was to cause the collapse of the whole arduously constructed economic edifice by persistent blows, thus, the more easily, after removing its economic foundations, to prepare the same lot for the edifice of the state. ^[32]

And here too, Hitler was critical of the bourgeoisie's political representatives:

The bourgeois camp was indignant at this obvious insincerity of Social Democratic tactics, but did not draw from it the slightest inference with regard to their own conduct... Instead of attacking and seizing the enemy's position, the bourgeoisie preferred to let themselves be pressed to the wall and finally had recourse to utterly inadequate makeshifts, which remained ineffectual because they came too late, and moreover were easy to reject because they were too insignificant... like a menacing storm-cloud, the 'free trade union' hung even then [that is, before 1914] over the political horizon and the existence of the individual. It was one of the most frightful instruments of terror against the security and independence of the national economy, the solidity of the state, and personal freedom. ^[33]

And when Hitler refers to 'national economy' and 'personal freedom' it is perfectly clear that he has the economy and freedom of the bourgeoisie in mind, for it was against this class that the 'frightful instruments of terror' were exclusively directed. If Hitler also felt threatened by the power of the organised working class - and he most certainly did, as his own testimony proves - then that was because, anti-bourgeois rhetoric notwithstanding, he identified himself with and tied his fortunes to the destiny of this same class, Hitler's anti-Semitism likewise flows from his essentially bourgeois world outlook, and in fact can be shown to have its immediate origins not in any family or local tradition, but in his pathological hatred of Marxism.

Hitler's account of how he became an anti-Semite shows that far from opposing Marxism for its 'Jewish' origins, he came to despise the Jews because of their disproportionate role in the Austrian Social Democratic movement. Hitler's racialism was a direct product of his ingrained fear of the organised proletariat:

Only a knowledge of the Jews provides the key with which to comprehend the inner, and consequently real, aims of Social Democracy. The erroneous conceptions of the aim and meaning of this party fall from our eyes like veils, once we come to know this people, and from the fog and mist of social phrases rises the leering grimace of Marxism. ^[34]

That Hitler's anti-Marxism preceded his anti-Semitism chronologically as well as mentally is clear from his own testimony. If we are to believe Hitler, his father was not in the least anti-Semitic. Indeed, 'in the course of his life he had arrived at more or less cosmopolitan views which, despite his pronounced national sentiments, not only remained intact, but also influenced me to some extent'. ^[35] Neither did the 'Jewish question' come up with any force at the high school in Linz. There, Hitler even found himself instinctively defending Jews on the rare occasions when a fellow pupil made an anti-Semitic comment:

There were few Jews in Linz. In the course of the centuries their outward appearance had become Europeanised and had taken on a human look [sic!], in fact, I even took them for Germans. The absurdity of this idea did not dawn on me because I saw no distinguishing feature but the strange religion. The fact that they had, as I believed, been persecuted on this account sometimes almost turned my distaste at unfavourable remarks about them into horror. Thus far I did not so much as suspect the existence of an organised opposition to the Jews. ^[36]

Nationalist prejudices at Linz were, as we have already noted, directed almost exclusively at the Czechs. It was only when Hitler arrived in Vienna that the veil began to fall from his eyes. And even then, the

future scourge of European Jewry was slow to learn. The trouble was that despite their 'sub-human' character, the Jews looked just like anyone else:

Notwithstanding that Vienna in those days counted nearly 200 000 Jews among its two million inhabitants, I did not see them... the Jew was still characterised for me by nothing but his religion, and therefore, on grounds of human tolerance, I maintained the tone, particularly that of the Viennese anti-Semitic press, seemed to me unworthy of the cultural tradition of a great nation. I was oppressed by the memory of certain occurrences in the Middle Ages, which I should not have liked to see repeated [sic!]. ^[37]

Only when Hitler began to concern himself with Viennese political life did anti-Semitism begin to intrude into his thinking. Hostile to the liberal-democratic press, which cared little for Hitler's nationalist aspirations, and already deeply disturbed by the power of the even more avowedly 'anti-national' workers' movement, he then made what he considered to be a world-shattering discovery:

What had to be reckoned heavily against the Jews in my eyes was when I became acquainted with their activity in the press, art, literature and the theatre... It sufficed to look at a billboard, to study the names behind the horrible trash they advertised, to make you hard for a long time to come. This was pestilence, spiritual pestilence, worse than the Black Death of olden times, and the people was being infected with it... The fact that nine-tenths of all literary filth, artistic trash, and theatrical idiocy can be set to the account of a people, constituting hardly one hundredth of all the country's inhabitants, could simply not be talked away: it was the plain truth. ^[38]

So the struggle against the bourgeoisie's 'literati' was to be waged with more discrimination than was the case under the rule of the two Bonapartes. And here there was a certain parallel with the bogus war National Socialism was later to wage against 'capital,' personified by the same ubiquitous - and highly convenient - Jew. But it was only when Hitler looked long and hard at the press of his greatest enemy - the workers' movement - that he became a confirmed anti-Semite:

... when I learned to look for the Jew in all branches of cultural and artistic life and in its various manifestations, I suddenly encountered him in a place where I would have least expected to find him. When I recognised the Jew as the leader of the Social Democracy, the scales dropped from my eyes, a long soul struggle had reached its conclusion. ^[39]

In other words, it required a supposed Jewish control over the affairs of Social Democracy before Hitler finally accepted as true the allegations made in anti-Semitic papers and pamphlets that the Jews were the ringleaders in a vast conspiracy to destroy the German nation:

I gradually became aware that the Social Democratic press was directed predominantly by Jews; yet I did not attribute any special significance to this circumstance, since conditions were exactly the same in the other papers. Yet one fact seemed conspicuous: there was not one paper with Jews working on it which could have been regarded as truly national... I swallowed with disgust and tried to read this type of Marxist press production, but my revulsion became so unlimited in so doing that I endeavoured to become more closely acquainted with the men who manufactured these compendiums of knavery. From the publisher down, they were all Jews. ^[40]

Now the struggle against Jewry could be fought without any reservations. The Jew was the leader of the proletariat, a revolutionary. From members of parliament to:

... trade union secretaries, the heads of organisations or street agitators... the party with whose petty representatives I had been carrying on the most violent struggle for months was, as to leadership, almost exclusively in the hands of a foreign people... to my deep and joyful satisfaction I had at last come to the conclusion that the Jew was no German. ^[41]

Neither were original 'discoveries'. We have already noted how from its inception the German labour movement was branded by its Junker and bourgeois enemies as a foreign creation, usually French. Neither were the Jews regarded by the 'best' circles as true Germans. They were excluded from membership of professional associations, student societies, and barred from holding commissions in the armed forces. Here Hitler was treading on well-worn ground. But standing on the shoulders - or rather another part of the anatomies - of the German and Austrian reactionaries, Hitler unified these two conceptions to forge an ideology which while utterly devoid of any scientific or historical foundation proved itself to be an immensely potent force in rallying the middle class and demoralised unorganised sections of the working class against the labour movement. This was a crucial 'nodal point' in Hitler's

transition from a run-of-the-mill petit-bourgeois nationalist into a fully-fledged counter-revolutionary leader:

For me this was the time of the greatest spiritual upheaval I have ever had to go through. I had ceased to be a weak-kneed cosmopolitan and become an anti-Semite. Just once more - and this was the last time - fearful, oppressive thoughts came to me in profound anguish... Have we an objective right to struggle for our self-preservation or is this justified only subjectively within ourselves?

And again it was Hitler's attitude to Marxism that tipped the scales:

As I delved more deeply into the teachings of Marxism and thus in tranquil clarity submitted the deeds of the Jewish people to contemplation, Fate itself gave me its answer. The Jewish doctrine of Marxism rejects the aristocratic principle of Nature and replaces the eternal privilege of power and strength by the mass of numbers and their dead weight. Thus, it denies the value of personality in man, contests the significance of nationality and race, and thereby withdraws from humanity the premise of its existence and culture... If, with the help of his Marxist creed, the Jew is victorious over the other peoples of the world, his crown will be the funeral wreath of humanity... Eternal Nature inexorably avenges the infringement of her commands. Hence today I believe that I am acting in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator: by defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the work of the Lord. ^[42]

The main source of Hitler's 'information' on the Jewish question appears to have been the Christian Social Party of the Viennese Mayor, Dr Karl Lüger. Here too, Hitler's conversion from opponent to supporter was protracted:

When I arrived in Vienna... the man and the movement seemed 'reactionary' in my eyes. My common sense of justice, however, forced me to change this judgement in proportion as I had occasion to become acquainted with the man and his work; and slowly my fair judgement turned to unconcealed admiration... How many of my basic principles were upset by this change in my attitude toward the Christian Social movement! My views with regard to anti-Semitism thus succumbed to the passage of time, and this was my greatest transformation of all! ^[43]

But Hitler learned more than gutter anti-Semitism from Lüger's party. For the first time, he saw in its activities and propaganda techniques the possibility of constructing a movement capable of fighting and defeating the Marxists on their own terrain. For in distinct contrast with the Austrian Pan-German movement under the leadership of Georg von Schönerer ^[44] (a movement whose nationalist goals Hitler shared) it did not disdain 'popular' slogans and tactics to win support for its reactionary policies. Where Hitler differed with Lüger was over the latter's futile struggle to preserve the nationally non-viable Austrian monarchy, instead of which he should have been, in Hitler's judgement, directing all his energies towards the unification of the two German-speaking states. What Hitler learned from Lüger's skilfully directed and pitched propaganda was nevertheless crucial in the subsequent development of Nazi political strategy:

Dr Lüger was the opposite of Schönerer. His thorough knowledge of men enabled him to judge the possible forces correctly, at the same time preserving him from underestimating existing institutions, and perhaps for this very reason taught him to make use of these institutions as instruments for the achievement of his purposes. *He understood only too well that the political fighting power of the upper bourgeoisie at the present time was but slight and inadequate for achieving the victory of a great movement.* He therefore laid the greatest stress in his political activity on winning over *the classes whose existence was threatened and therefore tended to spur rather than paralyse the will to fight.* Likewise he was inclined to make use of all existing institutions in his favour, drawing from these old sources of power the greatest possible profit for his own movement. *Thus he adjusted his new party primarily to the middle class menaced with destruction, and thereby assured himself of a following that was difficult to shake...* ^[45]

Depicted here are two of the most vital components of Nazi strategy - the exploitation of existing political institutions in order to seize power (and then destroy them!) and the creation of a mass movement of reaction recruited largely from the ranks of the petit-bourgeoisie. Hitler also found Lüger's strategy confirmed by his own experiences in Vienna, since he moved in Bohemian circles frequented by many like himself who had failed to establish themselves as stable members of the petit-bourgeoisie, and yet who feared the drop into the despised proletariat as a fate worse than death:

The environment of my youth consisted of petit-bourgeois circles, hence of a world having very little relation to the purely manual worker... the cleft between this class, which in an economic sense is by no means so brilliantly situated, and the manual worker, is often deeper than we imagine. The reason for this hostility... lies in the fear of a social group, which has but recently raised itself above the level of the manual worker, that it will sink back into the old despised class, or at least become identified with it. To this, in many cases, we must add the repugnant memory of the cultural poverty of this lower class, the frequent vulgarity of its social intercourse; the petit-bourgeois' own position in society, however insignificant it may be, makes any contact with this outgrown stage of life and culture intolerable. ^[46]

Precisely. And Hitler was able to make this sober and astute analysis of the anti-proletarian prejudices of the lower middle class not simply because he shared them in full measure, rather because he sought to transform them into a political doctrine which later became the means for welding this class into a compact counter-revolutionary force. From his Vienna experiences he gleaned one fundamental political truth - that in the age of mass movements and revolutions, those seeking to counter the proletarian movement could not hope to succeed by addressing appeals to the ruling powers that be. This was the great flaw in the Austrian Pan-German movement:

Theoretically speaking, all the Pan-German's thoughts were correct, but since he [Schönerer] lacked the force and astuteness to transmit his theoretical knowledge to the masses - that is, to put it in a form suited to the receptivity of the broad masses, which is and remains exceedingly limited - all his knowledge was visionary wisdom, and could never become practical reality... he saw only to a limited extent the extraordinary limitation of the will to fight in so-called 'bourgeois' circles, due... to their economic position which makes the individual fear to lose too much and thereby holds him in check. And yet... a philosophy can hope for victory only if the broad masses adhere to the new doctrine and declare their readiness to undertake the necessary struggle... Since Schönerer and his followers addressed themselves principally to bourgeois circles, the result was bound to be very feeble and tame. ^[47]

And it is at this point that Hitler returns to the by now familiar theme of the political failings of the German bourgeoisie. Again, his criticism can in no way be equated with his venomous attacks on Marxism, ^[48] even though fascist demagogy usually tries to maintain the utterly false impression that it pursues a middle course between the two great class camps:

Though some people fail to suspect it, the German bourgeoisie, especially in its upper circles, is pacific to the point of positive self-abnegation, where internal affairs of the nation or state are concerned... in times of good government such an attitude makes these classes extremely valuable to the state; but in times of an inferior regime it is positively ruinous, to make possible the waging of any really serious struggle, the Pan-German movement should have above all dedicated itself to winning the masses. ^[49]

But it could not have done so even if its leaders saw the necessity of such a policy, for like nearly all nationalist politicians of the period, they were totally unsuited to employing the type of wild rabble-raising and social demagogy needed to set such a movement in motion. Their entire social 'breeding' and political outlook and training inhibited them from attempting what would have been a complete *volte face* in their ways of deciding political questions. Hence the need for a new type of politician, a 'man of the people', able to speak the language of the dispossessed and the frustrated, the bitter, the prejudiced and the confused, and yet holding fast to basic bourgeois principles such as the defence of private property, religion (albeit of a non-denominational variety) and, of course, the 'nation'. While adopting the long-term strategic goals of the imperialists as his own, the fascist 'plebeian' fights for them in his own way, and yields nothing to the 'political' bourgeoisie in questions of tactics and methods. Herein lies the basis and origin of the many clashes and even open ruptures which flared up between National Socialism and the German ruling class, not only in the period of Hitler's rise from obscurity to power, but even afterwards. That is why Hitler's 'Vienna period' was perhaps the most crucial of his entire life insofar as it gave a definitive contour to his political outlook and aims, and began to indicate ways and means of fulfilling them:

I had set foot in this town while still half a boy and I left it for Munich in the spring of 1912 as a man grown quiet and grave. In it I obtained the foundations for a philosophy in general and a political view in particular which later I only needed to supplement in details, but which never left me... I do not know what my attitude toward the Jews, Social Democracy or rather Marxism as a

whole, the social question, etc, would be today if at such an early time the pressure of destiny - and my own study - had not built up a basic stock of personal opinions with me. ^[50]

‘... the pressure of destiny...’ An apt phrase for the conjuncture and penetration of the many cultural, religious, political, economic and social forces in the person of the young Hitler, forces which began to mould him for his role as the executioner of the German - and international - workers’ movement. But there was nothing pre-ordained about this process. As the penniless and unknown Hitler made his way from Vienna to the Bavarian city that was to serve as the fortress of his movement, the German Social Democratic Party was emerging triumphantly from its greatest-ever election victory - 4.25 million votes and a Reichstag delegation of 110 deputies. It was not Hitler’s ‘fist of fate’ that enabled him, 21 years on, to lay low this ostensibly invincible Goliath. It was the supine cowardice, vacillations and theoretical decay of its own leadership. This, more than any other single factor, put flesh and blood around the skeleton of Hitler’s early political ideas, and transformed the fifth child of an insignificant customs official in an equally insignificant Austrian border town into the dictator of continental Europe. These events became significant for Germany and mankind more by virtue of what others failed to do, than by what Hitler did. But if it is true that fascism is the punishment exacted by history on the proletariat for its failure to carry through the social revolution, then it is necessary to study in some detail the make-up of the jailers, torturers and executioners who carry out the sentence. In this sense, the evolution of Hitler’s political ideas is highly instructive, and it is a theme to which we shall return more than once.

Notes

1. LD Trotsky: ‘The Class, the Party, the Leadership’ (20 August 1940), *The Spanish Revolution (1931-1939)* (New York, 1973), p 361.
2. A Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (London, 1943), pp 6-7.
3. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 12.
4. This is the usual English translation of the German ‘*volkisch*’ which is in reality a far more complex term, conveying a populist flavoured racialism rather than orthodox nationalism.
5. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, pp 12-13.
6. Dr Leopold Pötsch, Hitler’s history teacher at the Linz ‘Realschule’.
7. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 15.
8. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, pp 21-37.
9. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 37.
10. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 38.
11. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, pp 38-39.
12. It seems that Hitler had been compelled, in the course of his Bohemian existence in the Austrian capital, to supplement his meagre resources by manual labour.
13. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 39.
14. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, pp 39-40.
15. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, pp 40-41.
16. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 41.
17. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 41.
18. In 1896, the Austrian constitution divided voters into five groups: aristocrats, the bourgeoisie (manufacturers, merchants and bankers), town and city tax payers, workers and peasants. The voters in the last two groups, which comprised the overwhelming majority of the population, elected 13 fewer representatives than the numerically insignificant aristocracy!
19. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 41.
20. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, pp 42-43.
21. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 46.

22. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 46.

23. ‘It is a lie, when the SPD asserts that Hitler is going to smash the trade unions.’ (*Nazi Election Leaflet*, No 33, Hamburg, 1932) ‘Not that we want to destroy the trade unions. Workers! Your institutions are sacred to us National Socialists, they are not to be touched. Workers! I give you my word, not only shall we preserve everything that exists, but we are going to extend the protection and the rights of the workers.’ (*The Day of National Labour*, Proclamation on 1 May 1933) The very next day the ‘sacred’ unions were abolished!

24. The record on this all-important question speaks for itself. Apart from the already-quoted reference to the rights of private property in *Mein Kampf*, we have the following equally unequivocal statements on the same subject made at various stages in Hitler’s career: ‘In contrast to men like Hermann Esser, Hitler never permitted himself to be caught up in such [socialist] demagoguery. He declared that as long as private property was recognised as one of the foundations of national life, he would not yield, irrespective of how bad the rulers of various states had been. The NSDAP adopted this point of view.’ (*Memoirs of Alfred Rosenberg* (Chicago and New York, 1949), p 204) Rosenberg was here relating Hitler’s attitude to the referendum organised by the SPD and KPD to secure the expropriation without compensation of the former German princes. At a meeting called in Bamberg on 14 February 1926 to determine Nazi policy towards the referendum, Hitler came out strongly against the party ‘radicals’ headed by the Strasser brothers and Goebbels, who were for backing the referendum in order to hold and extend Nazi influence amongst the workers: ‘Nationalisation, or socialisation... is nothing but dilettantism, not to say Bolshevism... I have never said that all enterprises should be socialised. On the contrary, I have maintained that we might socialise enterprises prejudicial to the nation. Unless they were so guilty, I should consider it a crime to destroy essential elements in our economic life... there is only one economic system, and that is responsibility and authority on the part of directors and executives... That is how it has been for thousands of years, and that is how it will always be.’ (O Strasser, quoting Hitler, *Hitler and I* (Boston, 1940), pp 11-113) This extract is taken from Strasser’s account of his two meetings with Hitler on 21 and 22 May 1930, which led to his defection from the Nazis on the grounds that Hitler was ‘sold to the capitalists’. ‘Private property cannot be maintained in the age of democracy, it is conceivable only if the people have a sound idea of authority and personality... All the worldly goods which we possess we owe to the struggle of the chosen... It is an impossibility that part of the people recognises private ownership while another part denies it. Such a struggle splits the people. The struggle lasts until one side emerges victor.’ These remarks, startling both for their frankness and perspicacity, were made to a secret meeting of industrialists and bankers at the Reichstag President’s residence on 20 February 1933. Hitler was appealing for financial and political support from big business in the elections scheduled for 5 March (*Nuremberg Document D-203*) ‘I absolutely insist on protecting private property. It is natural and salutary that the individual should be inspired by the wish to devote a part of the income from his work to the building up and expanding of a family estate. Suppose the estate consists of a factory. I regard it as axiomatic that this factory will be better run by one of the members of the family than it would by a state functionary... In this sense, we must encourage private initiative.’ (*Hitler’s Secret Conversations* (New York, 1953), p 294, being a day-by-day record of Hitler’s wartime ‘conversations’ - in reality monologues - with his most intimate party colleagues.) ‘The creative force not only shapes but also takes what it shapes under its wing and directs it. That is what we generally mean by such phrases as private capital or private property... Therefore the future will not belong, as the Communist holds, to the Communist ideal of equality, but on the contrary, the farther humanity moves along the road of evolution, the more individualised achievements will be... The basis for all real higher development, indeed for the future development of all mankind, will therefore be found in the encouragement of private initiative.’ (Hitler’s speech to 100 arms manufacturers, 26 June 1944, quoted in A Speer, *Inside the Third Reich* (London, 1970), pp 359-60) Yet we still find historians prepared to take Hitler’s ‘anti-capitalism’ seriously!

25. K Marx and F Engels, *The German Ideology* (Moscow, 1964), p 61.

26. It is not strictly accurate to say that Marx and Engels had never considered this problem before 1848. In *The Holy Family* (1844), they noted how Napoleon, while understanding that the 'modern state' was 'based on the unhampered development of bourgeois society, on the free movement of private interest', and undertaking to 'recognise and protect that basis', nevertheless 'regarded the state as an end in itself and civil life only as its treasurer and his subordinate which must have no will of its own... If he despotically oppressed the liberalism of bourgeois society he showed no more pity for its essential material interests, trade and industry, whenever they conflicted with his political interests. His scorn of industrial business men was the complement to his scorn of ideologists.' (K Marx and F Engels, *The Holy Family* (Moscow, 1956), p 166)

27. K Marx, 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte', *Selected Works*, Volume 1 (Moscow, 1962), pp 318-41.

28. However they shared Bonaparte's use of corrupted plebeian elements - his so-called Society of 10 December, whose members occupations Marx listed as 'vagabonds, discharged soldiers, discharged jailbirds, escaped galley slaves, swindlers, mountebanks, *lazzaroni*, pickpockets, tricksters, gamblers, procurers, brothel-keepers, porters, *litterati*, organ-grinders, rag-pickers, knife-grinders, tinkers, beggars - in short, the whole indefinite disintegrated mass thrown hither and thither, which the French term *la boheme*'.

29. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, pp 43-44.

30. The Hitler regime's reactions to these same demands will be discussed in Chapter XXVI, 'Capital and Labour in the Third Reich'.

31. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, pp 45-48.

32. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 46.

33. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, pp 49-50.

34. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 51.

35. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 51.

36. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 52.

37. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 51.

38. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 52.

39. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 60.

40. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 61.

41. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 61.

42. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, pp 64-65.

43. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 55.

44. Like Hitler, Schönerer depicted the Jews as fomenters of revolution: 'There is no place where we do not see them in league with the forces of rebellion... Our racial anti-Semitism is not the result of religious intolerance. Rather, it is the indisputable evidence of a nation's new strength and self-confidence, the firm display of national feeling... every loyal son of his nation must see in anti-Semitism the greatest national progress of this century...' (Speech to the Austrian Parliament, April 1887)

45. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, pp 99-100.

46. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, pp 22-23.

47. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, pp 99-101.

48. Thus one of many examples runs: 'No more than a hyena abandons carrion does a Marxist abandon treason... If at the beginning of the War and during the War twelve or fifteen thousand of these Hebrew corrupters of the people had been held under poison gas... the sacrifice of millions at the front would not have been in vain... On the day when Marxism is smashed in Germany, her fetters will in truth be broken for ever.' (Hitler, *Mein*

Kampf, pp 679-82) As far as poison gas was concerned, Hitler was to achieve his aim more than four hundred fold in the gas chambers of Auschwitz.

49. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 101.

50. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 125.

Fascism in Germany. Robin Blick 1975

Chapter X: No Man's Land

The Swastika on the helmet of steel

Black-White-Red band ^[1]

Is known throughout the land.

Workman, workman, what will become of you

When the Ehrhardt Brigade stands ready for the fight?

The Brigade of Ehrhardt knocks everything to bits.

Woe to you, woe to you, workman, son of a bitch.

(Song of the Captain Hermann Ehrhardt 'Free Corps' Brigade)

The German Reich is a Republic. Political authority emanates from the people... Freedom of association for the preservation and promotion of labour and economic conditions is guaranteed to everyone and all vocations. All agreements and measures attempting to restrict or restrain this freedom are unlawful. (Articles 1 and 151 of the Weimar Constitution)

'Political power...', says the *Communist Manifesto*, 'is merely the organised power of one class for oppressing another.' ^[2] The key word is organised, for like all the general propositions of historical materialism, those pertaining to the state must be concretised and filled out through study of the class struggle in particular periods and countries. We have already noted how, because of its unique development, the German bourgeoisie found itself able to exert political influence only indirectly, mediating its enormous economic power and dominance over the proletariat through the caste of state bureaucrats and officials selected from the Prussian squirearchy, the Junkers. The war of 1914-18 and the ensuing collapse of the Hohenzollern monarchy did not eliminate this characteristic of the German bourgeoisie, rather they changed the bases on which the process of the mediation of state power continued. The war accelerated two political trends already at work - one, the search for a means of securing collaboration with the right flank of Social Democracy; the other, a drive towards militarisation of political, economic and social life with a consequent subverting of the most basic democratic liberties and rights. But the great irony of the war - and one to which we have already referred more than once - was that these two trends, far from running counter to each other as they had done under Bismarck and were to do later under the Bonapartist regime of von Papen, for a brief period approached, though never quite attained, parallel courses.

While Social Democratic Party leaders and the High Command could jointly mobilise the resources of the nation for military victory without disruption from 'below', the latent tensions which always existed between reformist labour and the ruling classes could be smothered quite successfully. In this way, the optical illusion was conjured up in the early months of the war (an illusion Hitler depicted as a permanent reality) that the class struggle had been abolished in Germany. But on each and every occasion when the previously silent masses began to stir and speak, fissures began to open up in this strangest of all united fronts. The arrest and jailing in May 1916 of Karl Liebknecht for his consistent and public stand against the war immediately provoked not only a strike on his behalf by an estimated 60 000 Berlin factory workers, but a deep-going split in the ranks of the SPD. The expulsion of a majority of the Berlin party executive committee's members for supporting the strike helped create the organisational nucleus for the oppositional grouping that a year later formed the Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany (USPD). In turn, as the centrists and Lefts won more support from the war-weary, overworked and poorly-fed working class, the SPD leaders had to engage in a series of left manoeuvres to stem the haemorrhage from their ranks. Ebert, the super-patriot and hater of revolution, even went so far as to order his party officials to endorse the anti-war strike of January 1918 ^[3] lest it come under the exclusive leadership of the Lefts, and so develop in a revolutionary direction.

The zigzag course forced on the SPD leaders throughout and after the war exemplifies the Marxist theory of bureaucracy, pioneered by Lenin in his deep-going analysis of the degeneration of the Second International and the initial stages of bureaucratisation in the Soviet Union, and then enriched by Trotsky in his many and brilliant writings on the nature and role of the Stalinist bureaucracy both as regards the Soviet Union and its impact on the world class struggle through the medium of the Communist International. The SPD and ADGB bureaucracy was not a class, even though, like its future counterpart in the Soviet Union, it constantly struggled to secure for itself an independent position in German society. Craving respectability in the eyes of the bourgeoisie, aping its manners and style of dress, and raising

himself above the mass of proletarians to the standards of life of the stolid German petit-bourgeois, the SPD or ADGB functionary remained, whatever his subjective delusions of grandeur, a paid official of the reformist wing of the German labour movement. His social privileges and conservative outlook suited him admirably for the role of 'labour lieutenant of the bourgeoisie', but only for as long as he continued to draw his salary from the party treasury. Whether in a workers' or capitalist state, the party bureaucrat represents that portion of the workers' movement which has, through a whole range of mediations and agencies, arisen as a response to the corrupting pressure of imperialism on the workers' movement. And because of this contradictory relationship that the bureaucracy has with both imperialism and the working class, it is unable to pursue a clear-cut policy. Its survival depends upon a series of pragmatic improvisations, about-turns and somersaults, all of which have but one aim - the preservation of its own material privileges.

Its organic tendency is to seek to muffle the impact of the clash of classes, for it requires social peace in order to enjoy and extend its privileges. It therefore sees its role as one of buffer between the bourgeoisie and proletariat, and makes many adjustments in the realm of ideology to further this role of mediator, twisting the vocabulary of socialism often out of all recognition as it does so (this was the basic driving force behind Bernstein's attack on revolutionary Marxism, and the many subsequent attempts to blunt the cutting edge of the Marxist dialectic). But the bureaucracy is a buffer with a difference. *It is not an independent social class.* It remains tied to organisations founded, built and financed by the working class and can only hope to go on enjoying the rights and privileges which it has usurped from the proletariat by holding onto a sizable proportion, if not the majority, of those in whose name the bureaucracy claims to speak. Thus while the bureaucracy stands or falls with the rule of capital (for as a mediator in the class war, it must at all costs seek to maintain the rule of the bourgeoisie, and not its overthrow), neither can it sever the umbilical cord which ties it to the organisations whose aim it has perverted. If the bourgeoisie decides to make an end of independent working-class organisations - and this is the essence of fascism - then it must also, despite Social Democracy's many, invaluable services to capitalism in the past, *make an end of the bureaucracy as well.* Herein resides the key to the understanding of one of the greatest and, for many, the most perplexing of all ironies of German history: that the party which created the Weimar Constitution and was its most fervent defender, *was also outlawed by it.*

More than any other element of the political 'superstructure', constitutions embody and codify the accumulated illusions and prejudices of men. This is not to say of course that constitutions do not serve as screens for the rule of a single class. But they carry out this function imperfectly, sometimes even to such an extent that the bourgeoisie can be compelled in certain circumstances to tear up its own constitution.

^[4] The seemingly absurd spectacle of a bourgeoisie rising up in revolt against its own rule often leads formalistic thinkers to conclude that fascism contains a 'revolutionary' or anti-capitalist element, since it uproots institutions and subverts rights which the bourgeoisie itself has fought for - with varying amounts of energy and success - in the past. We will return to this aspect of fascism again, but it is first necessary to separate out the various forces which brought the Weimar Constitution into being before passing on to those which occasioned its demise. Like all other forms of thought - law, philosophy, etc - a constitution is an abstraction of real material relations, both past and present. Engels warned against simplistic thinking in this field when he wrote:

The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure - political forms of the class struggle and its results, to wit: constitutions established by the victorious class after a successful battle, etc, juridical forms... - also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their form. ^[5]

Weimar illustrates this perfectly. Like nearly all constitutions, it issued out of a profound social and political upheaval which either broke up or seriously undermined the previous forms of domination - ideological as well as institutional - through which the bourgeoisie had exerted its dictatorship over the proletariat. But although the Weimar Constitution can justly be described as one of the most systematic expositions and codifications of bourgeois democracy, the German bourgeoisie can hardly be credited with having fought for its introduction. For the most part they viewed its articles proclaiming the sovereignty and rights of the people with the gravest disapproval and apprehension. Therefore in the sense implied by Engels, this class cannot be regarded as 'victorious'. The real victory, such as it was, went to Social Democracy and those liberal elements closest to them organised in the German Democratic Party (DDP).

But neither could the bourgeoisie actively oppose the reforms proposed by Social Democracy and subsequently formalised - though by no means consistently implemented - under the Weimar Constitution. With the army crumbling away before its eyes, the ruling class quickly saw that it lacked the material means to suppress the deep-going movement in the masses for democracy, peace and social change. The only alternative to delegating governmental powers to the Ebert leadership was, as we have already seen, a social and not political revolution. This alliance, forged in the heat of imperialist war and the threat of proletarian revolution, was purely one of necessity so far as the dominant sectors of the bourgeoisie were concerned. On the other hand, the leaders of Social Democracy quite sincerely believed that the pact of 9 November concluded with Gröner and the leaders of old Germany was ushering in an entire era of peaceful and fruitful collaboration between the reformist bureaucracy and the German bourgeoisie. Illusions, as Engels pointed out, can exert a powerful influence on the course of history, especially when they grip not merely leaders, but as they did in Germany, millions.

Weimar also illustrates another tenet of historical materialism; namely, that ideas, institutions and the other aspects of the superstructure no more reflect the material basis of society immediately than they do perfectly. The Weimar Constitution became law in August 1919, yet the conditions which had given rise to it - the enforced alliance between Social Democracy and the bourgeoisie against the revolution - had already passed away. Certainly the threat of proletarian revolution remained, but its initial thrusts had either been diverted by the creation of the Ebert government or crushed by Free Corps murder squads under the direction of Minister of Defence Gustav Noske. The bourgeoisie, military leaders and of course Germany's old rulers, the Junkers, were by this time already finding Weimar democracy irksome, especially as, by the very nature of things, its smooth functioning depended upon the participation of representatives of various workers' organisations at every level of political and economic life. This basic antagonism towards the economic, social and political fruits of the November bloc lay at the heart of all the great crises which shook Weimar to its foundations in the first years of its life, ^[6] and which in the end, resulted in its disintegration.

And not only was the edifice of Weimar - the most democratic constitution in the world as the SPD leaders often smugly insisted - erected on a rickety political foundation, namely the transitory identity of interests which prevailed in the winter of 1918-19; it also saw the light of day in a Germany whose economy and currency had been bled white by four years of all-out imperialist war and the predatory reparations exacted by the victorious allies. The Social Democrats and their liberal allies were seeking to re-enact - this time they hoped successfully - the revolution of 1848 in an epoch and in a country where the ruling classes were becoming ever more hostile to the notions and institutions of democratic government and social reform. The Weimar Constitution - whose authors quite consciously took both the colours and the programme of 1848 as their model - arrived a matter of 70 years too late.

Although democratic demands still played an important part in mobilising the masses against capitalist and landlord rule in those countries where feudal institutions and social relations survived, throughout Europe from Britain to Russia the revolution could only secure basic democratic rights for the mass of the working population by overthrowing, not reforming, the capitalist state and establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat. Thus attempts to force the November Revolution into a bourgeois-democratic mould were counter-revolutionary both in intent and result, even though in the course of the struggle, the working class could only be sidetracked by means of a series of social and economic reforms. ^[7] That the proletariat secured basic trade union rights and the establishment of a 'welfare state' was entirely due to its own fighting capacity and courage in the early days of November 1918. The tragedy was that these concessions were so paltry in comparison with the enormous sacrifice paid in literally thousands of workers' lives. As far as the leaders of Social Democracy were concerned, the reforms sufficed to lift them to what they took to be the summits of political power, and as such, they had to be seen to be defending these gains on behalf of those workers who still supported the SPD. But the reforms which became embodied in the Weimar Constitution were viewed differently again by those who had to surrender them. To appreciate the fleeting and unstable nature of what we might term the 'November bloc', we can contrast the initial attitude of leading bourgeois and military circles to the formation of the Ebert government with the shift towards reaction which gathered pace in these same quarters less than a year after the official proclamation of the Weimar Constitution.

Let us therefore return to the autumn of 1918 to see precisely how the ruling class, with the aid of Social Democracy, devised its strategy of exploiting the democratic aspirations of the German masses to head off the socialist revolution. And on this question, the main participants in this counter-revolutionary

conspiracy have been most frank. Thus Prince Max of Baden, who handed over the Chancellorship to Ebert on 9 November, writes:

I said to myself that the revolution was on the point of winning, that it could not be beaten down, but might perhaps be stifled out. Now it is the time to come out with the abdication, with Ebert's Chancellorship, with the appeal to the people to determine its own constitution in a Constituent National Assembly. If Ebert is presented to me as a tribune of the people by the mob, then we shall have the Republic; if Liebknecht is, we shall have Bolshevism as well. But should Ebert be appointed Imperial Chancellor by the Kaiser at the moment of abdication... perhaps we should then succeed in diverting the revolutionary energy into lawful channels of an election campaign.
[8]

Which would of course provide the bourgeoisie with the vital political breathing space it so desperately needed to begin the rebuilding of its badly-mauled state machine and the refurbishing of its tarnished image in the eyes of its millions of petit-bourgeois supporters. [9] The SPD leaders had been allotted a role in this strategy which, by virtue of their party's history and roots in the masses, could be fulfilled by no other political group. It was the task of the reformists to emasculate the workers' and soldiers' councils which were then springing up all over Germany by securing their agreement to parliamentary elections, thus in effect committing suicide as potential organs of proletarian state power. Contacts between the two partners in the conspiracy were soon made at every level, paralleling the secret pact between Ebert and the High Command. On 15 November, after several days of private talks, the leaders of the ADGB concluded an agreement with the major employers' organisations. [10] If abstracted from the time and place where they were formulated, the demands secured by the leaders of the trade unions seemed highly commendable. Indeed, after a half century of stubborn resistance, the 'hard-line' bosses conceded the right of unions freely to organise in their plants, while withdrawing their former support for company 'unions'. The November agreement also provided for the workers' right to be consulted on conditions of work, and the establishment of freely elected works' councils to represent the interests of the workers in their dealing with the employers. Finally, in this ostensibly impressive list of concessions extracted from the employers, the limit of the working day was fixed at eight hours - a demand for which the Second International had fought since its foundation in 1889. Now the leaders of German industry were falling over themselves to grant it - and a lot more besides.

The reasons for this sudden about-turn are not hard to find. In November 1918 Germany's employers were faced with something far more radical - and final - than conceding the eight-hour day or the right of workers to organise. They were faced point-blank with expropriation, and only the blindest in their ranks failed to see that unless they bent to the pressure of the masses, the authority of the trade union bureaucracy would be undermined and the road cleared for the Spartacists and their allies in the shop stewards' movement. And this was not denied by one of their most important spokesmen, J Reichert, the secretary of the Association of German Iron and Steel Industrialists, who with the super-tycoon Hugo Stinnes was instrumental in winning over fellow employers to the pact:

The question [facing us in the talks] was how can we save industry? How can we spare capitalism from the threatening socialisation? Unfortunately, the bourgeoisie as it is in Germany could not be relied upon in things economic-political. We concluded that in the midst of the general great insecurity and in view of the tottering of the power of the state and the [imperial] government there were strong allies of industry only among the working class, and these allies were the trade unions. Moreover, there was a revolutionary government that consisted entirely of workers' representatives, and it was to be feared that the eight-hour day would become law if the employers did not compromise.

Thus did a leader of German heavy industry justify his pact with the once-despised ADGB. And there were few employers who would have at this time - early 1919 - disagreed with him. The workers had the eight-hour day, their works' councils and the right to organise, but the bourgeoisie still had its property. And the time would come when what had been conceded under duress would be taken back - with interest.

Having recorded two impressive victories - the undertaking by Ebert to fight the revolution, and binding the trade union leaders to an agreement which implicitly recognised the right of the employers to continue exploiting the working class, even if for one or two hours a day less than previously, the ruling class turned its attention to the pressing task of winding up the council movement. Here they acted only through the Social Democrats, for, by their very nature, the councils excluded the open, as opposed to

disguised, representatives of the bourgeoisie. From the very beginning, Ebert's strategy was to commit the councils to the creation of a parliamentary - and hence bourgeois - republic, as opposed to a workers' republic based upon the council system. The SPD was assured of a majority in the councils not only by virtue of the infancy of the movement itself - the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries swamped the Bolsheviks at a similar stage of the Russian Revolution - but due to the delayed nature of the split in German Social Democracy. The USPD broke from Ebert's party only in April 1917 - and even then the rupture was precipitated by mass expulsions - and the KPD in its turn severed its links from the centrists as late as 30 December 1918 - two weeks *after* the opening of the First Congress of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils in Berlin.

The choice facing the 488 delegates ^[11] was very clear, and one that had faced a similarly momentous congress in Petrograd little more than a year earlier - council ('soviet') power, or the continued rule of the bourgeoisie, however democratic its guise. Yet the USPD centrists, like the compromisers Zinoviev, Kamenev and Stalin on the very eve of the October Revolution, sought to blur over the fundamental and absolute contradiction between these two opposites. When the time came at the Congress to vote on resolutions calling for the mutually exclusive policies of vesting all state power in the workers' and soldiers' councils and the holding of elections to a constituent assembly, a sizeable group of USPD delegates voted 'yes' to both resolutions. ^[12] Yet there was no such confusion - if confusion it was - in the minds of the SPD delegates. They took their line from Ebert's opening address, which after demagogically lauding the heroism and discipline of the working class in the revolution, proceeded to spell out his plan for the new Germany:

... the victors [of the revolution] had to seize power and establish the provisional government, which until the meeting of the National Assembly is confronted with the task of regulating and strengthening the new regime... On the basis of victorious revolution you shall erect the new legal state. For... in Germany there can be permanently only one source of law: the will of the entire German people. This was the meaning of the Revolution. The rule of force hurled us to destruction, we will not suffer any sort of rule by force in the future, no matter from whom it may come. [Sic!] The sooner we succeed in placing our new German people's state upon the firm foundation of the will of the entire nation, just so soon will it realise its great socialist goals. The victorious proletariat does not establish any class rule. It conquers the old class rule - first politically, then economically - and establishes the equality of all who bear a human countenance. ^[13]

Ebert was carrying out the instructions of Prince Max - and Gröner - to the letter: that is, 'stifling the revolution' with parliamentary elections, one of the most tried and trusted cards in the bourgeoisie's pack. Ernst Däumig, speaking in support of the council system of government, was tragically prophetic when he declared to a largely hostile audience:

When the history of these revolutionary weeks in Germany is written, people will smile and say: 'Were they so blind as not to see that they were putting ropes around their own necks?' For anyone who thinks clearly must perceive that the jubilant approval of the National Assembly is equivalent to the death sentence of the system of which they now form a part, the council system. ^[14]

Däumig pleaded to no avail. Not even the sharp lash of the tongue of a Lenin or a Trotsky, a Liebknecht or a Luxemburg ^[15] could have undone in a few minutes what had accumulated over years and decades. In a solid phalanx, Ebert's men raised their hands in support of political suicide. And, as subsequent history has shown, it led not only to the self-destruction of the councils - the national congress met but once more to hand over its powers to the Constituent Assembly - but the suicide of the entire German labour movement. Failure to overthrow the bourgeoisie and destroy its state when the class enemy was at its weakest and most demoralised led inexorably - with the aid of the Stalinists - to the triumph of National Socialism 14 years later. And even some of Ebert's closest collaborators in this monumental act of betrayal paid for it with their lives.

Even as Ebert spoke in condemnatory tones about the 'rule of force', preparations were being made to assemble the counter-revolutionary units which were destined to play such a crucial role in the history of Weimar - Gustav Noske's 'Free Corps'. The first step had already been taken when Ebert undertook - on the insistence of the High Command - to subordinate the soldiers' councils to the discipline of the old officer corps. With the revolution in the army contained, and socialist 'contamination' of its troops stemmed, the High Command felt more secure. It at once began to apply pressure not only on the left

wing of the workers' movement, but even the Ebert government itself whenever it felt the Social Democrats to be making too many concessions to the workers. Troops loyal to their officers were brought back into Berlin, the centre of the council movement, and at once there were bloody clashes with armed workers and sailors. Gröner subsequently said of this stage of the counter-revolution:

At first it was a question of wrenching power from the workers' and soldiers' councils in Berlin, an operation was planned for this purpose, the military entry of 10 divisions into Berlin, the People's Commissar Ebert was completely in agreement with this... there were a number of difficulties... some Independent members of the government, but also I think some soldiers' councillors... demanded that the troops move in without live ammunition. ^[16] We naturally opposed this at once, and Herr Ebert naturally agreed that the troops should move into Berlin with live ammunition. For this entry by the troops which was to afford us at the same time an opportunity to re-establish a firm government in Berlin... a day-by-day military plan had been elaborated. This plan set out what was to happen: the disarming of Berlin, that is, the Berlin workers clearing Berlin of Spartacists, etc.

In conclusion Gröner - who was giving evidence at the official inquiry into the so-called 'stab in the back' legend held in 1925 - lauded the 'socialist' Ebert to the skies:

I am especially grateful to Herr Ebert for this and have defended him against all attacks for his absolute love of the Fatherland and his complete dedication to the cause. This plan had been formed throughout with Herr Ebert's knowledge and agreement. ^[17]

The formation and brief flourishing of the November bloc was faithfully echoed in the ruling-class press. Thus the extreme right-wing *Berliner Lokalanzeiger* conceded: 'We must face realities. We therefore subscribe to the government's programme.' That was, until the ruling class was strong enough to change it. The Junker *Deutsche Tageszeitung* was even enthusiastic about the virtues of democracy:

Only a government chosen by impeccable methods, ensuring the triumph of the people's will can have any authority... We repeat that there must be no disagreements among the German bourgeoisie, and that it must strongly support the Socialist government.

And yet only a few weeks earlier, this same paper had denounced in the most scathing terms Ebert's government for seeking peace with the allies:

Words cannot suffice to express the indignation and the grief... Germany, yesterday still unconquered, now left at the mercy of her enemies by men bearing the name of German, forced to her knees in ignominious disgrace by felony in her own ranks... This is perfidy that can never and shall never be forgiven. It is an act of treason, not only towards the monarch and the army, but towards the German people...

Paul Becker - the journalist who wrote the article - meant every word, and his paper's apparent *volte-face* a matter of weeks later in no way involved a retraction of anything he had said about the Social Democrats. The old imperialist circles simply had to bide their time, making the necessary purely tactical adjustments to the new political situation.

But it was only on the extreme left flank of the bourgeoisie that a readiness to permit Social Democracy anything approaching a permanent say in the affairs of state could be discerned. And predictably, the spokesmen of this trend were to be found not in heavy industry, where the Ruhr barons still gravitated to the monarchist right, but in commerce, the professions and intellectual strata. Such was the German Democratic Party, whose strategy of collaborating with the SPD against the threat of revolution while seeking to whittle down the party's programme to one acceptable to German capitalism, was devised by Max Weber, the prewar pioneer of this policy, and the prominent banker Hjalmar Schacht. It is indeed ironic that the man who not only helped smooth Hitler's path to power but served him for eight years as Director of the Reichsbank and Minister of Economics should have begun his Weimar political career as an outspoken partisan of parliamentary democracy and close collaboration and even coalition with the 'Marxists'. Yet if we look closely at what he himself says about this period, we will discover that the contradiction is only a formal one. In each case, Schacht the democrat and Schacht the Nazi pursued a clear class line devised for vastly different circumstances.

Schacht's account of the formation of the DDP is most revealing for the insight it provides into the thinking of the liberal wing of the German bourgeoisie at that parlous period of its history:

My reasons for engaging in political activity were very simple. Throughout the whole of the last year of the war Germany was already in a state of invisible revolution only restrained by the

discipline of war. Strikes, heated arguments in factories and Parliament, protest marches - all these were signs which could no longer be ignored. We cudgelled our brains as to what the new Germany would be like which was destined to emerge from this process of revolution. There was no doubt that there would be a swing to the left. But would it be as definite as in Russia where, after a brief struggle, the extremists had prevailed against the moderate groups? Would Germany, in short, turn Bolshevik; would Lenin - as he had already intimated - establish his ultimate headquarters not in Moscow but in Berlin? ^[18]

We can see that on this question - the possibility of Germany taking the Soviet road - there was almost total agreement between Schacht the banker and Scheidemann the Social Democrat, even though they formulated their views entirely independently of each other. So quite naturally, the Social Democrats became the rallying point for Schacht and his capitalist co-thinkers. In the storm of revolution, the Ebert government was to serve as their lifeline. Let it prattle away about 'socialisation' and the end of 'class rule'. The central task before both the bourgeoisie and the reformist bureaucracy was to smash German Bolshevism and murder the German Lenins:

The danger [of proletarian revolution] was there. No one could foretell how matters would develop once the bonds were broken. Since August 1914 too much political dynamite had accumulated in cellars, back-yards and tenement houses. I asked myself and my friends: what was to be done? ... I met kindred spirits - solicitors, journalists, businessmen, bankers, all were filled with the same anxiety: What was one to do? My reply was: 'We must prevent the moderates in Germany from falling victim to the extremists. We must endeavour to form a mighty reservoir of all those elements who, without being extremist, are dissatisfied with present conditions. We need a middle-class left which will throw in its lot with the organised workers in the coming coalition government.' These deliberations led soon afterwards to the founding of the German Democratic Party. ^[19]

This extremely class-conscious banker also gives a superb picture of the disarray and despondency in the highest level of the bourgeoisie on 9 November 1918, the day the Kaiser fell and Ebert's government was hoisted into power by Berlin workers. It underlines once more the perfidy of the Social Democrats in rescuing the ruling class at the precise moment in history when it had lost not only the means to rule, but, even in some quarters, the will:

Meanwhile there were increasing signs that the end might come at any moment. On 3 November 1918 the sailors of the main fleet started to mutiny. Spartacist elements had infiltrated the lower decks and hoisted the Red Flag. The revolution began to spread through Germany like wildfire. Workers' and Soldiers' Councils sprang up from nowhere and took over local authorities... During the early days of November 1918 Berlin prepared for civil war. Barbed wire entanglements appeared in the streets, barricades were erected from overturned vehicles. Shots whistled through the streets in the centre of the town and sent citizens scuttling indoors. No one appeared to have any authority: an armed mob stood ready to seize the helm... ^[20] Towards midday on 9 November I came out of the Hotel Esplanade-Platz with a friend and saw the first lorries drive across the Potsdamer-Platz filled with heavily-armed Red troops. It was a curious sight. People passed by the lorries looking depressed and indifferent - they did not even glance at them. The Red revolution shouted, brandished their rifles and generally threw their weight about... A very curious, significant scene, expressive of Germany's disrupted condition - revolution in lorries, apathy in the streets.

In other words, the 'citizens', that is, the middle class of Berlin, had accepted the revolution as a *fait accompli*. And lacking arms, there was little they could do except look depressed and apathetic. Schacht's narrative continues:

In the face of this incident we changed our direction and made for the Reichstag with the object of finding a member who would enlighten us as to the situation. The great government building was deserted and lifeless... At last we reached the abode of the Liberal Group, that is, the National Liberals, the main party of heavy industry... Inside the room a quavering voice asked: 'Who is it?' I recognised it at once - it was Stresemann's voice. At that time he was the leader of the National Liberal Group in the Reichstag... Have you any recent news? I asked... 'Revolution', was Stresemann's terse reply with a weary gesture. 'And the Emperor - our Army - the Government - the Police?' 'I don't know', said Stresemann. 'I'm the last remaining man in the Reichstag.' ... Stresemann's face was grey, his eyes tired, his mouth pinched... 'And what will

happen?', I asked. He shrugged his shoulders. 'Ebert will probably do something', he said. 'Now is his chance. His party is the strongest. If he doesn't succeed...' [21]

Yet more ironies! Until August 1914, Stresemann and his class had measured their political fortunes in inverse proportion to the rise of the SPD vote. Now with the old bourgeois party system in ruins - only the confessional Catholic Centre Party was to survive the November Revolution - Stresemann pinned his hopes for capitalist survival on the *strength* and *success* of Social Democracy. In 1878, Stresemann's National Liberals had voted to outlaw Social Democracy. Now it looked to the SPD as a saviour. [22]

Schacht proceeded to outline his political strategy to the demoralised Stresemann:

We must do something, Herr Stresemann. If the left [that is, the SPD] gets the upper hand, well and good. But we must start a middle-class Left Party so that the Socialist majority don't have everything their own way. A middle-class party with left-wing tendencies, he said. Yes - that might be the way out. We left him. At the time I knew as well as anyone that the great hour for the socialist parties had struck. Their persistent efforts for a negotiated peace, the workers' tremendous contribution to Germany's blood-sacrifice and last, but not least, their promises of social improvements would attract masses of electors to their ranks. That would lead to an extreme opposition from the right - as in Russia, which might well develop into a war between 'Red' and 'White'. We must act quickly if we were to achieve anything. [23]

Schacht sought to retard the polarisation of the classes by erecting a middle-class buffer between them, a 'third force' which on crucial issues would throw its weight on the side of Social Democracy where and when its leaders were under attack from the left. Likewise, it would counsel caution, restraint and patience to the monarchist-inclined forces in the landlord and big bourgeois camp lest ill-prepared and insufficiently supported attempts to overturn the rule of the reformists resulted in a violent proletarian backlash, a consequent diminishing of the stabilising influence of the much-needed Social Democrats and a corresponding growth in the revolutionary forces. There was also the added danger that without a radical middle-class party to attract the democratic petit-bourgeoisie - and their ranks had swelled enormously as a direct result of their disillusionment with the old regime - they would turn to the SPD in their millions, giving the Ebert leadership an absolute majority in Parliament which would have been as much an embarrassment to them as to their bourgeois opponents. For such a majority would have stripped away the last excuse the reformists in fact employed to justify their refusal to proceed with the SPD's programme of socialisation - that such measures would be undemocratic in that they lacked the support of a majority of the Reichstag. [24]

In normal times, parties can take years to gestate and formulate their programmes. But in the white heat of revolution, men accomplish in hours what would otherwise take decades. On 9 November, the Kaiser fell, and with it the constellation of Junker and bourgeois parties which had revolved around the throne of the Hohenzollerns for nearly half a century. On 11 November, the first of the Republic's new bourgeois parties was born, displaying a countenance that, if not exactly republican, was at least committed to the formal supremacy of parliament.

That the new party equivocated on this issue was largely due to Schacht's own intervention in the discussion on the DDP's declaration of principles. As he himself relates:

Theodor Wolff [of the liberal *Berliner Tageblatt* - RB] read out his proclamation which began with the words: 'We are republicans...' 'Stop!', I interrupted. 'I can't sign that. I'm a monarchist.' General astonishment. How, the others demanded, could a monarchist be a co-founder of a Democratic Party? ... 'There are quite a few constitutional monarchies in the world which are democratically governed...' Theodor Wolff gave in and began again. This time the sentence ran: 'We base our standpoint on republican principles.' I signified my agreement. [25]

And so the would-be German bourgeois democrats, like so many of their ancestors, still recoiled in horror from the prospect of a total and final rupture with the feudal institution of hereditary monarchy. [26] This farcical scene took place at the founding meeting of the DDP, among whose most prominent early supporters, were, apart from Schacht and Wolff, the proprietors of the liberal *Frankfurter Zeitung*, the industrialist Walther Rathenau, Max Weber the sociologist, and Hugo Preuss the legal authority and historian. Although their views differed widely on a range of questions, they were all united on the need to pursue a policy of rapprochement with the leaders of Social Democracy. Thus Preuss (who was soon to be charged with the task of drawing up the new republic's constitution) wrote in the *Berliner Tageblatt* on 14 November 1918:

We have the hope of escaping the dreadful shift from Red Terror to White only if a strong, energetic movement is formed within the German middle class, based candidly on events that have occurred, but not docile in the face of new authorities, and... only if these new authorities welcome the collaboration of this movement and tender it full equality of responsibility.

Again one cannot help but comment on the contrast between this strategy, so successful in the period during and immediately after the November Revolution, and that pursued by the Nazis in the last years of the Weimar Republic (in the case of Schacht, he actively participated in both). German fascism also sought to build 'a strong, energetic movement within the middle class', not, however, to *buttress* the Social Democrats, but to *crush* them, and with the SPD the entire organised power of the German proletariat. In both cases, the social basis of these movements was the petit-bourgeoisie, emphasising the truth of the contention that despite differences in policy and ideology, *liberalism and fascism arise on the same class foundation.* ^[27]

Nevertheless Schacht had good reason to commend himself on the success of his counter-revolutionary manoeuvrings when he wrote many years later:

The surmises we had entertained in connection with the formation of the DDP came to pass. The Social Democrats failed to obtain a majority in the National Assembly. The DDP secured 74 seats, and at a critical juncture ensured that socialist theories were not applied in too one-sided a fashion. The Social Democrats were compelled to form a Coalition Government with the middle-class left. ^[28] The DDP produced two ministers [Preuss and Rathenau] who were invaluable in helping to establish a gradual and continuous political development in place of an extremist upheaval. ^[29]

Schacht wrote these lines some 10 years after the end of the Second World War. They differ little from the judgement made much closer to the events in question, in his book *The Stabilisation of the Mark*, published in 1927:

The spectre of Bolshevism, more menacing than ever, suddenly raised its head. The bourgeois element was entirely excluded by the revolutionary government from power; and the only question was whether the extremist form of socialism in more or less Bolshevik shape, or the more moderate form of socialism which clung to democratic forms of government, would prevail... It may be said that it was primarily the efforts of the DDP which gave the non-socialist elements (and especially the parties standing further to the right whose leaders completely disappeared from view in the first moments of the collapse) the courage once more to assert themselves, and in the elections to the National Assembly left the Social Democrats and other elements still further to the left in a minority. ^[30]

And Schacht was not exaggerating when he said the leaders of the old right-wing parties were nowhere to be seen in the first days of the revolution. ^[31] Hence their temporary, if reluctant acceptance of the Ebert government. Only after some weeks had passed did the leaders of the pre-1914 'cartel' - the National Liberals and the Conservatives - begin to pull themselves together. The blunting of the council movement meant that Germany was due to pass through a phase, however short and insecure, of parliamentary government, and that necessitated, if the centre and left parties were not to carry all before them, a new approach to the problem of seeking support amongst the masses for reactionary policies. For a short time it seemed as if Stresemann and his National Liberals might throw in their lot with Schacht's DDP (which was in fact an updated version of the old Progressive Party), but at the last moment he balked at what he regarded as being its over-eagerness to collaborate with the SPD. Stresemann's party was, we should bear in mind, the main party of heavy industry, and as such it still looked on the 'Marxists' with grave misgivings. ^[32]

Stresemann himself was inhibited from following Schacht's policy not only by the interests of heavy industry, but his own subjective attitudes, which had been shaped in the pre-1914 period when throne, sword and altar were the holy trinity of all decent 'national' Germans. He therefore regarded the revolution of 9 November as an act of monumental betrayal, or as he put it some months afterwards, 'the death day of Germany's greatness in the world'. In fact Stresemann had been subjected to the crowning humiliation of being marched out of the Reichstag building on that day by a squad of armed workers. A week later, he agreed to take his tottering party, the National Liberals, into a merger with the Progressives to fight on a united platform against the Social Democrats. But Schacht had meanwhile succeeded in winning them over to his line of guarded collaboration with reformists. This left Stresemann with little

alternative but to launch his old party under a new label more suited to the nature of the times - the German People's Party (DVP), which he did on 22 November. But Stresemann's problems were far from over. Seeing that he had broken off negotiations with the DDP, leaders of the Junker Conservatives, who were even more isolated from the masses than the DVP, approached Stresemann with a view to forming a monarchist, anti-parliamentary and openly counter-revolutionary right-wing party. But again, Stresemann found himself unable to undertake such a fusion.

Although a monarchist, ^[33] he realised more clearly than the old Conservative leaders that restoration of the Hohenzollerns was a lost cause for the foreseeable future, and that the only realistic policy was to win as much popular support as was possible for the banner of moderate - moderate, that is, in terms of German bourgeois politics - conservatism. Right from the beginning, the new party was plagued with constant conflicts and periodic splits. And this was scarcely surprising, since under Stresemann's leadership it sought to reconcile not only sections of the big bourgeoisie which were fundamentally opposed to each other over political strategy and tactics, but the big bourgeoisie as a whole with the party's main mass of voters - the propertied middle and small bourgeoisie. And yet few could have been better suited for such a thankless task, since Stresemann, although a man of impeccable bourgeois pedigree, stood midway between the Ruhr industrialists of his party who provided it with most of its funds - the Vöglers and the Stinnes - and the small and medium employers in light industry who provided it with the majority of its votes. Stresemann was himself the owner of a medium-sized light manufacturing enterprise, and sat on several boards of other small firms in the Berlin area. But in the course of his business and political career he had succeeded in becoming the spokesman for wider economic interests, and even while leader of the DVP, still sat on the boards of two of Germany's most influential employers' organisations - the Association of Saxon Industrialists and the National League of Industry. His balancing act on the tightrope that was the internal politics of German big business typified the dilemmas confronting those bourgeois politicians and statesmen who sought to defend the interests of all property owners without either becoming ensnared in the embrace of organised heavy industry, or stoking up the fires of a petit-bourgeois revolt against the entire Weimar political structure.

We have already noted that Stresemann was a monarchist by tradition and by conviction, and yet, despite all previous protestations to the contrary, by the time of the DVP's founding Congress in April 1919 he was prepared to accept republicanism as a permanent feature of German politics, telling delegates that 'we must be clear about one thing, that Greater Germany can only be reconstructed on a republican basis'. This apparent change of heart was almost certainly due to the DVP's poor showing at the January elections. It managed, despite its hastily assumed populist nomenclature, to assemble a mere 4.4 per cent of the total poll, while the more strident monarchism of the DNVP - which Stresemann had no intention of emulating - had gained just over twice that amount. Even taken together, the two sole survivors and representatives of the *ancien régime* cut a sorry figure, winning between them a paltry 4.5 million votes, less than 15 per cent of the total cast. How far the cause of monarchy and traditionalist nationalism had lost ground in Germany can be appreciated by comparing these results with the returns for the last prewar election to the Reichstag, when together the National Liberals, Conservatives, Free Conservatives and anti-Semites secured very nearly twice that proportion. However unpalatable it might have been to Stresemann and his DVP colleagues, the truth had to be faced that there was no political force visible on the horizon that could dislodge the Social Democrats and their bourgeois radical allies from their preponderant position either in the National Assembly, where they exercised an absolute majority over all the other parties combined, or indeed at the lower and local echelons of the machinery of government. Neither was there a sign as yet of that ground swell of petit-bourgeois disillusionment with Weimar democracy which would soon begin to disrupt the precarious compromise effected between the reformists and the leaders of bourgeois liberalism at the time of the Revolution. A year after the elections, when sections of the DNVP leadership were already heavily committed to supporting the abortive military coup of Wolfgang Kapp, Stresemann rejected an offer from DNVP leader Albrecht von Grafe to form a united front of their two parties against the 'Weimar bloc' of the SPD, DDP and Centre:

It seems to me that the immediate task at hand in our political development is to eliminate the Social Democrats' present overwhelming influence and to reduce it to more modest proportions. A government without the Social Democrats during the next two to three years seems to me to be quite impossible since otherwise [that is, if it is forced into opposition - RB] we shall stagger along from general strike to general strike. There is a very real danger that the two Peoples' parties [that is, the DVP and DNVP - RB] will withdraw into the sulking corner for many years if they do not at once receive a voice in government proportionate to their numerical strength...

The danger is great that the [state] bureaucracy will be progressively alienated from us or replaced by persons from hostile parties, and that the people will become accustomed on a permanent basis to the rule of the present-day majority parties.

Stresemann's refusal to join with the DNVP in an anti-Weimar united front - a bloc principally directed against the SPD - caused much trouble in the leadership and ranks of his own party. Albert Vögler, a director of the steel trust ^[34] and a future supporter of the Nazis, was especially vocal in opposing Stresemann's moderate policies, and called for the united front offer to be taken up. In fact Vögler's views and those of several other heavy industrialists in the DVP - were in many ways far closer to the hard-line policies of the DNVP, and in fact some of them defected to it as they became progressively more critical of Stresemann's middle-of-the-road orientation, which year by year brought the DVP closer and closer to open collaboration with the Social Democrats.

Moving even further to the right we do indeed come to the DNVP, the revived corpse - and sometimes a pretty virulent one at that - of that old pillar of Bismarckian and Hohenzollern Prussia, the Conservatives. And we shall see that even this party could not ignore the magnetic attraction exerted on its more plebeian supporters by the power of the proletarian movement in the early weeks of the Republic. Moves anticipating the foundation of a more populist-oriented version of the old party were made several days before the fall of the Empire. On 7 November the inner executive of the largely defunct Conservative Party met under the chairmanship of Count Westarp to draft a statement of principles for the proposed new organisation. It too, like the DDP's and the DVP's manifestos and proclamations, paid lip-service to the new spirit abroad amongst even those who had previously been the most politically backward of Germany's population. The DNVP appeal, issued on 22 November 1918, declared that the new party was 'ready to cooperate with all parties that share our aim to heal the wounds inflicted by the war on our sorely tried fatherland, and to restore law and order'. But whose law and order? Certainly not that of the Junkers, whose military-bureaucratic machine was at that time patently unable to exercise it. So making the painful but inescapable adjustment to the demands of political reality, the appeal demanded, in the most un-Junker-like fashion, a 'return from the dictatorship of a single class to the parliamentary form of government which alone is possible after recent events'. Only the rule of the 'single class' was not the Junkers, who had enjoyed a virtual monopoly in the exercise of political power under the empire for nearly half a century, but the proletariat, whose council system threatened to sweep them away.

The East Elbian barons and landlords had not given up hope of restoring their old privileges in the exercise of state power, but they had sense enough to realise - at least some of them - that until the Ebert government had performed its initial allotted role of smothering and beating back the revolution, even they had to resort to the language of democracy. The DNVP was also compelled to present itself, as its name suggests, as a 'people's party', much as its more moderate monarchist rival, the DVP, had done. But beneath the hastily revamped image of a party sympathetic to parliamentary democracy there remained the class features of the old chauvinist, anti-Semitic right. Sometimes the two faces of the party were combined in a single policy statement, as in the case of a DNVP leaflet issued in Berlin for the elections to the National Assembly:

No class domination ought to decide the future of our people. All classes must be represented in the National Assembly. No wealthy foreign race should continue to abuse its power behind the scenes. Germany must be governed by us Germans.

And for good measure, the leaflet rounded off this diatribe against proletarian rule and the Jews - combined, it should be noted, with support for the National Assembly - with a thrust at that other Junker whipping boy, the Catholic Church: 'No Romanist intrigues are going to rob us of our heritage of the reformation. Protestant spirit must remain strong in the fatherland.' ^[35]

But the DNVP's attempt to recapture its old following among the small propertied classes - artisans and peasants in the main - necessitated a more radical social policy than the old Conservatives (with the exception of those who leaned towards Stöcker's brand of 'social' Christianity), had been prepared to risk. The self-styled 'Christian Socialist' wing of the new party, led by Siegfried von Kardorff, soon antagonised Westarp and the DNVP's chairman, Oskar Hergt, with their insistence on the need to attune the nationalist movement to at least some of the social and economic demands of the petit-bourgeoisie and peasantry. Westarp and Hergt, nationalists of the old school, were far more intent on representing the interests of the big agrarians and heavy industrialists than emulating or outdoing their rivals in social demagoguery. They could not at that stage see that the one by no means excluded the other. Here the

influence of the press magnate and former Krupps director Alfred Hugenberg was decisive. This future ally of Hitler, together with Gustav Rosicke, head of the highly influential agrarian organisation, the *Bund der Landwirte*, were the chief contributors to the party's coffers, and saw to it that they and the big-property interests they represented called the tune. Those elements in the party allied with the Christian Socialist movement and the white-collar workers' organisation, the *Deutschnationaler Handlungsgehilfen Verband*, were viewed by the majority of its leadership as vote-catchers without any right to a say in shaping DNVP policy. As a result, many of these plebeian supporters of the party turned elsewhere after the crisis of 1929 when it became clear that under the Hugenberg leadership, the nationalists were functioning purely as a mouthpiece for the interests of heavy industry and the big landowners. From a peak of 6.2 million in December 1924, the DNVP vote slumped to 2.6 million in the crisis elections of September 1930. The bulk of these losses had, without the least shadow of doubt, accrued to the Nazis, who not only equalled them in nationalist fervour, but completely outclassed them in the use of social demagoguery aimed at the DNVP's main source of support - the artisans, small traders, clerks and peasants.

This is not to say that there existed no points of contact between the DNVP and the 'social' ultra-right. The Pan-Germans and old monarchists shared the Nazis' hatred of Weimar and the parties which dominated it in the republic's early years. Thus the Pan-German Congress held at Bamberg in February 1919 declared its undying loyalty to the overthrown regime and political system:

The events after 9 November proved unmistakably that a nation like ours, which so obviously lacks political instincts, is not made for the republican form of government. It should entrust its fate to a firm leadership, such as a monarchy can supply much more effectively than a republic... we shall always propagate the Kaiser sentiment. ^[36]

The manifesto also, very much on lines that the Nazis were later to follow, called for a 'planned racial superiority of the German nation by selection of, and help for, all those persons who are gifted in the good old German manner...'. They would 'fight against all those powers which hamper and harm the racial development of our nation, especially the predominance of the Jews in all cultural and economic fields'.

It was not surprising therefore that this manifesto, drafted in a spirit of raging hatred for the most elementary forms of bourgeois democracy, declared that the Pan-German League had 'no confidence in the present government nor does it consider the present state as adequate for the German nation'. And to develop a counterweight to the new state which they so despised, the Pan-Germans together with the DNVP and smaller monarchist associations, formed the ultra-right-wing paramilitary veterans' organisation, the Steel Helmet or *Stahlhelm*, founded at the end of 1918 under the leadership of Franz Seldte (Seldte became Minister of Labour in the Nazi - Nationalist coalition of January 1933, a post he held to the fall of the Third Reich in 1945). Though never becoming a battering ram against the workers' movement in the way that the more plebeian-based Nazi Storm Troops did, the *Stahlhelm* certainly served as a breeding and training ground for many former officers who subsequently passed over into the ranks of National Socialism.

Continuing this review of the parties and movements which comprised the German body politic at the time of the foundation of the Weimar Republic, we must turn to that enigmatic organisation, the Catholic Centre Party. This party's commitment to the Weimar Republic was at best equivocal, ^[37] even though it provided a minister for every cabinet until the formation of von Papen's 'non-party' administration in May 1932. (Ironically, the man who ended the Centre Party's unbroken run was himself a Catholic!) And the reasons are not hard to find. Although founded in 1870 as a defensive measure by the Catholic bourgeoisie and hierarchy to ward off Bismarck's offensive against 'Roman' influences (the so-called *Kulturkampf*), the party never embraced consistently democratic views. It fought only for its own sectional, confessional interests, even though in so doing it found it convenient on occasions to make common cause with others oppressed by Protestant - Junker Berlin.

By very virtue of its being a confessional party, the Centre found it necessary to project a 'social' image towards the Catholic working class and, to a lesser extent, the artisans and poorer sections of the peasantry. Catholic workers were for some time insulated from Social Democratic influence through their organisation into Christian 'trade unions', which while claiming to represent the special interests of the workers, in fact spent much of their time attacking Marxist socialism and class-based trade unionism and defending the rights of private property. But at the same time, the Centre was not averse to indulging in a little of what Marx and Engels had termed in the *Communist Manifesto* feudal or clerical socialism. The

founding Centre Party programme declared that one of its aims would be to ‘maintain this middle class in the midst of perils created by the doctrines of political economy, by industrialism, by complete occupational freedom and by the power of capital...’. And by middle class the manifesto of course meant the hundreds of thousands - indeed millions - of artisans, peasants and other independent small producers who were already beginning to feel the pressure of Germany’s industrial growth. Thus there evolved a ‘guild socialist’ wing to the Centre which its leaders not only tolerated but encouraged as an indispensable counterpoise to the rapidly expanding Social Democratic political and trade union movement. Its targets were liberalism both political and economic, Marxism, and large-scale industry and banking. Thus Franz Hitze, an early pioneer of Centre Party guild socialism, wrote in 1880: ‘The guild is to absorb all associations having any connection with handicraft, and the whole social life of the craftsman is to be concentrated in the guild.’ The guild would ‘overcome the anarchy of production’ and create ‘a new society of social responsibility through the conquest of egotism’.

Such a guild socialism was not therefore unlike the ‘people’s community’ - the community interest before self-interest - of National Socialism, and indeed there is much evidence to suggest that the former helped to shape the latter. And as also with National Socialist economic and social theory, capitalism was not so much to be abolished as regulated in accordance with a (spurious) harmony of class interests. Instead of a labour movement which ‘is a tearing loose, a secession from the rest of society’, trade unionism ‘would be a joining on, it would be only one organisation among many’:

The other, more conservative estates would show the workers the path... *and the state would compel the workers to set themselves common goals and to put their own house in order alongside the ordered regiment of capital.* [Emphasis added]

With the aid of this social as well as clerical ‘cement’, the Centre succeeded remarkably well in smoothing over the many class and sectional divisions within the party. And of course, the bitterly anti-Catholic attitude of the state Lutheran Church greatly assisted its leaders in this work. The solidity of the ‘vertical’ Catholic bloc is evident from the steady vote the Centre Party received in all the elections under the Empire. In 1871, barely a year after its formation, it secured 0.7 million votes and 63 deputies. In 1874, its vote had doubled and its Reichstag representation had been raised to 93. From then until the last elections of 1912, the Centre Party vote and Reichstag strength remained almost constant, the latter varying between a low of 91 and a peak of 106. Unlike the Conservatives, National Liberals and Progressives, the party survived the upheavals of November 1918, and in the elections of January 1919 polled 5.9 million votes with 91 Reichstag deputies, thus becoming the second largest party to the SPD. And as such, it could not but avoid taking some sort of stand on the new political system ushered in by the November Revolution. Naturally, a party that functioned as the political arm of an immensely powerful, rich and entrenched caste ^[38] commanding widespread support in all classes of the population could not but look on the events of November 1918 and the rise to political power of the atheistic ‘Marxists’ with some trepidation. Indeed, Cardinal Faulhaber regarded the November Revolution as ‘perjury and high treason’, a view shared by the majority of the German hierarchy. Yet the Centre could not afford to adopt an openly hostile or abstentionist attitude to the system that had issued out of this ‘crime’.

If the Centre set itself squarely against collaboration with the SPD, it ran the very real danger of losing much of its proletarian support in the Ruhr, where Catholic workers had joined with their socialist and communist class brothers in a united struggle against the old regime. And in fact this process had already begun. With each passing year, the Centre increasingly became a party depending upon female support, roughly 60 per cent of its vote coming from women once they were enfranchised under the Weimar Constitution (they also voted in the elections to the Constituent National Assembly). A confidential report submitted to the Vatican after the 1928 Reichstag elections by Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli, Papal Secretary of State, and, after 1939, the pro-fascist Pope Pius XII, revealed the alarming situation for the hierarchy that from a high of 85 per cent in 1875, the proportion of Catholic males voting for the Centre had dropped to 65 per cent by 1907, 55 per cent in 1912, 48 per cent in 1919 and a calamitous 39 per cent in 1928. Confronted with this steady erosion of Catholic political influence amongst the proletariat - for in rural regions the situation was understandably very different - the leaders of the Centre opted for a policy of support for the new regime, exploiting their strong bargaining position in the Reichstag (they held the balance between left and right) to secure the protection of their own sectional interests in educational and other matters.

Far better to enter the Cabinet with the godless Marxists, many reasoned, and to temper their reforming zeal, than to permit them to function alone or with their equally secular-minded DDP allies. So in the first Weimar cabinet under SPD Chancellor Scheidemann (Ebert had meanwhile been voted President by the National Assembly), the Centre joined with the DDP as the Social Democrats' partners in the 'great coalition'. But all was far from sweetness and light in the Catholic camp. We have already noted the attitude of Cardinal Faulhaber, a hard-line opponent of Weimar. Even more significant, in view of his subsequent role as stirrup-holder for the Nazis, was the Catholic Westphalian aristocrat, Franz von Papen. This odious bootlicker of Hitler - he even continued to serve him after his private staff had been butchered by Nazi thugs in the purge of 30 June 1934 - never made any secret of his detestation of all things democratic and tinged with even the pinkest hues of socialism. It was an attitude he maintained up to his death - mourned incidentally by the pro-Tory British press - in 1969. His autobiography provides us with a clear picture of the utterly reactionary mentality of the man who cleared the road to power for Hitler in the summer of 1932.

First, the revolution:

Instead of the thousand-year-old monarchy, the Red Flag had been planted in the centre of Germany. It was the end of everything we had believed in for generations, the disappearance of all we had loved and fought for... Berlin and every other German city was torn by revolution. Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, Eisner and their followers were fighting a bitter battle, setting up 'soviets' everywhere, against the more reasonable wing of the SPD led by Ebert and Noske. ^[39]
The world I had known and understood had disappeared. The whole system of values into which I had integrated myself and for which my generation had fought and died had become meaningless. ^[40]

But not quite, for like many of his class and outlook, Papen did not give up all hopes of a monarchist restoration, certainly not of eventually driving the SPD back into opposition and so subverting the Republic in preparation for a more authoritarian type of regime. For while the Social Democrats and their bourgeois radical allies ruled the roost, there was simply no room in the new Germany for dyed-in-the-wool traditionalists. Neither was it a question of attitudes of mind only. Many like Papen realised that the social and economic concessions made to the workers as the price for staving off revolution were not only galling in themselves, but seen as establishing dangerous inroads into the hallowed rights of private property. It was his class consciousness, conceived though it was in romantically-flavoured and aristocratic Catholicism, and not a psychologically-grounded inability to 'adjust' to Weimar Germany, that took Papen all the way along the road of opposition to parliamentary democracy and the German labour movement:

The position of trust which we held under the Crown meant that we became conservative by nature. Now everything had changed. All these traditions had been swept away by the Republic, and we were all free to adopt an independent attitude. By background and upbringing I could hardly help being conservative, but even before the war I had found myself out of sympathy with the political development of the Conservative Party... A conservative must always be progressive. Tradition and principles are basic values, but conservatism implies their application to changing circumstances. ^[41]

Papen represented that section of the west German aristocracy which had successfully branched out or married into industry or allied itself with it. He was therefore critical of the Junker Conservative Party for failing to adjust to the rise of this new centre of economic power in the Reich, and to see that the massive proletariat which had been created by this industrial upsurge could not be countered by the traditional weapons of reaction. Papen's answer was yet another variant on the old 'social' Christianity theme, in the name of which he eventually threw in his lot with the Nazis:

Since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, and at an ever increasing speed in the first half of our century, we have witnessed a gigantic and fundamental conflict... The threat to the body politic has increased with the conversion of individuals into 'the masses' - a Marxist weapon in the struggle to overturn the capitalist system. ^[42] Collectivist philosophies, combined with the materialist conception of history, proclaim the overthrow of those Christian principles which have provided for 2000 years the basis of the Western world's growth... The problem has been to find some means of combating these forces. In the tumult of the postwar period, the duty of all conservative forces was to rally under the banner of Christianity, in order to sustain in the new Republic the basic conceptions of continuing tradition. The Constitution approved at Weimar in

1919 seemed to many a perfect synthesis of Western democratic ideas. Yet the second paragraph [quoted at the beginning of this chapter - RB] of its first article proclaimed the false philosophy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau - 'all power derives from the people'. This thesis is diametrically opposed to the teachings and traditions of the Roman Catholic Church. Over the centuries, the monarchy had represented the highest form of temporal authority in the state, but above it stood the still higher authority of spiritual teachings and Christianity... Ever since the French Revolution and the *Contract Social* [how the German reaction loathed Rousseau - RB] and its bastard offspring the *Communist Manifesto*, the transfer from faith to reason has acquired increasing momentum. The philosophy of naked force has replaced the old relationship between power and authority, between reverence and piety on the one hand, and force on the other... Marxism in all its forms has now set force against force, and the power of the masses against the authority of the rulers. [Papen now unveils his own, corporatist, solution, to the 'social question' - RB] My father-in-law Privy Councillor von Boch-Galhau, was one of a small group of enlightened industrialists who recognised the inherent evils of the capitalist system. He tried to establish a relationship of mutual confidence between capital and labour, while yet retaining the traditions of a family enterprise. [Sic!] The shadow of class warfare was already on the horizon. The socialists were propagating the principles of Marxism, and, in spite of the social reforms carried out under Kaiser Wilhelm II, were trying to organise the 'proletariat' on an international basis and detach the workers as a 'class' from the bourgeoisie. Only a few industrialists had grasped the fact that the best way of countering these methods was to assume that besides his wages, the worker should have a share in the prosperity of the enterprise and a dignified and satisfying existence. My father-in-law had been a leader in the provision of well-built modern houses, hostels and holiday estates for his workers, as well as medical care and pension and insurance rights. The results [that is, the weakening of trade union and Marxist influence - RB] proved a striking example of what could be accomplished by applying the principles laid down by Pope Leo XIII in his Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*.^[43]

In fact the Encyclical nowhere attacked the foundation of capitalist exploitation - private ownership of the means of production. Such attacks on capital that it did make - and they came well from the world's richest private organisation - were of a backward-looking, guild type, with the predictable criticisms of 'usury' (though the Vatican was discreet enough not to link this with the Jews):

It is no easy matter to define the relative rights and mutual duties of the rich and the poor, of capital and labour. And the danger lies in this, that crafty agitators are intent on making use of these differences of opinion to pervert men's judgements and to stir up the people to revolt... the ancient workingmen's guilds were abolished in the last century, and no other organisation took their place... Hence by degrees it has come to pass that workingmen have been surrendered... to the hardheartedness of employers and the greed of unchecked competition. The mischief has been increased by rapacious usury, which, although more than once condemned by the Church, is nevertheless... still practised by covetous and grasping men. To this must be added the custom of working by contract, and the concentration of so many branches of trade in the hands of a few individuals... To remedy these wrongs, the Socialists, working on the poor man's envy of the rich, are striving to do away with private property, and contend that individual possessions should become the common property of all... But their contentions are so clearly powerless to end the controversy that were they carried into effect the workingman himself would be among the first to suffer. They are, moreover, emphatically unjust, because they would rob the lawful possessor, bring state action into a sphere not within its competence, and create utter confusion in the community... Socialists... by endeavouring to transfer the possessions of individuals to the community at large, strike at the interests of every wage earner, since they would deprive him of the liberty of disposing of his wages, and thereby of all hope and possibility of increasing his stock and of bettering his condition in life.^[44]

Papen was therefore treading on safe ground when he cited *Rerum Novarum* to bolster his own reactionary political views, all the more so since the encyclical stated quite bluntly what was to be done with those who continued to propagate the socialist doctrines of class struggle and the nationalisation of the means of production:

The great mistake... is to take up with the notion that class is hostile to class, and that the wealthy and the workingmen are intended by nature to live in mutual conflict... Capital cannot do without

Labour, nor Labour without Capital... Thus religion teaches the labouring man and the artisan to carry out honestly and fairly all equitable agreements freely entered into; never to injure the property, nor to outrage the person, of an employer, never to resort to violence in defending their own cause, nor to engage in riot or disorder; and to have nothing to do with men of evil principles... It should ever be borne in mind that *the chief thing to be realised is the safeguarding of private property by legal enactment and public policy*. Most of all it is essential, amid such a fever of excitement, *to keep the multitude within the line of duty*; for if all may justly strive to better their conditions, neither justice nor the common good allows any individual to seize upon that which belongs to another, or, under the futile and shallow pretext of equality, *to lay violent hands on other people's possessions* [‘Thou shalt not steal’ - from thy exploiter! - RB]... there are not a few [workers] who are imbued with evil principles and eager for a revolutionary change, whose main purpose is to stir up tumult and bring about measures of violence. *The authority of the state should intervene to put restraint on such firebrands, to save the working classes from their seditious arts, and protect lawful owners from spoliation.* ^[45]

Guided by this obscurantist outlook, Papen opted to join the Centre Party, even though he did not share the willingness of many of its leaders to partake in the running of the new Republic. It was their ‘social’ policy which appealed to him: ‘As a party of the centre it was essentially one devoted to compromise, and had always pledged itself to interpret the social precepts of Pope Leo XIII.’ ^[46]

And if we are to believe Papen’s own testimony, it was this same ‘social’ Catholicism which convinced him of the moral justice of Hitler’s early policies:

Hitler sought to put an end to class warfare by granting the working class equal rights in the community. [Sic!] It was the best point in his programme... Class warfare was a Marxist tool and the socialist trade unions were its principle protagonists. The employers’ federations manned the opposing front. If class warfare was to be abolished, then the opposing forces would have to be disbanded. Neither in moral law nor in Christian doctrine is it laid down that the interests of the working class may be represented only by the trade unions. [Both the Bible and the Roman Catholic Church certainly predate the formation of the first trade unions - RB] The trade union organisation have made an overwhelming contribution to raising the standards of the workers, but their purely economic functions had been transmuted by the Marxist parties into a weapon of class warfare. ^[47] The coalition government of which I was a member went to great pains to build up a new relationship between worker and employer [sic] and between both and the state. Our principle concern was to eliminate class warfare. To achieve this we were prepared to approve the dissolution of the trade unions. There was much in this National Socialist conception which ran parallel to principles familiar to Catholics and enunciated in the Papal Encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*... ^[48] The time may yet come when the principles involved, if put into practice by more moderate and sensible regimes, will prove to contain the germs of a solution. ^[49]

So much then for Papen, the ‘gentleman horse-rider’ as he liked to regard himself. ^[50]

How were these contradictory, and in some cases mortally hostile forces, to be reconciled? Excluding the Nazis, who were yet to become a force in German politics - in fact Hitler only joined the German Workers Party towards the end of 1919 - ranged against the Weimar system on the right were die-hard monarchists, DNVP Junkers, militarist and Jew-baiting Pan-Germans, profit-hungry and labour-hating industrialists, anti-democratic Catholics like Papen and Faulhaber, Prussian officers either still on the army payroll or fighting as freelance counter-revolutionaries in the Free Corps, and - and this was to be a most important factor throughout the Republic’s history - a state bureaucracy which from top to bottom remained, both as regards ideas and personnel, the identical state and judicial machine which had served so loyally under the Imperial regime. These men - almost without exception convinced monarchists and opponents of democracy - were now to be called upon to administer ‘the most democratic constitution in the world’. How they saw their role in the new Germany can be illustrated by comparing their partisan reactions to political crimes committed by left and right respectively. Between 1919 and 1922, the judges of Weimar handed down the following sentences for alleged political murders:

	Right	Left
Not Convicted	326	4
Convicted	1	17

Partly Convicted	27	1
Self-confessed murderers acquitted	23	0
Average length of jail term	4 months	15 years
Fine per murder in marks	2	(no fines)
Number of executions	0	10

No comment is surely needed on these figures. They speak for themselves, far more loudly and plainly than Article 109 of the Weimar Constitution, which proudly proclaimed that ‘all Germans are equal before the law’.

The same can indeed be said for the entire document. It promised much, yet could allow so little. Thus after beginning with the classic bourgeois-democratic proposition that ‘political authority emanates from the people’, the Weimar Constitution incorporated an escape clause which ensured that in moments of political crisis and decision, it would rest in the hands of - in theory at least - a single man. Bonapartism, the classic form of rule for Germany for so many of the prewar years, was now officially enshrined within a constitution supposedly the last word in modern democracy! To be specific, the whole article in question, the notorious number 48, declared:

If any state [of the German Reich] does not fulfil the duties imposed upon it by the Constitution or the laws of the Reich, the Reich President may enforce such duties with the aid of the armed forces. In the event that the public order and security are seriously disturbed, the Reich President may take the measures necessary for their restoration, intervening if necessary, with the aid of the armed forces. For this purpose he may abrogate temporarily, wholly or in part, the fundamental principles laid down in Articles 114, 115, 117, 118, 123, 124 and 135.

Fundamental indeed, for the rights covered by these articles were respectively personal liberty, the inviolability of the home, secrecy of letters and telephone communications, freedom of the press, the right of assembly, the right of association and the right to own private property. ^[51]

Thus with a stroke of a President’s pen - for that was all that was needed to revoke these basic rights and liberties of the German people - the groundwork could be laid for the erection of a Bonapartist system of rule, as indeed it was under the regimes of Chancellors Brüning, von Papen and Schleicher, each of whom repeatedly by-passed a deadlocked Reichstag by the use of Article 48; not only as a means of enacting political legislation, but in order to drive down the living standards and wages of the working class. And it should not be forgotten for one moment that the Social Democrats - whose constitution this was - finally found themselves driven out of office in the state of Prussia under this very Article 48, which, they fondly believed, would be invoked only against the enemies, right as well as left, of the Weimar Republic.

Article 48 was included, it is generally believed, on the insistence of Max Weber, one of those charged by the Ebert government with drafting the new constitution. He was determined to have a strong executive authority standing over the legislature, a political structure that had its authoritarian potential multiplied by Article 41, which - again on Weber’s insistence - provided for the President to be elected directly by the population as a whole, thus once more by-passing both parties and parliament. ^[52]

Finally there were the Weimar constitution’s social and economic clauses, which in many cases, due to the intransigent resistance of the employers, remained little more than dead letters. And those that were implemented had to be fought for and defended in the teeth of bitter resistance by both the right-wing parties and the heavy industrialists, who regarded them as an outrage against the rights of private property. The articles which aroused so much hostility amongst the bourgeoisie were numbers 159, which proclaimed ‘freedom of association for the preservation and promotion of labour and economic conditions’; 161, which established a ‘comprehensive system of [social] insurance’; and 165, which provided for the setting up of works’ councils to make possible the ‘cooperating on an equal footing’ of ‘workers and employees’ with employers ‘in the regulation of wages and of the conditions of labour, as well as in the general development of the productive forces’. This last proved to be the bitterest pill for the employers to swallow, for even though it was but a liberal-reformist sop to workers who had been demanding the nationalisation of the major industrial concerns - this had after all been part of the SPD’s programme - it offended against heavy industry’s slogan of ‘master in the house’. No jumped-up trade union official or seditious shop steward was going to pry into the affairs of a Krupp or a Thyssen if

German industry was to have any say in the matter. One can appreciate their horror at Article 165. Part of it ran:

Workers and employees shall, for the purposes of looking after their economic and social interests, be given legal representation in factory workers' councils, as well as in district workers' councils and in a workers' council of the Reich district. Workers' councils of the Reich shall meet with the representatives of the employers... as district economic councils and as economic councils of the Reich for the purpose of performing economic functions and for cooperation in the execution of the laws of socialisation...

Big business never reconciled itself to Article 165, and it was steadily eroded after 1929, finally to be dispatched, along with all other laws and institutions which presupposed independent working-class organisations, after the Nazis came to power.

And what of opposition to Weimar from the left, the proletarian flank? True, it could be argued that in its early days, this was negligible, since the 'Spartacist Uprising' (wrongly so called, for the Spartacist leaders Liebknecht and Luxemburg both opposed it) only actively involved a small fraction of the Berlin working class, as did a similar revolt two months later. But while it is true that mass working-class hostility to the Republic was slow to crystallise and articulate itself - after all, the workers had been instrumental in creating the Republic, so they could hardly be expected to revolt against it *en masse* when their own leaders stood at its head - organised and widespread opposition to the bourgeois republic did begin to emerge quite early in the new year, as the Ebert government came to rely more and more readily and openly on Noske's Free Corps scum. In fact it was under their protection that the Constituent Assembly held its first session at Weimar, a small Thuringian town selected by virtue of its relative isolation from the main areas of proletarian strength and militancy. ^[53]

In fact, working-class disillusionment with Weimar can be measured much in the same fashion as the shift towards the anti-democratic right in the middle class - by voting returns for the pro- and anti-Weimar workers' parties. The USPD voted against the Weimar Constitution when it was put to the vote in the National Assembly at Weimar, as did, for opposite reasons, the DVP and the DNVP. Thus workers who voted USPD and, after 1920, in increasing numbers, for the KPD, did so fully aware that these two parties were as utterly opposed to the Weimar system as the SPD was in support of it. Thus we arrive at the following picture:

Million votes	Pro-Weimar	Anti-Weimar
	SPD	USPD + KPD
Jan 1919	11.5	2.3
June 1920	6.1	5.0

And if we turn to the balance of forces in the right-wing camp, the same trend emerges:

Million votes	Pro-Weimar	Anti-Weimar
	DDP + Centre	DVP + DNVP
1919	11.6	4.5
1920	6.2	8.2

Thus a year after the National Assembly voted by 262 to 75 to adopt the proposed new constitution, the Weimar majority which had seemed so stable had melted away to be replaced by an anti-Weimar majority in the Reichstag of three, and if the Catholic Bavarian People's Party is excluded from the Weimar bloc, of 24. Weimar was built on quicksands: economically, socially and politically. In the end only the Social Democrats remained faithful to it as, one by one, the SPD's bourgeois allies, their mass following almost completely eroded by the magnetic pull of Nazi counter-revolutionary dynamism, threw in their lot with Hitler. DDP, Centre and DVP - all voted for Hitler's Enabling Act, which authorised him to outlaw the SPD and the trade unions fully within limits prescribed by the Weimar Constitution. No doubt the leaders of Social Democracy thought they were scaling the heights of tactical subtlety when, acting as accomplices of the bourgeoisie, they derailed the German revolution by counterposing trade union recognition against expropriation, parliamentary democracy against council rule and social welfare against the dictatorship of the proletariat. But their bourgeois allies of 1918 had the final word,

since the reformists not only succeeded in strangling the revolution, but, in so doing, opened the door for the reaction that was to sweep away the very concessions which they had used to camouflage their treachery.

Notes

1. The colours of the overthrown Hohenzollern monarchy.
2. K Marx and F Engels, 'The Manifesto of the Communist Party', *Selected Works* (Moscow, 1962), Volume 1, p 54.
3. Which began as a protest against the rapacious treaty of Brest Litovsk which the Imperial regime had just forced on an almost defenceless revolutionary Russia.
4. Lenin detected this tendency in the Conservative-inspired revolt of the Ulster loyalists under Sir Edward Carson, and wrote about it with great perception in his article 'Constitutional Crisis in Britain' (10 April 1914), where he speaks of Carson's supporters as 'revolutionaries of the right' on account of their readiness to 'tear up the British constitution and British law to shreds' (*Collected Works*, Volume 20, p 228). By the same token - and also for their reliance on plebeian forces (Carson leaned on wide layers of the Protestant middle and working classes) - the Nazis can be regarded as 'revolutionaries of the right'.
5. F Engels, Letter to J Bloch, London, 21-22 September 1890, *Selected Correspondence* (Moscow, nd), p 498.
6. The most profound were the military Kapp Putsch of March 1920, which led directly to a general strike and revolutionary struggles in the Ruhr, Saxony and other industrial regions; the 'March Action' of 1921, in which the KPD staged an ill-conceived and adventurist bid to seize power during a sharp strike battle in central Germany; the assassination of DDP Foreign Minister Rathenau in June 1922, which precipitated a one-day general strike, and finally the inflation crisis and the French occupation of the Rhineland, which culminated in the aborted revolutionary situation in the autumn of 1923, and the Hitler putsch a matter of days later.
7. The bulk of which were whittled away - with the tacit support of the SPD - under the Bonapartist regimes of Brüning and von Papen.
8. Prince Max of Baden, *Memoirs*, Volume 2 (London, 1928), p 351.
9. Even Oswald Spengler, that die-hard enemy of the German workers' movement, saw the need to temporise with the SPD 'Marxists', in order later to prepare a counter-blow against the revolutionary section of the proletariat and finally the entire working class. In a letter written in December 1918, he predicted that 'the old Prussian element with its incalculable treasures of discipline, organising power and energy will take the lead and that the respectable part of the working population will be at its disposal against anarchism in which the Spartacus group has a remarkable relationship with left liberalism of the Jewish newspapers [the 'Jewish conspiracy' yet again - RB]... Germany has first to suffer for its sins... until finally... the Terror has brought to a head such a degree of excitement and despair that a dictatorship, resembling that of Napoleon, will be regarded universally as a salvation. But then blood must flow, the more the better. First of all force, the reconstruction, not through the agency of the dilettantism of political majorities, but by the superior tactics of the few who are born for and destined to politics.' And these lines were written more than 14 years before Spengler's 'Napoleon' (or Caesar) acted out this scenario!
10. The 'Working Alliance Agreement'.
11. The relative strength of the parties was SPD 289 delegates (60 per cent), USPD 90 (20 per cent), delegates without party affiliation 74 (15 per cent) and smaller groups 25 (five per cent). There were but 10 Spartacists in the USPD delegation.
12. Voting on the two resolutions was as follows. To hold elections to a Constituent National Assembly on 19 January: 400 for, 50 against. To vest all power in the councils: 98 for, 344 against. Thus 48 delegates voted for both resolutions!
13. *Political Institutions of the German Revolution* (New York, 1966), p 214.

- 14.** *Political Institutions of the German Revolution*, p 223.
- 15.** A request to admit the Spartacist leaders to the congress - they were not elected as delegates - was turned down by a large majority.
- 16.** The USPD wanted a parliamentary republic with workers' councils, and now counter-revolutionary troops without any ammunition!
- 17.** This plan provided for the most draconian punishments against revolutionary workers: 'Whoever is found in possession of arms without a licence is to be shot... Whoever assumes an official function without authorisation is to be shot... [etc, etc]' It was implemented in the wholesale repressions of workers during the 'Spartacist Uprising' of January 1919.
- 18.** H Schacht, *My First Seventy-Six Years* (London, 1955), p 148. It is all the more significant in that in his earlier career as a director of the Dresdner Bank (which he left in 1915 to join the smaller but highly influential Nationalbank für Deutschland) Schacht had built up a highly confidential network of contacts both formal and informal with leaders of German industry, among them Karl Friedrich von Siemens (Electric Trust), August Thyssen and Hugo Stinnes (heavy industry) and Herr Schlitter, manager of the Deutsche Bank. And his more discreet operations as an adviser to members of the royal houses enabled Schacht to enjoy intimate relations with, among others, the Princes Hohenlohe-Orhingen and Furstenberg, both of whom had badly burned their fingers in highly speculative undertakings. All in all, Schacht was admirably suited to be entrusted with the onerous task of launching a party whose prime aim was to ensnare the SPD in a reformist - liberal coalition. With such a background and class pedigree, there was little chance of Schacht being sucked into a policy of 'socialisation'. Schacht's business and social connections were equally valuable a decade later when he turned towards his new allies - the Nazis.
- 19.** Schacht, *My First Seventy-Six Years*, pp 148-49.
- 20.** Hitler's scorn for bourgeois political leaders in this period knew no bounds: 'After the revolution, when the bourgeois parties suddenly reappeared, though with modified firm names, and their brave leaders crawled out of the concealment of dark cellars and airy storerooms, like all the representatives of such formations, they had not forgotten their mistakes and likewise they had learned nothing new. Their political programme lay in the past, in so far as they had not reconciled themselves at heart with the new state of affairs; their aim, however, was to participate if possible in the new state of affairs, and their sole weapons remained, as they had always been, words. Even after the revolution, the bourgeois parties at all times miserably capitulated to the streets.' (A Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (London, 1943), p 531)
- 21.** Schacht, *My First Seventy-Six Years*, pp 149-50.
- 22.** And to anticipate the completion of this cycle: before going into voluntary liquidation under the Third Reich, its successor the DVP (German People's Party) had its two surviving Reichstag deputies cast their votes for Hitler's Enabling Act, under which the Social Democrats, squeezed dry of the last drop of treachery, were outlawed once again.
- 23.** Schacht, *My First Seventy-Six Years*, p 150.
- 24.** The elections to the Constituent National Assembly on 19 January 1919 gave the two workers' parties - the SPD and the USPD - a combined vote of 13 826 400, which amounted to 45.5 per cent of the total poll. Schacht's DDP, on a programme that approached closely that of the SPD, secured 5 641 800 votes - 18.6 per cent of the total. Thus it would have required only a minority of the democratic middle-class vote to have gone to the SPD (or even the USPD) to give the workers' parties an *absolute* majority in Parliament. Schacht's strategy had worked brilliantly since the reformists could now claim that they had no alternative but to form a 'centre-left' coalition with the DDP and the Catholic Centre Party. This alliance became known as the 'Great Coalition' even though it later included the solidly big-bourgeois DVP of Stresemann.
- 25.** Schacht, *My First Seventy-Six Years*, pp 151-52.
- 26.** Even though the deposed Kaiser had already fled Germany to seek exile in Holland.

27. The DDP vote, which in 1919 made it Germany's third largest party after the SPD and the Centre, declined in direct proportion to the growth of middle-class disillusionment with the Republic. Former DDP voters steadily moved to the right, often through the DVP, then the openly monarchist DNVP and finally, after the onset of the economic and political crisis in 1929, into the ranks of National Socialism. This dramatic shift of the German petit-bourgeoisie through the entire spectrum of German bourgeois politics, marking as it did the break-up of the so-called 'middle ground', the foundation of class collaboration and compromise, can be depicted graphically. (The Economic Party appealed specifically to small businessmen. It was bitterly hostile to the Republic, and not averse to employing anti-Semitic propaganda.)

Votes (in millions)						
Election	DDP	DVP	DNVP	EP	NSDAP	Total
1919	5.6	1.3	3.1	0.3	0.0	10.3
1920	2.3	3.9	4.2	0.2	0.0	10.6
1924 (May)	1.7	2.7	5.7	0.7	1.9	12.7
1924 (Dec)	1.9	3.0	6.2	1.0	0.9	13.0
1928	1.5	2.7	4.4	1.4	0.8	10.8
1930	1.3	1.6	2.5	1.4	6.4	13.2
1932 (July)	0.4	0.4	2.1	0.1	13.8	16.8
1932 (Nov)	0.3	0.7	3.0	0.1	11.8	15.9
1933	0.3	0.4	3.1	0.0	17.3	21.1

28. Schacht retired from active politics after the elections of 19 January, only to surface again in the midst of the economic crisis which erupted in the United States and rapidly sent industry and banking spiralling downwards towards disaster. Now Schacht appeared in a new role - contact man between big business and the Nazis.

29. Schacht, *My First Seventy-Six Years*, pp 152-53.

30. H Schacht, *The Stabilisation of the Mark* (London, 1927), pp 36-38.

31. Stresemann's paralysis and abject despair was typical of the old monarchist Right.

32. Some captains of industry were, however, more adventurous. As early as 17 October 1918, Carl Duisberg of the Chemical Trust wrote to a friend to tell him that 'from that day when I saw that the cabinet system was bankrupt, I greeted the change to a parliamentary system with joy... where it is possible I work hand-in-hand with the trade unions and seek in this way to save what can be saved... I am an opportunist and I adjust to things as they are.' But Duisberg cannot be regarded as typical of industry, since he supported the DDP and helped to finance its most sympathetic voice in the newspaper world, the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, which on 14 November 1918 had excelled all other bourgeois democrats in declaring: 'The new Germany must be radical and socialist to the core... Only with a radical programme can the middle class dare to engage in politics with a prospect of success... The bourgeoisie must be radical or it will cease to be.' And Duisberg, like Schacht, was soon to change his tune. In a speech to the 1925 Conference of the Federation of German Industry, he stated: 'Be united, united, united. This should be the uninterrupted call to the parties in the Reichstag. We hope that our words of today will work, and will find the strong man who will finally bring everyone under one umbrella, for he is always necessary for us Germans, as we have seen in the case of Bismarck.'

33. In a letter dated 6 January 1919, Stresemann declared: 'I have emphasised in almost every one of my campaign meetings that I was a monarchist, am a monarchist and shall remain a monarchist.' And on the 27th of the same month, he sent, together with other DVP leaders, a birthday greetings telegram to ex-Kaiser Wilhelm which ended: 'Millions of Germans, even under new circumstances and on a new foundation of political life, join us in acknowledging the monarchist principle and will oppose any unworthy renunciation of the

high ideals of the German Empire and the Prussian Kingdom.’ Less than four years later Stresemann became Chancellor of a Cabinet which included not only his own DVP, but four members of the SPD and two representatives of the DDP!

34. Vögler regarded his position as one of the DVP’s 19 deputies in the National Assembly as an opportunity to represent not so much his party, even less those who voted for him, but the interests of his own industrial undertakings, which were admittedly considerable. In his maiden speech to the Reichstag he abashed even the most venal of his parliamentary colleagues with his opening words: ‘I speak here as a representative of an industry.’ When the opportunity came to make an end with parliamentary democracy, tycoons like Vögler obviously had no regrets.

35. The Lutheran Protestant Church had for centuries been a most faithful supporter of the Prussian Monarchy, enjoying in its turn the special patronage and protection of the state as against the Catholic Church, traditionally regarded as an arm of ‘Roman’ influence inside Germany. The authority of God was frequently invoked at moments of great crisis for the Reich, both in wars, and revolutions. In March 1918, the Lutheran journal *Allgemeine Evangelisch Lutherische* justified the rapacious Treaty of Brest Litovsk in the following terms: ‘Russia had to yield up booty in inconceivable quantities. We needed guns and ammunition for the last assault on the enemy in the west. God knew that we needed it. So He gave it to us freely, for God is munificent... If there were still clear-sighted Christians in England they would now have to rise up and cry to their government in fear: “We have had enough, God is fighting for Germany.”’ Understandably the revolution loomed in the thinking of such men as the work of the devil himself. The 1848 Revolution had already been roundly condemned by a Lutheran theologian as ‘a breach of loyalty and the graveyard of respect, bringing with it the end of morality and therefore of the freedom and salvation of the people’. The November of 1918 therefore found the Protestants in a state of apoplexy, their feelings being summed up some years later by one of their number, who declared that ‘our chief misfortune has been the Social Democrats, who have made this unnecessary and unbelievably stupid revolution, who have deprived Germany of the fruits of its glorious struggles over four years, who have betrayed our country solely in order to bring their party to power’. Marxism was of course the scourge of all decent, God-fearing Germans. Another theologian stated in 1923: ‘Our political downfall, our entire misery has its roots in Marx’s theory, and this in turn, in Rousseau’s delusion about the nobility of man.’ There was much in Luther’s writings to bolster this line: ‘Because the sword is a very great benefit and necessary to the whole world, to preserve peace, to punish sin and to prevent evil, he [a true Christian - RB] submits most willingly to the rule of the sword, pays taxes, honours those in authority, serves, helps and does all he can to further the government that it may be sustained and held in honour and fear... you are under obligation to serve and further the sword by whatever means you can, with body, soul, honour or goods... Therefore, should you see that there is a lack of hangman, beadles, judges, lords or princes, and find that you are qualified, you should offer your services and seek the place, that necessary government may by no means be despised and become inefficient or perish. For the world cannot and dare not dispense with it.’ (M Luther, ‘Secular Authority: To What Extent Should It Be Obeyed?’ (1523), *Martin Luther: Selections From His Writings* (New York, 1961), pp 373-75)

36. Though monarchist circles were by no means united in their tactical appreciation of the Ebert government. The *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* was more astute than most when it wrote on 9 November 1918, that ‘the development in the Reich, which threatened to lead to anarchy, could - in the belief of the SPD - be controlled only by certain ultimative demands which would acquiesce the people and lead them back to order. The demand foremost was the abdication of the Emperor. One may grant that the Social Democrats wanted this not only to realise the aims and ambitions of their party, but also to serve the fatherland, which they saw as heading towards perdition [that is, revolution - RB]; only the future can prove whether their decisions will bring the salvation which they themselves - and now all the other parties - expect... It has, for the time being, helped us to get out of a critical situation.’

37. ‘In our opinion, every government enjoys God’s blessing, whether it be monarchic or republican.’ (Centre Party statement of principles, read to the National Assembly on 13 February 1919) This highly ambiguous declaration, derived as it was from Thomist teaching on the state, left the door ajar for future Centre Party adjustments to anti-republican movements and regimes. In this declaration, which heralded the Centre’s collaboration with the ‘atheistic’ SPD, was the germ of the opportunist strategy which permitted the political arm of the hierarchy to vote its unanimous support for Hitler’s Enabling Act on 23 March 1933, which in turn became the constitutional foundation stone for the tyranny of the Third Reich: ‘Render unto Caesar...’

38. In the middle 1920s the German Catholic Church employed more than 20 000 priests - one for every 2000 German Catholics. Its youth organisations, instrumental in indoctrinating young workers against Marxism, had a membership of 1.5 million. There were also associations for a whole host of occupational groups and catering for sports, cultural and other activities. At every level it sought both to duplicate and to counter the organisational methods and influence of Social Democracy. The historian of the Centre Party, Karl Bachem, was entirely justified when he claimed in 1931 that ‘never yet has a Catholic country possessed such a developed system of all conceivable Catholic associations as today’s Germany’. We should add to them the many and richly-endowed Catholic publishing houses, which catered for every class and type of reader from the traditionalist devout Bavarian peasant to the more modern thinking and class-conscious Ruhr miner or steel worker.

39. Even Papen was forced to concede that there were some who wore the ‘Marxist’ label who could be regarded as at least temporary allies. Nevertheless, it was Papen who ousted the ‘reasonable’ SPD leaders from the Prussian state government in July 1932 on the grounds that they were preparing to form a revolutionary united front with the Communist Party.

40. F von Papen, *Memoirs* (London, 1952), pp 84-90.

41. Von Papen, *Memoirs*, pp 90-91.

42. Not all ‘Marxists’ were villains however, as Papen explains: ‘As in all times of revolutionary change, the radical parties were in the ascendant, and the various forms of Marxism attracted the largest measure of support. Fortunately for Germany, there were, amongst the Social Democrats, a number of civic-minded leaders like Ebert and Noske, who stood firm against the Bolshevik storm.’ The only problem was that ‘in spite of their statesmanlike attitude, the basic programme of their party still exalted class warfare and the fight against religious influences. The cry for the “dictatorship of the proletariat” was heard from all shades of Marxist opinion even though more moderate policies were actually put into practice.’ Papen was for this reason critical of the Centre Party for remaining in the coalition with the ‘Marxist’ SPD longer than the exigencies of revolutionary upheaval demanded: ‘When our institutions seemed likely to collapse at the end of the war the Zentrum [Centre] undoubtedly did right to combine with the Socialists... They were able to block measures of a too radical nature and prevented Germany from becoming a field for too many socialist experiments. This was a signal contribution to the conduct of our affairs. But the Weimar Coalition of Socialists, Democrats and Zentrum held obstinately to office once the first shock had been countered. In the Central Government, feeble attempts were made from time to time to incorporate representatives of the right-wing parties. In Prussia, however, the Weimar Coalition remained in power without a break from 1918 [until Papen became Chancellor - RB]. The Zentrum could never make up its mind to break with the socialists in order to rescue the right-wing parties from the torpidity of endless opposition. This was one of the major reasons for the collapse of the Weimar brand of democracy [which Papen eagerly helped to bring about - RB] and the growth of Hitler’s party.’ (Von Papen, *Memoirs*, pp 104-06)

43. Von Papen, *Memoirs*, pp 91-93.

44. ‘Rerum Novarum: The Condition of the Working Classes’ (15 May 1891), *The Papal Encyclicals* (New York, 1963), pp 167-68 (Nihil Obstat John A Goodwine, JCD, Censor

Librorum, Imprimatur Cardinal Francis Spellman, Archbishop of New York). The *canard* also used by fascism that socialists seek to collectivise the personal possessions of the worker as well as the productive property of the bourgeoisie and big landowners, is answered by Marx in *Capital*, where he writes: ‘The capitalist mode of appropriation is the first negation of individual private property, as founded on the labour of the proprietor. But capitalist production begets... its own negation... This does not re-establish private property for the producer but gives him individual property based on the acquisitions of the capitalist era: that is, on cooperation and the possession in common of the land and the means of production. The transformation of scattered private property, arising from individual labour into capitalist private property is, naturally, a process incomparably more protracted, violent and difficult, than the transformation of capitalistic private property, already practically resting on socialised production, into socialised property. In the former case, we had the expropriation of the mass of the people by a few usurpers, in the latter we have the expropriation of a few usurpers by the mass of the people.’ (K Marx, *Capital*, Volume 1, pp 764-65)

45. ‘*Rerum Novarum*’, pp 174-84, emphasis added.

46. Von Papen, *Memoirs*, p 97.

47. Papen’s views were identical to Hitler’s on this question - see Chapters VIII and IX.

48. This Encyclical, *On Reconstructing the Social Order*, dates from 1931, and was promulgated by Pius XI. It updates and expands on *Rerum Novarum*, criticising certain ‘excesses’ of capitalist exploitation while intransigently upholding the sacred rights of private property. It went further in that it proposed a thoroughly fascist solution to the problem of the class struggle: ‘The complete cure will not come until this opposition [of the classes] has been abolished and well-ordered members of the social body - industries and professions - are constituted in which men may have their place, not according to the position each has in the labour market but according to the respective social functions which each performs.’ In other words, the corporate state which, had Pope Pius XI cared to look out of his Vatican windows, he would have seen being put into brutal practice by the atheist Mussolini’s fascist regime. Papen, who enjoyed the most intimate relations with the Vatican - it was he who more than any other member of Hitler’s government smoothed the way for the Concordat between Rome and the Third Reich - leaves no room for doubt on this issue: ‘Once the parties had disappeared [sic!] it became necessary to organise the democratic system on another basis, founded on the groups of trades and professions which formed the backbone of the nation. *The corporate state has long been an element in Catholic social philosophy*, and in many ways represents an improvement on the party system.’ (Von Papen, *Memoirs*, p 259, emphasis added)

49. Von Papen, *Memoirs*, pp 283-84.

50. Let it be noted here that like that other man of breeding, the banker Schacht, Papen escaped scot free at the Nuremberg war crimes trials, despite a mountain of evidence, documentary, as well as oral, of their both having not only been complicit in aiding Hitler’s rise to power, but ready to share in the spoils of victory. Inveterate enemies of Marxism and labour both, their responsibility for the hideous crimes of German fascism was not one wit less than those who paid with their lives. Like convicted war criminal Alfred Krupp, whose company grew rich on the profits extracted from Soviet and Jewish slave labour, and who conducted board meetings in his own cell, they were doubtless thankful that class justice, which Papen demagogically decried in his Nazi days, applied even to the most monumental crime committed in the history of mankind.

51. Article 48 was never once, in all the times it was employed, invoked to violate the property rights of the bourgeoisie. It was used, however, to seize and impound the property of the workers’ movement - that is, newspapers, membership lists and the like.

52. Although chosen to assist Preuss in drawing up the constitution Weber can hardly be termed a consistent democrat. An unrepentant chauvinist and militarist, he declared in the November of 1918: ‘For the resurrection of Germany in its old splendour I would certainly ally myself with every power on earth and even with the very devil himself...’ And early in

1919, in frank discussion with General Ludendorff, he remarked in reply to the question 'What do you understand by democracy?', that 'In a democracy the people elects the leader whom it trusts. Then the elected one says: "Now shut up and obey. People and parties must no longer butt in"', to which Ludendorff, who lent his considerable military prestige and personal presence to Hitler's ill-starred Munich putsch, responded: 'Such "democracy" is alright with me.' Weber's notion of democracy differs but little from Hitler's, whose definition we have already quoted. Hitler favoured a 'truly Germanic democracy, characterised by the free election of a leader and his obligation to assume all responsibility for his actions and omissions: in it there is no majority vote, but only the decision of an individual who must answer with his fortune and his life for his choice' (Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 91). Even on this last point there is similarity with Weber's definition, for he told Ludendorff that 'afterwards the people can judge - if the leader has made mistakes, to the gallows with him'. Only the leader was, in the case of Hitler at least, also chief hangman!

53. But around Weimar things were not quite normal. General Märcker, in charge of the Free Corps units detailed to protect the tender shoots of German parliamentarianism, later recalled that 'Weimar was encircled at 10 kilometers distance; all roads situated in this circle were secured by groups of officers and non-commissioned officers with full equipment... Villages and industrial hamlets in Thuringia were unfriendly to our troops...' (General Ludwig Märcker, *Vom Kaiserhof zur Reichswehr Geschichte des frei willeigen Landesjägerkorps* (Leipzig, 1927), p 91)

Fascism in Germany. Robin Blick 1975

Chapter XI: NSDAP

The Revolution's greatest piece of stupidity was to leave us all alive. If ever I come to power again there will be no pardons. With a good conscience I would have Ebert, Scheidemann and company strung up and dangling. (General Erich Ludendorff, February 1919)

It is almost a truism to say that as a political 'theorist', Hitler invented nothing. Neither did he found the party that under his leadership, and with an amended name, rose from its Munich obscurity to seize the levers of state power in little more than 13 years. And in fact even as regards nomenclature, the National Socialist German Workers Party (NSDAP) was not the first organisation to bear this thoroughly undeserved title. As we have already noted in Chapter Nine, the Bohemian-based 'German Workers Party' (DAP), founded in 1904 to defend the privileges of German-speaking highly-skilled workers and artisans against an imagined threat from their Czech fellow-workers, rapidly evolved in a chauvinist, anti-Marxist direction. At its Vienna conference in August 1918 the party not only adopted a new name (NSDAP), but a new programme which foreshadowed many of the demands soon to be put forward by the Hitler movement in its bid to win support from the middle-class masses:

The NSDAP aims at the elevation and liberation of the German working population from economic, political and intellectual suppression and at a complete equality of rights for it in all fields of *volkisch* and political life... It rejects, therefore, as unnatural a combination on the basis of supra-nationalism. An improvement of the economic and social conditions can, on the contrary, only be achieved by bringing together all those engaged in work on the basis of the individual nationality... [therefore] the NSDAP is not a narrow class party, but defends the interests of all those engaged in honest productive work. The party is libertarian and strictly *volkisch*, and it opposes all reactionary tendencies, the privileges of the Church, nobility and capitalists, and all alien influences, but above all the overwhelming power of the Jewish trading spirit in all spheres of public life.

The programme, in line with the party's already established tactic of indulging in entirely spurious anti-capitalist rhetoric, called for the nationalisation of all enterprises which were working against the 'common interest', and specifically for the rooting-out of so-called 'Jewish' finance from the national economy. Like Feder, whose ideas were cast in the same petit-bourgeois *volkisch* mould, the programme took pains to distinguish between what one of its leading publicists, Rudolf Jung, called 'disintegrating finance capital and the highly desirable productive national capital'. Jung also coined a well-worn slogan of the Nazi era, 'the common weal comes before private interests', one which Ley's Labour Front constantly employed to drive workers to even greater sacrifice on behalf of their employers, who always chose to appear in the self-effacing guise of the 'people's community'. The reader can judge for his or herself to what degree the original NSDAP contributed towards the Hitler movement's programme by comparing these demands with the 25-point programme adopted in January 1920, which is reproduced at the end of this chapter.

One thing is certain. Neither the birth of the Nazi movement, nor its initial growth, can in any sense be considered accidental. Firstly, there is the role of Hitler himself. He did not join the Munich DAP as a free agent, but as a political officer of the German army. Nor was it purely by chance that Hitler rather than some other right-wing fanatic came to be chosen for the task of establishing contact with the various anti-Marxist organisations that had sprung up in the Bavarian capital after the defeat of the Soviet Republic in May 1919. In fact Hitler's emergence as an army 'politico' dates from the Munich Bavarian revolution, when he served as an army stool-pigeon, informing on those among the regular troops who became sympathetic to the workers' movement in the course of the Bavarian Soviet Republic's brief life. When counter-revolutionary troops under the command of the future Nazi, Lieutenant General Franz Xavier Ritter von Epp took Munich on 1 May, Hitler added to the ensuing blood-letting by volunteering evidence that led to the decimation of supposedly 'disloyal' units. ^[1] This Hitler subsequently termed - with some justification - as his 'first more or less purely political activity'. ^[2]

Not only in Bavaria, but throughout Germany, the reaction was on the offensive, emboldened by the treachery of the reformists and the vacillations of the USPD centrists. The swing to the extreme right was more marked in Munich for a variety of reasons, historical as well as political. The Bavarian capital had long been a centre of anti-Semitic-flavoured *volkisch* nationalism, a tradition to which the Catholic church had not been slow in accommodating in its efforts to deflect charges that the 'Romanists' were

lacking in German patriotism. Neither was there that liberal bourgeois tradition which we encounter in the equally Catholic Rhineland, one which owed its origins to the spread of democratic ideas and institutions from neighbouring revolutionary France. The revolutions of 1789 and 1848 passed Bavaria by, just as in the Bismarckian period, the rise of heavy industry and large-scale capitalist farming were least in evidence in this, the most rural of all Germany's states. Social Democracy in Bavaria was from the very beginning prone to seek opportunist solutions to the problems posed by the class and political structure of the region. Faced by an intransigently hostile clerical movement, which drew its main strength from a pious peasantry and small-town artisans, the Bavarian Social Democratic Party leadership began to cast around for anti-clerical allies in the ranks of the bourgeoisie. And so was conceived and born that forerunner of the Stalinist 'Popular Front', the SPD - Progressive electoral alliance, in which the two parties mutually agreed to support each other in run-off ballots against the clericals and monarchists. It is evident from the evolution of Bavarian Social Democracy before 1914 that its leaders (notably Kurt Eisner and Erhard Auer) did not even conceive of the struggle for socialism on a national, let alone international plane, but rather viewed it through the double lenses of Bernsteinian revisionism and Bavarian particularism. All major principled and strategic questions were reduced to the small change of regional peculiarities and tactical combinations, a method which had not only utterly reformist consequences, but could - and in fact did - lead in a period of revolutionary upsurge to the most ill-conceived and ineptly-led adventures. Here too, Social Democracy proved to be the midwife of the most extreme reaction, for undoubtedly the defeat of the Bavarian Soviet Republic created the most favourable political conditions for the birth and rise of movements such as Hitler's. His political career dates, as he himself acknowledged, *from the crushing of the Munich proletariat*. To ensure a secure base for the new military regime in the still-seething city, and to root out and counter 'subversive' ideas in the army itself - many rank-and-file soldiers had been influenced by the workers' movement, and had themselves participated in the revolution as members of soldiers' councils - a bureau was set up (*Abteilung I b/P*) to carry out political work in the army. The bureau's head, staff officer Karl Mayr, drew up a list of possible candidates for his staff of spies and informers, one of the first to be drawn to his attention being... Adolf Hitler.

To prime him for his new role, Hitler was sent on a course of lectures at Munich University, and it was here that he first heard Feder extolling the merits of 'national capital'. Feder's selection by the army as one of the 'lecturers' in this induction course indicates just how reactionary was the political climate prevailing in post-revolutionary Munich. But there were already present elements that could not be directly identified with either militarist or monarchist reaction. The harrowing experience of the soviet republic had strengthened Hitler's conviction (and also many others of a similar *volkisch* outlook) that the old style 'dynastic' nationalism had had its day, even in Bavaria, where it had proved most impervious to the passage of time and the rise of the workers' movement.

Still as yet largely independently of the main *volkisch* groups in Munich, Hitler in his new post of political officer began to grope his way towards the notion of a plebeian-based counter-revolutionary movement which could achieve what the old bourgeois parties had so abysmally failed to accomplish - the extirpation of Marxism:

For the value of the whole affair [the lecture course at Munich University - RB] was that I now obtained an opportunity of meeting a few like-minded comrades with whom I could discuss the situation of the moment. All of us were more or less firmly convinced that Germany could no longer be saved from the impending collapse by the parties of the November crime, the Centre and the Social Democracy, and the so-called 'bourgeois-national' formations, even with the best of intentions, could never repair what had happened. A whole series of preconditions were lacking, without which such a task simply could not succeed. The following period confirmed the opinion we then held. Thus, in our own circle we discussed the foundation of a new party. The basic ideas which we had in mind were the same as those realised in the 'German Workers Party'. The name of the movement to be founded would from the very beginning *have to offer the possibility of approaching the broad masses; for without this quality the whole task seemed aimless and superfluous*. Thus we arrived at the name of 'Social Revolutionary Party'; this because the social views of the new organisation did indeed mean a revolution. ^[3]

The nature of this 'revolution' we have already discussed at some length. Hitler himself took great care to distinguish his use of the term from the sense in which the word had been traditionally understood not only by the workers' movement, but by its class enemies. It was a political 'revolution' - counter-

revolution, to be precise - that Hitler sought, the forging of a cadre and movement which while usurping the political prerogatives of the old ruling élites - the so-called 'political bourgeoisie' and its supplementary literary agencies - would create a new state structure resting on and defending the same capitalist property relations. This is why Hitler so eagerly seized on Feder's theory of 'productive capital' as it enabled him to reconcile his aim of a 'popular' national movement with his utterly conservative views on private property. As Hitler himself commented:

Previously I had been unable to recognise with the desired clarity the difference between this pure capital as the end result of productive labour and a capital whose existence and essence rests exclusively on speculation. For this I lacked the initial inspiration [sic], which had simply not come my way. But now this was provided most amply by one of the various gentlemen lecturing in the above mentioned course [at Munich University]: Gottfried Feder. ^[4]

Thus the struggle against 'Jewish' Marxism became, by virtue of this theory, synonymous with the fight against an equally Hebraic 'finance capitalism':

... it was the conclusions of Gottfried Feder that caused me to delve into the fundamentals of this field with which I had previously not been very familiar. I began to study again, and now for the first time really achieved an understanding of the content of the Jew Karl Marx's life effort. Only now did his *Kapital* become really intelligible to me, and also the struggle of the Social Democracy against the national economy, which aims only to prepare the ground for the domination of truly international finance and stock exchange capital. ^[5]

Stripped of its wilder moments of rhetoric, there was in fact very little even in Hitler's public utterances on economics to give the big bourgeoisie cause for concern about their property rights. On the contrary, those that took the trouble to read Chapter Four of Volume Two of *Mein Kampf*, 'Personality and the Conception of the Folkish State', would have found Hitler's main quarrel with the capitalist class to be over its failure to apply consistently what he called the principle of 'personality'. The bourgeoisie upheld it in economics by - in Hitler's declared opinion quite rightly - refusing to countenance any interference by the trade unions or works councils in the running of their enterprises. But by their toleration of, or even collaboration with, the Weimar system, they denied this same principle of 'personality' in politics and the affairs of state. And in so doing, they were sinning against what Hitler termed the 'aristocratic principle of nature'.

In such a 'Folkish State' founded on this principle, there would be room for neither trade unions nor parliamentary democracy, for they both were its pure negation:

A philosophy of life which endeavours to reject the democratic mass idea and gives this earth to the best people, must logically obey the same aristocratic principle within this people and make sure that the leadership and the highest influence in this people fall to the best minds. Thus it builds... upon the idea of personality... Even purely theoretical intellectual work... appears as the exclusive product of the individual person. It is not the mass that invents and not the majority that organises or thinks, but in all things only and always the individual person... organisation... must itself be an embodiment of the endeavour to place thinking individuals above the masses, thus subordinating the latter to the former... it must proceed from the principle that the salvation of mankind has never lain in the masses, but in its creative minds, which must therefore be regarded as benefactors of the human race... the selection of these minds... is primarily accomplished by the hard struggle for existence. Many break and perish, this showing that they are not destined for the ultimate, and in the end only a few appear to be chosen. In the fields of thought, artistic creation, even, in fact, of economic life, this selective process is still going on today, though especially in the latter field, it faces a grave obstacle... ^[6]

And what is this 'grave obstacle' that defies nature by standing in the way of the unfettered functioning of the aristocratic or 'personality' principle? Hitler's answer to this question is at the same time an exposition of the historical role of fascism:

Only political life has today turned completely away from this most natural principle. While all human culture is solely the result of the individual's creative activity, everywhere, and particularly in the highest leadership of the national community, the principle of the value of the majority appears decisive, and from that high place begins gradually to dissolve it... Marxism presents itself as the perfection of the Jew's attempt to exclude the pre-eminence of personality in all fields of human life and replace it by the numbers of the mass. ^[7]

At this point, Hitler draws a direct parallel between the threat posed to 'personality' in political affairs by bourgeois democracy and the subverting of 'personality' in economics by the workers' movement, specifically its trade unions:

To this [that is, the rule of the masses - RB], in the political sphere, corresponds the parliamentary form of government, ^[8] which, from the smallest germ cells of the municipality up to the supreme leadership of the Reich, we see in such disastrous operation, and in the economic sphere, the system of a trade union movement which does not serve the real interests of the workers, but exclusively the destructive [that is, revolutionary - RB] purposes of the international world Jew. *In precisely the measure in which the economy is withdrawn from the influence of the personality principle and instead exposed to the influences and effects of the masses, it must lose its efficacy in serving all and benefitting all, and gradually succumb to a sure regression. All the shop organisations which, instead of taking into account the interests of their employees, strive to gain influence on production, serve the same purpose. They injure collective achievement, and thus in reality injure individual achievement...* The folkish philosophy is basically distinguished from the Marxist philosophy by the fact that it not only recognises the value of race, but with it the importance of the personality, which it therefore makes one of the pillars of its entire edifice. ^[9]

That fascism has been the instrument for the crushing of the individual's personality, and his total subordination to the imperialist drive for profit and to war, and that Marxism seeks as its goal the liberation of the individual from this same oppression, is really not the main point here. What has to be stressed is that these conceptions were maturing in Hitler's mind at precisely the point when he launched himself on his chosen career as a 'socialist' and 'revolutionary', as an aspiring leader of the very masses he despised as ignorant, inferior and totally unable to guide their own destinies. As we have repeatedly contended, Hitler's sole strategic orientation was towards a counter-revolutionary alliance with the big bourgeoisie, a bloc in which the Nazi leadership would defend its allies against the threat of revolution in return for its being ceded the dominant positions for its main cadres (drawn almost exclusively from the petit-bourgeoisie) in the government. *The quarrel was over politics, not economics.* Hence Hitler's lack of interest in this most vital branch of human activity, and the relatively small importance he placed on it as a determinant of historical development. It was as if Hitler was saying to the bourgeoisie:

You have been selected by nature, through the ruthless working out of its aristocratic principle of the survival of the fittest, ^[10] to own and dispose of the nation's wealth, and you rightly cherish and defend this nature-given right against those who seek to subvert it. But by your failure to apply this same principle to the administering of the affairs of state, the selection of those who stand guard over your own property, you place your prized possessions and rights in the gravest jeopardy, for you delegate the running of the state to those who not only do not recognise this aristocratic principle, but are dedicated to eliminating it from every walk of life from culture and government to the army and above all, the running of the economy. In other words, it would lead, step by step, through the gradual encroachment by the trade unions and works councils on your property rights - for which provision has been made in Article 165 of the Weimar Constitution, and against which your parties voted in the Reichstag - to final and total expropriation. The destruction of the national economy - the long-term goal of Jewish Marxism and Jewish loan capital - would have been achieved, and entirely because of your criminal refusal to apply consistently the very principle to which you owe your present position of leadership in the economy. And so there is only one answer. If you wish to remain leaders of the economy, you must break your compact with the Weimar system and strike out on an entirely new course. You must smash parliament, and above all, you must smash the workers' movement, for until that has been done, you will never be safe, never be free from the pressure of the masses.

This was the message Hitler hammered home over and over again in a series of meetings and secret conversations with business leaders between 1920 and 1933, and it was one which only began to make sense to those who counted, when all other methods had been tried and found wanting.

Yet such an outcome seemed utterly improbable as Hitler commenced his duties as political officer in Captain Mayr's *Abteilung I b/P*, even when by dint of his undoubted prowess as an orator, he found himself entrusted with the task of 'decontaminating' soldiers infected with socialist ideas during their stay in the Soviet Union as prisoners-of-war. In this capacity he penned what is believed to be his first political document, a reply to a letter written to Captain Mayr by one of his former agents, one Adolf

Gemlich, who expressed alarm that the 'Jewish' Marxists were appearing to gain the upper hand in the new Germany. Hitler's reply, dated 16 September 1919, indicates that he had indeed by this date arrived at the conceptions which were to shape his political strategy for the remainder of his life. Anti-Semitism by itself was not enough, he explained. The final goal must be the creation of a ruthless dictatorship that could carry through not merely the removal of the Jews from public life, but their physical elimination, what Hitler prophetically termed the 'final solution'.

Four days before writing this letter, Hitler had, in the course of his work as an army political agent, attended a meeting of the tiny DAP where none other than Feder happened to be one of the speakers. Small though this group was - when Hitler joined it he was presented with a membership card numbered seven - it nevertheless had origins and associations which linked it with far more elevated circles of Munich society than its humble meeting place and modest means would suggest.

As we have already pointed out, the DAP first saw the light of day as a 'plebeian' offshoot of the Fatherland Front, an ultra-chauvinist breakaway from the Conservatives, which with support from several important industrialists and military leaders, stridently opposed a negotiated peace with the Allies when this idea began to gain ground in more liberal sections of the bourgeoisie after 1916. These intransigent Pan-Germans dimly perceived the need to win a degree of popular support for their policies, and to this end looked benignly on the formation of patriotic 'workers' groups' which espoused and propagated their imperialistic views to a proletarian audience, however small it might be. And so was born the Munich 'Free Labour Committee for a Good Peace', founded by the engineer Anton Drexler on 7 March 1918. Horrified by the growth of anti-war sentiments in the working class - they had even begun to take hold of a section of the traditionally backward Munich proletariat - he gathered around himself a small group of skilled artisans and craftsmen in the city's railway workshops on a programme of all-out support for the Kaiser's war and an equally uncompromising opposition to all and any manifestations of democracy and Marxism in the German body politic. Drexler's support dwindled as the war grew more and more unpopular with the workers, till in October 1918 he was almost totally isolated even in his own former stronghold. The overthrow of the Wittelsbach dynasty was a further body-blow to Bavarian and Munich ultra-rightists, and it seemed to many that it was only a matter of time before the rising workers' movement would make a clean sweep of them all. But here events moved directly - and tragically - parallel to those in Berlin. True, the Eisner regime veered further to the left, but like its counterpart, the Ebert Provisional Government, it never settled accounts with those who sought its downfall at the first opportunity. How else can we explain the survival of out-and-out racialist organisations such as the Thule Society, which despite its cultural pretensions, functioned as a meeting place for counter-revolutionaries and would-be assassins. ^[11] Apart from organising the infiltration of the Eisner government's security forces, the society also attempted to establish links with more popularly-based *volkisch* groups in the city, and for this purpose one of their number, Karl Harrer, formed a so-called 'Political Workers Circle' to spread the anti-Semitic gospel amongst the more backward elements of the Munich proletariat. Harrer's circle lacked one essential however - workers. The search for a genuine 'national-minded' proletarians eventually brought the Thule Society, through the intermediary of Harrer's empty 'Circle' into contact with Drexler and his tiny following of railway workshop engineers. At Harrer's instigation, Drexler took the step - momentous as it proved for history - of launching the DAP, a title which, as we have already suggested, was in all probability derived from the Bohemian organisation of the same name. The founding meeting of the new party, on 5 January 1919, was held quite openly under the benevolent protection of the Eisner government. No doubt the Munich Social Democracy believed such seemingly absurd grouplets - there were fewer than 40 present at this inaugural meeting - were as much beneath its contempt as were the new party's pretensions to speak on behalf of the German worker. Yet if we examine the DAP's programme, we will find contained in it all that was essential to National Socialism: rejection of the class struggle, opposition to 'Jewish' stock exchange capital, support for 'creative' 'national' capital and a call for solidarity between all workers of 'hand and brain' in a struggle against international Marxism.

And so we can establish a direct lineage, organisational as well as political, from the highest levels of German bourgeois and Junker society down to the formation of the Hitler movement; from the Junker Conservatives, through the Fatherland Front and the Thule Society to Drexler's DAP on the one side of the 'family tree', and on the other, Hitler as a professional army political agent of this same bourgeois - Junker class. The two lines intersected in Munich on the night of 12 September 1919, when Hitler attended his first meeting of the DAP. But before continuing with the genealogy of the NSDAP, we should look again at the political forces and individuals which were gathering in Munich under the very

nose of the Eisner government. The most notorious of these was without doubt Alfred Rosenberg, the author of that preposterous essay in National Socialist 'philosophy' and historical demonology, *The Myth of the Twentieth Century*. The entry of Rosenberg into German *volkisch* politics (via his membership of the Thule Society) and thence into the Nazi Party had a truly symbolic significance, for it represented the unification of two allied but until then disparate movements of extreme reaction: the Russian and the German. For Rosenberg was a German Balt who fled the Russian Revolution whilst an art student in Moscow. Before departing, he was introduced to the fantasies of the *Protocols* by a Russian anti-Semite, and he brought to Munich their message of a world Jewish conspiracy which set as its final goal the destruction of the 'gentiles' by means of a Marxist-led proletarian revolution. ^[12] This unbelievably clumsy forgery belongs to that species of 'anti-capitalism' which Marx and Engels denoted in the *Communist Manifesto* as 'Feudal Socialism'. It portrays the aristocracy as the true friend and defender of the proletariat, and the Jew, both in his usurious and revolutionary guises, as its sworn enemy. Thus the *Protocols* not only declared the workers' movement to be under the control of the mythical 'Elders of Zion', but even claimed credit for all the great bourgeois-democratic revolutions. Each and every forward stride of the peoples was but another move in the secret chess game being played by the Elders. The proletariat was nothing but a pawn in their hands, just as, in its time, had been the revolutionary bourgeoisie. For all its lunacy, this view of history gained widespread support in Russia, ^[13] where the aristocracy felt itself threatened both by the rise of large-scale capitalism and its inevitable polar opposite, an industrial proletariat. Its slanderous legends were retailed in the highest court circles, and, after 1905, provided the counter-revolutionary 'Union of the Russian People' (the 'Black Hundreds') with all that it required in the way of 'ideology' and programme. Based largely on the town petit-bourgeoisie - small shopkeepers, artisans, etc - and the criminal underworld, it was led by a motley assortment of clergymen, ultra-right-wing politicians, police agents and aristocrats. The rallying cry of the Black Hundreds was brutally simple - 'Beat the Yids and save Russia.' Founded like the Nazi Party to beat back the rising tide of revolution, it very quickly developed the strategy of mobilising the more backward middle-class and proletarian elements against the revolutionary movement, using the age-old ruse of anti-Semitism to incite mass hatred against bourgeois liberalism and Marxism alike. Typical of Black Hundred propaganda at this time, and providing an instance of how it borrowed from the forged *Protocols*, was the following proclamation:

The efforts to replace the autocracy of the divinely appointed Tsar by a constitution and a parliament are inspired by those bloodsuckers, the Jews, the Armenians and the Poles. Beware of the Jews! All the evil, all the misfortune of our country comes from the Jews. Down with the traitors, down with the constitution!

Such raging anti-Semitism, not one iota less murderous than that later employed by the Nazis, enjoyed the support of none other than the head of the Romanov dynasty, Nicholas II, even though certain of his politicians looked askance at the 'plebeian' methods and following of the Black Hundred movement itself. ^[14]

When the revolutionary threat was at its greatest, the Tsar's government poured funds into the coffers of the Black Hundreds to finance its counter-revolutionary activities, which embraced not only the wide dissemination of anti-Marxist and anti-Jewish propaganda, but organised pogroms. In one year alone, 2.5 million roubles found their way from the royal exchequer into the hands of this gang of murderers and Jew-baiters. It was this tradition of virulent anti-Semitism, allied with a hatred of Communism, that Rosenberg brought with him to Munich in the winter of 1918-19, and which drew him irresistibly towards the city's most reactionary political circles.

Rosenberg's first acquaintance of note was the playwright and translator Dietrich Eckart. This kindred Jew-baiter and anti-Marxist was preparing to publish an anti-Communist journal inspired by all the usual *volkisch* garbage about a world Jewish conspiracy of Marxism and high finance, and Rosenberg soon became involved in the venture. As it turned out, they did not found a new magazine but took over the *Münchener Beobachter* of Rudolf von Sebettendorff, who had himself bought it in July 1918 to publicise the theories of the Thule Society, of which he was the founder. Once under Eckart's proprietorship, the organ changed its name to the *Völkischer Beobachter* (the 'Racist' Observer). Eckart and Rosenberg may well have differed in terms of genuine intellectual powers, but they shared a common passion for the most reactionary strands of German idealist philosophy - notably Schopenhauer - and they were soon engaged in the common task of doling out a weekly dose of anti-Semitic poison to the more gullible of the Munich petit-bourgeoisie. Eckart's *volkisch* views had already brought him into the ranks of the DAP

before Hitler joined it, and it was through his good offices that the latter met not only Rosenberg, but a far wider and more influential circle of white Russian émigrés, who saw in the young movement a possible source of support for their campaign to regain their lost positions and possessions in the Soviet Union. Eckart also introduced Hitler into German ‘society’, one of his first converts being Frau Helene Bechstein, the richly endowed wife of the famous piano manufacturer. In turn, through the Bechsteins, who held pseudo-cultural *soirées* in Berlin and Munich to round up fresh support for the Nazi cause, and Eckart’s influential position in the Thule Society, Hitler gained access to people whom he would otherwise never have met, and without whose aid the young Nazi movement would have barely kept its head above water. Cash was found from these circles to keep the newly-acquired organ, the *Völkischer Beobachter*, running first as a weekly, and then, after March 1923, and with Rosenberg now its editor, as a daily. ^[15] The ‘Russian’ element in the formative years of the Nazi Party was important - and in some ways decisive - for its subsequent evolution. Up until 1919, Hitler knew and cared little about political developments outside the German-speaking world. When he spoke of Marxism, it was the German Social Democratic movement that he had in mind, and not the Marxism of the Russian Bolsheviks. His horizons began to broaden only with the arrival in Munich of émigrés such as Rosenberg and the even more influential Balt, Max Erwin von Scheubner-Richter. They had witnessed - and in the latter’s case, actually fought against - Marxism in its most militantly revolutionary form, by which the ‘Marxism’ of Ebert and Noske paled in comparison. They provided the *volkisch* movement with an internationalist perspective which it had previously lacked - internationalist, that is, in the sense that Rosenberg and his co-thinkers saw the need to combat Marxism on a continental and indeed global scale. ^[16] At the very centre of this outlook was an all-embracing hatred for the Soviet Union, depicted in the writings of Rosenberg as the rule of evil on earth. Eckart was a rapid convert to Rosenberg’s anti-Bolshevik crusade, and soon they were publishing a spate of pamphlets and articles on the Soviet menace to Aryan culture and civilisation. Naturally, their anti-Bolshevism had to be given a ‘populist’ flavour if it was to find favour amongst the broader public, and so we find Rosenberg writing, very much after the style he had gleaned from his reading of the *Protocols*: ‘The Black, the Red and the Gold Internationals represent the dreams of Jewish philosophers from Ezra, Ezekiel and Nehemia to Marx, Rothschild and Trotsky.’ (The three ‘internationals’ were that of the Roman Catholic Church, the Communist International, and international Jewry respectively. It was not to prove the last occasion on which Trotsky found his name linked with a mythical conspiracy!)

It took Hitler some time to find his bearings in these - for him - rather sophisticated political surroundings. Ebert, Scheidemann, Noske, Luxemburg, Lenin all were Marxists, and there was nothing more to be said about it. But under the influence of the two Balts, and also as a result of their success in arousing interest in the Nazi movement amongst richer White Russian émigrés and even pretenders to the vacant Russian throne itself, Hitler began to evolve a foreign policy to supplement his already well-defined political strategy for winning power in Germany. Among the more prominent and generous of Hitler’s White Russian backers were the pretender Prince Kyrill of Coburg, and the Russian industrialists Gukassov, Nobel and Lenissov. For Scheubner-Richter was not only active in the Nazi Party (he first met Hitler in October 1920) but was a front-rank organiser of contacts between the various and often rival Russian émigré groupings. It was he who served for a brief period as liaison officer between the emigration and General Wrangel, and when this mission proved abortive as a result of Wrangel’s defeat in south Russia towards the end of 1920, he convened the monarchist ‘unity’ conference held at Bad Reichenhall in May 1921. His goal transcended that of its main participants in that he not only desired the restoration of the old regime: in Russia, but a union of the two counter-revolutionary movements - ‘brown’ and ‘white’ - as the foundation for an anti-Marxist bloc dominating the entire European continent. The struggle for this goal, Scheubner-Richter wrote two weeks before the Munich Putsch (he was one of its 16 fatal Nazi casualties) ‘will be waged under the slogan Soviet Star against Swastika. And the Swastika will prevail!’

It should not be overlooked that at this time (1920-23) right-wing and even *volkisch* circles were by no means agreed on the future direction that German foreign policy should follow. In the general staff, there were some - Hans von Seeckt was perhaps their most articulate and brilliant spokesman - who saw in the Soviet Union a valuable counter-weight to the Versailles powers’ military and economic supremacy in Europe. For the military it was simply a matter of tactical and strategical expediency, though there was also a very genuine admiration for the way in which the Red Army had defended the revolution against what seemed to be impossible military odds. But there were others on the far right, more ‘ideologically’ inclined, who sought to construct an amalgam of Bolshevism and German nationalism, of the armed

forces and the organised German proletariat. A war of revenge would then be waged against the West - a 'revolutionary' war, for it would not be fought in the interests of the decadent bourgeoisie, but for the greatness of the entire German nation. Von Seeckt referred to this tendency - utterly utopian, where it was not a conscious stratagem to trap the war-weary German working class into yet another bloodbath on behalf of its class enemies - in a secret report to President Ebert on 26 June 1920 entitled *Germany's Immediate Political Tasks*:

The ideas of the Russian Revolution exert a powerful attraction for our epoch. Such [revolutionary] developments in the midst of a great crisis in world history cannot in the long run be held down by armed force. It is therefore essential to take the initiative and harness them to the service of the people's future. Wide sectors of the German people would regard any fight against Russia as a fight against their own ideals... It would swing the broad masses sharply against us and in the end probably bring Bolshevism in its worst form to Germany... The Entente fears the pan-Russian movement... because in the sphere of foreign policy it is directed against the system which won this war, against Anglo-Saxon capitalism and imperialism... A Russian defeat by the Entente seems out of the question because that vast land mass and its peoples are invulnerable. The future belongs to Russia... This must be said publicly and with the greatest frankness - for in this period of extraordinary difficulty for German internal politics we must win over the broad masses for our policy and lead the German people to ideas of unity... At the same time we ought to give assurances that we wish to live in friendship with Russia... and we ought to set our hopes on Russia, fully respecting the 1914 frontiers... In this way we should have found a few words to draw everyone together, including the German nationalist circles, thereby laying the foundation for ways of overcoming disunity. State power... needs... a politically intact, well-disciplined army with leaders who understand the modern age and the people's plight. But it is even more important for the government to deal with the present troubles by internal reforms.

Hitler entirely rejected this 'eastern orientation'. That he came to do so was to a large degree attributable to the ideological influence of Rosenberg and Scheubner-Richter and - though in a different fashion - to the strategic requirements of the White Russian émigré circles into which Hitler was introduced by these same two fanatically anti-Communist Balts. The fight against advocates of an eastern orientation occupied Hitler for many years, and was only finally resolved on 22 June 1941, the day the Nazis launched their fateful invasion of the Soviet Union. And it was a dispute whose origins dated back to well before the First World War, when German imperialist strategy oscillated between what Hitler termed a 'colonial' and 'continental' policy. Successive chancellors associated with them rose and fell as these two strategic options gained or lost support in military and bourgeois circles. By the time Hitler came to write *Mein Kampf*, he had irrevocably decided where the destiny of German imperialism lay:

For Germany... the only possibility for carrying out a healthy territorial policy lay in the acquisition of new land in Europe itself. Colonies cannot serve this purpose unless they seem in large part suited for settlement by Europeans. But in the nineteenth century such colonial territories were no longer obtainable by peaceful means. Consequently, such a colonial policy could only have been carried out by means of a hard struggle which, however, would have been carried on to a much better purpose, not for territories outside Europe, but for the land on the home continent itself. ^[17]

The historical basis for Hitler's repudiation of a 'colonial' policy was therefore Germany's retarded development as a major capitalist power, and its consequent debilitating effect on the struggle of German imperialism for a colonial position commensurate with its French and British rivals. And by the same token, if Germany was to seek its colonies in the European land mass itself, then it could only turn eastwards, thus parting company with the Bismarckian strategy of securing the German rear by a political and military understanding with the rulers of Russia. The Romanovs, for centuries the 'gendarmes of Europe', had gone. Now Russia was ruled by a party and ideology which proclaimed as its final aim the establishment of world-wide socialism. This change was to weigh more heavily in Nazi strategic thinking than the prospect of a tactical alliance with the Red Army against the Entente powers:

If land was desired in Europe, it could only be obtained by and large at the expense of Russia, and this meant that the new Reich must again set itself on the march along the road of the Teutonic Knights of old to obtain by the German sword sod for the German plough and daily bread for the nation. ^[18]

It is obvious that for all his archaic imagery and precedents, Hitler approached foreign policy from the standpoint of creating an autarchic unit in central Europe, one in which German industry and technique would be supplemented by the rich agricultural and raw material regions of the Soviet Union, notably the Ukraine, traditionally the 'bread basket of Europe'. Now the entire USSR was to serve as the larder of the Third Reich, a strategy whose wisdom and efficacy was doubted by many who were otherwise in sympathy with Hitler's counter-revolutionary goals:

Since these very circles are beginning to divert the tendency of our foreign policy in the most catastrophic way from any real defence of the folkish interests of our people, placing it instead in the service of their fantastic ideology, I feel it incumbent upon me to discuss for my supporters the most important question in the field of foreign affairs, our relation to Russia... The foreign policy of the folkish state must safeguard the existence on this planet embodied in the state, by creating a healthy, viable natural relation between the nation's population and growth on the one hand and the quantity and quality of its soil on the other hand... Only an adequately large space on this earth assures a nation of freedom of existence... If the National Socialist movement really wants to be consecrated by history with a great mission for our nation, it must be permeated by knowledge and filled with pain at our true situation in the world; boldly and conscious of its goal, it must take up the struggle against the aimlessness and incompetence which have hitherto guided our German nation in the line of foreign affairs. Then, without consideration of 'traditions' and prejudices, it must find the courage to gather our people and their strength for an advance along the road that will lead this people from its present restricted living space to new land and soil... The National Socialist movement must strive to eliminate the disproportion between our population and our area - viewing this latter as a source of food as well as a basis for power politics - between our historical past and the hopelessness of our present impotence... Land and soil as the goal of our foreign policy, and a philosophically established, uniform foundation as the aim of political activity at home. ^[19]

And to achieve these intimately linked and mutually conditioning goals - those of fascist dictatorship at home and a war of conquest against the Soviet Union - Hitler was even prepared to relegate in strategic importance the longed-for war of revenge against France. Such a war:

... can and will achieve meaning only if it offers the rear cover for an enlargement of our people's living space in Europe. For it is not in colonial acquisitions that we must see the solution of this problem, but exclusively in the acquisition of a territory for settlement... And so we National Socialists consciously draw a line beneath the foreign policy tendency of our prewar period. We take up where we left off 600 years ago. We stop the endless German movement to the south and west, and turn our gaze towards the land in the east. At long last we break off the colonial and commercial policy of the prewar period and shift to the soil policy of the future. If we speak of soil in Europe today, we can primarily have in mind only Russia and her vassal border states. ^[20]

Nor was it simply a question of 'soil', as Hitler's quasi-mystical language and romanticised view of earlier penetrations of the East would seem to suggest. The invasion, colonisation and 'Germanisation' of the Soviet Union was also a political task, the international projection of National Socialism's war to the death against Marxism in Germany. To those nationalists who still contemplated an alliance with the USSR, Hitler replied:

Never forget that the rulers of present-day Russia are common bloodstained criminals, that they are the scum of humanity which, favoured by circumstances, overran a great state in a tragic hour, slaughtered and wiped out thousands of her leading intellectuals in wild bloodlust, and now for almost 10 years have been carrying on the most cruel tyrannical regime of all time... Do not forget that the international Jew who completely dominates Russia today regards Germany, not as an ally, *but as a state destined to the same fate*. And you do not make pacts with anyone whose sole interest is the destruction of his partner... *The danger to which Russia succumbed* [that is, proletarian revolution - RB] *is always present for Germany*. Only a bourgeois simpleton is capable of imagining that Bolshevism has been exorcised... In Russian Bolshevism we must see the attempt undertaken by the Jews in the twentieth century to achieve world domination... *Germany is today the great next war aim of Bolshevism*. ^[21]

Tragically, due to the rise of Stalinism in the Soviet Union, which resulted in the reactionary, nationalist policy of 'socialism in one country' being foisted on the parties of the Communist International (of which the German Communist Party was numerically the largest and strategically the most important), Germany

was not to become the 'next great war aim' of what began as Bolshevism, but under Stalin's leadership, became transformed into its counter-revolutionary opposite. Nevertheless, this does not negate the validity from a German imperialist standpoint of Hitler's contention that any alliance, however fleeting or grounded in *'realpolitik'* with the Soviet Union - at least while its rulers pursued the Bolshevik goal of world revolution - could only undermine not just the strategic aims of German imperialism, which Hitler insisted should lie in the conquest of the Soviet east, *but the prosecution of the struggle against Communism at home*. Hitler's great merit as far as the bourgeoisie was concerned - and this was something they only came to realise in the last year of the Weimar Republic - was that he offered them - at a price - *a unified counter-revolutionary plan of action on a continental, and not merely national scale*. This is where National Socialism scored over its competitors among the 'national' parties of the bourgeoisie. And it was also why Trotsky warned, in the months preceding Hitler's victory, and especially against the criminal policies of the Stalinists that were clearing the road for such a Nazi triumph, that if Hitler was permitted by the leaders of the German proletariat to come to power, he would 'become the super-Wrangel of the world bourgeoisie'. ^[22] Hitler was still conducting much the same polemical war three years later in a work that remained unpublished for many years and has passed down to posterity under the title *Hitler's Secret Book*. The extent and obduracy of the resistance to his 'continental' imperialist strategy amongst *volkisch* circles, not to speak of the bourgeoisie itself, is evidenced by the amount of space Hitler devotes to the question of foreign policy in this work. And once again, there emerges the same fundamental critique of the 'political bourgeoisie' that was so evident in Hitler's attack on the domestic policies of the main nationalist parties of Weimar Germany:

In terms of foreign policy the National Socialist movement is distinguished from previous parties by, for example, the following: the foreign policy of the national bourgeoisie has in truth always been only a border policy; as against that, the policy of the National Socialist movement will always be a territorial one. In its boldest plans... the German bourgeoisie will aspire to the unification of the German nation, but in reality it will finish with a botched-up refutation of the borders. The National Socialist movement, on the contrary, will always let its foreign policy be determined by the necessity to secure the space necessary to the life of our people... Thus the point of departure of its thinking is wholly different from that of the bourgeois world... Nevertheless, a part of German youth, *especially from bourgeois circles*, will be able to understand me. Neither I nor the National Socialist movement expect to find any support whatsoever in the circles of the *political* national bourgeoisie active at present, but we certainly know that at least a part of the youth will find its way into our ranks. ^[23]

Hitler was perfectly content to remain a voice in the *volkisch* wilderness seemingly isolated from and even opposed to the main policy trends in the German ruling class. And this was just as true of foreign as domestic issues. He was convinced that time and events - accelerated by the bursting of the Weimar bubble - would prove him right:

I'm afraid... that I will never be understood by my bourgeois critics, at least as long as success does not prove to them the soundness of our action... Just as the National Socialist movement not only criticises democratic policy, but possesses its own philosophically grounded programme, likewise in the sphere of foreign policy, it must not only recognise what others have done wrongly, but deduce its own action on the basis of this knowledge. ^[24]

In this respect, Hitler was far ahead of all but the most astute bourgeois circles. Even before the war, he had already drawn the main lesson of Bismarck's failure to crush Social Democracy, and in the immediate post-1918 period, he arrived at similarly critical conclusions concerning what he considered to be the false international strategy of the German ruling class. Deprived of arms by the Versailles Treaty (its military clauses forbade arms manufacture in Germany, and limited the army to 100 000 officers and men) the bourgeoisie, so Hitler claimed, thought it could restore Germany's 'greatness' by purely economic means. This, he argued with great passion, was tantamount to committing national suicide. His alternative strategy was brutally simple, and proceeded in three stages: first, utterly destroy the 'pacifists' and the internationalists as a force in German politics; next rearm the German nation, only this time for an onslaught on the Soviet east. Finally, and only then, the conditions would have been created for an economic flourishing, the goal so fervently sought by the German bourgeoisie:

Blood values, the idea of personality, and the instinct for self-preservation slowly threatened to be lost to the German people. Internationalism triumphs in its stead and destroys our folk value, democracy spreads by stifling the idea of personality and in the end an evil pacifist liquid manure

poisons the mentality favouring self-preservation... *The great domestic task of the future lies in the elimination of these general symptoms of decay of our people. This is the mission of the National Socialist movement.* A new nation must arise from this work which overcomes even the worst evils of the present, the cleavage between the classes, for which the bourgeoisie and Marxism are equally guilty. ^[25] The aim of this reform work of a domestic political kind, must finally be the regaining of our people's strength to represent its vital interests abroad... Whoever wants to act in the name of German honour today must first launch a merciless war against the internal defiling of German honour. They are not the enemies of yore, but they are the representatives of the November crime [that is, the November Revolution - RB], that collection of Marxist demo-pacifists, destructive traitors of our country who pushed our people into its present state of powerlessness. To revile former enemies in the name of national honour and recognise the shameless allies of this enemy as the rulers within their own country - that suits the national dignity of this present-day so-called national bourgeoisie. ^[26]

Hitler was far more charitable towards the Pan-Germans, who at least had the virtue in his eyes of refusing to acknowledge the 'November criminals' as the legitimate rulers of Germany. But here too there was a fatal weakness, precisely that which he detected in the policies of the Schönenerer movement in pre-1914 Vienna:

... the foreign policy of the Wilhelminian period was in many ways viewed by not a few people as catastrophic and characterised accordingly. Innumerable warnings came, especially from the circles of the Pan-German League of that time, which were justified in the highest sense of the word... [When the revolution came]... what they had foretold for decades had now come to pass. We cannot think of these men [the Pan-German League pioneers] ^[27] without a deep compassion, men condemned by fate to foresee a collapse for 20 years, and who now, having not been heeded, and hence in no position to help, had to live to see their people's most tragic catastrophe... [and] when the revolution shattered the Imperial sceptre and raised democracy to the throne, the critics of that time were as far from the possession of a weapon with which to overthrow democracy as formerly they had been from being able to influence the imperial government. In their decades of activity they had been geared so much to a purely literary treatment of these problems that they not only lacked the real means of power to express their opinion on a situation which was only a reaction to shouting in the streets [sic!], they had also lost the capacity to try to organise a manifestation of power which was to be more than a wave of written protests if it were to be really effective... they could carry out their view in practice only if a large number of them have the opportunity of representing it. *And even if they wanted a thousand times to smash the political parties, they still indeed first had to form a political party which viewed as its task that of smashing the other parties.* ^[28]

Although these strategic conceptions were set down in written form between 1924 and 1928, they in fact originated in the months which followed Hitler's entry into the DAP, the precise period when he began to come under the influence of Rosenberg:

Since the year 1920 I have with all means and most persistently had to accustom the National Socialist movement to the idea of an alliance among Germany, Italy and England. ^[29] This was very difficult, since the 'God punish England' standpoint, first and foremost, still robbed our people of any capacity for clear and sober thinking in the sphere of foreign policy, and continued to hold it prisoner. ^[30]

So before returning to Hitler's early activities in the DAP, it would be appropriate to look briefly at a representative sample of Rosenberg's literary excrement. Not to engage in a useless 'refutation' - fascism is least of all a tendency vulnerable to intellectual persuasion - but to glean both an insight into the mind of the man who was - justly or otherwise - regarded as the high priest of National Socialism, and to see to what degree Rosenberg's brand of racial mysticism was related to the mainstream of German subjective idealist philosophy. Despite his ponderous pseudo-erudition and, verbose rambling and at times only semi-coherent style, there is indeed a common thread running through all his writings; an *intuitionism* which we also encountered on a far higher intellectual and cultural plane in the writings of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and also, though from a contrasting line of approach, Bergson. A reading of the following key extracts makes this clearer.

The actions of history and the future no longer signify class struggle or warfare between Church dogmas, but rather the conflict between blood and blood, race and race, people and people. And

this means conflict between spiritual values... the values of race-soul, which stand behind the new world-picture as driving forces, still have not been brought to living consciousness. Soul means race viewed from within. And, vice-versa, race is the externalisation of soul. [31]

Thus the age-old German 'inwardness' - the religious expression of which was Lutheranism - now found a new and even more mystical language - that of Rosenberg's 'race-soul'. All human history must be viewed through its prism until, like Rosenberg, we discover such earth-shattering truths as 'at the latest excavation of the pyramid of Cheops at Mastabas, it was discovered that the princes and Queen Meres-Anah were depicted as having blond hair', or that 'in all the sagas, the legendary, myth-enshrouded Queen Nitokris is described as being blonde'. [32]

In all movements that undermined the rule of aristocracy Rosenberg detected the hidden hand of 'racial polluters'. Thus:

By the middle of the fifth century the first steps towards chaos had been taken; mixed marriages between patricians and plebeians were legalised. For Rome, as for Persia and Hellas, mixed marriages signified the collapse of *Volk* and state. In AD 336, the first plebeians had already pushed their way into the Roman Assembly and around the year AD 300 there were reports of plebeian priests. In AD 287 the plebeian public assembly had been elevated to the position of being a state institution. Tradesmen and money changers hawked their wares [an early manifestation of the conspiracy between the 'money power' and democracy perhaps? - RB]; ambitious apostate priests like Gracchi, driven perhaps by a generous but falsely presented sense of benevolence, displayed democratic tendencies. Others, such as Publius Claudius, openly placed themselves at the head of Roman city mobs. [33]

The frightening thing is not the lunacy of such notions, nor even that their author came to wield the power of life and death over millions of human beings, but that others took them seriously and actually embraced Rosenberg's fantasies as a guiding world outlook. [34]

Entirely in the German subjectivist tradition was Rosenberg's total rejection of reason and logic as a means of learning about and changing the world. And he shared Bergson's substitution of the intuitive method of cognition for that of the materialist world outlook developed by the natural scientists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries:

In one forward-striving advance towards self, the solutions necessitated by atomism, mechanism, individualism and universalism, solutions to pedantically posited problems of existence, were transformed and nullified. Through this... a new morality was established: the soul does not adhere to abstract rules imposed from the outside; neither does it move toward a goal posited from without; in no case does it go outside itself, but rather, comes to itself. With this, however, a rather different conception of truth is outlined: for us, truth does not mean that which is logical and that which is false; rather it demands an organic answer to the question: fruitful or unfruitful, self-governed or unfree. [35]

This mystically-conceived pragmatism was derived from Nietzsche's notion of truth - namely, that it was the prerogative of the powerful, the few, the élite. And Rosenberg invoked Nietzsche's authority - and it was great indeed with the more intellectually-inclined German middle and upper classes - to bolster his attacks on Marxism:

He offered a thorough critique of the whole social structure, a critique of the Marxist movement, which at that time had already been falsely dubbed socialist - a critique which in logic [sic!] and detestation, is unthinkable even today. For him, Marxism is the tyranny of the least and the dumbest, that is, of the superfluous, the envious and the hack-actor, carried to its final conclusion... Nietzsche, above all, opposed the attempt to overthrow the property concept, because the overthrow of the property concept would encourage a destructive struggle for existence. [36]

In fact Rosenberg's own views on property allied him with Hitler and the rest of the Nazi 'conservatives', as he himself made clear in his own memoirs, written while awaiting execution at Nuremberg. His remarks on this question also underline with extra emphasis the nature and purpose of Hitler's polemic against the leaders of the bourgeois parties in Weimar Germany, The dispute was not about whether they should rule, but how:

Hitler had come to the conclusion [in the immediate postwar period - RB] that a just socialism had, *per se*, nothing to do with class war and internationalism. To perpetuate class war was

wrong. It would have to be eliminated. Thus he became an opponent of Marxism in all its manifestations, and characterised it as a philosophy of government inimical to both the state and the working class. *As far as the workers were concerned, it was therefore a question of renouncing this doctrine as well as their opposition to both the farmer and the property owner.* The middle class [that is, bourgeoisie] too had every reason to revise their attitude, they had failed to provide the working classes in their hour of dire need with leaders conversant with their requirements and had left them to the tender mercy of international propagandists. German nationalism, Hitler believed, was hemmed in by the nobility, while an entirely false conceit separated the middle class from the broad mass of the productive population. *The bourgeoisie would have to shed its prejudices before it would once again be entitled to leadership.* ^[37]

Such was the truly abysmal intellectual level and thoroughly bourgeois outlook of the man who not only posed as the philosopher of National Socialism, but in the formative years of the Nazi Party, probably exerted more political influence over its leader on questions relating to the Soviet Union (and of course the 'Jewish conspiracy') than any other member of the NSDAP's inner circle.

By 1920 therefore, the various strands which came to comprise German fascism had been fused in the DAP: imperialist Pan-Germanism and belligerent anti-Sovietism in the field of foreign policy, and at home, a murderous anti-Marxism which cloaked its hostility towards the proletariat in spurious anti-capitalism and an unbridled appeal to all the traditional anti-Semitic prejudices and political backwardness of the German petit-bourgeoisie; and finally, demarcating National Socialism from all those earlier and contemporary movements which contributed to its ideology and aims, there was Hitler's truly epoch-making contribution to the counter-revolutionary armoury of the bourgeoisie - the 'brown terror'. The Pan-Germans had merely written about the destruction of Marxism and democracy - Hitler intended to carry it out:

The German state is gravely attacked by Marxism. In its struggle of 70 years it has not been able to prevent the victory of this philosophy of life, but, despite a sum total of thousands of years in prison and jail sentences and the bloodiest measures which in innumerable cases it applied to the warriors of the menacing Marxist philosophy, has nevertheless been forced to almost total capitulation... The state which on 9 November 1918 unconditionally crawled on its belly before Marxism will not suddenly arise tomorrow as its conqueror: even today feeble-minded bourgeois in ministerial chairs are beginning to rave about the necessity of not governing against the workers... But in view of this fact - that is, the complete subjection of the present state to Marxism - the National Socialist movement really acquires the duty, not only of preparing the victory of its idea, *but of taking over its defence against the terror of an International drunk with victory.* ^[38]

Past experiences had taught Hitler that such a counter-revolutionary overturn could not be accomplished merely by fiery oratory or vitriolic press campaigns, nor even the sheer weight of state repression. Bismarck had attempted such a solution, and as Hitler frequently observed, failed miserably. For Hitler had set himself the task that had not even been achieved - in France, it is true - with the massacre of tens of thousands of communards. The political preconditions for a new imperialist war being waged by Germany demanded the extirpation of the last vestiges of socialist internationalism from the German proletariat, and the physical destruction of each and every one of its organisations:

Historically it is just not conceivable that the German people could recover its former position without settling accounts with those who were the cause and occasion of the unprecedented collapse which struck our state... [in 1918] any possibility of regaining outward German independence is bound up first and foremost with the recovery of the inner unity of our people's will. But regarded even from the purely technical point of view, *the idea of an outward German liberation seems senseless as long as the broad masses are not also prepared to enter the service of this liberating idea...* a foreign struggle cannot be carried on with student battalions, that in addition to the brains of a people, the fists are also needed... [Yet] unconquerable... seem the millions who oppose the national resurrection out of political conviction - *unconquerable as long as the inner cause of their opposition, the international Marxist philosophy of life, is not combated and torn out of their hearts and brains.* ^[39]

Summed up in these incredibly hate-laden, savage lines is the historical role of fascism. German monopoly capital could only be rendered secure from revolution, and its wars of conquest waged, over the battered corpse of the German labour movement, and the embers of its Marxist literature. But tearing

requires claws, and when Hitler joined the DAP, he possessed none. Once again, and however involuntarily, the SPD leadership was to come to his aid. The Free Corps, which under Noske's supervision had swollen to an army of 400 000 officers and men, contained just the material the young fascist movement needed to stiffen its ranks in the coming war which its leader had pledged himself to wage against Marxism. They had returned from the trenches thirsting for revenge against the 'November criminals' who had, so the right-wing legend ran, 'stabbed in the back' a Germany on the verge of victory over the Entente powers. Their sacred war decorations and emblems ripped off their uniforms by revolutionary workers and war-weary soldiers as they made their way home from the front line, these future warriors of National Socialism found to their horror and intense frustration that their trusted officers, instead of leading them into battle against the 'Marxist traitors', were actually negotiating with them, and even more monstrous, calling upon the old imperial army to lend its moral and material support to the Ebert regime! Some, like Hermann Goering, could not stomach such a humiliation even if it was deemed by the High Command to be necessary to present a united front of armed forces and Social Democrats against the socialist revolution. ^[40] But the vast majority of right-wing officers and men decided that it had, at that stage, to be a choice between the lesser of two evils. First, with arms provided by the Social Democrats, crush the Communists, and then, with these same arms, turn on Ebert, Scheidemann and company, and settle accounts with the remainder of the 'November criminals'. Thus reasoned some of the politically more aware members of the Free Corps. The Kapp Putsch of March 1920, which will be treated in some detail in Chapter XIII ('From Kapp to Munich: The Genesis of a Strategy'), represented the first serious attempt by extreme right-wing military circles to put this plan into practice. Its failure, though initially an enormous blow to the counter-revolutionary camp, in fact accrued to the advantage of the young Nazi movement, for literally thousands of Kapp putschists swarmed from all over Germany to Munich, where the right-wing government installed during the coup remained in power after its collapse, and was therefore able - and only too willing - to offer these rebels against the legal government of Germany a haven from Weimar justice. ^[41] Here too, the reformists were responsible for this regrouping of the forces of counter-revolution, for they, as the major partners in the Berlin coalition, could have insisted on their 'extradition' to face charges of overthrowing the legally elected government of Germany. Afraid of antagonising their bourgeois coalition partners, and even more fearful of the consequences of appealing to the working class for support should the military come out in defence of the Kapp putschists, the SPD leadership continued their step-by-step retreat before the forces of reaction that from the spring of 1920 were gathering in Munich around the National Socialist movement. Their arrival not only coincided with Hitler's determined bid for leadership within the DAP, but supplemented it in a most direct and concrete way. Hitler, despite his agreement with the 'theoretical' and programmatic postulates of the party founded by Drexler and directed politically by Feder, saw that it had to develop an entirely new style of agitation and combat if it was to avoid the fate suffered by numerous other similar *volkisch* and nationalist formations in the past - that is, their total isolation from the masses. The new movement, Hitler insisted, had to be a *combat* party, had to take the offensive against the workers' organisations by carrying the battle onto their own territory - the streets ^[42] - and above all, if the entire undertaking was not to go the way of all other *volkisch* movements, the new party had to be 'anti-bourgeois', had to demarcate itself as clearly and demonstratively as possible from even the most chauvinist and reactionary of the parties of the 'national bourgeoisie'. ^[43] For only in this way could the 'national classes' break out of the relative political isolation that had been forced on them by the November Revolution, and the rise of the Weimar coalition based on the bloc between the bourgeois radicals, the Centre and the Social Democrats:

In purely political terms; the following picture presented itself in 1918: a people torn into two parts. The one, by far the smaller, includes the strata of the national intelligentsia, excluding the physically active. It is outwardly national, yet under this word can conceive of nothing but a very insipid and weak-kneed defence of so-called state interests, which in turn seem identical with dynastic interests. They attempt to fight for their ideas and aims with spiritual weapons which are as fragmentary as they are superficial, and which fail completely in the face of the enemy's brutality. With a single frightful blow, this class, which only a short time before was still governing, is stretched on the ground and with trembling cowardice suffers every humiliation at the hands of a ruthless victory. ^[44]

So much for Hitler's opinion of the 'national classes' - principally the Junkers and the big bourgeoisie. If left to their own devices, these classes were doomed to perpetual humiliation at the hands of the 'victors' of November 1918, for they faced a far more formidable enemy - the proletariat:

Confronting it is a second class, the broad mass of the labouring population. It is organised in more or less radical Marxist movements, determined to break all spiritual resistance by the power of violence. It does not want to be national but consciously rejects any promotion of national interests, just as, conversely, it aids and abets all foreign oppression. It is numerically the stronger and above all comprises all those elements of the nation without which a national resurrection is unthinkable and impossible. ^[45]

This then was the balance of forces as Hitler saw them in the immediate postwar period. How could the deadlock be broken? For all his vehement polemicising against the bourgeoisie, Hitler acknowledged that the natural allies of his aggressive imperialist policies were to be found within its ranks:

Wretched as our so-called 'national bourgeoisie' is on the whole, inadequate as its national attitude seems, certainly from this side no serious resistance is to be expected against a powerful domestic and foreign policy in the future. ^[46] Even if the German bourgeoisie, for their well-known narrow-minded and short-sighted reasons, should, as they once did toward Bismarck, maintain an obstinate attitude of passive resistance in the hour of coming liberation - an active resistance, in view of their recognised and proverbial cowardice, is never to be feared. ^[47]

This 'socialist' and 'workers' party had to fight and crush the socialist workers in order to achieve its aims, which were precisely those of the German bourgeoisie:

It is different with the masses of our internationally-minded comrades. [Sic!] In their natural primitiveness, they are more inclined to the idea of violence, and, moreover, their Jewish leadership is more brutal and ruthless. They will crush any German resurrection just as they once broke the backbone of the German army. But above all: in this state with its parliamentary government they will, thanks to their majority in numbers, not only obstruct any national foreign policy, but also make impossible any higher estimation of the German strength, thus making us seem undesirable as an ally. For not only are we ourselves aware of the element of weakness lying in our fifteen million Marxists, democrats, pacifists and Centrists; it is recognised even more by foreign countries, which measure the value of a possible alliance with us according to the weight of this burden. ^[48]

And so was begun what Hitler termed the battle for the 'nationalisation of the masses', a war that could never be won by:

... half measures, but only by a ruthless and fanatically one-sided orientation toward the goal to be achieved... a people cannot be made 'national' in the sense understood by our present-day bourgeoisie, meaning with so and so many limitations, but only nationalistic with the entire vehemence that is inherent in the extreme. *Poison is countered only by an antidote, and only the shallowness of a bourgeois mind can regard the middle course as the road to heaven.* ^[49]

It might appear from this analysis undertaken by Hitler that he had left out of account the many-millioned German petit-bourgeoisie, since he speaks here only of the bourgeoisie and the 'broad mass of the labouring population'. Viewed statistically, the middle class of town and country seemed a formidable force, numbering, according to the various methods of classification, between roughly a quarter and a half of the total German population. But never at any time in the history of modern Germany had it proved itself capable of pursuing an independent political line, and this characteristic it of course shared with every other petit-bourgeoisie in Europe. Hitler too acknowledged this by excluding it in his calculations from both the main class formations, for he writes specifically of the 'labouring population', which in reality includes the lowest layers of the petit-bourgeoisie - that is, working peasantry, artisans, self-employed tradesmen, etc - as being 'organised in more or less radical Marxist movements'. Now Hitler was well aware that only a tiny fraction of the working petit-bourgeoisie either identified itself with or was organised in these 'more or less radical Marxist movements' - meaning of course the SPD, KPD and ADGB.

And we also know, from Hitler's own account of his Vienna experiences as a petit-bourgeois 'drop out', that he was fully aware of the important distinctions between even the most humble lower reaches of the middle class and the industrial proletariat, distinctions which under certain economic conditions and with the involuntary aid of the leaders of the workers' organisations, could become transformed into an almost unbridgeable gulf of anti-Marxist hatred. Yet Hitler never valued the middle class highly as a political force. ^[50] It had all the vices, and none of the virtues, of the German bourgeoisie that it at the same time aped and envied. Alone, it could never provide the forces needed to destroy the workers' movement. It

could only carry out its counter-revolutionary task of a battering ram against the proletariat, as a subordinate partner in the anti-Marxist front:

Every national body can be divided into three great classes: into an extreme of the best humanity on the one hand, good in the sense of possessing all virtues, especially distinguished by courage and self-sacrifice; on the other hand, an extreme of the worst human scum... Between the two extremes there lies a third class, the great, broad, middle stratum, in which neither brilliant heroism nor the basest criminal mentality is embodied. Times when a nation is rising are distinguished, in fact exist only, by the absolute leadership of the best extreme part. Times of a normal, even or of a stable development of affairs are distinguished and exist by the obvious domination of the elements of the middle, in which the two extremes mutually balance one another... Times when a nation is collapsing are determined by the dominant activity of the worst elements. ^[51]

And here Hitler reaches the nub of his argument, which relates intimately to his entire political strategy:

... the class of the middle only manifests [itself] perceptibly when the two extremes are locked in mutual struggle, but that in the case of the victory of one of the extremes, they complaisantly submit to the victor. In case the best people dominate, the broad masses will follow them; in case the worst element rises up, they will at least offer them no resistance; for the masses of the middle themselves will never fight. ^[52]

In a general sense this was true, just as Hitler's description of the balance of forces in the Weimar republic was, despite its *volkisch* conceptions and language, nearer the mark than estimations made by the leaders of bourgeois liberalism or Social Democracy. The many and violent oscillations within the German petit-bourgeoisie after 1918 were basically determined not by its own highly subjective impressions of Weimar politics, but the objective conflict between the two polar opposites, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat - or to employ Hitler's ill-assumed moralistic terminology, between the 'good' and the 'bad'. But what if the bourgeoisie - for a whole constellation of historical, economic and political reasons - proved itself unable to win the support of the 'elements of the middle', and by its political impotence, drove them into the arms of the 'internationally minded' proletariat? Here the Free Corps, or rather their most ruthlessly disposed elements, became integral to Hitler's strategy. As rootless cut-throats, they could never accomplish their proclaimed goal of destroying Marxism. ^[53] But as the spearhead of a terrorist movement attracting to its side the avowedly anti-Marxist and duping the more gullible with Hitler's 'socialist' demagogy, they could - and indeed did - serve as the officer corps of the fascist counter-revolutionary army. As we have already noted, the Kappist Free Corps officers and men began to arrive in Munich in the spring of 1920. By the summer of that same year, Hitler had not only succeeded in attracting many of them into the Nazi movement, but was already laying the foundations of what was to become the 'plebeian' shock force of German fascism - the SA:

At the very beginning of our big meetings, I began the organisation of a house guard in the form of a monitor service, which as a matter of principle included only young fellows. These were in part *comrades whom I knew from military service*; others were newly-won comrades who from the very outset *were instructed and trained in the viewpoint that terror can only be broken by terror*... They were imbued with the doctrine that, as long as reason [sic!] was silent and violence had the last word, the best weapon of defence lay in attack; and that our monitor troop must be preceded by the reputation of not being a debating club, *but a combat group determined to go any length*. And how this youth had longed for such a slogan! *How disillusioned and outraged was this front-line generation, how full of disgust and revulsion at bourgeois cowardice and shilly-shallying*. Thus, it became fully clear that the revolution had been possible thanks only to the disastrous bourgeois leadership of the people. Thus fists to protect the German people would have been available even then at the time of the November revolution, *but the heads to play the game were lacking*. ^[54]

More accurately, the 'heads' who did their thinking for them belonged to Ebert, Noske and company. Given a leadership and organisation which proceeded from mercilessly counter-revolutionary conceptions and strategy, the Free Corps could serve as the military arm and defender of what Hitler termed the 'national idea'. The so-called 'red terror' would now be answered by an even more remorseless 'brown terror':

How many times the eyes of my lads glittered when I explained to them the necessity of their mission and assured them over and over again that all the wisdom of this earth remains without

success if force does not enter into its service... How much more vividly the idea of military service now dawned on them! ... And how these lads did fight! Like a swarm of hornets they swooped down on the disturbers of our meetings, without regard for their superior power, no matter how great it might be... As early as midsummer 1920, the organisation of the monitor troop gradually assumed definite forms, and in the spring of 1921 little by little divided into hundreds, which themselves in turn were split up into groups. ^[55]

Standing at the head of these first Storm Troop units were the veterans of more than a year of almost ceaseless civil war against the revolutionary German workers. These exponents of what was often called 'trench socialism' - the term employed by Free Corps officers for the regime which reigned in the trenches of the First World War! - were greatly emboldened by their hero Ludendorff's open espousal of the Nazi cause. Following the collapse of the Kapp Putsch, he moved his headquarters to Munich and there became at once involved in the counter-revolutionary intrigues of *volkisch* groupings and Free Corps officers alike. Hitler soon visited the wartime dictator of Germany and at once reached agreement with him over the need to fuse the 'political' wing of the *volkisch* movement with the growing band of anti-Marxist war veterans now gathering in the Bavarian capital. The Rossbach, Epp and Ehrhardt Brigades, ^[56] together with their commanders, placed themselves under the banner of the young Nazi movement, and, as we have seen, comprised the nucleus of the first SA units. There was also, of course the swashbuckling Captain Ernst Röhm, main organiser of the Storm Troops and, moreover, one of the first members of the original DAP (he joined even before Hitler).

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of the Free Corps movement in securing the victory of National Socialism. For even though - as in the famous case of Captain Röhm - many of its more demagogic officers proved to be an embarrassment to the Hitler leadership once ensconced in the government, they were absolutely indispensable in the years of bitter fighting with the workers' organisations which blasted Hitler's road to power.

The skeletal structure of the movement was now complete. It had a programme - jointly drafted by Hitler and Feder and presented to the first mass meeting of the party in Munich on 4 February 1920 - it had a leader, and the embryo of a fighting force that could put his new strategic and tactical conceptions to the test in battle against the workers' movement. But these were by no means sufficient to guarantee the party a mass following, let alone the opportunity to stake its claim to state power. Such a course of development lay entirely outside Hitler's control. The 'national classes' would turn decisively to the Nazi Party only when all other means of combating democracy and the workers' movement had been exhausted, and even then, with great anxiety as to the repercussions of such a strategic shift inside the working class. And even this would not necessarily mean that the petit-bourgeois masses would follow them. As Hitler well understood, the middle class would submit to the side that proved itself the stronger. Only the calibre of proletarian leadership would determine which side that would be.

Appendix: The Founding Programme of the NSDAP

1. We demand the union of all Germans, on the basis of the right of the self-determination of peoples, to form a Great Germany.
2. We demand equality of right for the German People in its dealings with other nations, and the abolition of the Peace Treaties of Versailles and St Germain.
3. We demand land and territory for the nourishment of our people and for settling our surplus population.
4. None but members of the nation may be citizens of the state. None but those of German blood, whatever their creed, may be members of the nation. No Jew, therefore, may be a member of the nation.
5. Anyone who is not a citizen of the state may live in Germany only as a guest and must be regarded as being subject to the Alien laws.
6. The right of voting on the leadership and legislation is to be enjoyed by the citizens of the state alone. We demand, therefore, that all official appointments, of whatever kind, whether in the Reich, the provinces, or the small communities, shall be granted to citizens of the state alone. We oppose the corrupt Parliamentary custom of the state of filling posts merely with a view to party considerations, and without reference to character or capacity.

7. We demand that the state shall make it its first duty to promote the industry and livelihood of the citizens of the state, foreign nationals must be excluded from the Reich.
8. All further non-German immigration must be prevented. We demand that all non-Germans who entered Germany subsequently to 2 August 1914 shall be required forthwith to depart from the Reich.
9. All citizens of the state shall possess equal rights and duties.
10. It must be the first duty of every citizen of the state to perform mental or physical work. The activities of the individual must not clash with the interests of the whole, but must proceed within the framework of the community and must therefore be for the general good.
- We demand therefore:
11. Abolition of incomes unearned by work. Abolition of the thralldom of interest.
12. In view of the enormous sacrifice of life and property demanded of a nation by every war, personal enrichment through war must be regarded as a crime against the nation. We demand therefore the ruthless confiscation of all war profits.
13. We demand the nationalisation of all businesses which have been amalgamated.
14. We demand that there shall be profit-sharing in the great industries.
15. We demand a generous development of provision for old age.
16. We demand the creation and maintenance of a healthy middle class, immediate communalisation of wholesale warehouses and their lease at a low rate to small traders, and that the most careful consideration shall be shown to all small purveyors to the state, the provinces, or smaller communities.
17. We demand a land reform suitable to our national requirements, the passing of a law for the confiscation without compensation of land for communal purposes, the abolition of interest on mortgages, and prohibition of all speculation in land.
18. We demand ruthless war upon all those whose activities are injurious to the common interest. Common criminals against the nation, usurers, profiteers, etc, must be punished with death, whatever their creed or race.
19. We demand that the Roman Law, which serves the materialistic world order, shall be replaced by a German common law.
20. With the aim of opening to every capable and industrious German the possibility of higher education and consequent advancement to leading positions the state must consider a thorough reconstruction of our national system of education. The curriculum of all educational establishments must be brought into line with the requirements of practical life. Directly the mind begins to develop the schools must aim at teaching the pupil to understand the idea of the state. We demand the education of specially gifted children of poor parents, whatever their class or occupation, at the expense of the state.
21. The state must apply itself to raising the standard of health in the nation by protecting mothers and infants, prohibiting child labour, and increasing bodily efficiency by legally obligatory gymnastics and sports, and by extensive support of clubs engaged in the physical training of the young.
22. We demand the abolition of mercenary troops and the formation of a national army.
23. We demand legal warfare against conscious political lies and their dissemination in the press. In order to facilitate the creation of a German national press, we demand:
- a. That all editors of and contributors to newspapers employing the German language must be members of the nation.
 - b. That special permission from the state shall be necessary before non-German newspapers may appear. These need not necessarily be printed in the German language.
 - c. That non-Germans shall be prohibited by law from participating financially in or influencing German newspapers, and that the penalty for the contravention of the law shall be suppression of any such newspaper and the immediate deportation of the non-German involved. It must be forbidden to publish newspapers which do not conduce to the national welfare. We demand the legal prosecution of all tendencies in art and literature of a kind likely to disintegrate our life as a

nation, and the suppression of institutions which militate against the above-mentioned requirements.

24. We demand liberty for all religious denominations in the state so far as they are not a danger to it, and do not militate against the morality and moral sense of the German race. The party, as such, stands for positive Christianity, but does not bind itself in the matter of creed to any particular confession. It combats the Jewish-materialist spirit within and without us, and is convinced that our nation can achieve permanent health from within only on the principle: the common interest before self-interest.

25. That all the foregoing requirements may be realised we demand the creation of a strong central power of the Reich. Unconditional authority of the politically central Parliament over the entire Reich and its organisation in general. The formation of Diets and vocational Chambers for the purpose of executing the general laws promulgated by the Reich in the various States of the Confederation. The leaders of the Party swear to proceed regardless of consequences - if necessary at the sacrifice of their lives - towards the fulfilment of the foregoing points.

On 31 August 1927, Hitler decreed this programme to be immutable, declaring: 'Questions of programme do not concern the Council of Administration; the Programme is fixed, and I shall never suffer changes in the principles of the movement as laid down.'^[57] But his alliance with the leaders of industry and banking, which he had begun to forge by 1930, necessitated certain programmatic adjustments, and this delicate task was allotted to the dutiful Feder: On the land question (point 17) he said the following:

No hard and fast rule can be laid down as to the size of agricultural holdings. From the point of view of our population policy large numbers of prosperous small and middle-sized farms are all-important. Farming on a large scale, however, has its special and *necessary* part to play...^[58]

Feder also made a declaration on behalf of the NSDAP in reply to a series of questions from 'leading circles' of the Brandenburg Landbund, published in *Deutsche Tageszeitung* of 25 January 1930. The questions from this Junker organisation pertained chiefly to private ownership of land, profit-sharing (demanded in point 14 of the 1920 programme) inheritance, tariffs, credits, etc. To the question 'Is the NSDAP prepared to give guarantees that it will not encroach upon private property?', the author of the clause demanding the nationalisation of the trusts (point 13) and the confiscation of war profits (point 12) replied:

National Socialism recognises private property ownership in principle, and places it under state protection... It follows from the spirit of the whole programme, clearly and irrefutably that National Socialism, as the most convinced and consistent opponent of Marxism, most decisively repudiates its cardinal doctrine of the 'confiscation of all property'... and also that National Socialism, as the keenest adversary of the misguided international doctrines of Marxism sees in a class of landowning farmers the best and surest foundation of the national state... We need a strong, healthy class of farmers, free from interest, slavery and taxation-Bolshevism. [Sic!]

And finally on the vexed question of profit-sharing, one that perplexed and worried many potential Nazi supporters in the German business community, Feder wrote:

The present demand for profit-sharing springs either from the desire for gain (essentially capitalistic) or from envy (essentially Marxist)... The lowering of prices is the magic formula which must give every member of the nation a share of the profits of national production.

The industrialists had got the answer they wanted. What did it matter if they had to employ the language of anti-capitalism in order to protect their profits?

This is how the Nazis began to discard their 'socialist' demands under pressure from agrarian and big business interests even before they came to power. The study of Nazi 'socialism' in action we shall reserve to future chapters.

Notes

1. Hitler only makes the vaguest of allusions to this episode in his autobiographical *Mein Kampf*: 'A few days after the liberation of Munich, I was ordered to report to the examining commission concerned with revolutionary occurrences in the Second Infantry Regiment.' (A Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (London, 1943), p 208)

2. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 208.

3. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 208, emphasis added.
4. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 209.
5. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 215.
6. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, pp 446-47.
7. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 447.
8. For all his attempts to equate bourgeois parliamentary democracy and Marxism (on the grounds that both upheld the right of the 'masses' to rule), Hitler was well aware that there were important differences between the two, and that the Marxist defence of what were essentially bourgeois democratic freedoms and rights was a subordinate part of its overall revolutionary strategy: 'The Marxists will march with democracy until they succeed in indirectly obtaining for their criminal aims the support of even the national intellectual world. [But if today]... they came to the conviction that from the witches' cauldron of our parliamentary democracy a majority could be brewed which... would seriously attack Marxism, the parliamentary jugglery would come to an end at once. The banner bearers of the Red International would then, instead of addressing an appeal to the democratic conscience, emit a fiery call to the proletarian masses, and the struggle at one stroke would be removed from the stuffy air of our parliamentary meeting halls to the factories and the streets. Democracy would be done for immediately; what the mental dexterity of those people's apostles in the parliaments had failed to do, the crowbar and sledgehammer of incited proletarian masses would instantly succeed in doing, as in the autumn of 1918...' It was from this fanatically anti-Marxist, anti-proletarian viewpoint that Hitler rejected and attacked parliamentary democracy. Not so much for what it was or seemed to represent in itself, but because it was, by virtue of its formal commitment to the principle of popular rule, unable to take the extreme measures necessary to defeat the revolutionary Marxist movement: 'They [the 'incited proletarian masses' - RB] would drive it home to the bourgeois world how insane it is to imagine that they can oppose Jewish world domination with the methods of Western democracy.' (Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 377)
9. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 448, emphasis added.
10. This is no exaggeration. In the same chapter of *Mein Kampf*, Hitler declares: '... as in economic life, the able men cannot be appointed from above, but must struggle through for themselves, and just as the endless schooling, ranging from the smallest business to the largest enterprise, occurs spontaneously, with life alone giving the examinations, obviously political minds cannot be discovered.' (Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 449) And, in another even more explicit comment on the allegedly 'natural' rights and origins of business tycoons, Hitler once said: 'The capitalists have worked their way to the top through their capacity, and on the basis of this selection, which again only proves their higher race, they have a right to lead.' (Hitler to Otto Strasser, 22 May 1930, cited in O Strasser, *Hitler and I* (London, 1940), p 113)
11. The Thule Society, whose emblem was the Swastika, was the Bavarian branch of the Pan-German Teutonic Order, and at its peak had a membership of 1500, nearly all of whom were drawn from the 'cream' of Munich society - aristocrats, army officers, professors, publicists, etc.
12. The following words are put into the mouths of the 'Elders of Zion': 'We appear on the scene as the alleged saviours of the worker from this [capitalist] oppression when we propose to him to enter the ranks of our fighting forces - Socialists, Anarchists, Communists... By want and the envy and hatred which it engenders we shall move the mobs and with their hands we shall wipe out all those who hinder us on our way... We shall create by aid of gold, which is all in our hands, a universal economic crisis whereby we shall throw upon the streets whole mobs of workers simultaneously in all the countries of Europe... Remember the French Revolution, to which it was we who gave the name 'Great': the secrets of its preparations are well known to us for it was wholly the work of our hands. Ever since that time we have been leading the peoples from one disenchantment to another, so that in the end they should turn also from us in favour of that King-Despot of the blood of

Zion, whom we are preparing for the world.' (*Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* (London, 1960), pp 24-26)

13. And not only Russia. While *The Times* equivocated over the genuineness of the Protocols when they first appeared - in 1920 - in English translation, the staunchly Conservative *Morning Post* (the forerunner of the equally reactionary *Daily Telegraph*) was quite certain; the paper published no fewer than 13 articles in the summer of that year on the theme of the world Jewish conspiracy, which was unfolding in the Soviet Union before the eyes of the paper's horrified readers. (So enthusiastic was the response to this anti-Semitic filth amongst the *Morning Post's* upper and middle-class readers, the articles were republished in book form with a preface by the paper's editor.) The right-wing London weekly review *The Spectator* did not venture to declare the *Protocols* to be genuine, but neither did it expose them as the obvious forgery they were: 'Upon that much vexed subject of the authenticity of the *Protocols of Zion* we shall not enter, except to say that if the document is a forgery, as is alleged, then it is one of the most remarkable in the history of literature.' (*The Spectator*, 16 October 1920) Henry Ford, as notorious an anti-Semite as he was an enemy of trade unionism and socialism, had no doubts, his private daily paper, the *Dearborn Independent*, proclaimed to the citizens of Detroit on 10 July 1920: 'It is too terribly real for fiction, too well sustained for speculation, too deep in its knowledge of the secret springs of life for forgery.' Ford himself endorsed the authenticity of the *Protocols* in the classic language of American pragmatism: 'The only statement I care to make about the *Protocols* is that they fit in with what is going on. They are 16 years old and they have fitted the world situation up to this time. They fit it now.' (*New York World*, 17 February 1921) But it was in Germany that the *Protocols* found their most avid audience. First published in German in 1920, they were destined to become the gospel of the entire *volkisch* movement, going through no less than 33 editions, before Hitler's accession to power in 1933. Perhaps this statistic, more than any other, measures the degree to which the German bourgeoisie and wide sections of the middle class had become saturated with fanatical chauvinist hatred for the Jews. As Norman Cohn, in his excellent book on the history of the *Protocols* makes clear, this most infamous of all forgeries became the Third Reich's 'warrant for genocide'. And when the time came, years of anti-Semitic indoctrination ensured there would be no shortage of executioners.

14. Thus Prime Minister Witte wrote of the Russian anti-Semitic movement that it was 'patriotic to the depths of its soul... but its patriotism is primitive... Most of its leaders are upstarts..., [they] concentrate all their efforts on unleashing the lowest possible impulses in the benighted, savage masses... its leaders are political villains, it has secret sympathisers in court circles and amongst nobles with all kinds of titles - people who seek their salvation in lawlessness and have as their slogan: "Not we for the people, but the people for the good of our stomachs"... And the Tsar dreams of restoring greatness to Russia with the help of this party. Poor Tsar...' (quoted in N Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide* (London, 1967), p 111) The similarity between Witte's reaction to 'plebeian' counter-revolution and the repugnance felt towards the Nazis by his German counterparts is quite remarkable. But it did not prevent either from resorting to the services of the 'lawless' and 'savage' plebeians when the only alternative seemed to be defeat at the hands of the Marxist-led proletariat. Nevertheless, there are also important differences between the two movements, which relate not so much to their social composition, combat methods or ideology but their historical juxtaposition to the major classes in Germany and Russia. The Black Hundreds sought to mobilise 'the people' in defence of the monarchy against what was essentially, despite its proletarian vanguard, a bourgeois-democratic revolution, even though the bourgeoisie in its majority recoiled from the implications of its 'own' revolution. The National Socialists did not come out as defenders of throne or altar, though they were not averse, when the opportunity presented itself or the tactical situation demanded it, to aligning themselves with supporters of both. Although combating and finally destroying bourgeois democracy, the Nazis' main - in fact only - target was the organisations of the German proletariat. Fascism is therefore, contrary to the claims of Popular Front Stalinism, the plebeian instrument of *bourgeois* - and not feudal - counter-revolution.

15. ‘Angels’ contributing to the struggling paper’s finances included Captain Mayr’s political department, which donated a large sum in December 1920 to help secure Nazi ownership of the *Völkischer Beobachter*. Army influence was also reflected in Hitler’s choice of business manager for what had become the Nazi Party’s official organ - Max Amman, who had been a close friend of Hitler’s during his period of political service in *Abteilung I b/p*. Other donations came from Kurt Lüdecke, the big-business broker and buying agent who on the testimony of Alfred Rosenberg ‘had money, foreign money... and placed some of it at the disposal of the Party. He even outfitted, at his own expense, a troop of the SA.’ (A Rosenberg, *Memoirs* (Chicago and New York, 1949), p 60)

16. This Rosenberg did in an official state capacity after the Nazi victory in 1933, heading the *Amt Osten* (Eastern Department) of the Foreign Political Office of the NSDAP. In this capacity he was also involved in the propaganda and activity of the Anti-Komintern, the anti-Soviet alliance concluded between Germany, Italy and Japan, although this organisation was initially a sub-department of Goebbels’ Ministry of Propaganda. Preparatory to the invasion of the USSR in June 1941, Rosenberg was appointed by Hitler (on 20 April) as ‘Commissioner for the Central Control of Questions Connected with the Eastern European Region’. Proudly sporting this grandiose title, Rosenberg now planned the plunder of the country whose revolution he fled in 1918, and the physical extermination of its population by mass murder and slow death by systematic starvation: ‘The job of feeding the German people stands this year without doubt on top of the list of Germany’s claims on the East, and here the southern territories and the northern Caucasus will have to serve as a balance for the feeding of the German people. We see absolutely no reason for any obligation on our part to feed also the Russian people with the products of that surplus.’ (A Rosenberg, Speech to his Staff, 20 June 1941, *ND 1058-PS*) Rosenberg, Hitler’s mentor in Soviet affairs, was now carrying out his Führer’s ‘eastern policy’, as enunciated in *Mein Kampf*, to the letter.

17. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 139.

18. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 140.

19. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, pp 642-49.

20. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, pp 653-54.

21. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, pp 660-62, emphasis added.

22. LD Trotsky, ‘Germany, the Key to the International Situation’, *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany* (New York, 1971), p 126. At the very time when Stalin was beginning to look towards an ultra-nationalistic regime in Germany as a counterweight to what he wrongly considered to be an interventionist threat from French imperialism (presumably mounted through its semi-vassal state, Poland) Trotsky wrote: ‘None of the “normal” bourgeois parliamentary governments can risk a war at the present time [1931] of immense internal complications. [Precisely the point made by von Seeckt in his report to President Ebert! - RB] But if Hitler comes to power and proceeds to crush the vanguard of the German workers, pulverising and demoralising the whole proletariat, the fascist government will be the only government capable of waging war against the USSR... The crushing of the German proletariat by the fascists would already comprise at least half of the collapse of the Soviet republic.’ (Trotsky, ‘Germany, the Key to the International Situation’, *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, pp 126-27) And Hitler’s armies did occupy roughly this proportion of European Russia, to be driven out, not by the genius of Stalin’s military leadership, as the official Soviet history textbooks are once again claiming, but by the heroism and avoidable sacrifice of the Soviet working class and peasantry. Their German comrades having been defeated in the battle for power in Berlin, the Soviet proletariat was only able to check the brown onslaught, which began in 1933, at the very gates of Moscow and Leningrad, and in the shattered tractor factories of Stalingrad.

23. A Hitler, *Hitler’s Secret Book* (New York, 1961) pp 44-45, emphasis added; being the sequel to *Mein Kampf*, written in 1928, but unpublished until after the war.

24. Hitler, *Hitler’s Secret Book*, p 42.

- 25.** A typical demagogic turn of phrase, for elsewhere in the same work, Hitler writes: ‘The German national bourgeoisie, which alone is under discussion here - since international Marxism as such has no other aim but Germany’s destruction - even today has learned nothing from the past...’ (Hitler, *Hitler’s Secret Book*, pp 110-11) Far from condemning them equally, Hitler finds fault with the bourgeoisie only in so far as it has proved itself unable either to learn from the past or to pursue a consistent national policy in the present and future, while Marxism is rejected out of hand as internationalist, and therefore by its very nature incapable of serving the ‘national’ cause.
- 26.** Hitler, *Hitler’s Secret Book*, pp 79-90, emphasis added.
- 27.** Among whom was numbered Max Weber, a co-author of the Weimar Constitution!
- 28.** *Hitler’s Secret Book*, pp 38-39, emphasis added.
- 29.** As in the earlier *Mein Kampf*, Hitler still found it necessary to warn against the implications of a possible German-Soviet alliance: ‘The belief in a German-Russia understanding is in itself fantastic as long as a regime rules in Russia which is permeated by one aim only: to carry over the Bolshevik poisoning to Germany. It is natural, therefore, for communist elements to agitate for a German-Russian alliance. They thereby hope, rightfully, to be able to lead Germany herself to Bolshevism. It is incomprehensible, however, if national Germans believe that it is possible to achieve an understanding with a state whose great interest is the destruction of this very national Germany.’ (*Hitler’s Secret Book*, p 132) Hitler actually only felt free to make tactical adjustments to this line when the Stalinist counter-revolution had, through the Moscow Trials and the mass purges that accompanied them, crushed Soviet supporters of a genuine internationalist perspective for the European working class. This became the basis for the Stalin - Hitler pact of August 1939, a treaty which in turn enabled German imperialism to defeat its enemies in the West before launching the long-awaited and prepared invasion of the USSR.
- 30.** *Hitler’s Secret Book*, pp 166-67, emphasis added.
- 31.** A Rosenberg, ‘The Myth of the Twentieth Century’, *Alfred Rosenberg: Selected Political Writings* (London, 1970), p 34.
- 32.** Rosenberg, ‘The Myth of the Twentieth Century’, *Alfred Rosenberg: Selected Political Writings*, p 34.
- 33.** Rosenberg, ‘The Myth of the Twentieth Century’, *Alfred Rosenberg: Selected Political Writings*, p 40.
- 34.** Despite his proclaimed hostility towards Christianity, Rosenberg was at pains to exonerate its founder from slanderous charges concerning his ethnic origins: ‘As far as Jesus’ ancestry is concerned, there is not the slightest reason to believe... that Jesus was of Jewish ancestry, even if it be admitted that He had grown up in Jewish intellectual circles... The thoroughly un-Jewish teachings of the ‘Kingdom of heaven within us’ strengthen this realisation.’ (Rosenberg, ‘The Myth of the Twentieth Century’, *Alfred Rosenberg: Selected Political Writings*, p 70.) It is significant that Rosenberg’s proof of Christ’s ‘un-Jewishness’ is the latter’s Germanic ‘inwardness’ - in political terms a passive acceptance of the status quo.
- 35.** Rosenberg, ‘The Myth of the Twentieth Century’, *Alfred Rosenberg: Selected Political Writings*, p 87-88.
- 36.** A Rosenberg, ‘Address on the One-Hundredth Anniversary of Nietzsche’s Birth’, 14 October 1944, *Alfred Rosenberg: Selected Political Writings*, p 143.
- 37.** Rosenberg, *Memoirs*, p 56, emphasis added.
- 38.** Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 535, emphasis added.
- 39.** Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, pp 334-35, emphasis added.
- 40.** At a meeting of officers, held in the Berlin Philharmonic Hall in December 1918, Goering denounced attempts being made by the leaders of the armed forces to win their support for the Ebert government of ‘November criminals’. Minister of War General

Reinhardt had told the rally that officers would have to discard their treasured epaulettes and other insignia of imperial caste and rank for the colours of the new republican regime. This was too much for Goering: 'We officers did our duty for four long years [Goering had been a fighter pilot in the crack Richtofen Squadron - RB] and we risked our bodies for the Fatherland. Now we come home - and how do they treat us? They spit on us and deprive us of what we gloried in wearing... Those alone are to blame who have goaded on the people - those men who stabbed our glorious army in the back and who thought of nothing but attaining power and of enriching themselves at the expense of the people. [Sic! Goering, the greatest Nazi predator of them all, looted the art galleries and museums of all Europe to decorate and furnish his lavish palaces built at the expense of the German people - RB] And therefore, I implore you to cherish hatred - a profound abiding hatred of those animals who have outraged the German people!' And before striding out of the hall in protest against what he regarded as General Rheinhardt's treachery, he ended his speech with the following pledge, one which those who were arming the Free Corps allegedly to defend democracy from the 'dictatorship of the councils' would have done well to heed: 'The day will come when we will drive them [the Social Democrats] away out of our Germany. Prepare for that day. Arm yourselves for that day. Work for that day!'

41. Two who were particularly zealous in their protection of the Nazi Party at this time were Ernst Pöhner, a former Bavarian police president, who became a justice of the Bavarian Supreme Court in 1921. At the trial of the Munich Putschists he proudly declared: 'For five years I did nothing but treason.' Sentenced to a ludicrously short sentence of a few months by his court cronies, he in fact never went to jail, his election as a *volkisch* deputy in the Bavarian Diet conveniently providing this self-confessed traitor with immunity from arrest. The other benefactor of the Nazis was Wilhelm Frick, Bavarian police deputy president, who in 1933 became Hitler's Minister of the Interior. This appointment was in part at least a reward for service rendered. When Pöhner was asked, in the period preceding the Munich Putsch, whether he knew of the existence of right-wing killer squads operating openly on his 'patch', he replied: 'Yes, but there aren't enough of them.' Of these two Hitler wrote that they were in his eyes 'the only men in a state position who possess the right to be called co-creators of a national Bavaria' (Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 368).

42. 'What we needed and still need were and are not a hundred or two hundred reckless conspirators, but a hundred thousand, and a second hundred thousand fighters for our philosophy of life. We should not work in secret conventicles, but in mighty mass demonstrations, and it is not by dagger and poison or pistol that the road can be cleared for the movement, *but by the conquest of the streets*. We must teach the Marxists that the future master of the streets is National Socialism, just as it will some day be the master of the state.' (Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 543, emphasis added)

43. 'The red colour of our posters in itself drew them [our opponents] to our meeting halls. The run-of-the-mill bourgeoisie were horrified that we had seized upon the red of the Bolsheviks and they regarded this as all very ambiguous. The German national souls kept privately whispering to each other the suspicion [entirely unjustified, as they later found out - RB] that basically we were nothing but a species of Marxism, perhaps Marxists, or rather, socialists in disguise. For to this day these scatterbrains have not understood the difference between socialism and Marxism. Especially when they discovered that, as a matter of principle, we greeted in our meetings no 'ladies and gentlemen', but only 'national comrades' and among ourselves spoke only of party comrades, the Marxist spook seemed demonstrated for many of our enemies. How often we shook with laughter at these simple bourgeoisie scare-cats, at the sight of their ingenious witty guessing games about our origin, our intentions, and our goal.' Such confusion and suspicion in the less politically aware elements of the bourgeoisie was but a small price to pay for the enormous advantage these tactics gave the Nazis in the fight for influence in the masses. Hence also Hitler's injunction: 'Any meeting which is protected exclusively by the police discredits its organisers in the eyes of the broad masses.' (Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, pp 483, 487)

44. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 331.

45. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 331.

46. ‘The characteristic thing about our bourgeois world is precisely that it can no longer deny the ailments as such. It must admit that much is rotten and bad, but it no longer finds the determination to rebel against the evil, to muster the force of sixty to seventy millions with embittered energy, and oppose it to the danger... our present bourgeoisie has become worthless for every exalted task of mankind, simply because it is without quality and no good; and what makes it no good is not so much in my opinion any *deliberate* malice as an incredible indolence and everything that springs from it.’ (Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, pp 406-07) Hence the need for a ‘plebeian’ solution to - for the bourgeoisie - the seemingly intractable problem of the class struggle.

47. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 333, emphasis added.

48. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, pp 333-34.

49. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 337, emphasis added.

50. In one of his many scornful references to the lack of fighting power exhibited by the bourgeois parties in the early years of the Weimar Republic, Hitler writes: ‘It is obvious that such a “bourgeois” guild is good for anything sooner than struggle; especially if the opposing side does not consist of cautious pepper sacks [German slang for small traders - RB] but proletarian masses, incited to extremes and determined to do their worst.’ (Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 407)

51. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, pp 519-20.

52. While eager to enrol these ultra-right class warriors into the ranks of the young Nazi movement, Hitler had no illusions about their political immaturity, which he saw confirmed by their readiness to serve under the Ebert government. Even though they shouldered arms for the Republic to fight Bolshevism, it was in Hitler’s judgment, a monumental political error: ‘As volunteer soldiers they banded together into free corps and began, though grimly hating the revolution, to protect and thus for practical purposes, to secure, this same revolution. This they did in the best good faith... Gradually the Spartacist barricade fighters on the one hand and the nationalist fanatics and idealists on the other were bled white, and in exact proportion as the two extremes wore each other out [that is, the ‘best elements’ and the ‘scum’ - RB] as always the mass of the middle was victorious. The bourgeoisie and Marxism [that is, Social Democracy] met on a ‘realistic basis’ and the Republic began to be consolidated... The sole organisations which at this time would have had the courage and strength to oppose the Marxists and their incited masses, were for the present the free corps, and later the self-defence organisations, citizens’ guards, etc, and finally the tradition leagues that is, the *Stahlhelm*... [But]... just as the so-called national parties could exert no sort of influence for lack of any threatening power on the streets, likewise the so-called defence organisations, in turn, could exert no sort of influence for lack of any political idea, and above all of any real goal. What had given Marxism its success was its complete combination of political will and activist brutality. What excluded national Germany from any practical activity in shaping the German development *was the lack of a unified collaboration of brutal force with brilliant political will.*’ (Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, pp 523-32, emphasis added)

53. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 520.

54. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, pp 490-91, emphasis added.

55. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 491.

56. To take only three of the more notorious Free Corps brigades - the von Epp, Rossbach and Ehrhardt. The following officers served the Nazi movement in the positions specified: **von Epp Brigade** (which, as the unit which overthrew the Bavarian Soviet Republic, had the deepest roots in Munich): Hans Baumann, Battalion commander of Epp Brigade, founder member of DAP, later NSDAP Reichstag deputy; Robert Bergmann, SS *Standführer*, Reichstag member; Friedrich Eichhinger, joined NSDAP 1921, in Third Reich, adjutant to Bavarian Minister of Interior; Otto Engelbrecht, Munich putschist, appointed to SA leadership, 1933; Hans Hoffmann, leader of SA *gruppe* Bavaria 1931, inspector of SA and police chief of Regensburg, 1932, Reichstag member; Franz Krausser, co-founder with

Röhm of the SA, on supreme SA leadership, purged with Röhm in 1934; Otto Lancelle, secretary of von Epp, on staff of SA leadership, 1931; Johann Malsen-Ponickau, on SS chief Himmler's personal staff: Wilhelm Stuckart, NSDAP 1922, director in Prussian Ministry of Culture [sic!] under Third Reich; Gerhard Wagner, founder of NSDAP medical association, adviser to Hess on 'medical questions'; Wilhelm Weiss, SA *gruppenführer*, on staff of *Völkischer Beobachter*, Reichstag member 1936; Karl Wolff, adjutant to von Epp, SS brigade leader, Himmler's adjutant, Reichstag member. **Rosbach:** Kurt Dalweg, joined NSDAP 1922, founded Berlin SA, Lieutenant General of Prussian State Police; Edmund Heines, Rosbach chief in Silesia, Reichstag 1932, purged 1934. **Ehrhardt:** Heinz Hauenstein, NSDAP 1922, editor of Nazi paper, Hanover *North German Observer*; Wilhelm Heinz, Munich putschist, SA chief for west Germany, 1933, director of Reich Union of German Writers [sic!]; Manfred von Killinger, organised murders of Rathenau and Erzberger, SA *Obergruppenführer*, Reichstag member, Nazi Minister President of Saxony, Nazi 'ambassador' to Slovakia, 1940, and to Romania, 1941; Helmut Nicolai, fellow assassin of above (as members of 'Organisation Consul'), 1931, chief of NSDAP domestic policy departments, 1933, director in Ministry of Interior; Carl Eduard, Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, supreme staff of SA, President of German Red Cross [sic!]. And these are but a sample of the far longer list to be found in Robert Waite's study of the Free Corps movement in his *Vanguard of Nazism* (Cambridge, Mass, 1952). And in Daniel Lerner's study of the social and occupational origins of the Nazi leadership in the Third Reich, it emerges that 25 per cent of the top Nazi administrators served at some time in the Free Corps. The Bavarian basis of the NSDAP is evidenced by 20.5 per cent of its administrative officials being born in that state - precisely double the proportion warranted by Bavaria's population, which at that time stood at 10.1 per cent of the total Reich (D Lerner, *The Nazi Elite*, Stanford, 1951).

57. G Feder, *Hitler's Official Programme* (English Edition, 1934), p 10.

58. Feder, *Hitler's Official Programme*, p 33, emphasis in original.

Fascism in Germany. Robin Blick 1975

Chapter XII: Italy: The First Warning

The Brown shirt would probably not have existed without the Black shirt. The march on Rome in 1922 was one of the turning points of history. The mere fact that anything of the sort could be attempted and could succeed, gave us impetus... If Mussolini had been outdistanced by Marxism, I don't know whether we could have succeeded in holding out. At that time National Socialism was a very fragile growth. (Adolf Hitler, 1940)

It would be incorrect to conclude that Germany is faced directly with the establishment of a fascist government *à la* Mussolini... The great change that has taken place [since the march on Rome] is the growth of fascism within Social Democracy. ('Social Fascism in Germany', *Communist International*, Volume 6, no 11-12-13, May 1929, p 529)

In Italy Mussolini has triumphed. Are we guaranteed against the victory of German Mussolinis in Germany? Not at all. (LD Trotsky, *Report on the Fourth Congress of the Communist International*, 28 December 1922)

There was one sphere of activity in which the leaders of the German working class cannot be deemed remiss and that was in the manufacture of alibis. Confronted in the spring of 1933 with the ruins of what once had been the world's most powerful labour movement, a movement which they had jointly led to defeat and destruction, Stalinists and Social Democrats frantically heaped abuse on one another, as the leaders of the two tendencies conspired to conceal from their tormented followers their mutual responsibility for the victory of fascism in Germany. While Comintern and KPD pen-prostitutes railed hysterically against the 'social fascists' for their policy of 'tolerating' the 'lesser evil' of the quasi-Bonapartist Brüning regime (a policy which resulted in the victory of the Nazi 'greater evil'), the reformists hit back tellingly by pointing to the several occasions on which the KPD leaders had not merely refused a united front with the 'social fascists', but actually entered into a united front with the so-called 'national fascists' (a 'Third Period' Stalinist term distinguishing Nazis from 'social fascists') against the SPD!

But there was one alibi or diversion that not even the most debauched and case-hardened bureaucratic hireling dared employ. None could claim that Hitler's victory took them by surprise, that the rise of German fascism lacked an historical precedent, that there had not been ample warning of the fate that awaited the German proletariat should its leadership not be equal to the task of carrying through the socialist revolution. For staring the German workers' movement in the face for fully 10 years had been the tragic consequences of the Fascist 'March on Rome'. By an unprecedented campaign of systematic anti-proletarian terror, Mussolini's black-shirted *Fascisti* had not only succeeded in turning the tide of revolution which had been running high in the summer of 1920, but, unlike previous strike-breaking organisations, had at once gone over to the offensive in a determined bid for state power. This was something entirely new in the history of the class struggle under capitalism. Eagerly seizing the initiative presented to him by the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) reformists and centrists after their betrayal of the September factory occupation movement, Mussolini launched an unremitting siege of the Italian proletariat's major citadels. Spearheaded by squads of First World War veterans, black-shirted columns blazed a counter-revolutionary trail through north Italy until, one by one, every stronghold of the labour movement had fallen into Fascist hands. In every case, the pattern was the same. Armed Fascists (often with weapons supplied by the army and police) would bodily eject the constitutionally elected administration from the town hall, and replace it with power-hungry petit-bourgeois, craving for rewards of office. The premises and print-shops of the local workers' organisations would be looted, sacked and frequently closed for good. Workers' leaders and labour activists would be publicly humiliated before their comrades by the forcible administration of castor oil, and even on occasions simply shot out of hand. With the proletariat either cowed or divided by the cowardly retreat of its leaders, who at no stage in the Fascist offensive organised any serious resistance to the gathering reaction, Mussolini rapidly convinced important sections of the bourgeoisie - not to speak of key army leaders and the highest circles of the royal family - that the formation of a Fascist-dominated government was the logical outcome of his bloody crusade against the Italian labour movement.

Four years of Fascist rule in Italy were sufficient to root out the last remnants of any independent workers' organisation. The trade unions were outlawed, being superseded by Fascist 'corporations' which claimed to harmonise the interests of workers and employers in the interests of production and for the

greater glory of the state, while the two workers' parties, the PSI and the Communist Party of Italy (PCd'I) were declared illegal and driven underground by the Fascist secret police. A movement which at its peak had numbered millions, and enjoyed the devoted support of millions more, had been shattered. Not since the crushing of the Paris Commune had the European proletariat suffered such a terrible reverse. Its theoretical lessons and political implications would be neglected at the peril of every single detachment of the international working-class army. And just as had been the case in Germany, the ideological preconditions for the emergence of such a movement as Mussolini's had been a long while maturing. In searching for and discovering them, we find ourselves amidst philosophical surroundings that are remarkably similar to and in some cases identical with those that nurtured the ideologues of National Socialism. For Mussolini, although a renegade from the extreme left flank of the pre-1914 PSI, had from his earliest years as a political activist been influenced more by the subjective idealist schools of European thought than the theories of Marx and Engels. Both before as well as after his defection to the counter-revolution, Mussolini bolstered his political conceptions by invoking the very same names that in France, as well as Germany, had helped to stoke up the fires of philosophic reaction: Nietzsche, Max Stirner, Schopenhauer, Bergson and Sorel. ^[1]

What unites each of these major figures in the history of European thought is not so much a shared political outlook - Nietzsche, Schopenhauer and Bergson were all in their own fashion avowed opponents of socialism, while Sorel considered himself an uncorrupted champion of the proletariat - as a common theory of knowledge which can be summed up in one word: intuition. And it was in the name of this mystical force that Mussolini struck out along the uncharted path that was to lead him from the extreme left of the Italian Socialist movement to the ultra-right flank of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie. His revolt against the supposed rigidities of Marxist theory and principles, and his quest for 'action' at all costs became the ideological hallmark of what passed for the 'philosophy' of Fascism: faith and 'deeds' rather than science and action guided by theory:

I do not believe in the supposed influence of books... For myself, I have used only one book... I have had only one great teacher. The book is life lived. The teacher is day-by-day experience. The reality of experience is far more eloquent than all the theories and philosophies in all the tongues and on all the shelves... my political evolution has been the product of a constant expansion, of a flow of springs always nearer to the realities of living life, and always further away from the rigid structures of sociological theorists. ^[2]

The intuitionist or 'integralist' influence of the Bergsonian subjectivist school, especially as distilled through Sorel, is all too obvious in these lines. With Mussolini, the rejection of Marxism was open and brutal in the extreme. However in the case of Sorel's attack on the dialectical materialist foundations of the Marxist theory of knowledge, it was carried out in the name of defending Marx from his traducers and epigones. ^[3] This line of approach is most clearly expressed in his two famous essays, *Reflections on Marxism* (1906) and *The Decomposition of Marxism* (1908), written at a time when the French trade union movement was passing through its peak of prewar militancy. Viewing this combativity of the French proletariat through the eyes of a romantic, anti-rational intellectual, and seeing in it the antidote to the senility, parliamentary cretinism and ministerial opportunism of the official French Socialist movement, Sorel raised this class aggression to an absolute, and equated its most developed form - the general strike - with the proletarian revolution itself. Thus was born the Sorelian 'myth' of the general strike, as being a goal for which the proletariat strove for its own sake, and not as a means to an end, the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a socialist society. But firstly it is essential to see by what methodological route Sorel arrives at such intensely mystical conclusions, ones which have absolutely nothing in common with Marxism, even though they can, with some justice, be said to share a common basis with the theoretical postulates of the so-called 'revolutionary syndicalism' of the decade preceding the First World War. Sorel was an avid pupil and follower of Bergson, seeking to apply the latter's 'integral' theory of knowledge, which Bergson had evolved in his critique of mechanist theorists and 'model builders' in the natural sciences, to history and primarily to the study of the class struggle under modern capitalism.

... I put before my readers the working of a mental effort which is continually endeavouring to break through the bonds of what has been previously constructed for common use, in order to discover that which is truly personal and individual. The only things I find it worthwhile entering in my notebooks are those which I have not met elsewhere; I readily skip the transitions between these things, because they nearly always come under the heading of commonplaces. ^[4]

Yet such ‘commonplaces’ are precisely the repositories of all those shadings, the ‘skipped transitions’, wherein and by whose integral polarity the unique evolves and finally bursts forth as something which to the subjective idealist appears invested with a magical quality of *absolute* uniqueness. Thus ‘intuitionism’, far from laying bare the secrets of nature and society shrouded by hidebound dogmatic theorists, both obscures the mediations and transitions by which the old is negated into the new and the very inner complexities and further polarities contained within the fruits of this act of negation. What we ironically described as Bergson’s ‘short cut to infinity’ becomes a plunge into an abyss of mysticism and political reaction. ^[5] And this was as true in the case of Sorel, the renegade syndicalist, as it was with Mussolini, the renegade Socialist. Let us follow through the main progressions of Sorel’s argument in favour of a cult of proletarian violence and his propagation of the ‘myth’ of the general strike. Firstly Sorel frankly concedes that his theory lacks either substantiating objective evidence or any real prospect of fulfilment. And that is precisely its virtue:

... men who are participating in a great social movement always picture their coming action as a battle in which their cause is certain to triumph. These constructions, knowledge of which is so important for historians, I propose to call myths, the syndicalist ‘general strike’ and Marx’s catastrophic revolution are such myths... [Like]... those which were constructed by primitive Christianity, by the reformation, by the Revolution and by the followers of Mazzini... we should not attempt to analyse such groups of images in the way that we analyse a thing into its elements, but they must be taken as a whole, as historical forces, ... *we should be especially careful not to make any comparison between accomplished fact and the picture people had formed for themselves before action.* ^[6]

In other words, the myth (and here Sorel the would-be Marxist equates the proletarian revolution with the reactionary utopias of the early Christians) must at all costs be preserved intact, must be protected from the inquisitive scrutiny of science, and above all must continue to dominate the thinking of those it holds in thrall:

In employing the term myth I believed I had made a happy choice, because I thus put myself in a position to refuse any discussion whatever with the people who wish to submit the idea of a general strike to a detailed criticism, and who accumulate objections against its practical... possibility. ^[7]

Sorel’s refusal to countenance such a critical examination of his theories was reinforced by the opportunist political position of his opponents in the leadership of the French Socialist Party, who looked with suspicion on the activities of the syndicalists not so much for fear they might derail the struggle for socialism, but actually bring it about by revolutionary rather than evolutionary means. ^[8] It was this cleavage within the French workers’ movement - a split which found what Trotsky once called the ‘healthiest’ forces in the ranks of ‘revolutionary syndicalism’ - that both nourished and created an audience for Sorel’s theorising. And here there is an important parallel with the pre-1914 career of Mussolini, whose anarchist-flavoured Marxism was without doubt a largely intuitive reaction against the class-collaborationist policies favoured by the majority of the PSI leadership.

As a fervent anti-rationalist - rationalism being equated in his mind with parliamentary democracy, reformist socialism, bourgeois liberalism and middle-class intellectualism - Sorel welcomed any expression of the class struggle which in his view would give primacy to the instinct, to the dark forces of intuition, to violence that knew no limits or predetermined goal (as is the case in Marxist-led proletarian revolution). Thus in the scenario devised by Sorel, the proletariat, mobilised by the myth of the syndicalist (and not political) general strike, did not fight as a force in its own right and for its own emancipation from the rule of capital. For if we look more closely at what Sorel is saying, we see that his aim, far from the expropriation of the bourgeoisie, is its reinvigoration. Sorel spends much time denouncing the leaders of French socialism for their ‘bourgeoisification’, yet it is to the rescue of this same bourgeoisie that Sorel summons the proletariat:

It is here that the role of violence in history appears to us as singularly great, for it can... so operate on the middle class [bourgeoisie] as to awaken them to a sense of their own class sentiment... The day on which employers perceive that they have nothing to gain by works which promote social peace, or by democracy, they will understand that they have been ill-advised by the people who persuaded them to abandon their trade of creators of productive forces for the noble profession of educators of the proletariat [that is, bourgeois reformers - RB]. Then there is some chance that they may get back a part of their energy... proletarian violence not only makes

the revolution certain, but it seems also to be the only means by which the European nations - at present stupefied by humanitarianism - can recover their former energy. This kind of violence compels capitalism to restrict its attentions solely to its material role and tends to restore to it the warlike qualities which it formerly possessed. A growing and solidly organised working class can compel the capitalist class to remain firm in the industrial war; if a united and revolutionary proletariat confronts a rich middle class, eager for conquest, capitalist society will have reached its historical perfection... Everything may be saved if the proletariat, by their use of violence, manage to re-establish the division into classes, and so restore to the middle class something of its former energy; that is the great aim towards which the whole thought of men... must be directed. Proletarian violence, carried on as a pure and simple manifestation of the sentiment of the class war, appears thus as a very fine and very heroic thing; it is at the service of the immemorial interests of civilisation... ^[9]

For all their invocation of 'proletarian violence', these are ideas pregnant with a whole range of the most reactionary conceptions. For it transpires that Sorel is by no means a partisan of the proletariat in the class struggle. If he summons it into battle, it is to bestir a reformist and democratic bourgeoisie to take up its old ways (exemplified by the 'June Days' of the 1848 revolution, and the massacre of the Communards in 1871) by regaining its former lust for power and counter-revolutionary violence. In this gladiatorial fashion, the nation can purge itself of its 'weaker' elements, and thus regain its lost virility. Shades of Nietzsche, whom, incidentally, Sorel greatly admired, despite the former's well-known aversion for all forms of socialism and trade unionism. ^[10] Sorel's position therefore seems to straddle the embattled classes. He urges both to fight with the maximum vigour and ruthlessness, to cast aside all democratic and reformist subterfuges, to scorn the parliamentary process and by-pass the various mechanisms which a reformist labour movement and a liberal bourgeoisie has evolved to regulate the social conflicts and mitigate their repercussions in the political sphere. So for all the scorn Sorel displays for the middle-class intelligentsia, which he sees as the main agency in this muffling process, he adopts the classic pose of the politicised but disoriented petit-bourgeois thrown hither and thither in a period of violent class conflict (France was in this period the battleground for a series of monumental clashes between the syndicalist-led workers and an intransigent industrial bourgeoisie and capitalist state). His attacks on the 'middle class' were not so much a critique of its pernicious influence on the proletarian movement, as a total repudiation of theory, a position which he found fortified by the writings of his mentor Bergson. ^[11] Sorel saw as his mission the liberation of the workers from their intellectual seducers, for only in this way could they be led back to their pristine 'trade union' purity. Here too, Sorel was no innovator, since an almost identical line of attack on Marxist leadership had been launched less than a decade previously inside the Russian workers' movement, by the tendency which came to be known by the name 'Economist'. Its advocates argued that socialist students and intellectuals were diverting the working class from its trade union struggles by seeking to harness the power of the proletariat to the struggle to overthrow the autocracy, an aim that transcended trade union goals and methods of combat, even though it would necessarily embrace them. Economist agitators exploited the mistrust felt by the more backward workers towards middle-class intellectuals, and incited them to 'wrest their fate from their leaders'. Politics - that is, the struggle for the destruction of Tsardom - was seen as a corrupting influence on the Russian proletariat, which, the Economists insisted, was perfectly capable of devising its own theory, tactics and strategy for socialism without the assistance of Marxist intellectuals. Their job was not to interfere in the workers' movement, but to win over the liberal bourgeoisie.

Now Sorel by no means shared all these essentially revisionist ^[12] notions - we cannot even be certain that he knew of them. But this much is sure. Sorel was part of that process of theoretical degeneration within the prewar international workers' movement which in the summer of 1914 reached its treacherous nadir with the collapse into rampant chauvinism and collaboration with the capitalist state. And this collapse became the starting point for Mussolini's defection from the ranks of the PSI and his rapid transition towards the extreme counter-revolutionary right.

If we view the origins of German and Italian Fascism from the standpoint of the personal biographies of their founders, there is much that separates the two movements. Hitler, as we have noted, was never a supporter, let alone member or activist, of the Austrian workers' movement, while Mussolini was from his youth until his defection from the PSI in the autumn of 1914 a passionate advocate of revolutionary socialism, suffering repeated police victimisation and persecution for his convictions. Nor can we detect in the younger Mussolini any trace of the national hatreds that dominated the thinking of Hitler from the dawn of his social and political consciousness. Indeed, the future butcher of Ethiopia was famed (or

feared) in the PSI and the Second International for his seemingly intransigent opposition to militarism and chauvinism in all their forms, just as he was regarded as the leading antagonist of those PSI leaders who sought to enter the portals of the government ministries in coalition with the 'reformist' wing of the bourgeoisie headed by Giovanni Giolitti, leader of the Liberals. ^[13] Yet the historical, political and economic soil which nurtured the two movements and fertilised their early growth was in many ways strikingly similar. Firstly there is the oft-stated fact of the retarded national unity of Germany and Italy, a delay which in both countries led to the 'national question' predominating in the political, social and cultural life of both countries. In Germany, it tended to take the form - for deep-seated historical reasons - of militant anti-Semitism mingled with an almost equal hatred for France and Poland; while in the case of Italy, imperialist sentiment was directed primarily against Austria in the north, and only later southwards towards Africa, where the still-unconquered expanses of Libya beckoned on protagonists of an aggressive colonialist policy. Looking more closely at the class and political structure of the two nations, we can also detect similarities as well as differences. Rapid industrialisation of north Italy, though by no means as tempestuous and massive as in the German Ruhr, had hewn a militant proletariat out of what had been up to the last decades of the nineteenth century a primitive and God-fearing (or rather priest-fearing) peasantry. Consequently the 'social question' loomed as large as the national question in every quarter of the bourgeoisie and aristocracy just as the two issues had become fused during the Bismarckian era in Germany. And so the ideological antecedents of Italian Fascism are to be found amongst those organisations and individuals which, as in Imperial Germany, saw the solution to these twin dilemmas as residing in a political counter-revolution sweeping away bourgeois democracy and independent workers' movements alike, and the creation of a regime which would harness the energies of the working class in a struggle for empire. Such was the Nationalist Party, which played the ideological role in Italy performed for National Socialism in Germany by the Pan-German League. Its contribution to Italian Fascism was in fact greater in that it not only helped to shape Mussolini's aggressive foreign policy, but also pioneered many of the conceptions which were later to reappear in the official Fascist theory of the corporate state. Founded in 1910, a time when clamour for empire had reached a crescendo, the Nationalist Party fused Catholic social doctrines (see Chapter X) with a militant anti-parliamentarianism and a bellicose nationalism. The party's principle ideologist, and one who exerted a considerable influence on later Fascist thinking, was the high-school teacher Enrico Corradini. It was he who evolved the notion of an Italy condemned to poverty and backwardness by its being denied its rightful share of colonies. Italy, he claimed, was a 'proletarian nation', and it would only end its servitude to the sated capitalist powers when the energy-sapping fratricidal struggle of classes within Italy was brought to an end. ^[14]

The Nationalists, like their counterparts in the Pan-German League, never secured a mass following, though they were ahead of them in seeing the need to acquire one. Their 'social' and even 'proletarian' phraseology did, however, succeed in attracting into their ranks a small group of renegade socialists and more significantly for the future development of Italian Fascism, defectors from the syndicalist movement. These latter comprised the embryo of that counter-revolutionary tendency which assumed the title 'national syndicalism' and after 1914 gravitated rapidly into the orbit of Fascism. We should recall that in Germany, the forerunner of the Nazi movement, Drexler's German Workers Party (not to speak of the Bohemian organisation of the same name), advocated a national 'trade unionism', as indeed did Hitler, and that the DAP served as a bridgehead for the Pan-German Fatherland Front and the Munich-based Thule Society into the masses, which they themselves could never hope to reach. So it was with the Italian Nationalists. The foundation of the party had been anticipated and to some extent prepared by the publication of Corradini's nationalist review, *Il Regno*, which first appeared in November 1903. Right from the beginning, he struck a new note in ruling-class politics, scolding the bourgeoisie for its 'decadence' and summoning it, very much in terms that Sorel employed in his *Reflections on Violence*, to regain its lost virility and ruthlessness. This was also the theme of his address to the founding Nationalist Congress, where he called upon the government to throw caution to the winds and carve out an empire in North Africa before Italy's imperialist rivals choked the 'proletarian nation' to death:

As socialism teaches the proletariat the value of the class struggle, we [the Nationalists] must teach Italy the value of the international struggle... But if the international struggle means war, well then, let there be war!

And when war against Libya did come only a few months later, Corradini's chauvinist rantings were being echoed by voices which had till then been strident in their opposition to imperialist war and national hatreds. Arturo Labriola, militant syndicalist leader and theoretician, hailed the invasion and

conquest of Libya in terms both reminiscent of Sorel and foreshadowing the glorification of war indulged in by Mussolini:

War is].... a school of character, virility and courage... A people that does not know how to make war, will never make a revolution... Behind Turkey [whom Italy was fighting to annexe Libya] is the Europe of money, which desires its prey... We are really combating Mammon... [Shades of Carlyle and Feder - RB] ^[15]

With the approach of the world war, Italy and Germany presented what was in many ways a similar picture - an imperialist-oriented bourgeoisie confronted by an increasingly powerful labour movement, a polarisation which was itself mirrored at each pole by deep divisions over strategy and tactics. The liberals, encouraged by openly reformist and national trends in the workers' movement, sought a *rapprochement* with the more 'moderate' of their former enemies (thus Weber and certain of the Progressives in Germany, and Giolitti in Italy), while the extreme chauvinists demanded a policy of all-out war on every shade of socialism (in Germany, the Pan-German Junkers and industrialists, in Italy, the Nationalists). In both countries, the outbreak of the imperialist war threw these conflicting tendencies into flux. All except the most intransigent enemies of the German workers' movement welcomed its leaders' collaboration in prosecuting the war, while within the SPD and the trade unions, chauvinist degeneration proceeded at such a tempo that the voice of internationalism was all but stifled.

In Italy, events took a different turn. Waverings and divisions among the bourgeoisie and the military over which side to support enabled the leadership to take a seemingly firm stand against the war. Since the government was officially neutral, it did not require the courage of a Liebknecht to call on the workers' movement to be neutral also. Yet this stand did not satisfy all of the PSI leadership, no more than did the Italian government's neutrality please the militantly imperialist Nationalists, who were demanding a crusade to 'liberate' the Italian-speaking population of the Austrian Tyrol. For Mussolini, the editor of the PSI daily *Avanti*, a more 'active' policy was called for, even if it involved support for one or other of the two imperialist camps. This blind quest for action for its own sake, which had been a feature of his thinking both as a party activist and journalist, led Mussolini to challenge every single basic principle of Marxism. If adherence to such 'rigid' and abstract 'dogmas' as internationalism and antimilitarism stood in the way of action, then Mussolini the pragmatist decided they had to be jettisoned, as ideas condemning the movement to passivity in the face of great events. The crisis came on 18 October 1914, when Mussolini broke party discipline by publishing in *Avanti* his notorious article calling on the PSI to revise its policy on the war. In it he combined eclectically the terminology of Marxism with the intuitive philosophy of Sorel and Bergson:

Many indications support the inference that the PSI is not at ease on the cushions of so comfortable a formula as 'absolute neutrality'. Comfortable because it is negative, *allowing one to abstain from thought and to do nothing but wait*. A party that wants to live in history, to shape history, cannot accept a rule that has been made into a sacred dogma or eternal law independent of the inexorable exigencies of space and time... We have condemned war, but this condemnation of the phenomenon itself, viewed in its 'universality', has not prevented us from distinguishing - logically, historically, socialistically - between wars. The war forced upon Belgium and Serbia and in a certain sense upon France is quite different in character from the war waged by the Austro-German combination... Marx believed that 'whoever formulates a programme for the future is a reactionary'. Paradox! In our case, however, it is true: a programme of 'absolute' neutrality for the future is reactionary. Such a programme made sense once. *Today it is dangerous because it immobilises us. Formulas are accommodations to events; to accommodate events to formulas is sterile... If tomorrow... it should become evident that Italy's intervention can hasten the end of the terrible slaughter, who among us Socialists would favour a 'general strike' to prevent a descent into hostilities which, by saving hundreds of thousands of proletarian lives in France, Germany, Austria, etc, would constitute a supreme attestation of international solidarity?* Under pressure from the Socialists, could not Italy become tomorrow the armed mediator of a peace based on a limitation of armaments and respect for the rights of all nationalities? ... *unless we are prepared to condemn ourselves to immobility, we cannot remain bound by any formula...* Do we wish to be - as men and Socialists - *inert spectators of this grandiose drama...* sometimes the 'letter' destroys the 'spirit'. *Let us beware of saving the 'letter' of the party, if by so doing we destroy the 'spirit' of socialism.* ^[16]

As so often has been the case both before and after Mussolini, the attack on Marxism began with a passionate invocation of its founder's name. This particular onslaught was all the more pernicious in that it sought to defend the revolutionary, or rather activist, 'spirit' of Marxism from the allegedly passive exponents of its 'letter'. Neither was Mussolini alone. Others also previously identified with the extreme left-wing of the PSI and the main trade union organisation, the CGL (General Confederation of Labour) began to talk in the same highly ambiguous terms, among them the syndicalist Filippo Corridoni (not to be confused with the Nationalist Enrico Corradini) who had been jailed for his part in the violent struggles of the so-called 'Red Week' in June 1914, when workers and land labourers took over entire townships in Emilia and the Marche and defied police and army efforts to dislodge them for nearly a week. It is therefore too simple an argument to explain his and Mussolini's renegacy in terms of material corruption. Mussolini lost his post as editor of *Avanti*, while Corridoni proclaimed his support for Nationalist interventionist policy from the gloom of an Italian prison! And this line of reasoning is not only vulgar, it is dangerous, for it obscures the profoundly idealist philosophical roots of the movement that rapidly crystallised out of the fusion between the PSI and syndicalist renegades from the left and the Nationalists on the far right. If all treachery to the working class can be explained purely or even largely in terms of material corruption, or - and this is but a more sophisticated version of the same theory - that such renegades, whether they pass over to fascism or stop short at an opportunist position within the workers' movement, are pursuing a course they have already clearly mapped out in their heads, then this is merely another variant of idealist philosophy, which views the behaviour of individuals in moral terms or as a part of a larger 'conspiracy'. In the case of Mussolini, the intuitionist *par excellence*, we can see that this method of analysis is patently unable to explain his political evolution. Deeper and more complex forces were at work than 'bad faith' or some other moral deficiency. ^[17] Following Mussolini and Corridoni into the interventionist camp were small fractions from the PSI and the CGL. Among defectors from the latter were Michele Bianchi, Edmondo Rossini, Alceste Ambrisi and Giuseppe Giulietti, and they wasted no time in founding their own nationalist organisation which took the name Italian Labour Union (UIL). The 'national syndicalism' of Arturo Labriola, first expounded in the heat of the Libyan war, was now on the verge of becoming a vital ingredient in Fascist demagogy and, after 1922, an organisational prop of the corporate state. But by its very act of separation from the main body of the Italian syndicalist movement, the UIL surrendered all claims to being a genuine trade union. It denounced both the class struggle and the international solidarity of the working class, and called upon the proletariat to wage war, not on the Italian bourgeoisie, but its class brothers in uniform, the cannon fodder of the Austrian imperial army.

Meanwhile, Mussolini's career as a PSI journalist was coming to a bitter and fateful end. Outraged militants demanded his removal from the editorship of *Avanti* and his expulsion from the party, both being carried out before the end of November 1914. One career had ended, and a new one was about to begin. On 15 November, Mussolini launched his new interventionist daily paper, *Il Popolo d'Italia*, which carried on its masthead the legend 'A Socialist Daily', suggesting that its editor had not parted company with socialism, rather he was seeking a more national interpretation of it. Describing the outlook and background of his first supporters in this new journalist venture, Mussolini writes:

They were composed of revolutionary spirits who believed in intervention. They were youths - the students of the universities, the socialist syndicalists, destroying faith in Karl Marx by their ideas. There were professional men too, and working men who could still hear the real voice of the country. ^[18]

In December 1914, this group founded the germ-cell of the future Fascist Party, the Fascio d'Azione Rivoluzionara, the Fascio of Revolutionary Action (the word *Fascio* or Fascist being derived from the symbol of authority carried before the rulers of ancient Rome - an axe surrounded by a bundle of rods). At this stage, as the name of both his group and the subtitle of his paper implied, he was still posing as a revolutionary socialist, albeit of a highly unorthodox kind. Still groping for a new programme to replace the rejected internationalism of the PSI, Mussolini was at first motivated mainly by blind hatred for the movement which had expelled him from its ranks as a class traitor, and by a desire for violent action no matter what the cause or cost. Nevertheless, his subjectivism and intuitionism served as a vehicle for the most reactionary and consciously anti-working-class forces in Italian and international politics. The Nationalists and other interventionists began to look with favour upon Mussolini's patriotic drum beatings, especially since his 'national syndicalist' allies could prove invaluable in lending substance to Nationalist propaganda concerning the 'proletarian' and 'revolutionary' nature of Italian imperialism's struggle for new land and markets. Support of a more tangible kind was forthcoming from another and at

first sight more unlikely source. Acting with the full approval of the French government, Marcel Cachin, a pro-war leader of the French Socialist Party (and subsequently of French Stalinism) visited Italy in December 1914 with funds for the financing of interventionist groups in and around the Italian workers' movement. And among the beneficiaries of Cachin's largesse was Mussolini's new daily paper, *Il Popolo d'Italia*.^[19] With the fall of the neutralist Giolitti government on 12 May 1915, Mussolini's Fascio seemed to be left high and dry without a programme, since the pro-war administration of Antonio Salandra proceeded to carry it out by invading Austria on the 25th of the same month. Yet it rapidly became clear that Mussolini was not merely seeking war to regain the Italian-speaking regions of the Tyrol. His Fascio (who by now had been joined in their pro-war clamour by a motley band of Futurist literati and bohemians) also desired an entirely new political system where there would be little or no room for either parliamentary democracy or independent workers' organisations. 'Parliament', wrote Mussolini on the eve of Giolitti's fall, 'is Italy's bubonic plague which poisons the blood of a nation. It must be extirpated.'^[20]

Along with several others of his group, Mussolini volunteered for front-line service, leaving the day-to-day running of his paper to his closest co-thinkers. As working-class opposition to the war hardened (by 1917 real wages had dropped 27 per cent from their prewar level), so *Il Popolo d'Italia* became more strident in its demands for a war on two fronts against Austria and against the Socialist movement at home. The campaign came to a head with the cataclysmic rout of the Italian army at Caporetto in October 1917. All pretence at being a Socialist movement was discarded. The imperialist fatherland was in danger, and all those who hampered its struggle for survival were traitors to be shown no mercy. The paper then dropped its old subtitle of a 'Socialist daily' and now claimed to speak for the 'combatants and producers', a change which Mussolini himself later regarded as marking a watershed in the history of Fascism.^[21] The tone of the paper's articles also hardened:

With a fiery style I demanded on the part of the government severe action against slackers and whosoever undermined the spirit of the War. I called for the organisation of a volunteer army. I asked for military rule in the north of Italy, insisted on the suppression of Socialist newspapers.^[22]

Unlike Hitler, who, totally lacking in original political thought, took over ready-made the programme of the Pan-German and *volkisch* right, Mussolini was groping his way into unmapped territory, feeling his way step by step towards the rounded-out strategy and ideology that was to become Italian Fascism. And all the time Mussolini the ex-Socialist and former editor of *Avanti* was applying his considerable knowledge of mass movements and agitation to the task of breaking up, and not building, the movement he had served with no little skill and devotion for more than a decade.^[23] Business circles most closely linked to the war industries - notably the Ligurian shipbuilding firm Ansaldo - soon overcame their inhibitions at collaborating with a former notorious enemy of Italian capitalism, and began to subsidise Mussolini's paper and the activities of his group. The company was a classic example of a medium-size firm which mushroomed to enormous wealth and importance. Ansaldo shared Mussolini's enthusiasm for war, even though not for the same reasons. Government contracts increased its capital from 30 million lire in 1914 to 500 million by 1918, and its labour force over the same four-year period from 4000 to 56 000. By the war's end Ansaldo was producing not only warships, but guns, ammunition and even aeroplanes. Ansaldo's owners, the brothers Pio and Mario Perrone, also had a controlling interest in the big Banca Italiana di Sconto, so their decision in the summer of 1918 to subsidise Mussolini's movement possessed a significance far beyond the actual sums of money involved. It indicated that for the first time, Mussolini was being taken seriously not only as a patriotic drum-boy for imperialist wars, but a potential candidate for the role of strikebreaker and counter-revolutionist once the war came to its inevitable conclusion amidst a wave of working-class radicalism.

Though events never went as far as the formation of workers' and soldiers' councils - partly at least because unlike Germany, Italy was a member of a victorious and not defeated imperialist coalition - Mussolini found no response to his nationalist anti-socialist and anti-democratic propaganda amongst the working class. They had had enough of war, and they detested Mussolini as a traitor to socialism. Like Hitler, he rapidly discovered that middle-class ex-servicemen were far more sympathetic to his ideas:

A war of the masses ends with the triumph of the masses... The bourgeois revolution of 1789 - which was revolution and war in one - opened the gates of the world to the bourgeoisie... The present revolution, which is also war, seems to open the gates of the future to the masses, who have served their hard apprenticeship of blood and death in the trenches.^[24]

And though separated by victory and defeat, the political conditions which compelled Hitler and Mussolini to turn towards the 'trench socialist' for their firmest cadres were remarkably similar. In Italy too, the bulk of the middle class of town and country were pulled to the left by the pre-revolutionary upsurge within the working-class movement. This profound shift away from the old parties of order ^[25] drove the Vatican to the unprecedented and momentous decision of sanctioning the formation of a Catholic 'social' party, the *Popolari*, or Populists, and the creation of a parallel trade union organisation to counter the rising influence of the CGL amongst the more backward Catholic workers. (In fact the Catholic union, the Italian Confederation of Labour - CIL - was founded in March 1918, some 10 months before the official launching of the *Popolari*.) Another indication of the crisis in extreme right-wing circles was the rout of the Nationalists, who lost all three of their seats in the November 1919 elections, and the decline of the right-wing Liberals, Italy's main bourgeois party (analogous to Stresemann's DVP) who also lost support in the middle class. In all, the outlook for a movement of Mussolini's type looked grim, no more promising than that which confronted Hitler when he decided with all his doubts about its future prospects of success to become member number seven of the Munich German Workers Party. That Mussolini was able to break out of his group's postwar isolation, and blaze a counter-revolutionary trail which inspired Hitler to follow him, was due entirely to a series of fatal tactical and strategic errors committed by the leadership of the Italian workers' movement, not excluding that section of it, organised after 1920, in the Communist Party. And here too, there is a common bond with Germany, where the treachery of the reformists and mistakes of the centrists permitted the counter-revolution to regroup and strike back at the proletariat with deadly consequences.

And Mussolini's political prospects at the end of 1918 were black indeed. A movement which proclaimed harmony between classes and preached the mystical doctrines of nation and race could expect precious little support from the proletariat, now surging into the trade unions and the ranks of the PSI like a torrent. ^[26] While this movement maintained its forward impetus, Mussolini could only bend to it, even mimicking its radicalism and outbidding the Socialist leaders with shameless demagoguery.

That his pseudo-anarchist rantings ^[27] of this early postwar period were pure camouflage for his sinister counter-revolutionary aims is evident from his later recollections:

Everything was discussed again. We Italians opened the box of political problems and took apart the social clockwork. We pawed over everything from the Crown to Parliament, from the Army to our Colonies, from capitalistic property to the communistic soviet proposal for the federation of the regions of Italy, from schools to the Papacy. The lovely structure of concord and harmony that we combatants and the wounded had dreamed that we would build after the luminous victory of October 1918 was coming to pieces. ^[28]

And as in Germany, nationalist war-veterans returned from the 'harmony' of the trenches and the barracks thirsting for revenge against those who had snatched from them the rewards they believed their courage and sacrifices had merited. They did not relish the Italy they saw - a battlefield of classes, not of nations. Unity therefore had to be imposed on the nation, and by military means if needs be. The following passage from Mussolini's autobiography describes the circumstances which brought about the formation of the Italian Fascist movement:

I knew very well that a strong government would quickly put in order the Socialists and anarchists, the decadents and wreckers and the instigators of disorder... And thus... one Sunday, 26 February 1919, I saw at Milan a fact more disquieting and more important than I thought possible. I saw a Socialist procession - with an endless number of flags... with banners cursing the War. I saw a river in the street made of women, children, Russian, German and Austrians [sic!] flowing through the town... They had numerous meetings. They clamoured amnesty for the deserters. They demanded the division of the land! ^[29]

And equally disturbing for Mussolini was the same cowardice or indifference in the propertied classes which drove Hitler to conclude that only mass terror could combat the menace of Marxism:

As the procession passed through the streets the bourgeois closed hastily their windows and doors. They pulled down their roller blinds. 'There', said I, 'are eyes closing with the weariness of anxiety and fear... Not a single force *interventista* [that is, nationalist] or any other put their feet on to the street to stop the irresponsibles.' ^[30]

The very next day, Mussolini thundered against the Socialist 'beast' in *Il Popolo d'Italia*:

If the opposition to war that is not only finished, but was victorious, is now a pretext for an ignoble doubt, then we, who are not ashamed to have been *interventisti*, but feel the glory of our position, will shout to the heavens - 'Stand back - you jackals!' No one shall separate the dead... We shall defend the dead... even though we put dug-outs in the public squares and trenches in the streets of the city. ^[31]

It was a declaration of war against the Italian proletariat. Less than a month later, on 23 March 1919, the Fasci di Combattimento held its historic meeting (in a hall fittingly offered to Mussolini by the Milan Association of Merchants and Shopkeepers) which saw the adoption of the founding Fascist programme. ^[32]

Taken at its face value, the programme was distinctly 'left' in flavour, demanding not only a republic but the 'suppression of all forms of speculation' and 'confiscation of unproductive revenues'. But there was much that was deliberately ambiguous and even mystifying, especially point 12, which called for the 'reorganisation of production according to the cooperative principle, including the workers' direct share of profits'. Mussolini's speech to the Milan meeting helped to resolve at least some of these uncertainties. His new movement might appeal to the proletariat, but not in the name of socialism. Socialism was 'reactionary', 'national syndicalism' revolutionary:

Unquestionably, Bolshevism has ruined the economic life of Russia... For our part, we declare war on socialism... because it has aligned itself against the nation... The official Socialist Party has been obviously reactionary... It cannot lead a movement of renovation and reconstruction... Majorities are inevitably static, minorities dynamic. We wish to be an active minority, to separate the proletariat from the Socialist Party.

Then in a typical display of demagoguery, Mussolini continued:

But if the middle classes think that we shall be their lightning conductors, they are mistaken. We must go toward the workers... and accept their premises. Do they want an eight-hour day? Will miners and night workers insist on a six-hour day, invalidity and old age insurance, control over industry? We will support these demands, partly because we want the workers to become accustomed to the responsibilities of management and to learn in consequence that it is not easy to operate a business successfully... as for economic democracy, we favour national syndicalism and oppose intervention by the state whenever it is aimed at throttling the creation of wealth... There are industrialists who shun technical and moral innovations. Should they prove incapable of changing, they will be swept aside. However, we must impress on the workers that it is one thing to destroy, another to build... We are strongly opposed to all forms of dictatorship, whether of the sword or the cocked hat, of wealth or of numbers. The only dictatorship we do acknowledge is that of will and intelligence. ^[33]

This is the classic 'supra-class' programme of Fascism. The workers are to be rewarded with a voice in the running of industry - and backward employers are to be 'swept away'. Yet the state will not tamper with the economy while wealth is being created. Socialism is to be fought, but not for the benefit of the bourgeoisie... and so on. Each point balances out the next, the end result being a policy which promises everything to everybody yet commits the movement to nothing.

Both Hitler and Mussolini began their careers as professional counter-revolutionaries hoping to win over a sizeable segment of the proletariat to fascism. Early experiences taught them that this was impossible, and that the potential mass reserves of their movements lay elsewhere, namely in the petit-bourgeoisie. Proletarians were conspicuous by their absence from the cadre of the early National Socialist movement, and so it was in the case of its Italian counterpart. True, Mussolini enjoyed the support of a handful of renegade Socialists (as did Hitler: that is, Esser and Otto Strasser) and syndicalists, but they brought precious few workers with them into the infant Fascist movement. Fifty-four persons attended the Milan rally - 'syndicalists, old interventionists, demobilised officers still in uniform, and many *Arditi*, those brave grenade-and-knife shock troops of the war'. ^[34] These last, and not the renegades from socialism and syndicalism, were to comprise the fighting forces of Italian Fascism, just as in Germany, the commanding staff of the SA was recruited largely from the ranks and leadership of the Free Corps brigades:

This typically Italian formation [the *Arditi*] lived on after the War. The first fighting Fascisti were formed mostly of decided men. They were full of will and courage. In the first years of the anti-Socialist, anti-Communist struggle the *Arditi* war veterans played an important role. ^[35]

Their baptism of fire on the home front came the next month, when a general strike in the Milan industrial region provided the pretext for a Fascist attack on the offices of Mussolini's old paper, *Avanti*. Though massively outnumbered by thousands of demonstrating workers, the *Arditi* veterans of hand-to-hand trench fighting in the alpine north, routed the hastily assembled forces guarding the *Avanti* offices. The premises were sacked and burned with the *Arditi* escaping unharmed, much to the delight of the Milanese bourgeoisie, who were beginning to despair of the red tide ever receding. ^[36]

Even so, only a small trickle of anti-socialist fanatics found their way into the new movement's ranks in its first few months of activity. The bulk of its future middle-class supporters were still either putting their trust in bourgeois liberalism or watching - full of a mixture of hope and apprehension - the struggle of the proletariat to refashion Italy along socialist lines. Only when this bid had been decisively betrayed by the PSI reformists and centrists, and the bureaucrats of the CGL, did Mussolini find the courage to launch his massive onslaught on the proletariat, and only then did the middle class begin its violent plunge towards the extreme right. The great tragedy was that in Italy as well as in Germany, the revolutionary crisis matured more rapidly than the assembling and steeling of the leadership necessary to exploit it. In Germany, the Spartacists split from the USPD centrists at the end of 1918. Though long delayed, the formation of the KPD at least enabled the most advanced sections of the working class to enter the massive class battles of the next months and years behind a clear and distinct Communist banner.

Not so in Italy, where the genuinely Bolshevik elements in the party, headed by Antonio Gramsci and Amadeo Bordiga, only succeeded in demarcating themselves from the centrist 'Maximalists' in January 1921; that is, *after* the working class had passed through its most momentous offensive battles against the bourgeoisie. The PCd'I was founded in conditions of political reaction, and this too redounded to the tactical and strategic advantage of the Fascists. ^[37] The revolutionary energies squandered by the PSI and trade union leadership in the first two postwar years were truly prodigious. In 1913, a year of violent class conflict, 385 000 workers engaged in strike action. In 1919, this total had soared to 1.5 million, and was itself surpassed in the fateful year of 1920, when 2.3 million proletarians struck work. If, as the syndicalists and worshippers of spontaneity claimed, militancy were enough to overturn capitalism, then it should surely have done so in these two years. Yet it did not. The high point was reached in September 1920, when what began as a trade union struggle turned into an occupation of the major industrial concentrations of north Italy. Spreading from that hotbed of proletarian radicalism in the Fiat works at Turin, the factory seizures rapidly embraced Milan, Florence, Bologna and all the other industrial centres of the so-called 'iron triangle'; while in the countryside, from the fertile Po valley in the north to poverty-stricken Sicily in the extreme south, poor peasants and land labourers were also on strike for the right of their 'leagues' to negotiate their own working conditions with the employers and landlords. For the first time in the history of modern Italy, the whole nation was aflame with struggles of revolutionary dimensions and implications. But the one factor required to fuse these two still distinct, yet parallel streams into a single torrent was lacking.

For two weeks, the revolutionary situation ripened as the government, headed by the wily old Liberal Giolitti, stood back, powerless to intervene. It was a situation analogous in many ways to that of Germany in November 1918. The Italian bourgeoisie lacked both the will and the material reserves to crush the advancing proletariat by sheer brute force. And as in Germany, the most astute elements of this fearful bourgeoisie, guided by a Giolitti who knew the PSI and CGL reformists like the back of his hand, staked the fate of Italian capitalism on this bureaucracy's sure conservative instincts. With the agreement of the PSI centre and right, the trade union leaders were permitted to shift the struggle away from the issue of state power to a more familiar and less explosive terrain, and naturally, like their German counterparts in November 1918, the Italian employers, organised in the recently-founded General Confederation of Industry (*Confindustria*) were only too pleased to sign on the dotted line. Anything rather than expropriation! But it was an agreement which only one side intended to keep. While the CGL leaders prided themselves on their 'moderation', ^[38] the big industrialists began to consider ways and means of taking back what had been extracted from them under duress. In this too there was a direct parallel with Germany, where the big employers reneged on the November 1918 accords with the ADGB by opposing the social and economic clauses of the Weimar Constitution; but in Italy, the most reactionary employers (and landlords) wasted little time experimenting with the various parties of the traditional right. The defeat of the September occupation movement almost at once reflected itself in a rapid shift of the middle class towards the far right. The Socialist movement, having failed in its hour of great opportunity to give the clear lead the petit-bourgeoisie requires in periods of crisis, the treachery of

the trade union bureaucracy and PSI reformists and centrists now created the conditions for a counter-revolutionary movement in the middle class which the big bourgeoisie could exploit to take the offensive against a working class thrown into disarray by the September defeat.

Yet this new situation was partially masked by the communal election results of 31 October 1920. Held little more than a month after the end of the factory occupations, they more reflected the level of political consciousness which produced that great movement than the period of political decline which set in during the following months, and which culminated in the victory of Fascism two years later. The PSI won 25 of the 69 provinces, and more than a quarter of Italy's 8300 communes, thereby maintaining its position as the country's largest party. But there was a shadow on the horizon. A resurgent bourgeoisie had combined its political forces to form the so-called 'National Bloc', and under its anti-socialist banner they rallied the middle classes to such good effect that not only in the backward south, where the PSI had but a small following, and Rome, where the population was predominately petit-bourgeois, but even in industrial Florence, Genoa and Turin, the birthplace of Italian Communism, Giolitti's bloc (with Fascist support in Milan) took control of the local administration. The Catholic Populists also lost ground - heavily - on their performance in November 1919, reflecting a shift in the rural poor and more conservative workers back towards the right. Fascism itself also underwent a change in this period. Many of those misguided workers who had been dragged in its tow (while rarely becoming members of the party) through their membership of the UIL began to drift away as the middle class donned the black shirt of the *squadristi* and armed itself with knives, pistols and castor oil for the crusade against the 'reds'.

Bologna was Mussolini's first target. A stronghold of the workers' movement, it had returned a Socialist administration in the elections of November 1920, and was still celebrating the PSI's great ballot box triumph when a motorised Fascist assault column roared into the city armed to the teeth on 21 November and set about teaching the local Socialist officials some basic lessons of class warfare - lessons which they were tragically slow to learn. The arrival of the black-shirted army heralded an orgy of anti-proletarian terror which did not abate until every Socialist had been driven from office, the local labour press and premises sacked, looted and burned, and the city's working class driven to distraction and despair by the utter inability of their leaders to organise any resistance.

Mussolini's march on Rome began on that black day in the history of Italian and European labour, signposted by the reformist and centrists of the PSI. For none had heeded the prophetic warning of Gramsci, made at a time when the Italian working class was still in the ascendant and Fascism regarded by most PSI militants as little more than a minor political irritant:

The present phase of the class struggle in Italy is the phase that precedes either the conquest of political power by the revolutionary proletariat... or a tremendous reaction by the propertied classes and the government caste. No violence will be spared in this subjection of the industrial and agricultural proletariat to servile labour: a bid will be made to smash inexorably the working-class institutions of political struggle (the Socialist Party) and to incorporate its institutions of economic resistance (unions and cooperatives) into the machinery of the bourgeois state. ^[39]

Gramsci only erred in assuming that the reaction would stop short at the smashing of the unions and cooperatives. Once in power, Fascism, despite its demagogic pledges to preserve the 'economic' organisations of the workers, made no distinction between the PSI, the PCd'I and the CGL. Being independent class organisations, all stood condemned by the corporatist principles of class harmony and 'national syndicalism'. There was to be no 'incorporation', as Gramsci had predicted (indeed the very nature of the corporate state precludes it), but total obliteration. ^[40]

Rich landowners as well as industrialists began to subsidise the Fascists once it became evident that Italian labour, while still capable of fighting heroic defensive battles, was in full-scale retreat before the gathering reaction. During September 1920, Mussolini had not dared to come out openly against the factory occupations. He even criticised the employers for not accepting some of the CGL's demands. But by the summer of 1921, and with his black-shirted *Arditi* blazing a trail of burned-out trade union, Socialist, Communist and cooperative buildings throughout north Italy, ^[41] he was speaking with a rather different voice:

... let me warn you at once that we shall resist with all our strength any attempt at socialisation, collectivisation and state socialism... we assert that the real history of capitalism is only now beginning, because capitalism is not just a system of oppression, it also represents a choice of values, a coordination of hierarchies, a more developed sense of industrial responsibility. ^[42]

In this, his first speech to the Italian Parliament following his election - on a Giolittian National Bloc ticket - he also revised his previously anti-clerical views on church-state relations:

Fascism does not preach and does not practice anti-clericalism... I affirm here and now that today the Latin and imperial tradition of Rome is represented by Catholicism. I believe and affirm that the universal idea that exists in Rome today is that which radiates from the Vatican... I believe that if the Vatican were to renounce once and for all its dreams of temporal power - and I think it is going to - profane or lay Italy would furnish the Vatican with material aid for its schools, churches and hospitals. ^[43]

And so the first foundation stone was laid for the Lateran Accords of 11 February 1929, which established Catholicism as the Italian state religion and as 'the basis and apex of public education'. (The drafters of Italy's postwar constitution - headed by the Stalinist Minister of Justice Palmiro Togliatti! - were obviously delighted by Mussolini's handiwork, since the Lateran Accords were incorporated into the republican constitution which went into effect on 1 January 1948.)

The elections of May 1921, which brought 35 Fascist deputies into the Italian Parliament, marked a further shift to the right by the middle class. The bourgeois democrats and radicals lost 60 seats, dropping to 108, while the National Bloc and right-wing liberals totalled 148 seats. The Republican non-Socialist left, like the democrats, lost heavily (43 down to 22), while the Populists made a good showing, increasing their representation to 108. But now the workers' parties could not escape the consequences of the September defeat. Whereas in 1919, the PSI had won 156 seats, the PSI and PCd'I combined could now only claim 131 (PSI 108, PCd'I 15). The writing was on the wall, and written in language that even the most cretinous parliamentarian could decipher. Yet what was the reaction of *Avanti*? 'The Italian proletariat has buried the Fascist reaction under an avalanche of red ballot papers.' Other - and more real - burials and cremations were soon underway. Emboldened by his enemies' total lack of a fighting strategy and tactical plan, and greatly strengthened by tacit and often open support from the organs of state, Mussolini's offensive against what remained of the Italian labour movement now gathered momentum. His middle-class army waged a truly ferocious war of revenge on the proletariat, which it saw as the cause of all its political frustrations and economic problems. An official breakdown of Fascist Party membership made at its congress at Rome in November 1921 revealed that of the movement's 320 000 members, many were workers dragooned into the Fascist Party by virtue of their forcible enrolment into the UIL after the destruction of their own local trade union organisation. By contrast, landowners (36 000) tradesmen (7000) manufacturers (8000) and learned professions (20 000) comprised a percentage of Fascist Party membership far above the proportion warranted by their representation in Italy's total population. In other words, Mussolini's movement recruited its main forces from the propertied upper and middle classes and those strata and groups most closely associated with them either occupationally, materially or ideologically. As one Fascist squad leader - U Banchelli - himself once stated in his memoirs with remarkable frankness, the black-shirted onslaught on Italian labour was unleashed by those who did not consider themselves so much Fascists as 'sons of lawyers, doctors, tradesmen... for long these gangs had only to meet people who looked like workers to attack them without pity'. ^[44]

Hitler's assumption of power was preceded and to a great extent prepared for by a period when the polarisation of class forces produced a parliamentary stalemate in which no party or coalition of parties could form a majority government. This became the political basis for the semi-Bonapartist government of Brüning, and the fully Bonapartist regimes of Papen and Schleicher. So it was in Italy, where Populist disaffection with the Giolitti regime, which had adopted a harsh attitude towards the Catholic trade unions, brought about its fall after the May elections and its replacement by the administration of Ivanoe Bonomi, which sought to adopt a more compromising attitude towards the moderate left. These waverings in the political circles of the bourgeoisie only redoubled Fascist determination to brush aside the liberals and step up the war against Italian labour. In the last months of the Weimar Republic, decisive sections of heavy industry and finance broke with their traditional parties - the DVP and DNVP - in calling for the formation of a Hitler-led government. By the beginning of 1922, this trend was under way in Italy. Sufficient numbers of rich landowners, bankers and industrialists had switched their allegiance from the old bourgeois parties and leaders to the Fascists to make a Mussolini government a distinct possibility if the workers' movement found itself so tied by the reformists that it could not offer any serious resistance to a Fascist coup. Bonomi fell in February 1922, to be replaced by the even more ineffective Luigi Facta. His government did little more than hold the ring while the Blackshirts moved

with impunity from town to town crushing the last centres of working-class resistance to Fascism. Thus the stage was set for the final act in this tragedy - the so-called 'March on Rome'. This theatrical affair was carefully stage-managed by Mussolini and his closest aides to deck out the Fascist seizure of power in a revolutionary garb, for *Il Duce* had been under heavy pressure from the Fascist militants not to compromise with the old rulers of Italy. The trek from Naples - where the Fascists had been holding their congress - to Rome was certainly not undertaken with a view to toppling the Facta government by force, nor to intimidate the big bourgeoisie. A series of important speeches made throughout the previous year had banished the last lingering doubts in the minds of the propertied classes about Mussolini's intentions as to private property, the monarchy and religion. In November 1921, at the Dome party congress, he had declared:

Our aim is not to introduce socialism but to leave it far behind. We are economic liberals because we maintain that the national economy cannot be entrusted to collective, bureaucratic agencies. In view of the Russian experiment, the time has come to put a stop to all that. I would return the railways and the telegraph lines to private ownership because the present arrangement is monstrous and vulnerable in every way... We oppose the economic state. Socialist theories have been disproved; internationalist myths have crumbled. The class struggle is a fairy tale, mankind cannot be divided. Instead of being separated the proletariat and the bourgeoisie are integral parts of a single whole... One hears it said that the masses must be won over... We do indeed wish to serve them, to educate them, but we also intend to flog them when they make mistakes... we are hereby warning them that when the interests of the nation are at stake, the egoism of everyone, of the proletariat as well as the bourgeoisie, must take a back seat.

Ten months later, Mussolini made another speech which was nothing less than a demand to be handed the reins of state power. Only Fascism could quell the rebellious masses and set them to work:

You know very well that I do not worship the masses, that new divinity created by democracy and socialism. [According to them the masses]... are necessarily in the right solely because of their numbers. Nothing of the sort is true... history proves that it is always minorities... that produce profound changes in human society. We refuse to worship the masses even if they come endowed with all the sacrosanct calluses on hands and brain...

He then went on to explain why Fascism had to resort to 'social' demagoguery and employ some of the language of syndicalism:

We have had to practice syndicalism and are continuing to do so. Some say: 'Your syndicalism will end up by becoming entirely indistinguishable from socialist syndicalism; you will be forced by the necessary logic of events to wage the class struggle.' ... In actuality, our syndicalism differs from that of others because we absolutely deny the right to strike in the public services. We particularly favour class collaboration and are therefore trying to imbue our syndicates with this... idea.

On the vexed question of the monarchy (Mussolini had continued to favour a republic even after his defection from the PSI), Mussolini stated:

I really believe that the regime can be renovated in depth even if the monarchy is left untouched. We shall leave the monarchy alone because we believe a large part of the country would view with suspicion any transformation of the regime which went as far as that... I am basically of the opinion that the monarchy has no reason whatever to oppose the Fascist revolution.

Mussolini was right. After a conference in Milan with the *Confindustria* leaders, who were pressing Rome to appoint him Prime Minister in place of the demoralised Facta, Mussolini arrived at the Naples party congress, where after once again stressing to assembled bourgeois, aristocratic and military dignitaries that Fascist syndicalism was not really syndicalism at all, he made his most significant ploy of all. Fearing a possible clash with the army en route to Rome, he declared to the rally that 'the army should know that we defended it at a time when the ministers were advising its officers to go about in civilian dress in order to avoid clashes'. Mussolini now hoped the army leaders would repay this loyalty by refusing to defend these ministers should they give the order to fire on the black-shirted army when it arrived at the gates of Rome.

There was talk of such an order being given, but King Emmanuel III, who had grown increasingly sympathetic to Fascism as it steadily shed its republican hue, refused to sign the order proclaiming a state of siege in the capital. Now back in Milan, Mussolini awaited the call to the once scorned and despised

Quirinal. Whilst there, he held a series of last-minute conferences with the leaders of Italian industry, notably Crespi, Conti, Pirelli and Olivetti (the last being head of the all-powerful *Confindustria*). He made it clear to them that the aim of his government would be ‘the restoration of discipline especially in the factories’. So when Mussolini did finally enter Rome on 30 October as its new Caesar, it was with the full approval of Italy’s leading men of industry and in response to a summons from the king. And he arrived, not on a white horse at the head of his black-shirted legionaries, but in a first-class sleeper from Milan wearing that symbol of bourgeois rectitude, a bowler hat. The reactions of his business backers were predictable enough. Three days after the formation of the Mussolini coalition ^[45] the *Confindustria* organ, *L’Organizzazione Industriale*, gleefully heralded the advent of the first Fascist dictatorship in human history:

We look to it with great hopes. We will support the programme of this regime with all our strength, for in it, for the first time after long years, protection of property rights, the general obligation to work, a full valuation of the energy of the individual and of national sentiment are energetically proclaimed.

In making this triumphant declaration, the leaders of Italian monopoly capitalism were running true to form, as were the reformist leaders of the trade unions, who rather than continue to resist the Fascist menace, sought to come to terms with it. In doing so they foreshadowed the miserable capitulation to fascism carried out by their opposite numbers in Germany, who in the first weeks of the Nazi regime grovelled on their knees before Hitler in the vain hope that he would spare them and their organisations.

Oblivious to the fact that, unlike previous governments, Fascism had no need of their services, the CGL leadership curried favour with Mussolini by announcing their separation from the PSI, a move which elicited from Mussolini the ironic remark ‘at last’. Though the CGL unions were destined for eventual liquidation, it suited Mussolini to play along with the right-wing bureaucracy as a counterweight to the left wing of the workers’ movement. The CGL leaders lent themselves to this manoeuvre, shamelessly participating in talks with Mussolini in December 1922, just as the ADGB parleyed with NSBO officials in April 1933, at the very time when Hitler was already putting the final touches to his plans for winding up the entire trade union movement and putting its leaders in jail.

The pay-off for Mussolini was immediate. The CGL unleashed a furious witch-hunt against PCd’I and other trade union militants, many of whom were summarily expelled over the next few weeks. Nor was this all. The CGL bureaucracy issued a statement ‘fingering’ those workers who despite intimidation refused to accept its collaborationist policy, and warning others of the dire consequences of resisting the new regime, a ‘struggle from which they must absolutely remain aloof’. Non-political trade unionism, one of the hallmarks of syndicalism, had reached its nadir. But even though the CGL grovelled on its belly before Mussolini, it was all to no avail. Having performed their function of choking off the revolutionary militancy of the working class in the September 1920 occupations, and then of damping down their burning desire to hit back at the Fascists when the black counter-attack began later that same year, the bureaucrats of the CGL found the new regime had no more use for them. What big business demanded of Fascism was not a new era of compromise in which the union leaders would be permitted to ‘win’ a series of reforms for their members, but a long period of reaction, of naked dictatorship, in which the proletariat would have torn from its grasp everything that it had won - despite and even against its own leaders - in the period when the employers had been in retreat before the onrushing workers’ movement. Much to their dismay, there was to be no ‘tying of the unions to the state’, nor were Ludovico D’Aragona and the other leaders of the CGL bureaucracy permitted to ‘sit in the boardrooms of the corporate state’. In fact some were soon to find themselves sitting in far less salubrious surroundings, as step by step, the functions of the CGL were usurped by the bogus Fascist ‘unions’, which, because of their non-proletarian character and open adherence to the corporatist conception of ‘national syndicalism’, rapidly secured exclusive ‘bargaining rights’ with employers in all the major industrial centres of Italy. By 1926, Italy’s once-powerful trade union movement, which had struck fear into the heart of many an employer and landowner, had been reduced to rubble. Under Fascist corporative legislation (samples of which are reproduced at the end of this chapter) strikes were banned, militants jailed, wages cut, hours lengthened and working conditions worsened as big business reclaimed all that it had been compelled to surrender in the period of upsurge in the first two postwar years. ^[46] Little wonder that Mussolini’s triumph gladdened the heart of reactionaries the world over.

The Nazis were no exception. Even though Hitler made the initial mistake of believing he could mechanically reproduce on German soil and from his Munich base the Teutonic equivalent of a March on

Rome - that is, the 'March on Berlin' - he gleaned a great deal more from the Italian experience than did those whose task it was to wring the last drop of political wisdom from this tragic defeat lest fascism be unleashed on any other section of the international working class. That the lessons of the Italian disaster were drawn by only a handful of Marxists, and not by the entire vanguard of the European workers' movement, is almost entirely due to the rise of Stalinism in the Soviet Union, and its malignant effects on the political life of the other sections of the Communist International. Only the most thoroughgoing and unrestricted discussion inside the Communist parties on the origins, nature and role of fascism, the mistakes committed in the fight against it in Italy (and in Germany, where the Nazis were already becoming a menace to the labour movement), and the correct policy to be adopted in the workers' movement to defeat it, could arm the International in what was its very struggle for existence. Such a discussion was indeed begun after the March on Rome and the rise in the early months of 1923 of the Nazis in Germany, but it had barely got under way when the bureaucratic hand of Stalinism, first in the CPSU, then in all the other parties of the Comintern, stifled all genuine discussion and polemic on this as on all other questions germane to the struggle for socialism. This is not the place to discuss the consequences for Germany of the rise of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the USSR - this will be dealt with in far greater detail in later chapters - but it must be stressed here that the Italian defeat had a dialectical relationship with events both in Germany and the Soviet Union. Mussolini's triumph, because it marked a decisive setback for the Bolshevik strategy of extending the revolution from backward Russia to the more economically advanced regions of Central and Western Europe, by the same token greatly strengthened the forces of conservatism both outside and within the Soviet state and party. ^[47] Likewise Mussolini's victory over Italian labour emboldened his Nazi emulators in Germany who now had living proof that the hated Marxist enemy could be crushed:

In this period [between the March on Rome and the Munich Putsch - RB] - I openly admit - I conceived the profoundest admiration for the great man south of the Alps, who, full of ardent love for his people, made no pacts with the enemies of Italy, but strove for their annihilation by all ways and means. What will rank Mussolini among the great men of this earth is his desire not to share Italy with the Marxists, but to destroy internationalism and save the fatherland from it. How miserable and dwarfish our German would-be statesmen seem by comparison. ^[48]

The impact of Mussolini's victory on the Nazi movement was immediate. In Munich only days after the march on Rome, Hermann Esser told an ecstatic Nazi rally that 'what has been done in Italy by a handful of courageous men is not impossible. In Bavaria too we have [our] Mussolini. His name is Adolf Hitler.' *Volkisch* as well as Nazi circles began to talk of a 'March on Berlin' with Munich serving as their Naples - or rather Milan - as Munich police reports recorded that the Nazis had received 'a special force of gravity' following Mussolini's victory in Italy. Hitler later recalled that:

... the mere fact that anything of the sort could be attempted, and could succeed, gave us impetus. A few weeks after the March on Rome, I was received by the [Bavarian] Minister Schweyer. That wouldn't have happened otherwise. ^[49]

And a former close colleague of Hitler's, Ernst Hanfstaengl relates that in a speech to another Nazi rally in Munich, Hitler 'quoted approvingly the role of Kemal Atatürk and the example of Mussolini who had marched on Rome three weeks earlier'. ^[50]

Neither was it a question of inspiration alone. Just prior to Mussolini's victory, Kurt Lüdecke, a Nazi businessman who enjoyed wide political connections abroad as well as in Germany by virtue of his activities as a buying agent for large companies, visited the Fascist leader in Milan for a discussion on the joint aims of their two movements. To Lüdecke (whose mission had the personal approval of Ludendorff and the north German *volkisch* leader Count Ernst zu Reventlow):

... it seemed apparent that the Italian Fascist movement, like the Nazis, was strongly nationalist and directed against Marxism and Bolshevism, and that it might develop into an attack on the whole parliamentary system. ^[51]

Mussolini's victory continued to be a model and source of strength for National Socialism right up to its assumption of power in 1933. Hitler's future Minister of the Interior Frick told a Young Plan referendum rally in Pyritz on 18 October 1929 that the Nazis 'were determined to promulgate by force that which we preach. Just as Mussolini exterminated the Marxists in Italy, so we must succeed in accomplishing the same thorough dictatorship and terror.' And finally Goebbels wrote shortly after his own 'March on Berlin' had ended in victory that:

... the March on Rome was a signal, a signal of storm for liberal democracy. It is the first attempt to destroy the world of the liberal-democratic spirit which started in 1789 with the storming of the Bastille and conquered one country after another in violent revolutionary upheavals, to let the nations go under in Marxism, democracy, anarchy and class struggle.

That German capitalism did not 'go under' in the same way was due in no small degree to the fact that unlike the Stalinists and Social Democrats, the Nazis proved themselves to be capable of learning from history.

Appendix I

The Founding Programme of the Italian Fascist Movement, Adopted 23 March 1919

1. A national Constituent Assembly, Italian section of the international Constituent Assembly of nations, which will proceed to a radical transformation of the political and economic foundations of collective life.
2. Proclamation of the Italian Republic. Decentralisation of executive power; autonomous administration of regions and municipalities by their own legislative bodies. Sovereignty of the people exercised by means of universal, equal and direct suffrage, by all citizens of both sexes, the people keeping the right of initiative for referendum and veto.
3. Abolition of the Senate. Suppression of political police. Election of magistrates independently of the executive power.
4. Suppression of all titles of nobility and orders of knighthood.
5. Suppression of compulsory military service.
6. Freedom of opinion, of conscience and of belief, freedom of association and of the press.
7. An educational system, general and professional, open to all.
8. A maximum of public health measures.
9. Suppression of limited liability companies and shareholding companies; suppression of all forms of speculation, suppression of Banks and Stock Exchanges.
10. Census and taxation of private wealth. Confiscation of unproductive revenues.
11. Prohibition of child labour under the age of 16. Eight-hour day.
12. Reorganisation of production according to the cooperative principle, including the workers' direct share of profits.
13. Abolition of secret diplomacy.
14. Foreign policy inspired by international solidarity and national independence within a Confederation of States.

Postulates of the Fascist Programme (May 1920)

... the broad lines of the immediate tasks that confront the *Fascio di Combattimento* can be sketched under the following major headings: support for our recent war, winning the peace. Resistance to the theoretical and practical degenerations of politically-oriented socialism. Against political parasitism... With the hope of mobilising all our national energies to win the peace, the *Fascio di Combattimento* express their disgust for those men and agencies of the political bourgeoisie who have shown that they are incapable of handling domestic and foreign problems, that they are hostile to every profound renovation and to every spontaneous recognition of popular rights and that they are inclined to make those concessions that are dictated by calculations of parliamentary advantage.

For a Bourgeoisie of Labour: The Fascists recognise the very great value of the 'bourgeoisie of labour', which in all fields of human endeavour (from that of industry and agriculture to that of science and the professions) constitutes a precious and indispensable element for bringing out progressive development and the triumph of national aspirations.

Against the Degeneration of the Labour Struggle: The *Fascio di Combattimento*, which are anxious to support the moral improvement of the proletariat and to help the establishment of syndical organisations that will increase the self-confidence of labour, feel that it is their duty to

maintain an attitude of staunch opposition to those labour struggles in which strictly economic goals are submerged by considerations of pure demagoguery...

The Fasci and the Labour Organisations: The *Fasci* express their sympathy with and intention of supporting every initiative of those minority groups of the proletariat who seek to harmonise the safeguarding of their class interests with the interests of the nation. With respect to syndical tactics, they advise the proletariat to make use of whatever forms of struggle assure the development of the whole and the well-being of the various producers, without any special prejudices and without dogmatic exclusiveness...

This was the first clear exposition of 'national syndicalism', since the founding Fascist Programme of March 1919 said nothing about 'harmonising' the interests of the proletariat 'with the interests of the nation', nor indeed of assuring the 'well-being of the various producers', by which last term Mussolini meant not only the working class, but the so-called 'bourgeoisie of labour', the 'productive' bourgeoisie. These notions were subsequently codified in the various social, economic and labour legislation of the Fascist regime, from which selections are reproduced below.

Excerpts from the *Rocco Labour Law*, 3 April 1926, drafted by Alfredo Rocco, Minister of Justice and former leader of the Nationalists:

1. Associations of employers and of workers... may obtain legal recognition when they can prove that they comply with the following requirements... in the case of associations of workers that the workers who have voluntarily registered as members number not less than one-tenth of those of the class for which the association has been formed... that besides the protection of the economic and moral interests the association proposes to promote, and does actually promote, the assistance, instruction and moral and patriotic education of its members... that the director of the association affords guarantees of ability, morality and sound national loyalty...

5. ... Only legally recognised associations can appoint representatives of employers or workers to sit on councils, guilds or other bodies on which such representation is provided by law...

6. ... In no case can associations be recognised which, without the preliminary consent of the government, have contracted any ties of discipline or dependence with associations of an international character.

18. The lock-out and the strike are forbidden... Three or more workers who, by concerted agreement, leave their work or perform it in suchwise as to interfere with its continuity or regularity, with a view to obtaining from their employers different labour conditions, render themselves liable to a fine of not less than 100 and not to exceed 1000 lire... When the persons guilty of the offences foreseen under the above paragraph are more numerous, the leaders, promoters and organisers are liable to detention for not less than one year and not to exceed two years, besides the fine provided...

More stringent punishments are stipulated in Articles 19 and 21 for the same offences committed by workers in the state and public services, and for striking for the purposes of 'coercing the will or influencing the decisions of a department or organ of the state', that is, for political strikes. The former offence merited a maximum sentence of two years, and the latter of three years.

Excerpts from the *Decree on Corporations*, 1 July 1926. These derived from Article 3 of the *Rocco Labour Law*, which made provision for the merging of 'associations of employers and workers... by means of central liaison organs...':

42. The liaison organs provided for by Article 3 of the Act of 3 April 1926 are of a national character. They bring together the national syndical organisations of the several factors of production, employers, intellectual and manual workers connected with a given branch of production, or with one or more given classes of enterprise. Organisations thus linked up form a corporation...

43. The corporation is... an organ of the state administration...

44. ... Corporative organs are endowed... with the following powers... to promote, encourage and subsidise all initiatives aiming at the coordination and improvement of production...

56. ... corporate organs shall be guided by the considerations of equity and endeavour to conciliate the interests of the employers and workers, and both these interests with the higher interests of production...

Charter of Labour, 21 April 1927

III. There is complete freedom of professional or syndical organisation. But syndicates legally recognised and subject to state control alone have the right of legal representation of the whole category of employers and workers for which they are constituted...

IV. Solidarity between the various factors of production is concretely expressed by the Collective Labour Contract, which conciliates the opposing interests of employers and workers, subordinating them to the higher interests of production.

VII. The corporate state considers private enterprise in the sphere of production is the most effective and useful instrument in the interests of the nation... The worker... is an active collaborator in the economic enterprise, the direction of which rests with the employer, who is responsible for it...

IX. State intervention in economic production arises only when the private initiative is lacking or insufficient, or when the political interests of the state are involved. The intervention may take the form of control, assistance or direct management.

XII. The action of the Syndicate, the conciliatory efforts of the corporative organs, and the decisions of the Labour Court guarantee that wages correspond to the normal demands of life, to the possibilities of production, and the output of labour. Wages shall be determined without reference to any general rule, by agreement between the parties to the collective contracts.

XIX. Breaches of discipline or the performance of acts which disturb the normal working of the concern on the part of the workers shall be punished, according to the gravity of the offence, by fine, suspension from work, or in very serious cases, by immediate discharge without indemnity...

These three key laws make it abundantly clear that the Fascist corporate state as practised in Italy did not rest in any sense on 'collaboration' between trade unions and the state, or between trade unions and employers. The very definition of what constituted a *bona fide* 'workers' association' (articles one and six of the *Rocco Labour Law*) excluded the CGL from participating in the machinery of the corporate state, however much the trade union bureaucracy might have desired to do so. The 'corporations' were formed out of the fusion of an entirely bogus 'workers' syndicate' (staffed by hard-core Fascists and run on the explicitly anti-proletarian principles of 'national syndicalism') and employers' 'syndicates' that represented their members in practice as well as in theory. Once again then we see how false is the claim made by *Workers Press* that corporatism is a form of class collaboration practised between reformist trade union leaders and the capitalist state. It is not. It is, on the contrary, the *supersession* of the methods of class collaboration by the systematic dismemberment of all those mechanisms and agencies by which this collaboration has in the past been carried out. Fascism is not a form of collaboration between the classes, as its ideologists demagogically claim. For all its talk of social harmony, Fascism wages the most brutal class war - even on those whom the *Workers Press* so wrongly terms 'corporatists'.

Appendix II: Corporatism and 'National Syndicalism' in Spain, France and Portugal

Fascism almost always attempts to establish a base - however temporary or precarious - among the masses by stealing some of the slogans, vocabulary and even programmes of its proletarian enemies. Thus in Germany, Hitler - despite his own misgivings about the use of the term - stood before the German petit-bourgeoisie and backward workers as a 'socialist', while in Italy, Fascism bedecked itself out in the garb of 'national syndicalism'. In both cases, fascism worked up its own counter-revolutionary ideology and propaganda from materials stolen from the dominant tendencies in the workers' movement and perverted by the reactionary doctrines of nationalism and racialism. (In Britain today, we can see a similar tactic being employed by various shades of reaction from the Tory government, through Powell to the fully-blown fascist groups on the far right. They all speak of 'fair play', 'justice', the 'rights' of the 'individual', and claim to stand for the protection of the 'small man' against the 'faceless' bureaucracies of big business and the trade unions. This last is, of course, also a ploy of the Liberal Party.) The three other European countries which witnessed the growth of fascist movements - Spain, France and Portugal - were also strongholds of syndicalism, and it is no surprise therefore that in each case once in power the movements attempted to conceal the capitalist bases of their regimes with a veneer of 'syndicalist' demagogy. In Spain, the founder of 'national syndicalism' was Ramiro Ledesma Ramos, whose journal

The Conquest of the State began publication in 1931. Influenced by Mussolini's corporatism and pseudo-syndicalist demagoguery, Ledesma wrote that the:

... syndication of economic forces will be obligatory and in each instance bound to the highest ends of the state. The state will discipline and will guarantee production at all times... Our primary goal is revolutionary efficiency. There we do not seek votes but audacious and valiant minorities... Our organisation will be founded on the basis of syndical cells and political cells.

The other and more well-known pioneer of Spanish fascism, José Antonio Primo de Rivera, also employed much of the vocabulary of syndicalism to conceal his reactionary aims. Yet few workers were deceived by his noisy rhetoric, of which the following is a sample:

If anything truly deserves to be called a workers' state, it is the fascist state. Therefore, in the fascist state - and the workers will come to realise this, no matter what - the workers' syndicates will be elevated to the dignity of organs of the state.

In fact, the fascist state of General Franco ground them to pulp. And since the army, and not a fascified petit-bourgeoisie, provided the main support of the new regime, Franco had little need of a pseudo-radical doctrine to justify his rule. Spanish 'national syndicalism' was accordingly given a more conservative flavour than in Italy, where even for a period after Mussolini's seizure of power, the Fascist 'syndicates' had to compete against the genuine workers' unions of the CGL (see Chapter VIII, 'The Political Economy of National Socialism').

In Portugal, Salazar's rise to total power was accompanied by the growth of a 'national syndicalist' movement under the leadership of Dr Rolão Preto. In 1934, one year after the Salazar regime instituted its corporative National Statute of Labour, the movement's national executive voted to join the pro-government National Union against the wishes of Preto, who went into opposition and was eventually deported to Spain. Salazar's corporatism, like that of his close ally Franco, eschewed the excesses of pseudo-syndicalist demagoguery:

We are opposed to all forms of internationalism, Communism, Socialism, syndicalism and everything which may divide or minimise or break up the family. We are against class warfare, irreligion and disloyalty to one's country...

No renegades from the trade union or Socialist movement ever held high office in Salazar Portugal or Franco Spain. This was not true of Vichy France, however, where two former syndicalists, René Belin and Hubert Lagardelle (the old Sorelian 'integralist') served Pétain and Laval respectively as Ministers of Labour. Like Mussolini, Belin certainly did not begin his career as a trade unionist with the intention of ending up as an oppressor of the French proletariat. After a militant record as a leader of the postal and telegraph workers in Lyon (where he organised a stubborn strike against the government), Belin climbed rapidly up the trade union hierarchy, and in 1935 was appointed Deputy General Secretary of the main trade union federation, the CGT. His anti-political approach to trade union questions drove him sharply towards the right when in 1938, he founded a weekly journal, *Syndicate*, which campaigned against Communist Party influence in the CGT (the Stalinist-led minority trade union federation, the CGTU, after denouncing the CGT as a 'social fascist' organisation throughout the 'Third Period', had unified with the 'social fascists' following the adoption of the Popular Front strategy in 1934). His anti-Communism (an extension of his anti-political syndicalism) led him even further to the right two years later when with the formation of the Vichy regime of Marshal Philippe Pétain, he agreed to serve it as Minister of Labour. In this capacity he helped draft the thoroughly corporatist Charter for Labour, which became law in 1941 after gaining the approval of the Nazi authorities in Paris. Belin also presided over the liquidation of his old trade union federation, the CGT, which was officially outlawed by government decree on 9 November 1940. (Like their counterparts in Italy and Germany, the CGT bureaucrats had sought to evade this fate by disavowing any intention of waging the class struggle, but to no avail.) The Vichy 'national revolution', with its slogans of 'work, family, country', was badly in need of ideological embellishment and a social doctrine, and Belin helped to provide both. The preamble to the programme of the Vichy 'national revolution' declared:

... only one aristocracy will be recognised: the aristocracy of intelligence; one sole merit: work... Work and talent alone will be the foundation of the French hierarchy... The class struggle, so fatal to the nation, can only be done away with by doing away with the causes that formed those classes and set them against one another. Thus there will be born again the true élites that the superseded regime spent years in destroying... the economic life of our country is about to have a

new orientation... It will... be necessary to put an end to the present economic order by a rational organisation of production by corporative institutions.

In each of the cases cited - and this cannot be emphasised too often or too strongly - the establishment of a 'corporative' system was only possible after the total destruction of the independent workers' organisations, economic as well as political. Belin had to resign from the CGT, and Vichy had to liquidate it, before this syndicalist renegade could concoct his corporatist fantasies about termination of the class struggle. Those who recklessly talk of reformist trade union leaders or Social Democrats being transformed into corporatists - Stephen Johns refers to Transport Workers' leader Jack Jones as a 'devoted disciple of corporatism' ^[52] - have simply learned nothing from the immensely rich history of the workers' movement in its fight against fascism. If Belin, Lagardelle and the Italian syndicalist renegades were corporatists when they entered the service of Vichy France and Italian Fascism - and they undoubtedly were - then on what political grounds, and with what historical and theoretical justification, is it correct to describe a leader of a *bona fide* workers' union also as a 'corporatist' - and a 'devoted' one at that? To do so is to equate, or closely to relate, *reformist* class collaborationism as advocated and practised by Jones and the rest of the TUC leadership, left as well as right, with the entirely bogus claim of fascist corporatism that it too stands for 'collaboration' between the classes. Formalist thinking has led the *Workers Press* into the trap of taking the claims of corporatist propaganda seriously. Corporatism in Italy, Spain, Vichy France and Portugal, and the Nazi variety in Germany, with its demagogic talk of a 'people's' or 'works' community', had nothing to do with class collaboration. *It was all-out class war*, masked by an ideology that preached social harmony and justice. By detecting a fully-blown 'corporatism' in the words and deeds of British trade union and Labour Party leaders, *Workers Press* has mistaken myth for reality.

Notes

1. In 1911, Mussolini wrote from prison of his literary journey through the mountain peaks of European culture: 'And of these summits of the spirit are called Stirner, Nietzsche, Goethe, Schiller, Montaigne, Cervantes, etc.' On the young Mussolini's desk, so a contemporary of his relates, were always to be found volumes of Nietzsche, Stirner and Schopenhauer. In 1919, and now embarked on his new career as a professional enemy of the Socialist Party he once served so ably as agitator and journalist, we find Mussolini more deeply committed than ever to a defence of his early philosophic mentors. 'Leave the way free for the elemental power of the individual', he wrote in his demagogic, pseudo-anarchistic style, 'for there is no other human reality than the individual! Why shouldn't Stirner become significant again?' Mussolini attempted an exposition of Italian Fascism's guiding ideology in his maiden speech to the Chamber of Deputies on 21 June 1921, in which he claimed to have 'introduced into Italian socialism something of Bergson mixed with much of Blanqui', while in his definitive essay, *The Political and Social Doctrine of Fascism*, which dates from 1932, he writes that 'in the great stream of Fascism are to be found ideas which began with Sorel, Peguy, with Lagardelle in the "Mouvement Socialiste" and with the Italian trade union movement which throughout the period of 1904-14 was sounding a new note in Italian Socialist circles'. Some, but by no means all, of these sources' of Fascist ideology are discussed in this chapter.
2. B Mussolini, *My Autobiography* (London, 1939), pp 34-35.
3. And this, despite Sorel's collaboration in the immediate pre-1914 period with the French ultra-monarchist movement, the *Action Française*. Sorel co-edited the monarchist journal *l'Indépendance* with two avowed anti-Semites and enemies of socialism, Paul Bourget and Maurice Barres. Sorel also participated in this journal's forerunner, *Cite Française*, with the equally reactionary George Valois, who attempted to synthesise anti-Semitic monarchism with a Proudhonist anarchism. Valois' *Cahiers du Cercle Proudhon* had a frankly corporatist flavour, a fact which led its editor to claim some 15 years later that it was the first journal to espouse the cause of fascism in France. It should be noted that this enterprise enjoyed, even if only for a short period, the support of Mauras, the founder of the *Action Française*, and Sorel, the high priest of the myth of the proletarian general strike.
4. G Sorel, *Reflections on Violence* (New York, 1961), p 28.

5. 'The 'myth' of the general strike', Sorel writes, 'has all the advantages which "integral" knowledge has over analysis, according to the doctrine of Bergson; and perhaps it would not be possible to cite another example which would so perfectly demonstrate the value of the famous professor's doctrines... Movement, in Bergson's philosophy, is looked upon as an undivided whole; which leads us precisely to the catastrophic conception of socialism...' Yet Sorel does not believe that such a 'catastrophe' will come about, nor even that this matters in the least: '... it is even possible that nothing will come to pass - as was the case with the catastrophe expected by the first Christians... The myth must be judged as a means of acting on the present [that is, purely from a pragmatic standpoint - RB]; any attempt to discuss how far it can be taken literally as future history is devoid of sense. *It is the myth in its entirety which alone is important...* we know that the general strike is... the myth in which socialism is wholly comprised, that is, a body of images capable of evoking *instinctively* all the sentiments which correspond to the different manifestations of the war undertaken by socialism against modern society... *We thus obtain that intuition of socialism which language cannot give us with perfect clearness - and we obtain it as a whole, perceived instantaneously... This is the "global knowledge" of Bergson's philosophy.*' (Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, pp 123-28, emphasis added) Another theorist of French syndicalism, Hubert Lagardelle, whom Mussolini cites as one of the ancestors of Italian Fascism, embraced a similar theory of knowledge: 'No more dogmas or formulas; no more fruitless discussions on the future society; no more compendious plans for social organisations; but a sense of struggle that provides through practice a *philosophy of action which gives first place to intuition and which indicates that the simplest worker engaged in the class struggle knows more than the most doctrinaire thinkers.*' [Emphasis added] Lagardelle's evolution is most instructive in this regard. Following the collapse of the Third Republic in 1940, he drifted towards a collaborationist position, and in 1943 entered the Vichy regime as Minister of Labour.

6. Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, pp 41-42, emphasis added.

7. Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, p 43.

8. '... the objections urged by philosophy against the revolutionary myths would have made an impression only on those men who were anxious to find a pretext for abandoning any active role, for remaining revolutionary in words only... [those] Socialists who are afraid of a revolution... do all they can to shake the confidence of the workers in the preparations they are making for the revolution; and in order to succeed in this they cast ridicule on the idea of the general strike - the only idea that could have any value as a motive force.' (Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, pp 45-49)

9. Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, pp 90-98.

10. Sorel shared Nietzsche's cult of the 'superman', finding him not in the ranks of the proletariat, which he viewed as an elemental mass devoid of individual personality whose only valid contribution to 'civilisation' was the unleashing of periodic salvos of therapeutic violence, but the so-called 'captain of industry' (a reverence he shared with Carlyle and Spengler, not to speak of Feder): 'We know with what force Nietzsche praised the values constructed by the masters, by a superior class of warriors who, in their expeditions, enjoying to the full freedom from all social restraint, return to the simplicity of mind of a wild beast... I believe that if the professor of philology had not been continually cropping up in Nietzsche he would have perceived that the master type still exists under our own eyes, and that it is this type which, at the present time, has created the extraordinary greatness of the United States. This type is still found today in all its purity in the United States: there are found the indomitable energy, the audacity based on a just appreciation of its strength, the cold calculation of interests, which are the qualities of great capitalists.' (Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, pp 89, 230-31) Sorel tries to establish a common bond between the ruthless tycoons of his day (exemplars of Nietzsche's 'wild beasts' freed from 'all social restraint') and his conception of 'revolutionary syndicalism' which, he asserted, 'would be impossible if the world of the workers were under the influence of such a morality of the weak' (p 236). Sorel's was a 'warrior socialism', a 'socialism' of the 'strong', of the 'violent' and the pitiless. And as such, it had absolutely nothing in common with the socialism of Marx. Also

to be noted here, and of special significance not only for Sorel's pre-1914 flirtation with the pioneers of French corporatism, but for Mussolini's subsequent use of the syndicalist vocabulary to conceal the class basis of his own Fascist 'corporate' state, is the former's use of the term 'producers'. It was a word freely used in the syndicalist movements of France and Italy to distinguish the workers from those who parasitically exploited them as mere owners or 'non-producers'. Both Sorel - and following him Mussolini in his Fascist career - distorted this admittedly vague term to include what Feder called the 'productive' bourgeoisie. 'Proletarian violence', writes Sorel, 'confines employers to their role of producers, and tends to restore the separation of classes just when they seemed on the point of intermingling in the democratic marsh.' (p 92) And Mussolini, while like Hitler denouncing the political leadership of the bourgeoisie for its lack of resolve in combating Marxism, allots to it the leading role in the organisation of the so-called 'corporate' economy. In his pronouncement published on the eve of the 'March on Rome', Mussolini wrote: 'Fascism does not march against the police, but against a *political* class both cowardly and imbecile, which in four long years has not been able to give a government to the nation. Those who form the *productive class* must know that Fascism wants to impose nothing more than order and discipline upon the Nation and to help raise the strength which will renew progress and prosperity.' [Emphasis added]

11. Thus in the thundering tones of the French petit-bourgeois *enfant terrible* (epitomised by the anti-militarist rhetoric of a Gustav Hervé, who, at his bourgeoisie's hour of need, rallied to the flag he once declared to be fit only for planting on a dung-heap), Sorel pours scorn on 'our parliamentary Socialists, who spring from the middle classes and who know nothing outside the ideology of the state, [and who] are so bewildered when they are confronted with working-class violence... If revolutionary syndicalism triumphs, there will be no more brilliant speeches on imminent justice, and the parliamentary regime, so dear to the intellectuals, will be finished with!' (Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, p 40) Very much in the Economist fashion, Sorel claims that 'a new culture might spring from the struggle of the revolutionary trade unions against the employers and the state: our greatest claim to originality [sic!] consists in our having maintained that the proletariat can emancipate itself without being compelled to seek the guidance of that section of the middle classes which concerns itself professionally with matters of the intellect' (p 53). Here Sorel finds himself totally opposed to Lenin, who in his polemic against the Russian 'Sorelians', the Economists, wrote that 'there could not have been Social Democratic consciousness among the workers. It would have to be brought to them from without. The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness... The theory of socialism... grew out of the philosophic, historical and economic theories elaborated by educated representatives of the propertied classes, by intellectuals.' (VI Lenin, 'What Is To Be Done?', *Collected Works*, Volume 5, p 375) Events both in France as well as Russia proved Lenin, not Sorel, to be right. The French proletariat certainly lacked nothing in combativity as its history shows. But what it lacked in Sorel's day - and lacks still - was a revolutionary party guided by what Lenin called 'the most up-to-date revolutionary theory'.

12. Sorel the super-revolutionary was deeply sympathetic towards Bernstein the evolutionary. Both denied the importance of the goal of the workers' movement, regarding the latter as sufficient unto itself. Despite differences of terminology and emphasis, their method was closely similar, as was their counterposing of the 'practical' aspects of the trade union struggle to what they both declared to be the utopian goal of a socialist society: 'Bernstein's ideas were received most favourably by those who wanted to see Marxism escape the rigid mould in which Kautsky wanted to keep it... thus life was introduced into a doctrine which was, until then, condemned to sterility... Bernstein asserted... that the final aim is nothing and that the movement is everything. *He thus penetrated the true spirit of contemporary, that is, "integralist" or Bergsonian philosophy, in that he does not trouble himself with a point of departure, or with a starting point, but rather with the forces which, at each instant, are able to generate the movement in the sense that he conceives it.*' (G Sorel, 'The Decomposition of Marxism', in I Horowitz, *Radicalism and the Revolt Against Reason* (London, 1961), pp 118-19, emphasis added)

13. The anarchist flavour of Mussolini's anti-parliamentarianism distinguished his critique of bourgeois democracy from that of Marx and Lenin, revealing an indifference towards democratic rights and freedoms which subsequently became one of the hallmarks of Fascist anti-parliamentarianism. 'I take an absolutely negative view of the value of parliamentary suffrage... The uses to which it has been put should prove to the workers that it is not the weapon which will enable them to win complete emancipation. [The former assertion does not at all flow logically from the latter statement - RB] We hold that Italy needs a strong, homogeneous socialist, incohesive democracy... Bissolati, Cabrini, Bonomi [all leaders of the PSI 'coalitionist' wing] can go to the Quirinal [the king's residence], to the Vatican too, if they wish; but the Socialist Party must declare that it will not follow them today, tomorrow, or ever.' (B Mussolini, Speech to the PSI Congress, Reggio Emilia, 8 July 1911) Little more than 10 years later, Mussolini did follow them, smashing on the way not only Italy's chaotic, 'incohesive democracy', but his own Socialist Party.

14. Corradini even coined the term *socialismo nazionale* to delineate his social and foreign policies from those of the labour movement and the bourgeois liberals. In his *Italian Nationalism* (Milan, 1914) he bitterly assails the 'plutocratic nations' (France, Britain and Germany) for denying Italy its place in the imperialist sun. Imperialism divided nations into the 'haves', the plutocrats, and the 'have-nots', the proletarians, for whom pacifism and democracy were not only luxuries they could ill-afford, but downright obstacles to their emancipation: 'Nationalism... is the socialism of the Italian nation in the world.' Similar reactionary ideas were also peddled in Germany at this time, not only by the traditional right, but by extreme nationalist elements of the SPD (see Chapter VII).

15. 'I: War may be considered from its noble side... the idea that the profession of arms cannot compare to any other profession - that it puts the man who adopts this profession in a class which is superior to the ordinary conditions of life, that history is based entirely on the adventures of warriors, so that the economic life only existed to maintain them. II: The sentiment of glory which Renan [a Catholic 'integralist' admired by Sorel] so justly looked upon as one of the most singular and the most powerful creations of human genius, and which has been of such incomparable value in history. III: The ardent desire to try one's strength in great battles, to submit to the test which gives the military calling its claim to superiority, and to conquer glory at the peril of one's life... The Syndicalist general strike presents a very great number of analogies with this conception of war.' (Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, pp 166-67) 'Fascism... believes neither in the possibility nor the utility of perpetual peace. It thus repudiates the doctrine of pacifism, born of a renunciation of the struggle and as an act of cowardice in the face of sacrifice. War alone brings up the highest tension all human energy and puts the stamp of nobility upon the peoples who have the courage to meet it. All other trials are substitutes, which never really put men into the position where they have to make the great decision - the alternative of life or death. Thus a doctrine which is founded upon this harmful postulate of peace is hostile to Fascism.' (B Mussolini, *The Political and Social Doctrine of Fascism*)

16. B Mussolini, 'From Absolute Neutrality to Active and Operative Neutrality', *Avanti*, 18 October 1914, emphasis added.

17. Thus Trotsky writes of the leader of the Soviet Thermidor that 'if Stalin could have foreseen at the very beginning where his fight against Trotskyism would lead, he undoubtedly would have stopped short, in spite of the prospect of victory over all his opponents. But he did not foresee anything... He did not have the slightest understanding of the historical function he was fulfilling.' (LD Trotsky, *Stalin* (London, 1947), p 393) Mussolini's defection from the PSI was also governed by social processes and objective forces that he at first had little or no comprehension of. He later told Hitler that 'at the moment when he undertook the struggle against Bolshevism, he didn't exactly know where he was going' (*Hitler's Secret Conversations*, p 118). But this did not prevent either Stalinism or Italian fascism from emerging as consciously counter-revolutionary movements (the former as a corrupted bureaucratic tendency *within* the workers' movement, the latter as a direct instrument of monopoly capitalism *against* it) at a certain critical stage in their development. As for Hitler, he began as and remained until the end of his days an avowed

and fanatical enemy of proletarian socialism, and in this sense his political make-up and evolution differs from that of Mussolini.

18. Mussolini, *My Autobiography*, p 49.

19. The aptly-named Cachin, who acted as go-between for the French government in its dealings with Italian Socialist and syndicalist ‘interventionists’, negotiated an initial cash grant of one million lire for Mussolini’s struggling new daily, a sum that was compounded by further monthly payments of 10 000 lire. After a brief flirtation with Bolshevism, Cachin became a Stalinist stalwart, and after the adoption of the Popular Front policy of alliances with bourgeois liberals in 1934, was able once more to give his suppressed patriotic sentiments full vent.

20. *Il Popolo d’Italia*, 11 May 1915.

21. ‘... the word “producers” was already [in the summer of 1918] the expression of a mental attitude’, wrote Mussolini in his *The Political and Social Doctrine of Fascism*. By ‘producers’ he meant not the proletariat alone, but all those classes and individuals whom corporatist doctrine declared to be ‘productive’. This included not only the working class and the rural proletariat, but ‘productive’ capitalists and landowners. This misuse of syndicalist terminology - a salient characteristic of Italian Fascism - had already been foreshadowed more than a decade before by Sorel in *Reflections on Violence*, which Mussolini is known to have received with great enthusiasm. The admiration was mutual, Sorel remarking that Mussolini (who by this time was a fully-blown fascist) was ‘the only energetic man capable of redressing the feebleness of the government’.

22. Mussolini, *My Autobiography*, p 59.

23. Comparing the fascist dictators of Germany and Italy, Trotsky considered Mussolini to be far more original: ‘Mussolini from the very beginning reacted more consciously to social materials than Hitler... Mussolini is mentally bolder and more cynical... the Roman atheist only utilises religion as he does the police and courts, while his Berlin colleague really believes in the infallibility of the Church of Rome.’ And while Hitler denied the class struggle in theory only to wage it the more viciously in practice, Mussolini never forgot that which he learned in the PSI, namely ‘the theory which sees in the life of contemporary society first of all the reciprocal action of two classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat’. And, Trotsky went on, ‘just as scientific medicine equips one with the possibility not only of curing the sick but of sending the healthy to meet their forefathers by the shortest route, so if scientific analysis of class relations, predestined by its creator for the mobilisation of the proletariat, enabled Mussolini, after he had jumped into the opposing camp, to mobilise the middle classes against the proletariat, Hitler accomplished the same feat in translating the methodology of fascism into the language of German mysticism.’ (LD Trotsky, ‘What Is National Socialism?’, *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany* (New York, 1971), pp 401-02) And in his biography of Stalin, Trotsky writes of Mussolini’s intuitionism, that the leader of Italian Fascism was: ‘Agile and inordinately ambitious, he smashed his Socialist career in his greedy quest for success. His anger at the party became a moving force. He created and destroyed theory along his way. He is the very personification of cynical egotism... Hitler exhibits traits of monomania and messianism. Personal hurt played a tremendous role in his development. He was a declassed petit-bourgeois who refused to be a working man... He achieved a vicarious social elevation by execrating Jews and Social Democrats. He was desperately determined to rise higher...’ (Trotsky, *Stalin*, p 413)

24. *Il Popolo d’Italia*, 5 March 1919.

25. The degree of this shift can be partially measured by comparing the election results for 1913 with those for 1919. In the last prewar election, the bourgeois parties with a middle-class following - the liberals, democrats, radicals, republicans and nationalists - won 417 of the 508 seats in the Italian parliament, while the PSI secured but 51. In the first postwar election (November 1919), the bourgeois bloc had been cut down to a total of 151 seats, while the PSI had tripled its representation to 156. The Popolari accounted for the remaining 100 seats.

26. CGL membership rose from 300 000 in 1914 to 1 375 000 in 1919 and to a peak of 2 200 000 in 1920, the year of the September factory occupations. From this date, there was nothing but decline. PSI membership also followed the same curve - 100 000 in 1920 as against 50 000 before the outbreak of war.

27. ‘I start with the individual and strike at the state... Down with the state in all its forms and incarnations: the state of yesterday, and of today and of tomorrow, the bourgeois state and the socialist state. To us, there remains during the present gloom and dark tomorrow, only the religion, at present absurd, but always consoling, of Anarchy!’ This was how Mussolini wrote in April 1920. Within a year, he was denouncing the ‘bourgeois state’ for its liberalism! And in his first speech to the Italian Chamber of Deputies after the march on Rome on 16 November 1922, this former enemy of the state declared: ‘The state is strong and will prove its strength against everyone. Whoever defies the state will be punished.’ Finally, this champion of the individual against all authority wrote, in his *The Political and Social Doctrine of Fascism* (1931) that being ‘anti-individualistic, the Fascist conception of life stresses the importance of the state and accepts the individual only in so far as his interests coincide with those of the state... The Fascist concept of the state is all-embracing; outside of it no human or spiritual values can exist... The state is not only the present, it is also the past and above all the future... The Fascist state expresses the will to exercise power and to command.’

28. Mussolini, *My Autobiography*, p 65.

29. Mussolini, *My Autobiography*, p 69.

30. Mussolini, *My Autobiography*, pp 69-70.

31. *Il Popolo d'Italia*, 28 February 1919.

32. Reproduced at the end of this chapter.

33. *Il Popolo d'Italia*, 23 March 1919.

34. Mussolini, *My Autobiography*, p 74.

35. Mussolini, *My Autobiography*, p 75.

36. Like Hitler, Mussolini took care not to become closely identified with the old bourgeois parties. Anxious to deflect charges by his former comrades that he had gone over to reaction, Mussolini demonstratively supported an ‘occupation’ organised by the ‘national syndicalist’ UIL at the Dalmine engineering works near Milan. By not striking, and by raising the Italian tricolour rather than the red flag, these workers were acting ‘creatively’ by ‘not forgetting the nation’. It was a ‘strike’ with a difference.

37. Addressing the Third Congress of the Communist International on this problem, Trotsky warned against the adoption of a ‘leftist’ line by the newly-formed PCd’I in the wake of the historic September reverse: ‘I might have said “Here is a country ruined by war where the workers have seized the factories, where the Fascists are sacking labour printing plants and setting fire to working class institutions. And if this party does not raise the cry: ‘With All Our Forces Forward Against the Enemy’, then it is a cowardly party which will be condemned by world history.” But if we look at things not from the standpoint of weighing the situation cold-bloodedly, we would have to say what comrade Zinoviev did, namely: they must gain anew the confidence of the working class since the workers have become much more cautious precisely owing to this treachery. They will say to themselves: “We heard the same phrases from Serrati [leader of the PSI centrists]. He said virtually the same thing and then he betrayed us. Where is the guarantee that the new party will not betray us, too?” The working class wants to see the party in action before going into the decisive battle under its leadership.’ (LD Trotsky, ‘Speech on Comrade Radek’s Report on Tactics of the Comintern’ (1 July 1921), *The First Five Years of the Communist International*, Volume 1 (New York, 1945), p 178) Trotsky’s advice was not heeded by all the leaders of the new party. The group headed by Amadeo Bordiga stubbornly refused to adopt a united front tactic with the centrists and reformists workers’ organisations and leaders, arguing that such a policy involved a surrender of revolutionary principles. Neither did Bordiga distinguish between the parliamentary and Fascist forms of capitalist state power. ‘If the Fascists

destruction parliament, we shall be delighted', declared Bordiga to the PCd'I Congress held at Rome in October 1921, with the Fascist coup only a matter of days away. And continuing a line of reasoning that the Stalinist KPD leadership developed to its ultra-leftist nadir in the period of Hitler's rise to power, Bordiga claimed that no distinctions existed between the various non-Communist parties in Italy. He termed them the 'Socialist-populist Fascist ruling class' while their respective leaders, Turati, Sturzo and Mussolini, were three names for a single 'grim tyrant'. Bordiga and his leftist comrades were soon to discover that there was a very great difference between the 'grim tyrants' of the PSI and those of Italian Fascism, for within a matter of months, PSI and PCd'I militants - and even leaders - were sharing the same cells and prison compounds!

38. Just prior to the march on Rome, CGL secretary Ludovico D'Aragona declared with obvious sincerity that 'it is our glory and pride that we prevented the outbreak of the revolution which the extremists desired'. One can understand why Mussolini wrote in August 1921: 'If the three secretaries of the Labour Alliance [the alliance of Italy's three main trade union bodies] had been three of the most fanatical Fascists, they really could not have rendered a greater service to the cause of Italian Fascism.' (*Il Popolo Italia*, 5 August 1921) The Socialist reformists were no better. Following the ignominious collapse of a poorly organised anti-Fascist general strike at the beginning of August 1921, Turati wrote: 'The general strike has been our Caporetto... We must have the courage to recognise that today the Fascists are masters of the field.' Giacomo Matteotti, the reformist deputy murdered by Fascist assassins in June 1924, adopted a similar defeatist line, advising workers to 'stay at home... Even silence and cowardice are sometimes heroic.'

39. A Gramsci, Speech to the PSI National Council, *L'Ordine Nuovo*, 8 May 1920.

40. Gramsci was of course speaking at a time (the spring of 1920) when there were no concrete historical precedents to work from. His premonition of Fascism - for such it was, even though he does not refer to Mussolini specifically - cannot be faulted simply because it failed to predict with complete accuracy the course of the Fascist regime. But when, more than half a century later, and 47 years after the official liquidation of the Italian trade union movement with the promulgation of the Rocco Labour Law (3 April 1926), we still encounter Marxist publications which refer to corporatism as if the March on Rome had never happened, let alone Hitler's liquidation of the German trade unions in May 1933 or Franco's merciless, extermination of the Spanish UGT and CNT, we can only be amazed at such theoretical slovenliness. Repeatedly *Workers Press* treats what it calls 'corporatism' as a species of 'collaboration' between the trade union leaders and the employers and capitalist state. Thus in *Workers Press* of 3 August 1973, we read that 'in answer to the demand that a Labour government is returned to power by revolutionary working class action, committed to nationalising big capital, they [the TUC] hold out the sop that unions would be allowed to nominate their own men to help organise the counter-revolution. And in opposition to the demand for full workers' control of both former private and former state-run industry, they suggest politely that officials of the new, corporatist unions could sit in the boardrooms of the corporate state too.' ('Scanlon Praises TUC's Corporatist Report', *Workers Press*, 3 August 1973, p 9) Here the TUC figures not merely as an essential element of a future corporatist regime, but as its *pacemaker*, as the following extract from the same article bears out: 'Thus Scanlon becomes an essential prop for the bureaucratic corporatist machinery with which the trade union leaders *want* to divert the growing support in the working-class movement for immediate policies of socialist nationalisation and workers control.' [Emphasis added] So, *Workers Press* tells us, the TUC actually *wants* to institute a corporatist regime. And since, in the Trotskyist book, corporatism is the ideology of the fascist state (after all, the corporatist Mussolini was also a fascist), we arrive at the proposition that far from being an obstacle - however feeble - to the establishment of a fascist dictatorship by the monopolies, as Trotsky repeatedly insisted against 'Third Period' Stalinist claims that the reformist unions had turned 'social fascist', the trade unions will become one of the main agencies in the institution and maintenance of such a regime. This dangerous line of thinking is a mockery of Trotskyism, and, moreover, it flies in the face of

history. Corporatist Italy was the graveyard of trade unions - and a prison for even their most collaborationist leaders.

41. This was the tally of Fascist destruction visited on the workers' movement during the first six months of 1921: 17 newspaper offices and print-shops, 59 'People's Houses', 119 chambers of labour, 107 cooperatives, 83 peasant leagues offices, 141 Socialist and Communist clubs and offices.

42. B Mussolini, Speech to Chamber of Deputies, 21 June 1921.

43. B Mussolini, Speech to Chamber of Deputies, 21 June 1921.

44. Italo Balbo, one of the top four Fascist leaders (*quadrumvirs*) described in his diary one such onslaught - that on the working-class stronghold of Ravenna in July 1921; 'We undertook this task in the same spirit as when we demolished the enemy's stores in wartime. The flames from the great burning building [the Socialist headquarters] rose ominously into the night. The whole town was illuminated by the glare, we had to strike terror into the heart of our enemies... I announced to him [the Ravenna police chief] that I would burn down and destroy the houses of all the Socialists in Ravenna if he did not give me within half an hour the means required for sending the Fascists elsewhere... I demanded a whole fleet of lorries... after half an hour they told me where I could find lorries already supplied with petrol. Some of them actually belonged to the office of the chief of police... We went through Rimini, Sant'Arcangelo, Savignano, Cesena, Bertinoro, all the towns and centres in the provinces of Forli and Ravenna, and destroyed and burnt all the red buildings, the seats of the Socialist and Communist organisations. It was a terrible night. Our passage was marked by huge columns of fire and smoke. The whole plain of the Romagna was given up to the reprisals of the outraged Fascists determined to break for ever the red terror.' (I Balbo, *1922 Diaries*, pp 103-09)

45. The composition, as well as origin, of Mussolini's first government was similar to that of Hitler's (both also shared the official designation of governments of 'national concentration'), though it included representatives of parties whose German counterparts were excluded from the smallest share in the exercise of power in the early months of the Third Reich. Mussolini headed a coalition of, besides himself, three Fascists, two Populists, two rightist Liberals, three 'Democrats', a Nationalist and two 'non-political' appointments as heads of the army and navy. Though excluded from power, Germany's liberals, democratic and Catholic leaders were not one whit less anxious to lick the fascist boots than their Italian predecessors. Both Hitler and Mussolini received unanimous votes of confidence from the old bourgeois parties, Hitler's enabling act of 23 March 1933 being opposed only by the SPD - the KPD was already banned - while in Italy, the confidence vote of 16 November 1922 was carried 306 to 116, with once again only the deputies of the two workers' parties - the PSI and PCd'I - voting against. At the death, the bourgeois liberals, democrats and radicals preferred Fascism when the alternative appeared to be a victory of socialism.

46. Italian labour succeeded in forcing a wide range of concessions from the bourgeoisie in the period of its greatest militancy between the end of the war and the autumn of 1920. By 1921, industrial wages had increased by 557 per cent on their prewar monetary value, while prices had risen over the same period by 501 per cent. This marked an increased share for the proletariat of the total national product, and a considerable diminution in the rate of profit of the industrial and banking bourgeoisie. With the defeat of September 1920 capital once more took the offensive, and aided by the onslaught of Mussolini's Blackshirts on the nerve centres of the labour movement, began to restore the dominant position it held before and during the war. While retail prices rose to an index of 517 by the end of 1922 (base year being 1913) industrial wages were, with the tacit acceptance of the trade union bureaucracy, pushed back from their 1921 peak of 557 to 503 two months after the march on Rome. And the bosses' counter-attack had only just begun. With their Fascist allies holding the reins of government, and the Fascist-dominated 'syndicates' increasingly becoming the only organisations permitted to 'represent' Italian labour, wage cuts, price increases and the lengthening of the working day continued apace. Retail prices soared to 633 by the first half

of 1926, while wages now limped along 38 points behind. And this was in a period of industrial expansion, when had it been free to organise in independent trade unions, the proletariat would have been able to exploit the increased demand for its labour power by demanding higher wages. Instead, they were, in real terms, progressively cut. Meanwhile company profits rose from 1.7 per cent on total capital in 1922 to 8.0 per cent in 1925 and 7.0 per cent in 1926. Other measures which gladdened the hearts - and helped replenish the coffers - of Italian big business included the restoration of the telephone system to private enterprise, the ending of the state monopoly in life insurance created by Giolitti in 1921, the winding up of the Ministry of Labour, and the abolition of rent controls. The *Confindustria*, whose support for Mussolini had been crucial in the days prior to his appointment as Prime Minister, was rewarded by being recognised as the sole spokesman for industrial interests, much to the chagrin of the Fascist 'national syndicalists' and the small businessmen who had provided many of the activists and funds for Fascism in its early days of struggle. Fascism in power was, despite its 'national' and 'social' claims, the most ruthless champion of big business, and, by the same token, a merciless enemy of the proletariat.

47. '... Russia could not isolate itself from the profound reaction that swept over postwar Europe in the early 1920s... the coincidence of such dates as the organisation of the first Fascist coup under Mussolini on 30 October 1922 in Italy, the coup in Spain of 13 September 1923, which placed Primo de Rivera in power, the condemnation of the Declaration of the Forty-Six Bolsheviks by the joint plenum of the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission of 15 October 1923 are not fortuitous. Such signs of the times will bear serious consideration.' (Trotsky, *Stalin*, pp 411-13)

48. A Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (London, 1943), p 681.

49. A Hitler, *Hitler's Secret Conversations* (New York, 1953), p 9.

50. E Hanfstangl, *Hitler: The Missing Years* (London, 1937), p 34.

51. K Lüdecke, *I Knew Hitler* (New York, 1937), p 58.

52. Stephen Johns, 'Stewards Keen on Merseyside Collaboration Scheme', *Workers Press*, 3 September 1973, p 11.

Fascism in Germany. Robin Blick 1975

Chapter XIII: From Kapp to Munich: Genesis of a Strategy

The more highly developed a democracy is, the more imminent are pogroms or civil war in connection with any profound divergence which is dangerous to the bourgeoisie. (VI Lenin, *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*)

When in 1923 for the first time we determined to act we already had behind us a big history of preparations for a putsch. I can confess quite calmly that from 1919 to 1923 I thought of nothing else than a *coup d'état*. (Adolf Hitler, 1936)

The historical role of fascism can only be assessed within the context of the reciprocal relationships which have evolved between the three classes of modern capitalist society: the monopoly bourgeoisie, the proletariat and the petit-bourgeoisie. Fascism mobilises the middle-class masses to crush the organised proletariat on behalf of monopoly capital. This, reduced to its most brutal essentials, is the historical task of fascism, performed in Italy by Mussolini, in Germany by Hitler, in Spain by Franco ^[1] and most recently by the military dictatorship in Chile. In other words, fascism is the 'plebeian' method of resolving the bourgeoisie's 'social problem' - what to do with the organised proletariat when all other solutions based on a degree of compromise, or on the exclusive use of bureaucratic-police methods, have failed. At this point, elements within the ruling class will begin to turn towards a solution which can perhaps be described as 'counter-revolution from below', involving the mobilisation of millions of middle-class and even backward proletarian forces against the labour movement. Thus the bourgeoisie fights its class enemies by calling in the demagogues, the rabble rousers and the street warriors. It cuts adrift from its own parties, whose leaders have failed, through either a lack of material forces or a sufficiently ruthless strategy, to implement the anti-working-class policies demanded by big business. With great trepidation, the big bourgeoisie places its destinies in the hands of men drawn for the most part not from the higher ranks of the propertied classes, nor from the traditional governing and bureaucratic castes, but from the middle and nether regions of the despised petit-bourgeoisie, and even the gutter itself in the persons of the SA gangsters. This 'plebeian' character distinguishes fascism in its classic German and Italian forms from all other movements of anti-socialist reaction, and a fascist dictatorship from all other right-wing governments which, to one degree or another, persecute or repress the organised workers' movement. ^[2]

But fascism does not provide us with the only instance of the bourgeoisie resorting to 'plebeian' methods to fight and crush its class enemies. In its struggle to overthrow a deeply entrenched absolute monarchy, nobility and clergy, the rising bourgeoisie of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was finally compelled, however reluctantly or hesitatingly, to summon the plebeians of its day to arms, and to permit all but their most radical spokesmen to partake in the formulation of government policy. And when the fate of the revolution demanded the most extreme terroristic measures against the feudal reaction and its allies, the higher echelons of the bourgeoisie found itself thrust aside as the plebeians seized entire sections of the machinery of state, or created new organs of coercion and mass mobilisation where the need arose. Such was the plebeian-based revolutionary dictatorship of the Jacobin Committee of Public Safety, which ruled France from April 1793 to July 1794, when the anti-Jacobin bourgeoisie succeeded in securing the arrest and execution of four of its 12 members - the brothers Robespierre, Couthon and Saint Just. Thermidor marked the temporary exit of the plebeian masses from the stage of French history, just as the formation of the 'sections' and the rise of the *sans culotte* agitator or *enragé* signified their explosive entry.

So often in the literature of Marxism has revolutionary - and reactionary - France served as a source of theoretical inspiration for the unravelling of the complexities of the class struggle in modern Europe. ^[3] And because Jacobinism provides us with a classic instance of the bourgeoisie fighting its class enemies by plebeian, terrorist methods (even though those enemies were feudal in origin, and therefore stood to the right of the bourgeoisie) its rise - and fall - can furnish us with valuable insights into what for formal thinkers often appears to be an insoluble contradiction between fascism as a counter-revolutionary buttress of capitalist rule and fascism as a mass movement mobilising literally millions of 'plebeians' behind a programme of radical action against capitalism and the 'political bourgeoisie'.

Trotsky certainly considered the example of Jacobinism valuable in this respect. In a speech to the Comintern Executive in July 1926 (convened to discuss the opportunist conduct of the Polish Communist

Party during the coup of Marshal Józef Piłsudski in May 1926) he pointed out to a largely hostile audience the similarities as well as differences between petit-bourgeois Jacobinism and fascism:

The movement he [Piłsudski] headed was petit-bourgeois, a plebeian means of solving the pressing problems of capitalist society in process of decline and destruction. Here there is a direct parallel with Italian Fascism... These two currents undoubtedly have common features: their shock troops are recruited... among the petit-bourgeoisie; both Piłsudski and Mussolini operated by extra-parliamentary, nakedly violent means, by the methods of civil war; both of them aimed not at overthrowing bourgeois society, but at saving it. Having raised the petit-bourgeois masses to their feet, they both clashed openly with the big bourgeoisie after coming to power ^[4] ... one is forced to recall Marx's definition of Jacobinism as a plebeian means of dealing with the feudal enemies of the bourgeoisie. That was in the period of the *rise* of the bourgeoisie... now, in the epoch of *decline* of bourgeois society, the bourgeoisie once again has need of a 'plebeian' means of solving its problems - which are not progressive but, rather, thoroughly reactionary. In this sense, then, fascism contains a reactionary caricature of Jacobinism... The bourgeoisie in decline is incapable of maintaining itself in power with the methods of its own creation - the parliamentary state. It needs fascism as a weapon of self-defence, at least at the most critical moments. ^[5]

This takes us far away from the vulgar explanation of fascism so often encountered in the labour movement and radical circles that it is 'cooked up' by the ruling class and used and discarded just as one switches on or off a water tap. Precisely because of the plebeian basis of fascist movements, and the demagogic social programme which its leaders employ to mobilise the petit-bourgeois masses against the organised proletariat, they generate an internal impetus and volatile lumpen radicalism that threatens, once the fascist leaders are installed in power, to bring it into collision with its big-bourgeois paymasters. Indeed, the German monopolists, bankers, agrarians and military leaders had to wait more than a year for their 'Thermidor' before Hitler offered them the heads of the 'brown Jacobins' on the sacrificial platter, and even then (unlike the period of bourgeois consolidation which followed the fall of Robespierre) the bourgeois and Junkers were not permitted to insert themselves into the political vacuum created by the purge of the SA 'plebeians'. Himmler's SS, and not the monarchist clubs or the Junker officer corps, was to be the supreme political arbiter in the Third Reich. For Hitler, despite the delusions of the old monarchist right, was no tame second edition of Bismarck. He was a counter-revolutionary of the twentieth century, not of the nineteenth.

Trotsky characterised this ever-present and fluctuating tension between the big bourgeoisie and the fascist 'plebeians' in the following manner:

The bourgeoisie does not like the 'plebeian' means of solving its problem. The bourgeoisie had an extremely hostile attitude towards Jacobinism, which [nevertheless] cleared a path for the development of bourgeois society. The fascists are immeasurably closer to the bourgeoisie in decline than the Jacobins were to the bourgeoisie on the rise. But the established bourgeoisie does not like the fascist means of solving its problems either, for the shocks and disturbances, although in the interests of bourgeois society, involve dangers for it as well. This is the source of antagonism between fascism and the traditional parties of the bourgeoisie. ^[6]

The bourgeoisie therefore resorts to the 'plebeian' solution only when all other available methods of combating or containing the proletariat have failed, and, more specifically, when class compromises which are tolerable in conditions of capitalist expansion and periods of world peace become insufferable in conditions of capitalist crisis, declining world trade, falling profit rates, inter-imperialist rivalries, potential military conflicts and a proletariat which obstinately refuses to yield what it has won in the boom in order to rescue its hard-pressed employers. The momentous decision to call in and arm the fascist plebeians therefore necessarily marks the end of a political era of class compromise and class collaboration in which differences are settled (or settlements postponed) through the peaceful alternation of various parliamentary combinations, and by the regulation of the class struggle through the mechanism of the political and trade union wings of the reformist bureaucracy. Fascism puts a brutal end to bourgeois democracy as well as all the organisations of the proletariat, and for this very reason, its assumption of power generates considerable, if secondary, tensions between the propertied, exploiting bourgeoisie, whose only concern is the extraction of surplus value from the labour power of the proletariat, and the former political and literary representatives of the bourgeoisie and the democratic - or rather non-fascist - middle class. The bonds which tie these two segments of the bourgeoisie are

strong, even though not unbreakable, and it is with the greatest reluctance that the leaders of the economy (who comprise only a tiny fraction of the ruling class as a whole) part company with those who have represented and defended its interests in the past. But when as in Weimar Germany the terrain of the struggle shifts from parliament, the editorial office and the salons of high society to the streets of the proletarian quarters of industrial Germany, other qualities and skills than those of debate, syntax and social respectability are called for. The bourgeoisie's old politicians and 'literati' are thrown to the wolves as into the seats of power clamber brown-shirted gangsters who only yesterday were fraternising with the underworld. Small wonder that in Germany, the big bourgeoisie resolved to secure the appointment of a Hitler administration only after it had run through a gamut of governmental forms and combinations ranging from intimate collaboration with Social Democracy, guarded support for bourgeois liberalism, reluctant acquiescence in bourgeois republicanism, a brief flirtation with military dictatorship to finally, in the last two years of Weimar, a critical endorsement of Bonapartism. ^[7] The German bourgeoisie came to fascism unevenly and with many inner reservations and misgivings, and only after a rich and protracted period of experimentation with almost every other form of rule encountered in the history of modern capitalism convinced it that the continued toleration of parliamentary democracy and existence of independent workers' organisations were incompatible with the restoration of capitalist economy and the resurgence of German imperialism. It was on these two fundamental issues that the decisive sections of the monopoly bourgeoisie finally found common ground with the Nazis, and thus made possible the formation of the Hitler government of 'national concentration' in January 1933. Yet Hitler had been striving towards this goal for a full 13 years, and on more than one occasion, the ruling class had denied it to him. ^[8]

So while it is correct to say that in 1933 the paths of 'plebeian' fascism and big bourgeois reaction converged on a single point - the annihilation of the workers' movement - this convergence must be placed in a perspective of time, and viewed as a product not only of the strategic requirements of a ruling class in its most profound crisis, but of the failings of leadership on the part of the two parties of the German working class, the SPD and the KPD. We can see from a study of the turbulent period between the November Revolution and the Munich Putsch that while important sections of the big bourgeoisie and agrarians were prepared to sanction or even initiate repressive measures against the entire German workers' movement, the conditions had by no means matured sufficiently either in their own ranks or that of the petit-bourgeoisie to make a fascist solution necessary and possible. Nor had the workers' movement, for all the mistakes and treachery of its leadership, been forced back onto the defensive and its fighting capacities gravely undermined.

Capitalists and military leaders there certainly were who looked to Hitler to provide a solution to the 'social problem', but they proved, when the time came, to be in a small minority. The Munich Putsch failed not only because it lacked sufficient support in the nationalist petit-bourgeoisie, but because a majority of the monopolist bourgeoisie still considered it possible to resolve their economic and political problems within the framework of Weimar parliamentary democracy, and without a decisive break from Social Democracy. And even when its thinking turned towards open dictatorship, it still rejected the Nazi 'plebeian' solution, as the events leading up to and surrounding the Kapp Putsch indicate. ^[9]

The Kapp Putsch

The Kapp Putsch of March 1920 represented the first serious attempt by right-wing forces to overturn the Weimar Republic, and as such it merits serious study, not only for the immediate impact which it had on German politics, which was indeed explosive, but its longer-term effects, which without doubt turned more astute ruling-class minds away from traditional notions of reaction towards the strategy of a counter-revolution not, *à la* Kapp, from 'above', but on plebeian lines, from 'below'. Kapp's military coup flowed from the aborted nature of the November Revolution. The old ruling classes had been forced to retreat, but had not, thanks to the duplicity of the reformists, been decisively defeated. Even as the republic's founders were celebrating the triumph of democracy over 'despotisms of Left and Right', the groundswell of counter-revolution was already gathering impetus. Firstly, the big industrialists were preparing to fight against the implementation of the concessions extracted from them by the ADGB under the November 1918 'Working Agreement'. Hugo Stinnes, himself the employers' chief spokesman in the negotiations with the trade union leaders, bluntly declared some three months later that:

Big business and all those who rule over industry will some day recover their influence and power. They will be recalled by a disillusioned people, half dead with hunger, who will need bread and not phrases.'

A former government minister closely associated with heavy industry - Dernberg - denounced the eight-hour day conceded by the employers in the 'Working Agreement' as 'a nail in Germany's coffin',^[10] a sure indication that a significant group of big employers was about to renege on the deal concluded with the ADGB in November 1918. But they must have been well aware that to do so while the Social Democrats remained the main government party would court the most violent political repercussions, for not even the reformists, with their Communist and USPD rivals daily gaining ground on them, could afford to sanction such a brutal breach of trust. The Stinneses and the Thyssens therefore had no alternative but grudgingly to honour the November Working Agreement until such time as political forces came to hand capable of overturning the government coalition, which rested on the class compromise embodied not only in the Working Agreement, but the entire legislative social, economic and political system created by the November Revolution.^[11]

The big employers and agrarians made their feelings known not only through their own organisations and press, but in the National Assembly, where DVP and DNVP deputies daily denounced the republic and all its works in the most scathing terms. It was a depressing spectacle for Hugo Preuss, who had spent so many laborious hours devising a constitutional system acceptable to all reasonable men. The problem was, so many of Germany's old rulers refused to accept reason as the governing principle in human affairs:

How foreign a parliamentary system seems to even the most enlightened Germans. I have often listened to debates with real concern, glancing often rather timidly to the gentlemen of the Right fearful lest they say to me: 'Do you hope to give a parliamentary system to a nation like this, one that resists it with every sinew of its body?' One finds suspicion everywhere; Germans cannot shake off their old political timidity and their deference to the authoritarian state. They do not understand that the new government must be blood of their blood, flesh of their flesh, that their trusted representatives will have to be an integral part of it. Their constant worry is only: how can we best keep our constituted representatives so shackled that they will be unable to do anything?

But once again, like the big employers and landowners for whom these 'gentlemen of the Right' spoke, there was little they could do to translate their anti-democratic invective and class arrogance into deeds. Together with the USPD (who opposed Weimar for opposite reasons to the extreme right) the DVP and DNVP could only muster 75 votes against the new constitution when it was finally presented for approval to the National Assembly at the end of July 1919. What these would-be counter-revolutionaries so desperately lacked were arms and men to wield them. So where else could they turn but to the units formed by the *Ebert Government* to combat the revolution: the Free Corps Brigades of Gustav Noske? Quite early in the new year, it was becoming evident even to the most hardened reformist that many Free Corps officers and men were becoming disgruntled with having to fight under an alien political leadership for a republic they openly despised as 'Jewish' and 'Marxist'.^[12] Little time was lost in establishing contact with more political elements in the Free Corps such as the Nationale Vereinigung of Captain Pabst (it was Pabst who ordered and supervised the murder of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht) and the Baltikum, which waged its own private war in the east against German proletarians, Poles and Baltic Communists alike. As the SPD leaders gradually disengaged themselves from the more extreme anti-socialist Free Corps commanders and brigades, the latter readily turned towards other and more amenable forces prepared to finance their counter-revolutionary activities.^[13]

Finally, there was the old High Command itself, banned by the Allies from functioning under its old name, and so now masquerading as the 'Preparatory Commission for the Peace Army'. Thirsting for revenge, and fearing that the prevailing pacifist political climate would become institutionalised in the shape of the SPD-dominated coalition, at least some of its more influential officers could be expected to look with sympathy on moves to install a regime that would restore German arms to their former glory - and of course, put the Social Democratic upstarts and 'November criminals' in their rightful places. The predatory terms forced on Germany by the victorious Entente powers only served to feed nationalist sentiments and provide imperialist circles with a splendid opportunity and pretext to intensify their plottings against the republic and the organised workers' movement, whose leaders were always depicted as tools of Germany's enemies.^[14]

Thus there were four main streams of right-wing opposition to Weimar - the Junker and industrialist 'intransigents', elements in both the DVP and DNVP, a section of the officer corps, and the more political leaders of the Free Corps - which given a favourable conjuncture could converge to form a single counter-revolutionary front. And this is precisely what did happen. Already by the summer of 1919, a section of the old High Command, headed by General von Lüttwitz, had begun to depart from the old Prussian Officer corps tradition of non-intervention in politics by calling for the establishment of a military regime which would combat 'Bolshevism' at home and defy attempts by Germany's enemies abroad to weaken further its military power. Divisions within the ruling class over policy towards the new republic were inevitably mirrored in the army leadership. Lüttwitz found his proposals opposed by General Märcker and Colonel-General von Hammerstein, who in linking their more recently-begun military careers with the new republic, feared a conflict between army and government that would end in defeat for the Reichswehr and a consequent debacle for their policy of winning over the SPD and its liberal coalition allies to a position of supporting the rebuilding of German military strength. Opposition from these 'moderates' did not deter Lüttwitz from proceeding with his plottings. On 21 August 1919, he held his first meeting with Wolfgang Kapp, an old Pan-German, founder member of the ultra-chauvinist Fatherland Front (whose lineal connection with National Socialism we have already discussed), and now employed by the Weimar Republic as a rather minor civil servant in that redoubt of Junker reaction, East Prussia. Their discussion resulted in the formulation of a programme which, apart from the customary military and nationalist demands, called for the abolition of the right to strike, the ending of dole payments to the unemployed, and the scrapping of the Weimar Republic's quite substantial social welfare legislation. Clearly the views of influential industrialists were making themselves felt among the growing circle of conspirators, who now included not only Lüttwitz and his circle of fellow officers, but Captain Pabst, who provided a valuable link with the Free Corps, Count Westarp of the DNVP, the former Police President of Berlin Traugott von Jagow and, representing the 'spiritual' arm of the movement, the Lutheran Pastor Gottfried Traub, who had been court chaplain to William II in the last years of the Empire. While the bourgeois wing of the anti-Weimar opposition preferred for the most part to adopt a circumspect attitude towards the conspirators, a significant section of the Junker-dominated DNVP leadership readily endorsed the aims of the Lüttwitz-Kapp circle. Apart from Westarp, not only Kapp but Traub and von Jagow were prominent DNVP members, and they were joined in their preparations for the putsch of March 1920 by party colleagues Kurt von Kessel and Hans Freiherr von Waggenheim (Traub served the short-lived Kapp regime as its Minister of Church and Cultural Affairs).

Kapp and Lüttwitz knew they could rely on a sizable proportion of the Free Corps commanders and brigades to support their planned coup, and provide it with the fighting forces necessary to combat the inevitable resistance which it would encounter from the working class. But what of the attitude of big business? Represented mainly, but not exclusively by Stresemann's DVP, the leaders of heavy industry were as divided over their attitude towards the anti-Weimar movement as was every other segment of the ruling class. They wavered between a policy of 'critical support' for the republic (that is, Duisberg) and one of open hostility (Thyssen, Kirdorf and, to a lesser degree, Stinnes). But once the conspiracy - whose progress was discussed daily in the German press - began to gather impetus, a group of business leaders began to abandon their waiting attitude and decided to lend the counter-revolutionary movement financial and well as political aid. Contact with Kapp was established by Vögler (of the Gelsenkirchen Mining Co), Stinnes, Borsig (a future Nazi supporter) and Kirdorf through the medium of the ultra-reactionary National Club, an exclusive association established after the war as a venue for anti-Weimar politicians, aristocrats, military leaders, landowners and businessmen. At the beginning of 1920, with the Kapp Putsch now little more than two months away, Stinnes stated in a letter to government leaders that the time had come to dispense with parliamentary democracy in Germany, that 'it is a sign of a true democracy that in times of mortal peril, it finds its dictator'. At the same time, he placed at the disposal of Kapp a sum of 1.5 million marks, paid into the latter's account at the Königsberg (East Prussia) branch of the Mid-German Credit Bank at the monthly rate of 125 000 marks. ^[15]

The attitude of 'hard-line' industrialists was summed up by Thyssen:

During an entire year - 1918-19 - I felt that Germany was going to sink into anarchy... It was then that I realised the necessity - if Germany was not to sink into anarchy - of fighting all this radical agitation [of the USPD and KPD]... The SPD endeavoured to maintain order, but it was too weak. The memory of those days did much to dispose me, later on, to offer my help to National Socialism... ^[16]

But in those early months of the republic, there was no Nazi Party, nor any other comparable movement capable of rousing the petit-bourgeois masses against Weimar and the ‘November criminals’. Nor was there a significant body of opinion inside the ruling class considering such a ‘plebeian’ solution to its problems. Such opposition that there was to Weimar flowed for the most part through the already existing parties and institutions of the ruling class, subjecting them to such tremendous strains that at the time of the Kapp Putsch open rifts were precipitated within them.

The year of 1920 began with a renewed eruption of crises on both the domestic and international fronts. The imminent passage through the Reichstag of the Works Council bill (see Chapter X) precipitated an even more intense polarisation of the classes, creating a situation where the Social Democrats found themselves simultaneously attacked from Left and Right. The bill, derived to a large extent from the class collaborationist principles enshrined in the November Working Agreement, had aroused bitter hostility not only among reactionary employers, but wide sections of the working class, who rightly considered it to be a betrayal of the socialist goals for which they had fought in the revolution of November 1918. The already harassed Weimar coalition now headed by the former trade union bureaucrat Otto Bauer (Scheidemann had resigned the Chancellorship in June 1919) lashed out against the left flank of the workers’ movement, rounding up 400 USPD and KPD activists in the Ruhr region alone and banning rallies and demonstrations by both parties throughout Germany. And on 13 January, while SPD deputies and their bourgeois allies were voicing their approval of legislation which purportedly ushered in a new era of class peace in the factories and mines of Germany, outside on the steps of the Reichstag building, the Weimar police were pumping lead into a vast crowd of workers demonstrating against the passage of this self-same bill. Dozens of workers were slaughtered, and many more wounded in this show of brute force against the revolutionary wing of the proletariat.

But as has so often been the case in such situations, the 13 January massacre did not placate the anti-Weimar alliance of Junkers, officers and industrialists. On the contrary they saw this sharp shift to the right on the part of the government as an opportunity to press even more extreme policies on its leaders, as a prelude to driving the SPD out of the coalition entirely and forming a new ‘national’ cabinet firmly anchored on the hitherto oppositional parties, the DVP and DNVP. Such a policy was in fact mooted by DVP treasurer and steel tycoon Albert Vögler ^[17] at a meeting of his party’s managing committee on 3 March, but was successfully opposed by Stresemann, who by this time had opted for a tactic of gradual reduction of Social Democratic influence in the government and state.

Stresemann considered the wisest plan to be to force the holding of new elections, and to this end he joined with the DNVP leadership in pressing the government for an immediate dissolution of the Reichstag. This step had been taken mainly as a response to demands by the Entente powers that the German government deliver up to the Allies for trial as ‘war criminals’ nearly 900 military leaders, some of whom were among the most illustrious names in the Prussian officer corps. The other demand which incensed all German nationalists and militarists, and seriously concerned those bourgeois seeking to maintain an armed counter-weight against the increasingly radicalised workers’ movement, was the Allied insistence that the two strongest and most political Free Corps brigades, the Marine, under Commander Captain Erhardt, and the Baltikum, led by General Count von der Goltz, should be immediately disbanded. ^[18]

Now the group of plotters around Kapp and Lüttwitz decided that the time had come to strike, since if they delayed any longer their chief combat forces could well be dispersed when the government complied with the Allied demand. On 4 March, Lüttwitz conferred with Rudolf Heinze and Oskar Hergt, chairmen of the DVP and DNVP Reichstag fractions respectively, suggesting that they swing their parties behind Kapp’s proposed bid to unseat the government. Though eager to effect a shift towards the right in government policy, both party leaders balked at Lüttwitz’s proposal that they present the Bauer cabinet with an ultimatum, for they realised that its probable rejection would precipitate a military revolt.

News of these manoeuvrings soon leaked out, yet the government still hesitated to move decisively against the military-monarchist right for fear that in so doing, it would be compelled to rely on the strength of the working class and thus unleash a wave of militancy which would break out of the defensive limits imposed on it by the Social Democrats. ^[19] And that is in fact precisely what did happen.

On 12 March, after several days of bargaining with the Lüttwitz faction, the Bauer government found itself confronted with a mutiny by a section of its ‘own’ army leadership. Refusing to comply with a government order (ironically issued by Defence Minister Noske, founder of the Free Corps) to disband the two offending brigades, Lüttwitz ordered one of them, the Marine, which was stationed a short

distance outside Berlin at Doberitz, to march on the German capital. With swastikas on their steel helmets, and chanting the refrain which had echoed throughout Germany, Erhardt's men entered Berlin in the early hours of 13 March as Kapp and his monarchist entourage made ready to pronounce themselves the new rulers of Germany.

Kapp's brief reign dramatised the enormous gulf that separated the aims of the counter-revolutionary right from its ability to achieve them. Proclaiming all strikes to be 'treason' and 'sabotage', ^[20] the new regime looked on helplessly as its grip on Berlin and the rest of Germany was progressively undermined by the largest general strike in the history of world capitalism.

Literally nothing moved in Berlin as its entire labour force, clerical and professional as well as manual, refused to lift a finger for the illegal regime. For the first - and in all probability last - time, top ranking civil servants ignored ministers' instructions, lost safe keys, and hid rubber stamps for official documents. Chancellor Kapp's writ did not even run within the confines of the government buildings, let alone the capital or the rest of Germany. As in the early days of the November Revolution, wide sections of the middle class were drawn towards the side of the proletariat as the latter proved in action its ability and determination to act decisively against the reaction, once again giving the lie to the reformist (and after 1934, Stalinist) claim that militant action by the proletariat drives the petit-bourgeoisie into the arms of the enemies of the working class and socialism. The Kapp Putsch also proved something else that was to have an enormous bearing on the outcome of the working-class struggle to defeat fascism between 1930 and 1933. Between those two dates (in fact, to be strictly accurate, from 1929 to the middle of 1934) the Stalinist leadership of the Communist International instructed the KPD not to have any dealings at any level with either the SPD or the ADGB. All anti-fascist actions were to be conducted under the exclusive leadership of the KPD and its various affiliated organisations - the so-called 'united front from below' - on the utterly false premise that Social Democracy had turned fascist and that its leaders would under no circumstances sanction, let alone initiate, any action by its members and supporters against fascism. In forcing such a suicidal line on the KPD, the Stalinists were obliged either to distort or ignore one of the most important chapters in the history of the German workers' movement. If we were to project this Stalinist schema back from 1928, when it was first conceived, to 1920, the year of the Kapp Putsch, ^[21] we would then have to ask ourselves; who initiated the anti-Kapp general strike? And if we were to take this same Stalinist theory of 'social fascism' seriously, we would have to conclude that it either arose spontaneously, or in response to a call made by the KPD.

Reality was far more complex and, from the standpoints of theory and political tactics and strategy, infinitely richer. The anti-Kapp general strike was not in fact called by the KPD, nor the USPD (which by this time enjoyed the support of several million workers) but by that backbone of conservatism in the labour movement, the ADGB! The same trade union bureaucracy that prior to 1914 had, in the words of its leader Karl Legien, scorned the weapon of the general strike as 'general nonsense', ^[22] and throughout the imperialist war served the ruling class as the custodian of social peace in the factories and mines, the very same bureaucracy which, once again under the leadership of Legien, had done so much to divert the working class away from the struggle for state power and the expropriation of the bourgeoisie by concluding the November Working Agreement with Hugo Stinnes, now became, under the immense pressure of a thoroughly roused and politicised proletariat, the initiator of strike action for exclusively political goals.

Neither did the conduct of the Social Democrats conform to the arid schemas of 'Third Period' Stalinism. ^[23] The SPD executive jointly supported the ADGB's strike call together with the Social Democratic ministers in the cabinet. Even President Ebert permitted his name to appear on the official SPD proclamation which announced the strike call. It was evident that when it was a question of preserving their own bureaucratic privileges inside the labour movement, and positions within the government and state apparatus (both of which hinged on the continued existence of a parliamentary system and an independent workers' movement) the reformist leadership could be driven to fight for its survival, even to the extent of sanctioning or initiating mass actions by the working class. True, in the case of the Social Democratic leadership, the reformists' main concern was to restore Germany to the political situation that existed prior to 13 March, but it proved to be a policy which brought them into sharp conflict with the trade union leadership.

Sustained and driven forwards by the sheer power of the strike movement against Kapp, the ADGB executive for the first time in the history of the German labour movement found itself putting forward demands which placed it to the left of the SPD. While the Social Democrats contented themselves with

issuing directives which simply called for the restoration of 'democracy' - the very same democracy that had permitted Kapp to prepare and spring his putsch - Legien, as the leader of the central strike committee, drafted a programme which, if fully implemented, would have precipitated a head-on clash with not only monarchist intransigents, but the entire ruling class. When Kapp fled Berlin on 17 March, the ADGB proposed the following nine-point programme, pending the acceptance of which the general strike would continue:

1. 'Decisive influence' of the trade unions in the formation of a new government, and in the shaping of more radical social and economic policy.
2. Drastic and prompt punishment of all those who participated in any way in the Kapp Putsch.
3. The dismissal of Defence Minister Noske, whose Free Corps had provided the armed units for Kapp's take-over on 13 March.
4. A purge of all monarchists in the civil service and public administration.
5. 'Democratisation' of the machinery of government, giving a decisive voice to trade unions representing clerical as well as manual workers in its employ.
6. Extension of social legislation.
7. Immediate nationalisation of the mining, potash and electrical industries.
8. Expropriation of large landowners who either failed to deliver foodstuffs or did not cultivate their land intensively.
9. The dissolution of all counter-revolutionary paramilitary formations, and the establishment of a workers' militia to maintain security. ^[24]

Naturally the Social Democrats rejected the more radical of the demands put forward by their trade union colleagues, not merely for fear that acceptance would drive a wedge between the SPD and its bourgeois cabinet partners, but because reports were flooding from every major industrial region that the working class had gone over to the offensive after the fall of Kapp, and in the Ruhr and Saxony had succeeded in forming its own rudimentary organs of administration. In a situation of imminent dual power, the reformists swung over hard to the right, and immediately began to mobilise against the working class the very forces which had overturned the legal government on 13 March. Once again, as in the early days of the November Revolution, the army emerged as the supreme arbiter in the balance of power between the classes and parties of Germany, and, for the second time, it was the Social Democrats who permitted and even invited it to perform this reactionary role. With workers defecting in droves from Social Democracy, the SPD leadership eagerly clasped the proffered hand of the chief of staff, Hans von Seeckt. Reichswehr might not fire on Reichswehr, but it was only too willing to butcher the flower of the German working class. ^[25] Seeckt's order of the day to his troops declared that the German army took its stand 'in defence of peace and order against any Bolshevik and Spartacist attempt to seize power in Germany and thus strike a fatal blow at our people'.

When the gun-smoke finally cleared from the battlefields of the Ruhr and Saxony, and thousands of bereaved proletarian families had buried their dead - women, children and babies as well as men - one political fact of life became clear for millions of German workers. Social Democracy had bought the 'loyalty' of the High Command by the wanton sacrifice of the most heroic and class-conscious elements of the German proletariat. From March 1920 onwards, no government could expect to 'rule' Germany without the support of the officer corps. In periods and moments of great crisis, beneath the skin of Weimar democracy would become visible the Bonapartist outlines of the sinew, muscle and bones of the same Junker caste that stood guard over the throne of the Hohenzollerns. The events of March 1920 provided an object lesson in the class nature of even the most 'advanced' capitalist democracy.

A Balance Sheet of Kapp

The Kapp Putsch, brief and ill-conceived though it was, marked a watershed in the history of Weimar Germany. ^[26] The convulsions it unleashed within an already crisis-wracked German capitalism subjected every party leadership and political programme to the severest possible test, with the political pendulum swinging at times almost hourly from right to left and back again to the right. We have already touched on the Kapp crisis as it affected the reformist wing of the workers' movement and observed how the trade union bureaucracy, by virtue of its position of leadership in the general strike, found itself violently at odds with the SPD leadership once the Kapp regime fell on 17 March. What of the conduct of

the left flank of the movement, led by the USPD and the small but rapidly growing KPD? Once again, we find that reality confronts the schematist and formalist with all manner of unpleasant surprises.

On 13 March, the day the ADGB proclaimed a general strike to bring down the Kapp regime, the KPD Central Committee published and circulated in Berlin and elsewhere a leaflet which, far from endorsing and giving a revolutionary perspective to the strike movement, actually opposed the ADGB's strike call, warning the working class 'not to lift a finger for the democratic republic', which the KPD statement deemed to be 'only a thin mask for the bourgeois dictatorship'. But that was hardly the point at issue. Kapp's putsch not only overturned the rickety edifice of Weimar parliamentary democracy, but directly and immediately threatened the very existence of all the organisations of the German proletariat, from the SPD and trade unions through the centrist USPD to the revolutionary KPD. That was the meaning of the Kapp regime's declaration banning strikes, and of its intention to transform Germany into what it called a 'working moral community'. In their justifiable anxiety to demarcate their party as sharply as possible from reformist and centrist tendencies in the workers' movement, the KPD leaders overlooked the basic fact that the struggle against bourgeois influences in the proletariat is best waged when there is the maximum freedom for political discussion, polemic and action between and inside the various groupings of the working class, and that with the curtailment or abolition of these conditions, the political and theoretical clarification of the proletariat and its vanguard is gravely impaired.

The KPD leadership, which to a large extent had still to free itself from putschist and sectarian concepts of struggle and leadership, believed that Kapp's Putsch, by instituting a regime of naked bourgeois repression, would actively assist in this process of political clarification, and that therefore the sooner the hated Weimar republic was overthrown, the better:

The Ebert Republic, the bourgeois democracy, can no longer be saved; it is merely an empty pretence, merely a cracked mask for the capitalist dictatorship... The revolutionary proletariat remains in chains. Thousands of revolutionary leaders are in protective custody... The situation is crystal clear. The watchword is evident: all revolutionary workers must rally around the flag of the proletarian dictatorship. ^[27]

Crystal clear to the KPD perhaps, but not to those millions of workers who were either still loyal supporters of the SPD, or were making their way to the left through the centrist-dominated USPD. The KPD offered no fighting programme to combat the very real menace posed by Kapp's regime, but merely noisy propaganda for the dictatorship of the proletariat. Its leaders failed to devise a tactical bridge between the struggle against Kapp and the final battle for state power. But this sectarian line could not be sustained for more than a day. On 14 March, with 12 million strikers defying Kapp, the KPD performed a rapid about-turn.

The party's opposition to the strike ran completely counter to the unprecedented upsurge of united militancy that the putsch had unleashed in the entire working class, and was resulting in the KPD being subjected to calculated attacks by Social Democracy for its refusal to join the battle to defend the basic democratic rights of the proletariat. Partly because of its initial mistake (and also of course due to its relative numerical smallness) the KPD was unable to wrest the political initiative from the ADGB and the USPD centrists. Serious attempts, however, were made to rectify the blunder of 13 March, and to this end the KPD declared eight days later (that is, *after* the fall of Kapp) that it would function as a 'loyal opposition' to a 'workers' government' of the type proposed by the ADGB in its nine-point programme. ^[28]

Taken together with the early KPD's other leftist deviations - the refusal of certain of its leaders to take part in parliamentary elections and work in the reformist trade unions - the Kapp experience was destined to acquire enormous political significance after 1928, when, under the Stalinist leadership of Ernst Thälmann, ultimatism and abstentionism were raised from episodic errors into an entire system of tactics and strategy. Stalin's theory of 'social fascism', forced on what was by far the largest section of the Comintern outside of the CPSU, prevented those millions of workers in and close to the KPD learning the political lessons of the leftist mistakes committed at the outset of the Kapp Putsch, since 'Third Period' Stalinism had now made these false tactics mandatory for the entire international movement.

Stalinism thus acted - and still does - as a political and theoretical chloroform, dulling the sensitivities of the proletariat, preventing it from assimilating the lessons of its past struggles in order to betray those of the present and future.

The same cannot be said of the more politically aware elements in the ruling class and the extreme counter-revolutionary right. But before turning to their assessment of the Kapp Putsch, and the changes in

their tactical and strategic thinking that were occasioned by its demise, it will be necessary to look briefly at the rise and fall of the Kapp regime as it affected relations between the various factions inside Germany's main bourgeois party, the DVP. As late as 4 March 1920 (nine days before the Kapp Putsch) Stresemann had written to a party colleague that he rejected the policy advocated by some of the DVP's heavy industrialists, which was to drive the Social Democrats out of the government coalition. This would, he wrote, 'force them over into the camp of the Independents and the Bolsheviks'. Stresemann said he favoured 'the elimination of the dominant influence of the Social Democrats, if possible through a cabinet in which the middle-class parties predominate'. At this stage, he certainly did not desire or envisage a head-on, least of all violent, clash with the SPD. Yet the Kapp Putsch, whose goals if not methods were shared by Stresemann's right-wing industrialist critics in the DVP, found this apostle of moderation adapting to the military dictatorship with remarkable suppleness.

On the day of the putsch, Stresemann and other DVP leaders met in Berlin to determine their party's attitude to Kapp's regime. The consensus proved to be that though Kapp's methods were questionable from a constitutional point of view, his goals were admirable. ^[29]

Stresemann hoped that his party, while having reservations about certain of Kapp's measures, could exploit the initial success of the putsch to extract concessions from the ejected government on the composition of a future, more constitutional cabinet. This tactic necessitated the DVP performing the role of intermediary between the Kapp regime and the deposed government leaders, who after a brief sojourn in hostile Dresden (army leaders there were openly sympathetic to Kapp), set up their 'exile' headquarters in Stuttgart. The meeting of 13 March agreed to dispatch a three-man deputation to Kapp, to sound out the new 'Chancellor' on his policies. On hearing their favourable reports, Stresemann declared:

We must seek a line which on the one hand will make no difficulties for the new government but which will leave open the possibility of our acting as an intermediary between Dresden and Berlin... The *faits accomplis* are recognised, but we demand that the present illegal situation be promptly brought into accord with the law.

This was how things stood on the evening of 13 March. But by the next morning, unanimity within the DVP leadership was shattered by the impact of the workers' general strike, which to all but the most obtuse bourgeois was clearly capable of bringing Kapp to his knees in a matter of days. What Stresemann had predicted in his letter of 4 March - that any attempt to force the SPD out of the government would drive its supporters into a united front with the USPD and KPD workers - had indeed come about.

Two main groups emerged; one favouring a rapprochement with the deposed government (which if the general strike were successful, would soon become the effective ruler of Germany again), the other, 'hard-line' faction advocating continued support for Kapp. The latter group was led by Oskar Maretzky, who had been offered the post of Berlin Police Commissioner by Kapp as an inducement to swing the rest of the DVP leadership behind the putsch. Not for the last time, Stresemann found himself holding the balance within his party between the pro-Weimar 'collaborationists' and the anti-republican extremists. Should the putsch fail (as now seemed likely) and the DVP not detach itself from Kapp in good time, then the prospects of cobbling together a Weimar coalition dominated by the bourgeois parties and depending on the toleration of the Social Democrats were ruined for years, if not for good. He therefore despatched Reichstag fraction chairman Heinze to Dresden, who reported that the Saxon Landtag (state parliament) fraction of the DVP had decided to support the legal government temporarily in residence there. Stresemann himself meanwhile met government party leaders still in Berlin, and proposed to them a compromise solution whereby a provisional government nominated by President Ebert would replace both the Kapp regime and the deposed cabinet of Chancellor Bauer. Consistent with his tactics of using the Kapp regime as a lever to shift the political centre of gravity rightwards, Stresemann proposed that this provisional government should award the strategic post of Economics Minister, which until March 1920 had been in the hands of parties who sought to curb the power and influence of the Ruhr tycoons, to the DVP.

But before Stresemann's plan could be properly considered (and it should be remembered that those who were negotiating with him were not empowered to do so by their respective parties) the crisis took another turn for the worse so far as the bourgeois of the DVP were concerned. The general strike, now in its third day, was developing a momentum and aim of its own which far transcended the limited political goals of those in the deposed government who had either called or supported it. It was no longer a question for Stresemann of facilitating the smoothest possible transition back towards 'constitutional' rule with a minimum of damage to the prestige of his party and the maximum of political concessions

extracted from a revamped Weimar coalition. On 16 March, and without even consulting any fellow DVP leaders, Stresemann visited Kapp's Chief of Staff, Colonel Max Bauer, in order to negotiate the withdrawal of the regime in such a way as to prevent the working class from seizing the political initiative before the old government could re-establish its authority and somewhat tarnished reputation. Stresemann's ploy had the backing of a section of the DDP leadership, who like Stresemann feared that the anti-Kapp strike movement was now becoming a danger to the bourgeoisie as a whole, and not merely that small fraction of it which had either supported or sympathised with the putsch.

The right-wing Social Democrats Paul Hirsch and Albert Südekum, seeing that the general strike had escaped their control, also favoured a graceful exit being arranged for Kapp, Lüttwitz and their chief aides, and only withdrew at the last moment from direct talks with Lüttwitz when instructed to do so by their party executive. The meeting, whose main arrangements had been made by Stresemann, went ahead with representatives present from the DNVP, the DVP, Centre and DDP. Pro and anti-Weimar party leaders alike undertook to work for an amnesty for the Kappists, following which Lüttwitz wrote out his resignation. On 17 March, at 3.30pm, the Kapp government ceased to exist. Stresemann now hoped that he and his allies in the other bourgeois parties could insert themselves into the vacuum created by its demise. Imagine Stresemann's consternation when the next day, the government on whose behalf he had ostensibly been negotiating repudiated the deal with Lüttwitz. Yet again, the DVP found itself with the necessity of undertaking a sharp tactical manoeuvre, only this time towards the left.

On 18 March, after a party executive meeting called to discuss the crisis (hourly worsening as it became evident that the ADGB would not be able to call off the general strike), the DVP issued another statement on the Kapp events, this time trying to put a constitutional and legalistic gloss on the party's ambivalent, to say the least, attitude and conduct over the previous five days:

What we had to do in the face of the forcible overthrow of 13 March was prescribed for us by the national and liberal character of the DVP... it was impossible for us to leave the path of organic, constitutional development. Accordingly, we must condemn decisively any violent undertaking directed against the constitution and any use of our troops... for an irresponsible undertaking threatening the very existence of the Reich. ^[30]

(This final act of disengagement from the discredited and defeated rebels was to serve the DVP in good stead some three months later when, after the Reichstag elections of 6 June, the old Weimar coalition lost its overall majority and had to make way for a new Cabinet which both excluded the SPD and for the first time in the life of the young republic, allotted two portfolios to the party of Stresemann.)

As we have already suggested, the ways in which the Kapp Putsch was evaluated by various elements of the ruling class and the counter-revolutionary Right greatly influenced the contours of bourgeois strategy for the remaining years of the Weimar Republic. Chief of Staff Hans von Seeckt, one of the ablest brains to grace the leadership of the Prussian officer corps, drew the conclusion that a government which relied for support on the armed forces alone was doomed to collapse, a view which he conveyed in his report (quoted in Chapter XI) to President Ebert of 26 June 1920. Many other high ranking officers shared the opinions of Seeckt on this question. ^[31]

Captain Ehrhardt, whose Free Corps Marine Brigade provided the main military forces for the Kapp regime, also considered that the coup ended in fiasco because those whose duty it had been to support it firmly and openly had conspicuously failed to do so. In an interview given to the *London Daily News* shortly after the collapse of the Kapp regime, he declared:

... the cowardice of the middle class was also responsible for our failure. The German bourgeoisie were delighted with our putsch, but they preferred to remain at home and to act innocent instead of coming to our aid.

Ehrhardt also flayed the Kapp-Lüttwitz regime for its half-heartedness in carrying out its declared policy of crushing all strikes. (Ehrhardt himself had recommended the arrest of the strike leadership, and their shooting, as the only means of forcing the workers to end the general strike):

The army must maintain order and prevent looting. The government must be ruthless and strong enough to let ten thousand in the North of Berlin starve. [North Berlin was the main proletarian quarter of the capital - RB] With such a lesson in mind the people will refrain for a time from participating in another general strike.

The politically more sophisticated Rossbach ^[32] decided after the failure of the putsch to throw in his lot with the Nazis, with whom he established contact on fleeing to Munich. Involved in training and

organising the SA, he soon became a valuable mediator between the Bavarian Nazis and the north German *volkisch* groups, founding in November 1922 the Berlin-based 'Great Germany Workers Party', with a businessman friend of Hitler's, Bruno Wenzel, as its political director (the new party was to function as a 'front' for the Nazis, who had been banned in Prussia by the state's Social Democratic government). The Pan Germans, still smarting after their reverse in March 1920, took an interest in Rossbach's party and its Nazi counterpart in Munich, and through Wenzel, offered to make them a gift of one million marks. Wenzel immediately went to Munich to ask Hitler whether he should accept, to which Hitler replied:

If you can get 10 million marks instead of one million, all the better. Politically we all depend on the Pan German League, of which we can only complain that, despite its correct analysis... up to now it has done no practical work. But now we can make up for this by using its resources.

The Nazis could win the masses, but lacked the 'resources' to do so, while the Pan Germans, never short of ready cash for a 'national' cause, could not hope to secure a popular following. The alliance, as natural as it was mutually beneficial, was to be consummated on a far more devastating scale in the last three years of the Weimar Republic.

Neither were Junker circles satisfied with Kapp's methods and strategy. Hermann Rauschnig, the Danzig Nationalist who went over to the Nazis, wrote nearly two decades after the event that the putsch:

... was an absolutely perfect model of the way not to organise a modern *coup d'état*. It revealed a complete absence of ideas of how the attack of ideas on the subject of the seizure of power... his idea that the occupation of ministries and the replacement of police by the soldiery were all that was needed for the reorganisation of the state... shows the incurable weakness of any direct military action in a revolutionary enterprise. The army may instigate a *coup d'état* but in order to carry it to completion they need political machinery... An undisguised military coup remains at all times a mere episode in the political struggle, and throws away the indispensable safeguard of the availability of the army for use in emergency in the day-to-day political struggles. ^[33]

It was generally appreciated by Kapp's rightist critics that repressive measures against the working class could only be undertaken by a regime which had extended the basis of its support beyond the state apparatus and the wealthier sections of the propertied classes. And here of course we are returned to the question with which this chapter began: namely, that in order to defeat the proletariat and prevent it from regrouping itself for future defensive or offensive battles, the bourgeoisie must resort to the 'plebeian' or 'Jacobin' solution. ^[34] This was precisely the factor that was so glaringly lacking in the preparation and execution of the Kapp Putsch. Such petit-bourgeois layers as might have been sympathetic to the aims of the coup - and they undoubtedly existed, as the June election results confirmed - never emerged as a tangible counterweight to the organised proletariat during its general strike, and failed even to raise their voices in support of the regime whilst it survived. The behaviour of the nationalist middle class - and here we are referring specifically to the 'old' petit-bourgeoisie, rooted in small property and trading - during the Kapp Putsch was in glaring contrast to the role it performed under the leadership of the Nazis more than a decade later, namely that of a human battering ram against the German labour movement.

Movements embracing millions cannot be conjured up overnight simply because the bourgeoisie might find them necessary to combat the working class. They emerge and develop, not according to the whim or desire of industrial magnates, but in response to profound social crises which shake and shatter the trust which the petit-bourgeois masses have in the efficacy of the methods of parliamentary democracy, and to the extent that the working class fails, by virtue of the inadequacies of its leadership, to convince these exploited and frustrated middle-class masses that salvation lies in the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and the construction of genuine socialism, and not in a fictitious struggle against the 'thralldom of interest' and the creation of a bogus 'people's community' in which monopoly capital, now decked out in its National 'Socialist' finery, continues to rule supreme, grinding down the 'small man' and reducing him to pauperism as never before.

Large fascist movements are the outcome of a whole complex of conjunctural events and processes in which the subjective and objective mutually interpenetrate, and this is illustrated perfectly by the development of the Nazi Party between the Kapp Putsch and its own abortive bid to seize power in November 1923.

Towards the Munich Putsch

Like those we have already quoted, Hitler regarded the Kapp Putsch as a political blunder of the first magnitude, even though he shared the aims of its main perpetrators. ^[35] In a conversation with Otto Strasser (who had, as a former student member of the SPD, been active in the struggle against Kapp), Hitler countered charges that the putsch had been unconstitutional by answering that 'one must not be satisfied with the letter, one must penetrate to the spirit. The Kapp Putsch was necessary, though it was ineffectively carried out.' ^[36] Hitler returned to this question in a speech delivered on the first anniversary of the formation of the Nazi regime, on this occasion stressing the 'bourgeois' inhibitions and cowardice of Kapp's accomplices:

When the Kapp Putsch was at an end and those who were responsible for it were brought before the Republican courts, then each held up his hand and swore that he knew nothing, had intended nothing and wished nothing. That was what destroyed the bourgeois world - that they had not the courage to stand behind their act, that they had not the courage to step before the judge and say: Yes, that is what we wanted to do; we wanted to destroy this state. This courage they lacked and therefore they have suffered shipwreck.

Together with the already-quoted remarks by Hitler on the political shortcomings of those who led and comprised the Free Corps, these judgements on Kapp help us to understand why Hitler was so anxious to build a movement that while ready to accept financial assistance from army sympathisers and to exploit the army's natural inclination to favour and even to protect organisations of a 'national' coloration, would maintain its political independence from any section of the military leadership. National Socialists would not be the foot soldiers of another Kapp, but the spearhead of the so-called 'national revolution' in which the Nazi tops, and not the general staff, would wield the supreme political power.

But this did not mean that Hitler had freed himself from the strategy which led Kapp and his allies to disaster. As he himself admitted many years later, Hitler thought of nothing but a putsch - *his own putsch* - between 1919 and 1923, and it was only after the Munich fiasco that he finally arrived at the strategic and tactical conceptions which underlay his successful bid for power in the period between 1930 and 1933. The Nazi counter-revolution could only triumph when supported 'from below' by a mass, predominantly petit-bourgeois, current, profoundly hostile to all forms of proletarian socialism, and 'from above' by an alliance with decisive sectors of the ruling class - that is, industry, banking, landowners, military, etc. Finally - and this was made possible by kind permission of Stalinism and Social Democracy - the proletariat must be so weakened, divided and disoriented by its own leadership that it cannot offer a coordinated defence against National Socialism. With these three conditions fulfilled - as they were in the last years of the Weimar Republic - the Nazis had every reason to expect victory. But they were not present to anything like the same degree in the similar period which spanned the putsches of 1920 and 1923.

To be sure, by 1921, the young Nazi Party had begun to sink roots into the soil of its Bavarian redoubt, and to attract the interest, if not the committed support, of several business leaders, aristocrats and wealthy Russian émigrés; but it was far from enjoying the influence and mass support which it commanded at a comparable stage in its successful struggle for power in the early 1930s. ^[37]

Undoubtedly support was growing among layers of the nationalist middle class for the brand of right-wing radicalism offered by the Nazis, and this can be traced through the growing influence the NSDAP exerted in Bavarian politics over the period in question. And it is also true that with the failure of Kapp, certain business leaders began to explore the possibilities of what we have termed, after Trotsky, the 'plebeian' solution to the problem of the proletariat. But these trends were only in their infancy. We said at the outset of this chapter that no class travels in a straight line towards the solution of the historical problems and crises which confront it. In the case of the German bourgeoisie, repeated attempts were made - some of them enjoying temporary and partial success - to maintain and enhance its social dominance as a ruling and exploiting class by working through existing political parties and institutions, before it came to the conclusion, under conditions of economic crisis which were not to the same extent present in 1923, that its survival as a class was incompatible with the existence of independent workers' organisations and parliamentary democracy.

One cannot of course calculate precisely how far to the extreme right the petit-bourgeoisie gravitated between the putsches of Kapp and Hitler, but there are pointers which suggest an underlying trend. Election results for the period between June 1920 and May 1924 indicate that the middle class, while

being far more volatile in its behaviour, resembled the bourgeoisie in that it tested out those parties closest to it (both to the left and right) before embarking on a more radical course of political action. In the elections to the Constituent National Assembly of January 1919, the petit-bourgeoisie edged to the left, its support for what it hoped would be a more modern and democratic Germany flowing mainly into the channel provided by the DDP, but also towards the SPD. The table below represents in statistical terms how petit-bourgeois disillusionment with Weimar democracy (which proved to be far more unstable and fraught with disasters than Wilhelmian semi-absolutism) expressed itself by a steady shift to the right, away from the DDP and the SPD towards the DVP and then, in 1924, increasingly by support for the DNVP and to a lesser extent, the Nazis.

Votes in millions	19 January 1919	6 June 1920	4 May 1924
SPD	11.5	6.1	6.0
DDP	5.6	2.3	1.7
DVP	1.3	3.9	2.7
DNVP	3.1	4.2	5.7
NSDAP	-	-	1.9

The collapse of radical liberalism in the middle class, reflected in the catastrophic decline of the DDP vote, was but the obverse side of the equally steady growth of right-wing extremism in this same social layer, as the election returns for 1920 and especially 1924 indicated. (The decline in the SPD vote is mainly due to the rise of the USPD, which in 1920 secured five million votes. The bulk of its support went over to the KPD after the two parties fused at the USPD's Halle Congress in October 1920.)

But the overwhelming majority of the nationalist petit-bourgeoisie stopped short at the threshold of National Socialism. Militant monarchism, or 'dynastic patriotism', was in most cases as far as the bewildered bank clerk, pious peasant or angry artisan was prepared to go in his search for an alternative system to that created by the November Revolution, which he was now being taught to despise as the source of all his ills. ^[38]

This rightwards shift can also be traced through election returns for certain key regions of Germany, areas which after 1930 became breeding grounds for National Socialism. What also emerges is the remarkable degree to which the SPD's abject failure to act decisively against capital when it held the power in its hands subsequently produced a reaction against Social Democracy by the middle class. In East Prussia, where the Nazi vote reached 47.1 per cent of the total poll in the Reichstag elections of July 1932, we have the following picture.

In percentages	1919	May 1924
SPD	43.5	15.3
USPD	6.2	-
KPD	-	11.7
DNVP	12.8	38.9
NSDAP	-	8.6

In Lower Bavaria, another region with a large petit-bourgeois population, a similar pattern emerges, with the middle class moving away from the workers' parties (SPD, USPD and KPD) towards the right, while a section of the Catholic petit-bourgeoisie defects from the confessional BVP (Bavarian People's Party) to the Nazis.

In percentages	1919	1924
SPD	25.9	9.2
USPD	12.7	-
KPD	-	7.1
BVP	49.7	39.2

NSDAP	-	10.2
-------	---	------

In Schleswig-Holstein, one of the few regions where the Nazis actually secured an absolute majority in July 1932 (51 per cent), the first shifts to the right again accrued chiefly to the benefit of the main bourgeois parties, and to the detriment of the SPD and the liberals.

In percentages	1919	1924
SPD	45.7	24.9
USPD	3.4	-
KPD	-	10.2
DDP	27.2	8.1
DVP	7.8	12.1
DNVP	7.7	31.0
NSDAP	-	7.4

These statistics tell us some, though by no means all, of the story of Hitler's failure in November 1923. The observed shift in the petit-bourgeoisie away from liberalism and the reformist flank of the workers' movement towards the extreme right, consummated and exploited by the Nazis with such deadly results for the working class in the last three years of Weimar, had assumed neither an irreversible nor hardened character in the period under review. In its struggle for mastery of the state and total domination of the proletariat, fascism requires a great deal more of its following than passive support at elections. To do its counter-revolutionary work, fascism must organise into compact armies the millions of 'small people', so disoriented by capitalist crisis and the breakdown of parliamentary democracy and so disillusioned with all forms of proletarian socialism, that they will be prepared not only to sanction *but actively to take part in* ^[39] the violent suppression of the workers' movement and the dismemberment of what remains of bourgeois democracy. All the available evidence points to the unmistakable conclusion that while the NSDAP was emerging as the focal point of the counter-revolutionary, *volkisch* right in the period which began with the French occupation of the Ruhr in January 1923 and ended with the aborted putsch some 10 months later, neither in Bavaria, where the Nazis were strongest, nor in the rest of Germany, had Hitler gathered sufficient forces to his banner to offer his movement even a remote prospect of success; especially when we remember that Hitler, while exploiting the particularist prejudices of the Bavarian clerical right against Berlin, in fact intended to use his Munich stronghold as the base camp for the long-awaited march on the German capital, from where he would then launch, Mussolini-style, a nation-wide campaign to cleanse Germany of Marxism (under which heading he of course included the Social Democrats).

Apart from running counter to the policy then being pursued by Chancellor Stresemann, ^[40] who after the collapse of the revolutionary threat in Saxony and Thuringia, was anxious to return as quickly as possible to conditions of bourgeois normality (which of necessity involved not the suppression of, but collaboration with, Social Democracy), Hitler's bid for power, if temporarily successful, would have immediately run aground on the same rocks that wrecked the Kapp regime.

Even though the tremendous reverse suffered in the autumn of 1923 gravely impaired its offensive capacity, there could be no doubting the determination and ability of the German proletariat to wage defensive battles should the extreme right have successfully defied Stresemann and sought to impose a Mussolini-type regime in Germany. Hitler in fact admits as much in *Mein Kampf*, when in the chapter 'The Trade Union Question', he states quite candidly that the Nazi movement as it existed in the pre-putsch period lacked both the forces and leadership necessary to challenge, let alone defeat, the German trade unions. The sheer magnitude of the task that confronted the Nazis at that time is accurately reflected in the following passage:

Anyone who at that time would have really shattered the Marxist unions, and in place of this institution of destructive class struggle, helped the National Socialist trade union idea to victory, was among the very great men of our people, and his bust would some day have had to be dedicated to posterity in the Valhalla at Regensburg. But I did not know of any head that would have fitted such a pedestal... Today the National Socialist movement must combat a colossal

gigantic organisation which has long been in existence, and which is developed down to the slightest detail. The conqueror must always be more astute than the defender if he wants to subdue him. The Marxist trade union fortress can today be administered by ordinary bosses; but it will only be stormed by the wild energy and shining ability of a great man on the other side. If such a man is not found, it is useless to argue with fate and even more useless to attempt forcing the matter with inadequate substitutes. Here we must apply the maxim that in life it is sometimes better to let a thing lie for the present than to begin it badly or by halves for want of suitable forces. ^[41]

It would require a decade more of false leadership, the demoralisation brought about by permanent mass unemployment, the backing of important sections of big business, and a middle class driven to despair by the prospect and onset of economic ruin, before Hitler could tackle this task of the destruction of German trade unionism. But having stressed those factors and relationships which militated against a successful Nazi bid for power in 1923, we must never neglect that which it undoubtedly contained in embryo - the triumph of 10 years later.

The early and last years of the Weimar Republic were similar in that in each period, profound economic crisis propelled the leaders of big business towards openly dictatorial forms of rule. Demands for 'strong government' or a 'strong man' went hand in hand with concerted pressure to liquidate all the social gains of the November Revolution - collective bargaining, works councils, social welfare, the eight-hour day, etc. But as we have already pointed out, the ways and means by which this attack on the working class and bourgeois democracy was launched differed in several vital respects. In 1933, despairing of their own traditional parties being able to carry through the necessary counter-revolutionary measures, heavy industry and finance opted for a Hitler regime, and delegated political power to his armed and unruly 'plebeians'.

No such solution was envisaged in the period preceding the Munich Putsch, *not even by Hitler himself*. With a membership barely reaching 50 000 (mostly concentrated in and around Munich), and an active SA strength of far less, the Nazi Party, when it figured in ruling-class strategy at all, could only expect to be allotted the role of auxiliary in any bid to overturn the Republic, with Hitler figuring as the 'drummer boy' for the real wielders of power. Indeed, perhaps 'overturn' is too strong a term, for what the majority of economic and military leaders desired at this stage was not so much a violent coup *à la Kapp* (for obvious reasons) but a sharp shift to the right inside the Cabinet, allied with a strengthening of Presidential powers through the use of Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution. Matters were also complicated by the rifts continually opening up inside the DVP between Stresemann, who after the Kapp Putsch was calling for acceptance of the Republic and collaboration with the SPD, and the heavy industrialists led by Vöglger and Quaatz, who proposed a bloc with the DNVP. ^[42]

So while on the one hand reactionary industrialists and army officers discreetly encouraged and financed the various *volkisch* and paramilitary leagues sprouting up all over Germany, they at the same time exploited their growth to exert more pressure on the government and the reformists for even more far-reaching concessions to the monopolies. Already in August 1922, Stinnes and Thyssen had launched a campaign to abolish the eight-hour day and greatly to curb the power of trade unions and works councils in the factories and mines. On 30 October, the SPD replied that it would never yield on the question of the eight-hour day, a pledge that was put to the test and found wanting a year later.

Earlier that month, Thyssen had addressed an open letter to the leftward-leaning Centre Party Chancellor Dr Wirth which in effect called on him to end his policy of collaboration with the reformists, declaring that: 'Germany's salvation can only come from a return to the Ten-Hour Working Day!' Two weeks later, on the fourth anniversary of the November Revolution, Stinnes also took the offensive in a speech to the National Economic Council of the Republic:

I do not hesitate to say that I am convinced that the German people will have to work 10 hours per day for the next 10 to 15 years... The preliminary condition for any successful stabilisation is, in my opinion, that wage struggle and strikes be excluded for a long period... we must have the courage to say to the people: 'For the present and for some time to come you will have to work overtime without overtime payment.'

This trend towards dictatorship, ever present behind the Weimar façade, was greatly accentuated by the onset of the 1923 hyper-inflation. ^[43] But at first, the French Occupation of the Ruhr in January 1923 (occasioned by Germany defaulting on its reparation payments to France) revived the moods of August 1914. The Social Democrats were once again to be found in the embrace of even the most extreme

nationalists as, patriots all, they rallied to Chancellor Cuno's call for 'passive resistance' in the Ruhr against the army of occupation. A 'general strike' was proclaimed that had official government approval, Cuno even going to the extent of paying the striking workers' wages for the duration of the action (thereby greatly exacerbating the already acute inflationary situation). Only the Nazis on the right, and the KPD on the left, declined to join this so-called 'united front'.

Hitler's position was quite consistent with his overall strategy, which demanded the destruction of the internal foes of the 'German awakening' before starting out on any war of revenge against its foreign enemies:

Just as in 1918 we paid with our blood for the fact that in 1914 and 1915 we did not proceed to trample the head of the Marxist serpent once and for all, we would have to pay most catastrophically if in the spring we did not avail ourselves of the opportunity to halt the activity of the Marxist traitors and murderers of the nation for good. Any idea of real resistance to France was utter nonsense if we did not declare war against those forces which five years before had broken German resistance on the battlefields. Only bourgeois minds can arrive at the incredible opinion that Marxism [that is, Social Democracy, for it was the SPD that had been enrolled into the national front against France - RB] might now have changed, and that the scoundrelly leaders of 1918, who then coldly trampled two million dead underfoot, the better to climb into the various seats of government, now in 1923 were suddenly ready to render their tribute to the national conscience... No more than a hyena abandons carrion does a Marxist abandon treason... Regardless of what type of resistance was decided on, the first requirement was always the elimination of the Marxist poison from our national body... it was then the very first task of a truly national government to seek and find the forces which were resolved to declare a war of annihilation on Marxism, and then to give these forces a free road; it was not their duty to worship the idiocy of 'law and order'... No, at that time a really national government should have desired disorder and unrest, provided only that amid the confusion a basic reckoning with Marxism at last became possible and actually took place... It should have been borne in mind that the bloodiest civil wars have often given rise to a steeled and healthy people... in the year 1923 the most brutal thrust was required to seize the vipers that were devouring our people. Only if this were successful did the preparation of active resistance have meaning. ^[44]

Hitler's scorn for the 'political bourgeoisie' (that is, Wirth, Cuno and Stresemann, and those who supported them in their policy of collaboration with Social Democracy) was limitless as it was impotent:

At that time I often talked my throat hoarse attempting to make it clear, at least to the so-called national circles, what was now at stake, and that if we made the same blunder as in 1914 and the years that followed, the end would inevitably be the same as in 1918. Again and again I begged them to give free rein to Fate, and to give our movement an opportunity for a reckoning with Marxism; but I preached to deaf ears. They all knew better, including the chief of the armed forces [von Seeckt], until at length they faced the most wretched capitulation of all time. Then I realised in my innermost soul that the German bourgeoisie was at the end of its mission and is destined for no further mission. ^[45]

But was Hitler opposed to the policies being advocated by these 'national circles', which as we know included men prominent in both business and military affairs? Once again, it is evident that the fierceness of Hitler's polemic was directed not against the goals of the bourgeoisie, which were in essence shared by Hitler (those of a revived German imperialism and a tamed proletariat) but against the means by which they sought to achieve them. Thus we read in *Mein Kampf* that

... if Herr Cuno, instead of proclaiming his subsidised general strike and setting it up as the foundation of the 'united front', had only demanded two more hours of work from every German, the 'united front' swindle would have shown itself up on the third day. Peoples are not freed by doing nothing, but by sacrifices.' ^[46]

So the Nazis stood, like Stinnes, Thyssen, Vögler and the rest, *for the abolition of the eight-hour day*, just as they echoed the demand of heavy industry for an end to the 'tyranny of the works councils' and the power of the trade unions. ^[47]

Nazi preparations for a coup gained momentum and support at the precise moment when an entire section of heavy industry moved over into opposition to the newly-formed Stresemann government. ^[48] When it was learned that no less than four portfolios were to be allotted to the SPD (with Finance going to the

hated 'Marxist' Rudolf Hilferding), Vögler and Quatz staged a walk-out by a group of right-wing DVP deputies from the Reichstag. At the same time, the Stresemann government was bitterly criticised by the DNVP and its ultra-rightist allies outside parliament for submitting to France by calling off the passive resistance on 26 September. And like so many of its predecessors, the new administration at once found itself assailed from all sides. In Saxony and Thuringia, Communists joined with left Social Democrats to form coalition 'workers' governments' that were intended by the KPD to serve as a central German base for launching a revolution throughout the country, while to the south, Hitler's preparations for a coup were nearing completion. As at the time of the Kapp Putsch, Stresemann's first concern was to counter the threat from the left before turning to negotiate with the extreme right. On the same day that passive resistance was wound up in the Ruhr, the government proclaimed a state of emergency throughout the Reich, which until further notice was to be governed under Article 48 by the Minister of Defence Otto Gessler (who had succeeded Noske in this post after the Kapp Putsch). Seeckt's attitude in this crisis was summed up in his reply to the Pan-German Heinrich Class, who in September 1923 invited von Seeckt to throw his and the army's authority and prestige into the scales on the side of the anti-Weimar right, whose leaders were at that very moment collaborating with Hitler's bid to seize power in Bavaria. In a letter to Class, dated 24 September 1923, Seeckt declared that what Class proposed was:

... a violation of the Constitution, an act of sedition. I tell you I will fight to the last shot against those of the left, the role of the *Reichswehr* is to maintain the unity of the Reich, and those who compromise this are its enemies, from whichever side they come.

(Another illustrious Junker officer was not quite so loyal. The future President von Hindenburg, when asked to send his greetings to Hitler on the eve of the Munich Putsch, replied: 'You may, but tell him also I must warn him against any rash action; the Fatherland cannot stand another Kapp Putsch.' Hindenburg, re-elected as President with SPD support in April 1932, had in fact visited Munich in August 1922, where he met his old High Command comrade Ludendorff, together with not only a group of monarchists, but several leading members of the NSDAP!)

The sudden deepening of the political crisis in September together with the accelerated devaluation of the mark served as a signal for big employers to intensify their pressure on the cabinet to abolish the eight-hour day. The SPD, having pledged itself to oppose such a measure the previous October, now began to retreat before the Ruhr barons. The SPD cabinet members would agree to a temporary suspension of the eight-hour day for the duration of the crisis if the government agreed to the face-saving formula that it would not be officially included in an economic enabling act then in preparation (the act was passed with SPD support on 13 October). The wedge had been inserted, and the bourgeois parties had no intention of withdrawing it. Meanwhile, headed by Stinnes and Thyssen, ^[49] a group of the most intransigent anti-Weimar employers were preparing to support Hitler's counter-revolutionary putsch in Munich. They did not for one moment intend Hitler to emerge from the coup as the leader of a new 'national' government, but rather to exploit the situation created by a successful putsch to force their own terms on Berlin. And in this undertaking, they undoubtedly hoped to secure the active support of the general staff. Stinnes' plan, for such it was, has been recorded for posterity by Alanson B Houghton, a United States official, who met Stinnes on 21 September 1923, and discussed with the industrialist the political crisis then maturing in Germany. According to Houghton's account, Stinnes said:

If Germany was to live, production must be increased... factories and workshops were ready. German labour, however, must work longer and harder. He said he believed German workmen were underpaid and he could, he thought, double or even treble their wages if a normal 10-hours working day were given in return. [Precisely the demand made by Hitler! - RB]. He is convinced however that German labour will not yield to the necessity and that therefore it must be forced. Then he said a dictator with power to do whatever is necessary must be found. Such a man must speak the language of the people and be himself a bourgeois, and such a man was ready. A great movement starting from Bavaria and determined to restore the former royalties was imminent... The movement would be joined by all the right parties and by a considerable group of moderate men in the centre and would mean primarily a fight against Communism since the Communist wing would lead the workmen in opposition. I asked him if the industrialists would unite with the movement. Stinnes replied that they would. The plan as outlined by Stinnes is briefly this: by the middle of October three or possibly four million men will be out of work. The Communists will try to take advantage of this to start a revolutionary outbreak... Directly the Communists begin, Ebert in the name of the Republic will name a man, or possibly a committee of three as dictator

and put the entire military force under the dictator's control. Thenceforward parliamentary government will be at an end. The Communists will be put down with a savage hand and if a general strike should be called that too will be suppressed by force. Socialism as a politically possible method of national existence in Germany will, it is hoped, be thus definitely eliminated and the laws and enactments which hamper production and serve no useful purpose will be forthwith repealed. ^[50]

Hitler was to be the 'drummer boy' or the pied piper, but the rhythm and tune were to be called by big business. Mooted for the 'directory' that was to replace a parliamentary-based cabinet were Kahr, the Bavarian General Commissar (subsequently press-ganged by Hitler into supporting his putsch), Otto Wiedfeldt, a former Krupp director and currently German Ambassador to Washington, and Stinnes' own banker, Friedrich Minnow, who had in fact served as mediator between Stinnes and the Nazis in the pre-putsch period. Pressure from this quarter became so intense that following the collapse of the revolutionary threat in Saxony and Thuringia on 27 October (army units occupied the two states unopposed, and ousted the SPD - KPD coalition governments), the SPD withdrew from the cabinet. Von Seeckt, who was known to favour the Stinnes plan for a *troika*, now asked Ebert to form a new rightist cabinet that would be able to reach agreement with the Bavarians, who were now openly in revolt against Berlin's authority. At this stage it became clear that while the army and big business alike sought to impose what they termed a *Burgherblok* government on a reluctant Ebert and Stresemann, with the ending of the revolutionary crisis in central Germany they no longer had need of Hitler's desperadoes, whose declared aim it was to seize power in Bavaria and then 'invade' Red Saxony and Thuringia to put down the Marxists. Hitler's putsch, when it came, was therefore launched in a political situation that was altogether different from the one in which it had been conceived and in which it had attracted the interests and guarded support of counter-revolutionary circles in industry and the army. While an understanding with the clerical-monarchist Bavarian government undoubtedly had attractions for the Stinnes - Seeckt group (as it did indeed for the more moderate Stresemann), clear-thinking rightists had no use for a Hitler regime whose declared aim of waging bloody civil war on the proletariat could only serve to provoke the working class to rebellion, just as Kapp's Putsch had done in March 1920.

Hitler made no attempt to conceal his counter-revolutionary aims and strategy, no doubt calculating that the more openly he proclaimed them, the more support he could hope to attract from the 'national' classes. ^[51] Typical of his agitation were two speeches delivered in the late summer, the first of which, made on 1 August, made a direct comparison between the prevailing situation in Germany and that which existed between the two Russian revolutions of February and October 1917:

We stand at the beginning of the second revolution in Germany. Just as after Kerensky in Russia, so after the lemonade [November] revolution, the real Soviet dictatorship will be set up... [The choice is between] Swastika or Soviet star: the despotism of the International or the Holy Empire of German nationality... Today the last decisive struggle rests between the Swastika and the star of the Soviet.

On 5 September, Hitler threw down an open challenge to the Stresemann government. Since it had extended the hand of friendship to the SPD 'Marxists', Berlin was now the centre of the anti-German conspiracy:

Our movement was not formed with any election in view, but in order to spring to the rescue of the people... at the moment when in fear and despair it sees the approach of the Red Monster... There will be two possibilities: either Berlin marches and ends up in Munich, or Munich marches and ends up in Berlin. A Bolshevik north Germany and a National Bavaria cannot exist side by side... On us in Bavaria falls the task to be the cell whence recovery shall come to the rest of the Reich.

Denied at the last moment, due to the changed situation in central Germany, of the support his coup required to stand the least prospect of success, Hitler's brown-shirts were defied and routed by a company of a hundred policemen.

So with measures already in hand both at home and internationally to restore value to the mark, and to rebuild an economy torn by class strife and the ravages of reparations, and with the revolutionary left and counter-revolutionary right both temporarily eliminated as important factors in Germany's internal political development, the road was clear for the German bourgeoisie to enjoy a period of stability it had not experienced since the birth of the republic four years previously.

Yet for those who followed closely the trial of Hitler and his accomplices - and in retrospect there seems to have been precious few who did - there were ample warnings that as far as the leader of German fascism was concerned, the failure of the Munich Putsch was merely a temporary setback for a movement destined to seize power and purge the nation of Marxism. The trial, which began in Munich on 26 February 1924, was converted with the tacit agreement of the court into a flaming indictment of the Berlin government and the 'November criminals' whose creation the hated republic was. Who would guess that the following words were uttered not by Hitler's defence council, *but by the State Prosecutor?*

Hitler came of a simple background; in the Great War as a brave soldier he showed a German spirit, and afterward, beginning from scratch and working hard, he created a great party, the NSDAP, which is pledged to fighting international Marxism and Jewry, to settle accounts with the November criminals, and to disseminating the national idea among all layers of the population, in particular the workers. I am not called upon to pass judgement on his party programme, but his honest endeavour to reawaken the belief in the German cause among an oppressed and disarmed people is certainly to his credit... Hitler is a highly gifted man who, coming of simple background, has, through serious and hard work, won for himself a respected place in public life. He dedicated himself to the ideas which inspired him to the point of self-sacrifice, and as a soldier he fulfilled his duty in the highest measure. He cannot be blamed for exploiting the position which he created for himself to his own purposes.

It came as no surprise when Hitler, found guilty of treason, received the shortest possible prison sentence for the crime that the law permitted - five years - of which he served less than one, leaving the fortress of Landsberg on 20 December 1924 free to resume his war on the Weimar Republic and the German workers' movement. But it is with Hitler's valedictory speech to the Munich court that we end this chapter, a speech full of foreboding for the German proletariat and, indeed, for workers throughout Europe:

I believe that the hour will come when the masses, who stand today in the street with our Swastika banner, will unite with those who fired upon them... I aimed from the first at something a thousand times higher than being a minister. I wanted to become the destroyer of Marxism. I am going to achieve this task, and if I do, the title of minister will be an absurdity as far as I am concerned... At one time I believed that perhaps this battle against Marxism could be carried on with the help of the government. In January 1923 I learned for the first time that that was just not possible. The hypothesis for the victory over Marxism is not that Germany must be free, but rather Germany will only be free when Marxism is broken. At that time I did not dream that our movement would become great and cover Germany like a flood. The army that we are building grows from day to day, from hour to hour. Right at this moment I have the proud hope that once the hour strikes these wild troops will merge into battalions, battalions into regiments, regiments into divisions.

The 'destroyer of Marxism'... Yet of the countless thousands who were destined to be exterminated by National Socialism, how many heeded this dire warning? And of those who did, how many had even begun to assimilate the lessons of the tumultuous years and months which ended with the failure of Hitler's putsch, a period of missed revolutionary opportunities, of Social Democratic treachery, of determined attempts to drive the German proletariat back to the conditions of repression that it had endured under Bismarck?

The next decade was to give its answer.

Appendix: The German Communist Party

It is impossible to overestimate the historical consequences of the defeat suffered by the German working class in the autumn of 1923, when the economic crisis and the political disarray of the ruling class presented the German Communist Party with an unprecedented opportunity for mobilising the proletariat for the conquest of power. Had the KPD pursued an aggressive audacious policy directed towards the seizure of power in the latter half of 1923, there is little doubt that its careful preparatory work over the previous two years would have been crowned by success. National Socialism would have been nipped in the bud, and the road cleared for the triumph of the socialist revolution throughout Central and Western Europe. It was for this purpose, that of world revolution, that the Communist International had been founded in March 1919. Its leadership, comprised of the most advanced cadres of all the world's Communist parties, was intended to function as the general staff of the international working class in its

life or death battle with the forces of international capital and their counter-revolutionary agencies. All the Bolshevik leadership, Stalin not excluded, recognised and repeatedly emphasised that upon the outcome of this international struggle between the classes hinged the fate of the Soviet Union itself. And Germany, the foremost economic power in Europe, occupying a strategic central position between the victorious imperialist allies and the USSR, and possessing the politically most mature and best organised detachment of this world proletarian army, inevitably became the main battleground for this titanic conflict.

Utterly false is the assertion made by the veteran British Stalinist R Palme Dutt that ‘it was not Lenin, but Trotsky, who clung to the supposedly “Marxist” axiom that the survival of the Soviet Revolution would depend on the speedy extension of the socialist revolution to Western Europe’ and that it is a ‘grand distortion and fallacy’ to say the ‘next stage [of the Russian Revolution] according to the supposed “pure” principles of Marxism should have been its extension to Western Europe, [and] that this was the universal expectation of the Bolshevik Party and pivot of Lenin’s policy...’.^[52] In the same work, Dutt insists that it was a ‘vulgar’ and ‘Trotskyist’ distortion of Marxism which ‘insisted that the Russian Revolution would be doomed unless the superior enlightened West European socialist revolution came to its rescue’.^[53] By this token, Lenin must be included amongst those Dutt describes as vulgar and Trotskyist, for in his report to the Extraordinary Seventh Congress of the Russian Communist Party, on 7 March 1918, Lenin declared quite categorically, as if he had Dutt’s allegations in mind, that ‘it is the absolute truth that without a German revolution we are doomed... At all events, under all conceivable circumstances, if the German revolution does not come, we are doomed.’^[54]

There was no evading the question of Germany, since the delay of the revolution - the direct consequence of the chauvinist, class-collaborationist policies being pursued by the Social Democrats - had compelled the Soviets to make the most far-reaching concessions to German imperialism in the peace treaty of Brest Litovsk. Long-term, as well as immediate, Bolshevik strategy therefore took as its starting point the necessity of aiding in every possible way the rapid development of the revolution in Germany, even to the extent of being prepared to sacrifice power in Russia should the triumph of the revolution in Germany demand such a risk being taken. For Germany, not Russia, was the European nation most suited to pioneering the road to world-wide socialism:

Here [in Germany] we have ‘the last word’ in modern large-scale capitalist engineering and planned organisation, *subordinated to Junker-bourgeois imperialism*. Cross out the words in italics, and in place of the militarist, Junker, bourgeois imperialist *state* put *also a state*; but of a different social type, of a different class content - a *Soviet* state... and you will have the *sum total* of the conditions necessary for socialism. Socialism is inconceivable without large-scale capitalist engineering based on the latest discoveries of modern science. It is inconceivable without a planned state organisation which keeps tens of millions of people to the strictest observance of a unified standard in production and distribution... At the same time socialism is inconceivable unless the proletariat is the ruler of the state... history... has taken such a peculiar course that it *has given birth* in 1918 to unconnected halves of socialism standing side by side like two chickens in the single shell of international imperialism. In 1918 Germany and Russia have become the most striking embodiment of the material realisation of the economic, the productive and the socio-economic conditions of the other. A successful proletarian revolution in Germany would immediately and very easily smash the shell of imperialism (which unfortunately is made of the best steel, and hence cannot be *broken by the efforts of any*... chicken and would bring about the victory of world socialism for certain, without any difficulty...^[55]

The Bolsheviks were not the only Marxists to appreciate this dialectical relationship between Germany and the Soviet Union. Rosa Luxemburg repeatedly stressed that the German working class held the key not only to its own future, but that of the revolution throughout Europe. Even before the October Revolution, she insisted on the international nature of the struggle being waged in Russia between the proletariat and the counter-revolution, emphasising that there was:

... only one serious guarantee against these natural concerns for the future of the Russian Revolution [of February 1917]: the awakening of the German proletariat, the attainment of a position of power by the German workers and soldiers in their own country, a revolutionary struggle for peace by the German people.^[56]

And in September 1918, she sought to defend charges against the Bolsheviks that they had collaborated with German imperialism in concluding the treaty of Brest Litovsk by pointing out that the treaty had been signed in order to buy time for the workers of Germany to make their own revolution:

There is only one solution to the tragedy in which Russia is caught up: uprising at the rear of German imperialism, the German mass rising [which was in fact less than two months away - RB], which can signal the international revolution to put an end to this genocide. At this fateful moment, preserving the honour of the Russian Revolution is identical with vindicating that of the German proletariat and of international Socialism. ^[57]

Hence the strategic importance and urgency of securing a revolutionary breakthrough in Germany, the most advanced and best organised stronghold of world imperialism, an imperialism moreover which by virtue of its geographic proximity to the USSR, and an ever-increasing need for certain essential raw materials which Russia possessed in abundance, posed a perpetual interventionist threat to the security of the Soviet Union. And hence, by the same token, the painstaking care with which Lenin and Trotsky especially, despite all their other pressing political and administrative tasks, followed the development of the class struggle in Germany, and the patient way in which they attempted to acquaint leaders of the young and relatively inexperienced German Communist Party with the priceless experiences acquired by Bolshevism during its preparations and struggle for power in Russia.

And this strategic importance of the German proletariat was as clearly perceived on the other side of the class divide, as can be seen from deliberations between the main representatives of the victorious imperialist powers which preceded the foundation of the League of Nations in 1919. Lloyd George, that most astute of all British bourgeois statesmen and political leaders (he was greatly admired by Hitler for his ability to ensnare the masses) declared to the Allied Supreme Council in March 1919 that

... as long as order was maintained in Germany, a breakwater would exist between the countries of the Allies, and the waters of revolution beyond [that is, the Soviet Union and Hungary]. But once that breakwater was swept away, he could not speak for France, and he trembled for his own country... [if] the people of Germany were allowed to run riot, a state of revolution among the working classes of all countries would ensue with which it would be impossible to cope.

These fears were expanded upon in Lloyd George's confidential memorandum submitted to the Allied 'Big Four', entitled *Some Considerations for the Peace Conference Before They Finally Draft Their Terms*, in which, contrary to the rapacious demands of the French imperialists, he advocated a policy of leniency towards the new rulers of Germany, lest harsher peace terms drive the masses to revolt:

The whole of Europe is filled with the spirit of revolution. There is a deep sense not only of discontent, but of anger and revolt amongst the workmen against prewar conditions. The whole existing order in its political, social and economic aspects is questioned by the masses of the population, from one end of Europe to the other... there is a danger that we may throw the masses of the population throughout Europe into the arms of the extremists whose only idea for regenerating mankind is to destroy utterly the whole existing fabric of society. These men have triumphed in Russia... The greatest danger that I see in the present situation is that Germany may throw her lot in with Bolshevism and place her resources, her brains, her vast organising power at the disposal of the revolutionary fanatics whose dream is to conquer the world for Bolshevism by force of arms. The danger is no chimera. The present [Social Democratic] government in Germany is weak; it has no prestige; its authority is challenged; it lingers merely because there is no alternative but the Spartacists, and Germany is not ready for Spartacism, as yet... If Germany goes over to the Spartacists it is inevitable that she should throw in her lot with the Russian Bolsheviks. Once that happens all Eastern Europe will be swept into the orbit of the Bolshevik revolution and within a year we may witness the spectacle of nearly 300 million people organised into a vast red army under German instructors and German generals equipped with German cannon and German machine guns and prepared for a renewal of the attack on Western Europe... If we are wise, we shall offer to Germany a peace which, while just, will be preferable for all sensible men to the alternative of Bolshevism.

We find Lloyd George returning to this theme more than a decade later, at a time when a new crisis in Germany had raised once more the spectre of a revolutionary alliance between Europe's major economic power and the USSR:

The recent growth of Communism in Germany is of the greatest danger to the whole of Europe... Germany will be much more dangerous to the world than a Communist Russia. Germany possesses the best educated and the most highly skilled working class of the whole world... I can conceive of no greater danger for Europe, yes, for the whole world, than for such a mighty Communist state to come into being in the centre of Europe - a state that will be led and supported by one of the most intelligent and disciplined people of the world. Hand in hand with Germany and under the skilled and clever leadership of the German people the significance of the Russian revolution would be multiplied a hundred fold. These two countries would provide a mighty combination. Accordingly it is advisable for all countries to make the greatest sacrifices to prevent such a catastrophic alliance from taking place. ^[58]

And even when the threat of revolution had receded following the victory of the Nazis, Lloyd George - of whom Lenin said that he 'is not only a very intelligent man, but one who has also learned something from the Marxists' - was still warning against the consequences of a socialist revolution in Germany. On 22 September 1933, this Liberal, warning as he did in 1919 against a belligerently anti-German policy, declared that:

... if the powers succeeded in overthrowing Nazism in Germany, what would follow? Not a Conservative Socialist [SPD] or Liberal regime, but extreme Communism... A Communist Germany would be infinitely more formidable than a Communist Russia. The Germans would know how to run their Communism effectively.

Lloyd George's appreciation of the decisive importance of Germany in the world-wide struggle between socialism and capitalism, formulated though it was from the standpoint of imperialism, differs but little from that of Lenin in 1918 and Trotsky in 1930. We should also recall Hitler's statement that 'Germany is today the next great war aim of Bolshevism'.

While, for obvious reasons, a detailed history of the KPD lies beyond the scope of this work, it will be necessary to assess the long-term as well as immediate significance of the errors and weaknesses of the German Communist Party, deficiencies which while having their origins in the characteristics and history of the German working-class movement, not only remained uncorrected, but became transformed after 1923 under the leadership of the Stalinised Comintern into an entire system of non-Bolshevik tactics and strategy, a system which finally produced the debacle of 1933.

While it is correct to say that ultra-leftism predominated in the KPD between the party's May 1929 congress and the victory of Hitler four years later - in fact the KPD continued to label the SPD as a 'social fascist' party for more than a year after its destruction at the hands of the Nazis - it is by no means the case that the Stalinist leadership of the Comintern in this period (Molotov, Kun, Piatnitsky, Kuusinen, Manuilsky, Knorin, Lozovsky being among the most important of its members) batted only on the leftist errors committed by the leaders of German Communism. Thus the one-sided and mechanical application of the united front by the Brandler leadership in the later summer of 1923, at a time when with the maturing of the revolutionary crisis, the break with left Social Democracy and the preparations for the insurrection were called for, was after 1928 seized upon by the KPD and Moscow Stalinists to discredit entirely the tactic of the united front between revolutionary and reformist workers' organisations. Yet the error of the KPD leadership in 1923 did not lie in its employment of this tactic, which forms an essential weapon in the armoury of the workers' movement in its struggle against reaction. It resided in the Brandler leadership's failure to accomplish in good time the transition from the period of preparation, carried out through the united front under the slogan, issued by the Comintern's 1921 congress, 'to the masses', to tactics which correspond to the objective revolutionary situation which matured after the fall of the Cuno government on 9 August. What Stalinist critics of the so-called 'Saxon mistake' (Saxony, with Thuringia, was the state where Communists joined with left Social Democrats to form a 'workers' government', a manoeuvre which predominated over the arming and political preparation of the proletariat) deliberately obscured was that this centrist orientation itself arose as an 'over-correction' of the thoroughly adventurist tactics pursued during the 'March Action' in March 1921, when on the basis of its theory of the 'revolutionary offensive', the KPD leadership (or rather a large proportion of it) attempted by artificial means to convert a partial struggle by the miners of central Germany into a national insurrection. It was only after a prolonged and at the time heated debate at the third congress of the Comintern in June 1921 that a majority of delegates rejected the theory of the 'revolutionary offensive', and the KPD leadership became convinced of the need to win the leadership of the majority of the proletariat before attempting an overturn.

The relationship between the leftist errors of 1921 and the centrist vacillations of 1923 are well described by Trotsky in his speech to the Fifth All-Union Congress of Soviet Medical and Veterinary Workers, made on 21 June 1924, where he deals in some detail with the failure of the revolution in Germany:

What was the fundamental cause of the defeat of the KPD? This, that it did not appreciate in good time the onset of the revolutionary crisis from the moment of the occupation of the Ruhr... It missed the crucial moment... It is very difficult for a revolutionary party to make the transition from a period of agitation and propaganda, prolonged over many years, to the direct struggle for power through the organisation of armed insurrection. This turn inevitably gives rise to an inner-party crisis. Every responsible Communist must be prepared for this. One of the ways of being prepared is to make a thorough study of the entire factual history of the October Revolution. ^[59] Up to now extremely little has been done in this connection, and the experience of October was most inadequately utilised by the German party... It continued even after the onset of the Ruhr crisis to carry on its agitational and propagandist work on the basis of the united front formula - at the same tempo and in the same forms as before the crisis. Meanwhile, this tactic had already become radically insufficient. A growth in the party's political influence was taking place automatically. A sharp tactical turn was needed... to ensure *in good time* the decisive tactical turn towards the seizure of power. And this was not done. This was the chief and fatal omission. On the one hand, the party expected a revolution, while on the other hand, because it had burned its fingers in the March events, it avoided, until the last months of 1923, the very idea of organising a revolution... ^[60]

The consequences of the German defeat, for the Soviet Union as well as for the workers of Germany and the rest of the capitalist world, will be discussed later on in this work. But it must be stressed here that one of its effects was to instil into not only the new KPD leadership which replaced that of Heinrich Brandler (with the blessing of Comintern chairman Zinoviev, the KPD central committee was brought under the control of the leftist faction headed by Arkadi Maslow and Ruth Fischer) but among the party's proletarian rank and file, a mistrust not only of unprincipled manoeuvres with the leaders of reformism, but a disregard for the tactic of the united front itself. And of course, this rejection of what was - and remains - an essential component of revolutionary tactics became reinforced by the treacherous policies which the SPD leadership pursued throughout the remaining years of the Weimar Republic. This basically healthy and potentially revolutionary hostility towards Social Democracy was quite cynically exploited and perverted by the Kremlin bureaucracy, and in particular by Stalin himself, to bolster a political course in Germany that not only helped preserve Social Democracy at a time when its proletarian supporters should have been deserting it wholesale for the KPD, but actively assisted the victory of the Nazis, thereby condemning the KPD itself to annihilation.

Nor is this all. The period of the high tide of Stalinist leftism, while it batted on all the KPD's opportunist errors, prevented a critical examination of its previous sectarian mistakes, since almost without exception they had been magnified a hundredfold under the sign of Stalin's theory of 'social fascism'. In its early days, the KPD refused either to work in the reformist trade unions or contest parliamentary elections, on the grounds that both tactics involved a compromise with Social Democracy and the class enemy (Lenin answers these and other leftist arguments in his *'Left-Wing' Communism*, much of which is devoted to the problems of the KPD). While the Stalinist KPD did contest elections, it compounded the party's other early leftist error by not only neglecting to enter and work consistently in the reformist (ADGB) unions, but by setting up its own 'red' breakaway unions, organised by the Revolutionary Trade Union opposition (RGO) which at its peak embraced a membership of fewer than 400 000 workers - that is, barely 50 000 more than the maximum membership of the KPD itself. Then there is the vital experience of the March Action, with its utterly false adventurist theory that a determined minority of the proletariat, by provoking a violent clash with the employers and the capitalist state, can 'galvanise' the previously passive majority into revolutionary action. While the KPD never officially endorsed this tactic during the 'Third Period', it gave ample evidence that it had completely failed to glean anything from either the March Action itself, or the discussion on tactics which ensued as a result of the KPD's policy at the Third Congress of the Comintern. To take but one example; the 1929 May Day 'confrontation' with the Berlin police, who were under the control of the Prussian Social Democratic government and the SPD Berlin police President, Karl Zörgiebel. Until 1929, Communist and Social Democratic workers had marched on the same May Day demonstration behind their own party banners. Proletarian unity was established without any mixing of slogans, banners or programmes. Third Period Stalinism, however, dictated an entirely different and far more 'revolutionary' and 'intransigent'

course. The KPD central committee, acting under orders from Moscow, announced that it would not march with the 'social fascists' on May Day (neglecting to explain how it had managed to do so on every previous occasion) and that it would hold its own march and rally through Berlin in direct rivalry and opposition to the 'social fascist' demonstration.

This decision, heralded by the Stalinist press as a master stroke of revolutionary tactics, and evidence of the KPD's resolute opposition to Social Democracy, proved to be a disaster for not only the KPD, but the entire German working class. Seizing on the golden opportunity presented to them by the new Stalinist course, the SPD administration in Berlin banned the march. Previously, the reformist leaders had had to endure Communist workers fraternising on May Day with their own members. Now Stalin's theory of 'social fascism' saved them from that discomfort, and, even more fortuitously, enabled them to set a bloody trap for the Communist workers of Berlin. The KPD leadership declared it would defy the police ban, and proceeded to march its thousands of unarmed workers into a hail of police gunfire. Instead of immediately ordering the demonstrators to disperse (the only possible way of avoiding further useless and demoralising bloodshed), the KPD leadership pressed ahead with its 'confrontation', organising the setting up of barricades in the proletarian district of Wedding, where the KPD enjoyed more support than the Social Democrats. Armoured cars were brought in, and in a matter of hours the backbone of the uprising had been crushed. The criminal role of the reformists in employing police and armoured cars to settle their differences with the Communist workers, a deed no less counter-revolutionary than their use of the Free Corps to crush the Spartacists in 1919, should not be permitted (as the Stalinists indeed hoped it would) to blind us to the fact that at no time in this second version of the March Action did those heroic workers engaged in the street and barricade fighting number more than a few thousand, and at no time did they enjoy the support or sympathy of anything like the majority of the Berlin proletariat, let alone the workers in the rest of the country.

While the May Day clashes provided the Stalinists with good propaganda material to hurl at the 'social fascists' (at least 40 workers were killed and many more injured) their consequences were calamitous so far as the German working class was concerned. Millions of Social Democratic workers, the very force the KPD should have been seeking to win to its revolutionary programme through the tactic of the united front, were either perplexed or alienated from Communism by the May Day adventure, since it was in their eyes directed not against the ruling class, but against another wing of the workers' movement and against a Berlin administration which had been elected with their votes. Instead of helping them, by fraternal discussion and through united action on specific issues, these workers, whose support was indispensable if the revolution was to succeed, were repelled by tactics they could neither understand nor endorse, and were driven back into the arms of the very reformists who had ordered the May Day massacre. Thus did the Stalinists trample on all the traditions of Leninism, and either pervert or negate the perspectives, tactics and strategy hammered out in the first four congresses of the Communist International.

Finally, there is the question of 'National Bolshevism', which reappeared in 1930 in the guise of the KPD's programme for 'National and Social Liberation'. This turn of the KPD towards the language (and even policies) of National Socialism, climaxed by the infamous alliance between the NSDAP and the KPD in the Prussian 'Red Referendum' of August 1931, was, like so many other aspects of the party's policy at this time, not a unique creation of Stalinism. The notion that German Communism could exploit the antagonism between the German bourgeoisie and the Western imperialists by allying the KPD with the anti-French Right was first conceived by the Hamburg Communists Heinrich Laufenburg and Fritz Wolffheim. They went so far as to suggest opening the ranks of the anti-Western front to officers and men of the Free Corps, who at that very time (1919) were waging their murderous war against the revolutionary workers of Germany (Laufenburg and Wolffheim also belonged to the leftist faction opposing parliamentary and trade union work). The advocates of 'National Bolshevism' argued that a defeated, dismembered and disarmed Germany could only hope to regain its old strength by forming an alliance with the Soviet Union, and that therefore this realignment would create the conditions inside Germany for a bloc between the workers, led by the KPD, and a general staff thirsting for a war of revenge against the West.

This line evoked a distorted echo on the extreme right, where *volkisch* intellectuals (some of whom, like Count Ernst zu Reventlow, later became active in the 'radical' wing of the NSDAP) took up Laufenburg's proposal and began to call for an alliance between the general staff and the proletariat for a struggle against the 'decadent' and 'plutocratic' Western democracies. The mere fact that 'National

Bolshevism' could win the approval of such mortal enemies of Communism should have served to doom the project at birth, but in fact, such was the political confusion rife among the working class and radical intellectuals at this time that Lenin found it necessary to polemicise against Laufenburg's theories in *'Left-Wing' Communism*:

... one of the undoubted errors of the German 'Lefts' lies in their downright refusal to recognise the Treaty of Versailles... It is not enough, under the present conditions of the international proletarian revolution, to repudiate the preposterous absurdities of 'National Bolshevism' (Laufenburg and others), which has gone to the length of advocating a bloc with the German bourgeoisie against the Entente. One must realise that it is utterly false tactics to refuse to admit that a Soviet Germany (if a German Soviet republic were soon to arise) would have to recognise the Treaty of Versailles for a time, and to submit to it... To give absolute, categorical and immediate precedence to liberation from the Treaty of Versailles and to give it precedence over the question of liberating other countries oppressed by imperialism, from the yoke of imperialism, is philistine nationalism. ^[61]

What then would Lenin have said about the KPD's 1930 programme of 'national and social liberation', which vied with the demagogy of the Nazis in its strident chauvinism, a programme which declared, following the example of Laufenburg's 'National Bolsheviks', that 'we Communists will tear in pieces the robber treaty of Versailles and the Young Plan and repudiate all the international debts and repayments which enslave Germany workers'?

Once again, it is a question of an initial and genuine error, committed in the search for a revolutionary solution to the problems confronting the German working class (and Lenin never doubted the *integrity* of the National Bolshevik innovators), reappearing in a new guise and in a new political situation, and no longer representing a mistake made 'in good faith', *but a deliberate falsification of Communist tactics, designed not to develop the revolutionary movement in Germany but to further the foreign policy of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union*. Only a formalist would therefore seek to equate the deviations towards nationalism that can be detected in the activity of the KPD in the Ruhr crisis of 1923 and the quite conscious alignment of the KPD with the Nazis in the Prussian Referendum eight years later.

This does not mean that these errors of 1923 can be ignored because they did not flow from a consciously anti-Bolshevik policy. Indeed, they were mistakes of orientation which can be committed by a revolutionary party in any country where the bourgeoisie, however fleetingly or partially, finds itself in conflict with the imperialist bourgeoisie of another nation. In this category must be placed the famous speech of Karl Radek on the death of the German nationalist and Free Corps officer, Albert Leo Schlageter, executed by the French army on 26 May 1923 for sabotaging industrial installations in the Ruhr. Radek's speech was delivered at a session of the Executive Committee of the Comintern, which met in Moscow from 12 to 23 June. Its theme was that the depth of the crisis in Germany, coupled with elements of national oppression that he saw in the French occupation of the Ruhr, was driving wide sections of the petit-bourgeoisie previously hostile to Communism towards an alliance with the proletariat. The Free Corps officer Schlageter typified for Radek these new forces that could be won for Communism, given a new orientation on the part of the KPD that would take into account the national sentiment of the petit-bourgeoisie. Radek's speech, in the opinion of this author, went beyond the bounds of what is permissible in undertaking this manoeuvre:

Schlageter, a courageous soldier of the counter-revolution, deserves to be sincerely honoured by us, the soldiers of the revolution... If those German Fascisti, who honestly thought to serve the German people, failed to understand the significance of Schlageter's fate, Schlageter died in vain... against whom did the German people wish to fight: against the Entente capitalists, or against the Russian people? With whom did they wish to ally themselves: with the Russian workers and peasants in order to throw off the yoke of Entente capital or for the enslavement of the German and Russian peoples? Schlageter is dead. He cannot supply the answer. His comrades in arms [that is, his companions in the Free Corps] swore there at his grave to carry on his fight. They must supply the answer: Against whom and on whose side?

We ask the honest, patriotic masses who are anxious to fight against the French invasion: How will you fight, on whose support will you rely? ... If the patriotic circles of Germany do not make up their minds to make the cause of the majority of the nation their own, and so create a front against both Entente and German capital, then the path of Schlageter was a path into the void... Germany... will be transformed into a field of bloody internal conflict, and it will be easy for the

enemy to defeat and destroy her... The powerful nation cannot endure without friends, all the more so must the nation which is defeated and surrounded by enemies... If the cause of the people is made the cause of the nation, then the cause of the nation will become the cause of the people... This is what the KPD and the CI have to say at Schlageter's graveside... The KPD must say openly to the nationalist petit-bourgeois masses: ... we believe that the great majority of the national-minded masses belong not to the camp of the capitalists, but the camp of the workers... We are convinced that there are hundreds of Schlageters who will hear and who will understand it... ^[62]

Chasing after the most viciously anti-Communist elements of the middle class in this fashion could only alienate those workers who had experienced at first hand the patriotic handiwork of the Schlageters. It cut clean across the struggle to win the reformist-influenced workers for a united front against the armed fascist gangs that were in the Ruhr especially, terrorising workers and staging provocations that led, as in the case of the massacre at Krupps in Essen, to French troops opening fire on unarmed workers. Neither was the KPD leadership immune from such errors. August Thalheimer, writing in *Die Kommunistische Internationale*, declared that 'at least temporarily, and against its own will, the German bourgeoisie is revolutionary in its foreign policy, as it was at the time of Bismarck', a judgement which occasioned a sharp retort from Alois Neurath of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, who took Thalheimer's reasoning to its logical - and chauvinist - conclusion:

It is clear to what consequences such theses must lead. The German proletariat must first of all support the fight of the German bourgeoisie against 'French imperialism'. It must 'temporarily' conclude a pact for civil peace with Cuno, Stinnes and Co, perhaps not explicitly but in fact... ^[63]

Also impermissible was the tactic of KPD speakers appearing at rallies organised jointly with chauvinists and on one occasion at least, even fascists. *Rote Fahne* carried a report of Hermann Remmele speaking at one such meeting in Stuttgart, where he was greeted by 'enthusiastic applause from fascists and workers'. And no wonder! According to the same report in the official KPD organ, Remmele had attempted to parry anti-Semitic barrackers by retorting:

How such anti-Semitism arises I can easily understand. One merely needs to go down to the Stuttgart cattle market in order to see how the cattle dealers, most of who belong to Jewry, buy up cattle at any price, while the Stuttgart butchers have to go home again, empty-handed because they just don't have enough money to buy cattle. ['Quite right!' from the Fascists] ^[64]

These exchanges went on as throughout Germany, Communist workers were running the gauntlet of armed attacks by nationalist terrorist gangs. Finally, there were glimpses of another opportunist device employed by the KPD Stalinists in the Third Period, namely that of permitting party members to write in the counter-revolutionary press, and of encouraging unreconstructed chauvinists and even anti-Semites to sully the columns of Communist journals. Thus in July, *Die Rote Fahne*, in an issue entitled 'Germany's Way', published not only Radek's Schlageter speech, but articles by Reventlow and the 'revolutionary conservative' and author of *The Third Reich*, Moller van den Bruck. On 22 August 1923, the same paper printed another article by Reventlow with the title 'One Part of the Way', which was answered by Paul Frölich, who wrote that 'whoever comes to us without intrigue will find us ready to march at his side'.

While these tactics failed to win any significant section of the *volkisch* movement to Communism (not even its 'National Bolshevik' version), they certainly were counter-productive so far as the KPD's policy of undermining the grip of the reformists on the working class was concerned. The SPD made merry with its exposures of KPD flirtations with the extreme right, and it was this policy which caused serious unrest among rank-and-file Communist party workers, who had to bear the daily brunt of the struggle against the counter-revolutionary gangs whose leaders their party was seeking to convince of the virtues of Communism.

Opportunist in its dealings with the Social Democratic lefts, the KPD leadership displayed similar, though not identical vacillations in its struggle, absolutely essential for the victory of the revolution, to win over or neutralise the middle-class masses.

We must bear both these weaknesses of the early, pre-Stalinist KPD in mind when we come to examine its crucial - and catastrophic - role in the later years of the Weimar Republic, when the party leadership degenerated into a loyal outpost of the Kremlin bureaucracy within the German workers' movement, a brake on its revolutionary development not one whit less pernicious than Social Democracy. We can

indeed concur with Trotsky when he writes, in his first great work on the German crisis of 1930-33, *The Turn in the Communist International and the Situation in Germany*, that:

... one of the necessary conditions for the liberation of the party from bureaucratic bondage is a general examination of the 'general line' of the German leadership, beginning with 1923, and even with the March Days of 1921... The party will not rise to the height of its great tasks if it does not freely evaluate its present in the light of its past. ^[65]

Notes

1. Spain differed from Germany and Italy in that a mass fascist movement amongst the urban petit-bourgeoisie was completely lacking in the period prior to the military uprising of July 1936. However, the more traditionalist wing of the Franco camp - Carlists and pro-fascist clergy - did undoubtedly succeed in drumming up sizeable support for the revolt amongst strongly monarchist and Catholic peasants, many of whom could by no means be described as wealthy.

2. Thus it would be inaccurate to describe the Greek military junta as a fully-blown fascist regime, likewise the racialist regimes in Rhodesia and South Africa. The presence of a highly-privileged white settler minority, with its own racialist-based parliamentary system and 'opposition' parties and press, further complicates matters and renders the label 'fascist' almost meaningless if applied indiscriminately to such regimes.

3. Examples of this are the *coup d'état* of Louis Bonaparte, the Bismarck regime in Germany, and the rise of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union.

4. As in his turn did Hitler, who after the formation of the Nazi - Nationalist coalition in 1933, began to demand the whole power for his party, to the exclusion of 'dynastic' nationalists like Hugenberg and Papen, who believed they could use Hitler to crush the proletariat and then squeeze him out of office. In the end, it was Hugenberg and Papen who found themselves dispensable. Hitler was also successful in securing the liquidation - voluntary or otherwise - of all the bourgeois political parties, together with their various allied associations such as youth movements, confessional trade unions and paramilitary and veterans leagues. The Nazis demanded a total monopoly of political power - and they got it.

5. LD Trotsky, Speech to the Polish Commission of the ECCI (2 July 1926), cited in 'The Only Road' (14 September 1932), *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany* (New York, 1971), p 282.

6. Trotsky, Speech to the Polish Commission of the ECCI, 2 July 1926, cited in 'The Only Road', *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, pp 282-83. Even though Trotsky made these remarks with the experiences of Italy and Poland fresh in his mind, they anticipated with rare accuracy the relations that developed between the big bourgeoisie and the Nazis in the last year of the Weimar Republic. And in fact he returned to his analogy between fascism and Jacobinism in *The Only Road*, written - in September 1932 - at the precise moment when the German ruling class was waging a furious and quite open polemic within its ranks as to whether to continue supporting von Papen's Bonapartist 'cabinet of barons', which conducted its war against the proletariat with 'legal' means, or to summon to power Hitler's plebeian hordes. Papen and Hitler conducted their debate by means of 'open letters' in their respective house organs!

7. The French bourgeoisie also came to its 'plebeian' solution via a series of experiments and alignments with more moderate leaderships, beginning with the 'Patriot Party' and Lafayette, who sought to reconcile a reformed monarchy with a conservative bourgeoisie, through the bourgeois republican Girondins to the petit-bourgeois Jacobins, who alone proved capable of consummating the struggle begun in 1789.

8. Not only in his abortive Munich Putsch of November 1923, but in the several unsuccessful bids for the Chancellorship Hitler made between his first election triumph in September 1930 and his eventual appointment by President Hindenburg little more than two years later.

9. We must also remember that since the German bourgeoisie divided itself politically into no fewer than four parties - the Catholic Centre, the DDP, the DVP and DNVP - it is

impossible to speak of a single ruling-class policy being pursued at any time in the history of the Weimar Republic. At best, we can pinpoint factions which coalesced around certain important policy questions, and which on occasions could cut across party frontiers. Thus the Chemical Trust and Rathenau's electrical combine, AEG, tended in their early years at least to support the Republic and its democratic parties, along with that section of the Catholic bourgeoisie which identified itself with the Centre (other Catholic bourgeois like Thyssen were bitterly hostile to Weimar), while heavy industrialists, grouped around the DVP and DNVP, were more often than not ranged against the bourgeois democrats on important questions such as social welfare, collective bargaining, reparations, etc. The internal divisions were accentuated in every great political crisis, and found their reflection at every level of the state apparatus from the High Command to the judiciary and police.

10. Politically necessary though these concessions undoubtedly were, German monopoly capitalism was in no economic position to make them. The war had drained the nation's resources to an unprecedented extent, and without the compensation of the spoils of victory. In 1913, Germany's national wealth was calculated at 225 billion gold marks. The war had seen this sum more than halved, while the national debt soared to 250 billion gold marks. Even before the Entente powers began their plunder of the German economy, it was in the red to the tune of nearly 150 billion gold marks. Apart from its colonial empire, the German bourgeoisie was compelled by the terms of the Versailles Treaty to surrender 13.1 per cent of its own European territory, which accounted for 75 per cent of its iron ore production, 68 per cent of its zinc, and 26 per cent of its coal. When reparation terms were finally fixed, they involved Germany paying out three times its annual national product. Naturally, the German ruling class did not envisage paying this gigantic tribute out of its own pocket, payment would be made by squeezing more surplus value out of the working class. Hence the constant pressure brought to bear by the bourgeoisie on the eight-hour day and the various social and economic articles of the Weimar Constitution.

11. The newly-formed Federation of German Industry, the main employers' organisation, rapidly became a battleground for the factional struggle between the 'hard-line' heavy industrialists and the more liberal, pro-Weimar medium and light industrialists, who were more oriented towards the consumer market. Stinnes, Hugenberg and Krupp were regarded as spokesmen for the former faction, while Duisberg (Chemical Trust), Rathenau (AEG) and Ernst von Borsig (engineering) were prominent as representatives of the second group. Both factions were, however, generally agreed, in the early postwar period, that Germany's inflation should be used to regain its lost positions on the world market, a policy strongly opposed by the banks. Thus Stinnes declared to a steel producers meeting in Dusseldorf on 16 July 1919: 'If we have the coal we need, our country will be the land of quality production, on the one hand, because of our exchange situation, and on the other, because of our wages, which in view of our exchange situation, are the lowest in the world.'

12. The right-wing Social Democrat Max Cohen Reuss described a visit to one such Free Corps unit in January 1919: 'I felt a chill down my spine. There are a lot of officers there who will have nothing to do with socialism [not even of the Noske variety! - RB] and are looking forward to beating people up again. I must say what happens horrifies me. These people have learnt nothing at all.' This was an understatement. Colonel Reinhard, the 'butcher of Berlin', openly referred to the Ebert government as 'riff-raff', while Captain Gengler of the 'Iron Host' corps wrote in his diary on 21 January 1919, that 'the day will come when I shall get my own back on this government and unmask the whole pitiful pack'. Finally, another Free Corps officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Heinz, wrote in an ultra-rightist journal that 'this state, born of revolt, will always be our enemy, never mind what sort of constitution it endows itself with and who is at its head... Fight against the government! Death to the democratic government.'

13. Eduard Stadtler, an ideologue of 'revolutionary conservatism', was instrumental in channelling funds from big business into the cash boxes of the main anti-Communist fighting units. For a short time he headed the *Antibolschewistische Bewegung*, which with the support of Stinnes and other industrialists, was to the fore in combating the two 'Spartacist uprisings' of January and March 1919. Stadtler later addressed a meeting of

industrialists on the need to maintain an independent combat organisation to fight the left flank of the workers' movement, after which Stinnes offered to set up an 'anti-Bolshevik fund' of 500 000 marks. This sum, together with donations from other wealthy industrialists, was subsequently distributed to various nationalist organisations, including several Free Corps brigades. Contributors to Stadtler's 'Anti-Bolshevik Movement' included some of the most illustrious names of German industry and banking, who, despite their tactical differences over their approach to the new republic, were united in their desire to avoid a repetition of the Russian disaster in Germany: the steel producers Vöglar, August Thyssen (father of the Nazi supporter Fritz), Paul Reusch of the Haniel group, Fritz Springorum of the Hoesch group and of course Kirdorf. The electrical industry was represented by Carl von Siemens and Felix Deutsch from the rival and reputedly more liberal AEG, and financed by Mankewitz of the Deutsche Bank and Salomonsohn from the Diskontogesellschaft. This anti-Communist alliance fell apart once the initial 'Spartacist' menace had been overcome, many of its members edging their way back to a policy of toleration of Weimar and its Social Democratic architects.

14. On the day of the signing of the Versailles Treaty, the Pan-German *Deutsche Zeitung* shrieked: 'Vengeance! German nation! Today in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles a disgraceful treaty is being signed. Never forget it! On that spot where, in the glorious year of 1871, the German Empire in all its glory began, today, German honour is dragged to the grave. Never forget it! The German people, with unceasing labour, will push forward to reconquer that place among the nations of the world to which they are entitled. There will be vengeance for the shame of 1919.' (*Deutsche Zeitung*, 28 June 1919)

15. A letter to Kapp from the director of the bank branch in question, dated 8 January 1920, stated that 'the Berlin Handelsgesellschaft, the Dresdner Bank, the Mid-German Credit Bank and the Deutsche Bank are very well disposed towards our efforts'. Financial support was also forthcoming from Carl Duisberg, who in October 1918 was looking forward to a long period of peaceful and fruitful collaboration with the labour movement.

16. F Thyssen, *I Paid Hitler* (New York, 1941), pp 86-87. The violent class battles of this period left deep scars on the memories of other industrialists too. Otto Steinbrinck, private secretary to Friedrich Flick of the giant steel trust Vereinigte Stahlwerke (United Steel Works), handled most of his boss' dealings with the Nazis in the year prior to the formation of the first Hitler government. The Flick concern turned towards the Nazi movement in 1932, he explained at the Nuremberg trial of Nazi industrialists, because it feared a resurgence of the proletarian radicalism experienced in 1923: 'One has to consider that our plants were situated in the most radical territories of the Reich; that is, Saxony, where Riesa, Goeditz and Lauchhammer were situated. This district has always been one of the reddest parts of Germany and the plants Brandenburg and Hennigsdorf, very close to Berlin, were almost on the same level as this Red Saxony. That's why our plant managements in these plants... were rather worried because the same troubles which we had experienced eight years previously might revive again. Then... we had seen fairly heavy fighting with the revolutionary Red Army in the Vogtland, and in Saxony, and Riesa, and... the memory was still fresh.' (*The Flick Case: US Military Tribunal*, Volume 6, p 346.) Punishment for the mistakes of leadership committed in 1923 may have been long delayed, but was all the more merciless when it came.

17. Vöglar was of course just one among many of the big-business contingent in the DVP Reichstag fraction who, along with their co-thinkers in the DNVP, voted against the Works Council bill. Others included Hugo Stinnes, Kurt Sorge, a director of the Krupp concern (Krupp himself was a member of the DNVP) and President of the Federation of German Industries, Reinhold Quaatz, a leading officer of the influential Essen-Mulheim-Oberhausen Chamber of Commerce (his divorced wife Magda later married Goebbels), Hans von Raumer, regarded as a spokesman for the electrical industry, and Helmuth von Raumer of the potash industry.

18. In his 4 March meeting with the DVP and DNVP leaders, Lüttwitz declared quite bluntly that 'if the Free Corps are dissolved, and in addition, half the regular army is disbanded, the country will be left defenceless in the face of the threat from Bolshevism'.

19. Even Scheidemann had his doubts about the wisdom of government policy towards the rightists. In a letter to President Ebert, dated 20 February 1920, he wrote: ‘The German nationalists are now raging against the government worse than the Spartacists... People do not understand... why the USPD papers are shut down for attacking the government... Much closer attention than hitherto must be given to the activities of the German nationalists if we do not want to have very sad experiences. Steps should most certainly have been taken against the DNVP newspapers before [sic!] proceeding against those of the extreme left.’ (P Scheidemann, *Memoirs of a Social Democrat*, Volume 2 (London, 1929), pp 646-47)

20. The proclamation of the Kapp regime, issued on 13 March, was not couched in the language of the traditionalist monarchist right. It employed social demagoguery which foreshadowed a dictatorship which while not lasting for the predicted thousand years, proved far more durable than that of Kapp and Lüttwitz: ‘The government stands for economic freedom. It will ruthlessly suppress strikes and sabotage. Strikes mean treason to the people, the Fatherland and the future. *This will not be a government of one-sided capitalism, but will defend German labour against the harsh fate of international slavery under finance capitalism...* We shall govern not with theories but through the practical needs of the state and the people. *The government will be an objective judge in the current battle between capital and labour. We decline to favour any party, whether Right or Left.* We recognise only German citizens. Every person must do his duty. Today work is the most important duty for any person. *Germany must be a moral working community.*’ [Emphasis added]

21. An important article in the Comintern organ did in fact attempt to detect ‘social fascism’ in the wartime policy of the SPD (‘Decaying Capitalism and the Fascisation of the Bourgeois State’, *Communist International*, Volume 7, no 2-3, 1 April 1930)

22. This sensational reversal of ADGB policy even aroused comment in the international trade union press. One such journal observed that ‘the attempt of the militarists in March last to overthrow the German republic has forced the trade union movement of Germany, always so careful in the past to have nothing to do with politics, into the political arena... It was only the organised working class of Germany that formed the defence of the republic... [they] were the organisers and leaders of the opposition to the action.’ (*International Trades Union Review*, no 5, June 1920, p 16) The official historian of the ADGB also acknowledged that Kapp had compelled the conservative trade union leadership to adopt tactics which it had until March 1920 stoutly opposed as adventurist and disruptive: ‘The method of the general strike, so long a point of contention between party and trade unions, was here applied for the first time. The trade union leaders, who had formerly regarded the use of the general strike with great uneasiness as a reckless playing with fire, did not hesitate to resort to it when the right moment for it had come.’ (Richard Seidel, *The Trade Union Movement of Germany* (Amsterdam, 1928), p 100)

23. And not only Third Period Stalinism. Thus in the notes to the most recent edition of Lenin’s *Collected Works*, we can read the following legend: ‘... the Social Democratic government offered no resistance [to the Kapp Putsch]. On 13 March 1920, army units were moved to Berlin and meeting with no resistance from the government declared it dissolved and set up a military junta. The German working class responded with a general strike and on 17 March, under pressure from the working class, Kapp’s government fell and state power again passed into the hands of the Social Democrats, who by deceit succeeded in frustrating the general strike.’ (Notes to Volume 30 of Lenin’s *Collected Works*, p 567) This account of the Kapp Putsch leaves out one small detail: that the general strike which brought Kapp down was called by the Social Democrats! The text of the SPD strike call ran thus: ‘Workers, Comrades! The military putsch is under way. The Ehrhardt marine brigade is marching on Berlin to force a change of government. These mercenaries, who fear disbandment, want to put reactionaries in the various government posts. We refuse to bow to this military pressure. We did not make the revolution in order to acknowledge once again the bloody rule of mercenaries. We will make no deal with the Baltic criminals. Workers, Comrades! Use every means to prevent this return of bloody reaction. Strike, stop working, strangle this military dictatorship, fight... for the preservation of the republic, forget all dissension! There is only one way to block the return of William II; to cripple the country’s

economic life. Not a hand must move, not a single worker must help the military dictatorship. General strike all along the line! Workers, unite!’

24. Sensing its newly-acquired bargaining power, and also fearing that unless it adopted a radical stance, the leadership of the general strike would pass over to the USPD and the KPD, the ADGB executive declared in its official journal that the trade unions ‘must intervene as a new factor in political life, with which the government and the parliament must come to terms before all decisive steps. There may be doctrinaire democrats who view such a settlement as incompatible with the constitutional rights of the people’s representative bodies. To them we can only say: a parliamentarianism that hardens in external forms without caring for the vital productive power of the people is a danger to the commonweal. The Monarchist Putsch has shown how easily democratic governments and parliaments can be dispossessed. But what cannot be dispossessed, and cannot abdicate or be dissolved, the one remaining power, the source of all the forces sustaining the state, is the working nation, whose economic unions have fearlessly taken up the challenge of the political and military traitors and have defeated them.’ (*Correspondenzblatt*, 27 March 1920)

25. The savagery of the fighting far surpassed anything experienced in previous repressions of revolutionary workers by army and Free Corps forces. One saviour of Weimar democracy in the von Epp Brigade, the student Max Ziller, described his exhilarating experiences in a letter: ‘If I were to write to you everything, you would say these were lies. No mercy is shown. We shoot down even the wounded. The enthusiasm is marvellous, almost incredible... Anyone who falls into our hands gets first the gun butt and then the bullet... we also shot dead instantly 10 Red nurses, each of whom was carrying a pistol. We shot these abominations with joy, and how they cried and pleaded with us for their lives. Nothing doing! *We were much more humane against the French!*’ [Emphasis added] Of such human material were the extermination units in Hitler’s war against the USSR made. Creatures like Ziller, who two decades later were to be found equally joyously gassing Jews by the million, and herding untold numbers of women and children into mass graves across the war-ravaged expanses of eastern Europe, were blooded and trained for this task in Weimar’s counter-revolutionary war against the workers of the Ruhr.

26. The Kapp Putsch tends to be dismissed as an episode of little significance for the subsequent history of the Weimar Republic and the rise of National Socialism. Thus the liberal historian Erich Eyck writes in his two-volume study of Weimar that ‘from its very beginnings the Kapp Putsch was nothing but the work of overgrown juvenile delinquents’ (E Eyck, *A History of the Weimar Republic*, Volume 1 (New York, 1967), p 150), overlooking the impact that the coup’s failure had on rightist thinking after 1920.

27. *Rote Fahne* (daily organ of the KPD), 14 March 1920.

28. This statement provoked much controversy inside the leadership of the Communist International, the Hungarian Béla Kun joining with Karl Radek of the Soviet party in attacking the KPD proposal as opportunist. Lenin thought differently. In his *‘Left-Wing’ Communism*, Lenin devoted some considerable attention to the tactics of the KPD in the Kapp Putsch, upholding the ‘loyal opposition’ statement of the party as ‘quite correct both in its basic premise and its practical conclusions’, while insisting that the KPD was theoretically wrong in terming the proposed SPD - USPD ‘workers’ government’ a socialist one, and pointing out that the statement displayed illusions in bourgeois democracy when it said that ‘a state of affairs in which political freedom can be enjoyed without restriction, and bourgeois democracy cannot operate as the dictatorship of capital, is, from the viewpoint of the development of the proletarian dictatorship, of the utmost importance in further winning the proletarian masses over to the side of Communism...’. It was enough to say, wrote Lenin, that ‘as long as the majority of the urban workers follow the Independents we Communists must do nothing to prevent those workers from getting rid of their last philistine democratic illusions by going through the experience of having a government of their ‘own’. That is sufficient ground for a compromise, which is really necessary and should consist in renouncing for a certain period, all attempts at the forcible overthrow of a government which enjoys the confidence of a majority of the urban workers.’ (VI Lenin, “‘Left-Wing’ Communism: An Infantile Disorder”, *Collected Works*, Volume 31, pp 109-

10) These tactics were of course pioneered by the Bolsheviks in the struggle to overturn the Provisional Government thrown up by the first Russian Revolution of February 1917. While the Bolsheviks remained in a minority in the Soviets, they submitted to Soviet discipline and on one famous occasion (the 'July days' in Petrograd) actively restrained the advanced workers and sailors from attempting what would have been a premature and therefore disastrous overthrow of the Kerensky regime, which, because of the support given to it by the majority soviet parties (Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries) would have been able to mobilise a considerable proportion of the more conservative sections of the proletariat against the Bolshevik vanguard. Lenin was now availing the leaders of German communism of this priceless experience. More than a decade later, Trotsky employed precisely the same tactical concept in seeking a political road to those millions of Social Democratic workers in Europe menaced by the rise of Fascism: 'Make your party open up a real struggle for a strong democratic government... We Bolsheviks would retain the right to explain to the workers the insufficiency of democratic slogans; we could not take upon ourselves the political responsibility for such a government but we would honestly help you in the struggle for such a government; together with you we would repel all attacks of bourgeois reaction. More than that, we would bind ourselves before you not to undertake any revolutionary actions that go beyond the limits of democracy (*real* democracy) so long as the majority of the workers has not consciously placed itself on the side of revolutionary dictatorship.' (LD Trotsky, 'Our Present Tasks' (7 November 1933), *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1933-34* (New York, 1972), pp 138-39) This declaration elicited a furious outcry from the Stalinists, who were still clinging, nearly a year after Hitler's victory in Germany and the Nazis' destruction of the entire Social Democratic movement, to Stalin's theory that fascism and Social Democracy were 'twins'. British Stalinist Andrew Rothstein wrote (under his pen name of 'RF Andrews') that Trotsky's proposal to the Social Democratic workers had 'only one meaning, the abandonment of the struggle against capitalist exploitation and war, class collaboration preparing the way for fascism' (RF Andrews, *The Truth About Trotsky* (CPGB, London, 1934), p 69). Self-styled followers of Trotsky such as Robin Blackburn of the International Marxist Group (to name the most notorious example) would be hard put to it to explain in what sense their opposition to the demand for a Labour government (with or without socialist policies) differs from Rothstein's denunciation of Trotsky.

29. The text of the statement issued after the 13 March meeting read: 'The previous government was unable to gain the confidence of the people. It opposed every attempt to set up a new government through the constitutional means of new elections and, beyond that, it sought to violate the hitherto existing constitution in order to insure its own power. It therefore bears the responsibility for the fact that the path of organic development, which we endorse, has been departed from. Now a new government has been formed. [Sic!] All of those who want to see the reconstruction of our Fatherland in a peaceful, orderly fashion must now demand that the new government give guarantees for the preservation of order, property and freedom to work. The liberal principles of the DVP remain unaffected by the upheaval. We therefore demand the quickest possible transformation of the present provisional government into a constitutional one. We expect the government to conduct without delay new elections to the legislative bodies on the basis of the present free electoral law and so insure the formation of a constitutional government into which all of those parties will be drawn which are serious about the re-establishment of our economy and the preservation of our national honour. Until that time we must make it our duty, through the cooperation of all Germans, to keep internal strife from bringing about a collapse of our political and economic situation.'

30. The resolution was forced through at the insistence of the party's liberal wing, who were anxious to begin collaboration with the pro-Weimar bourgeois parties and the right-wing reformists. Stresemann, while sympathising with their objectives, remained unrepentant about his role in the Kapp events, declaring to a DVP leaders' meeting on 28 March that he had acted as he did because he felt no obligation to defend the Weimar regime, since it had issued out of a revolution. Neither did it exclude the possibility of the DVP giving its support to a more successful dictatorship in the future: '... if our Lord God and destiny send us a man who, without holding to the paragraphs of Weimar, builds us a great Germany

again, then our party would - so I hope - grant him the same indemnity which the fathers of the National Liberal Party [the imperial forerunner of the DVP] granted to Bismarck. Stresemann was to have his wish granted, though he did not live to see it. The DVP Reichstag delegation, whittled down by wholesale defections to the Nazis amongst its middle-class supporters, cast its puny two mandates for Hitler's Enabling Act on 23 March 1933, thereby putting its bourgeois seal on the tyranny of the Third Reich. It is hard to reconcile these words of Stresemann, full of yearning for the political 'strong man' so often encountered in even the more liberal representatives of the German bourgeoisie, or indeed his and his party's conduct during the Kapp Putsch, with EH Carr's comment that 'heavy industry, finding its spokesman in Stresemann... denounced the putsch and rallied to the restored government' (*The Bolshevik Revolution*, Volume 3, (London, 1961), p 174). Neither is it correct to describe Stresemann as the 'spokesman' of heavy industry, since the DVP leader was constantly battling to prevent his party becoming a tame political mouthpiece for the tycoons of the Ruhr.

31. Thus Colonel von Wendel of the Supreme High Command under Hitler, wrote of the Kapp Putsch that its failure 'proved that recovery required time and had to ripen slowly'. It also taught 'that bayonets may be able to conquer power for a moment but that without approval and consent from at least a large portion of the mass of the people, power cannot be maintained (von Wendel, *Wehrmacht and Partei* (Leipzig), p 34). Similar conclusions had been drawn much earlier by von Seeckt, who wrote in his *Zukunft des Deutsche Reiches* (1930) that 'it is most undesirable that the army be called in to maintain public order: that is beyond the scope of its function which is external, and for this it urgently needs the people's trust and its prompt support, which it risks losing if it is employed as a police force'. And one year earlier, Major H Foertsch, in the first Nazi pamphlet on military affairs, declared that 'revolutions which are made by the army alone usually destroy the foundations of the army. They do not last long; the confidence of the people has always been a sounder basis for state leadership than guns or bayonets.'

32. In a speech delivered in Munich on the fourth anniversary of the formation of the Free Corps (22 November 1922) Rossbach called for unity of all the paramilitary leagues under a single leadership, obviously that of the Nazis: 'Out of the mass of innumerable separate and competing national groups... a great unified Power Organisation must be founded which will end this present nonsense for ever. To accomplish that, we must clear the way with blackjacks and bayonets... In Bavaria, you will soon have the opportunity to act. It is to be hoped that we will soon have the same chance in Prussia...'

33. H Rauschnig, *Germany's Revolution of Destruction* (London, 1939), pp 4-5. The conviction that a lasting political overturn in Germany could and indeed should not be attempted by the armed forces alone went very deep amongst the ruling classes after Kapp, and was certainly shared even by the more politically motivated members of the officer corps. Thus the 'social general' Kurt von Schleicher, strongman behind the von Papen regime and himself the Chancellor whose resignation made way for the appointment of Hitler, issued a statement in the summer of 1932 which exemplified this very real fear of a military-based regime confronted by a hostile population (a prospect which loomed ominously large at the time when the statement was made): '... the support of bayonets is not a sufficient foundation for a government. A government in which popular confidence is steadily diminishing, a government whose parliamentary basis does not correspond to the actual state of popular opinion, would gain nothing from army support. A government can continue usefully in office only if it does not turn against the currents of opinion among the mass of the people, but is able to provide itself with a broad basis of confidence in the vital and productive elements of the people.' Schleicher tried to apply his theories during his brief tenure of office, seeking to widen the narrow basis of his regime (which he had inherited from von Papen's non-party 'Cabinet of Barons') by creating a triangular alliance between the army, the Nazi 'lefts' under the leadership of Gregor Strasser, and the trade union bureaucracy. The project failed to get beyond the exploratory discussion stage, and its collapse cleared the road for the formation of the Nazi - Nationalist coalition.

34. Rauschnig understood this with remarkable clarity: ‘A new phenomenon has emerged, incalculable, menacing like a natural force. Bursting the bounds of all past forms of state and society - the masses. *We must try... to divide the masses. We must try to hold the masses in check through themselves.* The masses could be contained only through the masses. *Political leadership could only be won and kept through the masses.* The securing of a basis among the masses seemed to us to be the practical teaching of all political wisdom. The non-socialist parties, Liberal and Conservative, and any parties that hope for political survival, must become mass parties... Disraeli’s example was before our eyes when we [that is, the German ruling class] approached the mass party of Nazism. Not to enrol in it, but to bring it over to us, *and out of it to provide the mass basis that was lacking to the whole of our non-socialist democratic parties...* What would have become of Germany’s democratic liberties if one day the whole of the masses had been brought to a common denominator and delivered over to the law of progressive radicalisation?... *All those years we were under the pressure of the possibility that the Nazi masses would march over to the Communists.*’ (H Rauschnig, *Make and Break with the Nazis* (London, 1941), pp 38-39, emphasis added)

35. Hitler in fact attempted to make contact with the regime, flying to Berlin from Munich with Eckart only to discover on landing that Kapp had just fled the capital to his Swedish exile. The mission had been undertaken at the suggestion of Captain Mayr’s political department, which still technically employed Hitler (even though by this time the latter was establishing himself as a politician in his own right). Following his return from Berlin, Hitler severed his formal links with the army, though he continued to enjoy the patronage of its more *volkisch*-minded officers.

36. Hitler quoted in O Strasser, *Hitler and I* (London, 1940), pp 7-8.

37. Some of Hitler’s earliest backers have already been listed in Chapter XI. To them we should add the Munich publishing family of Bruckmann, Frau Gertrud von Seidnitz, a Balt with shares in a Finnish paper mill, von Borsig the locomotive manufacturer and prominent member of the Federation of German Industries, and the Augsburg factory owner Grandel. Others from the business world who took an interest in Hitler’s movement before the Munich Putsch included the Munich industrialist Hermann Aust, who introduced its leader to the august circles of the Bavarian Federation of Industry, as confirmed in the following testimony, given by Aust at Hitler’s trial in February 1924: ‘In order to discuss Hitler’s economic plans a discussion took place in the office of Privy Councillor Kuhlo, a syndic of the Bavarian Federation of Industry. The latter, Dr Noll, the chairman of the Federation, and myself were present. As a consequence of this discussion another was arranged in the Herren Club... and later a bigger meeting in the businessmen’s casino. Herr Hitler made a speech on his aims, with much applause. Some gentlemen who were not acquainted with Hitler expressed their satisfaction by handing me donations to pass on to Hitler.’ Hitler also spoke at the Berlin National Club in 1922, where he met von Borsig, and from whom he later received a large donation to finance the Nazi party’s growing activities. Another business contributor of note was Albert Pietsch, the owner of an electro-chemical plant, who gave Hitler regular cash grants from 1923 onwards. Finally there is of course Fritz Thyssen who claims in his autobiography that he was first introduced to the Nazis by Ludendorff, who told him that Hitler ‘was the only man who has any political sense’. Hitler struck Thyssen - this was shortly before the Munich Putsch - as a man with the ‘ability to lead the masses’, and after a meeting with him, Thyssen gave Hitler ‘about one thousand gold marks’ to aid the coup being prepared in Munich (Thyssen, *I Paid Hitler*, pp 111-14). Among the aristocrats who rallied early to the Nazi cause, Hitler singled out four for special mention: Stransky, Scheubner-Richter, von der Pfordten and ‘Prince Ahrenberg, one of our earliest adherents... the man was a multi-millionaire’ (*Hitler’s Secret Conversations* (New York, 1953), pp 180, 498). In all, quite an impressive roll call, but nothing approaching the support Hitler drummed up from the big bourgeoisie and aristocracy between 1930 and 1933.

38. This is not to deny that the Nazis were already learning to adjust their propaganda and agitation to the reactionary ‘anti-capitalism’ of the propertied middle class, whose origins we have discussed in earlier chapters. A pamphlet from this period, written by the former SPD activist Hermann Esser, skilfully played on the anxieties experienced by the petit-

bourgeoisie as the galloping inflation eroded both their incomes and their status: ‘Artisans! Civil servants! Artists! Graduates! War pensioners! Officers! Shopkeepers! Small manufacturers! Have you not yet realised that you have already sunk below the so-called proletariat and are the victims of the international stock exchange and currency speculation? Then you must organise yourselves politically. Political neutrality is disastrous. If you want to go on living you must fight. Individually you are nothing; united, a power which no one can resist. The only popular movement which represents your interest is the NSDAP.’ The Nazi Party as a middle-class ‘trade union’! This was a novel approach, and it was one that obviously appealed to a class which by its very nature was unable to organise in defence of its own variegated and often contradictory interests.

39. Ultra-rightist terror was directed, save for a period during the Ruhr crisis of 1923, not against proletarian organisations, meetings or premises, but consisted mainly of the assassinations either of prominent politicians and statesmen identified by the far right with the democratic republic, or individuals who crossed the path of the secret military units which proliferated in the Ruhr region during the first half of 1923. Nor were they carried out by the petit-bourgeois enragés who after 1930 swelled the ranks of the SA and the Hitler Youth, but by small squads of Free Corps officers and men banded together in a hideous ‘brotherhood’ - the *Fehme* - whose origins are traceable back to medieval Germany, when feudal ‘justice’ was administered by similarly depraved specimens. Thus was Matthias Erzberger done to death on 26 August 1921, as punishment for the signature which he appended to the Armistice at Compeigne on 11 November 1918. Eleven months later Foreign Minister Rathenau was laid low by assassins, a deed which precipitated a 24-hour general strike throughout Germany. Rathenau had not only been associated with a liberal-democratic domestic policy, but as the country’s Foreign Minister had three months earlier concluded the Rapallo Treaty with the Soviet Union. Though delighted at the time by these murders, Hitler also realised that they were counter-productive so far as his movement was concerned. In *Mein Kampf* he commented, that ‘to put any one of these out of the way was completely irrelevant and the chief result was that a few other bloodsuckers, just as big and just as threadbare, came into a job that much sooner... In those years I kept the National Socialist movement away from experiments [sic!] whose performers for the most part were glorious, idealistic-minded Germans, whose acts, however, not only made victims of themselves, but were powerless to improve the lot of the fatherland even in the slightest.’ (Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (London, 1943), pp 544-46)

40. Shortly after Mussolini’s march on Rome, Stresemann had written in his own journal *Deutsche Stimmen* (5 December 1922) that ‘a great many circles in Germany have, with an unusual unanimity, already decided in favour of dictatorship... Mussolini’s victory in Rome... is acclaimed by them. Herr Hitler holds rallies in Munich which are allegedly attended by 50 000 persons. The urge toward new things is unmistakable. They forget one thing, that it has repeatedly been those who stood farthest right who have, through their policies, brought about the strongest shifts to the left.’ Stresemann’s speech to the Reichstag on 9 August, four days before his appointment as Germany’s first DVP Chancellor (in a cabinet which, also for the first time, found the SPD sharing portfolios with the leading party of the German bourgeoisie), also stressed what he saw as the urgent need to avoid provoking the working class in view of the fact that the initial attempts at proletarian revolution had been successfully countered: ‘In the period from November 1918 to August 1919, an important domestic struggle was fought out in Germany... the issue was whether we should go the way of the dictatorship of the proletariat or return to the idea of constitutional government. The victory of the constitutional idea in this struggle gave us the basis for a possible consolidation of the German situation.’ And in the wake of the Hitler coup, Stresemann declared to the Reichstag (on 22 November 1923) that ‘the fascism that has been created under a completely different sun in Italy by a highly gifted statesman... [is not a model] that could suddenly replace this system without tearing Germany to pieces. Our German body politic is feverishly ill and cannot stand the quack treatment of civil war.’

41. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, pp 603-04. Hitler’s caution was understandable. ADGB membership climbed from 2.8 million in 1918 to an all-time high of 7.8 million in 1922. On

the eve of their destruction by the Nazis in May 1933, trade union membership stood at around the four million mark.

42. This bitter dispute, which rent the DVP throughout its existence, even spilled over onto the floor of the Reichstag. On 18 July, a whole group of DVP deputies led by Vögler defied party policy by either abstaining on, or voting against, the emergency bill for the protection of the republic which was enacted after the assassination of DDP Foreign Minister Rathenau by ultra-rightist fanatics. (Three in fact joined with the DNVP in voting against, while another 23 either did not show up for the division or abstained.) The other major split arose after the formation of the Stresemann government on 13 August 1923, following the fall of Chancellor Cuno. For the first time, the DVP and SPD were members of the same cabinet, a state of affairs the industrialists Quatz and Vögler considered to be little short of a betrayal of their class. In the vote of confidence in the new government on 14 August, which was carried 239 to 76, 19 DVP deputies abstained (as did 53 deputies of the SPD).

43. The trend towards hyper-inflation began in the war, which the government attempted to finance not only by increasing taxes and reducing private consumption, but by the printing of vast quantities of paper money. As a result, the national debt rose from 5.4 billion marks in 1913 (costing 230 million marks to service) to 200 billion marks in 1920, its servicing now costing, at 12.5 billion marks, 45 per cent of the total budget! A series of domestic and diplomatic crises, climaxed by the French occupation of the Ruhr, sent the exchange rate of the mark against the dollar spiralling dizzily downwards. On armistice day, 1 November 1918, one mark exchanged for 7.45 dollars. In the spring of 1922 dollars were exchanging in Berlin at the rate of one to 290 marks. By November of the same year, the dollar rate was 9150 marks, and the final plunge was about to begin. By October 1923, one dollar was exchanging for 12 million marks, on 1 November, 120 million marks, and on 20 November, 4200 billion.

44. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, pp 678-80.

45. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, pp 680-81.

46. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 683.

47. By the summer of 1923, Nazi Party branches were offering their services as strike-breakers to local employers.

48. Hitler had won the right to lead the *volkisch* movement through a series of victories over rival organisations and leaders. In the summer of 1921, he quelled a revolt against his leadership in the NSDAP, staged by its founder Anton Drexler, a battle from which Hitler emerged as the party's President, a position which in effect made him the movement's absolute dictator. At the same time, Hitler succeeded, after much squalid manoeuvring on both sides, in his bid to absorb the rival *volkisch* group of the fanatical anti-Semitic schoolteacher Julius Streicher, whose 'German Socialist Party', with branches in Augsburg, Nuremberg and Munich, was a serious embarrassment to Hitler's claim to exclusive leadership of the south German *volkisch* movement. Over the next two years, Hitler's novel conceptions of mass mobilisation and his aggressive tactics against the workers' movement (as exemplified by the victory over the 'reds' at a national rally in Coburg in October 1922) so impressed itself on the rest of the *volkisch* movement that in 25 September 1923, at a summit meeting of the leaders of the various 'national' organisations - Hitler, Goering and Röhm for the Nazis, Friedrich Weber of the *Bund Oberland* and Captain Heiss of the *Reichsflagge*, agreed to place the leadership of their alliance, the *Kampfbund*, in the exclusive hands of Hitler. The date of this meeting coincides almost to the day with the renewed offensive launched by Stinnes, Vögler, Thyssen and Quatz against the Stresemann government, which had declared its willingness to treat with France and was already collaborating with the Social Democrats.

49. Thyssen describes how the 1923 crisis led him to Hitler and the Nazis: 'We were at the worst time of the inflation... In Berlin the government was in distress. It was ruined financially. Authority was crumbling. In Saxony, a Communist government had been formed... In Hamburg, a Communist revolt had broken out. After Saxony, Thuringia had given itself a Communist government... Amidst all this chaos, Bavaria seemed to be the last

fortress of order and patriotism... If Germany should break into pieces, it was said, Bavaria would come to the whole country... Such was the atmosphere in which my first meeting with Hitler took place... Ludendorff and Hitler agreed to undertake a military expedition against Saxony in order to depose the Communist government of Dr Zeigner [who in fact was not a Communist, but a left Social Democrat - RB]. The ultimate aim of the proposed expedition was to overthrow the Weimar democracy, whose weakness was leading Germany into anarchy. Funds were lacking. Ludendorff... had already solicited and obtained the help of several industrialists, particularly that of Herr Minnow of the Stinnes firm. For my part, I gave him about one thousand gold marks... ' (F Thyssen, *I Paid Hitler*, pp 111-14)

50. State Department Documents, Decimal File 1910-29; 462.00 R29, Volume 6.

51. All available evidence suggests that like the mass Nazi movement of the early 1930s, the early 'National Socialist German Workers Party' was comprised mainly of petit-bourgeois. A 1920 party membership roll lists the following occupations for members whose names began with the letter 'H': manufacturer, man-servant, locksmith, directress, cabinet-maker, businessman, doctor, manufacturer, doctor, owner of iron works, electrician, author, soldier, businessman, senior secretary, roofer, businessman, bank filing clerk, owner of business school, newspaper representative, deputy sergeant, wife of businessman, pharmacist, businessman, wife of artist, bank official, engineer, clerk, mechanic, medical student, apprentice, doctor's wife. The largest single group is that of 'businessman', which, together with manufacturers and owners, makes up no less than 28 per cent of the total sample! A similar picture of the class composition of the NSDAP emerges from the roll-call of those killed in the Munich Putsch (Hitler was obliging enough to list their occupations when dedicating *Mein Kampf* to their memory). Of the 16 who fell on 9 November 1923, no fewer than four were businessmen, while three more were 'bank clerks', another three 'engineers' while the remainder consisted of a retired cavalry captain, a civil servant and a headwaiter, with the 'workers' being represented by a valet, a hatter and a locksmith. Like the previous random sample, this list contains not a single industrial proletarian. Such manual occupations as are represented are of the artisan type, a factor of enormous political significance for the subsequent development of the Nazi Party.

52. R Palme Dutt, *Problems of Contemporary History* (London, 1963), pp 78-91.

53. Palme Dutt, *Problems of Contemporary History*, p 89.

54. VI Lenin, 'Political Report of the Central Committee' (7 March 1918), *Collected Works*, Volume 27, p 98. Neither was Lenin given to cynical references to the 'superior enlightened West European socialist revolution'. Lenin, again in common with the entire Bolshevik leadership, understood only too well the immense obstacle that Russia's cultural and economic backwardness presented to the development of socialism in the Soviet Union. It was precisely to the 'enlightened' and culturally 'superior' German proletariat that the Soviet leadership turned for comradely assistance in their struggle to defeat the counter-revolution and lay the foundations of a socialist economy and culture. Four days later, in his short pamphlet *The Chief Task of Our Day*, Lenin reminds those still influenced by anti-German prejudices acquired in the imperialist war that the German worker was the ally of the Soviet people: 'Learn from the Germans! Remain true to the brotherly alliance with the German workers... they will come to our aid. Yes, learn from the Germans! History is moving in zigzags and by roundabout ways. It so happens that it is the Germans who now personify, besides a brutal imperialism, the principle of discipline, organisation, harmonious cooperation on the basis of modern machine industry, and strict accounting and control. And that is just what we are lacking. That is just what we must learn. That is just what our great revolution needs in order to pass from a triumphant beginning, through a succession of severe trials, to its triumphant goal. That is just what the Russian Soviet Socialist Republic requires in order to cease being wretched and impotent and become mighty and abundant for all time.' (VI Lenin, 'The Chief Task of Our Day' (14 March 1918), *Collected Works*, Volume 27, p 163)

55. VI Lenin, "'Left-Wing" Childishness and the Petit-Bourgeois Mentality' (May 1918), *Collected Works*, Volume 27, pp 339-40.

- 56.** R Luxemburg, 'The Old Mole', *Spartacus*, no 5, May 1917, *Selected Political Writings* (London, 1972), p 233.
- 57.** R Luxemburg, 'The Russian Tragedy', *Spartacus*, no 11, September 1918, *Selected Political Writings*, p 243.
- 58.** Quoted in the Vienna *Neue Freie Presse*, 17 July 1931.
- 59.** This was a theme to which Trotsky returned - in far more polemical vein - in his *Lessons of October*, whose publication later the same year precipitated what became known as the 'literary discussion', a euphemism for the factional struggle between Trotsky and the *troika* of Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev.
- 60.** LD Trotsky, *Through What Stage Are We Passing?* (London, 1965), pp 32-34.
- 61.** VI Lenin, "'Left-Wing" Communism: An Infantile Disorder', *Collected Works*, Volume 31, pp 75-76.
- 62.** *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 3, no 47, 28 June 1923, pp 460-61.
- 63.** *Die Kommunistische Internationale*, no 26.
- 64.** *Rote Fahne*, no 183, 10 August 1923.
- 65.** LD Trotsky, 'The Turn in the Communist International and the Situation in Germany' (26 September 1930), *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, p 26.

Chapter XIV: Big Business Rationalises

Such economic stability as was enjoyed by German monopoly capitalism between 1924 and the onset of the world crisis five years later had its origins in the enormous political reverse suffered by the working class in the autumn of 1923. Entirely involuntarily (and in complete contrast to the Social Democrats, who consciously worked to preserve the rule of the bourgeoisie), the KPD leadership had, by its vacillations at the moment when the necessity of preparing the revolutionary insurrection was posed point-blank, given a new lease of life to a class that had begun to doubt its own prospects of survival. Even the normally sanguine Schacht wrote, some four years after the crisis, that:

... not since the spring of 1919 had Germany been so close to the peril of Bolshevisation as in these weeks. It is hard for foreigners to form a conception of the excitement within the country at this time. Germany was then completely isolated. All who held any leading position in the business or public life of the country tortured their brains, day out, to find a remedy for the position. ^[1]

This was the judgement he adhered to in later years, stating in his autobiography that September 1923:

... found Germany in the grip of a fever that threatened to undermine her last vestige of strength. In Saxony, Thuringia and Bavaria riots broke out everywhere. Hitler was tub-thumping in the south. The Communist - Social Democratic Zeigner Government in Saxony gave the Red terror a free hand. In Hamburg street fights raged all day and 15 policemen and 65 civilians were killed. The danger of a Communist upheaval was imminent. I felt it my duty to evacuate my family from this hell's kitchen and packed them off to Switzerland so that I myself might not be hindered by personal considerations were I to be drawn into the whirlpool. ^[2]

Papen was no more optimistic, as he confesses in his autobiography:

I became conscious at a very early stage of the hopeless inability of the National and State Parliaments to take decisive steps to deal with this social disaster [of inflation]... Without a firm backbone of authority Germany was gradually sinking into the depths. As early as September 1923 I wrote a pamphlet with the title *Dictatorship or Parliament?*. My thesis was that Germany was on the brink of collapse ^[3] and that salvation would not be forthcoming through mechanical parliamentary methods or the sterile clash of rigid party doctrines. I called for a government of independent, responsible people... who would use the last remnants of state authority to impose solutions designed to meet the emergency of the times... It is only too easy to forget the desperate German internal situation at the time. The currency had collapsed, a Communist government had been set up in Saxony, the Socialists were engaged in violent political warfare against the hundred-thousand-man *Reichswehr* and the Communists were making a renewed attempt to seize power by illegal means... ^[4]

And finally there is the estimation made of the 1923 crisis by the SPD Berlin Police Chief Albert Grzesinski that 'in October 1923, the Communists planned another uprising which, due to the economic crisis, had a fair chance of success because conditions were desperate'. ^[5] And as a reformist, Grzesinski would have been more sensitive than most to those shifts in the consciousness of the proletariat away from the politics of compromise and class collaboration which herald every great revolutionary crisis.

All the conditions which for Lenin constituted a revolutionary situation ^[6] were present in Germany in the late summer of 1923. Already beset by a profound crisis in its relations with France, the German ruling class was also deeply divided as to how to cope with the hourly accelerating inflation and the political upheavals which accompanied it, a conflict which, in the cases of Bavaria and the Rhineland, expressed itself through the politics of particularism and even separatism. And just as at the time of the Kapp Putsch, but now at a far greater pitch of intensity, the factional struggle within the ruling class reverberated throughout the state machine, even disrupting relations within that normally highly homogenous caste, the German general staff. Wide layers of the petit-bourgeoisie, whose savings and fixed incomes were losing value by the minute as the mark plunged towards its November nadir, no longer trusted the old bourgeois and 'national' parties to defend their interests. Many in their despair turned towards the bogus anti-capitalism of the *volkisch* and Nazi right, but such was the ferment in this highly volatile social layer that it would have in all probability been possible either to win over or to neutralise the bulk of the working petit-bourgeoisie to the side of the working class (as had been proved

at the time of the Kapp Putsch) if the KPD had established itself in the heat of the crisis as a party whose revolutionary propaganda and agitation was matched by deeds.

Finally, there was the active, 'negating' force in the crisis, the German proletariat itself. Over the previous five years it had provided ample testimony of not only its political maturity and organisational capacities, but its readiness to fight, and if necessary to risk death, to defend its past gains and go forward to win state power. In the space of these five years, the German working class had passed through more phases of struggle than previous generations had experienced in a lifetime. From the establishment of councils in November 1918 its most advanced layers attempted to seize power in a series of bitter armed clashes with troops under the leadership of the 'government socialists'. There then ensued a period of bitter disillusionment with the SPD on the part of millions of workers who had been amongst its most loyal supporters over previous years and decades. The treachery of the reformists after the Kapp Putsch accelerated this leftwards impulse within the proletariat, a current which did not for the most part flow directly into the KPD, but indirectly, through the USPD, whose centrist leaders, after the party's unification with the KPD in October 1920, then made their way back into the womb of Social Democracy, taking with them a sizable minority of the USPD's more conservative-minded workers. After the adventure of March 1921, the KPD then set about winning the majority of the proletariat to its banner, a task which, greatly facilitated by the onset of the Ruhr crisis, was on the verge of completion when paralysis gripped the Brandler - Thalheimer leadership after the formation of the KPD-SPD coalitions in Saxony and Thuringia.

This truly tragic squandering of the resources and energies of the German proletariat cast its shadow across the future path of the revolutionary struggle not only in Germany but throughout Europe from Britain in the west to the Soviet Union in the east. And by the same token, it marked a turning point in the fortunes of the German and European bourgeoisie. Now free to dispense with the services of the Nazis and their paramilitary allies, the bourgeoisie began to feel firm ground under its feet for the first time in many months, and, in a broader sense, since the summer of 1914. Such was the dialectic of revolution and counter-revolution. The economic crisis of 1923 had created all the conditions necessary for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie save that of the subjective factor - revolutionary leadership. Now the latter's absence - more accurately, deficiencies - in turn created the political conditions which enabled this same bourgeoisie not merely to salvage what had only weeks before seemed irrevocably lost, but over the next three years, so to consolidate and restructure its economy that industry reached a level of output that despite Germany's postwar territorial losses, in most departments more than matched its performance in the immediate prewar period. Lenin had hoped that this restoration of German industrial might would take place on the basis of socialist property relations, thus making possible the creation of the politico-economic union which he had envisaged in early 1918, and which Lloyd George had so feared following the end of the war. But since it unfolded on the foundations of *capitalist* property relations, this revival of the German economy inevitably generated once again, though of course in a greatly changed context, the same tensions between the main imperialist powers and combinations that had precipitated the war of 1914-18. They flowed from the potentially explosive antagonism between the productive forces developed by capitalism on the one hand, and, on the other, the barriers erected against their further expansion by not only the capitalist mode of production, *but the bourgeois nation state*. Germany's defeat in 1918, since it had not led to a victorious proletarian revolution, only postponed a violent renewal of these contradictions. In contrast, however, with the tempestuous industrial growth which took place under Bismarck and Wilhelm II, the post-1923 boom did not derive so much from any great internal economic strength possessed by German capitalism as from the massive intervention by United States imperialism in the affairs of the European continent. Within weeks of the passing of the revolutionary crisis, moves were afoot both in Germany and internationally to place the economy on a stable footing. Three days after the collapse of the Hitler Putsch, Stresemann's Finance Minister Dr Hans Luther invited Schacht (who was then a director of the big *Danatbank*) to devote all his considerable skill and energies to the task of stabilising Germany's chaotic currency situation. The next day, 13 November, Schacht assumed the new post of Commissioner for National Currency, with a brief to employ whatever methods he saw fit 'in all matters touching the question of money and credit'.^[71]

Meanwhile, Stresemann's government, deprived of the support of the Social Democrats on the left and the Nationalists on the right, fell on 23 November after losing a vote of confidence (the SPD found itself unable to remain in a cabinet that had sanctioned the removal by military means of legally elected Social Democratic governments in Saxony and Thuringia, while the DNVP was still opposed to Stresemann over his refusal to join their proposed right-wing bloc against the centre and left parties, also bitterly

condemning him for his policy of seeking a *détente* with France). The result was a more rightist government under Dr Wilhelm Marx of the Catholic Centre Party, being a coalition of Ministers from the DDP, the Centre, the DVP and the BVP (Bavarian People's Party). ^[8]

After an initial attempt by the Junker DNVP financial expert Karl Helfferich to introduce a stopgap mark whose value would be tied to the price of rye (blocked by the Social Democrats, who quite rightly saw it as a move to enhance the power of the agrarians), Stresemann had secured the introduction of the so-called *Rentenmark*, which while theoretically equal to the value of the gold mark (which had remained unaffected by the inflation) would be covered by a mortgage on all German landed property. This meant that the new mark could be exchanged on demand for an identical amount in mortgage bonds, thus restoring much-needed confidence to the currency. Schacht, however, was anxious to place the mark on a more stable footing (even land values were subject to wide variations), his goal being the restoration of the old gold mark. The death of the Reichsbank President Havenstein on 20 November led somewhat fortuitously to Schacht's appointment to this enormously influential post two days later, and it was in this new capacity that Schacht travelled to London to secure Bank of England backing from Montagu Norman for his projected *Golddiskontobank*, which would be entirely based on gold. The bank's main function would be to finance the heavy industries of the Ruhr, which had been hard hit by the French occupation and the consequent economic and political unrest. Norman agreed to make available for the proposed bank a sum of 100 million marks, to be paid in sterling, and at an interest of only five per cent (the going rate in Germany was twice that amount). The deal between the Presidents of the English and German central banks, concluded on 2 January 1924, marked another turning point in the recovery of German big business.

Norman's decision to aid his former imperialist rivals was taken with one eye on the conference shortly to convene in Paris under the chairmanship of the US banker General Charles Dawes. The abject failure of military methods to secure the prompt payment of reparations, and the disastrous repercussions such strong-arm tactics had on German economic and political life, had led to a reconsideration of Allied policy towards Germany. Reparations were still to be paid, but there was now a realisation that Germany could only pay insofar as its resources and capacities were harnessed to the full. Hence the adoption of the Dawes scheme, whereby credits would be granted by foreign bankers to Germany in order to revitalise its economy and so make possible the payment of reparations. Far-sighted statesmen also saw the urgent need, after the recent revolutionary events in Germany and elsewhere in Europe, to mitigate class tensions throughout the continent by aiding a policy of industrial expansion and concessions to the working class. In the words of the US Secretary of State Hughes, 'there can be no economic recuperation in Europe unless Germany recuperates', and the first consideration of the Dawes Plan (as it became known) was to end the period of turmoil and uncertainty that had characterised Germany's first five postwar years.

This dramatic turn in the relationship between Europe and the United States, one which profoundly influenced the subsequent course and forms of the class struggle in Germany, had been predicted by Trotsky in a series of articles and speeches developing the slogan of the 'United Socialist States of Europe' as the revolutionary solution to the economic, political, national and cultural problems besetting the continent that had cradled both capitalism and its Marxist polar opposite. Trotsky warned all Communists that they ignored the might of American imperialism at their peril. The trans-Atlantic colossus could only be confronted by a Europe united by proletarian revolution:

... until recently we have failed to differentiate adequately between Europe and America. And the slow development of Communism in America might have inspired some pessimistic ideas to the effect that so far as the revolution is concerned Europe must wait for America. Not at all! Europe cannot wait... if the revolution in Europe is postponed for many decades, it would signify the elimination of Europe generally as a cultural force. It is nowhere written that the European proletariat must keep waiting until the American proletariat learns not to succumb to the lies of its triply depraved bourgeoisie... At the present time the American bourgeoisie is deliberately keeping Europe in a condition of decay. Glutted with European blood and gold the American bourgeoisie issues orders to the whole world, sends its plenipotentiaries to conferences who are bound by no commitments... The European bourgeoisie, not only of Germany and France but also Britain, begs on its hind legs before the American bourgeoisie which drained Europe in wartime by its support, by its loans, by its gold, and which now keeps Europe in the throes of death-agony. ^[9]

And if the European proletariat found its most mortal enemies in Washington and New York, then its most loyal and self-sacrificing allies lay to the east, in Moscow:

Two courses are possible: either the European proletariat remains terrorised by the American boot, or the European proletariat is backed by the Russian workers and peasants, and thus assured of grain during the difficult days and months of revolution. That is why each economic success in agriculture is a revolutionary deed. ^[10]

But should this struggle to establish the unity of Europe by means of proletarian revolution and with the aid of the Soviet workers and peasants fail, then the way would be clear for American imperialism to dictate its terms to an exhausted bourgeoisie and a defeated proletariat alike: 'America is standing aloof from Europe, tranquilly biding her time until Europe's economic agony has reached such a pitch as will make it easy to step in and buy up Europe.' ^[11] Hence the urgent need, argued Trotsky in the summer of 1923, to impress on the consciousness of the advanced workers the necessity of fixing as their revolutionary goal not merely the defeat of capitalism in their 'own' country, but the creation of a federation of socialist states that would ultimately embrace and unite all Europe. 'Socialism in one country' was as unreal and reactionary a programme in Germany as it became under Stalin in the USSR:

France cannot stand apart from Germany, nor can Germany stand aloof from France... The European continent in the present state of the development of the productive forces is an economic unit... as was proved in the terrible catastrophe of the world war, and again by the mad paroxysm of the Ruhr occupation. Europe is not a geographical term, Europe is an economic term... Just as federation was long ago recognised as essential for the Balkan peninsula, so now the time has arrived for stating definitely and clearly that federation is essential for Balkanised Europe... the very danger arising from the USA (which is spurring the destruction of Europe, and is ready to step in as Europe's master) furnishes a very substantial bond for uniting the peoples of Europe who are ruining one another, into a 'European United States of Workers and Peasants'. ^[12]

It was with this slogan that Trotsky concretised programmatically the perspectives flowing from the uneven development of the class struggle in the Old and New Worlds, at the same time making it abundantly clear that 'this opposition between Europe and the United States stems organically from the differences in the objective situations in the European countries and of the mighty trans-Atlantic republic, and is not in any way directed against the international solidarity of the proletariat, or against the interests of the revolution in America'. ^[13] (It therefore had nothing in common with the Stalinist-inspired anti-Americanism of the 'Cold War' period.)

The American intervention in Europe followed almost exactly the itinerary mapped out by Trotsky. It did not suffice for fascism to triumph in Italy, nor bloody counter-revolution in Hungary and Bulgaria. These defeats, important though they were for both imperialism and the international working class, had been inflicted on the proletariat at the extremities of the continent. US finance capital continued to 'stand aloof' from Europe until the outcome of the strategic struggle in its German heartland had been decided for the foreseeable future. But when the time came to intervene, the operation was carried out on a truly gargantuan and typically American scale. Through such agencies as the Dawes Plan, and by exploiting the political leverage of war debts and reparations payments, United States monopoly capitalism sought to transform its role of *arbiter* between Europe's main imperialist rivals (a role it assumed in the last year of the First World War) into that of banker and policeman of the entire continent. ^[14]

Under the Dawes Plan, Germany's reparations were rescheduled, and largely American loans made available to aid their payment, the terms of both being finalised in the London Agreement of 30 August 1924. Germany was to make annual payments starting at 1000 million gold marks and rising by the fifth year to 2500 million marks. From then onwards until their intended completion some 40 to 50 years later, payments would vary from this sum when the world price of gold either fell or rose by more than 10 per cent. Onerous though these terms were, what irked the nationalist middle classes and the big bourgeoisie most, and later provided excellent grist for the Nazi propaganda mill, was the Allied decision to take over the control of Germany's state railway system, and to seize all its profits as additional tribute. (This naked plunder went hand-in-hand with enforced mortgages on private industrial undertakings with a working capital of more than 50 000 marks.)

With practically the entire Germany economy now pledged as security against the proposed loans, there was no shortage of subscribers to what a year previously would have been regarded as a suicidal financial undertaking. Of the initial Dawes Plan loan of 800 million marks, 110 million was raised in New York,

being oversubscribed to the tune of 1000 per cent! And the loan was underwritten by the titan of American finance, JP Morgan. Carried forward on the crest of its internal industrial boom, ^[15] US capitalism poured its dollars into Germany at an incredible rate, the flood reaching its high point in 1928, when 153.8 million dollars made the journey from Wall Street to the Berlin Bourse. In the five years between 1924 and 1928, of the 15 000 million marks borrowed by Germany from foreign investors, *over half was raised on the US capital market.* (Ironically, in view of their original purpose, Germany's loans were almost double the sum paid in reparations to the Allies!)

Into whose accounts were these vast quantities of money paid? Only a portion of the loans went to the German government to enable it to meet its reparations and other foreign commitments, which of course included the servicing of debts already contracted. There were two other major borrowers, destined, when the American well ran dry, to confront each other as bitter enemies. From the outset of the Dawes Plan, the biggest German monopolies ^[16] saw US credits as a quick and easy means of raising the funds necessary to renew and modernise their plant, which because of the war and the ensuing economic and political crises, had either become obsolescent or run down. As for the third main borrower, the Social Democratic municipal authorities and state governments, American loans were employed to finance a whole series of social reforms and undertakings that would otherwise have proved impossible to carry through on a capitalist basis with revenues raised from purely domestic sources. German Social Democracy proceeded to build its 'socialism in one municipality' by permission of General Dawes, the blessings of JP Morgan and with the dollars of Wall Street financiers!

The hyper-inflation of 1923 temporarily impoverished wide layers of the middle class whose wealth consisted mainly of savings, or income on fixed pensions or dividends. But for a far smaller number, it was a boon, even if one that proved to be short-lived. Owners of large industrial concerns found that their fortunes - since they were mostly tied up in property and not liquid cash - increased in inverse proportion to the decline in the value of the mark, while their debts fell in direct proportion to the rate of inflation. Tycoons such as the insatiable Stinnes, while in no way being responsible for the inflation, exploited it to extend the range and size of their holdings. The shaky nature of these ventures became obvious, however, once the currency was stabilised, since debts contracted during the inflation now had to be honoured in gold marks. The Stinnes empire, ^[17] the prime example of this type of debt-financed undertaking, only outlived its owner by a year, collapsing in June 1925.

Its failure, together with the collapse of a series of similarly unsound and artificially assembled concerns, precipitated a new crisis in German industry, which over the previous year had been enjoying its first real postwar period of prosperity. Demand had been greatly stimulated by the sudden influx of foreign credits, and swelled by government compensation paid to those who had lost their savings during the 1923 inflation, and the majority of firms found that in this market situation they could make reasonable profits without investing in new plant and machinery. Heavy demand ensured that prices remained high, thus masking grave structural and capital deficiencies of many large monopolies. The short boom gave way to a sharp downturn of production in September 1925 as domestic demand fell away, exposing the high unit costs of firms that had previously been enjoying record postwar profits and sales. From this crisis came the initial impetus towards the rationalisation and further monopolisation of entire branches of the German economy.

Reichsbank President Schacht had long seen the need for such measures, though he by no means approved of the means by which they were financed. ^[18] As early as October 1902, he had advocated the development of vertical monopolies or trusts in order to reduce by as much as possible the production costs of German industry, thereby rendering it more competitive on the world's markets. The disadvantage of a cartel was its deliberate policy of maintaining high prices, which in turn dispensed with the need to cut costs and maximise the exploitation of the labour force. By the same token, small or medium firms had to be liquidated since their inability to produce at the same low unit costs as their larger cartel partners forced up overall prices. In 1908, Schacht cited the example of the electricity generating industry to show how the old cartel system was beginning to act as a brake on the further development of the German economy, and

... pointed out the colossal waste among the concerns engaged in electricity generation, whereby the innumerable little local electric works have the last word... By contrast I advocated a concentration of production in large generating stations with the aim of cheapening consumption, bringing electric policy under a single state leadership and combining public control with private enterprise. ^[19]

The cartel system therefore generated tensions between the primary and power producers and the manufacturers of finished goods, who were being compelled to pay exorbitant prices for their raw materials and power supplies. As a banker standing outside, or rather above, this struggle, Schacht was possibly better placed to formulate a policy representing the long-term interests of the monopoly bourgeoisie as a whole. But it was only in 1925 that the first serious attempts were made to cut away the dead wood that had accumulated under the protective umbrella of the cartel system. In that year, the Chemical Trust IG Farben was formed out of no fewer than six separate concerns, a merger which gave the new company a 100 per cent monopoly in synthetic dyes, and a near-total monopoly in other products ranging from rayon to fertilisers, synthetic nitrogen, dynamite, photography, potash, aluminium, jute, and even pottery. During the First World War, Germany's chronic lack of certain basic raw materials - the most important being oil - had led to direct government support for the chemical industry in its attempts to develop synthetic substitutes. This tradition was continued under the Weimar Republic, and raised to its hideous apogee in the murderous partnership between IG Farben and the Third Reich, symbolised by the employment of Jewish slave labour at the firm's Buna plant in the shadow of the chimneys of the Auschwitz death camp.

The year of 1925 also saw the beginning of a series of mergers in shipping. The Roland, Hamburg-Bremen-Afrika and Horn lines fused with the North German Lloyd, while the following year, the Deutsche-Australische and Kosmos lines were absorbed by North German Lloyd's main rival, Hamburg America. Finally in 1927, all the Mediterranean lines merged into a single group, with the result that Germany's merchant fleet of nearly two million tons was now organised by no more than five shipping companies. At the same time, air travel was rationalised under the government-backed company Lufthansa.

In the Ruhr, steps were also taken to achieve economies of scale and modernisation of plant through the creation in 1926 of the *Vereinigte Stahlwerke* (United Steel Works) under the aegis of Friedrich Flick, who rivalled Stinnes both in his predilection for stock market manipulations and hatred for organised labour. (He was a contributor to Nazi Party funds in 1932, and later shared in the plunder of occupied territories from the USSR to France.) Fused in the new concern were the interests of the Thyssen, Stinnes, Phoenix AG and Otto Wolff groups. Members ceded their interests to the company and in return received a proportional amount of its shares. Thus the old Rhein-Elbe-Union, which in December 1926 fused into the *Gelsenkirchner Bergwerksgesellschaft*, received 39.5 per cent of the new share issue, with 26 per cent going to the Phoenix group, where Wolff was prominent, another 26 per cent to Thyssen, and 8.5 per cent to the *Rheinische Stahlwerke*, also partly owned by Otto Wolff (IG Farben also acquired an interest in the new concern by virtue of its 51 per cent holding in the last named firm). Flick exercised control over this iron and steel empire by means of a hierarchy of minority share-holdings in its constituent groups. Flick's original firm, the Charlottenhutte AG, in which he had a 44 per cent controlling interest, also exercised control over the *Gelsenkirchner*. In its turn, the *Gelsenkirchner* dominated, by virtue of its 39.5 per cent share holding and a series of complex financial manoeuvres within its other member companies, the entire steel trust. The extent of the *Vereinigte Stahlwerke's* grip on German heavy industry is illustrated by the following figures, which give the proportions of national production accounted for by the newly-formed monopoly: coal: 36 per cent; pig iron: 48 per cent; hoop iron: 49 per cent; bar iron: 42 per cent; semi-finished steel: 56 per cent; thick plates: 47 per cent; tubes: 50 per cent; wire rods: 39 per cent.

Coal mining was even more tightly organised, with the Rhine-Westphalian syndicate increasing its share of total German coal production from 66.7 per cent in 1920 to 77.9 per cent by 1925, and coke production from 61.3 per cent in 1913 to 90 per cent by 1930.

Electrical engineering was already highly monopolised prior to 1914, with two firms - AEG and Siemens-Schuckert - accounting for 80 per cent production in this sphere. There was therefore little scope for further concentration, though both concerns did move into the radio and film industries after the end of the war. Banking, however, presented an altogether different picture, with a steady reduction in the number of big banks and an equally steady increase in their size and deposits. Through a series of mergers, the prewar Berlin 'big nine' shrunk to seven in 1924, five in 1929, and four in 1931. In 1913, the 'big nine' accounted for just under 50 per cent of the 10 billion marks held by all German banks, while in 1929 the five biggest banks held 11.4 billion of a total deposit of 17.5 billion marks - that is, 67.5 per cent.

Rationalisation and monopolisation were not confined to heavy industry and banking. For example, four syndicates in the cement industry shared by agreement between 85 to 90 per cent of Germany's cement output, while a similar process of concentration was under way in other medium and light industries. These newly amalgamated economic units not only commanded enormous material resources, but dominated whole armies of workers. Thus by 1929, the Flick concern employed 177 000 workers, AEG 60 000, Krupps 90 000 and IG Farben 148 000 (in 1936). Immense power also became concentrated in the hands of a tiny group of industrial and banking magnates, even more than had been the case in the prewar period of monopolisation. In the basic industries (coal, iron, steel and potassium) 19 persons or families owned fortunes amounting to 810 million marks, while in manufacturing, 11 persons or families owned 210 million marks. Taking industry as a whole, 42 persons and families aggregated 1.25 billion marks, and in finance, 110 owned 3.4 billion marks. ^[20] Also greatly enhanced was the role of the major banks in industry. As we have seen, centralisation of the banking system accompanied rationalisation and monopolisation in industry, and these twin processes inevitably led to an even greater representation by the big banks on the boards of industrial companies. The number of big bank directors sitting on the supervisory boards of industrial firms almost doubled from 751 in 1903 to 1484 by 1932.

Rationalisation consisted of a great deal more than simply the merging of banks or industrial concerns. It also involved the planned reduction in the amount of productive units, the least efficient being closed down and production concentrated in the most advanced. With largely foreign loans and funds realised as a result of the sale of unwanted assets, technological innovations and improvements were then carried out in line with the latest theories on plant and labour utilisation. Rationalisation became an industrial philosophy bent towards one aim - the maximisation of profit on capital employed by the most ruthless reduction of costs. A German writer on rationalisation, J Gerhardt, considered that:

... the productive process in the factory must be organised, having due regard to the configuration of demand, to lower costs, and all rationalisation consists singly and solely in the elimination of costs... the immediate purpose of rationalisation in a competitive economy *is not to increase the production of goods, to produce them cheaper and to better their quality, but to increase profit.* [Emphasis added]

RV Holzer, another authority on rationalisation, echoed these sentiments when he wrote in 1928 that:

... the purpose of every private undertaking is profit, and every action undertaken, and every step forward which the employer will make, has the sole purpose of maintaining or increasing profits. If here and there social and ethical considerations appear as the basis for decision and policies [as they did in Nazi ideology - RB], so these must drop into the background... Singly and solely to increase dividends should be the purpose of every larger measure, and consequently must be the basis for the rationalisation of every enterprise. ^[21]

And since German industry was engaged in a bitter trade war to recover overseas markets lost during and after the war, greater emphasis was placed on cost reduction than price maintenance. A Ruhr mine-owner summed up the central aim of rationalisation when he declared it to be 'the increase of productivity and profitability by the reduction of working costs, with prices remaining at the same level, *or actually falling*' [emphasis added].

To see how rationalisation worked out in practice, it is necessary to study the impact its application made on a specific branch of industry. On the eve of rationalisation, in 1925, the bituminous coal industry employed 557 087 workers in 343 concerns, at an average of 1624 workers per firm. When the world crisis brought it to a sudden end in 1929, 266 firms employed 517 401 workers, an average of 1945 per concern. So much for concentration, which proceeded at a far greater pace during these five years than in any other comparable period. But did monopolisation, and its attendant emphasis on cost reduction and optimum utilisation of labour power, succeed in its aim of increasing output per worker and the value created per worker? With production rising from 150 million tons in 1925 to 163 million tons in 1929, and with a declining labour force due to rationalisation, output per worker did indeed increase - from 238 tons annually in 1925 to 315 tons in 1929. Likewise value created per worker increased over the same period from 3416 marks annually to 4794.

Larger firms were, of course, better placed to exploit the advantages of rationalisation through economies of scale, and cost-cutting as a result of vertical integration. Thus the Flick combine, in the financial year 1926-27, aggregated an output of 26 million tons for its various products ranging from coal to crude and rolled steel, while employing a labour force of 183 000 wage workers. By 1929-30, with production

slightly down to 25.7 million tons, the labour force had been cut to 144 000. *Labour productivity had therefore increased from 148 tons per worker annually to nearly 192 tons.*

Such drastic reductions in the labour force of the major industries had an immediate effect on the unemployment rate. The number of workers employed in industry actually fell from 9.4 million in 1925 (the peak of the pre-rationalisation boom) to 8.7 million in 1928, the year in which industrial output in the Weimar Republic reached its maximum. And since redundancies tended to occur in those industries and plants where labour was strongly organised, the trade unions were particularly hard hit by rationalisation. The year of 1926 was especially lean, with the proportion of trade unionists out of work increasing from 6.7 per cent to 18 per cent. ^[22]

These then were the major advantages accruing to German big business as a direct result of its rationalisation and concentration of industry and banking between 1925 and 1928. But these measures were far from ensuring a prolonged period of stability and prosperity for German capitalism. Firstly it should be pointed out that quite apart from their excessive reliance on foreign (mainly US) credits to finance their modernisation programmes, ^[23] the trusts depended on a steadily rising demand for their products to keep their plant utilisation at or near the optimum point, and therefore their costs at a minimum. Heavy industry in particular found its fortunes directly linked to the state of the world market, since its produce was either directly exported, or was purchased by the equally export-oriented German manufacturing industry.

So while world trade, sustained by the roaring US boom, continued to expand, the basically precarious position of the German economy remained masked. Exports in finished manufactures (an industry which enjoyed the full advantages of rationalisation since the latter not only cut manufacturers' costs, but those of their raw materials suppliers) exceeded the best prewar levels, rising from 6630 million marks in 1925 to 7550 million in 1927. The strategic importance of manufacturing for the German economy is self-evident when we note that in 1927, the total value of all German exports was 10 224 million marks! A contraction in demand either in Europe or the USA on the one hand, or a drying up of the sources of foreign credit on the other, would obviously plunge German industry into a profound organic crisis.

There were, however, other tendencies towards crisis that emerged even prior to the world slump of 1929. Rationalisation and concentration inevitably led to what Marx termed the increased organic composition of capital, ^[24] a process whereby money expended on labour power (variable capital) declines proportionally to that laid out on the means of production, raw materials, etc (constant capital). The never-ending quest of the employer for lower costs drives him to seek ways of increasing the productivity of labour by more efficient work-organisation and technical innovation. In turn, this means that less living labour power is poured into each newly-created commodity, or, conversely, that the same amount of labour power now spreads itself over a greater number of commodities. This is indeed one of the aims of all rationalisation procedures. But herein lies the great contradiction of the capitalist mode of production. In seeking to produce as cheaply as possible, the employer of necessity tends to reduce the amount of surplus value contained to the individual commodity, and realised upon its sale. Unless the rate of surplus value is increased (either in relative terms, by shortening that portion of the working day in which the worker reproduces the value of his own labour power - that is, wages - or absolutely, by lengthening the working day), the rate of profit will tend to fall (the rate of profit being the percentage return on capital employed). In fact, it may continue to fall even if the rate of surplus value is increased.

While Marx speaks of the tendency for different rates of profit (this being the result of varying organic composition of capitals) to equalise themselves around the average rate of profit for the aggregate of capitals, it is important to remember that this is a *tendency*, and can be counteracted for considerable periods of time by other factors. Different rates of profit tend to become equal *as a result of a struggle between capitals*, in which those with the lower rate of profit (that is, where the organic composition of capital is highest, the rate of surplus value being the same) seek to appropriate a portion of the surplus value accruing to capitals where the rate of profit is above the average. This can be done by the owners of capitals with a low profit rate raising their prices above the value embodied within them in human labour time, thereby increasing the return on their invested capital. But since no new real values are created by mere price manipulations, the net result of this practice (which today would be called inflationary) is simply to increase the prices paid by the purchasers of this capitalist's commodities, whether they be means of production, in which case they become part of the costs of another capitalist, or consumption goods, thereby necessitating greater expenditure on the part of the workers.

Though rationalisation cut the production costs of German industry, enabling it to compete more effectively on the world market, it simultaneously reduced the proportion of capital expenditure which created its profits. With a lending rate of about seven per cent on its loans from the United States, industry therefore came under severe pressure to defend its profit margins, as can be gathered from the average rates of profit in the following branches of industry in the period 1924-27: coal and iron: 3.8 per cent; chemicals: 4.3 per cent; machine production: 6.2 per cent; electrical engineering: 6.7 per cent; artificial silk: 9.9 per cent; breweries: 11.6 per cent. (The average for industry as a whole was 7.6 per cent while dividends between 1925 and 1927 averaged 5.0 per cent, compared with 8.4 per cent in the last prewar year). What surely stands out is the precarious position of Germany's two primary producing industries, coal and iron, for any disruption of production here would clearly have immediate repercussions throughout the entire economy, as indeed proved to be the case after 1929. Mining and steel production were also the two industries whose organic composition of capital was highest, reflected in its exceedingly low rate of profit, so that, in turn, this low rate of profit inhibited capital accumulation, and threw the trusts into even greater dependence on the banks and foreign loans for new investment.

Since as the figures already quoted suggest, it is in heavy industry where the lowest rates of profit are normally found, and where, therefore, the pressures will be most compelling to force them up ^[25] by raising the prices of the final product, it also follows that if, as in the case of the Ruhr coal, iron and steel industry, the producers are organised in trusts and monopolies, buyers will either have to accept these increased prices or cease or curtail production through a lack of raw materials, fuel and means of production. If such capitalists producing consumer goods absorb these price increases charged by the capitalists with a lower rate of profit, then it must necessarily lead to a reduction in their mass profit, and hence rate of profit. Or they can pass the increased cost on in the form of higher prices, which will then have to be met by the consumer, who will, more often than not, be a worker. In his turn, if he is organised in a trade union, and the political regime of the country concerned permits such action, the worker will then seek to protect his own standard of living (which is at once threatened, if not undermined, by such price increases in the necessities of life) by securing a higher price for the sale of his own labour power, either through collective bargaining or, if this proves unsuccessful, strike action. And so, unless the second capitalist does indeed absorb the price increase charged by the first, the wheel has turned full circle. Our original capitalist, after securing an increase in the mass and rate of his profit by the device of raising the prices of his products above their value, now discovers the rate declining again as his mounting wages bill erodes his mass of profit. He must either put up his prices once again, thus making his product less competitive, or he must absorb the increase in wages which he has conceded (on pain of strike action or loss of some of his labour force to higher-paid firms) to his workers. We can therefore see that attempts to maintain or increase profit rates by the expedient of price increases are counter-productive and therefore inflationary where capitalists producing consumer goods are able to recoup the portion of surplus value appropriated by the heavy industrialist through the simple device of charging higher prices to the consumer, and where the workers respond in kind by demanding and winning higher wages. Nazi Germany provides us with the classic case of heavy industry seeking, and for a time successfully, to overcome the problem of low profit rates by ensuring, through the intervention of the state, that neither light industry nor the working class is able to take the measures outlined above in order to defend their profit rates and real wages respectively. Trade unions had to be destroyed, and with them the bargaining power of the proletariat, before serious inroads could be made on this most pressing problem of German heavy industry. Likewise the consumer-oriented capitalists had to be expropriated politically and allotted a far more humble share in the total surplus value extracted from the working class. Nor must we overlook the strategic imperialist considerations of such a policy. The Third Reich valued iron smelters, coal producers and the makers of tanks far more than it did artificial silk manufacturers.

And even should the capitalist class succeed, either by improved technology which cheapens the price of the necessities of life (and therefore of labour power) or by depressing the wages and living standards of the masses, in raising the rate of surplus value (that is, in shortening the portion of the working day during which the worker reproduces the value equivalent of his own wages), then this by no means removes the basis of this antagonism. If technology is improved, then this means that more constant capital and less living human labour will be required to produce the same or even more commodities. Therefore the organic composition of capital rises, while the mass of surplus value may fall, even though the rate has risen. The final result will be a decline in the rate of profit. Likewise with a cut in the consumption of the masses. This will, as the experience of Nazi Germany has shown, produce a sharp

increase in the accumulation fund of the capitalists, which will return to them in the form of increased profits (since the wages fund has now been reduced). However in the next cycle of production, this extra revenue reappears, no longer as additional profit increasing the capitalists' rate of profit (as it did on the previous cycle) but as *capital* only a small portion of which, if any, will be variable capital, and therefore capable of expanding rather than reproducing its value. Thus yet again, the basic tendency of the rate of profit to fall reasserts itself, and the capitalist is once more driven to seek fresh measures to arrest its decline. And there is in fact no long-term solution that can overcome this contradiction on the basis of the capitalist mode of production, since the latter's driving force is not the creation of use values for human needs, but exchange values for profit.

We must say at this juncture that the foregoing is by no means a digression from our central investigation, which is to unravel those social, political and economic forces and processes which culminated in the victory of National Socialism. These 'chemically pure' abstractions, derived from the labour theory of value, assume a living, concrete character when employed to illuminate the problems confronting German heavy industry in the Weimar Republic, and help to establish on a rigorous scientific basis the reasons why its leaders were finally compelled to turn towards fascism in an attempt to overcome them.

Profitability and the formation of new capital were also undermined from another quarter. As we have stressed on many occasions, the German bourgeoisie was only able to cling onto the state power in the winter of 1918-19 through making a series of concessions which while not renouncing the principle of private property in the means of production (it was in fact implicitly upheld by Article 153 of the Weimar Constitution), imposed severe financial burdens on employers by compelling them to contribute heavily to state social welfare schemes for their workers. Government, state and communal (municipal) expenditure on social welfare had, by 1926, increased nearly fourfold on the last prewar year, an indication of the degree to which even the most reactionary employers had been forced to retreat - temporarily - from their stand of intransigent opposition to 'Marxist'-inspired social legislation. Differences frequently came to light in the leadership of the Federation of German industries as to what to adopt towards the trade unions. Paul Silverberg, an advocate of collaboration with the reformist leaders - on very well-defined terms - outlined his views on this question to a meeting of the Federation on 4 September 1926:

... it must be fully and gratefully recognised that the old trade unions... have earned great credit by their cooperation in leading back to constitutionalism that revolutionary movement of workers and soldiers... We would hope that the present so-called clearing up will not stop here. One should recognise that the overwhelming majority of the German working class give their political allegiance to the SPD and a minority to the Centre Party... It is intolerable and shameful that such a large party as the SPD should remain more or less in irresponsible opposition. It has been said that one cannot govern against the workers. If this is so, one must face up to the consequences - one cannot govern without the Social Democrats, they must be brought into responsible cooperation. And they will perish as a party if they do not make up their minds to this effect. We say this on the assumption that the Social Democrats have the courage to learn the lesson of history - they have neither the power, the vigour nor the capability to rule and lead the state. It is not done by filling the streets with muscle and shouting. We live in a world organised on capitalist economics and culture. If the SPD will abandon its radical doctrines and the disruptive politics of the streets, they will be able to join with the employers in leading Germany and the German economy once again to success.

And this, remember, was a speech made in the middle of a boom by a relative liberal! Silverberg was something of a lone wolf amongst the big industrialists, who were bitterly critical of the then ruling all-bourgeois coalition under Dr Marx. They passed a resolution at the same meeting condemning the government for its failure to respond 'even to those suggestions which had almost unanimous approval in economic circles and authoritative quarters'. The Federation, obviously troubled by the continued lack of funds for investment, also renewed:

... its demand for a final settlement of the question of financial compensation with a view to the reduction of the burden of taxation nationally and locally to facilitate the essential creation of new capital and restore the profitability of the economy. The Federation [the resolution went on] recognising the necessity of making provision for those not able to work, is nevertheless apprehensive about too generous distribution of social benefits. It warns against the premature

repeal of a labour law and for premature restriction of hours of work. This could make our country, heavily burdened as it is with reparation payments, uncompetitive in world markets.

To what extent Weimar's social legislation further eroded the already slender profit margins of heavy industry can be seen from the examples of three Ruhr combines. In 1926, the following companies paid these proportions of their total profits to the government in the form of either taxes or social welfare contributions: *Vereinigte Stahlwerke*: 55 per cent; Klöckner: 46 per cent; Krupp AG: 77 per cent. ^[26]

Bearing in mind that in addition to the burdens imposed on industrialists and agrarians by the republic's welfare programmes, Social Democratic administrations in the states and communes were borrowing heavily from abroad to finance their own social reforms for the working class, we can appreciate why Schacht, as President of the Reichsbank and therefore responsible for Germany's solvency, openly doubted, from a capitalist point of view, the wisdom of this policy being pursued by the SPD. The truth of the matter was that German capitalism was in no position to make such far-reaching concessions to the proletariat:

While every effort must be made... not to allow a setback of civilisation... there is at the same time an absolute necessity for the very greatest economy in public expenditure. If public institutions are to be financed at all with foreign capital, *it must only be those which contribute in the first instance to increasing the level of production of the country, and not such as serve mere luxury or avoidable increases of consumption.* [Sic!] The Reichsbank has been continuously at pains to diffuse such views and to make them effective... It goes without saying that borrowed capital, which is invested in the improvement of production, can only be paid off in the course of time by annual payments out of regular profits. *Herein lies the need for differentiation in the manner of employment of the capital.* Only capital which is productively invested will yield the required payments. *Foreign loans contracted for unproductive consumption or luxury purposes will only be tolerable if the general increase in production is large enough to make it possible to finance this amortisation out of the surplus and savings of the national product as a whole.* ^[27]

We should bear in mind that by 'luxuries' and 'avoidable consumption' Schacht (who three years after he wrote these lines, went over to the Nazis) meant Social Democratic expenditure on clinics, nurseries, cultural facilities, adult workers' education, welfare for the poor and unemployed, etc. All these projects had either to be severely curtailed or scrapped, Schacht argued, if German big business was to regain its lost European supremacy and former colonies. ^[28]

Finally, there was the highly controversial issue of wages. Here too, the legacy of the November Revolution continued to plague agrarian and industrialist alike. The enhanced bargaining power of the trade unions (codified both in the November 1918 Working Agreement and Articles 159 and 165 of the constitution), together with a policy of government support for the maintenance of wage rates, prevented heavy industry indulging in the kind of wage cutting necessary to combat declining profit margins and compensate for greatly increased expenditures on loan repayments, taxes and welfare contributions, not to speak of the national levies imposed by reparations. With wages now subject, in the event of a dispute, to the veto of a referee appointed by the Labour Ministry, and most cabinets dependent for their survival on the toleration, if not open support, of Social Democracy, the practice of awarding what were known in industrialist circles as 'political wages' became an established one for the duration of the boom.

Wage rates were subject to the upwards pressure of trade union militancy, but not to the reverse pressure of unemployment, as can be seen from the following table:

Real Wages (per cent of 1913)			
Year	Skilled	Unskilled	Unemployed
1913	100	100	-
1922	64	86	150 000
1923	58	72	140 000 (summer)
1924	76	87	400 000
1925	92	102	200 000
1926	91	101	2 000 000

1927	93	105	350 000
------	----	-----	---------

The cumulative effect of all these factors was to divert that proportion of the national income which would have otherwise accrued to capital in the form of new investment, into public expenditure on social services and increased private consumption (especially by the lower income groups who gained from the rise in real wages) on the one hand, and repayment and servicing of foreign loans on the other. ^[29] Only under the rule of the Nazis, whose destruction of the trade unions removed wage rates from the realm of collective bargaining and market demand, did this trend become reversed. From a peak of 64 per cent in 1932, the share of wages and salaries in the national income declined, after five years of Nazi tyranny over the working class, to 57 per cent in 1938. Gross investment (which hinged to a large extent on the ratio of distribution of the national income between labour and capital) meanwhile rose from 18 per cent in 1928, and after a record low of nine per cent in 1932, to 23 per cent by 1937.

Since all these contradictions were concentrated most acutely at the heavy industrial core of the German economy, it was from here that the greatest pressures were mounted to break the resistance of organised labour as a necessary prelude to wage cutting, increased exploitation of labour and the severe curtailment of expenditure on welfare schemes. Certainly, the balance of forces both within the Reichstag and successive cabinets between 1924 and 1928 favoured such an aggressive policy by the leaders of heavy industry. The elections of May 1924 gave a clear majority to the main bourgeois - agrarian parties, placing further strains on the already fragile Weimar alliance of the SPD, Centre and DDP. Deputies in the new Reichstag were distributed as follows: SPD 100; KPD 62; Centre 64; BVP 21; DDP 28; DVP 45; DNVP 95; Landbund (a purely agrarian splinter from the DNVP which by this time was coming more under the influence of ultra-reactionary industrialists led by Hugenberg, a director of Krupp AG) 10; Economic Party 10; Racist Bloc (dominated by the NSDAP) 32. Despite the record vote for the KPD - 3.7 million - and the impressive electoral debut of the Nazis - 1.8 million votes - the underlying trend was towards the bourgeois centre. Had the elections been held six months earlier in the wake of the 1923 autumn crisis, support for the poles of revolution and counter-revolution would have been appreciably greater, and by the same token, markedly smaller for the SPD on the left and the main bourgeois parties on the right. This movement away from the extremes towards the centre continued at the elections held seven months later on 7 December. The KPD vote fell away by 900 000, while that of the Social Democrats rose by 1.8 million to give the SPD 131 Reichstag deputies. On the right, this process of stabilisation appears at first sight to be contradicted by the increased vote for the DNVP (up by 0.5 million), a party which had still to declare its loyalty to the Republic (even though certain of its leaders were prepared to enter an all-bourgeois cabinet that leaned firmly to the right). In contrast to the elections of June 1920, when the DNVP gained at the expense of parties to its left (that is, the DDP and the DVP) on 4 May 1924, the main source of its increment was former Nazi voters edging their way back to the mainstream of nationalist politics (not all the Nazi party's lost 0.9 million votes accrued to the DNVP however, since the Economic Party, only slightly less strident in its anti-Semitic and anti-capitalist demagoguery than the NSDAP, increased its vote by more than 300 000). At the same time, and as part of this trend towards bourgeois consolidation, the DVP also gained votes, as did even the DDP, confirming the point made in Chapter XIII that for most of the lifetime of the Weimar Republic, even the more conservative and nationalist layers of the petit-bourgeoisie were by no means irrevocably committed to militant anti-Marxism. ^[30]

As a result of these two election victories for the bourgeois centre and right, Germany between 1924 and 1928 was ruled by a series of coalitions which completely excluded the representatives of the SPD. The policy of Schacht and Stresemann had been vindicated. Moreover, with the Centre Party and the DDP discreetly disengaging themselves from their weakened Social Democratic partner, the road was now clear for the entry of the DNVP into a rightwards-oriented bourgeois - Junker cabinet. First under Dr Hans Luther in 1925, and then under Wilhelm Marx of the Centre Party throughout 1927 and until the appointment of the Social Democrat Hermann Müller as chancellor in June 1928, the ultra-reactionaries of the DNVP exercised a powerful grip on the conduct of government affairs.

Yet when armed with what must have seemed to them to be a clear mandate from the electorate to redress the balance of class and political forces within the republic, the spokesmen of heavy industry and the agrarians found themselves unable to convert their undoubted parliamentary supremacy into the degree of domination over the proletariat which they had exercised and enjoyed under the Empire. In other words, they encountered precisely the same apparently intractable obstacle that had thwarted Kapp's attempt to undo all the modest gains of the November Revolution - the power of the organised labour movement.

Frustration with Stresemann's moderate policy had already led early in 1924 to the defection of a sizable group of rightists (including the Ruhr industrialists Klonne, Sorge, Becker and, of course, the ubiquitous Quaatz and Vögler) to the DNVP, where under the aggressive leadership of press magnate and former Ruhr industrialist Alfred Hugenberg, the party was progressively weakening its exclusive ties with the big agrarians and transforming itself primarily into an ultra-reactionary mouthpiece of heavy industry. Nor was this all. While the Vögler group made its way towards or into the DNVP, another faction within the DVP made a determined bid to take over the leadership of the party, which they deemed to be heading for ruin under Stresemann's chairmanship. Flick, and until his death on 10 April 1924, Stinnes, attempted to blackmail Stresemann by threatening to cut off heavy industry's much-needed financial contributions to the party's treasury, a move which Stresemann only narrowly averted at the DVP congress in March.

There were other pointers as to the direction of thinking among leaders of industry. Dr Carl Duisberg, whom we first saw in 1918 advocating a policy of uninhibited collaboration with the Social Democrats, spoke in very different terms when he addressed the 1925 conference of the Federation of Germany Industry, the republic's most influential business organisation:

Be united, united, united. This should be the uninterrupted call to the parties in the Reichstag. We hope that our words of today will work, and will find the strong man who will finally bring everyone under one umbrella, for he is always necessary for us Germans as we have seen in the case of Bismarck.

But the only Bismarck on the horizon was the ageing former Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg, who in the same year was elected successor to the deceased Ebert as President of the republic. While his undisguised monarchist sympathies rendered him a potentially pliant tool in the hands of the extreme right, Hindenburg was obviously incapable of introducing under his own auspices the reforms desired by industrialists like Duisberg:

If Germany is again to be great, all classes of our people must come to the realisation that leaders are necessary who can act without concern for the caprices of the masses... it is to be hoped that there will be found in Germany the necessary number of such personalities who will be the leaders of that nation. Only then will she rise from the deepest misery to her former greatness... There is no doubt that the German economy can only exist and fulfil its duties, if the burden of salaries, wages, taxes, freights and - not least - impositions for social security, which it must carry, are limited. German trade unions must from now on hold as their primary duty giving consideration, together with employers, to increasing production. The wage and salary question... [will no longer be] of exclusive importance as it unfortunately still is today.

We can recognise here not only the language of political reaction, *but of rationalisation*, which in the case of Duisberg, as with many fellow monopoly capitalists, and bankers such as Schacht, became fused with the former into a single bitterly anti-working-class doctrine. Still lacking however, were the political forces willing and able to make these reactionary plans of dictatorship and increased exploitation of the proletariat a reality. The political problems of heavy industry were highlighted in 1927 by the enactment of legislation guaranteeing regular weekly benefits to the unemployed. Ironically, this measure, which angered wide circles of the German business world because of its violation of the bourgeois principle of 'self-help', was approved by a cabinet which contained no fewer than four representatives of the DNVP, and another two from the DVP. Between them, they outnumbered their Catholic and non-party cabinet partners, and could have, theoretically, blocked the proposed legislation by threatening either to vote it down or withdraw from the cabinet. In the event they did neither, and the bill became law on 16 July 1927. Already smarting under the burdens imposed by existing social welfare payments, the new act convinced a group of heavy industrialists that continued retreats before the power of organised labour were placing the profitability of the whole economy at risk. Under the leadership of Vögler of the Flick Steel Combine and Paul Reusch of *Gute Hoffnungshutte* steel works, they took control of the highly influential North-West Group of the Association of German Iron and Steel Industries, and proceeded to use it as a base from which to launch their offensive against the workers of the Ruhr. At the 1927 conference of the Federation of German Industry, this same faction blocked a proposal by the liberal Jewish banker Paul Silverberg, speaking for the 'moderates', to resume the long-since abandoned collaboration with the ADGB. That same year, in August, Reusch and Vögler formed their *Ruhrlade*, a circle of 12 Ruhr industrialists who met monthly on an informal basis to discuss common economic and political problems, and to prepare for what they considered to be a decisive battle with the Ruhr workers

over the renewal of their 1928 wage contracts. And a year earlier, Reusch, together with industrialist Robert Bosch, had founded his 'League for the Renewal of the Reich', which had as its aim the 'reform' of the Weimar Constitution along more authoritarian lines. In its inaugural manifesto, the League declared:

In the hour of danger, there can be no other slogan but that of strengthening the state. The imperial government must have decision-making powers in relation to all the general important questions. Apart from foreign policy, law and military affairs, it is concerned with finance and all other determinative economic issues. Such an empire must have the power that once built the old empire and that should now serve the common cause.

Here we have the beginnings not only of a move towards the subversion of the existing Weimar Constitution, which upheld the right of the state and communal authorities to undertake a wide range of social and economic reforms (something that obviously provoked opposition from industrial and financial circles), but of a renewal of imperialist-colonialist tendencies within the monopoly bourgeoisie. These were succinctly summarised by Schacht when he wrote in 1927 that:

It must be possible to make some colonial territory available for settlement and exploitation by the German people, so as to provide Germany with the possibility of regular emigration and to facilitate the solution of the problem of her food supply. ^[31]

But once again, the question was - how? Just as the monopolist bourgeoisie lacked the internal political reserves to impose a crushing defeat on its domestic foes, so it lacked the military means with which to regain what it had lost in the world war. Fears concerning the durability of the boom (which began to gain currency after 1927) ^[32] and an increasing awareness that the time was drawing near when the leaders of the economy would have to claim back from the working class what it had been compelled, on pain of expropriation, to yield in 1918 and 1919, now became allied with a growing restiveness about German capitalism's subordinate position in European politics, an inferiority which was in potentially explosive contradiction with Germany's economic and especially industrial preponderance in the continent.

This chronic imbalance can be depicted graphically, measuring Germany against its main imperialist rival, France. (All figures are for 1929 unless otherwise stated.)

Factor	Unit	Germany	France
Population	million inhabitants	64.0	41.2
Motive Power in Industry	million HP	(1925) 18.1	(1926) 11.7
Share of World Industrial Production	per cent	12.6	7.6
Steel Output	million tons	16.2	9.7
Export of Manufactured Goods	billion \$	2.34	1.23
Foreign Investments	billion Fr	(1930) 5.0	(1930) 31.4
Merchant Fleet	million tons	4.1	3.4
Navy, total tonnage	thousand tons	99.6	552.3
Army	thousand men	100.5	563.0
Population of Colonies	million inhabitants	-	65.1

Thus Germany had either re-established or maintained its prewar supremacy over France in every sphere except that of foreign investment, which showed a catastrophic decline from its pre-1914 peak of 44.0 billion francs. And this related directly to those factors in which France now towered over Germany - namely in the military and colonial spheres. Defeat in 1918 led inexorably to German capital being driven out of regions where it had already established itself, and exclusion from others where Allied capital was already supreme. Disarmed and diplomatically isolated, post-1918 German imperialism again found itself hemmed in on all sides, very much as it had done towards the close of the Bismarck era, only now the terms forced on the country's leaders at Versailles denied it the means to clear a new road in Europe and

overseas for German capital. To break this deadlock, German imperialism required a regime which while relentlessly pursuing a policy of militarisation of the population and rearmament, switched its strategic orientation away from yet another debilitating collision with the Entente powers, and towards the Soviet east, where far from meeting with their opposition, a German offensive could justifiably expect to win the approval of the Allied imperialists.

The acuteness of this contradiction could not but imprint itself on the consciousness of the heavy industrialists; one of whom, Gustav Krupp, declared:

We need markets, but the markets of the world are closed to us. Great Britain has erected tariff walls. In France, Italy, Sweden, the Balkans, in fact everywhere, German trade is up against barriers which little by little are becoming insuperable.

Which was precisely the point being hammered home by Hitler in a series of speeches to right-wing business and political leaders during the rationalisation period (for example, his address to the Hamburg National Club in February 1926) and in the sequel to *Mein Kampf*, written in 1928, which is largely devoted to foreign policy questions:

The more market difficulties increase, the more bitterly will the struggle for the remaining ones be waged. Although the primary weapons of this struggle lie in pricing and in the quality of the goods with which the nations competitively try to undersell each other, in the end the ultimate weapons even here lie in the sword... If a really vigorous people believes that it cannot conquer another with peaceful means, or if an economically weak people does not wish to let itself be killed off by an economically stronger one... then in both cases the vapours of economic phraseology will be suddenly torn asunder and war, that is, the continuation of politics by other means, steps into its place.

Those who do not understand this:

... open the way to decay in which the inner strength of such a people swiftly disappears, all racial and moral and folk values are earmarked for destruction, ideals are undermined, and in the end the prerequisites which a people urgently needs in order to take upon itself the ultimate consequences of the struggle for world markets is eliminated. Weakened by a vicious pacifism, peoples will no longer be ready to fight for markets for their [sic!] good with the shedding of their blood... The sword had to stand before the plough and an army before economics. ^[33]

As the reader will readily appreciate, this is a purely imperialist programme, arrived at on the basis of what was, given Hitler's quasi-mystical political conceptions, a basically correct estimation of the economic dilemmas confronting German industry in the postwar era.

All save one of the conditions necessary for the forging of an alliance between big business and the Nazis were therefore maturing in Germany at the precise moment when the boom was at its peak. All conditions save one. And Wall Street was to provide it.

Appendix: Two Crises: The Election of Hindenburg and the Princes Referendum

Two episodes which occurred in the period of - for Weimar Germany - relative political stability between 1924 and 1928 serve to indicate how little the ruling class had succeeded in resolving the internal political differences which had manifested themselves so starkly in the Kapp Putsch and again in the great crisis of 1923. And they also provided ample evidence that temporary economic prosperity and the abatement of the revolutionary threat had done little or nothing to reconcile the hard core of Junkers and heavy industrialists to the political system established by the November Revolution, nor to the prominent role that the workers' movement played within it. The death of President Ebert on 28 February 1925 brought both of these questions to the fore, since the ruling class was neither able to agree on a single candidate to oppose those of the workers' parties, nor to formulate a common political programme on which such a candidate could campaign.

This disunity had indeed already evidenced itself before Ebert's death, since with a new Presidential election pending in the summer of 1925, representatives of the right-wing parties (DVP, DNVP, BVP and Economic Party) had met on 12 February to agree on a joint 'national' candidate. The rift was reflected first of all in the three names put forward at the meeting. Only one could be properly termed a 'civilian' - the DVP Mayor of the Ruhr town of Duisberg, Dr Karl Jarres. The other two were Army Chief of Staff von Seeckt and Defence Minister Otto Gessler. So even in a period of relative tranquillity, the General

Staff sought to sustain and protect its role of arbiter, even to the extent of running its own candidate for President of the Reich. But such a move was sure to cause great unease not only among the working class, which had bitter memories of the role of the military at the time of the Kapp crisis, and again in 1923, but liberal-democratic circles of the middle and ruling class. The choice of candidate was further complicated by the religious question, since even the ultra-right-wing Bavarian Catholics of the BVP could not bring themselves to endorse a Protestant nomination for the Presidency. The national bloc therefore began to disintegrate as the elections, scheduled for 29 March, approached. Consequently, the ruling class, or rather its various warring factions, presented to the electorate no less than four candidates: Jarres (who emerged, after protracted negotiations between the DVP and DNVP, as the main 'national' candidate), Wilhelm Marx of the Centre Party, Dr Heinrich Held, Minister President of Bavaria and a leader of the BVP, and Dr Willy Hellpach of the DDP. And for good measure, the Nazis and their *volkisch* allies ran General Ludendorff.

For the working class the choice was much less complicated. They could vote for either Otto Braun, the Social Democratic Minister President of Prussia, or the Communist Party leader Ernst Thälmann. With such fragmentation on the right, it was scarcely surprising that no candidate secured a clear majority at the first ballot. Jarres, as expected, won the votes that in a Reichstag election would have gone to his two main sponsors, the DVP and the DNVP (he in fact secured 10.7 million). Party loyalties also prevailed in the cases of Marx, Hellpach and Held, with 3.8, 1.5 and 1.0 million votes respectively. The further decline in the fortunes of the Nazis was reflected in the paltry 200 000 votes cast for their candidate, Ludendorff.

On the left, the temporary consolidation of Social Democracy at the expense of the KPD, which first became visible in the Reichstag elections of December 1924, gathered pace, with Braun receiving 7.8 million votes against Thälmann's 1.8 (less than half the vote won by the KPD in the Reichstag elections a year previously). Under the provisions laid down by an act of 1920, new Presidential elections had to be held, in which the winner did not require an absolute majority. At once, a regroupment took place in both the Social Democratic left, and the bourgeois centre and right. A Popular Front-style Weimar coalition was hastily assembled between the reformists and the bourgeois democrats and Catholics, with Marx as its candidate. In theory, if the voting preferences of the first election were reproduced at the second, then Marx could expect to garner at least 13 million votes, enough to give him a clear lead of several millions over the best candidate of a splintered right. The 'Reich bloc' obviously required a more commanding figure than the nondescript and relatively unknown Jarres to rally the middle-class masses to the national banner and the good fight against godless Marxism and the alien spirit of parliamentary democracy. For this was precisely the intention of those who prevailed upon Hindenburg to emerge from military retirement, at the age of 78, to run for Presidency of Europe's most crisis-prone state. Now, the Reich bloc hoped (with some justification) that party labels and programmes would be cast aside by all 'national' Germans. In electing the victor of Tannenberg, they would not be voting for a party, nor even a man, but a symbol of a lost imperial past that under his leadership could be recaptured. The popular front Republican bloc proved itself utterly impotent in the face of such a mobilisation of all that was backward, mystical and reactionary in the petit-bourgeoisie. All they could offer the middle class was the same souped-up version of parliamentary democracy that had alienated wide layers of the middle class from Social Democracy and liberalism in the first years of the republic. Bourgeois and Social Democratic 'moderation' proved itself powerless to prevent the election of the man who eight years later presided over the liquidation of both bourgeois democracy and the SPD. In the second ballot, held on 26 April, Marx succeeded in slightly increasing the vote of the Republican bloc to 13.7 million. But it was not enough. Hindenburg trumped him by just under one million votes, and even though this did not give him an overall majority (Thälmann on this occasion receiving 1.9 million), it was enough to place the enormously powerful office of President in the hands of the national right. But he remained a symbol, rather than an instrument, of its unity, for even amongst the parties which had endorsed his candidature, there was unease that Hindenburg's election would irrevocably drive the Social Democrats into opposition, possibly attracting to them a section of the bourgeois democrats and Catholics. Stresemann, for one, reasoned thus, only becoming reconciled, in the best traditions of German liberalism, to the new President when it became clear that the Social Democrats were in fact contemplating no such drastic action. And Hindenburg was adroit enough in his early months of office not to give the SPD and its bourgeois allies any grounds for abandoning their policy of 'toleration' of the centre-right coalitions that ruled Germany between 1924 and 1928. Stresemann noted in his diary that the new President 'makes a powerful impression... For the time being I don't have the feeling that Hindenburg will be under the

influence of any political camarilla, at least not consciously.’ The significance of Hindenburg’s election was given an altogether different evaluation by an aspiring member of the ‘political camarilla’, von Papen. Very much in keeping with his own rigidly authoritarian views, he had dissociated himself from his party’s own candidate, the Catholic Marx, and had come out openly in support of Hindenburg the Protestant:

With some friends I issued a declaration in the middle of April 1925... we pointed out that important sections of the population had lost faith in the type of society sought by the Weimar Coalition [here Papen was quite right - RB], based as it was, to too great an extent, on rationalistic and atheistic premises... Calling for a return to the old Christian conception of government, we proclaimed once again Germany’s historical duty to act as the watchman and bulwark of the Western tradition in the heart of Europe. We felt that the election of such a God-fearing and devout personality as Hindenburg would provide the best guarantee for a return to this fundamental policy. ^[34]

Papen had also entertained high hopes of von Seeckt, who on several occasions before his resignation as chief of staff in 1926 had exerted a decisive influence on the course of German politics:

I have always regretted that at this critical point in our history [Papen refers here to the crisis of the autumn of 1923, when the army assumed emergency powers to deal with the revolutionary threat in central Germany - RB] Seeckt did not make up his mind to bring order and authority into the chaotic state of our affairs... how much better it would have been if the task of organising [sic! - an obvious euphemism for destroying - RB] a working democracy had been entrusted to a man whose whole nature was opposed to dictatorship and war. ^[35]

But we know from Seeckt’s expressed views on the role of the army in politics that while he considered it to be an indispensable support to established authority, it should never seek to initiate a drastic change of regime. ^[36]

But many among the ruling class were slow to learn this axiom of counter-revolutionary strategy, as the crisis precipitated by the referendum on the expropriation of the former royal houses a year later revealed. Ironically, this second crisis arose in part as a result of the frustration felt by extreme right-wing Junker and industrialist circles with the first year of Hindenburg’s rule. We should remember that his election had been preceded by the formation of the first truly ‘national’ cabinet, containing five DNVP ministers, two each from the Centre and the DVP, and for the first time since the short-lived Müller government, which held office from the fall of Kapp to August 1920, no representatives of the bourgeois radicals, the DDP. But, as we have already noted, this cabinet, even when enjoying the obvious advantage of working under a President who made no attempt to conceal his ultra-reactionary, monarchist views, could make very little headway in its proclaimed task of eroding the more objectionable political features of the Weimar system, and redressing the balance of power against the workers’ movement. Sharp divergences over foreign policy, with the DNVP opposing closer relations with France, and Foreign Minister Stresemann’s DVP generally favouring them, strained relations between the two main coalition partners, who parted company on 26 October 1925, following the Locarno Conference with the Allied powers. The DNVP, after less than a year of sharing office, went over to their accustomed position once more, thus greatly adding to the crisis already maturing over the controversial question of the princes’ property.

While the November Revolution - contrary to the wishes of Ebert - ended the reign of the Hohenzollerns, successive republican governments, even when they contained Social Democratic ministers, did nothing to challenge the privileges of the royal houses, whose enormous wealth had been filched from the German people over centuries of absolutist rule. Only in a few instances did state governments expropriate the princes without compensation, a measure which was later declared to be illegal as it violated article 153 of the Weimar (republican) Constitution. Partly because it involved the still-vexed question of the monarch, but also because it challenged the right of private property in land (the main form of the princes’ wealth) the Communist Party’s campaign to secure a national referendum on the issue aroused intense feelings on both sides of the class divide, finally precipitating a crisis of near-Kapp proportions. The government crisis began in January 1926, when following a period of nearly two months without a Chancellor (Luther had resigned after the withdrawal of the DNVP from the cabinet the previous October, and no successor to him had been found), a group of Junkers and industrialists formulated a plan to fill the void created by Luther’s departure with an extra-parliamentary dictatorship resting only on the authority of the President. Hindenburg, however, pre-empted such a move by reappointing Luther Chancellor on 20 January 1926, who then proceeded to form a cabinet which

leaned back to the centre, excluding the DNVP and including three representatives of the DDP. Over the next few days Hindenburg was subjected to considerable pressure from the usual ultra-rightist circles, for whom the influential and arch-reactionary Junker Oldenburg-Januschau, a close friend of the President, acted as chief spokesman. But to no avail. Hindenburg was not prepared to overturn the constitution and risk plunging Germany once more into civil war. The reaction from the far right was immediate and harsh. The *Berliner Börsen Zeitung*, a semi-official organ of finance capital, closely linked with the army leadership, was especially biting. It declared, on 23 January, that 'the hope that our venerable President would succeed in unifying the multitude of centrifugal elements in our people, as he so ardently wishes, has not been fulfilled...'. The President's failure to provide Germany with the leadership it required called for drastic action, since by parliamentary methods, 'one cannot force 60 million individuals into one direction, the individualistic German needs strong government'. (Precisely the message being hammered home by industrial leaders such as Duisberg, Vöglér and company.) So if the President was unwilling or unable to act as those who had secured his election desired, then other ways had to be found. It was at this point that the KPD referendum campaign, which had been initiated in November 1925, began to play the central part in the gathering crisis. Such was the support it won amongst non-party and Social Democratic workers that the SPD leadership found it impossible to oppose the referendum. By 17 March, more than 12.5 million signatures had been collected in support of the proposed referendum on the expropriation of the princes, and many must have been from people who had not voted for either the KPD or the SPD in the December 1924 Reichstag elections, since on that occasion, the two workers' parties aggregated only 10.6 million votes. Clearly, a section of the middle class were being drawn into the campaign, one in which, significantly, the KPD and the SPD were collaborating quite closely. Many on the right sensed the danger implicit in the success of the KPD's agitation against the princes. Hindenburg's old general staff comrades petitioned him to assume dictatorial powers, with or without the sanction of Article 48, while on 14 May 1926, the ex-emperor's son, the Crown Prince Wilhelm (later to become a fervent Nazi and storm trooper) wrote to the President that the:

... attacks on our Hohenzollern family against the judiciary and landed property, ultimately against all property, are but a systematic preparation for the Bolshevisation of Germany. There is still time for a determined government ready to apply its power ruthlessly to fight these destructive tendencies. But time is running out. If nothing is done, I see us being plunged into a bloody civil war, *whose outcome is quite unpredictable*. [Emphasis added]

The Crown Prince's frantic tone, and his anguished call for a 'determined government', were quite understandable. How could the new Luther cabinet 'apply its power ruthlessly' when three members of a party - the DDP - that was supporting the expropriation of the princes sat in it? The letter was a clear hint to the President that moves were afoot to unseat what the far right considered to be a weak-kneed government, and replace it by one not dependent for its survival on parliamentary majorities or the approval of the electorate. And such indeed was the case.

As an unrepentant monarchist, Hindenburg also had strong feelings about the referendum, declaring in a letter that it was:

... a great injustice, and also an exhibition of a regrettable lack of traditional sentiment... The legal recognition of property is the very foundation of a constitutional state, and the proposal of expropriation offends the principle of morality and justice.

Count Westarp, the DNVP leader, also stressed the connection between the campaign against monarchy and the property question:

Beyond the proper issue of a fight against private property, the agitation was primarily directed against the cause of monarchism, to tear the monarchic idea firmly and irrevocably out of the hearts of our people.

Hindenburg also made his sympathies known on another highly controversial and emotionally-charged issue which flared up at this time - that of the naval flag. The Weimar Constitution had already compromised on this issue - one of enormous symbolical and indeed mystical significance for the monarchist right - by specifying a merchant ensign in the old imperial colours of red, white and black, with the Republic's colours - red-black-gold - tucked away in one corner of the flag. But even this did not satisfy the die-hard monarchists. They prevailed upon Luther to sanction and submit to the President a decree instructing all German embassies and consulates outside Europe to display the merchant ensign alongside the flag of the Republic, as well as on German ships in European seaports. When the decree became law on 5 May, the storm that at once erupted around Luther's head quickly forced him to resign,

after losing a vote of confidence by the narrow margin of 176 to 146, with the SPD and their DDP allies voting against, and the DNVP abstaining. Thus Germany once again found itself without a government, not only for lack of a unified bourgeois policy and leadership, but because for the first time in more than two years, the working class was now beginning to take the offensive again, albeit on a seemingly secondary question. It was at this moment that the ultra-right, led by among others, Hugenberg of the DNVP (who in the same year had denounced universal suffrage as a 'crime'), the Pan-German League Chairman Class, and Vögler of the Steel Trust, decided to strike their blow. Many of the details of what followed remain obscure to this day, but the general shape of the plan seems to have been a more discreet version of the Kapp Putsch, in which on this occasion the plotters hoped to exploit both the President's undoubted good will and the paralysis endemic in government quarters. In the event, the coup never got off the ground. Counter-measures were already in hand in Prussia, which came under the control of the Social Democratic state administration and its Interior Minister, Carl Severing. Otto Braun authorised a series of raids on the homes of leading Ruhr industrialists, including that of Vögler, and much incriminating material was in fact discovered, including plans for the dissolution of parliament (the pretext for which would have been the unearthing of a fictitious Communist plot to stage a revolution). Death sentences were to be handed out to all those who resisted the new regime or attempted to revive the overthrown one, and there were proposals for coordinating army action with that of right-wing paramilitary groups (such as the *Stahlhelm*) to suppress the anticipated working-class resistance to the coup. Stresemann (against whom the intended putsch was in part directed) leaves us a tantalisingly incomplete account of the events surrounding its preparation and detection.

The initial moves in the direction of a right-wing coup seem to have been made towards the end of 1925. An entry in Stresemann's diary for 16 December records that:

... at the present meeting of the Association of German Iron and Steel Manufacturers, Herr Dr Reichart [a DNVP Reichstag deputy and business manager of the Association who together with Stinnes in November 1918 negotiated the Working Agreement with the ADGB - RB] after the servants had left the room, made the following statement about the formation of the government: the great coalition would not succeed [that is, it would prove impossible to form a Weimar coalition of Social Democrats, the Centre, DDP and DVP - RB]. The central government to follow would possess neither a majority nor sufficient authority. Nothing else remained but to govern on the basis of Article 48 and not to summon the Reichstag again until there were 13 months in the year. Borsig and Grobler agreed with R's remarks. R insisted it was necessary to get the President's [that is, Hindenburg's] support for this view. A series of deputations must, therefore, be sent to Hindenburg to put these considerations before him. Baumer was to represent the Association of German Iron and Steel Manufacturers, because he could exercise most influence on Hindenburg, and was the best speaker. ^[37]

It also appears possible, though the evidence is far more circumstantial, that the Prussian Social Democrats were taking their own counter-measures to pre-empt such a rightist coup:

'Von Campe [DVP fraction leader in the Prussian Landtag (state parliament) - RB] gave me the following information: A German Nationalist [DNVP] deputy had told him that in the Prussian Ministry of State all preparations had been made for a Prussian dictatorship. In the Reich there was nothing for it but to govern on the basis of Article 48, Prussia was for this development. In the Prussian Ministry of the Interior all preparations had been made for concentrating the entire political power on [SPD Interior Minister Carl] Severing. The deputy in question had expressed the hope that the DVP would not in that case stand on the side of the Social Democrats. I told Herr von Campe that the whole statement seemed to be very improbable in that form. But I could very well imagine that having regard to the extraordinary increase in the numbers of the Communists these preparations had been made in Prussia so as to be able to take measures in case of any serious unrest arising from intensified unemployment [now standing at around the two million mark - RB]. ^[38]

The next specific reference Stresemann makes to the activities of this right-wing group of industrialists is on 11 May, when he notes that raids carried out by the Prussian police in Berlin on the homes of known ultra-rightists had unearthed plans for the installation of an open dictatorship. The houses of prominent Ruhr industrialists were obviously among those searched, since on 3 June, at a meeting of the Reich Committee for Trade and Industry of the DVP, held at Erfurt, charges were made against Stresemann that he had either approved or supported the Prussian Social Democrats' moves to bloc the proposed coup,

and had even connived at the visits paid to the industrialists' homes which had been authorised by Dr Abegg, a leading official in the Prussian Ministry of the Interior. Naturally, these immensely rich and powerful capitalists were enraged, not only by the frustration of their coup, but the humiliation they had been made to endure at the hands of the Social Democrats, who remained in their eyes plebeian upstarts and traitors. And therefore we can also appreciate Stresemann's eagerness to refute this accusation, since it seemed to accord with the long-standing grievance of the Ruhr industrialists that the DVP chairman was 'soft' on the 'Marxists'. Stresemann replied that in a telephone conversation on the day of the raids with the Berlin Police Vice-President, Dr Friedensburg, 'there was no mention of forthcoming domiciliary visits to the leading magnates of the Rhenish-Westphalian industry...'.^[39]

Although Stresemann was not privy to the counter-measures of the Prussian Social Democrats, he was better informed of the activities of the Ruhr rightists. A memo, dated 3 June 1926, records that a:

Herr Dr F explained in some detail that a large coup had been contemplated, the ultimate aim of which was to remove the President [who had by this time, because of his reluctance to violate the constitution, become an obstacle to the projected overturn - RB] and appoint a Reich Commissar, who should in his turn appoint Commissars in all the constituent states and rule as a dictator, with his directory and without a parliament. As regards methods, Dr F said that the intention was, when the occasion arose, to capture Berlin, in conjunction with sections of the Reichswehr, and he referred to the so-called emergency decree, and the measures therein contemplated against those who opposed the new regime.^[40]

Dr F did not name the proposed new Chancellor:

... but ... merely remarked that I [Stresemann] would be surprised if I knew who was contemplated for the post. However, he gave me the names of the other members of the directory: Hugenberg, Mohl, Luning, etc... I assumed from the very detailed information given me by Dr F... that we had been directly confronted with a catastrophe...^[41]

Needless to say, Hugenberg had claimed for himself the Ministry of Economics. Stresemann speaks of a 'catastrophe', and by this he clearly means a repeat version of the Kapp Putsch, whose near-certain failure could have driven the Social Democrats into opposition. This thought had been uppermost in his mind throughout the last six or more years of his life (he died in 1929), and determined the course of his relations with not only the Ruhr industrialists, who never became reconciled to the SPD's influential role in the Weimar Republic, but representatives of the military opposition. For example, an entry of 28 February records a visit paid on Stresemann by Captain Erhardt, who, ostensibly, came to thank him for his efforts in securing an amnesty for the participants in the Kapp Putsch. The former Free Corps officer and ex-Nazi (he had broken with Hitler after the Munich Putsch, when the latter opted for a legal struggle against Weimar) said to Stresemann that 'at the next elections we must combine under the watchword: United nationals against the non-nationals', to which Stresemann, who correctly understood this slogan to mean a renewed offensive against not only the KPD but the SPD, replied that the Social Democrats 'had done wholly national work'.^[42]

Stresemann's account is interesting for two reasons. It indicates how deep were the divisions within the German ruling class between some of its leading political representatives, of whom Stresemann was among the most gifted and experienced, and the big employers, who were demanding and even actively preparing a more openly dictatorial form of government; and at the same time, the even more sharp antagonisms between the big bourgeoisie and the Social Democrats, the latter even being compelled to employ police and emergency measures to protect themselves from a rightist coup (though never for one moment seeking to rally their millions of working-class supporters to defend the gains of the November Revolution).

The final vote for the referendum held on 20 June 1926 confirmed the trend detectable in the signature-collecting campaign of three months before. Then, the proposal to expropriate the princes without any compensation had secured the support of 12.5 million people. By 20 June, another three million had joined them, proving that the measure had attracted, in the face of a non-stop propaganda barrage from practically the entire bourgeois press, the backing of layers of the petit-bourgeoisie who had not associated themselves with the workers' movement in any way since the earliest days of the November Revolution and the Weimar Republic. In little more than a year, the middle-class masses who rallied in their millions to Hindenburg had been split, and a sizable proportion of them won to support a measure which was known to be strongly opposed by the President himself. Although failing to win the required number of votes (more than half the total German electorate), in a straightforward choice between

republic and monarchy, and on the even more fundamental issue of the rights of private property, the workers' movement had, despite its deep principled divisions, succeeded in rallying more support for its campaign against the princes than had Hindenburg in the Presidential election of April 1925. This is a factor of some historical significance, and one that not even Trotsky gives its due weight. Of Hindenburg's election he says the following:

Conservatives, Nationalists, Monarchists, all the enemies of the November Revolution, put Hindenburg in the post of *Reichspräsident* the first time in 1925. Not only the workers but also the parties of the bourgeoisie voted against the Hohenzollern marshal. But Hindenburg won. He was supported by the masses of the petit-bourgeoisie moving towards Hitler. ^[43]

Neither of these statements is accurate. Hindenburg, as we have seen, was the candidate of the anti-Weimar bourgeoisie as well as of the Junker monarchists. His candidature was endorsed by the heavy industrialists of the DVP and DNVP, and opposed by the Catholic Centre (but not by Papen's group) and the bourgeois democrats. In other words, the ruling class *divided* over the Presidency. Nor can one simply say that the millions of petit-bourgeois who voted for Hindenburg in April 1925 were 'moving towards Hitler'. In 1926, a not insignificant proportion of those who had voted for Hindenburg the previous year (and for Hitler between 1930 and 1933) move perceptibly leftwards, a trend that continued up to and in the Reichstag elections of 1928. The votes of 1925 and 1926 therefore must not be taken in isolation from one another. Between them, they indicated the alternative routes along which the middle class masses can travel - with the monopolies as an anti-labour militia, or with the proletariat against their monopolist exploiters and fascist deceivers.

Surely one could not desire better proof that the German middle class need not have become the foot-soldiers of the Nazi counter-revolution, and that under a genuine Communist leadership that fought to establish a principled unity of the working class against fascism and all forms of reaction, its best elements could have been won to revolutionary socialism? This is the main historical lesson that has to be distilled from the election of Hindenburg and the crisis of the princes' referendum.

Notes

1. H Schacht, *The Stabilisation of the Mark* (London, 1927), p 76.
2. H Schacht, *My First Seventy-Six Years* (London, 1955), p 177.
3. In common with leading non-Marxist historians (the most important being Werner T Angress, *Stillborn Revolution* (Princeton, 1963) and EH Carr, *The Interregnum* (London, 1954), the latest Stalinist history of the Communist International denies that a revolutionary situation existed in Germany in 1923: 'The Party's leadership overestimated the degree of readiness of the masses for the decisive battles and the rate at which the revolutionary crisis was building up.' (*Outline History of the Communist International* (Moscow, 1971), p 195) This volume was produced by a group of Soviet authors headed by AI Sobolev, and with the assistance of a team of former Comintern officials and journalists, among them the British Stalinists Andrew Rothstein and Palme Dutt. As we have already noted, Palme Dutt has a vested interest in proving that Germany was not ripe for revolution in the early 1920s. Admitting this would be tantamount to a confession of harbouring 'vulgar Marxist' and 'Trotskyist' views. Yet such heresies succeeded in infiltrating the columns of *Pravda*, which on 25 May 1924, declared: 'It is clear that in October 1923, during the unprecedented economic crisis, during the complete disintegration of the middle classes, during a frightful confusion in the ranks of the Social Democracy resulting from the powerful and sharp contradiction within the bourgeoisie itself and an unprecedented militant mood of the proletarian masses in the industrial centres, the Communist Party had the majority of the population on its side. It could and should have fought and had all the chances of success.'
4. F von Papen, *Memoirs* (London, 1952), pp 102-20.
5. A Grzesinski, *Inside Germany* (New York, 1939), p 106.
6. Lenin listed these as follows: '... for a revolution to take place, it is essential, first, that a majority of workers (or at least a majority of the class-conscious, thinking and politically active workers) should fully realise that revolution is necessary, and that they should be prepared to die for it; second, that the ruling classes should be going through a government crisis, which draws even the most backward masses into politics... weakens the government,

and makes it possible for the revolutionaries rapidly to overthrow it.' (VI Lenin, "Left-Wing" Communism', *Collected Works*, Volume 31, p 85)

7. Schacht, *My First Seventy-Six Years*, p 180.

8. Exclusion from the new cabinet did not prevent the SPD voting for an enabling act which empowered the Marx government to implement, without the consent of the Reichstag, any and all measures 'which it deemed necessary and useful in alleviating the distress of people and Reich'. It was a formulation almost identical to that of Hitler's enabling act which, with only the SPD voting against, ushered in the Third Reich on 23 March 1933. Once again, an instance of the Social Democrats making a rod for their own backs.

9. LD Trotsky, 'Report on the Fourth World Congress' (28 December 1922, delivered to a meeting of the Communist fraction of the Tenth All-Union Congress of the Soviets, with non-party delegates attending), *The First Five Years of the Comintern*, Volume 2 (New York, 1953), pp 317-28.

10. Trotsky, 'Report on the Fourth World Congress', *The First Five Years of the Comintern*, Volume 2, p 329.

11. LD Trotsky, 'Is the Time Ripe for the Slogan: The United States of Europe?' (first published in *Pravda*, 30 June 1923), *The First Five Years of the Comintern*, Volume 2, p 342.

12. Trotsky, 'Is the Time Ripe for the Slogan: The United States of Europe?', *The First Five Years of the Comintern*, Volume 2, pp 342-43.

13. Trotsky, 'Is the Time Ripe for the Slogan: The United States of Europe?', *The First Five Years of the Comintern*, Volume 2, p 344.

14. Again it was Trotsky who paid the closest attention to this new factor in European and world politics, devoting many articles and speeches to the problem of the relations between Europe and America in the period between 1924 and 1926. In July 1924 he pin-pointed the main aims of US strategy in Europe; aims that, the more they were realised, undermined the very political and economic stability that the US was seeking: 'What does American capitalism want? ... It is seeking, we are told, stability; it wants to restore the European market; it wants to make Europe solvent. How? ... After all, American capitalism is compelled not to render Europe capable of competition; it cannot allow England, and all the more so France and Germany, particularly Germany, to regain the world markets inasmuch as American capitalism finds itself hemmed in, because it is now an exporting capitalism - exporting both commodities and capital. American capitalism is seeking the position of world domination; it wants to establish an American imperialist autocracy over our planet... What will it do with Europe? It must, they say, pacify Europe. How? Under its hegemony... This means that Europe will be permitted to rise again, but within limits set in advance, with certain restricted sections of the world market allotted to it... This is its aim. It will slice up the markets; it will regulate the activity of the European financiers and industrialists... *It wants to put capitalist Europe on rations.*' (LD Trotsky, 'Perspectives of Development' (a speech to workers, 28 July 1924, printed in *Izvestia*, 5 August 1924), *Europe and America* (Ceylon, 1951), p 16)

15. The US gross national product rose from 73.3 billion dollars in 1920 to 104.4 billion in 1929, while its foreign debt of nearly four billion dollars in 1914 had by 1929 been transformed into a credit of twice that amount.

16. Among firms taking up US loans, chiefly through the mediation of the house of Morgan, were Krupp AG (which obtained three), Thyssen and the Flick combine which borrowed for a single concern the gigantic sum of 124 million dollars, which at the prevailing rate of exchanges amounted to roughly four times that amount in marks. US monopolies were quick to exploit their new position as Germany's creditors, to secure a footing in the country's economy. Thus Westinghouse acquired an interest in Siemens, and its powerful rival the General Electric Company one in AEG. Opel, Germany's largest car firm, was purchased by General Motors (whose banker just happened to be... Morgan). The Dawes Plan became the instrument whereby a small but immensely powerful group of corporations linked up with

their opposite numbers in Germany, forging trade, technical and even political links that endured up to and even beyond the outbreak of war between the Third Reich and the United States.

17. The Stinnes Empire, which in modern economic parlance would be termed a 'conglomerate', was founded by Hugo's grandfather, Matthias Stinnes, the owner of a Rhine shipping firm. By 1914, his grandson had branched out from shipping into iron and coal mining, steel production and electric power supply, controlling by a network of interlocking share blocs, the *Deutsch-Luxemburgische Bergwerks-gesellschaft* and the *Rheinisch-Westfälische Elektrizitäts Gesellschaft*. In 1918, Stinnes broke into ocean shipping, previously the monopoly of the two Hamburg-based lines, the North German Lloyd and the Hamburg-America Line. Government compensation for losses incurred as a result of war reparations and the seizure of Alsace and Lorraine by France enabled him to widen his interests even further, buying a holding in the iron and steel concern, the *Gelsenkirchner Bergwerksgesellschaft*, and the Siemens-Shuckert electrical engineering firm. Stinnes extended his monopolies both vertically and horizontally, buying entire forests in East Prussia for pit-prop timber for his coal mines, and at the same time enabling him to move into the paper production industry and so on to printing and then newspaper publication, eventually controlling an immense propaganda machine of no fewer than 150 newspapers and periodicals ranging from the semi-official *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* through the more 'popular' mass press to the satirical *Kladderadatsch*. In 1920, Stinnes joined with a group of equally reactionary tycoons - Vögler, Kirdorf and Siemens being the most prominent - to found the Siemens-Rheinelbe-Shuckert Union, a trust whose vertical and horizontal tentacles reached out into virtually every sector of the German economy. At its peak, the Stinnes empire accounted for one-eighth of Germany's industrial production.

18. 'Industry was in desperate need not only of money for the purchase of raw materials; it cried out for capital to invest in the restoration and improvement of its means of production. To expect this capital to accrue from even the most economical management and from the thriftiness of the population was a waste of time. A much quicker result could be achieved from the proceeds of a foreign loan. In the course of the next few years a considerable proportion of business firms had incurred debts on foreign loans.' (Schacht, *My First Seventy-Six Years*, p 217) Schacht's continual campaigning against what amounted to a policy of economic and social concessions to the working class (financed largely by US loans) led him after 1929 to seek an alliance with the Nazis against the labour movement, which stubbornly refused to be reduced to conditions of 'thriftiness' in order that big business should continue to prosper.

19. Schacht, *My First Seventy-Six Years*, p 95.

20. Krupp topped the wealth league in heavy industry, with a personal fortune of 200 million marks, followed by Petscheck, 150 million, Thyssen, Haniel Wolff and Ottmar Strauss, each with 50 million. In manufacturing, von Opel (of the car firm of the same name) headed the list with 120 million marks, while Siemens followed him with 20 million.

21. Which brings to mind a guiding principle of the founder of modern 'work study' methods, Frederick Taylor, who in his *Shop Management* (London, 1919) wrote that 'all employers should bear in mind that each shop exists first and last and all of the time for the purpose of paying dividends to its owners' (p 143). Taylor, and even more, Henry Ford, were taken as models for emulation by modernising and rationalising German employers. Nor were trade union leaders immune from the work study contagion. ADGB Chairman Theodore Leipart sat on the board of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Labour Physiology in Dortmund, presided over by Dr Edgar Aler, a leading researcher into the new science of labour physiology, while in 1920, a 17-man ADGB delegation visited the USA to study mass production techniques, returning home convinced that Henry Ford was pioneering a new economic order. The German Metal Workers Union declared that the unions 'do not oppose the conscious merging of similar industrial establishments, under the stress of technical progress, into concerns and superstate organisations, since these are preparatory steps to the coming socialistic communal economy'. The SPD *Vorwärts* was no less opportunist in adapting to the growing power of the big monopolies, saying of Stinnes that

he brought 'capitalism into the chrysalis stage, from which one day the socialist economy will emerge as a full grown butterfly. Let us not disturb him in his work. Socialists may yet acclaim him as one of their greatest men.' It was not socialism, but its counter-revolutionary opposite, fascism, that emerged from the monopoly capitalist 'chrysalis', as *Vorwärts* was later to discover.

22. Total unemployment figures for the period were: 1924: 0.4 million; 1925: 0.2 million; 1926: 2.0 million; 1927: 0.35 million; 1928: 0.6 million. Not surprisingly, the year of the most intense rationalisation and monopoly concentration was also one in which the jobless rate climbed to its highest point before the onset of the great crisis in 1929-30.

23. Of the 1.8 milliard marks loaned up to 1928 by overseas investors to private industrial undertakings in Germany, 0.8 milliards was borrowed by the mining and steel combines, and another 0.4 milliards by the electrical engineering industry. And overall the German economy was dependent on foreign loans to a remarkable degree for its capital accumulation. In 1927, an especially good year for domestic investment, German-owned accumulated capital was less than twice that imported from abroad, 7.6 milliard marks as against 4.4. Once again we can see that the foreign capital market - principally that of the USA - was a prime factor in not only stabilising the German economy, but in sustaining its growth.

24. The relevant sections of Marx's *Capital* are to be found in Parts II, 'Conversion of Profit into Average Profit' and III, 'The Law of the Tendency of the Rate of Profit to Fall', *Capital*, Volume 3 (Moscow, 1962), pp 140-261.

25. Marx also refers to another means of equalising the profit rate, namely the migration of capitals away from areas where the rate of profit is low to those where it is higher. Yet here, too, the capitalist can encounter a series of pitfalls. Firstly capital tied up in heavy industries such as mining or steel does not lend itself to employment elsewhere. The capitalist must therefore either find a buyer (unlikely in view of its low rate of profit, unless the state is prepared to nationalise his firm with good compensation, as in the case of the British Labour government of 1945-50) or, as in a period of acute depression, sell it off as scrap. Then there is a further difficulty, concerning not so much the individual capitalist as the entire class of employers. If capital migrates from industries producing the means of production (department I) to those producing consumption goods (department II) in the search for a higher rate of profit, then this will tend to disrupt the equilibrium between these two intimately interrelated spheres of production, causing a famine in the means of production, and an overproduction of consumption goods.

26. Landed property-owners found Weimar's social welfare legislation no less irksome. A survey of nine Westphalian farms showed that whereas in 1913-14, taxes and social contributions amounted to but 20.36 per cent of their income, in 1925-26 this ratio had tripled to 64.57 per cent. Here indeed was common economic and political ground for an alliance between agrarians and industrialists against the Weimar Republic.

27. Schacht, *The Stabilisation of the Mark*, pp 220-28, emphasis added.

28. Not that Schacht failed to appreciate the force of circumstances that led to such a policy being adopted by the Social Democrats: 'The end of the war had been attended in Germany itself by revolutionary portents and had raised revolutionary [that is, Social Democratic - RB] politicians to posts of responsibility. Revolutionaries, however, are only kept within bounds if the masses can perceive some outward advantages to themselves. Instead of making up their minds, after their defeat, to live and manage on the most modest and economical basis, everyone succumbed to the demands for increased standards of living and a good time in general. At the head and front were the municipal corporations with a preponderance of Social Democratic circles and those with similar tendencies.' (Schacht, *My First Seventy-Five Years*, pp 217-18) Elsewhere Schacht recalled that 'the battle for votes impelled all parties without exception, but especially those of the left, to let as much foreign money as possible into the country in order to create cultural and social comforts for the people' (H Schacht, *The Magic of Money* (London, 1967), p 47).

29. At the peak of the postwar boom, in 1928, 67.7 per cent of the national income was distributed in the form of wages, salaries and pensions, while of the remainder, 30.4 per cent, accrued to the owners of property. This marked a drastic diminution of capital's share in the national product, which in 1913 had been 49.7 per cent as against 48.3 per cent to wages, salaries and pensions. In the crisis which began in 1929, big business found such a division of the spoils of labour intolerable. National Socialism was the means it used to restore the return on capital which it enjoyed in the last years of Imperial Germany.

30. This steady movement away from right-wing extremism continued right up to the onset of the 1929 crisis. In the Reichstag elections of 20 May 1928, in which the two workers' parties polled 39.4 per cent of the total vote (SPD 9.1 million, KPD 3.3 million) the DNVP voted declined by nearly 1.9 million, while the Nazis slipped yet again to 810 000. It was only due to the failure of the KPD leadership to unite the working class behind a policy of revolutionary struggle against monopoly capitalism that drove the petit-bourgeois masses back towards the right and into the eager embrace of the Nazis.

31. Schacht, *The Stabilisation of the Mark*, p 244.

32. In November 1928, at a time when reformists were still sunning themselves in the boom, and SPD theoreticians such as Rudolf Hilferding were writing about the merits of a crisis-free 'organised capitalism', Stresemann warned: 'I must ask you all to remember that during the past years we have been living on borrowed money. If a crisis were to arise and the Americans call in their short-term loans we should be faced with bankruptcy.' Which is exactly what did happen a year later.

33. *Hitler's Secret Book* (New York, 1961), pp 22, 99.

34. F von Papen, *Memoirs*, p 108.

35. Von Papen, *Memoirs*, p 121.

36. We must always remember that this principle does not apply to countries such as Chile and Greece - to cite but two recent examples - where the organised proletariat comprises a small proportion of the population, and where, therefore, a truly Nazi-style mass mobilisation of the petit-bourgeoisie against the labour movement is not absolutely essential for the overturn of bourgeois democratic or Popular Front-type governments; though in Chile, wide sections of the middle class alienated from the Allende government did provide invaluable support for the military during the first days and weeks of their coup.

37. G Stresemann, *Diaries, Letters and Papers*, Volume 2 (London, 1935-40), pp 364-65.

38. Stresemann, *Diaries, Letters and Papers*, Volume 2, p 365.

39. Stresemann, *Diaries, Letters and Papers*, Volume 2, p 384.

40. Stresemann, *Diaries, Letters and Papers*, Volume 2, p 385.

41. Stresemann, *Diaries, Letters and Papers*, Volume 2, p 385.

42. Stresemann, *Diaries, Letters and Papers*, Volume 2, p 390.

43. LD Trotsky, 'The German Puzzle' (August 1932), *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany* (New York, 1971), p 269.

Fascism in Germany. Robin Blick 1975

Chapter XV: Hitler Rebuilds

Only one thing could have broken our movement - if the adversary had understood its principle and from the first day had smashed with extreme brutality the nucleus of our new movement. (A Hitler at the 1933 Nuremberg Nazi Party rally)

If our opponents had been clever, considering that political weapons were so unevenly distributed, they could have undoubtedly found ways and opportunities to make our success impossible. (J Goebbels, 1934)

If the enemy had known how weak we were, it would probably have reduced us to jelly. It would have crushed in blood the very beginning of our work. (J Goebbels, 1934)

Released in December 1924 from his luxurious confinement in Landsberg prison - having served less than a quarter of his original sentence - Hitler was confronted by a Nazi movement in headlong decline, rent by countless political and personal feuds. The latter need not concern us except in so far as they either coincided with or affected genuine political differences. For the most important dispute Hitler found himself called upon to resolve was that concerning strategy. How was the movement to win power - through yet another putsch, in direct conflict with the existing state authorities and the majority of the ruling class; or 'legally', through an alliance with decisive sections of the bourgeoisie, army and agrarians? It was to this question that Hitler primarily addressed himself when he spoke for two hours to a rally of the Nazi faithful in Munich on 27 February 1925.

The movement's great error had been, he explained, to fight on two or even more fronts when it should have been concentrating all its propaganda and energies against the main foe - Marxism. By allowing itself to be drawn into conflicts with secondary opponents, as did the hard-line Protestants and pagans, with their polemics against the Catholic church and the Christian religion in general, the Nazi Party unnecessarily alienated sections of the population and the ruling class who would otherwise sympathise with its struggle against Marxism; likewise with the police, the army and even the bourgeois parties. In each case, the movement had to learn to subordinate its secondary and *tactical* differences with these institutions to the long-term, *strategical* goal of destroying Marxism, which in Hitler's vocabulary always meant the organised workers' movement:

To make a struggle intelligible to the broad masses, it must always be carried on against two things: against a person and a cause... Against whom do the Jews fight with their Marxist power? Against the bourgeoisie as a person, and against capitalism as its cause. Against whom, therefore, must our movement fight? *Against the Jew as a person, and against Marxism as its cause... The success of our movement shall not be measured in votes obtained in the Reichstag or Landtag, but in the degree of annihilation of Marxism and the exposure of its creatures, the Jews.* [Emphasis added] ^[1]

Lüdecke, who had been well informed of Hitler's change of tactics, endorsed his Führer's speech in an article for the February 1925 number of Rosenberg's journal *Weltkampf*:

... we must cease fighting against all fronts at the same time. Our main enemy... is Marxism. A one-sided fight against Marxism in Bavaria would be a wasted effort, because there is no longer a serious danger. Hence the field of attack aims to be transferred as early as possible to the Protestant north, where the religious question will not divide our strength, where the Centre Party is almost identical with Marxism [presumably a reference to the Centre's support of the SPD in the Prussian State Parliament, where the two parties formed the ruling coalition - RB], and the concentration against Marxism will become a logical step.

Hitler had indeed learned the bitter lesson of the Munich fiasco. After a year's reflection in Landsberg, where he had been engaged for the most part in writing his autobiographical treatise on fascism, *Mein Kampf*, Hitler had come to realise that for all its pretensions to being a socialist movement of the exploited and oppressed, the Nazi Party could only become a serious contender for power through an alliance with the bourgeoisie (or at least, an important section of it), and that it could only hold this power as its protector.

By declaring that henceforth National Socialism would fight only Marxism, and that this same 'Jewish' Marxism was engaged in an equally bitter war against the bourgeoisie and capitalism, Hitler was in effect saying to the bourgeoisie: the enemies of our enemies are our friends. It remained Hitler's task to

convince the leaders of this class that they stood to gain by such a friendship. Here he frankly admitted that a long struggle faced the movement:

I most solemnly confess: I regret that German industry does not support us... these men, who were so big, support the Marxists [that is, the Social Democrats - RB] out of cowardice while they don't even know their German national comrades... I would take every penny and every million without strings too if from a German...

But no such largesse was forthcoming from Hitler's future 'national comrades' in heavy industry, save for Thyssen, who loyally soldiered on in the Ruhr as the lonely standard-bearer of the Nazi cause. And the reasons for this isolation are not hard to find. Only a matter of days before Hitler delivered this speech, the DNVP entered a Reich cabinet for the first time in the republic's history, raising hopes in industry, army and agrarian circles alike that a new era of reaction and right-wing political consolidation had set in. And these expectations were at once further aroused and apparently given justification by the election of Hindenburg to the Presidency only three months later. Neither could the ruling-class be expected to respond enthusiastically to Hitler's clarion call for a war to the death against Social Democracy, in view of the latter's tacit and on occasions even explicit collaboration in the bourgeois consolidation of the republic and the rationalisation of industry. Such ruling class elements that were in this period (1925) seeking to eliminate the influence of Social Democracy in political and economic affairs still vainly looked towards action from the armed forces, as the events surrounding the princes' referendum and leading to the abortive coup of May 1926 would seem to suggest. Besides which scepticism there were also the confusion and anxieties rife in business and landed circles concerning the social and economic objectives of the NSDAP. We can readily understand why they approached with reservations and caution a movement calling itself 'socialist' and addressing itself in wildly demagogic style to the 'workers'. How could they be sure that once in power Hitler would not implement those parts of the 1920 programme calling for the expropriation of profiteers and trusts? And should they take Hitler's word that he meant something altogether different from the Marxists when he spoke of 'socialism' and 'workers'? Outside of rebuilding and reorienting his shattered movement, Hitler's biggest single task was to convince his chosen future allies in the capitalist class that Nazi propaganda for the masses was one thing, and the real aims of the movement's leaders another - close to the heart's desire of all trade-union-hating employers and war-mongering Junkers.

But before embarking on this task, Hitler and those closest to him in the party leadership had first to put their own ramshackle and divided house in order. This was the first prerequisite for any future bargaining with the mighty Ruhr industrialists (Kirdorf), influential bankers (Schacht), political 'fixers' (Papen) and political generals (Schleicher). And achieving unity in the ranks of the NSDAP on the strategic and tactical guidelines laid down by Hitler in his speech of 27 February was no small order. It occupied him more than a year, and was completed only with the quelling of the revolt of the self-styled north German 'radicals' around the Strasser brothers and Joseph Goebbels.

Whilst in prison, Hitler had refrained from lending his name or support to any of the factions struggling for dominance in the NSDAP or the broader *volkisch* movement of which it was then still a part. Quite apart from the fact that he was in the throes of recasting, in the light of the Munich defeat, many important aspects of Nazi tactics and strategy, Hitler in all probability felt that his position of supremacy in the party was best preserved by ensuring that no single group or leader emerged victorious over its rivals. The factional conflict first erupted shortly after the Munich Putsch and the trial of Hitler, when differences arose both within the NSDAP and among its *volkisch* allies in the north and west of Germany over what attitude to adopt to the Reichstag elections scheduled for May 1924. Rosenberg, nominated by Hitler as his representative for the duration of his prison term, favoured participation, even though all the party's previous agitation had been directed against parliament. Hitler seems to have fallen out with his deputy, for he lent support to Esser and Streicher in their opposition to such participation. It was indicative of Hitler's transitional state of mind at this time that he rejected a tactical turn that he was to employ to such devastating effect between 1930 and 1933. A short while later, he had in fact changed sides in the dispute, commenting to Kurt Lüdecke ^[2] during the latter's visit to Hitler in Landsberg prison that:

When I resume active work it will be necessary to pursue a new policy. Instead of working to achieve power by armed coup, we shall have to hold our noses and enter the Reichstag against the Catholic and Marxist deputies. If outvoting them takes longer than outshooting them, at least the

result will be guaranteed by their own constitution. Any lawful process is slow... Sooner or later we will have a majority - and after that, Germany. ^[3]

Those Nazis favouring the exploitation of the parliamentary tactic found allies in the north German *volkisch* movement of Count Ernst zu Reventlow, whom we earlier encountered debating with the KPD in the columns of its press. The German Racial Freedom Party (DVFP) had broken from the DNVP in 1922 after disagreements over the latter's too-restrained anti-Semitism. While sharing the Nazis' understanding for the need to conquer mass support with a pseudo-radical social policy (something the DNVP, whether under the leadership of Count Westarp, or after, 1928, Hugenberg, never fully appreciated), the north German *volkisch* groups remained, like the DNVP from which they had split, oriented towards parliamentary elections and activity. Another weakness (which became more evident in later years when the Nazis began to attract mass support) proved to be the mainly aristocratic background of the movement's leaders. For all their 'National Bolshevik' pretensions, they failed to make inroads into the working class, and won precious little support even from the nationalist petit-bourgeoisie. Nevertheless, since the DVFP represented the most consistently *volkisch* elements within the ruling class, they were useful election allies for the more plebeian-based and led Nazis, and after negotiations, the two parties agreed to run on a single 'Racial-Social Bloc' ticket, polling 1.9 million votes.

Yet scarcely had the 32 Racial-Social deputies ensconced themselves in the unaccustomed comfort of their Reichstag seats than a series of fresh disputes flared up amongst those who had elected them. Nazi 'radicals' schooled in the demagogic propaganda methods and combat techniques of Hitler and Röhm accused their DVFP election allies of ignoring or playing down the social aspects of the *volkisch* doctrine, while in the north, at Hamburg, a group of Nazis not only demonstratively separated themselves from Reventlow's 'parlour Bolsheviks', but committed the unforgivable heresy of proclaiming their independence from the Nazi Vatican in Munich (and by implication, cast doubt on the infallibility of its Pope). North Germany remained an independent preserve of Nazi 'radicals' until Hitler brought them to heel in the spring of 1926.

A third centre of opposition crystallised around Ernst Röhm, whom Hitler had appointed leader of the Storm Troops for the duration of his stay in prison. Like the 'radicals' with whom he was in sympathy, Röhm exploited his new-found freedom to put his own ideas into practice, founding the *Frontbann*, a bloc of the many paramilitary and Free Corps formations which had, over the previous four years, aligned themselves with the counter-revolutionary right. In opting for a military organisation independent of the party's political leadership, Röhm was challenging one of the central principles of National Socialism as repeatedly enunciated by Hitler, and finally codified in the second volume of *Mein Kampf* (written during 1925, and therefore after the first break with Röhm). Hitler insisted that since the SA's purpose was political, 'its training must not proceed from military criteria, but from criteria of expediency for the party'. Nor should it engage in individual terror, such as the assassination of leading politicians or militants of the workers' movement. It should aim at being a movement of the masses:

... fighting for the erection of a new National Socialist folkish state... The NSDAP... must neither suffer the SA to degenerate into a kind of combat league nor into a secret organisation; it must, on the contrary, endeavour to train it as a guard, numbering hundreds of thousands of men for the National Socialist and hence profoundly folkish idea. ^[4]

These ideas were anathema to the swashbuckling Captain Röhm. He had attracted to his side men of a similar nihilistic state of mind, trained and hired killers who knew no other profession than murder, and no other ideology than blind activism and destruction. How could they be expected to submit themselves to the discipline of a political movement, which for all its fanatical hatred of Marxism and democracy, allowed itself to be sucked into the bourgeois game of parliamentary seat-hunting? Röhm took the dispute to the highest authority in the *volkisch* movement - its universally acknowledged patron, Ludendorff. In a letter to the general, Röhm vehemently defended the independence of the counter-revolutionary soldier:

The political and military movements are entirely independent of each other. Both the political and the military movement are represented in the parliamentary group. As the present leader of the military movement, I demand that the defence leagues be granted appropriate representation in parliament and that they be not hindered in their own particular work... Germany's liberty - at home and abroad - will never be won by mere chatter and bargaining; it must be fought for.

Detectable in these last lines are the seeds of Röhm's final clash with Hitler, when his insatiable urge to dominate not only the party but the Reichswehr with his massed columns of SA men - by 1934 no longer a motley collection of Free Corps and First World War veterans, but a brown army some four

million strong - drove Hitler to unleash the purge of the 'Night of the Long Knives' on 30 June. But in the early weeks of 1925, the feud was resolved, not with a mass blood-letting, but by Röhm's resignation as SA leader, and his eventual emigration to Bolivia, where until recalled by Hitler in 1930 to head the SA once more, he served as a military instructor to the army.

The most serious and protracted threat to Hitler's position as supreme party leader and arbiter on questions of National Socialist doctrine, tactics and strategy came from the industrial north and west. There, where the NSDAP confronted an immensely powerful and radical workers' movement, party activists were compelled to adopt a 'leftist' stance on most social and economic questions, far more so than was necessary in the predominantly rural and petit-bourgeois Bavaria. It must be stressed at once that their employment of radical phraseology and slogans, in many cases stolen from the KPD and eclectically combined with anti-Semitic chauvinism, flowed not from any misguided but genuine socialist convictions, but from a real fear that in its quest for working-class support, the party would otherwise be hopelessly outflanked on the left by the KPD and militant elements in the SPD and ADGB.

The emergence of a distinctive north German faction dates from August 1925, when Nazi 'radicals' of various tendencies came together to form the National Socialist Working Association, with its own organ, the *NS Briefe*, edited by a relatively recent convert to Nazism, Joseph Goebbels. The base of the group, significantly, was the Ruhr town of Elberfeld, where radical traditions in the workers' movement were strong, and its leaders were the Strasser brothers Otto and Gregor, Goebbels, Bernard Rust (Hitler's future Minister of Education), Robert Ley (in 1933, appointed head of the Labour Front) and Karl Kaufmann, who afterwards became *gauleiter* of Hamburg. Of lesser importance in the group's clash with Munich, but destined to hold high office in the Third Reich, were Friedrich Hildebrandt, *gauleiter* of Mecklenburg, and Erich Koch, East Prussian *gauleiter* under the Third Reich and after the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, butcher and slave driver of the Ukraine.

Reading the speeches, diary entries and articles of the north German Nazis, one gains a new insight into the utter political impotency of the petit-bourgeois *enragé*, the noisy radical who, denied what he thinks is his rightful place in the bourgeois sun, vents his anger on those above and below him. He admires (and fears) the discipline, heroism and dynamism of the revolutionary workers' movement, just as he despises its internationalism and 'class exclusiveness'. He borrows from Communism that which he finds useful to intimidate the big bourgeoisie in order to compel it to bestow on him the privileges and power he deserves; while from this same bourgeoisie he takes the poisonous ideology of chauvinism and anti-Semitism, using it to divert the proletariat from its revolutionary path, thereby rendering it a passive object under the tutelage of its social and intellectual betters.

The thoroughly petit-bourgeois, eclectic nature of the Working Association's 'socialism' is clear from the account of one of its main practitioners and theoreticians, Otto Strasser:

Our second step [after founding the group's organ] was to work out an economic, political and cultural programme. In the economic field it was opposed alike to Marxism and capitalism. We foresaw a new equilibrium on the basis of state feudalism. The state was to be the sole owner of the land, which it would lease to private citizens. All were to be free to do as they liked with their own land, but no one could sell or sublet state property. In this way we hoped to combat proletarianisation and to restore a state of liberty to our fellow citizens. No man is free who is not economically independent. We proposed nationalisation only of such wealth as could not be multiplied at will; that is, the country's landed and industrial inheritance. In the political field we rejected the totalitarian idea in favour of federalism. Parliament, instead of consisting of party representatives, would consist of representatives of corporations. These we divided into five groups: workers, peasants, clerks and officials, industrialists, and the liberal professions... The prosperity of the country would be assured by the nationalisation of heavy industry and the distribution of the great estates as state fiefs... Reconstruction, to our minds, could only be brought about on the basis of a new order which could re-establish harmony between labour and capital and between the individual and the community... There would be no dictatorship, either of class or race. ^[5]

No dictatorship of class or race... yet for all his talk of nationalisation (which he clearly learned during his brief career as a student member of the SPD), there remained exploited labour and exploiting capital, and under a regime which denied the worker's right to organise himself in trade unions and political parties. As for Strasser's claim that his 'left' version of National Socialism rejected racialism, there is the clear call in his brother Gregor's draft programme (drafted towards the end of 1925 and submitted for

discussion to his fellow north German Nazis) for the deportation of all Jews who had entered Germany since 1 August 1914, and for the withdrawal of German citizenship from all those who remained, a demand which was the stock-in-trade of every German anti-Semite throughout the life of the Weimar Republic. Otto Strasser, who broke with Hitler in 1930 on the grounds that the Nazi leader had sold out to big business, for obvious reasons later chose to play down the ‘national’ aspects of his ‘socialism’, and to exaggerate the latter. His brother’s draft was in fact little more radical than the original Nazi programme of 1920. Apart from its anti-Semitic clause, it proposed the nationalisation of the land and the breaking up of all estates larger than 1000 acres into small peasant holdings, a distinctly less radical measure than Otto Strasser said was demanded by the north Germans. Neither did Gregor’s draft demand outright nationalisation. Instead, a form of ‘mixed economy’ was advocated, with the state owning 51 per cent of the shares in vital industries and 49 per cent in the remainder. Ten per cent of the private stock would then be set aside for distribution among the workers. Finally, and again in contradiction to the account given by Otto Strasser, the draft envisaged, not a European Federation, but a greatly enlarged Germany with its lost colonies restored, and one that would consequently dominate the entire continent:

The organisation and powerful concentration *on a racial basis* of the German nation in a Greater German Reich: this German Reich to be the centre of gravity for a mid-European customs union and the basis for the United States of Europe. [Emphasis added]

This quotation also raises the other cardinal facet of north German National Socialism. Until their capitulation to Hitler early in 1926 (and on occasions, even afterwards), Goebbels and the two Strassers flirted with a *volkisch* version of National Bolshevism. They argued that in order to enable Germany to break out of the isolation imposed on it by the defeat of 1918, it was necessary, despite the unbridgeable ideological chasm that separated Communism from National Socialism, to solicit Soviet diplomatic and military aid in imperialist Germany’s preparation for the war of revenge against the ‘plutocratic and ‘decadent’ Entente powers. At least, that is how the theory stood until 1925. But with Stalin’s rise to power, and his revision of Marxist internationalism with his nationalist theory of socialism in one country, ‘left’ Nazis began to write more sympathetically on internal developments in the USSR. Stalin’s approaching victory over the Trotskyist Left Opposition was quite correctly seen as the triumph of conservative, nationalistic forces over proletarian internationalism. (Nazi National Bolsheviks were also quick to draw attention to Stalin’s well-known anti-Semitism, and the fact that many of the opposition leaders - Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Radek, to name but four - were of Jewish origin. The pogrom of Communists had started, and the Nazi ‘lefts’ were delighted.) Goebbels developed this theme in an article addressed to KPD members in October 1925, pointing out that Soviet and Comintern policy under the leadership of Stalin had begun to veer towards a national conception of socialism, and thus it was now necessary for KPD workers to take this development to its logical conclusion: ‘never has a suppressed class liberated itself through international protest, but only through nationalistic will for the future...’^[6] Goebbels at this time was also conducting a debate with White Russian émigrés, explaining why for tactical reasons it was necessary to align Germany diplomatically with the USSR. In one letter to an émigré he wrote:

We look to Russia because it is the country most likely to take with us the road to socialism, because Russia is an ally which nature has given us against the devilish temptation and corruption of the West. We watch in bitter pain while so-called German statesmen destroy all bridges that lead towards Russia [an obvious reference to Foreign Minister Stresemann’s ‘western orientation’ - RB]. Our pain is so strongly felt *not because we love Bolshevism*, but because an alliance with a really national and socialist Russia will strengthen our own national and socialist position and dignity. [Emphasis added]^[7]

We encounter essentially the same pseudo-radicalism in the early writings of Goebbels. For all his noisy rantings against capitalism and its exploitation of the proletariat, this future Nazi Minister of Propaganda’s conception of what he terms ‘socialism’ is that of a petit-bourgeois chauvinist, a typical German middle-class *enragé* who wants to solve the ‘social problem’ not through the abolition of private property, but its wider and more even distribution, thereby abolishing both monopoly capitalism and the proletariat without disturbing the small-property foundations of his own existence:

Socialism can be realised only in the national state... in materialistic terms, socialism is not a question of wages, but a question of indigenoussness and therefore of property. The working classes can be made free materially and spiritually by increasing the number of property owners up to the last possible point...^[8]

The Working Association, largely because of its close study of the workers' movement, was able to develop a tactic that paid handsome dividends after 1930, when the NSDAP at last began to make serious inroads into the more backward strata of the proletariat. They cunningly exploited all the past betrayals of the Social Democrats (just as after 1930, they did those of the Stalinists) to confuse workers and to prove to them that, in contrast to the 'Marxists', the Nazis were the real socialists. One typically 'left' Nazi poster of the period, playing upon nationalist opposition to the SPD's acceptance of the Dawes Plan, read:

The socialist railways are now, in the seventh year of the republic, a capitalist undertaking of the American bank and stock exchange Jews. Workers of the hand and brain, you like us are socialists. When are you going to understand? Today your leaders no longer speak of the socialist republic... You don't want alms. You want nothing more and nothing less than your rights, than to live in the republic a life fit for human beings.

Gregor Strasser, ever anxious to prove himself more left than the reformists (a task that was made all too easy by their supine collaboration with the class enemies of the proletariat and the non-exploiting layers of the petit-bourgeoisie), wrote in a special 'May Day' number of his organ, *Der Nationale Sozialist*, that the SPD had only functionaries, not a single leader, and that the reformist bureaucracy had lost all contact with the workers, being 'narrow minded, petit-bourgeois, ambitious intriguers, dull after-dinner speakers'. In a word, the Social Democrats had become bourgeoisified. Thus did the Nazi 'lefts' borrow from and then pervert for counter-revolutionary purposes the revolutionary Marxist analysis and critique of the reformist bureaucracy. ^[9]

And very much in the same vein, the article complained that because of the SPD's retreat from its pledge to expropriate the giant trusts, 'marching socialisation has become stuck in the mud, in the mire of corruption of parliamentary democracy... This is the way the Marxist Social Democracy leads us, this is its great sin.' And this from a party that, once in power, was fanatical in its defence of the monopolies!

But such 'leftism' also had its dangers for the Nazi leadership in Munich. With one eye on a future alliance with big business and the agrarians, and the other on the nationalist petit-bourgeoisie who were to provide the bulk of the Nazis' mass support, Hitler utterly rejected the north Germans' wild talk about founding *volkisch* 'trade unions' and their attempts to outbid the SPD and KPD in radicalism. While he was not opposed to winning workers to the NSDAP, this had to be done only on the basis of his own firmly-held convictions on the defence of private property. Hitler was in the process of finalising his views on the trade union question during 1925, when the north Germans first raised the demand that the NSDAP should either found itself, or lend its support to, *volkisch* organisations of workers. His conclusions are set down in the second volume of *Mein Kampf*, and they show that by the end of 1925 he had opted for a policy that would later win the party the enthusiastic support of the big employers who looked forward to a Germany without independent trade unions. Hitler begins by addressing four questions to his readers (and, we suspect, especially to those who were pushing for a more 'left' trade union line in the NSDAP):

1. Are trade unions necessary?
2. Should the NSDAP itself engage in trade union activity, or direct its members to such activity in any form?
3. What must be the nature of a National Socialist trade union? What are our tasks and aims?
4. How shall we arrive at such unions? ^[10]

He answers these question in the following way. Since the Nazi Party claimed, for purely demagogic purposes, to be a party of the 'workers' - though the Nazi definition of this term was, as we have already seen, highly elastic, and could even, when the occasion demanded, embrace big industrialists! - and since it was seeking to detach at least a portion of the proletariat from its allegiance to its traditional organisations, then Hitler could not avoid making a verbal commitment to the need for trade unions. To proclaim publicly in advance his intention of destroying them would have been tantamount to committing political suicide. This is where the Nazis scored so heavily and frequently over their rivals in the bourgeois nationalist parties and the monarchist leagues. He is, however, at pains to give his affirmative answer a nationalistic twist; and conditional on the continued existence of the Weimar system:

As things stand today, the trade unions... cannot be dispensed with. On the contrary, they are among the most important institutions of the nation's economic life. Their significance lies not only in the social and political field, but even more in the general field of national politics. A

people whose broad masses, through a sound trade union movement, obtain the satisfaction of their living requirements and at the same time an education, will be tremendously strengthened in its power of resistance in the struggle for existence. ^[11]

What Hitler means by a 'sound trade union movement' becomes clear in the passage which follows. We learn that 'trade unions are necessary as foundation stones of the future economic parliament or chamber of estates'. ^[12] Can it be that Hitler was proposing to allot a place in his corporate state (for this is what he means by 'economic parliament' and 'chamber of estates') *to the existing class trade unions of the ADGB*? A superficial reading might indeed suggest this, lending credence to the utterly false theory which sometimes masquerades as Trotskyism that the fascist corporate state is created by the merging of employers' and workers' organisations, and by the incorporation of the latter into the capitalist state. We have already established that Fascism in Italy did not take this form, and that its corporative state structure not only in practice but in theory specifically excluded the class-based trade unions from any participation in the new regime. And we find that it was also the case with the NSDAP. When Hitler refers to 'trade unions', he has something entirely different in mind from the Marxist, Social Democrat, Stalinist, centrist, or any other tendency in the workers' movement:

The trade union in the National Socialist sense does not have the function of grouping certain people within a national body and thus gradually transforming them into class, to take up the fight against other similarly organised [employers'] formations. We can absolutely not impute this function to the trade union as such; it became so only in the moment when the trade union became the instrument of Marxist struggle. Not that the trade union is characterised by class struggle; Marxism has made it an instrument for the Marxist class struggle. Marxism created the economic weapon which the international world Jew uses for shattering the economic base of the free, independent national states, for the destruction [that is, nationalisation - RB] of their national industry and their national commerce, the enslavement of free peoples in the service of supra-state world finance Jewry. In the face of this, the National Socialist trade union must, by organisationally embracing certain groups of participants in the national economic process, increase the security of the national economy itself... Hence for the National Socialist union the strike is not a means for shattering and shaking national production, but for enhancing it and making it run smoothly by combating all those abuses which, due to their unsocial character, interfere with the efficiency of the economy and hence the existence of the totality. ^[13]

There are visible here elements of the 'national syndicalism' which emerged on the 'radical' wing of fascist movements in France, Spain and Italy. The proposed 'unions' were to embrace not only workers, but their employers, a conception which the Strasser group at first found difficult to accept, since they were in direct competition with trade unions based firmly on the class principle. Hitler saw the dangers implicit in such rivalry:

Real benefit for the movement as well as for our people can only arise from a trade union movement, if philosophically this movement is already so strongly filled with our National Socialist ideas that it no longer runs the risk of falling into Marxist tracks. For a trade union movement which sees its mission only in competition with the Marxist [that is, ADGB - Social Democratic] unions would be worse than none at all. It must declare war on the Marxist union, not only as an organisation, but above all as an idea. In the Marxist union it must strike down the herald of the class struggle and the class idea and in its stead must become the protector of the occupational interests of German citizens. ^[14]

This answered question number three - what must be the nature of Nazi 'trade unions' - but it did not resolve question number four - how would the NSDAP arrive at such unions. Here Hitler posed two alternative lines of attack:

(1) We could found a trade union and then gradually take up the struggle against the international [that is, class] Marxist unions; or we could (2) penetrate the Marxist unions and try to fill them with the new spirit; in other words, transform them into instruments of the new ideology. ^[15]

Hitler ruled out the first line of action. The party simply lacked the resources to launch a Nazi 'union' which could defeat the reformist unions in open combat. Hitler also undoubtedly realised that his 'national trade unionism' stood very little chance of winning large numbers of workers away from the class unions, at least until a really historic defeat had been inflicted on the proletariat. And by the same token, the second alternative offered little better prospects of success while the fighting capacities of the working class remained unimpaired. A turning towards the forms of organisation and ideology advocated

by the Nazis could only gather pace in conditions of profound demoralisation - or at the point of a gun. And this is in fact the solution which Hitler finally hints at:

Today the National Socialist movement must combat a colossal gigantic organisation which has long been in existence, and which is developed down to the slightest detail. The conqueror must always be more astute than the defender if he wants to subdue him... Here [therefore] we must apply the maxim that in life it is sometimes better to let a thing lie for the present than to begin it badly or by halves for want of suitable forces... The more we muster the entire strength of our movement for the political struggle, the sooner we may count on success all along the line; but the more we prematurely burden ourselves with trade union... and similar problems, the smaller will be the benefit for our cause as a whole. For important as these matters may be, *their fulfilment will only occur on a large scale when we are in a position to put the state power into the service of these ideas.* ^[16]

In other words, only when the Nazis actually wielded state power, and with it the entire machinery of class repression augmented by their own fanatical hordes, could the 'trade union' question be tackled with any hopes of success. And this is precisely the course that events followed, with the destruction of the class trade unions on 2 May 1933, and their replacement by the Labour Front of Dr Ley which embraced not only the members of the former free trade unions, but also the employers. The ADGB was not 'tied to the state', its leaders did not, despite all their pleadings, become 'policemen' of the employers and the capitalist state, nor instruments of exploitation and repression. They ended up in jail.

Shrewd tactician that he was, Hitler sought neither an immediate nor head-on clash with the north Germans. Instead, he devoted most of his energies to consolidating his Munich base, where he continued, despite the events of November 1923, to enjoy the indulgence of leading Bavarian government and state officials. The issue which finally brought the dispute between the two factions into the open towards a final resolution on Hitler's terms was the same as had precipitated a full-scale crisis in the ruling class - namely the referendum on the compensation of the princes. The Working Association, in keeping with their more 'left' interpretation of the Nazi programme (and also, no doubt, because of the widespread and enthusiastic support the demand for expropriation without compensation had aroused among the workers of north and west Germany), came out against the princes.

Hitler, who had opted more than a year previously for a thoroughly conservative economic policy, would not hear of the NSDAP becoming involved in a campaign, initiated by the KPD, against the sacred rights of private property. But before the issue was finally resolved at the well-known meeting in Bamberg on 14 February 1926, the north Germans, although divided between themselves on certain issues, had made a bid to supplant the 'old guard' in Munich as Hitler's political confidants (for never was there any question of their seeking to depose the Führer himself). The intention seems to have been to persuade Hitler that he was surrounded in Munich by 'reactionaries' such as Streicher and Feder, and that he should instead bring to the forefront of the party the leaders of the Working Association. But a series of meetings held by the north Germans and their allies failed to achieve the political unity they had been counting on in their challenge to Munich. Gregor Strasser's draft programme was attacked from all sides, some deeming it too radical, others lacking in sufficient anti-Semitic venom. There were also disagreements in the group on the questions of Pan-Europeanism and policy towards the USSR. In the last conference held by the 'radicals', in Hanover on 25 January 1926, the main item on the agenda was the princes referendum. Pfeffer von Salomon, whom in November 1926 Hitler appointed as commander of the SA, later frankly admitted that the question 'was extremely embarrassing for everybody and they would much rather have avoided taking up a position on it'. But they could not, since it was the number one issue of German politics, and every political leader and party was being compelled to take sides for or against the princes. The Nazi 'lefts' could not retreat from their previous position of support for the campaign against compensation for the princes, but neither could they unequivocally endorse it. In order to differentiate the NSDAP from the KPD and SPD, they proposed, in the event of the referendum succeeding, to move an amendment in the Reichstag calling for the confiscation of all the property of Jews who had entered Germany since 1914, together with the confiscation of all bank and stock exchange profits (that is, the gains of 'speculative capital') made since the beginning of the war. The meeting - held in the presence of Feder, who had been sent by Hitler to report on the proceedings - also discussed critically the party's 1920 programme, which had been drawn up by none other than Hitler and Feder. Finally, the gathering drew up a slate of 'lefts' whom they hoped Hitler would agree to promote onto his central staff at Munich. Taken together, these three acts of insubordination confirmed Hitler's fears that

the Strasser - Goebbels group were seeking to supplant him as the supreme authority on questions of programme, policy, doctrine and organisation - in fact the entire gamut of Nazi theory and practice, tactics and strategy. On hearing Feder's report of the Hanover meeting of rebels, he convened the confrontation at Bamberg. Hitler went to the meeting knowing just what he wanted, and aware of the utterly opportunist nature of the opposition, who were, as subsequent developments proved, craving for high office and power. In contrast, the north Germans went to Bamberg divided amongst themselves and full of envy for Hitler's entourage, who were already beginning to live the lives of rising politicians and party bureaucrats. Otto Strasser summed up Hitler's reasons for opposing the referendum campaign when he wrote, many years after the Bamberg meeting, that:

... to have understood Hitler's fury [against the north Germans] it was necessary to have followed his recent change of front. Hitler had become [sic!] conservative. He needed money for his party, and this could only come from the capitalists. The expropriation of the princes would obviously alarm the big industrialists, the financiers, and the landowners, who would naturally regard the breaking up of the property of the former reigning houses as the first step towards similar measures directed against themselves... [At the Bamberg meeting] Adolf made a brilliant plea for the princes and the claims of the aristocratic families. ^[17]

Even if Hitler had wished to make a demagogic switch of line, as the north Germans were suggesting, he could not have done so, since he was already receiving subsidies from at least one of the former royal houses now threatened with expropriation without compensation. For at this time (early 1926) he had not succeeded in convincing the big capitalists that his party could further their interests. Such links that the NSDAP had established with the ruling class, Hitler clung on to tenaciously. They were his lifeline to wealth, political influence and eventually power, and therefore could not be endangered on any account, least of all to indulge the pseudo-radical whims of the Strassers and Goebbels. The referendum campaign, he told the meeting, was nothing but a 'Jewish swindle' and the Nazis must therefore back the princes' fight to defend their property to the hilt. ^[18]

But while rejecting their demands for a more radical orientation for the party, Hitler was quick to see that the north German faction contained leaders who could serve him ably in Munich. He skilfully disintegrated their group by offering its spokesmen plum posts in the party apparatus. The stages and political convolutions through which Goebbels passed *en route* from his blustering National Bolshevism to complete agreement with Hitler are well traced in his private diary entries of the period, as indeed is the utterly eclectic nature of his radicalism. For example on 31 January 1926, we find him regretting the fact that Nazis and Communists have to 'bash each other's heads in', and asking 'where can we meet leading Communists', while only three days later, he delightedly records that 'at last' he has had the good fortune to meet 'a prominent businessman'; and then that same evening, a 'discussion... [with] a follower of the Communist Workers' Party. ^[19]

11 September: National and Socialist! What comes first and what second? For us in the West [that is, the Ruhr] there can be no doubt. First the socialist redemption, then, like a hurricane, national liberation. Prof Vahlen disagrees. First, make the workers national minded. But how? Please talk to our people. Hitler stands half-way in between. But he is about to come over to our side. [Neither statement was true; Hitler, as he makes clear in *Mein Kampf*, aimed at the 'nationalisation of the masses', a perspective from which he had no intention of shifting - as Goebbels was soon to discover - RB]

30 September: Strasser is a dear fellow. He still has a lot to learn. But he will accept anything that adds radical content to the idea. He is to be our battering ram against the Munich bosses. Perhaps the battle will flare up very soon.

2 October: Long drawn-out negotiations with Strasser. We have reached complete agreement... Munich seems really to be a big pigsty... we shall launch a big offensive. National Socialism is at stake.

12 October: Letter from Strasser. Hitler does not trust me. He has abused me. How that hurts... In Munich, cads are at work.

14 October: I am finishing Hitler's book [*Mein Kampf*]. Thrilled to bits! Who is this man? Half plebeian, half god!

16 October: Locarno: the same old fraud. Germany gives in and sells out to the capitalist West. A horrible prospect! Germany's sons will be bled to death on the battlefields of Europe as the

mercenaries of capitalism. Perhaps, probably, in a 'holy war against Moscow'! [An accurate prediction - and Goebbels was to be one of its high priests - RB] Can there be anything politically more infamous?

19 October: Hitler will be in Hamm and Dortmund on Saturday and Sunday, and Streicher will be there to protect him. That damned idiot Hermann Esser. I shall not be a party to this Byzantianism for long. We must get close to Hitler. The programme, the spiritual and economic fundamentals, all of that is vague... That is not the way to start a revolution.

23 October: We shall be the mercenaries against Russia on the battlefields of capitalism. We have been sold... in the last analysis better go down with Bolshevism than live in eternal capitalist servitude.

24 October: In Essen with Kaufmann last night. Julius Stretcher was there, the 'hero' of Nuremberg. A typical Bavarian bum-brusher... Poor Hitler! Woe betide National Socialism! ... Strasser reports from Munich. We have cleared up matters with Hitler. Hitler also wants to employ me more.

14 November: Osnabruck... Speech in the evening. To bourgeois. About 2000. Raging applause.

28 November: To the Bechstein family [one of Hitler's first capitalist benefactors - RB]. Hitler's saloon. I am received like an old friend.

23 December: Every day at work on a comprehensive programme for National Socialism. I am beginning to see how difficult it all is. [Sic!]

25 January: Arrival, Hanover [for meeting of north Germans]... Gottfried Feder turns up, the servant of capital and interest [a sarcastic reference to Feder's phoney anti-capitalism - RB]. [The meeting]... begins at eight o'clock... Feder speaks. Intelligently but obstinately dogmatic. And then a confused debate without end... What is a social distress? asks Ley... Then Russia. I am attacked without restraint... Then I go for it. Russia, Germany, Western capital, Bolshevism... Everyone listens in hushed silence. Then stormy agreement! We have won. [Another delusion: this speech proved to be Goebbels' swan-song as a radical oppositionist - RB] Strasser shakes my hand. Feder very small and self-effacing.

31 January: I think it is horrible that we and the Communists bash each other's heads in... Where can we meet leading Communists?

3 February: Monday afternoon with Herr von Bruck, a leading Rhenish industrialist. A prominent businessman at last. He gave us a political-economic lecture of astounding breadth. That is a man with whom we can collaborate. Knew Chicherin [a leading Soviet diplomat, succeeded Trotsky in the spring of 1918 as Commissar for Foreign Affairs - RB]. Confirmed the last tittle of our views about Bolshevism. We are following the right trail. In the evening a discussion in Elberfeld. A follower of the Communist Workers Party. Interesting debate.

6 February: Hitler is in a rage about the programme [in all probability, Gregor Strasser's draft - RB]. The Bechsteins. Old lady. Property must be preserved [the Bechsteins were obviously becoming agitated about the forthcoming referendum - RB]. Next Sunday, Bamberg. Invitation from Hitler. Stand up and fight! That will decide.

15 February: Hitler speaks for two hours. I am almost beaten. What kind of Hitler? A reactionary? Amazingly clumsy and uncertain. Italy and Britain the natural allies. Horrible! ... It is our job to smash Bolshevism. Bolshevism is a Jewish creation! ... Compensation for princes! Question of not weakening private property. Horrible! Programme will do! Happy with it. Feder nods. Ley nods. Streicher nods. Esser nods. It hurts me in my soul to see you in that company. Short discussion. Strasser speaks. Hesitant, trembling, clumsy... Lord, what a poor match we are for those pigs down there... I can no longer believe in Hitler absolutely.

22 February: Fobke told me more hair-raising stories from Bamberg. Streicher waffled. Called me literally dangerous. That swine... Let the men of Munich enjoy their Pyrrhic victory. Work, get strong, then the fight for socialism.

26 February: Letter from Rudolf Hess. They are trying to whitewash Julius Streicher. I shall not let go until this matter is settled.

12 March: To Hitler: 'It hurts my soul to see you in this company.'

13 March: Reading: Adolf Hitler, *The South Tyrol Question and the Problem of German Alliances*. An amazingly lucid pamphlet with a grand perspective. What a man he is... the chief! Once again he has removed many a doubt from my mind.

And indeed, the turning point appears to have been reached. The entry for 21 March reads: 'Via Wurzburg... to Nuremberg... Julius Streicher [the 'Bavarian bum brusher' and 'swine' - RB] expects me. Long talk. Reconciliation. At least Julius [sic!] is honest.'

And reconciliation it was. On 29 March, Goebbels records with evident relish that he had 'lunched with the Thyssens' and that he had that morning received a letter from Hitler: 'I am to speak in Munich on 8 April.' There follows a glowing account of Hitler's speech to a gathering of party leaders in Munich on 13 April, to which, significantly, Goebbels had been invited:

Matters of principle: Eastern affairs... The social question. The Bamberg evidence. He speaks for three hours. Brilliant... Italy and Britain our allies. Russia wants to devour us... We are moving closer. We ask. He gives brilliant replies. I love him. Social question. Quite new perspectives. He has thought it all out. His idea: Blend of collectivism and individualism. The land: all that is on it and below it for the people. Production, individualistic [that is, capitalistic - RB] for those who create. Combines, trusts, production of finished articles, transport, etc, to be socialised... He has thought it all out. I am reassured all round... with this sparkling mind he can be my leader.

10 June: Still don't know where I am. Now Hitler is to decide next week. He [Strasser] suspects that I am compromising.

12 June: I would like Hitler to draft me to Munich. There I would be away from the muck. [Eight months previously, Goebbels had declared that Munich was a pig sty! - RB]

19 June: Yesterday Hitler addressed industrialists in Essen. Fabulous!

25 August: The latest story, in the eyes of the movement I have met my Damascus. ^[20] Bowed to Hitler and Munich. The hawk of this story: the two Strassers.

Goebbels had indeed seen the light. The one-time terror of the landed aristocracy, we find him entering in his diary on 2 October 1926, shortly before assuming his post as *Gauleiter* of Berlin: 'Brunswick. I stay with Herr von Wedel-Parlow. Genuine old nobility.' ^[21]

Hitler's rout of the radicals began to pay immediate dividends in more ways than one. Set against themselves by their defeat at the Bamberg conference, Hitler felt free to offer them the jobs they wanted on his terms. In August 1926, Goebbels announced his final defection from the Strassers in the *Völkischer Beobachter*, disparaging them as 'revolutionaries in speech but not in deed'. Three months later Goebbels was heading for Berlin as the city's newly appointed *Gauleiter*. Other posts were also doled out as the 'lefts' came to heel, von Pfeffer ^[22] taking over the leadership of the refounded SA, and Otto Strasser, after a spell as propaganda chief, assuming the responsibilities of party organiser. Hitler was now in a position to begin the realisation of the plans and strategy he had devised during his stay in Landsberg prison and in the first year of his renewed party activity:

From this failure of the putsch we knew a great lesson for the future: we recognised that the new state must previously have been built up and practically ready to one's hand... In 1933 I had behind me by far the greatest organisation which Germany ever possessed, a movement which was built up from the smallest cells until it had become an organisation embracing the whole Reich. This mighty reconstruction of the party contributed to create the most important condition for taking over power in the state and maintained it securely. ^[23]

The formation of these 'cells' of the Third Reich dated from the period between 1926 and 1928, by which time the party had been divided into three main compartments. The first, under Gregor Strasser's energetic and highly-talented supervision, had as its sole task the destruction of the existing political order, especially the party's main opponents, the SPD, KPD and the trade unions. The second section comprised the skeleton of the Nazi regime of the future, with leaders responsible for security, economics, agriculture, 'race and culture', law and the projected 'labour service' ministry. As the movement grew in size and influence, attracting into its ranks increasing numbers of military, police, civil service, business and other leaders with technical expertise, so the skeleton took on flesh, in 1933 enabling the party to achieve a relatively smooth takeover when it began to usurp and displace the less pliable personnel of the old system. Finally there was the propaganda department, which functioned under the watchful gaze of Hitler himself. Goebbels became chief of this section towards the end of 1928, a post for which his brief career as a pseudo-revolutionary Nazi eminently suited him.

The 'trade union question' was also tackled in a way that had not been previously possible. Now that the 'radicals' had been bought over and tamed, Hitler felt more free to encourage the development of this side of party work, since it ran far less risk of developing in directions that would antagonise his freshly-won supporters in the business world. Hitler's recommended policy towards the trade unions, it will be recalled, was to enter and seek to weaken them as much as possible. To this end, a Berlin Nazi, Johannes Engel, founded a small cell of anti-Marxist workers at the city's Pneumatic Brake Co, a move that was endorsed by Berlin *Gauleiter* Goebbels, who subsequently appointed Engel NSDAP 'Head of Secretariat for Labour Affairs'. Though it met with little success except amongst workers who were either non-political or had previously adhered to one or other of the bourgeois parties, another step towards a national trade union faction was taken in July 1928, when the party launched its National Socialist Shop Organisation, the NSBO. The director was Reinhold Muchow, who had defected to the Nazis from the nationalist white-collar 'trade union', the DHV (Engel served under him as assistant director). However, this organisation did not achieve full party status until as late as January 1931, the main reason presumably being that it had signally failed to win anything approaching mass support in the factories, mines and other workplaces. At the end of 1931, the NSBO claimed a mere 43 000 members, though this figure was to rise sharply over the next two years as unemployed and near-pauperised workers, despairing of any positive and united action by the two workers' parties and the reformist trade unions, turned to the Nazis as their last hope of salvation. All this, however, lay in the future as Hitler, emerging victorious from his fight with the north Germans, set out to re-establish the links with the business world that had been shattered by the Munich fiasco and his year of enforced political retirement. He now had something to offer the big employers, and he wasted little time in letting them know.

A year and a day after Hitler had instructed his followers to concentrate all the movement's forces against one enemy - a foe that had as its sole aim the destruction of capitalism - the Nazi leader launched himself on a series of speeches to industrialists and bankers that in the course of the next seven years was to raise the Nazi Party from the depths of its post-putsch division and depression to the summit of state power. At Bamberg on 14 February 1926, Hitler had laid down the Nazi law on private property to his 'leftist' critics, and routed them. On 28 February, he travelled north to the radicals' own territory in Hamburg to address, not a meeting of backward workers in the style of Goebbels or the Strassers, but an exclusive gathering of big employers, bankers and right-wing political and military figures at the Hamburg 1919 National Club. Founded shortly after the November Revolution to represent and defend the interests of the port city's beleaguered bourgeoisie (the Hamburg proletariat was among the most militant in all Germany), the club regularly invited well-known personalities from the business and political worlds to address them on themes of their own choosing. Among its guests had been Field Marshall von Mackensen, Admiral von Tirpitz, Schacht, Stresemann, Luther, von Seeckt, Gessler and Cuno. This formidable list would seem to suggest that the National Club had assumed more than a parochial role. In fact it had become a forum for the discussion and formulation of bourgeois-Junker political policies and philosophy, and as such, the club's decision to invite Hitler could not have been taken lightly nor, indeed, without some of its members having already displayed some interest in the ideas and activity of their guest's party. And as Hitler's speech progressed, it became evident that others who were not so well acquainted with his views found Hitler's 'socialism' far more acceptable than the brands they had grown to hate and fear in their native Hamburg. For what Hitler outlined in his address was nothing else than a blueprint for the destruction of the German labour movement; the detailed strategy and tactics of fascist counter-revolution. Hitler at once went to the root of the problems confronting German imperialism. They did not, as so many on the bourgeois right asserted, date from the November Revolution. This disaster was itself only a symptom of a far more deep-seated disease, whose origins Hitler traced back to the formation of the German workers' movement:

On that day when a Marxist movement was allowed to exist alongside the other political parties the death sentence was passed on the Reich. All else flowed logically and was the political consequence of the activity of a movement which from the first had as its goal the destruction of the Reich... [24]

Hitler then scourged the old bourgeois 'national' parties and leaders for failing to grasp the root of the problem and take the necessary measures as Bismarck had vainly attempted to do with his anti-socialist legislation:

The parties of the right were powerless. It has always been our tenet that the people can be educated, that politics is a matter which can be fought about with intellectual weapons. That is

wrong, as the final objective of politics, now and for the future, is war. We cannot talk about the laws of democracy prevailing, the determination of things to come by a free people, by the majority of the people. This only makes sense if people recognise it and abide by it. In a so-called democratic society, on that day when a minority, however small, says this law does not apply to us, we will build up our own force and we are prepared to achieve whatever we want by the most brutal means regardless of the cost, when we feel strong enough, on that day, the whole democratic lunacy is doomed. ^[25]

Hitler had struck just the right note, for these were the sentiments of many of those gathered in the audience. They loathed the political system created by the 'November crime', and the consequent prominent role allotted within it to the reformist representatives of the workers' movement. Before November 1918, the worker knew his place. He would not have dreamt of prying into the business affairs of his employer. Now the same worker had the right - on paper at least - to elect representatives from his shop organisation to check on the operations of the company, just as he had secured the right to free collective bargaining. His employer was now compelled by law to negotiate with his trade union's officials. All this to the reactionary employer, bred in the palmy days of Bismarck and Wilhelm II, was nothing short of 'Marxist dictatorship'. Hitler knew how they felt, since this had long been his own opinion. What he had new to tell them, and what they wanted to hear, was how to end this 'red tyranny'. ^[26] But first they listened approvingly to Hitler's explanation of why the bourgeoisie had failed to establish its authority in the early years of the Weimar Republic:

The bourgeoisie had not the power on their own [they shared it with the Social Democrats - RB], but in practice they governed the state and the power was still embodied in the state. The whole military establishment and the administration still represented power. But our bourgeoisie so little recognised the necessity of possessing power or of the need for a political philosophy, that it did us the most serious harm. The soldier was persuaded: 'politics are not your affair'. The politicians had been brought up in the conviction to use no brutality, only intellectual weapons. The two had been so far separated that they could not now get together. ^[27]

Thus the bourgeoisie held in its hands the main levers of state power - the army, police, bureaucracy, courts, etc - but due to its entire tradition of political indecisiveness and lack of schooling in the harsh business of ruling, could not or would not use them to crush its mortal Marxist enemy. Indeed, they sat in the cabinet with its Social Democratic representatives, the leaders of a movement which Hitler claimed was characterised by the very qualities the bourgeoisie lacked: 'spirit and brute strength'. Hitler understood far more clearly than any theoretician of 'Third Period' Stalinism that for all its 'bourgeoisification' the Social Democratic movement had to be utterly destroyed if Germany was to be politically, economically and militarily equipped for its imperialist role in Europe and the Soviet east. After 1928, the Comintern leadership repeatedly declared that the SPD was taking on the twin tasks of the fascisation of Germany and the preparation of a new war of intervention against the USSR. ^[28] Here we have Hitler, two years earlier, insisting the precise opposite; that the agency for enslaving the German proletariat was National Socialism, and that to achieve this aim, it had to *annihilate* Social Democracy:

Thus the revolution succeeded and became stabilised in these past seven years. I emphasise 'the revolution' but not 'the republic' because it is not a question of republic or monarchy but of the structure the revolution has fashioned, which still endures even if it appears to have slowed down. ^[29]

Hitler here refers to the greatly enhanced role the reformist labour movement enjoyed under the Weimar regime - a supposition which becomes obvious in the next passage:

The reasons for the perpetuation of this revolution lie in two human weaknesses: one is the cowardice of [the bourgeois] part of the nation and the other in extreme selfishness. For the revolution has understood something. Not only has it torn down the old building but replaced it by their own apparatus. *There are now 60 to 70 000 of their supporters in government employment posts and they know their existence depends on the continuance of the present situation. Should this edifice collapse, so would their own existence.* Just think gentlemen how incompetent and incapable are those at the top who are bound up in such a situation. How can such low-grade people be members of state government, how can such worthless people qualify for the suffice of Reichs President. Also, when things collapse, their own existence shatters into a thousand fragments. When this scum is so incapable that he can hardly make a living as a guttersnipe, but is now elevated to the governing class, surely *he will fight fanatically to preserve*

this situation. You see today the consequences of this tragedy, and each one feels it personally.
[30]

Thus did Hitler speak of the working class when snugly closeted behind the locked doors of his future big business paymasters. 'Low grade' proletarian 'guttersnipes' and 'scum' had no right to hold office in the German state or any of its subsidiary organs. The bourgeoisie would only be able to concentrate on its main task - making profits - when this alien growth had been expelled from the German body politic. That was the meaning of Hitler's repeated assertion that the question of political power had to be resolved before there could be any question of an economic flowering:

Economically Germany is gradually facing the danger of a takeover by foreign capital... The object is no longer to give Germany some assistance but to get the German economy under its control. That is what the Dawes Plan is all about. It was originally believed in many quarters that the Dawes Plan would bring about an unending flow of gold into Germany. The experience has been the opposite and Locarno has been the political receipt for it... I would [therefore] like to touch on an important manifestation of the postwar period... the quite incomprehensible belief that the German economy would one day recover and be built up again... It is madness to spread the idea that Germany will one day rise again by economic means [that is, by means of the Dawes Plan - RB]... because experience shows that a blooming economy cannot safeguard the state, unless accompanied by a vigilant political will to survive, economics can even be the lure to the destruction of a state. Each one is capable of growth, but woe to those who do not back it up with power... If we ask ourselves the question what have we really been doing all these years for the salvation of Germany, the honest answer is, we have tried to revive the economy... You know, perhaps better than others, how treacherous this conclusion has proved... What is depicted as a revival of Germany is in reality only the organisation of Germany as a colony for its colonialist masters. [Shouts of 'Quite so'] [31]

Hitler has now reached the nub of his case. He poses to his bourgeois audience the question he asks in *Mein Kampf*: how can the political deadlock in Weimar Germany be broken? He describes the polarisation of forces between left and right, worker and capitalist with a rare degree of class consciousness:

What has brought about this downfall? Not recognising the Marxist danger. And what is the position today? There are 30 or 34 million people who decide Germany's fate - by their votes. They consist of three sections. One couldn't care less about what happens. Then there is another section who are internationally, or at least only vaguely nationally minded... it consists not only of the Social Democrats but also the Communists, the pacifist Social Democrats and reaches into the centre or to the so-called right parties who will not commit themselves to the national interests, but hope for international pacifist support. This gives opposing groups of 14 to 15 millions and 10, 12 or 13 millions of nationally minded with temperament, energy and strength... Why then cannot Germany rise again? Numbers do not count. What does count is the will to power. The international groups combine the most active, powerful and disciplined... The Communists could win by some form of violent attack. Believe me, if they do, in three years, you wouldn't know Germany. Perhaps millions would go to the scaffold. Every theatre, every cinema, everything down to the railway trains would carry Communist propaganda... On the other hand, suppose the DVP won. You would see no change from now. The hoardings would still have Communist propaganda, bookshops their manifestos, etc, etc... these Left groups, at most 12-14 million strong, *are more determined and ruthless than the millions on the other side*. The broad masses are blind and stupid and don't know what they are doing. *The parties of the right are without the will to grasp power*. It is quite obvious they have become timid inside the walls of their own camp. Be clear on this - since time began, the freedom of nations has only been won and safeguarded in battle... Germany will be no exception. Germany is disarmed and encircled, *any national policy is thwarted by the presence of these 14 or 15 million negative elements*. Germany cannot today conduct a policy nor can she fight a battle. If Germany had to fight today, the warriors could only be taken from the universities and from a few patriotic associations... At the next election the KPD will get five to six million votes. Many do not see the danger. The grave diggers of Germany are at work. *If the Communists were to march today, the Social Democrats would follow them...* Read the Social Democratic press and you will find a continuous leftward trend... It almost exceeds the Communist in agitation. *It has to, otherwise their flock*

would desert them. Today the Social Democrats are demanding a people's referendum... the wind has changed direction... they can sense coming events and do not want to be left behind. [32]

So whichever way the German bourgeoisie turned, whether towards the restoration of its lost colonies and territory, or in the search for political stability and economic prosperity at home, it came up hard against the same obstacle - the 14 to 15 million 'negative elements' of the German proletariat. At this point, when no avenue of escape appears to be either visible or possible, the most determined among the ruling class will turn to the fascists for a solution. And Hitler gives it:

Whether the DVP or the DNVP gets an electoral victory today, takes 15 or 20 seats from the rest, has no significance... That is what people will not face up to, and that is why Germany will not rise again but decline further year by year. I want to state a plain fact. *The matter of Germany's revival is the matter of the destruction of Marxism...* The recognition of this was the moving cause of my political activity and of the foundation of the movement I represent today. There are 15 million willing and convinced anti-nationals. *Until they are led back into the fold of a collective national feeling, all talk of a German revival is meaningless.* [Shouts of 'Hear, hear!']... It was so in Italy. It has been resolved there, not thanks to the genius of one man, but to the intelligence of a part of the nation [obviously Hitler means here the bourgeois 'part' since it backed fascism to the hilt against the Italian labour movement - RB], *who realised that all the flowering of trade is ridiculous as long as this poison is in the body.* [Shouts of 'Bravo!'] It is on the recognition of this that my movement was founded. *Its task is single minded: the destruction and elimination of the Marxist philosophy.* The bourgeois parties have no such aim. All they want is electoral activity. The fundamental thing is - *either Marxism exterminates us or we exterminate it, root and branch.* This formula will eventually create a force which alone can govern as in Italy today, *where the political doctrine makes no secret of the fact that it will break the necks of its opponents,* just as Russia has done on its side. This idea is unacceptable to conventional parliaments. When the moment of danger arises, it is much easier to appoint a commission, which in the end does nothing. [33]

And what does Hitler then propose; since parliamentary methods are powerless to combat and defeat the Marxist enemy, a movement embracing millions? He proposes the 'plebeian solution', or, in the apt words of Rauschnig, to pit 'mass against mass'. By its very nature, it is a counter-revolutionary task that is beyond the capabilities of even the most gifted bourgeois career politician, steeped as he inevitably must be in the traditions and methods of parliamentary manoeuvrings, and tricky combinations with the leaders of reformist labour. Such men might serve as invaluable fixers and wire-pullers for the fascists, but they cannot substitute for them, as Hitler makes clear and as his capitalist audience ecstatically acknowledges:

If we have grasped the fact that our fate is to be decided by the destruction of Marxism, then any means are justified to bring it about... a movement which turns to the broad masses, to those among whom the Marxists themselves work [is essential]. One can only get rid of poison with an antidote. We must be hard-headed, ruthless, sternly resolved and idealistic. [Thunderous applause from audience.] So such a movement must turn to the masses wherein lies the source of all power. [34]

This was heady stuff. The Hamburg bourgeois had never heard anything like it before in their lives. For the first time, here was a movement that not only sought the destruction of Marxism, but actually had a plan to carry it into practice. But Hitler also cautioned them. In order to break into the masses the Social Democrats and Communists regarded as their own private preserve, it would be necessary to indulge in frequent bouts of social demagogy, in which the Nazis would have to pledge themselves to a struggle against capitalism on behalf of the exploited workers and petit-bourgeois. This was the price the bourgeoisie had to pay for their salvation. And besides, as Hitler made clear, the eventual winners would be the employers, since the Nazi 'unions' would not press for material gains as the ADGB unions had done, but drive the worker to produce more:

These broad masses who are deluded into fighting for Marxism are the only weapon the [Nazi] movement can use to destroy it. But they must be convinced of the rightness of our objective and that all means are justified... the German trade union movement... was implanted from abroad and had Marxist tendencies... The Marxists are behind all these demands [for higher pay, shorter hours, etc]... They say 'Behold the bourgeoisie, they feast and revel and you get nothing.' But if a new movement arises which genuinely looks after the broad masses, *don't you think it could*

conduct the struggle differently, that the masses could be won over? They must be convinced of our intention to create an independent German national state that will satisfy all their reasonable [sic!] demands. They must believe they will share the benefits of increased production. The objective must no longer be higher wages; but increased production which will benefit all. ^[35]

Hitler had evidently caught the spirit of the rationalisation movement then gathering momentum in German industry, a fact which his audience probably noted with approval. A regime which set as its goal the keeping down of wages and the maximisation of production must have been an exciting prospect after seven years of the Republic's 'political wages', and enforced collective bargaining and the eight-hour day.

Hitler quickly reassured his audience that there was no question of the Nazi movement yielding to the working class simply because National Socialism had espoused a radical-sounding programme and a mass-oriented and aggressive propaganda style:

It is no use saying to them [the masses]: 'I invite you to a discussion.' What you must say is: 'Fellow Germans, I hereby open the mass assembly. I must point out that we are in charge and anyone daring to interrupt will be flung out and land up with a broken head.' [Tumultuous applause from audience.] Individual workers can often make so-called reasonable and sensible utterances. *But when he undergoes the effect of 200 000 in the Lustgarten, he is only a worm among them, and these 200 000 are not only a symbol of strength, but also the truth of the movement...* The [Nazi] movement must be intolerant! This is especially important in view of the bourgeois attitude that everyone has the right to express an opinion... Our movement will not tolerate that kind of thing... If a movement wants to carry out a struggle against Marxism it must be as intolerant as Marxism itself... If I succeed reclaiming the 15 million folk who today cry 'down with Germany, long live the international, down with the bourgeoisie, long live the proletariat' *who is going to question my means of doing it?* ^[36]

Who indeed. Certainly, very few of those gathered in the Hotel Atlantic on the night of 28 February 1926. And to prove his point, he cited the example of his mentor, Mussolini:

Remember how we said about Mussolini; he suppresses eleven newspapers, sets fire to four trade union headquarters, and that tomorrow he will do this and that and the other [terrible thing]. But this man has freed Italy from its greatest enemy, and restored it as a great power. ^[37]

And Hitler knew full well that this was the argument which carried most weight with the German bourgeoisie. The close of his speech was greeted, as it had so often been punctuated, with 'tumultuous ovations and cheers'.

There then followed in quick succession further meetings with business leaders, mainly industrialists, as Hitler followed up his great triumph in Hamburg. (There was also the added advantage for Hitler of the rightward swing in the bourgeoisie during and after the princes referendum campaign.) On 18 June, he addressed industrialists in Essen (Goebbels was present, and described the meeting as 'fabulous'), where he returned again in the December of the same year, this time addressing about 200 industrialists on the evils of Marxism, democracy, etc. A new note appears to have been struck by his call for living space in Eastern Europe, a topic which he left alone in his Hamburg speech.

Hitler attached a great deal of importance to these meetings with capitalists, as can be seen from a letter by his deputy, Hermann Hess, to a Nazi supporter in London, Walter Hewel:

You will probably be most interested to learn that last year [1926] he spoke three times before invited industrialists from Rhineland-Westphalia, etc, twice in Essen, and once in Königswinter. Each time it was as successful as that time in the Atlantic Hotel in Hamburg.

Hess also makes the revealing admission that the privacy and composition of the meeting meant that:

Hitler could speak quite openly about his political and economic aims; because he could attune his speech to a fairly uniform audience, he was able to stick to a consistent line. As in Hamburg, so in this instance the attitude was at first rather cool and negative... It was a great pleasure for me to be able to observe how the men slowly changed their outlook not without visible signs of their inner resistance. At the end they clapped in a way these men probably rarely clapped. The result was that at the second meeting of industrialists in Essen about 500 gentlemen accepted invitations. Hitler will probably speak to industrialists for the third time on 27 April [1927].

Hitler, after two years in the political wilderness, was on the way back. And the men of the Ruhr were beginning to take interest.

Notes

1. Hitler also applied this principle to international questions. Seeing Fascist Italy as a natural ally of a future National Socialist Germany, he was prepared to forego nationalist claims to the German-speaking Tyrol in order to cement such an alliance: 'Whatever you do, do it completely. By beefing against five or ten states, we neglect the concentration of all our willpower and physical force, for the thrust to the heart of our infamous [Marxist and Soviet] enemy, and sacrifice the possibility of strengthening ourselves by an alliance for this conflict... the National Socialist movement... must teach our people to look beyond trifles and see the biggest things, not to split up over irrelevant things, and never to forget that the aim for which we must fight today is bare existence of our people, and the sole enemy which we must strike is and remains the power which is robbing us of this existence... The struggle that Fascist Italy is waging... against the three main weapons of the Jews is the best indication that... the poison fangs of this supra-state hydra are being torn out. The prohibition of Masonic secret societies, the persecution of the supranational press, as well as the continuous demolition of international Marxism, and conversely, the steady reinforcement of the Fascist state conception, will in the course of the years cause the Italian government to serve the interests of the Italian people more and more, without regard for the hissing of the Jewish world hydra.' (A Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (London, 1943), pp 635-37) Which rendered it an excellent ally of a Fascist Germany.

2. Lüdecke had been entrusted by Hitler with a mission to the United States in search of funds for the party's empty coffers. He visited the Jew-baiting and anti-union car king Henry Ford at his Detroit headquarters, but failed to extract anything more substantial than his platonic support, even though Lüdecke promised Ford that 'whoever helped us now would not fare badly from a business standpoint... a binding agreement could be arranged whereby large concessions would be guaranteed there [Germany]... from the moment of Hitler's rise to power'. Ford, who could hardly be blamed for his scepticism about the prospects of a movement whose leader was currently in jail for treason, was not tempted even by the offer of a stake in the Russian market, which Lüdecke declared the Nazis would soon open up once they came to power in Germany: 'Pointing to the probability that a Nazi regime in Germany might lead to a change also in the Russian situation, with the reopening of that vast market, I emphasised the tremendous rewards his initiative would bring, not only in advancing his business interests, but also by furthering his grandiose social policies throughout the world.' (K Lüdecke, *I Knew Hitler* (New York, 1937), p 199) Lüdecke appears to have had no more success with Hiram Evans, Imperial Grand Wizard of the Klu Klux Klan. In complete contrast with the Nazis, this movement did not lack cash but a strategy for power: 'With such a flood of money pouring in, any man of genius might have been able to anticipate, in America, the work Hitler eventually did in Germany.' (p 205) Though the KKK may well have been deficient in leadership, its failure to become a serious contender for power was due to objective historical, economic and political factors, and not subjective ones.

3. Lüdecke, *I Knew Hitler*, p 217.

4. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, pp 546-53. And here Hitler was undoubtedly right. Nothing could have been more intimidating for the waverers within the workers' movement, and inspiring for those who were its enemies, than to see seemingly endless columns of uniformed SA men and youths marching through the working-class quarters of Berlin, Hamburg and Germany's other industrial centres, chanting in unison their songs of hate against Marxism, the republic, the Jews - and, in a cunningly demagogic twist, the 'reaction'. Hitler had learned his Vienna lesson well.

5. O Strasser, *Hitler and I* (London, 1940), p 83. While Otto Strasser gave a medievalist slant to his fascism (in common with so many others), he was ahead of his time in advocating a European economic and trading union some of whose proposed features have been incorporated into the Common Market: 'A European Federation based on the same

principles... would lead to a disarmed Europe, forming a solid bloc in which each country retained its own administration, customs and religion. The abolition of tariff walls would create a kind of European Autarchy, with free trade prevailing throughout the continent.’ (Strasser, *Hitler and I*, p 83) And autarchy, of course, was Hitler’s central economic airy, though he saw it being realised not through a Pan-European federation in which all member nations enjoyed (theoretically at least) equal rights, but under the total domination of German arms and industry. In this sense too, Hitler assumed the mantle of Bismarck.

6. *Völkischer Beobachter*, 24-25 May 1925.

7. The Nazi ‘left’ followed with close interest and not a little sympathy Stalin’s campaign against the Left Opposition, with articles appearing on this theme in the *NS Briefe* for 15 October, 15 November and 15 December 1927. All were concerned with the expulsion of the Trotskyists from the Bolshevik Party just prior to its Fifteenth Congress, a development which the journal heralded as further confirmation that Stalin was embracing a national and anti-Semitic version of socialism. Goebbels, now writing in his own Berlin daily, *Der Angriff*, commented (on 16 January and 6 February 1928) that Stalin’s victory over the Left Opposition represented the ascendancy of agrarian, nationalist and non-proletarian forces in the USSR over ‘Jewish’ internationalism as represented by Trotsky. Earlier, on 21 November, Goebbels had denounced the Trotskyist opposition and warned German workers against adhering to a ‘Fourth International’ (which Soviet and other Stalinists were also slanderously asserting Trotsky was about to found). On 12 March 1928, Goebbels waxed sarcastic on the prospects of building a genuine Communist leadership in opposition to the Stalinist faction in the USSR and the Comintern, as well as the reformists of the Second International: ‘Four “Internationals” and still no solidarity: on the contrary, only new fissures and establishments! This ought to make clear, finally, to the thinking German worker that all internationalism is a swindle and that he can achieve a betterment of his situation only through a national organisation of labour.’ Even Rosenberg’s *Weltkampf*, normally a mouthpiece for the most vitriolic attacks on the USSR, began to revise its opinion on the post-Lenin regime, with approving articles on Stalin’s anti-Semitism and nationalism appearing in its issues for February and April 1929. The Hitler - Stalin pact of August 1939 flowed directly from the Nazi leadership’s appreciation of how far the Kremlin leadership had departed from proletarian internationalism. All of which renders even more piquant the charge trumped up at the second and third Moscow Show Trials against Trotsky and other leading Soviet oppositionists that they were agents of German fascism.

8. *NS Briefe*, 15 October 1925.

9. ‘Third Period’ Stalinism, instead of taking a principled stand against such cunning demagogy, and defending the Social Democrats, *leaders as well as rank and file*, from all Nazi attacks, whether verbal, written or physical (while at all times demarcating itself from reformism, and pointing out that these Nazi manoeuvres were only possible because of Social Democratic treachery), actually lent credence to such demagogy by aligning itself, as on the occasion of the Prussian Referendum of 1931, with the Nazis against the SPD.

10. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, pp 597-98.

11. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 598, emphasis added.

12. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 598.

13. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, pp 600-01.

14. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 605. How anxious Hitler was to prevent the development of a ‘proletarian’ wing to the party paying lip service to class trade unionism is clear from the following passage: ‘... the germ cells for the economic chambers will have to reside in bodies representing the most varied occupations, hence above all in the [Nazi] trade unions. And if this future body representing the estates and the central economic parliament are to constitute a National Socialist institution, these important germ cells must also embody a National Socialist attitude and conception... Upon the economic chambers themselves it will be incumbent to keep the national economy functioning and eliminate the deficiencies and errors which damage it. The things for which millions fight and struggle today must in time

be settled in the chamber of estates and the central economic parliament. Then employers and workers will not rage against one another in a struggle over pay and wage scales, damaging the economic existence of both, but solve these problems together, in a higher instance, which must above all constantly envision the welfare of the people as a whole and of the state...’ And consequently, the right to strike, which Hitler demagogically upheld under the Weimar Republic, has no place in a regime which has ‘abolished’ the class struggle: ‘For the National Socialist union... the strike is an instrument which may and actually must be applied only so long as a National Socialist folkish state does not exist.’ (Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, pp 599-602)

15. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 603.

16. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, pp 604-05, emphasis added.

17. Strasser, *Hitler and I*, pp 87-88.

18. Hitler was currently receiving a monthly subsidy of 1500 marks from one of the royal houses threatened with expropriation - that of von Sachsen-Anhalt, via the divorced Duchess Eduard. The Rhineland Prince Eulenburg had also shown an interest in Hitler’s movement, though it is not known whether this went to the extent of giving its leader money. At any rate, he and his fellow aristocratic parasites must have been flattered by Hitler’s description of the referendum. Apart from being a ‘Jewish swindle’, it represented the revolt of the ‘subhuman’ against the ‘élite’. Alfred Rosenberg, who entirely shared Hitler’s orthodox bourgeois views on private property, recalled Hitler ‘declared that as long as private property was recognised as one of the foundations of national life, he would not yield, irrespective of how bad the rulers of the various states had been. The NSDAP adopted this point of view.’ (A Rosenberg, *Memoirs* (Chicago and New York, 1949), p 204)

19. The Communist Workers Party (KAPD) was a syndicalist offshoot from the KPD, breaking away after the Kapp Putsch.

20. Of Goebbels’ defection to Hitler, Otto Strasser writes that in the course of his visit to Munich in April: ‘Goebbels had time to make contact with the officials of the Bavarian party [who were, for the first time, receiving a steady salary - RB]. The number of cars at the disposal of Hitler’s associates did not fail to impress him, and he compared his own modest way of living with the luxury already enjoyed by the Streichers, the Essers, the Webers. His choice was made even before the meeting [at which Hitler won Goebbels over - RB] started.’ (Strasser, *Hitler and I*, p 89) Shortly prior to this sudden ‘conversion’ - in February 1926 - Goebbels had written to Hitler suggesting that he take on the leaders of the north German ‘lefts’ as a new general staff, hinting that their opposition would melt away if he did so: ‘The men are available. Just call them. Or rather, summon them one after another just as in your eyes they seem to deserve it.’

21. J Goebbels, *Diaries, 1925-1926* (London, 1962), passim.

22. In a letter to Pfeffer, Hitler made it plain his new SA chief was to make a clean sweep of the Röhm old guard and its methods: ‘The training of the SA must be carried out, not according to military principles, but according to the needs of the party... In order also to divert the SA from any temptation to activism by petty conspiracies, they must from the very beginning be completely initiated into the great idea of the movement and so fully trained in the task of representing this idea that the individual does not see his mission as the eliminating of some petty rogue, but as committing himself to the establishment of a new National Socialist people’s state. Thereby the struggle against the present state will be raised out of the atmosphere of petty acts of revenge and conspiracy to the grandeur of a philosophical war of annihilation against Marxism. We shall not work in secret conventicles but in huge mass marches; the way for the movement cannot be opened up by dagger or poison or pistol, but by conquest of the street.’

23. A Hitler, Speech to NSDAP rally, Nuremberg, 1933.

24. A Hitler, Speech to the Hamburg 1919 National Club, 28 February 1926, translated from W Jochman, *Im Kampf um die Macht* (Frankfurt, 1960).

25. Hitler, Speech to the Hamburg 1919 National Club, 28 February 1926.

26. ‘On the one side [against the bourgeois parties] were the Social Democrats, not as a weapon of reason but as a weapon of terrorism, as brutal force. They did not appeal to the mind nor to democracy. They called the masses into the streets and with these street masses... this affair [the November Revolution] was carried out by a handful of people. But this handful had a creed to which they were brutally dedicated.’ (Hitler, Speech to the Hamburg 1919 National Club, 28 February 1926)

27. Hitler, Speech to the Hamburg 1919 National Club, 28 February 1926.

28. ‘One of the features of the approach of a new revolutionary rise is the fact that in the leading capitalist countries (Germany and Britain) the bourgeoisie had been compelled to bring into action its last reserve - Social Democracy. The Müller and Macdonald governments have accepted the task entrusted to them by the bourgeoisie - to break the rising movements of the workers, establish a fascist dictatorship, and prepare for war, war first and foremost on the USSR.’ (S Gusiev, ‘On the Road to a New Revolutionary Rise’, *Communist International*, Volume 6, no 19, 15 August 1929, p 717) Less than a year later, Hermann Müller and his fellow Social Democrats had been ejected from the government by the big bourgeoisie, the first step taken towards the assumption of power by the real fascists and German imperialism’s war on the USSR. As Hitler so rightly insisted, the precondition for the fascistisation of Germany and the securing of ‘living space’ in the Soviet east was the *total destruction* of what the Stalinists termed ‘social fascism’. Since Third Period Stalinism denied the existence of any contradiction between the reformist bureaucracy and the Nazis, it was unable to exploit the antagonisms which arose between the bourgeoisie and the SPD when the former began to hound the reformist leaders and their lower functionaries out of the government and state administrations (as in the case of von Papen’s removal of the Prussian Social Democratic government on 20 July 1932, when even the SPD police chief ended up in one of his own prison cells!). Trotsky, on the other hand, repeatedly insisted that the KPD should discard its adventurist, ultra-leftist policy of rejecting a united front with the Social Democratic organisations and instead employ the tactic of the united front, exploiting even the smallest and most transitory conflicts which the bourgeois offensive generated between the Nazis and the reformist leaders. Their struggle to cling on to their long-accustomed posts and privileges, which, whether they liked it or not, was directed against the fascists who were seeking to displace them, helped to create the conditions for the formation of an anti-Nazi united front between the SPD, the ADGB and the KPD, the three principal organisations of the German working class: ‘The thousands upon thousands of Noskes, Welses and Hilferdings prefer, *in the last analysis*, fascism to Communism. But for that they must once and for all tear themselves loose from the workers. Today this is not yet the case. Today the Social Democracy as a whole, with all its internal antagonisms, is forced into sharp conflict with the fascists [just as in March 1920, it was forced into sharp conflict with Kapp - RB]. It is our task to take advantage of this conflict and not to unite the antagonists against us... It is necessary to show by deeds a complete readiness to make a bloc with the Social Democrats against the fascists in all cases in which they will accept a bloc.’ (LD Trotsky, ‘For a Workers’ United Front Against Fascism’ (8 December 1931), *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany* (New York, 1971), p 137) Less than two months later, with the bourgeoisie hourly mounting its pressure on the besieged Social Democrats, Trotsky again insists that the depth of the German crisis is forcing the ruling class towards a total rupture with the reformists that had served it so well in the past: ‘Just now their [Hitler’s and the Social Democratic leaders’] interests diverge. At the *given* moment the question that is posed before the Social Democracy is not so much one of defending the foundations of capitalist society against proletarian revolution as of defending the semi-parliamentary bourgeois system against fascism. The refusal to make use of this antagonism would be an act of gross stupidity.’ (LD Trotsky, ‘What Next?’ (27 January 1932), *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, p 173). The Stalinist movement only broke from ‘social fascism’ and turned towards a bloc with the Social Democrats when the reformist leaders found themselves threatened principally not by fascist counter-revolution, *but proletarian revolution*. This was the genesis of the Stalinist - reformist - bourgeois-liberal Popular Front in France and Spain before the war, and it remains so to this day, as witnessed by Chile.

- 29.** Hitler, Speech to the Hamburg 1919 National Club, 28 February 1926.
- 30.** Hitler, Speech to the Hamburg 1919 National Club, 28 February 1926, emphasis added.
- 31.** Hitler, Speech to the Hamburg 1919 National Club, 28 February 1926.
- 32.** Hitler, Speech to the Hamburg 1919 National Club, 28 February 1926, emphasis added.
- 33.** Hitler, Speech to the Hamburg 1919 National Club, 28 February 1926, emphasis added.
- 34.** Hitler, Speech to the Hamburg 1919 National Club, 28 February 1926, emphasis added.
- 35.** Hitler, Speech to the Hamburg 1919 National Club, 28 February 1926, emphasis added.
- 36.** Hitler, Speech to the Hamburg 1919 National Club, 28 February 1926, emphasis added.
- 37.** Hitler, Speech to the Hamburg 1919 National Club, 28 February 1926.

Fascism in Germany. Robin Blick 1975

Chapter XVI: United Front From Below

The Müller... government [has] accepted the task entrusted to it by the bourgeoisie: to break up the rising movements of the workers, establish a fascist dictatorship and prepare for war, first and foremost against the Soviet Union. (S Gusiev, 'On the Road to a New Revolutionary Rise', *Communist International*, Volume 6, no 19, 15 August 1929, p 717)

The kicking out of Hermann Müller's coalition government by finance capital was the first signal for the establishment of a Fascist dictatorship. (H Neumann, 'The International Significance of the Reichstag Elections', *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 10, no 69, 15 August 1930)

The formation of the Hermann Müller government on 6 June 1928 created a radically new political situation in Germany. For the first time since the break-up of the Stresemann 'grand coalition' in November 1923, the SPD was sharing office with its old liberal and Catholic allies. And we must go back to June 1920 for the last occasion on which a Social Democrat actually held the post of Chancellor (when, by coincidence, Müller was then also the leader of the government). Most important of all, the return to office of the Social Democrats opened up for the KPD the greatest opportunity to weaken and eventually to break the grip of reformism and centrism on the German working class since the crisis year of 1923. That it lamentably failed in this task was directly the outcome of the false policies being pursued by the leadership of the Communist International after 1923, and was not in any sense attributable to a lack of militancy, devotion or courage on the part of rank-and-file members and supporters of the KPD. In the course of the following five years, they were to furnish more than enough proof of their desire to fight the Social Democrats and so clear the road to the German revolution. We must repeat and insist: *only the zigzags of Stalinist policy, forced on the KPD by the Moscow leadership of the Communist International, prevented them from doing so.* For all the long-term advantages - and many of the tactical ones - lay with the Communist Party. The Social Democrats had not entered the cabinet as a result of backstairs dealings between the party leaders, but had been thrust into the government by an upsurge of working-class militancy and radicalisation that the republic had not witnessed since the stormy summer months of 1923. The Reichstag election of 20 May 1928 only confirmed the continued evolution of a revival in the workers' movement that had been evident from the beginning of 1926, when millions of workers threw themselves into the KPD - SPD campaign to confiscate the princes' property:

Reichstag Election May 1928 (December 1924 results in brackets)						
Party	Votes (million)		%		Deputies	
SPD	9.15	(7.9)	29.8	(26.0)	153	(131)
KPD	3.26	(2.7)	10.6	(9.0)	54	(45)
Centre	3.7	(4.1)	12.1	(13.6)	62	(69)
BVP	0.94	(1.13)	3.0	(3.7)	16	(19)
DDP	1.5	(1.9)	4.9	(6.3)	25	(32)
DVP	2.67	(3.04)	8.7	(10.1)	45	(51)
DNVP	4.4	(6.2)	14.2	(20.5)	73	(103)
Econ P'ty	1.4	(1.0)	4.5	(3.3)	23	(17)
Agrarians*	1.26	(0.5)	3.9	(1.9)	21	(8)
NSDAP	0.81	(0.9)	2.6	(3.0)	12	(14)
*Combined totals for Landbund, Bauern und Landvolk, Deutsche Bauernpartei						

Therefore the two workers' parties had gained both in absolute and relative terms as against the parties of the bourgeois centre and right. In a reduced poll (74.6 per cent in 1928, 77.7 per cent in December 1924) the KPD and the SPD increased their combined vote by approximately 1.7 million, while their share of the total poll rose from 35.0 per cent to 40.4 per cent - a level only exceeded twice in the entire history of the Republic (19 January 1919: 45.5 per cent; 6 June 1920: 41.6 per cent). The election returns of May

1928 not only reflected through the parliamentary prism the renewed combativity of the German proletariat, but the contradictory fashion in which this process of radicalisation was unfolding. On all previous occasions, an increase in votes for the KPD (or in 1919-20, the USPD) had been accompanied by a decline in electoral support for the SPD. Thus in June 1920, the USPD vote rose by 2.7 million in the National Assembly elections of January 1919, while the SPD lost 5.4 million, being divided roughly equally between working-class defections to the left, and middle-class shifts towards the bourgeois centre and right. A contrary trend was at work during 1924, following the defeat of the previous year. In December, the KPD lost 0.9 million votes on the May elections, while the SPD picked up 1.8 million. Now in 1928, we find *both* parties gaining simultaneously (though at a different tempo), a sure indication that the entire workers' movement was becoming radicalised, attracting to its side previously passive or even hostile layers of the working population. The rates of growth of the two parties also tell us something about the changed political climate after 1928. While the SPD vote had increased by 15 per cent, that of the KPD was 20 per cent above the level recorded in the elections of December 1924. This could only have meant that the KPD was attracting hundreds of thousands of former SPD supporters and voters, while, at the same time, the SPD was more than making good its proletarian losses to the left by winning over a considerable section of the democratic petit-bourgeoisie that had deserted the party after the National Assembly elections of January 1919. Both tendencies worked to the advantage of the KPD, since they indicated that the party was becoming a powerful pole of attraction for workers on the left flank of Social Democracy, while a significant layer of the middle class, by voting for the SPD, had given indications that, as in the campaign for the princes' referendum, they were prepared to align themselves with the workers' movement against the parties of the big bourgeoisie and the ultra-right. And here it should be noted that the Nazis reached their all-time low, with a wretched 810 000 votes. How that total became multiplied eightfold within the space of 28 months cannot be explained simply in terms of the impact of the 1929 world economic crisis, which hit Germany harder than any other capitalist state. To argue thus is to concede that fascist movements on such a stupendous scale must inevitably arise under similar conditions of economic crisis, and that therefore there is little or nothing the workers' movement can do to prevent the middle class going over *en masse* to the counter-revolution. This was certainly never Trotsky's view. Analysing the Reichstag elections of 14 September 1930, when the Nazis scored their first spectacular triumph (6.4 million votes), he wrote:

For the social crisis to bring about the proletarian revolution, it is necessary that, besides other conditions, a decisive shift of the petit-bourgeois classes occur in the direction of the proletariat. This will give the proletariat a chance to put itself at the head of the nation as its leader. The last election revealed, and this is its principal symptomatic significance, a shift in the opposite direction. Under the impact of the crisis, the petit-bourgeoisie swung, not in the direction of the proletarian revolution, but in the direction of the most extreme imperialist reaction, pulling behind it considerable sections of the proletariat. The gigantic growth of National Socialism is an expression of two factors: a deep social crisis, throwing the petit-bourgeois masses off balance, *and the lack of a revolutionary party that would today be regarded by the popular masses as the acknowledged revolutionary leader.* If the Communist Party is the party of revolutionary hope, then fascism, as a mass movement, is the party of counter-revolutionary despair. When revolutionary hope embraces the whole proletarian mass, it inevitably pulls behind it on the road of revolution considerable and growing sections of the petit-bourgeoisie. Precisely in this sphere, the election revealed the opposite picture: counter-revolutionary despair embraced the petit-bourgeois mass with such force *that it drew behind it many sections of the proletariat.* ^[1]

So what had transformed the cautious optimism of the democratic petit-bourgeoisie in 1928 into the 'counter-revolutionary despair' of 1930 was not only the economic crisis (which should have worked to the even greater advantage of the KPD), but the reciprocal relations between the two parties of the German proletariat. To understand why the KPD failed to exploit the crisis in Social Democracy unleashed by its assumption of power in 1928, and further aggravated to near-breaking point with the onset of the depression a year later (when the big bourgeoisie launched its campaign to oust the SPD from the government and replace it with a ruthlessly anti-working-class alliance of the right-wing parties), to understand why almost the entire petit-bourgeoisie, in the space of three years, stampeded into the camp of fascist counter-revolution, and why even at the very nadir of its fortunes, the SPD still clung on to the bulk of its proletarian support, it is necessary to turn our attentions towards the crucial developments within the Soviet Union and the leadership of the Communist International over the period

between the defeat of the German Revolution in October 1923 and the Sixth Congress of the Communist International, held in Moscow in the summer of 1928.

As the leading section of the Communist International the Soviet Communist Party carried an enormous historical responsibility on its already heavily burdened shoulders. Not only had it to confront daily the gigantic task of organising the proletarian dictatorship and nationalised economy of a vast and culturally backward multinational state debilitated by eight years of uninterrupted imperialist and then civil war. The international character of the Russian Revolution, a revolution which issued out of the crisis of a world system of capitalist economic and political relations, necessarily meant that the USSR could only be defended and strengthened against the pressures of imperialism by the methods of international revolutionary class struggle, by the revolution's extension to the heartlands of advanced industrial Europe, principally Germany. This, as we have already noted, was the perspective of Lenin from the first days and weeks of Soviet power. And if we study closely the writings and speeches of Lenin and Trotsky in this period, we are immediately struck by their internationalist approach to even the most mundane or routine task confronting the Soviet government or party. Repeatedly they stress the indissoluble yet contradictory unity between the struggle to consolidate Soviet power and the socialist elements of the economy in the USSR, and the fight for proletarian revolution in Central and Western Europe. The highest expression of this unity of opposites was to be found in the pre-Stalinist activity of the Communist International, summed up and generalised in its first four congresses between 1919 and 1922.

The history of the Communist International after 1923 is one of the squandering, perverting and near-liquidation of the immensely rich practical experience and vast theoretical capital accumulated both before its foundation, in the work of the Bolsheviks, and, from 1919, in the activity of its national sections. Step by step, the Stalinist faction in the CPSU gained control of the leadership of the International, driving out its most experienced, gifted and devoted cadres, disorienting and corrupting those who remained, and elevating to its supreme leadership those who for the most part owed their promotion to subservience to the ruling clique in the Kremlin, and an uncritical readiness to accept and embellish each and every slanderous attack on the Trotskyist Left Opposition concocted by the Soviet Stalinists. Central to Trotsky's analysis of Stalinism is his theoretical explanation of how and why the main turns in Comintern policy after 1923 flowed not from an objective Marxist appraisal of the strategic revolutionary requirements of the working class in the country concerned, but from the tactical exigencies of the burgeoning Soviet bureaucracy. Trotsky was able to demonstrate in his many writings on the USSR and the Communist International that both the period of right-opportunism between 1925 and 1927 when Stalin's faction drove key sections of the International into uncritical blocs with trade union and Social Democratic lefts (Britain) and left bourgeois nationalists (China), and the subsequent phase of *ultra-leftism* (that ended in 1934 with the adoption of the Popular Front and during which these same reformists were now deemed to be transformed from valuable allies of the proletariat into 'social fascists' and with whom no alliance of any description was permissible) the fundamental theoretical and material basis of Stalinist policy was the same. Whether pursuing a policy of the wildest adventurism, as in Germany between 1930 and 1933, and which made possible the victory of fascism, or the crassest opportunism, as was the case in the bloc between the Chinese Communist Party and the Kuomintang of Chiang Kai-shek, which led directly to the massacre of the Shanghai proletariat in April 1927, the Stalinist faction in the CPSU and the leadership of the Communist International clung firmly to its leader's policy of building 'socialism in one country', independently of the course of the class struggle in either the colonial world to the Soviet Union's south and east, or in the advanced imperialist nations to the west.

The essence of Stalin's nationalist revision of all Marxist teachings on the international nature of the class struggle was this: that provided further imperialist interventions were kept at bay, the USSR could, alone and unaided by socialist revolutions in the West, proceed to construct a fully developed socialist society. The world division of labour, the international nature of economic relations, the need for the backward Soviet economy to avail itself of the technological expertise and material assistance of culturally advanced countries such as Germany - all this was discarded as Stalin's new nationalist doctrine became the official line of the CPSU and then the Communist International. Those such as Trotsky who continued to uphold the original internationalist perspectives of the Russian Revolution were slandered either as adventurists who wished to carry the revolution to the West by military means (the 'export of revolution', which in Stalinist parlance became identified with Trotsky's theory of the permanent revolution), or alternatively (and sometimes simultaneously) as capitulators who had abdicated the struggle to develop a socialist-type economy in the Soviet Union. These fundamental differences over

questions of internationalism and socialist construction in the USSR were to have a profound bearing on the course of the class struggle in the imperialist world, and nowhere more so than in Germany. After the great defeat of October-November 1923, the KPD was confronted with two central tasks. It had first of all frankly to acknowledge that an historic defeat had indeed been inflicted on the party and the working class, and secondly to learn the reasons why. Here the rise of Stalin's bureaucratic clique in the CPSU played an especially pernicious role. Because of a unique conjuncture of political forces in the two parties, it was able to ally itself briefly with a faction on the Central Committee of the KPD which was widely regarded by Communist workers as a genuine left alternative to the centrist-inclined Brandler group which had so badly and tragically bungled the revolutionary opportunity in the autumn of 1923. In the early months of 1924, it should be remembered, Stalin had aligned himself with two other prominent 'old' Bolsheviks, Zinoviev and Kamenev (the so-called '*Troika*'), to block Trotsky's fight against bureaucratism in the party and state apparatus. ^[2] Appearing before the party and the International as the custodians of orthodox Bolshevism - a claim that appeared substantiated to the majority of members by their long records in the party - Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev succeeded in having Trotsky condemned by the Thirteenth Party Conference in January 1924 as the leader of a 'petit-bourgeois deviation' in the CPSU. At once, the 'Russian question' became an issue for every section of the Communist International since the *Troika* now had to ensure that their line prevailed not only in the Soviet Union, but throughout the entire Communist movement. This meant that in the KPD, the major party of the Communist International (where an oppositional movement would prove most damaging to the prestige and position of the Stalin faction in the Soviet Union), a tendency had to be sought out which would uncritically support the ruling group in the CPSU and Zinoviev's leadership on the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI). This task had acquired a double urgency in view of the fact that both Zinoviev and Stalin were directly implicated in the defeat of 1923. Zinoviev had been responsible for the directives sent to the KPD over the preceding months of preparation, and Stalin had dispatched a letter to the KPD Central Committee recommending the continuation of the party's cautious united front policy which the developing crisis demanded should be rapidly terminated. ^[3]

A scapegoat was found - Brandler - and a new group brought into the top leadership which owed its promotion more to direct support from Moscow than the democratic decisions of the appropriate German party bodies. Trotsky was completely opposed to such a blatantly administrative and factional 'solution' to what was a far more deep-going and complex problem involving the entire history of the German workers' movement. It could not be overcome by the removal of one leadership, however inadequate, and its arbitrary replacement by another, whatever its pretensions to revolutionary intransigence. Even though Trotsky made clear his political differences with Brandler (differences that continued to widen over the years) his principled defence of Brandler led to his name being linked with an alleged centrist, semi-Menshevik tendency in the Communist International as well as the CPSU. (Radek, who also opposed the removal of Brandler by Zinoviev's *ukase*, was indeed in political sympathy with the deposed KPD secretary, an error quickly exploited by the *Troika* in its campaign against the entire Opposition, since Radek endorsed many of Trotsky's criticisms of the Soviet party regime and political line.) Thus Trotsky became identified as a supporter of the German 'right', while Stalin and Zinoviev formed an episodic alliance with the KPD 'left' of Ruth Fischer, Ernst Thälmann and Arkadi Maslow, whose group was now given an enlarged representation on the Central Committee of the party. ^[4] The fruits of this unprincipled bloc were a grotesque parody of Bolshevism, a pseudo-revolutionary intransigence against Social Democracy that foreshadowed, albeit on a very embryonic plane, the ultra-leftism of the Stalinist Third Period.

Having disposed of Brandler, the ruling group in the Soviet party and the Communist International had to assert that no serious reverse had been suffered under its leadership in Germany, that the revolutionary crisis was continuing to develop, and that the revolutionary opportunity, far from being missed in the autumn of 1923, lay ahead in the near future. ^[5] This utterly false assessment of the political situation in Germany provided the sounding board to the mounting leftist rantings that reached a crescendo at the Fifth Congress of the Communist International held in Moscow in July 1924. In January 1924, at a conference of the International Red Aid, Zinoviev stated that 'Germany is apparently marching towards a sharpened civil war', while a month later the Praesidium of the ECCI declared in its resolution on the recent German events that the KPD 'must not remove from the agenda the question of the uprising and the seizure of power. On the contrary this question must stand before us in all its concreteness and urgency.' On 26 March, the ECCI advised the KPD that the defeat of October 1923 was 'only an episode' and that 'the fundamental estimate remains the same as before'.

With the working class in headlong political retreat under Seeckt's military dictatorship, and the German bourgeoisie at last beginning to consolidate itself after years of turmoil and crisis, the ECCI, under Zinoviev's direction, made no call for the KPD to change its tactics or policies: 'The KPD must continue as hitherto to exert all its forces in the work to arm the working class.' *Arm the working class!* That this advice could be given to a party driven into illegality, under conditions where any attempt at armed resistance to Seeckt's rule would have been met by the most savage repressions imaginable, indicated just how rapidly the ruling clique in the Communist International was veering away from Leninist strategy and tactics. One need only recall Lenin's tactical retreat at the time of the 'July Days' in Petrograd to see how little Zinoviev's suicidal recipes had in common with Bolshevism. In the summer of 1923, when the maturing of the revolutionary crisis demanded that the KPD sever the united front with the SPD lefts and begin the preparations for the arming of the proletariat and the insurrection, Stalin and Zinoviev counselled restraint. Now, when the revolutionary opportunity had been missed, they demanded the arming of the proletariat and the rejection of the united front on the grounds that the revolution was still approaching. The question of the united front is the one that concerns us most here, since it had a crucial bearing on the outcome of the conflict between the Nazis and the German proletariat between 1930 and 1933, when the Stalinists - *for the second time* - banned the formation of a united anti-fascist front between the KPD and the SPD. The ECCI statement on the German events, dated 19 January 1924, had this to say on the united front tactic in Germany:

The leading strata of German Social Democracy are at the present moment *nothing but a fraction of German fascism wearing a socialist mask*. They handed state power over to the representatives of the capitalist dictatorship in order to save capitalism from the proletarian revolution... It is not just now that these leaders of German Social Democracy have gone over to the side of capital. At bottom they have been always on the side of the class enemies of the proletariat, but it is only now that this has been revealed to the masses in a glaring light, ^[6] *by their completing the transition from capitalist democracy to capitalist dictatorship*. This circumstance induces us to modify the united front tactics in Germany. There can be no dealings with mercenaries of the White dictatorship. This must be clearly grasped by all German Communists, and solemnly and loudly announced to the entire German proletariat. Even more dangerous than the right-wing SPD leaders are the left - the last illusion of the deceived workers... The KPD rejects not only any dealings with the SPD centre, *but also with the 'left' leaders* until they shall have shown at least enough manliness to break openly with the counter-revolutionary gang in the SPD presidium. The slogan of the united front tactic in Germany is now: *Unity from below!* ... The KPD must learn how to put this slogan of the united front from below into operation. [Emphasis added]

Thus even while Lenin lived - he died two days after the adoption of this resolution - the revolutionary tactics and strategy, principles and theory which will forever be associated with his name were being quite openly challenged by the Stalin - Zinoviev bloc. Social Democracy is no longer characterised as a *bourgeois tendency within the workers' movement*, but as a 'fraction of fascism wearing a socialist mask'. In other words, *social fascism*. The statement that Social Democracy had completed the transition from capitalist democracy to capitalist dictatorship was not only proved false in the light of subsequent developments in Germany (where far from serving as an instrument of capitalist dictatorship, the SPD found itself excluded from participation in the government for more than four years, and on at least one occasion - the attempted coup of May 1926 - ran the risk of being the victim of capitalist dictatorship itself), but in a general theoretical sense, in that no tendency which has its historical roots in the proletariat and depends for its survival on a measure of working-class support, can merge *completely and permanently* with an open military or fascist-type bourgeois dictatorship. The false propositions that Social Democracy had turned fascist (or to employ a term much abused by the *Workers Press*, 'corporatist') and that it had fused totally and irrevocably with the military dictatorship of Seeckt (a dictatorship that terminated barely a month after this resolution was adopted, when Ebert lifted the state of emergency first proclaimed in September 1923) served to justify the abandonment of the united front tactic, and its replacement by the 'united front from below'. Finally, an *ultimatum* was issued to the SPD lefts - break with your party centre and right, *or we will refuse to form a united front with you*. In other words, the KPD was instructed to form a 'united front' only with those workers and leaders outside its ranks who *in advance* gave undertakings to accept *in toto* KPD policy - a complete violation and travesty of the meaning and spirit of the united front as it was conceived by the Communist International in the years 1921 and 1922.

The Leninist United Front

Towards the end of 1921, the Communist International - not without some considerable inner resistance on the part of its sections - turned towards the tactic of a united front with the parties of the Second International, the centrist Vienna Union (the 'Two-and-a-Half International') and the reformist Amsterdam International Federation of Trade Unions. What had brought about this tactical change of line was not a reappraisal of Social Democracy, nor indeed any change of policy within the leadership of the reformist and centrist internationals, but the temporary recession of the postwar revolutionary wave in Europe. Fascism was on the offensive in Italy, and bourgeois reaction in its various forms in Germany, France and Britain. Every worker and every labour organisation, no matter what political tendency, had to bear the brunt of the capitalist attack on wages, working conditions, jobs and democratic rights then gathering speed across the continent. With a view to establishing a united front of *all* workers' organisations against the bourgeoisie, the ECCI sent out to all the sections directives on how the campaign for the united front should be conducted. It stressed the two underlying principles that had to be observed in all united front activity. Firstly, that far from repelling those workers seeking unity with the Communist parties, but reluctant to break from their own leaders and organisations:

The ECCI is of the opinion that the slogan of the Third World Congress of the Communist International, 'To the Masses', and the interests of the Communist movement generally, require the Communist parties and the Communist International as a whole to support the slogan of the united front of the workers *and to take the initiative in this matter.* ^[7]

The second and equally important principle went to the root of all genuine revolutionary activity:

The principal conditions which are equally categorical for Communist parties in all countries are... the *absolute independence* of every Communist party which enters into an agreement with the parties of the Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals, its *complete freedom to put forward its own views and to criticise the opponents of Communism.* While accepting a basis for action, Communists must retain the *unconditional* right and the possibility of expressing their opinion of the policy of all working-class organisations without exception, not only before and after action has been taken but also, if necessary, *during its course* [emphasis in original]. *In no circumstances can these rights be surrendered.* While supporting the slogan of the greatest possible unity of all workers' organisations in every practical action against the capitalist front, Communists may in no circumstances desist from putting forward their views, which are the only consistent expression of the defence of working-class interests as a whole. ^[8]

The history of Stalinism is one of the violation of these two cardinal Communist principles, either through an ultra-leftist rejection of the united front, first in 1924, and then, with far more deadly repercussions, between 1928 and 1934; or an opportunist, uncritical bloc with the reformists, exemplified by Stalin's combination with the TUC General Council during the British General Strike of 1926, and later by the liquidation of an already existing unprincipled united front into a counter-revolutionary alliance with the liberal wing of the ruling class - the Stalinist policy of the Popular Front, inaugurated officially by the Seventh Congress of the Communist International in 1935, and never since abandoned. Nor was the united front in Lenin's day conceived of simply as a manoeuvre to 'expose' the reformists. It was also a response to and acknowledgement of the profound, organic desire of the working masses for unity against the main class enemy. ^[9] The Leninist united front devised a form of struggle whereby this unity could be achieved while at the same time the fundamental differences in the workers' movement could continue to be fought out without any one of its tendencies surrendering either its organisational independence or political principles. 'March separately, strike together', was the slogan under which the Communist International launched its world campaign for the united front with the centrist and reformist internationals.

The initiative of the ECCI did not fall on stony ground. Under pressure from their millions of proletarian members and voters, who were daily feeling the same lash of the capitalist offensive in the factories and mines, and on the dole queues, as did their Communist class brothers, the leaders of the Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals accepted the ECCI invitation and attended a joint conference of the three movements which opened in the Berlin Reichstag building on 2 April 1922. The discussion was always sharp, at times acrimonious and even verged on virtual civil war. Yet at the end of the day, all three delegations were able to put their names to a joint statement committing the reformists and centrists to a united plan of action with the Communist International against the capitalist offensive and for the defence

of the Soviet Union. The agreed resolution called for united demonstrations in every country over the next month on the following demands:

- For the eight-hour day.
- For the struggle against unemployment, which has increased immeasurably on account of the reparations policy of the capitalist powers.
- For the united action of the proletariat against the capitalist offensive. For the Russian Revolution, for starving Russia, for the resumption by all countries of political and economic relations with Russia.
- For the re-establishment of the proletarian united front in every country and in the International.^[10]

Of course, the reformists immediately attempted to backtrack on these jointly-agreed demands once the question arose of putting them into practice, and this retreat obliged the Communist International both to denounce the reformists for breaking the agreement concluded at the Berlin conference, and to press on independently with such support as the Communist parties could muster amongst the rank and file of the reformist movement. The tactic of the united front was never intended, when first conceived, to bind the hands of revolutionaries simply because the leaders of other tendencies either refused to enter into such tactical agreements, or proceeded to break them when confronted with the resoluteness of the class enemy. As the ECCI statement on the Berlin conference made very clear:

... the united front is not and should not be merely a fraternisation of party leaders... With the leaders, if they want it so, without the leaders if they remain indifferently aside, and in defiance of the leaders and against the leaders if they sabotage the workers' united front.^[11]

And for a brief period in the early summer of 1922, following the breakdown of the arrangements to hold a world congress of the three internationals, the ECCI did recommend to the sections that they struggle to build a 'united front from below'. But it should be remembered that this turn followed a period of repeated attempts to secure a united front with the *leaders* of the reformist and centrist internationals, an agreement which, when finally reached, was promptly violated.

And it is evident from the text of the document in question that this 'united front from below' had nothing in common with the versions of Zinoviev (1924) and Stalin (1928-33), as the following extract makes clear:

The proletariat without distinction of party has had the opportunity of convincing itself who is for the united front and who is against. The resistance of the leaders of the Second International has frustrated the attempt to organise the proletarian united front from above. That makes it a duty to rally all forces to organise the proletariat for the common struggle in opposition to the leaders of the Second International. Communist workers, it is your duty to spread the lesson of this first attempt to establish the united front among the broadest masses of the working class. Workers of the parties of the Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals! After this experience with your leaders it is your duty to do everything, to omit nothing, *to show the leaders of your parties who have forgotten their duty that you will no longer tolerate sabotage of the united front...* The slogan of the world workers' congress *will be the slogan of further struggle, but the experience of this first attempt has shown that to be successful it is necessary to break the resistance of the Social Democratic leaders...* Fight the leaders of the Second International who are splitting the working class. Build the united front from below.^[12]

There is not the slightest trace here of ultra-leftism. The workers in the reformist parties are called upon 'from below' to fight their leaders *in order to drive them back into the united front which they had so shamefully deserted*. It was not, as under Zinoviev and then Stalin, an administratively conceived manoeuvre to 'capture' the reformist-led workers from their already sufficiently 'exposed' leaders, but a tactical turn, a necessary prelude to a renewed offensive to force the leaders of the Second International *back into the united front*, thus bringing into struggle against capitalism (and, given a correct tactic and a favourable conjuncture, eventually against their own reformist leaders) millions of workers who would, without such a lead from their organisations, have remained on the periphery of the fight.

The Communist International did indeed return to the united front tactic later that same year, when at its Fourth World Congress, held in the shadow of the victory of Italian Fascism, it issued a challenge to the leaders of world reformism:

The Fourth Comintern Congress puts a plain question to the Second and Vienna Internationals: Are they willing, now that their policy has still further worsened the position of the working class, to offer their hand to establish the common front of the international proletariat for the struggle for the basic rights and interests of the working class? It asks the Amsterdam International whether it is willing to stop splitting the trade unions, stop excluding Communists from the unions, willing to help in a united front of the working class? ... As we said at the Berlin conference, *the CI does not expect the parties of the Second International, the Vienna Labour Union and the Amsterdam trade union leaders to fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat,* ^[13] *which was and is our goal.* But we ask them whether they want to fight against the dictatorship of capital, *whether at least they want to use what remains of democracy to organise resistance to the triumph of that same capital* which turned the world into a mass grave and is now digging new mass graves for our proletarian youth. The CI has spoken... It is now the turn of the Second International, the Vienna Labour Union, the Amsterdam Trade Union International and its Hague Congress to speak. ^[14]

With the leftwards shift in the German proletariat that gathered pace after the eruption of the Ruhr crisis in January 1923, the KPD was especially well placed to develop the united front tactic on a local and national scale, and it was pursued with great energy and success up until the summer of that year when with the general strike and the fall of Cuno, a sharpening of the attack on Social Democracy called for a new tactical turn. The failure of the Brandler leadership to make such a turn - a failure which was due in no small part to the role played by Zinoviev and, to a lesser degree, Stalin, who sent his letter to the KPD Central Committee at this crucial moment - was used in the early months of 1924 to cast doubt on the validity of the united front tactic generally. The formulation 'united front from below' was given a leftist interpretation, since it now ruled out negotiations with reformist leaders on principle, whereas the formula had originally applied to a situation which arose when the reformists had either *already broken off* or *declined to enter* a united front between the reformists and revolutionary organisations of the working class.

The Fifth Congress of the Communist International, held in July 1924, should have placed the German defeat right at the top of its agenda, not in order, in the manner of Zinoviev and Stalin, to hunt down, denounce and disgrace scapegoats, but, as Trotsky repeatedly insisted at this time, to prevent such a disaster occurring in the future. But the consolidation of the Stalin-led bureaucratic clique in the leadership of the Soviet party, drawing its strength from the moods of depression in the working class and the party following the defeat in Germany and the decline of the revolutionary wave throughout Europe, conspired to prevent such a discussion from taking place. The result was a congress conducted as if in a political and historical vacuum, in which Leninist formulas were eclectically interwoven with the leftist rhetoric in which Zinoviev and his supporters in the Communist International were so adept at this particular time. For the first time in an official Comintern congress resolution, Social Democracy was designated as a pro-fascist tendency, and not a *reformist* current *within* the workers' movement which served the interests of the bourgeoisie by diverting the proletariat from the revolutionary struggle for power. In the resolution adopted by the congress on fascism, we read the following formulation, one that was put into cold storage for the duration of the right turn between 1925 and 1927, and then revived and given an even more leftist emphasis in the six years between 1928 and 1934:

As bourgeois society continues to decay, *all* bourgeois parties, *particularly Social Democracy*, take on a more or less fascist character... Fascism and Social Democracy are the two sides of the same instrument of capitalist dictatorship. In the fight against fascism, therefore, Social Democracy can never be a reliable ally of the proletariat. ^[15]

This utterly false characterisation of the relationship between fascism and Social Democracy was rendered all the more dangerous in this instance in that it was combined with an impeccable definition of fascism. ^[16]

Once again we can see the same idealist method being employed in the approach to Social Democracy. First it is dubbed 'more or less' fascist, then, for good measure, workers are told in suitably grave tones that it 'can never be a reliable ally of the fighting proletariat'. *But the Communist International was founded in 1919 for this very reason!* Was it therefore necessary to 'prove' it yet again by abusing reformist leaders as fascists? The test of whether Social Democrats can prove reliable allies of the proletariat in its struggle against capitalism - an issue not in doubt amongst Communists - is repeatedly to summon them, through mass pressure *from below*, combined with direct appeals *from above*, to joint

struggle on a limited and agreed set of demands, under the condition that neither party demands of the other that it surrenders its right to criticise its united front allies, or its freedom of action on issues where there is not and can never be any such agreement. The Fifth Congress recommended a different united policy from that pursued under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky - and, incidentally, Zinoviev - in earlier years. The sections of the Communist International were now summoned to 'fight for the international united front under Comintern leadership'.^[17] In other words, participation by other tendencies in this 'united front' was excluded from the outset, since, by definition, it was to be under the sole leadership of the Communist International and therefore no united front at all.

And as if this was not enough to bemuse the delegates and those they represented, another resolution, the *Theses on Tactics*, adopted a mid-way position between the already-quoted formulation on the united front, and that which had been current in the Communist International in 1921-23. Here the main purpose of the united front was characterised as a 'struggle against the leaders of counter-revolutionary Social Democracy and... emancipating Social Democratic workers from their influence', a view which was contrasted with a 'right-wing tendency' in the Communist International (a thrust primarily at Brandler) which 'tended to interpret the united front as a political alliance with Social Democracy'.

Both are wrong. The united front is neither simply a struggle against the leaders of reformism, any more than it is an *alliance* with Social Democracy. It is a fighting bloc of two or more workers' organisations which come together on certain basic class issues which affect them all and which agree to fight together for a limited time for a limited set of demands. In the course of the struggle for the united front, and during its operation, it will become possible for the Communists to convince workers following the reformists that their leaders do indeed fail to defend their class interests, *but only in so far as the Communists prove themselves by their wholehearted commitment to the united front action that they are fighting for the class as a whole, and not simply in order to expose the reformist leaders.* Along this sectarian path lies certain alienation of the reformist workers, *and the consequent strengthening of Social Democracy.* The same resolution underlined its eclectic character by then swinging over to the leftist position adopted in the resolution on fascism: that is, the 'united front from below':

The tactics of the united front from below are the most important, that is, a united front under Communist leadership concerning Communist, Social Democratic and non-party workers in factory, factory council, trade union, and extending to an entire industrial centre or area or industry.^[18]

All very impressive on paper. But, a naive worker might ask, since you intend to form a 'united front from below' with Social Democratic and reformist trade union workers at every imaginable place, why not, instead of calling upon these millions of workers *individually* to place themselves under the leadership of the Communist Party (something they are obviously not prepared to do, since they have decided to remain with the reformists), why not address this demand to the *organisations* to which these workers belong, or owe their political allegiance? At the Fifth Congress, such a question would have received several answers, according to which resolution it was drawn from. After the Sixth Congress in 1928, there was only one permissible reply: the Social Democrats have turned social fascists, together with the organisations they lead, even down to their middle and lower officials, cadres, shop stewards and municipal councillors. Therefore, no unity with the social fascist traitors, but only a united front from below under the leadership of the Communist Party. We can see how - quite unconsciously - the ground was being prepared for this suicidal rejection of the Leninist united front in the period of leftism which followed the defeat of the German revolution and reached its apogee at the Fifth Congress of the Communist International.

Far more issues were at stake for the *Troika* at the Fifth Congress than an examination of the German defeat. Indeed, the fantasy was still sustained in defiance of all the evidence that the proletariat was still advancing towards the revolution!^[19] Neither was there a serious appraisal of the application of the united front tactic in a period when large numbers of workers previously behind the Communist parties were drifting back towards the reformists. The central issue at the congress was the isolation and defeat of Trotsky and his real or suspected supporters in the other sections of the Communist International. This campaign of necessity had to take the form of a fight against Trotsky's alleged attempts to 'substitute Trotskyism for Leninism'. By a clever series of manoeuvres, the Zinovievists in the ECCI and the national sections were able quite falsely to link Trotsky with genuine centrist elements in the International, who had indeed been guilty of committing opportunist errors in their dealings with Social Democracy during the period of the application of the united front tactic in Germany and elsewhere.^[20]

Thus the so-called 'Bolshevisation' campaign was a two-edged weapon. While it directed justified blows at the centrists, it also served to undermine Trotsky's standing in the Soviet party and the Communist International, thereby clearing the ground for the revision of Leninist principles and theory that was shortly to be undertaken by Stalin with his new nationalist policy of 'socialism in one country', which he first enunciated in October 1924.

In a superficial sense it could be argued that the leftist line prevailing in the Communist International from January 1924 until a year later did not correspond to the rightwards course being pursued within the Soviet Union by the *Troika* in the field of economic policy and on questions of party democracy and the fight against bureaucracy. But this is to miss the contradictory essence of the Thermidorian reaction then unfolding in the Soviet Union. Its most acute manifestations appeared at the core of the party organisation, and it was consequently against Stalin, the recently-appointed party General Secretary, that Lenin intended to direct his heaviest blows. But precisely because bureaucratisation was concentrated at the party centre, it assumed a highly contradictory form. The eroding of party democracy was carried through in the name of defending the party rank and file against 'aristocrats' such as Trotsky. The entrenchment of Stalin's bureaucratic clique took place under the sign of a 'Leninist' struggle against bureaucracy. Casting itself - initially quite sincerely - in the role of the defender of Bolshevik traditions, the *Troika* depicted Trotsky as the leading spokesman for a 'Social Democratic deviation' in the party, in which role Trotsky was fast regressing to his alleged former Menshevik errors.

And this line was carried over into the Communist International, a manoeuvre greatly facilitated by Zinoviev's chairmanship of the ECCI, from which position he was able to build up anti-Trotsky factions in most of the parties of the International (many of the Zinovievists soon found themselves out of favour when their patron temporarily broke from Stalin in the spring of 1926 to form a bloc with Trotsky - the Joint Opposition). This unity between the lines pursued by the dominant faction in the post-Lenin Communist International and Soviet party also expressed itself in another subtle fashion. Throughout 1924, and even into the early months of 1925, the ECCI tried to sustain the illusion that the working class was still on the offensive. This was in part a factional position directed against Trotsky (the leader of the 'Social Democratic deviation'), who argued that, on the contrary, the immediate perspective was not one of a naked clash between the forces of proletarian revolution and fascist counter-revolution (in which the Social Democrats had been allotted by Zinoviev and Stalin the role of a left cover for fascism), but of the revival of Social Democracy *on the basis of an easing of tensions between the classes*. As the year drew on, more and more evidence piled up that Trotsky was correct, that the workers' movement was in decline almost everywhere, that the reformists were not only regaining their grip on large sections of the proletariat who had moved towards Communism over the previous two to three years, but were even preparing to or had entered coalition governments with the liberal representatives of the bourgeoisie (France and Britain). Yet still Zinoviev, sustained by the Stalin faction in the Soviet party, refused to acknowledge this new situation, one which demanded different tactics towards reformism from those called for in Germany in the autumn of 1923. And if a real mass movement of workers could not be found by the Communist International, then substitutes for it had to be created. To adopt a long-term perspective that took into account the real level of the working-class movement was tantamount to conceding that Trotsky was correct in his estimation of the nature of the period through which the Communist International was passing, something Zinoviev, for factional reasons, was not prepared to do, no more than were his supporters around Stalin in the Soviet party apparatus. Thus began the search for forces *outside* the proletariat that could fill the vacuum created by the decline in working-class militancy after the defeat in Germany, the continued rule of Fascism in Italy, and the renewal of Social Democracy throughout Europe.

Organisations and leaders who briefly flitted across the Comintern stage in this period included the Peasants International (Krestintern) headed by the Pole Dombal, a movement whose size and influence was exaggerated out of all proportion as the specific weight of the Communist International declined in the major capitalist countries. In the United States, the Communist Party attempted to create the semblance of a mass movement by throwing its few and precious cadres into a campaign designed to boost and 'capture' the Farmer-Labour Party of the radical petit-bourgeois LaFollette. None of these opportunist ventures produced any tangible 'results' for the Communist International except confusion and a shameful mixing of banners and programmes. And what is especially significant is that this liquidationism proceeded at full speed at the precise time when the ECCI was proclaiming from the Kremlin rooftops its undying hostility to a Social Democracy that was turning fascist, and remonstrating with all those in the sections who still argued for the application of a genuine Leninist united front with

the reformist workers' organisations. Leftism, as is so often the case, *provided the screen for a transition to opportunist positions*. For what was the essence of Stalin's Comintern policy between 1925 and the end of 1927? That in order to prevent an imperialist intervention from disrupting the USSR's gradual progression towards 'socialism in one country', it was necessary to subordinate the parties of the Communist International to the *strategy* of building a series and network of blocs with reformist and bourgeois nationalist organisations, whose sole task it would be to restrain the imperialists from an invasion of the USSR. In Trotsky's words, Stalin's policy was to transform the parties of the Communist International from movements fighting for the proletarian revolution into 'frontier guards of the Soviet Union'. The essential groundwork for this right-wing turn, one which ruined a pre-revolutionary situation in Britain, and a revolutionary one in China, *had been laid during the period of ultra-leftism in 1924*. In both instances, the Comintern leadership leaned for support on organisations and leaders whose entire outlook was hostile to the methods and goals of proletarian revolution. In the 1924 phase of *leftism*, this took the form of seeking artificially and administratively to *accelerate* the tempo of the class struggle, a method which had its tragic climax in the suicidal Estonian uprising of December 1924, while in the *rightist* phase of 1925-27, it was to *restrain* a working class now resuming the offensive by subordinating its Communist leadership to an unprincipled alliance with reformists (the TUC General Council in Britain) and bourgeois nationalists (Kuomintang in China). In both cases, the method of organisation and leadership was bureaucratic, and had its social roots in the growth of bureaucracy within the Soviet Union in conditions of economic backwardness, cultural poverty and imperialist encirclement. Trotsky summed up the dialectical relationship between these three crucial phases of the Communist International - the rightist errors in Germany in 1923, the year of leftism which followed, and the opportunist line of 1925-27 - in the following way:

The Left illusions of 1924 rose thanks to the Right leaven. In order to conceal the significance of the mistakes and defeats of 1923 from others as well as from oneself, the process of the swing to the Right that was taking place in the proletariat had to be denied and revolutionary processes within the other classes optimistically exaggerated. That was the beginning of the downsliding from the proletarian line to the centrist... which in the course of the increasing [capitalist] stabilisation, was to liberate itself from its ultra-left shell and reveal itself as a crude collaborationist line in the USSR, in China, in England, in Germany and everywhere else. ^[21]

Thus the formation of the Anglo-Soviet Trade Union Committee was *conceived* under the *leftist* schemas in force during the unfettered reign of Zinoviev, but *applied* in a thoroughgoing *right-opportunist* fashion in the period before, during and even after the betrayal of the General Strike by the Soviet trade unions' British TUC partners. What had changed in the course of 1925 was not the method of leadership in the Communist International but a definite bedding down of the rising bureaucracy on the foundations of the more privileged elements of Soviet society - the technical experts, richer peasants (*kulaks*), highly-skilled workers, party and non-party officials and the like. This layer, like the labour bureaucracy in the capitalist countries, was either in the process of solving its own 'social question', or, in the case of the most privileged layers in the party, state and economy, had done so already. And as a satisfied social stratum, it acted as a conservative force within the Soviet Union and its ruling party, eschewing all political or social upheavals that might disrupt its own petit-bourgeois or even bourgeois conditions of life. Here too it began to exhibit, though necessarily in the guise of adherence to Stalin's revisionist version of 'Bolshevism', all the ideological and psychological traits of its counterpart in the trade union and Social Democratic bureaucracies in the major capitalist countries. Inevitably, this stratum began to exert enormous pressure on the organisation and leading cadres of the Communist International, since this movement, while it remained true to its revolutionary principles, was a permanent and intolerable challenge to the untrammelled rule of the usurping bureaucracy in the Soviet Union. Just as had been the case in the Soviet party, Stalin became the instrument for the exertion of this pressure, for, despite his many weaknesses, Zinoviev found himself drawn towards Trotsky on a series of key issues: China, where the Communist Party had, on the instructions of the ECCI, liquidated itself into the bourgeois Kuomintang; Britain, where the Communist Party and its Minority Movement in the trade unions was functioning as little more than a mouthpiece for the TUC lefts with the slogan of 'All Power to the General Council'; and on economic policy in the Soviet Union, where Stalin, now backed by his new theoretician Bukharin, was leaning on the *kulak* and the private trader and opposing Trotsky's repeated demands for a planned policy of rapid industrialisation and *voluntary* collectivisation of private farming. The eclipse and final ousting of Zinoviev from the chairmanship of the ECCI, ^[22] a post he had held on Lenin's proposal since its foundation in March 1919, was therefore a treacherous blow struck by the

bureaucracy against the international working class and on behalf of the most reactionary anti-Soviet forces in the USSR. This progressive weakening and eventual destruction of the Communist International as a revolutionary factor in the life of the Soviet and world working classes was absolutely essential for the triumph of the Stalinist bureaucracy, and its leader could not afford to rest until its finest cadres had either been expelled, broken or murdered in the cellars of the Lubianka, along with the victims of Stalin's purges in the CPSU.

Towards the Sixth Congress

Trotsky makes the theoretically acute observation that beginning with the false leftist line of 1924, each wrong orientation of the Communist International originated in the mistakes of the previous phase. Thus we have two interpenetrating processes. After 1924, Stalin's bloc with the *kulak* and the private trader (justified on the basis of Bukharin's theory that the rich peasant could be persuaded peacefully to 'grow into' socialism) provided the national foundations for the Communist International's international policy of blocs with reformists and bourgeois nationalists. However it was not simply a question of a mechanical or automatic reflex projection of the Soviet line on to the Communist International, but also of such an opportunist turn being nourished by the leftist errors of 1924. The same process was at work on a national scale three years later, when recoiling at the last moment from the threat of a revolt against the Soviet power by the pampered and appeased *kulaks*, Stalin swung sharply to the left and demanded what amounted to enforced collectivisation of the peasantry and a crash programme of industrialisation. This leftist zigzag, just like those that had preceded it in the Communist International, had been prepared by the previous policy, one of steady retreat before restorationist elements in the town and country, and of continuous and mounting persecution of the Left Opposition, which had developed a programme to counter the crisis and to bring the Communist International back to its original revolutionary perspective.

What effect did Stalin's abrupt about-turn on domestic economic issues have on the policy of the Communist International, which from 1925 until the last months of 1927, had been one of the right-opportunist blocs with reformists, bourgeois nationalists and petit-bourgeois radicals? Once again, the problem is more complex than might appear at first sight. It has almost become a truism today to say that the line of the Communist International was after Lenin's death determined by the policies being pursued by the dominant faction in the Soviet bureaucracy. This can indeed be substantiated by referring to the ultra-leftist swing which began in the Communist International early in 1928 and gathered pace step by step with the increased tempo and ferocity of Stalin's drive to 'liquidate the *kulaks* as a class'. Likewise with the right turn towards the Popular Front and entry into the League of Nations (1934), which coincided with the completion of collectivisation, a slackening in the tempo of industrialisation, and the emergence of fresh recruits - several millions strong - to the Soviet 'élite', whose material basis had been created by the enormous economic and social changes wrought over the previous six years. But we have also to consider the Communist International as a force in its own right, led by cadres whose record of struggle in the workers' movement in many cases went back over more than a quarter of a century. For all their political faults, they were not made of the stuff that lent them readily or willingly to becoming puppets of Stalin's ruling clique. Indeed, not only the leading bodies of the Communist International, but those of its national sections had to be purged repeatedly before Stalin could trust the International to function as a servile tool of Kremlin diplomacy. Nor should we neglect the millions of workers who over the years joined the parties of the Communist International in order to make the socialist revolution in their own countries, and not simply to worship and applaud 'socialist construction' in the USSR from afar (as did in the Popular Front period so many middle-class liberals and radicals). The proletarian base of the Communist International in the major capitalist countries could not be expected by Stalin to submit knowingly to a line that spelt defeat and even physical destruction for themselves and their movement. Then we must also remember that what Trotsky says about the first two zigzags after 1923 also holds good for the third in 1928, when suddenly and without exception the national sections were found to have been harbouring hordes of right-wing deviationists who had unaccountably remained undetected over the previous three years. The opportunist line of that period now bore the same relationship to the ultra-leftist one that was to succeed it as did the centrist mistakes of the KPD in 1923 to the Zinoviev-inspired leftism of 1924. The policy of aligning the Communist parties with the reformists had not only led to serious new defeats (as in Britain), but had generated considerable hostility towards the Social Democrats among rank-and-file Communist workers. This thoroughly justified hatred for the reformists who had betrayed the General Strike of 1926 and crucified the miners right into the winter of that year, was not developed along Leninist lines by the adoption of correct tactics in relation to the reformist movement in Britain and

other countries where it was strong; but perverted and exploited through a renewal, in an even more leftist fashion, of the sectarian formulas of 1924, which had been gathering dust in Bukharin's office for the duration of the bloc with the TUC and the Kuomintang. While the basic and decisive impetus for the ultra-left turn towards the 'united front from below' and the theory of 'social fascism' came from the dramatic turn in the Soviet Union at the beginning of 1928, it was without the least doubt anticipated, supplemented and augmented by the dialectical relationship between the manifold stages and phases in the degeneration of the Communist International that began with the German defeat of 1923.

Nor, finally, should we for one moment underestimate the importance of the theoretical, programmatic and agitational activity of the Left Opposition. Although increasingly denied access to the party press and the right to address meetings of fellow party comrades, the Left Opposition tirelessly warned of the dangers implicit in the Stalinist course both nationally and internationally, which Trotsky described as one of clinging to 'rotten ropes' - the TUC in Britain, the Kuomintang in China, and the *kulak*, Nepman and bureaucrat in the Soviet Union. On the fate of each of these alliances, the Left Oppositions' warnings were tragically confirmed, and with each reverse suffered by the Stalin faction, the pressure increased within it to execute a manoeuvre towards the left - not in order to return to the Leninist course of the pre-1924 period, which would have demanded the jettisoning of the Stalin - Bukharin theory of 'socialism in one country', but to cut ground from under the feet of the Left Opposition, and to disarm at least some of their criticisms by paying lip-service to the need for a firm proletarian and internationalist line.

Unless we take these secondary but by no means insignificant factors into account, we are in danger of arriving at a view of the Communist International which might appear to be formally correct, and in accordance with 'orthodox' Trotskyism, but which in practice tends towards schematicism. Thus we will be unable to explain or understand why, on 12 December 1927 - a full month before Stalin's first report on the grain procurement crisis - two of Stalin's budding henchmen, Heinz Neumann of the KPD, and the fellow Georgian Besso Lominadze, usurped the authority of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee by launching a disastrous revolt in the south Chinese city of Canton. The 'commune' was drowned in the blood of thousands of workers in a matter of hours, whilst its two chief architects made their way back to Moscow to report to their patron. Stalin's reaction to the episode seems to suggest that by this time (early 1928) he had begun to consider a turn to the left in Comintern policy as a possible way of both outflanking the expelled Left Opposition and of undermining the position of Zinoviev's successor in the ECCI, Bukharin. For in the bitter arguments that ensued in the unavoidable post-mortem on the fate of the Canton Commune, Bukharin received little, if any support from Stalin in his verbal onslaught on the two adventurers. ^[23]

Neither is it hard to see why Stalin adopted such a guarded attitude towards the Canton Commune adventure, since elements of his future ultra-leftist line can be detected in his Political Report of the CPSU Central Committee to the Fifteenth Party Congress, delivered on 3 December 1927 - that is, nine days *before* the Canton insurrection. Here we find Stalin repeatedly asserting, in complete defiance of the facts, that 'only the blind and the faint-hearted can doubt that the Chinese workers and peasants are moving towards a new revolutionary upsurge', and that 'whereas a couple of years ago it was possible and necessary to speak of the ebb of the revolutionary tide in Europe, today we have every ground for asserting that Europe is obviously entering a period of new revolutionary upsurge...'. ^[24] What conclusions can be drawn from Stalin's remarks on the situation in Europe and China? Firstly, he dates the ebbing of the postwar revolutionary wave at 1925, two years later than was actually the case - in the autumn of 1923, with the definitive defeat of the German revolution. But under Zinoviev (with whom Stalin was then allied against Trotsky) the official Comintern line was that the revolutionary wave was still in the ascendant, a false perspective that was silently abandoned early in 1925, when under the influence of Stalin's new theory of 'socialism in one country', the Communist International began to establish 'united fronts at the top' with the reformists of the British TUC and the bourgeois nationalists of the Kuomintang. There then, in accordance with the new Comintern line, ensued a period of 'stabilisation', just when in Britain and China, the masses began to take the *offensive* against their class enemies, an offensive that clashed with and was finally blunted by the prevailing opportunist line of the Communist International. Yet precisely at this point, when the British and Chinese masses were still reeling from the blows inflicted on them as a direct result of Stalin's rightist course, the architect of these defeats proclaims that a 'new revolutionary upsurge' has begun and in the very countries where the opposite trend is gathering momentum! This was leftism at its most infantile. Thus as in 1923, 1924, and 1925-27, the Comintern orientation was in violent conflict with the real, objective movement of the class

struggle and the development of class consciousness in the proletariat and its Communist vanguard. The Communist International was to the right in 1923, when it should have been driving the KPD on towards the seizure of power, and to the left in 1924, when it should have applied the brakes and digested the lessons of the defeat of the previous autumn. It then swung back to the right during 1925 when, in China and Britain especially, historic class battles were in preparation. And finally, at the very close of 1927, Stalin began to push the line back towards and then quite rapidly beyond the Zinovievist leftism of 1924, with his empty chatter about 'new revolutionary upsurges', designed to conceal why the real upsurges of the previous two years had been beaten back and, in China, drowned in blood.

Then there was another aspect of Stalin's report to the Fifteenth Congress, one that has remained unaccountably neglected by those (such as Theodore Draper) ^[25] who have hunted high and low for the origins of the 'Third Period' in the Communist International. One of the central propositions of 'Third Period' Stalinism was the repeated assertion that all governments, whatever their political complexion, were rapidly turning, or had already turned, fascist.

Thus at the Tenth Plenum of the ECCI, held in June 1929 when the 'Third Period' was in full swing, Kuusinen only developed the line first tentatively advanced by Stalin at the Fifteenth CPSU Congress, when he declared that 'along with the fascisation of the bourgeois class rule there goes on also the process of the fascisation of the reformist trade union bureaucracy and of the parties of the Second International. Reformism and Social Democracy develop into social fascism.' ^[26] While R Gerber of the KPD wrote shortly afterwards in the Comintern organ that the party's 'conciliators' (that is, those who supported, or refused to fight, Bukharin's Right Opposition) denied 'the obliteration of all differences within the reaction' and therefore the transformation of reformism into 'social-fascism'. ^[27] These notions, first evolved in the initial leftist phase of the Communist International in 1924, and obligatory between 1928 and 1933 (and in fact, some way into 1934), were definitely being revived by Stalin as he felt his way towards a left turn in the Communist International at the end of 1927. When in his Fifteenth Congress report he spoke of a 'brutal pressure of the fascisised governments', ^[28] he had in mind not only Italy and Poland (the latter being a doubtful case) but Britain, France and Germany, where right-centre bourgeois-*parliamentary* coalitions were in office, and where the trade union and political workers' movement, while certainly under pressure from the ruling class, was enjoying full bourgeois legality. This abuse of the term 'fascism' was to become one of the hallmarks of Third Period Stalinism, when it was applied indiscriminately to Social Democratic, liberal, conservative and genuinely fascist governments alike. Finally, as another harbinger of the new line that was to emerge in the new year, there was the sharper edge to Stalin's remarks on Social Democracy, ^[29] striking a tone that had not been heard in official Comintern circles since the winding up of the Zinovievist leftist line more than two years before; and his false optimism about the degree and depth of disenchantment with Social Democracy that was present in the broad masses of workers:

Facts like the British General Strike... the obvious differentiation that is taking place in the British working-class movement whereby the workers are moving to the left while the leaders are moving to the right, into the camp of avowed social imperialism, the degeneration of the Second International into a direct appendage of the imperialist League of Nations [into which Stalin took the USSR in October 1934 - RB], the decline of the prestige of the Social Democratic parties, the universal growth of the influence and prestige of the Comintern and its sections... all these facts undoubtedly indicate that Europe is entering a new period of revolutionary upsurge... revolutionary energy has accumulated in the depths of the working class and is seeking... an occasion... to break to the surface and hurl itself upon the capitalist regime. We are living on the eve of a new revolutionary upsurge both in the colonies and in the metropolises. ^[30]

This last reference to an alleged mass radicalisation of the British working class proved to be a broad hint that a new line was already in preparation for that country, where the Communist Party had been faithfully and enthusiastically pursuing the opportunist policy towards reformism that had aided the TUC in its betrayal of the General Strike 18 months previously. For when the Ninth ECCI Plenum began its first session on 9 February 1928, it at once became clear that a gentle, yet unmistakable leftist breeze was blowing through the corridors of the Comintern headquarters. Under the newly proclaimed slogan of 'class against class', the CPGB was launched towards the line that was soon to become mandatory for all sections of the International. Feeding on the previous three-year history of adaption to Social Democracy, and exploiting the monstrous betrayals perpetrated by the TUC General Council, lefts as well as rights, the Plenum's call for a sharper tactic against the Labour Party won the immediate backing of Palme Dutt,

who had in fact been agitating for such a turn - quite possibly in the foreknowledge that it was coming for some time before the Plenum, in his own journal, *Labour Monthly*. Undoubtedly a move to the left was called for (Trotsky had been demanding it two years earlier, and been expelled for his pains), but as was always the case in Stalinist manoeuvres, the shift proceeded on false theoretical premises and largely for factional purposes. Thus in the resolution on the 'English Question' we find the following schematic formulation on the new relationship that was said to be evolving between the capitalist state and the reformist-led organisations of the British working class:

The policy of the British ruling classes is designed to draw the major workers' organisations - the Labour Party and the trade unions - into their sphere of influence, despite the resistance of the working class. The leaders of these organisations... are doing their best to transform them into subsidiary organisations of the bourgeois state and the employers' organisations... This integration of capitalist bourgeoisie and reformism is accompanied by the development of the struggle between the right wing and the revolutionary workers.

From this analysis that the Labour Party was fast losing its proletarian character, the resolution concluded that the CPGB had 'to change its attitude to the Labour Party and Labour government, and consequently to replace the slogan of a Labour Government by the slogan of a revolutionary workers' government'.^[31]

That the bourgeoisie seeks to subordinate to itself the organisations of the proletariat - especially the trade unions - is not in dispute. But the Plenum resolution went further than this. It claimed that the main agencies in this process were the leaders of the labour movement, and that it was not simply a question of a 'sphere of influence', but of the trade unions' actual 'transformation into subsidiary organisations of the bourgeois state', of the 'integration of capitalist bourgeoisie and reformism'. Now the classic and only correct definition for a modern imperialist state where all the independent organisations of the working class have been destroyed (for there can be no other way of achieving this 'integration', as the example of Italy should have already taught the drafters of this resolution) is *the fascist corporate state*. Yet the schema put forward by the Ninth Plenum was one of the reformist leaders actually administering this regime on behalf of the capitalist state and the employers, and that instead of the rise of such a regime driving even the most craven of reformists into opposition (as Trotsky insisted would occur in Germany, where far from accepting the services of the Social Democrats, the Nazis jailed and murdered them alongside the Communists), the Ninth Plenum presented them as 'doing their best' to liquidate the very organisations from which they derived their role as reformist collaborators with the bourgeoisie. Once again, as the examples of Italy and Germany (and now Chile) prove, however good this 'best' might be, it is never good enough to earn reformists an honoured or even subordinate role in the operation of the fascist corporate state. For this exacting task, other social and ideological types are required, absolutely ruthless oppressors of the proletariat who have been trained for their murderous work by years of counter-revolutionary struggle against the entire workers' movement and its leaders, reformist no less than revolutionary. How important this theoretical error was for the subsequent development of the class struggle in Germany will become evident when we trace the evolution of the 'new line' from the Ninth Plenum through to the Sixth Congress of the Communist International.

The formulations employed by Stalin at the Fifteenth Congress were sufficiently tentative to permit a manoeuvre back towards the right should the factional struggle in the Soviet Union or considerations of international diplomacy demand it. But this was less true of the line promulgated just over two months later at the Ninth Plenum, though even here it should be noted that the CPGB had not been unequivocally committed to its policy of 1929, which demanded calling the Labour Party and TUC fascist organisations. Indeed, the door had been left ajar to the reformists, since the *English Resolution*, belying much of its cheerful idiocy about the prospects of a 'revolutionary upsurge' in Britain, declared that as 'large sections of the masses still support the reformist leaders, it is absolutely essential to propose a united front locally *and nationally*, in order once more to expose the Labour Party and trade union leaders who prefer unity with the capitalists to unity with the revolutionary workers'.^[32]

When we bear in mind that these proposals for a sharper line against Social Democracy were intended initially only for the British party, then it is almost certainly correct to say that up to and during the Ninth Plenum, Stalin's policy options in the Communist International were still open. What dramatically solidified this fluid situation, driving Stalin along the road to a break with Bukharin and to the rapid adoption of far more ultra-left policies than could have possibly been anticipated from either the Fifteenth

Congress or the Ninth Plenum, was the long-festering crisis in Soviet agriculture, which after several years of Stalin's denying its existence, starkly confronted the Soviet regime in the early weeks of 1928.

A report dispatched by Stalin on 13 February 1928 (that is, while the Ninth Plenum was still in session) 'to all organisations of the CPSU', enables us to date with some precision the change of line on agrarian policy. After frankly admitting that as compared with January 1927 the state cereal procurements were down by 128 million poods to 300 million poods - a catastrophic shortfall - Stalin revealed that the CPSU Central Committee:

... found it necessary to issue on 6 January 1928, a third directive, the first two having failed to produce the required quotas of cereals, one quite exceptional both as to its tone and as to its demands. This directive concluded with a threat to leaders of party organisations in the event of their failing to secure a decisive improvement in grain procurements within a very short time. [33]

The left turn in domestic policy begins from the promulgation of this emergency directive, since it almost at once brought Stalin's centre faction in the party into conflict with the right tendency led by Bukharin and supported by Rykov (Lenin's successor as Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars) and Tomsky, head of the Soviet trade unions. Stalin had exploited this rightist group's pro-*kulak* sympathies in his fight against the Left Opposition, and in doing so had encouraged openly restorationist tendencies in the countryside. Now he found that in order to continue to defend the bureaucracy which had raised him to supreme power in the party and the state, he had to hit out at the extreme right, whence came a new and sinister threat to overturn the property relations established by the Russian Revolution, and from which the bureaucracy drew its material and political privileges. As events were soon to reveal, Bukharin, and especially at this stage Rykov, favoured a continued policy of full-scale retreat before the *kulaks*, one which, as the Left Opposition had pointed out, rendered impossible the conversion of the surpluses of the rich peasants into funds for laying the foundations of a modern industrialised Soviet economy. In the early months of 1928, the nature of Stalin's left turn in domestic policy was both empirical and tentative. He also had to cope with the united resistance of Bukharin, Tomsky and Rykov (who reportedly stalked out of a Politbureau meeting on hearing Stalin's emergency proposals to deal with the grain crisis) and not least, the embarrassing similarity between his own strictures on the parlous state of Soviet agriculture and the warnings the now-expelled Left Opposition had been issuing on this very question for the previous two years. He therefore had to move circumspectly, feeling his way towards a new course as the pressures in the International and the economy for a new line mounted and became fused.

The battle had already been joined in the KPD, where Brandler, who had enjoyed something of a comeback under the discreet patronage of Bukharin, had just published in the Comintern organ a centrist *Programme of Action for Germany*. It nevertheless managed to say some correct things about certain developments in the SPD that were not at all to the liking of the ECCI, now that it had taken up Stalin's new line on the struggle against Social Democracy. In relation to the SPD left, Brandler stated it was:

... the more or less expressed rejection of the coalition government and the purely parliamentary opposition, and, at the same time, the rejection of revolutionary mass action. In the present, when the policy of coalition is becoming more and more difficult [this was of course written when the right-wing parties were dominating successive German cabinets to the total exclusion of the SPD - RB], the left wing of the SPD attains an increased importance. It reflects two things: one, the opposition of the masses to the coalition government, and secondly, the attempt of a certain section of the party bureaucracy to stifle this opposition by a verbally radical policy... With regard to the trade unions, it is also necessary to transform the bureaucratically administered central and professional unions into democratic industrial unions, directed by the members and organised on the basis of factories. [34]

Naturally, Brandler's observations on the SPD produced vehement accusations that the exponent of the 'Saxon mistake' was proposing a revamped version of the same centrist manoeuvre with the Social Democratic left. Nor were his views on trade union tactics welcomed, as they jarred with the new line that the unions were fast becoming instruments of capitalist dictatorship and oppression, and that the time was approaching when fresh 'organs of struggle' would have to be built up - under Communist leadership 'from below' to supersede *and even to destroy* the unions led by the reformists. Already implicit in the Ninth Plenum resolution on the English question, this line became explicit in the course of the preparations for the Fourth Congress of the Red International of Labour Unions (RILU), held between 17 March and 3 April 1928. As the head of the RILU (the Communist rival to the reformist Amsterdam-based trade union international, the IFTU) Lozovsky had a vested interest in accelerating the

disintegration of his rivals, and so he took up with obvious relish the new line that the reformist unions were becoming tools in the hands of the employers and the capitalist state:

We have now entered into a phase of development of the class struggle in which the reformist trade unions and employers' organisations are not two warring parties *but are one party*, which reaches agreement in the measure that the dissatisfaction of the masses accumulates... This *assimilation of the trade union apparatus into the bourgeois state* bears an extremely varied character, but in general it indubitably presents a growing alliance between the Amsterdam organisations and the bourgeois state, a continually increasing alliance between the trade unions and the employers' organisations. Before our very eyes is going on a process of *fusion* of the Amsterdam union with the employers' organisations and the transformation of those unions into *organisations for strike breaking*.^[35]

Even more ominous, in view of the line that was soon to be forced on all sections of the Communist International (that the reformist trade unions had turned fascist, and therefore had to be deserted by Communists to form new 'red' unions) was Lozovsky's assertion (as early as March 1928, it should be noted) that in the United States, where the trade unions were suffering a substantial loss in membership:

... such a slogan as 'save the unions' is out of place. It does not say anything, it confuses the issue, it distracts the workers' attention from important questions [sic!], it sows the illusion that the present AFL is an advantage for the American workers. Where did this slogan come from? It is a desperate slogan arising from an over-evaluation of the importance of the fascist AFL and the misinterpretation of the united front.^[36]

This abstentionist position on the fight to defend trade unionism in the United States marked a definite shift towards the ultra-left line of forming breakaway 'revolutionary' unions in countries such as Germany, where in 1931, after a series of reverses in the strike movement, the KPD launched 'red' unions parallel with those of the ADGB. This adventurist tactic flowed from the false analysis of the relationship between the reformist bureaucracy and the capitalist state made by Lozovsky and codified at the RILU Congress:

The rule of the reformist leaders in the trade unions is leading more and more and more to the destruction of the difference between the organisations which came into being as organs of the class struggle [Lozovsky had in mind here the ADGB unions in Germany - RB] and bourgeois [that is, company] unions working for industrial peace.^[37]

The resolutions and discussions at the RILU Congress shared the same eclectic and schematic character that Trotsky detected in the proceedings of the Comintern congress which followed it. The cloudiness and ambivalence of many of the formulations could well have concealed deep disagreements within the Comintern leadership over the questions of the united front, Social Democracy and fascism, and the degree to which the 'leading lights of the trade union machinery' had become fused with 'the apparatus of the bourgeois state', to quote from the main policy resolution of the congress. This transitional and contradictory nature of the RILU Congress is well illustrated by its observations on the united front:

The tactics of the united front and unity which have justified themselves during the last few years [sic - the British General Strike! - RB] must be continued... at the same time it is essential to fight most determinedly against the subordination of the class struggle to formal unity [as indeed was done through the bloc between the Soviet and British trade union leaders - RB]... In view of the evolution undergone by the leaders of the Amsterdam International, the *main slogan should be unity from below* at the point of production. This does not exclude the possibility of negotiations, which after the break-up of the Anglo-Russian Committee (which was a model of the united front from above and below) are remoter than ever... Thus *unity from below* must be given first place...^[38]

So that which had been prescribed only for the British party at the Ninth ECCI plenum back in February now became mandatory for every section of the Communist International. The 'new line' was taking shape as in the USSR tensions mounted in the CPSU Politbureau between supporters and opponents of Stalin's left turn in agricultural policy. A new leftist *nuance* can also be detected in the thesis *Measures for Fighting Fascism in the Trade Union Movement*, adopted by the RILU Congress on reports by Monmousseau (the leader of the French Communist-dominated trade union federation, the CGTU), Redens and, it should be noted by those who quite wrongly credit him with always having opposed the Stalinist theory of 'social fascism', Georgi Dimitrov. As at the Fifth Comintern Congress four years

previously, also held in a period when a leftist line predominated in the Communist International (only on that occasion, it was shortly to be abandoned for the opportunist policy of 1925-27, while the RILU Congress inaugurated a far longer and more devastating period of adventurism), the main characteristics and role of fascism were correctly defined:

Fascism represents a special system of class domination of the bourgeoisie in the epoch of imperialism and social revolution... For the class movement of the proletariat of all countries, fascism is a constant and growing danger. For fascism, the possession of the trade unions, *the destruction of the class trade union movement is a vital necessity*, just as the dictatorship of the proletariat is unthinkable without a class trade union, so, too, *the fascist dictatorship of the bourgeoisie is impossible without the break-up of the class trade union movement. Fascist terror is directed against any genuine working-class movement, and against any economic struggle.* [39]

Therefore, one must deduce from this analysis that by its very nature, the fascist offensive against the trade unions and the entire organisations of the proletariat must bring it into conflict with the leaders and cadres of even the most moderate wing of the workers' movement, since as the resolution states, fascism requires the *total destruction* of the trade unions in order to establish its own regime securely. And of course this is what precisely did happen in Italy, where by 1926, all class trade unionism had been driven underground and the reformist union leaders either hounded into exile, jailed or placed under police surveillance. Those responsible for the drafting of this resolution, of vital importance for every trade unionist faced with the threat of fascism and the destruction of his organisations, were fully aware of the experience of Italy, since they called upon workers in that country to 'leave the fascist corporations, [and] join the General Confederation of Labour', even though that reformist body had been long since outlawed by Mussolini and was working in conditions of total illegality. Yet this same resolution, after making the entirely justified observation that 'by their anti-working-class policy, the reformist Amsterdam bureaucracy is clearing the way for fascism in the trade union movement' (though even here, there is a certain ambiguity about the word 'in', which is used rather than 'against'), goes on to lump together fascism and reformism after the fashion of Zinoviev and Stalin in 1924:

... thus reformism is actually taking up the *same* stand as fascism. The line of demarcation between its ideology and the ideology of fascism is tending to *disappear more and more, and the reformist bureaucracy is being transformed into the instrument of fascism in the trade union movement... working in the united front with fascism*. Part of the leaders of the reformist trade unions *are already in open and full ideological and political union with fascism* (Italy [sic! - RB], Bulgaria, Hungary, etc). The other part *is on the way to fascism* (Jouhaux, Thomas [with whose social fascist CGT the Stalinist CGTU merged in 1936 during the Popular Front period - RB], Grossman [ADGB], etc. The more the masses in the reformist unions move to the left and become revolutionised, and the more they resist the treacherous policy of the reformist bureaucracy, *the more... will the leadership of the trade unions move to the right - towards fascism.* [40]

The decisive turn had been made on the very eve of the Sixth Comintern Congress. The trade union bureaucracy had allegedly either already transformed itself into an instrument of fascist repression, or was fast doing so. Given this utterly false analysis, there could obviously be no question of any serious approaches being made to reformist organisations for a united front against fascism when these very bodies were serving as the vehicle for the fascist attack on the working class. The RILU Congress, despite its lip-service to the continuation of the old united front policy, therefore foreshadowed the decisions of the Sixth Congress on this question, as well as its revival of the 1924 theory of 'social fascism', since it was at the Sixth Congress that the crucial decision was finally made to scrap the united front tactic of the previous three years and to go over exclusively to the 'united front from below'.

The fact that Bukharin, as Secretary of the ECCI, gave the main political report to the congress helped to mask from many of the assembled delegates the violent factional struggle that had only days before erupted inside the Soviet Politbureau over Stalin's new policy towards the *kulaks*. [41] Valiantly mouthing the leftist clichés that had recently become the stock-in-trade of Comintern functionaries and journalists, the future leader of the Right Opposition facilitated his own destruction by propagating tactics which a year earlier he would have condemned out of hand as adventurist:

The change in the objective situation [sic!] compelled us to change our tactics. It was a proper reaction to the altered state of affairs... The change in the attitude of our British party was determined by the change in the objective situation, by the new organisational methods of the

Labour Party, by the new relationships that arose between our party and the Labour Party... The political pivot of this change is our changed attitude towards the Social Democratic parties... United front tactics must, in most cases, now be applied only from *below*. No appeal to the central committees of the Social Democratic parties. In rare cases appeals may be made to local Social Democratic committees. In the main, we must appeal only to the Social Democratic masses, to the rank-and-file Social Democratic workers. ^[42]

But others were more anxious even than Bukharin to prove their leftist pedigree, especially in the KPD delegation, ^[43] where Ernst Thälmann was emerging as the leader, if not the most articulate spokesman, of those favouring an even harsher line against Social Democracy. This became clear in the discussion on Bukharin's report. Fritz Heckert, a future Stalinist henchman, proved how conversant he was with the new line on fascism and Social Democracy when he told delegates (many of whom had, like Heckert himself, been working closely with left reformists and centrists in their own countries over the previous three years) that:

... reformism has... a strong tendency towards fascism in countries where the situation for capitalism is critical. It is only a small step from reformism which had developed in industrial peace, to fascism, to the defence of an aggressive foreign policy and strict measures against the revolutionary elements of the country. Thus we see that reformism has undergone a change and that we are compelled to accentuate our struggle against it. ^[44]

This theme was taken up by Dimitrov, the future darling of the Popular Front liberals and clergymen, who in 1928, far from seeking to build 'broad peoples' alliances' with all manner of opportunist and pro-imperialist elements, was anxious to ingratiate himself with a Stalin faction in the CPSU which was already preparing to ditch Bukharin to clear the way for the development of a far more leftist line in the International. Dimitrov's performance was even more obsequious in that he slanderously linked Trotsky to the activities of the 'social fascists':

By its role of agent and pace-maker of social fascism among civil servants, it [Social Democracy] does great harm and the struggle against it must be continued with unabated energy. Trotskyism found no followers in the Communist Parties of the Balkans and among the proletariat. Its champions in the Balkans were the social fascists and the most shameless renegades of the Communist movement. ^[45]

By far the most important and significant contribution came from Ernst Thälmann, leader of the most powerful section of the Communist International outside the USSR. His formulations on the question of fascism and Social Democracy were not only far harsher than anything uttered by Bukharin (or any other delegate for that matter), they also gave ample warning of the new leftist line the KPD was about to adopt on the recently-formed government of Social Democrat Hermann Müller:

In this government the Social Democrats are the driving factor in the war preparations against the Soviet Union... The development of reformism into social fascism is a phenomenon of which one can give various examples in the various countries... In Germany, reformism is the bourgeoisie's best support, and will continue to be so in the coming years [sic!] if the Communist movement does not grow even stronger than it is now... This development of reformism into social fascism ^[46] is closely connected with the growing war preparations of the bourgeoisie and the growing war danger. The SPD is not only a fighting organisation working against the revolutionary proletariat and the proletarian revolution, it is engaged in preparing for joint action with the bourgeoisie in the ideological and military sphere.

Then for good measure Thälmann, who led the parade of delegates mounting the speakers' rostrum to voice their approval of the expulsion of Trotsky from the Communist International at the end of 1927, went on:

We can declare at the Sixth Congress that for the first time in three years the KPD is in the pleasant position of being able to say that the renegades of ultra-left [sic!] Trotskyism have been finally beaten. They have been dissolved partly into petit-bourgeois nothingness, and partly they have landed into the ranks of Social Democracy; we need not waste a single word here about them. ^[47]

The main event of the congress was intended to be the presentation and adoption of the Comintern programme, which Bukharin had been busy drafting for the previous two or three months behind closed doors. However, a conflict flared up over Bukharin's theses *The International Situation and the Tasks of*

the Communist Parties, which had failed to reflect the changing line on the struggle against left Social Democracy. ^[48] There also appears to have been considerable and more open controversy on the vexed question of the relations between Social Democracy and fascism, which after 1923 was always a barometer of changes in the party and Comintern line. In the draft programme, fascism and Social Democracy were, as in 1924, lumped together quite arbitrarily. After quite correctly pointing out that fascism and Social Democracy were two alternative forms of rule for the bourgeoisie, which varied according to circumstances, the programme declared, in complete violation of this view, that 'Social Democracy itself, particularly at critical moments for capitalism, not infrequently plays a fascist part'. ^[49] And if that indeed was the case, what need had the bourgeoisie of the other variety of fascism, if the 'social fascist' could do the same job? *In Germany, this became the line of the KPD*. The Müller government was 'introducing the fascist dictatorship', and nobody else. Therefore the 'main enemy' was not the bourgeois parties, nor the paramilitary monarchist leagues, nor even the Nazis (who even as the congress debated and approved the line that led to the defeat of the German proletariat, were perfecting the tactics and strategy that, with the aid of the reformists and Stalinists, were to lift them to power less than five years later).

Thus Ernst Schneller of the KPD, in a speech on the struggle against the danger of imperialist war, listed the following organisations as comprising the 'fascist movement' in Germany: the Red Cross, the Young Christian Organisations, the Christian and Nationalist Women's organisations, and the *Stahlhelm*. Only the Nazis were missing! Commented the suicidally myopic Schneller: 'It is characteristic also for Germany that certain relations between the fascist and reformist movement are becoming even closer because they are marching towards the same goal.' ^[50] The KPD seems to have been very agitated about the dangers implicit in a joint Red Cross - SPD invasion of the USSR, or of a bloc between the ADGB and Catholic Women against the Red Front Fighters League (the paramilitary body of the KPD, which was banned after May Day fighting in Berlin in 1929), but it seems to have viewed with remarkable equanimity the prospect of a counter-revolutionary and anti-Soviet alliance between the Nazis, the *Reichswehr* and the Ruhr industrialists.

As we have said, there was some discussion in the commission on the Comintern programme about the relationship between fascism and Social Democracy, and here Bukharin seems to have been forced to give a little more ground to the hard-line leftists:

First of all there is not the slightest doubt that Social Democracy reveals a social fascist tendency, secondly this is merely a tendency and not a complete process, for it would be a mistake to lump Social Democracy and fascism together. Nor must this be done in analysing the situation or in laying down Communist tactics. Our tactics do not exclude the possibility of appealing to Social Democratic workers and even to some minor Social Democratic organisations, but we cannot appeal to the fascist organisations. ^[51]

But despite Bukharin's desperate attempt to salvage a few fragments of the old line from the wreck it had suffered both before and at the congress, it was no good. The helm was over to the extreme left, and the entire Comintern boat was heading full speed towards the still partially submerged rocks of German fascism.

What effect did the new line have on the policy and internal life of the KPD, which now found itself working in a country ruled by 'social fascism'?

To answer this question, it is necessary to recapitulate briefly on developments in the German party since 1924, when the Zinoviev-backed left ousted the disgraced Brandler - Thalheimer right at the April 1924 Ninth KPD Congress. Both men were promptly 'exiled' to Moscow and assigned to routine duties in the Comintern apparatus - a convenient method later frequently used to silence critics of the Comintern line or leaders of the national sections. Even with their main rivals out of the way, all did not go smoothly for the new Fischer - Maslow - Thälmann leadership. The collapse of Zinoviev's ultra-leftist perspectives, accelerated in Germany by the KPD's poor showing at the December 1924 Reichstag elections, brought great pressure to bear on the party Central Committee for the adoption of a more realistic line, one that took into account both the obvious consolidation of the bourgeoisie that had taken place throughout the year, and the equally self-evident recuperation of the SPD. In fact, the rightwards swing so disturbed Maslow that he departed from his previous radicalism and started to call for a policy of 'defence of the republic' against the monarchist right, which in the spring of 1925 grouped itself behind Hindenburg's presidential candidature. How easily yesterday's - or today's - super leftists can be transformed into tomorrow's opportunists is illustrated by the case of Maslow, since he rapidly went beyond calling for a

united front of the two workers' parties in defence of democratic rights to a demand for what was in effect a 'Popular Front' alliance between the KPD, the SPD... *and the Catholic Centre* - presumably on the grounds that this last party, although both bourgeois and clerical, was an upholder of the Weimar Republic, and could therefore perform a useful role in an anti-monarchist bloc. Once again, we can see how a leftist deviation fed its mirror opposite. And the process of interaction did not end there, for once Maslow's views on this question became known to the party, numerous workers in the militant Ruhr region and the KPD Berlin stronghold of Wedding revolted against this even more opportunist version of Brandlerism, and rapidly provided a base in the party for a new ultra-left consisting of Arthur Rosenberg and Werner Scholem.

Tensions that were just beginning to emerge within the ruling *Troika*, between Stalin on the one hand and principally Zinoviev on the other, led to another intervention by Moscow in the affairs of the KPD (which at no stage since the end of 1923 had been permitted to develop its own internal party life and train its cadres in the way that Lenin and Trotsky had favoured in the early years of the Communist International). Differences over tactics for the run-off ballot in the Presidential elections now found Zinoviev ranged with KPD 'moderates' against an ultra-left who argued, like Iwan Katz, that it would be a betrayal of the party to vote for the SPD candidate Braun in the second ballot, rather than split the republican vote and risk letting in Hindenburg. This question was thrashed out in Moscow, on 2 April, 1925, at a session of the ECCI Presidium - in the presence of both Zinoviev and Stalin. Katz put the position of the German ultra-left, declaring demagogically that 'our comrades see in the Ebert party the worst enemy of the working class, a corrupt group of the bourgeoisie', and that anyway the monarchist danger had receded since the collapse of the Hitler putsch. It was a reformed Zinoviev who put the case for supporting the SPD candidate. Gone was the bluster of 1924, with its rash talk of an approaching proletarian revolution, and Social Democrats becoming transformed into fascists:

We cannot at all accept the point of view that the choice, republic or Monarchy, is immaterial to us... Bourgeois democracy is generally more favourable than monarchy for our class struggle even if this democracy is a very poor one... We started with the perspective of an imminent fight of the proletarian revolution against bourgeois democracy, [but] the moment the revolutionary wave declines, the difference between bourgeois democracy and monarchy is of great importance... The situation is like this: the Social Democrats got eight million votes, we got two million, the Nationalists 11 million, the so-called republican bloc has 13 million, the monarchists 11 to 11.5 million - everything hangs by a thread. If a monarchist candidate is elected, the Social Democrats and the [liberal] bourgeoisie will try to hang the responsibility on us... The greatest danger is that the broad strata of the working class will be estranged from us... I believe that our slogans must be very simple; only the most popular demands should be put forward... In the first election, we tested out forces; in the run-off, we must take into account the final result... You can learn these tactics by reading Lenin. ^[52]

And in reply to Katz's noisy abstentionism, Zinoviev coolly answered:

We live encircled by enemies. We need brains; if we lose, the working class will have to bear the capitalist yoke 25 years longer. In Britain we voted for MacDonald; people like Engels and Lenin had studied the English question for decades to find a road in Britain. *You don't understand what kind of enemies we have.* ^[53]

Zinoviev's iron logic did not carry the day, possibly because Stalin, who was already discreetly backing the German ultra-left against Zinoviev's supporters in the KPD, refused to commit himself to either side. As a result, the opportunity was missed to make a principled united front proposal to the SPD, who had still to decide whether to run Braun again in the second ballot. Of course, when Braun eventually stood down in favour of the Centre Party candidate Marx, the KPD had no alternative but to run Thälmann once again, since there could be no question of voting for an openly bourgeois candidate, however sincere his protestations of democratic and republican loyalties. Hindenburg's narrow victory - by a smaller margin than the votes given to Thälmann - put the KPD in the invidious position against which Zinoviev had warned in the April Plenum. The SPD and the bourgeois democrats - and following their lead, countless historians of the period - have sought to place the blame for Hindenburg's victory, and by implication all that ensued from it, up to and including the Nazi triumph eight years later, on the KPD. Perhaps if the full truth were known, part of the responsibility should fall on Stalin, not to speak of the German reformists, whose capitulation to their liberal bourgeois allies on the second ballot made it that much

easier for the KPD ultra-lefts to maintain their abstentionist position on the defence of democratic rights against the monarchist threat.

A similar, though not identical, dispute erupted over tactics in the Prussian parliament, which was delicately balanced between republicans and monarchists of various hues. Here Thälmann, who had until now been linked with the Maslow - Fischer group, switched over to Rosenberg's new ultra-left faction, voting against a resolution moved at an extended Central Committee meeting in Hamburg on 9-10 May 1925, which stipulated that 'in a situation where our party is arbiter between the right and the so-called left, it is permissible, and even under certain conditions, mandatory, to make a left coalition against a right coalition'. This resolution shows how wrong it can be to schematise on the history of the Communist International. In the Soviet Union, Stalin was cementing his bloc with the future Right Opposition - Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky - insuring himself against a possible split with Zinoviev and Kamenev, who were growing restless with Stalin's repeated retreats before restorationist forces in both town and country. Yet in the KPD, we find the roles briefly reversed. Stalin's man, Thälmann, has moved towards, though not fused with, the extreme ultra-left of the party, while a section of Zinoviev's supporters in the KPD were now voting for policies which carried with them undoubted opportunist implications. ^[54] Then followed another zigzag, one organically aligned with developments in the CPSU. Stalin dispatched his trusted ECCI trouble-shooter Manuilsky to straighten out the affairs of the recalcitrant German party, none of whose many factions, tendencies and cliques (other than those congealing around Thälmann, Pieck and Ulbricht) could be relied upon to obey the ruling groups in the Soviet party without hesitation or reservation.

The extreme ultra-lefts had served their purpose to apply pressure to the old leadership of Maslow and Fischer (just as they in their time had served Zinoviev in his feud with Brandler). Now the time had come to reconstruct the KPD along lines more amenable to the Stalin faction in the USSR. (This was the period when Neumann began to attract Stalin's attention as a future leader of a 'tamed' German party.) Despite Manuilsky's intrigues, the KPD proved obdurate. It had deep roots in the proletariat, and was justly proud of a revolutionary heritage that reached back through Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, Bebel, the younger Kautsky and Wilhelm Liebknecht to the founders of Marxism itself. The bureaucratic pressure being applied from Moscow only intensified the factional splinterings in the party as intellectuals and workers alike struggled vainly to fight their way out of the crisis into which the bureaucratic clique in the CPSU had plunged their once powerful and combative movement. At the Essen Party Congress in February 1927, there emerged no less than 10 separate groupings, ranging from supporters of the still-exiled Brandler and Thalheimer on the far right, through the bureaucratic centre of Ulbricht and Pieck, and the pro-Stalin clique of Thälmann, Neumann, Schneller, Philip Dengel and Heinrich Susskind, to the Zinovievist wing of the pro-Left Oppositionists, led by Fischer, Maslow and Urbahns, and the ultra-left, worker-based factions of Hans Weber (Palatinate), Paul Kotter (Wedding), Ernst Schwarz (mainly Berlin) and the most ultra-left of them all, the philosopher Karl Korsch. Only after the Essen Congress was Manuilsky able to report to Stalin that his mission had been accomplished - that of expelling from the KPD all those who stood to the left of the official Comintern line. The cliques of Ulbricht and Thälmann had seen to it that precious few delegates attended the Congress who were not committed to voting for whatever Manuilsky proposed. Stalin's German pupils were learning their lessons in bureaucratic manoeuvring well. But in warding off this powerful challenge from the assorted groups of lefts and ultra-lefts, the KPD centre had been compelled to lean more than it liked on the old right - which of course was precisely the dilemma that confronted Stalin after his break with Kamenev and Zinoviev and during his ensuring bloc with Bukharin. As a result, the KPD Central Committee came under the control of a pro-Bukharin right that was only finally ousted and broken up towards the end of 1928, as similar blows were being landed on their counterparts in the CPSU.

Now we can see how poorly equipped was the KPD to exploit the favourable new political situation created by the formation of the Müller government in June 1928. Not only were its political perspectives false to the core; its best cadres, many being close comrades of the party's martyred founders Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, and pioneers of the Spartacist League, had been hounded from the party or gagged by decree of the ECCI. At the base, the party gathered around itself the finest of the German proletariat; but at the top, all was confusion, theoretical backwardness, rampant bureaucratism, servile fawning on Stalin. Only a drastic change of course, one that not merely repudiated the anti-Leninist tactics and programme adopted at the Sixth Comintern Congress, but initiated a serious study of the social and theoretical roots of this degeneration in the KPD, the International and the CPSU, could hope to save the party and the entire German proletariat from disaster. This was the moving principle behind

the work of the Trotskyist opposition in the USSR, and its truth was to find tragic confirmation in the events of the succeeding five years.

Appendix I: Fascism and Social Fascism, 1922-24

Mussolini's victory over the Italian working class compelled the Comintern leadership to ask and answer some basic questions concerning the role of fascism, its class basis, and its relationship to the reformist wing of the labour movement. If initial mistakes were made in this respect, then they were attributable not to a false method, but the uniqueness of the problem. Never before in the history of world capitalism had the working class been defeated and crushed by a movement that stole with such facility and to such devastating effect the political, organisational and tactical weapons of its enemy. The plebeian nature of fascism was recognised from the outset. At first, this led to a falsely optimistic perspective of its inevitable internal disintegration, with deluded workers and rural poor 'sobering up' as they began to taste the bitter fruits of fascism in power, as distinct from the demagogy of fascism in opposition. Thus the *Manifesto to the Italian Workers*, passed at the Fourth Comintern Congress on 5 November 1922, declared that 'these elements will soon realise how deceptive were the promises which attracted them into this counter-revolutionary adventure and turned them into an army of the landlords against their kindred'. Mistaken too was the Comintern's belief that Italian fascism was 'primarily a weapon in the hands of the large landowners' and the 'industrial and commercial bourgeoisie' were 'following with anxiety the experiment of ferocious reaction, which they regard as black Bolshevism'. The big industrialists of the *Confindustria* were as eager as the agrarians to place Mussolini in power so that he could continue his bloody work of destruction against the workers' movement. These, however, were errors of emphasis, and flowed in part from a lack of experience in dealing with the phenomenon of a mass-based counter-revolutionary movement. But one error the Communist International at this stage did not lapse into was that of bracketing together fascism and Social Democracy. While the Communist press throughout the International scourged the reformist leaders of the CGL and the PSI for refusing to wage a resolute fight against fascism, and especially for their betrayal of the September 1920 strike movement, whose defeat cleared the road for the rise and triumph of Mussolini, with two notable exceptions *it never identified capitulation before fascism with fascism itself*. The two instances where this was done (referred to in Draper's long article on the subject in *Survey*, no 84) followed reports (that proved to be false) that the PSI fraction in the Italian Parliament had agreed to support the newly-formed government of Mussolini. The story, which appeared in *Izvestia* of 12 November 1922, was headed 'Social Fascists', and it was used again on 28 December in an article attacking the PSI and CGL leaderships (in the case of the trade union leaders, who were vainly seeking a *modus vivendi* with the fascist regime, one can understand, but not agree, with the use of the term). Draper suggests that this, the first known use of the term, was probably the brainchild of a headline writer in the offices of *Izvestia*, and that therefore its employment did not signify a new theory of fascism and Social Democracy. The first instance of a responsible Comintern leader equating the two movements occurs after the defeat of the German revolution, when at a session of the ECCI convened to discuss the recent events in Germany, Zinoviev took the fateful step of declaring that Italian Social Democracy had become a wing of fascism:

What are Piłsudski and the others? Fascist Social Democrats. [The future Polish dictator was a renegade from the Polish Socialist Party - RB] Were they this 10 years ago? No. But they have become fascists precisely because we are living in the epoch of revolution. What is Italian Social Democracy? It is a wing of the fascists; Turati is a fascist Social Democrat... You may hurl insults at [Ramsay] Macdonald: You are a traitor, a servant of the bourgeoisie, but we must understand in what period we are living. International Social Democracy has now become a wing of fascism.

Which if true, meant that in Britain the CPGB had just helped to elect a fascist government, since following Lenin's recommendations in *'Left-Wing' Communism* and also the line of the Communist International up to that time, the British party had called and worked for the victory of Labour Party candidates at the December 1923 general election, only running its own where they had either won the support of the local Labour Party, or did not jeopardise the victory of the Labour candidate. But Zinoviev never thought the consequences of this new theory through to the end, which would have been to withdraw all electoral support from the Labour Party, abandon the affiliation campaign being conducted by the CPGB, break off all united front relations with the reformist and trade union leaders, and proceed to build a 'united front from below' under the exclusive leadership of the 3000-strong Communist Party (these of course did become CPGB tactics for the duration of the 'Third Period'). Zinoviev's theory was,

however, after a delay of some eight months, taken up and developed from another quarter much nearer home. Stalin was just as anxious as his *Troika* ally to prove that under their leadership no serious reverse had been suffered by the European working class, and that therefore the decisive revolutionary struggles lay in the future. (Thus in July 1924, Stalin declared quite unequivocally that ‘Germany is more pregnant with revolution than any other country in Europe... If a revolutionary upheaval commences anywhere in Europe it will be in Germany. Only Germany can take the initiative in this matter...’ ^[55] It is important to remember that this false analysis not only preceded, but helped to prepare the sharp turn to the right embodied in Stalin’s pronouncement, made some four months later, that socialism could be built in ‘one country’ - that is, the USSR - without revolutionary breakthroughs in the advanced imperialist West.) And as such, this theory of fascisation of reformism was an attack on Trotsky, who in a series of articles and speeches in the spring and summer of 1924, had examined in some detail and breadth the new political situation that emerged in Europe after the German defeat, and the possible consequences this could have for relations between Europe and the United States. Trotsky argues that following the recession of the revolutionary threat, the European bourgeoisie now felt able to lean to the left, on the right flank of the workers’ movement, rather than to the extreme right, on the armed fascist gangs, as it had done during the previous years of crisis. In his speech of 21 June 1924 (*Through What Stage Are We Passing?*) he takes issue with loose definitions of fascism, and especially with wrong appraisals of its role:

On the most casual grounds it is sometimes said that fascism is developing or that fascism is advancing. If some strikers are arrested somewhere, this fact is interpreted quite often as the establishment of a fascist regime, though the bourgeoisie arrested strikers before fascism existed. We have to think this out, comrades: what *is* fascism? How does it differ from a ‘normal’ regime of bourgeois violence?

Once again, it is necessary to point out that Trotsky’s appraisal of fascism at this time was conditioned by its concrete manifestations, first of all in Italy, where even in 1924 Mussolini had not succeeded in destroying the workers’ movement (this was done only in 1926) let alone parliament. Consequently Italian fascism displayed some of the characteristics of a transitional regime, which after blunting the offensive of the proletariat, regressed towards more normal forms of bourgeois rule. Thus Trotsky asks:

Can a fascist regime exist for an indefinitely prolonged period? Fascism is the fighting organisation of the bourgeoisie during and in case of civil war. That’s what fascism is. It plays the same role for the bourgeoisie as the organisation of armed uprising plays for the proletariat ... [therefore] can fascism last a long time? No! If the bourgeoisie keeps hold of power, as happened in Italy in 1920, as happened in Germany last year, then, having made use of fascism’s bloody work, it strives to broaden its base, to lean upon the middle and petit-bourgeoisie, and once again re-establishes reality. The bourgeoisie cannot exist for long in conditions of fascism, as the proletariat cannot exist for years in a state of armed uprising.

We can, with all the advantages that historical hindsight gives us, see that Trotsky was wrong. He saw only one side of fascism - its combat role in the armed struggle against the revolution. *But fascism also became a system of rule.* It did succeed, for a whole variety of reasons, in passing over from the phase Trotsky describes so well to that which he considered to be impossible, namely the consolidation of a fully-blown fascist regime in which the bourgeoisie finds itself allotted a subordinate political role. It may well, as Trotsky says, yearn for a return to the saner days of parliamentary democracy, but the fascist plebeians have other plans. And moreover, as the main governing party, they possess the means to implement them. Just as Mussolini’s regime was in a state of flux when Trotsky made this speech, so were Trotsky’s views on fascism. And it could not be otherwise, seeing that he was grappling with a process and movement that lacked all historical precedents. (Trotsky was to correct and greatly to enrich his analysis of fascism over the following 10 years, beginning with his speech on the Polish question to a session of the ECCI in July 1926, where he paid a great deal of attention to the plebeian aspects of fascism, especially those that bring it into political conflict with the bourgeoisie, and lead to the latter’s exclusion from the state.) But as in 1922, Trotsky never fell into the trap equating fascism and Social Democracy (even though the fascist regime in Italy continued to tolerate the activities of the reformists - as it did those of the PCI). He correctly saw the two movements as clear alternative methods of bourgeois rule, and spoke of the ‘replacement of the fascist by the Menshevik’ as being ‘in accordance with the laws of historical development’ - though again it must be said that history knows of no case where the bourgeoisie has persuaded a fascist regime to make way for a reformist one, though there are several

examples of the reverse process. Stalin never mentioned Trotsky by name, but it is obvious that his article 'Concerning the International Situation' - Stalin's first on this theme since the revolution seven years previously! - was directed against Trotsky's contention that Europe was passing through a period of bourgeois pacifism in which Social Democracy, and not fascism, would be brought forward to share the political power with the parties of the ruling class (the Labour-Liberal coalition in Britain, the 'Left bloc' in France). Stalin thought differently:

Some people think... that while the decisive battles were in progress, the bourgeoisie needed a fighting organisation, needed fascism; but now that the proletariat is defeated, the bourgeoisie no longer needs fascism and can afford to use 'democracy' instead, as a better method of consolidating its victory. Hence the conclusion is drawn that the rule of the bourgeoisie has become consolidated, that the 'era of pacifism' will be a prolonged one, and that the revolution in Europe has been pigeonholed. This assumption is absolutely wrong. Firstly it is not true that fascism is only the fighting organisation of the bourgeoisie. Fascism is the bourgeoisie's fighting organisation that relies on the active support of Social Democracy... These two organisations do not negate, but supplement each other, they are not antipodes, they are twins. Fascism is an informal political bloc of these two chief organisations, a bloc, which arose in the circumstances of the postwar crisis of imperialism, and which is intended for combating the proletarian revolution. The bourgeoisie cannot retain power without such a bloc. It would therefore be a mistake to think that 'pacifism' signifies the liquidation of fascism. In the present situation, 'pacifism' is the strengthening of fascism with its moderate, Social Democratic wing being pushed into the foreground. ^[56]

We should note parenthetically that in a report to the Central Committee of the CPSU delivered on 17 June 1924, Stalin also detected 'open' fascism in the policies of orthodox bourgeois politicians in France and Britain, while in Italy, he saw its approaching collapse:

... during the last year we have had occasion to witness a number of attempts at the open fascisation of internal policy in the West European countries... Leaving aside Italy, where fascism is disintegrating, attempts to fascise European policy in the main countries, France and Britain, have miscarried, and the authors of these attempts, Poincaré and Curzon, have, to put it plainly, come a cropper... ^[57]

For Stalin, 'fascism' was a term employed to abuse any government or political leader of whom the Soviet government disapproved. Significantly, in view of the evolution of Stalin's pro-German foreign policy during and even after the Nazi rise to power, he did not apply this abusive epithet to the German government. Instead, while avoiding any characterisation of the Berlin regime, he wrote of the 'superhuman struggle of the German people against Entente oppression'. ^[58]

Under the 1924 Zinoviev - Stalin schema, fascism becomes the product of the fusion of the counter-revolutionary combat unit of the fascists and the organisations of the reformists. In Germany, this would have meant that the SPD or the ADGB had actually joined forces with the Nazi SS or SA in order to fight the KPD! In such a 'bloc' (which existed purely in the minds of those who devised and propagated this lunatic theory) Social Democracy merely represented the 'left' or 'moderate' wing or 'face' of fascism. How this 'bloc' of fascism and Social Democracy worked out in practice had already been demonstrated in Italy a matter of weeks before Stalin's article appeared in the CPSU theoretical organ *Bolshevik*. When the Italian Parliament met on 30 May 1924, the secretary of the PSI, the ultra-right-wing Social Democrat Giacomo Matteotti, took the floor on behalf of his party and courageously hurled a torrent of invective at the fascist regime, whose parliamentary representatives now dominated the chamber. He accused the fascists of rigging the recent elections and intimidating voters, and called upon the chamber to declare the results invalid. It was of course a speech couched within the framework of Social Democracy, but the manner of its delivery aroused the fury of the fascists and their allies. Ending his speech, he remarked to fellow socialists amidst the howls of hatred and abuse: 'Now you can prepare my funeral oration.' If Stalin's theory held any water at all, then Matteotti was either suffering from morbid depression or delusions of grandeur. In the event, he proved to have a sounder comprehension of the real nature of fascism than Stalin, for all the latter's pretensions to Marxist orthodoxy. The next day, Mussolini wrote in his *Il Popolo d'Italia* that Matteotti should not be answered with verbal abuse, but something more substantial and permanent. On 10 June, the socialist was kidnapped by five black-shirted thugs (with whom, according to Stalin's theory, he was in a 'bloc'), brutally beaten up and then stabbed to death as he screamed for help. His body was buried in a wood near Rome, and only found two months later. This

story must be told, not in order to idealise either Matteotti or the political views which he defended both against the fascists on the right and the Communists on the left. It was none other than Matteotti who prior to Mussolini's victory advised workers attacked by the fascists to 'stay at home; ignore all provocations. Even silence and cowardice are heroic.' But here lies the irony and the contradiction which Trotsky grasped, but Stalin either failed to see or chose to ignore. Matteotti told the workers to stay at home and to hide, yet when the battle was lost, he found himself driven, by forces he could not properly comprehend, to risk and lose his life in a genuinely heroic gesture of defiance towards the fascist regime.

Had the current staff of the *Workers Press* been at hand to comment on Matteotti's reformist, and indeed treacherous activities before Mussolini's seizure of power, and after it up to the events of 30 May - 10 June 1924, then in all probability they would have dubbed him a 'corporatist' (not a tall order, in view of the fact that *Workers Press* has applied this adjective, which for a Trotskyist denotes a supporter of the corporate state and therefore of fascism, to nearly every tendency in the British workers' movement bar themselves). And this same editorial staff (acting, as the masthead of their paper indicates, under the direction of the Central Committee of the Workers Revolutionary Party and its secretary, G Healy) would also in all likelihood have blacked out all news of Matteotti's murder, as they did the killing of his modern counterpart in the Six Counties SDLP, Paddy Wilson. He was also hideously stabbed to death, with 30 thrusts of a knife, on the night of 26 July 1973, by fascist or - if *Workers Press* will permit - corporatist-minded thugs as part of their campaign to terrorise the Catholic working class and break the back of their opposition to the rule of British imperialism in a part of the Irish nation. The news of such crimes as the murder of Paddy Wilson, and in 1924 of Matteotti, would indeed have proved highly embarrassing to those who contend then, and do so again, now, that under the impact of a deepening capitalist crisis and intensified pressure from the ruling class, Social Democrats and reformist trade union leaders become transformed into fascists (Zinoviev, Stalin) or 'corporatists' (*Workers Press*). If we wish to trace the historical and theoretical antecedents of this type of pseudo-revolutionary ranting, then we need look no further than the January 1924 speech of Zinoviev and Stalin's article of September of the same year. And, it should be remembered by those who to pride themselves on their intransigence towards Stalinism, *both were directed against Trotsky*. Indeed, we can find further evidence that this was so in the resolution 'On Comrade Trotsky's Actions', approved by a plenary session of the Central Committee of the CPSU in January 1925, when Zinoviev and Stalin were still in a bloc against Trotsky. Here we still find Trotsky being presented as *right deviationist*, since he rejected the *Troika's* views on the relationship between fascism and reformism, which were of course of an ultra-left nature:

On basic questions of international politics (the role of fascism and Social Democracy, the role of the USA, the duration and nature of the 'democratic pacifist era', whose assessment by comrade Trotsky in many ways coincides with that of the Social Democratic 'centre'), comrade Trotsky adopted a stand different from that of the CPSU and the whole Comintern...

The same resolution linked Trotsky with 'the Italian social fascists', an indication not only of the depravity of those who drafted and voted for the resolution, but of the stubbornness with which the *Troika* clung to this formula. What practical, tactical conclusions flow from this theoretically illiterate analysis of fascism? Obviously that since reformism and the armed squads of fascism (SA, SS, *Arditi*, etc) are one, then there can be no question of a bloc with the reformist organisations and their leaders against this same fascism. A more moderate version of this leftist line had indeed been tentatively and inconsistently applied in the Communist International throughout 1924, only to give way to an openly opportunist united front tactic with the reformists the next year. And of course, it was invoked and applied with far more severity from the Sixth Congress of the Communist International to a full year after Hitler's victory in Germany. The theoretical and tactical ground work for this monumental defeat had therefore been laid during the months after the previous great reverse of October 1923, and flowed directly from it. Here is a superb confirmation of the Marxist dialectic of history. On its conscious side on both occasions was the fight of Trotsky for theoretical clarity, the only possible basis for a correct revolutionary line in Germany and internationally. In 1924 he was almost alone in declaring frankly to the Soviet party and the entire Communist International that there had been a defeat in Germany of such proportions as to shape the course of the class struggle in Europe for the next half decade and more. This perspective became an integral political foundation of the work of the Left Opposition, which, in its turn, found its highest theoretical expression on the international plane in the years between 1930 and 1933 in the fight to reorient the Communist International, and principally the KPD, back towards the revolutionary strategy and tactics of Leninism. The inner unity of these two periods of the Left Opposition, the first in 1924, and the last in 1933, together with the complementary struggle against

Stalinist right-opportunism in China and Britain between 1925 and 1927, and the campaign for the revival of Soviet democracy and a planned industrialised economy in the USSR, was consummated after the German debacle with Trotsky's call for the foundation of a Fourth International. That is why the 1924 polemics on the nature and role of fascism have to be grasped from this standpoint, one of the never-ending struggles not only to build a revolutionary leadership, but to equip it with the most advanced revolutionary theory.

Appendix II: Stalin and the KPD

The first open indication that Stalin had begun to search for a new leadership in the KPD to support his recently adopted policy of forming blocs with reformists abroad, while creeping towards 'socialism in one country' at home, came with the publication in *Pravda* on 3 February 1925 of a conversation between Stalin and Herzog of the KPD Central Committee. No longer were the Social Democrats falsely categorised and abused as the 'moderate wing of fascism'. Instead we have the mild formulation that 'the Social Democrats must be pilloried not on the basis of planetary questions, but on the basis of the day-to-day struggle of the working class for improving its material and social conditions...' Stalin was also playing a cunning game in emphasising his devotion to the principles of democratic centralism and the rights of party minorities - something he was busily engaged in repressing in the CPSU. But here, in the KPD, it was a case of undermining the existing Zinovievist, leftist leadership, one that obstructed Stalin's sharp turn towards the right in the Communist International and its largest non-Soviet section: 'Some comrades think that strengthening the party and Bolshevising it means expelling all dissenters from it. That is wrong, of course.' Eight months later, when Stalin made his next recorded pronouncement on the affairs of the KPD, we find him striking a different note. True, there is an even greater emphasis on the need to approach the reformists with great sensitivity (in violent contrast to the line of three years later), but now we find Stalin celebrating the triumph of the bureaucracy over the very principles he demagogically upheld in his talk with Herzog:

Undoubtedly, the removal of the 'ultra-lefts' has improved the position of the KPD. The 'ultra-lefts' are people alien to the working class. What can Ruth Fischer and Maslow have in common with the working class of Germany? ^[59]

This was the same group whose assumption of the leadership of the KPD after the 1923 fiasco was hailed by Stalin as representing the 'decisive' victory achieved by 'the revolutionary wing in the KPD' and as 'sealing the victory of the revolutionary wing in the principal sections of the Comintern'. ^[60] 'The result of the removal of the "ultra-lefts" has been that new leaders of the Communist Party have come to the fore from the workers...' ^[61]

Stalin's rejection of the KPD Zinovievists (on whose support he had depended in the struggle against Trotsky in 1924) became even more marked in 1926, when the Soviet bureaucracy's turn towards a domestic alliance with the Nepman and *kulak*, and, internationally, with the reformists and bourgeois nationalists, drove their champion, together with Kamenev, towards a bloc with their former enemy Trotsky. Stalin now deemed the main enemy in the KPD to be not the Brandler right (ideologically in sympathy with Stalin's new ally Bukharin, who was soon to become Zinoviev's successor as head of the Communist International), but the Fischer - Maslow 'ultra-left': 'Either the KPD breaks the resistance of the "ultra-lefts"', Stalin declared in January 1926 '... or... it will make the present crisis chronic and disastrous for the party. Hence the fighting against the "ultra-lefts" in the KPD is the immediate task.' ^[62] Stalin intervened in the troubled affairs of the KPD yet again some two months later at the German Commission of the Sixth Plenum of the ECCI, when once more his purpose was to protect the Thälmann 'centre' leadership from its left critics. Using the crudest anti-intellectual demagoguery, he heaped praise on the ultra-Stalinist Thälmann faction as true representatives of the German proletariat, on the entirely spurious grounds that it was composed largely of former industrial workers. By contrast, there was the left faction, made up of 'conceited' and 'puny intellectuals' who, according to Stalin, considered it sufficient 'to have read some two or three books, or to have written a couple of pamphlets, to... lay claim to the right of leading the party'. Other qualities than interest in Marxist theory were called for, said Stalin - blanket endorsement of the 'general line': 'You may have written whole tomes on philosophy, but if you have not mastered the correct policy of the KPD CC, you cannot be allowed at the helm of the party.' As for Marxist theory, that was of little consequence. It was a problem that would take care of itself:

It is said that theoretical knowledge is not a strong point with the present CC. [In the case of Thälmann, this was an understatement - RB] What of it? If the policy is correct, theoretical knowledge will come in due course. Knowledge is something acquirable; if you haven't got it today, you may get it tomorrow. ^[63]

The idea that theoretical knowledge might have some bearing on arriving at a correct policy was anathema to the bureaucratic minds of Stalin and his supporters. All wisdom - and theory - began with the 'correct' or 'general line', which issued forth from the infallible brains of the ECCI apparatus and their manipulators in the Kremlin. Where the German 'lefts' sinned was in their continuing to repeat, in 1926, a period of right opportunism, what they had been allowed and even encouraged to say - against Trotsky - in 1924, the year of leftist adventurism. Such independence of spirit had to be ruthlessly squashed, and Stalin cared not how this was done: '... about the Ruth Fischer group... I consider that of all the undesirable and objectionable groups in the KPD, this group is the most undesirable and the most objectionable.' ^[64] However the defeat of the old KPD left was no easy matter, as it enjoyed considerable prestige amongst the proletarian members and supporters of the party, and was in fact nourished in its leftism by the deep (and justified) hatred for Social Democracy amongst the most advanced workers of the KPD. The expulsion of the Fischer - Maslow group therefore was not simply a reactionary blow struck by Stalin against an important section of the party leadership, one that with all its failings (and Trotsky, who entered into a bloc with this tendency at a later juncture, was fully aware of them) had an important contribution to make to the struggle for socialism in Germany. Stalin's war on the KPD lefts drove away from the party and into the political wilderness hundreds and indeed thousands of the finest proletarians to have rallied to the banner of Communism. First the purge of the Spartacists, now of the lefts - this was the logic of Stalin's bureaucratic regime in the Communist International, and of the zigzag centrist course pursued under its leadership.

Notes

1. LD Trotsky, 'The Turn in the Communist International and the Situation in Germany' (26 September 1930), *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany* (New York, 1971), p 59, emphasis added.
2. Lenin had been the instigator of this campaign, when he proposed to Trotsky a year earlier that they should form a bloc to cleanse the party of the bureaucratic methods personified by Stalin. Lenin's prolonged illness, and then his death in January 1924, rendered their alliance stillborn, and the battle was only joined in earnest towards the end of 1923 with the letter submitted to the Central Committee of the CPSU by 46 prominent party members - the *Platform of the Forty-Six* - and Trotsky's series of articles in the party press on the dangers of bureaucratism, subsequently published under the title *The New Course*.
3. The letter was couched in the most opportunist terms, inveighing against any rupture with the reformists, whose continued support was seen as a prerequisite for the eventual victory of the revolution: 'Should the Communists (at a given stage) strive to seize power without the Social Democrats? That, in my opinion, is the question... If today in Germany the power... falls, and the Communists seize hold of it, they will fall with a crash. That in the "best" case. At the worst, they will be smashed to pieces and thrown back... Of course, the Fascists are not asleep, but it is to our interest that they attack first; that will rally the whole working class around the Communists... In my opinion, the Germans must be curbed and not spurred on.' (Quoted in LD Trotsky, *The Third International After Lenin* (New York, 1957), p 322)
4. The Ninth KPD Congress was held in Frankfurt in April 1924, when the party had just emerged from the illegality imposed on it by Seeckt's military rule. Out of the 118 delegates, only 11 were committed supporters of Brandler, the party's General Secretary. The newly-elected KPD Central Committee was made up of 11 'lefts' (who were in turn divided amongst themselves, as was soon to become clear) and four supporters of the 'centre' including Klara Zetkin and the future Stalinist Wilhelm Pieck. In a letter addressed to the Congress, the ECCI had openly backed the 'lefts' (Fischer, Maslow, Thälmann) by endorsing their ultra-left rejection of the united front tactic: 'In Germany it is essential for us to use the united front tactic only from below, that is to say, we will have no dealings with

the official Social Democratic leaders. The tactics of the united front from below must, however, be pursued honestly, consistently, and to the end.’ The letter also anticipated the decisions of the congress when it confidently declared that ‘the triumph of the left wing of the KPD is of tremendous significance for the fate of the German revolution’. Within a year, when the helm had been swung by the Stalin faction hard over to the right, the German ‘left’ was to be given an altogether different evaluation, save for a handful around Thälmann who proved their subservience to the ruling faction in the USSR by shifting their political stance in accordance with every twist and turn in the Comintern line.

5. Trotsky had no time for this empty-headed radicalism. He insisted that a defeat be given its correct name, and that a new orientation be worked out for the KPD which took into account the impact of this defeat on the consciousness of the various layers of the German working class. Once again, as so often in the past, it was a question of making a *transition* from one period and phase of struggle to another, in which new opposites had been established and needed to be grasped consciously before the party could begin to make good the losses of the previous reverse. This was the central theme of several speeches made by Trotsky in the wake of the German defeat. Thus in his address to the Military Science Society on 29 July 1924, he warned against the blind optimism then still in the ascendant in the Communist International: ‘It is clear that the bourgeois regime which has been restored in Germany, following the abortion of the proletarian revolution, is of durable stability... But if we close our eyes to the experience of these events, if we do not use this experience to educate ourselves, if we continue passively to make mistakes like those already made, we can expect to see the German catastrophe repeated, and the consequent dangers for the revolutionary movement will be immense.’ (LD Trotsky, *Problems of Civil War* (New York, 1970), p 21) And in a speech given a month earlier, he scourged those who denied that the KPD was in temporary decline and had lost a large proportion of its mass support in the working class, and that a considerable period of recuperation would be required before the KPD could once again regain the political initiative: ‘It would be absurd to shut one’s eyes to this: revolutionary politics are not the politics of the ostrich... The German proletariat suffered last year a very big defeat. It will need a definite and considerable interval of time in order to digest this defeat, to master its lessons and to recover from it, once more to gather its strength; and the KPD will be able to ensure the victory of the proletariat only if it, too, fully and completely masters the lessons of last year’s experience.’ (LD Trotsky, *Through What Stage Are We Passing?* (London, 1965), p 37)

6. Glaring for workers who already adhered to the KPD certainly, but not for those many millions who still clung to the SPD, despite its treacherous record since the foundation of the Republic (and indeed, since August 1914) as was proved by the Reichstag election results of May 1924, which gave 3.7 million votes to the KPD, but six million to a party that according to Zinoviev had not only gone over completely to capitalist dictatorship, but had become a ‘fraction of German fascism’. Lenin dealt with this classic leftist-subjectivist error in his *‘Left-Wing’ Communism*, where he writes: ‘... we must not regard what is obsolete to us as something obsolete to a class, to the masses.’ (VI Lenin, “‘Left-Wing’ Communism: An Infantile Disorder’, *Collected Works*, Volume 31, p 58)

7. ‘Directives on the United Front of the Workers and on the Attitude to Workers Belonging to the Second, Two-and-a-Half, and Amsterdam Internationals, and to Those Who Support Anarcho-Syndicalist Organisations’, adopted by the ECCI, 18 December 1921, emphasis added.

8. ‘Directives on the United Front...’, emphasis added.

9. Drawing on the experience of the revolutionary struggle in Russia before the revolution, the directive pointed out that despite their ceaseless fight against the Mensheviks, the Bolsheviks ‘often came to an understanding with the Mensheviks... The formal break with the Mensheviks took place in the spring of 1905, but at the end of 1905, the Bolsheviks formed a common front with the Mensheviks... and these unifications and semi-unifications happened not only in accordance with changes in the factional struggle, but also under the direct pressure of the working masses who were awakening to active political life and demanded the opportunity of testing by their own experience whether the Menshevik path

really deviated in fundamentals from the road of revolution... The Russian Bolsheviks did not reply to the desire of the workers for unity with a renunciation of the united front...' - as did the Stalinist KPD leadership in 1929-33.

10. *The Second and Third Internationals and the Vienna Union: Official Report of the Conference* (London, 1922), p 85.

11. 'ECCI Statement on the Results of the Berlin Conference', April 1922.

12. 'ECCI Statement on the Meeting of the Committee of Nine' [being a body set up by the Berlin conference to organise the united front of the three Internationals], 24 May 1922, emphasis added.

13. Unlike the WRP, which has as its main strategic aim the adoption of a full socialist programme of nationalisation by the Labour Party - in other words, the expropriation of the bourgeoisie.

14. 'Open Letter to the Second International and the Vienna Labour Union, to the Trade Unions of all Countries and to the Hague Trade Union and Cooperative Congress', 4 December 1922, emphasis added.

15. 'Resolution on Fascism', adopted by the Fifth Congress of the Communist International, July 1924, emphasis added.

16. The question of fascism, Social Democracy and social fascism in the early years of the Communist International is discussed at greater length in a note at the end of this chapter.

17. 'Resolution on Fascism', adopted by the Fifth Congress of the Communist International.

18. 'Theses on Tactics', adopted by the Fifth Congress of the Communist International, July 1924.

19. 'The prospects for the German revolution, as outlined by the ECCI in the autumn of 1923, remain unchanged... by its very nature the international position of the German bourgeoisie and Social Democracy remains hopeless... The internal crisis may come to a head very quickly.' ('Theses on Tactics', adopted by the Fifth Congress of the Communist International, July 1924)

20. 'The Congress... observes that the opposition in the RCP [Russian Communist Party] was supported by groups in other parties, in the Polish, German and French parties, etc; this, like the RCP opposition, is a manifestation of a right (opportunist) deviation in these parties, and was condemned as such by the Fifth Congress of the Communist International... The congress resolves... to endorse the resolutions of the Thirteenth Conference and Thirteenth Congress of the RCP, which condemned the platform of the opposition [the 'Forty-Six'] as petit-bourgeois, and its conduct as a threat to the unity of the party and consequently to the proletarian dictatorship in the Soviet Union.' (Resolution of the Fifth Comintern Congress on the Russian Question) Thus support for the Soviet Left Opposition was not merely branded as right opportunism, but deemed tantamount to threatening the existence of the Soviet Union itself. And here it should be noted that Zinoviev's leftist course at this time enabled the *Troika* to depict Trotsky (who was arguing for a sober policy that would favour the eventual revolutionary regroupment of the shattered ranks of the German proletariat) as a rightist seeking to 'de-Bolshevise' the RCP and the Communist International and subvert it with his own brand of 'Menshevism'.

21. Trotsky, *The Third International After Lenin*, p 124.

22. Zinoviev was removed from the leadership of the Communist International by decision of the CPSU Central Committee at its session of October 1926, where Trotsky and Kamenev were removed from the party Politbureau. Bukharin became the new Comintern Chairman. The composition of the ruling body of the Comintern between its congresses, the Presidium of the ECCI, had undergone drastic changes in personnel since the death of Lenin, reflecting the violent oscillations of the factional struggle in the CPSU. At the last congress at which Lenin spoke - the fourth, in December 1922, Lenin and Trotsky were elected to the ECCI, while on the Presidium sat Zinoviev and Bukharin from the Soviet party. The rise to power of the *Troika* in the USSR greatly influenced the composition of the ruling bodies elected at

the Fifth Congress less than two years later. Now the Soviet representation on the Presidium was doubled to include not only Kamenev, who had been active in the work of the Comintern from its early days, but the third member of the *Troika* - Stalin, who had never even so much as attended either a Comintern congress or written on its problems in any of the party or Comintern organs. The Soviet fraction in the ECCI was equally dominated by opponents of Trotsky - Zinoviev, Bukharin, Stalin, Kamenev - with Trotsky now relegated on purely factional grounds to the position of candidate. The break-up of the *Troika* was also faithfully reflected in the Presidium and ECCI membership. At the Sixth Plenum of the ECCI in the spring of 1926, Kamenev (now in opposition with Zinoviev, and shortly to form a bloc with Trotsky) was removed and on came Kuusinen and Lozovsky, both firm Stalin men; and from the KPD, Remmele, who joined Thälmann, elected by the ECCI after the Fourth Congress. Then in the autumn of 1928 there began a purge of Bukharinites, which reached its climax with the removal of their leader from the chairmanship of the Comintern on 3 July 1929, by a decision of the ECCI on the 'recommendation' of the CPSU Central Committee. Six years later, at the Seventh and last Congress of the Comintern (where under Dimitrov's guidance, the line was mapped out that prepared counter-revolution in Spain and France), a squad of utterly depraved and subservient Stalinists was elevated to the body that, in Lenin's day, had been staffed by the finest leadership that had ever stood at the head of the world workers' movement. Of the Presidium elected after the Fourth Congress in 1922 (12 full members, three candidates), only two - Kuusinen and the Bulgarian Kolarov - survived the successive waves of purges to serve Stalin after the Seventh Congress. Just as the Stalinist bureaucracy destroyed Bolshevism in the USSR, so it devastated the international movement founded by Lenin, Trotsky and Zinoviev to carry the Russian revolution to every corner of the globe.

23. One former anonymous Comintern official relates: 'They had no reason to tremble for their careers when Bukharin, who had learned about the Canton insurrection only from the wires published in the newspapers [thus confirming that the whole suicidal undertaking had been launched behind the back of the leading organ of the Comintern, a higher authority than either the Chinese Party or even the CPSU - RB], was shouting at them during the secret session of the Comintern in Moscow. In back of them stood a mightier man who gave the two boys a thorough scolding but did not permit any harm to come to them. [Not at any rate until the onset of the great purge, in which both Neumann and Lominadze - now bitter opponents of their former protector - shared the fate of so many other functionaries and leaders of the Comintern - RB] A year later, Bukharin was finished in the Comintern and a new leadership instituted. Heinz Neumann returned to Germany, became a deputy in the German Reichstag, and one of the mighty in the KPD.' (Ypsilon, *Pattern for World Revolution* (New York, 1947), p 191) This account, which is corroborated by other independent versions of the Canton Commune episode, bears out Trotsky's own judgement on the motives behind the staging of the insurrection, namely that it 'was an adventure of the leaders in an effort to save their "prestige"'. And he also makes the telling observation that the emergence of putschist moods in the Chinese Communist Party, hypocritically condemned by an ECCI resolution on the Canton commune, were 'a reaction to the entire opportunist policy of 1925-27, and an inevitable consequence of the purely military command issued from above to "change the step" without an evaluation of all that had been done, without an open reevaluation of the basis of the tactic, and without a clear perspective.' (LD Trotsky, 'The Chinese Revolution' (June 1928), *The Third International After Lenin*, p 200) All of which holds good for the leftist turn that was to gather pace throughout the Communist International during the early part of 1928, and nowhere more so than in Germany.

24. JV Stalin, 'Political Report of the CC of the CPSU', *Works*, Volume 10, pp 290-93.

25. Cf T Draper, 'The Strange Case of the Comintern', *Survey*, Volume 18, no 3, Summer 1972. This is a near-exhaustive inquiry into a most important subject, presumably carried out by its author as part of his research into the history of the Communist Party of the United States, which Draper is currently engaged in writing. Nevertheless, Draper's long essay on the origins of 'social fascism' is not without its errors and omissions. He picks up Stalin's

December speech reference to the onset of a ‘new revolutionary upsurge’ (p 104), but not his associated claim that ‘the policy of the bourgeois governments’ was gradually becoming ‘fascised’ (JV Stalin, ‘Political Report of the Central Committee’ (3 December 1927), *Works*, Volume 10, p 288). Equally surprising, in view of Draper’s otherwise copious textual references, is his categorical assertion, made on two separate occasions, that Stalin ‘never used the term [social fascism] himself, still contenting himself with repeated references to Social Democracy’, and that he ‘always used the more respectful term “Social Democracy” without an intimation that it was becoming something else or something worse’ (T Draper, ‘The Strange Case of the Comintern’, *Survey*, Volume 18, no 3, Summer 1972, pp 126, 128). In Stalin’s ‘Report to the Sixteenth Congress of the CPSU’ (27 June 1930), we can read the following classic Third Period formulation: ‘Will many workers be found today capable of believing the false doctrines of the social fascists? ... the best members of the working class have already turned away from the social fascists.’ (JV Stalin, *Works*, Volume 12, p 260)

26. O Kuusinen, ‘The International Situation and the Tasks of the Comintern: Report to the Tenth Plenum of the ECCI’, June 1929, *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 9, no 40, 20 August 1929, p 847.

27. R Gerber, ‘The Face of German Social Fascism’, *Communist International*, Volume 6, no 21, 15 September 1929, p 800.

28. Stalin, ‘Political Report of the CC of the CPSU’, *Works*, Volume 10, p 289.

29. Stalin’s speech must have left the scribes of the official Comintern organ in a quandary since it contained much that was old as well as a little that sounded new. One writer solved the problem thus: ‘As earlier so now the central slogan of our party is the united front. But... in so far as we have a strong rightward movement of the upper ranks of Social Democracy, all the weight of the struggle for the united front must be transferred below, in which the attacks against the Social Democratic leaders must be carried on with double and triple energy.’ (‘The Comintern’s Militant Task’, *The Communist International*, Volume 5, no 2, 15 January 1928, p 30) Bukharin, as chairman of the ECCI, could scarcely afford to be either pre-empted or outflanked by Stalin, and so at the CPSU Congress he took up and even embroidered on the theme of a sharper struggle against Social Democracy, obviously never guessing for one moment where it would eventually lead him: ‘Never before has the gulf between us Communists and the Social Democrats been so great from top to bottom as now. We must attack the Social Democrats still more resolutely than ever before along the whole line of front.’ (*Report of the ECCI to the Fifteenth Congress of the CPSU*)

30. Stalin, ‘Political Report of the CC of the CPSU’, *Works*, Volume 10, pp 290-91.

31. ‘Resolution on the English Question’, Ninth Plenum, ECCI, 18 February 1928.

32. ‘Resolution on the English Question’, Ninth Plenum, ECCI, 18 February 1928, emphasis added.

33. JV Stalin, ‘First Results of the Procurement Campaign and the Further Tasks of the Party’, 13 February 1928, *Works*, Volume 11, p 13.

34. H Brandler, ‘Contribution to a Programme of Action’, *Communist International*, Volume 5, no 3, 1 February 1928, p 68.

35. A Lozovsky, ‘Problems of Strike Strategy’, *Communist International*, Volume 5, no 5, 1 March 1928, p 113, emphasis added.

36. A Lozovsky, ‘Results and Prospects of the United Front (For the Fourth RILU Congress)’, *Communist International*, Volume 5, no 6, 15 March 1928, p 146, emphasis added.

37. ‘Theses on Lozovsky’s Report’, *Fourth RILU Congress*, July 1928 (London, 1928), p 12.

38. ‘Theses on Lozovsky’s Report’, *Fourth RILU Congress*, July 1928, pp 20-21, emphasis in original.

39. ‘Measures for Fighting Fascism in the Trade Union Movement’, *Fourth RILU Congress*, p 51, emphasis added.

40. ‘Measures for Fighting Fascism in the Trade Union Movement’, *Fourth RILU Congress*, pp 52-53, emphasis added.

41. The real relationship of forces at the congress is well depicted by a supporter of Bukharin in the ECCI apparatus: ‘The Congress was a comedy worthy of the pen of Gogol, Bukharin acted as president and made the big programmatic speech... But in the halls and corridors a flood of dirty rumours against Bukharin was spreading, such as I have never experienced in the Comintern. It was really in the halls and corridors that a change of regime was manoeuvred while Bukharin himself was proclaiming the principles of Communism at the meetings.’ (‘From the Papers of Comrade X’, in Ypsilon, *Pattern of World Revolution*, p 118) Shortly after the close of the congress, in an unpublished article ‘Who Leads the Comintern?’, Trotsky wrote that ‘the leadership of the Sixth Congress seemed Bukharin’s. He gave the report, put out the strategic line, put forward and carried through the programme... and opened and closed the congress... And yet everybody knows that in fact Bukharin’s influence on the congress was virtually nil.’ Togliatti, who ventured to cast doubts on the new formulas regarding fascism and reformism, admitted in a private conversation that ‘it is impossible to speak the truth about the most important, the most vital problems. We cannot speak. In this atmosphere, to tell the real truth would have the effect of an exploding bomb.’ Even Maurice Thorez, who was soon to begin his climb to the summit of the French party machine as Stalin’s loyal executor, expressed misgivings about the theory of ‘socialism in one country’. Five years of increasingly bureaucratic misleadership had reduced the once powerful and respected Communist International to a shambles. No mass revolutionary movement could have withstood the succession of left and right zigzags and changes of leadership imposed on the Communist International from the Kremlin. Trotsky takes up these and allied questions in his classic Marxist analysis and history of the post-Lenin Communist International, ‘The Draft Programme of the Communist International’ (published in *The Third International After Lenin*).

42. NI Bukharin, ‘Report to Sixth Comintern Congress’, *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 8, no 41, emphasis in original.

43. The pro-Stalin faction in the KPD was quicker off the mark than any other section in backing the ‘new line’ and giving it even more leftist emphasis. On 1 June 1928, there appeared in the KPD theoretical organ *Die Internationale* an article by Josef Lenz which contended, as Zinoviev and Stalin had done four years previously, that Social Democracy was ‘developing tendencies in the direction of social fascism’, an opinion which won approval from an unsigned article in the *Communist International* 10 weeks later. Also written at this time, and indicating the eagerness with which the KPD ‘left’ followed - and helped to accelerate - the slide of the Communist International towards a fully-blown theory of social fascism, was an article in the 15 June number of the Comintern organ, entitled ‘The White Terror and the Social Democrats’. Apart from a highly significant reference to the *Volksstaat* as being ‘the organ of the Saxon social fascists’, the article upbraids the Prussian Social Democrats for allegedly forming an alliance with an anonymous ‘white terror’ against the KPD. Yet this harsh line was contradicted by another contributor to the organ a month later, who in analysing the Reichstag elections of May 1928, grouped the SPD together with the KPD as a workers’ party. The article was also noteworthy in that unlike so many others being written on Germany at this time, it drew attention to the possibility of a revival in the fortunes of the Nazis: ‘It is absurd to regard the German fascists as finished.’ (‘The Lesson of the German Elections’, *Communist International*, Volume 5, no 14, 15 July 1928, p 311) An altogether different approach was adopted on the same theme by Hermann Remmele, a supporter of the Thälmann faction in the KPD, in the next issue. He grouped the SPD with the ‘bourgeois left parties’, and reserved for the KPD the distinction of being the sole workers’ party in Germany. And he added, in tones that boded ill for the KPD centre and right, that ‘the line of battle between Menshevism and Communism is becoming more sharply defined. The task of winning over the workers from the ranks of the Social Democrats necessitates the use of different methods

and conditions from those that were customary years ago. On this account the Communist Parties were obliged to examine their relations to the Social Democrats and make certain changes.' Remmele obviously had his own party in mind when he said this, for he went on to criticise 'supporters of the right group within the party, who expect much from an alliance with the "left wing" as a means of winning over the masses' (*Communist International*, Volume 5, no 15, 1 August 1928, p 353).

44. F Heckert, 'Report to Sixth Comintern Congress', *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 8, no 41, p 814.

45. G Dimitrov, 'Report to Sixth Comintern Congress', *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 8, no 41, p 847.

46. Only one delegate seems to have had the temerity to imply that all was not well with the new theory of 'social fascism'. Ercoli (Palmiro Togliatti), while conceding that there was an 'ideological connection between fascism and Social Democracy' and even in some cases an 'organic connection' where Social Democracy 'in certain cases and under certain circumstances' used 'frankly fascist methods', warned that 'one must beware of excessive generalisations, because there are [also] serious differences. Fascism as a mass movement is a movement of the petit-bourgeoisie and middle bourgeoisie dominated by the big bourgeoisie and the agrarians; more, it has no basis in a traditional organisation of the working class. On the other hand, Social Democracy is a movement with a labour and petit-bourgeois base, it derives its force mainly from an organisation which is recognised by enormous sections of the workers as the traditional organisation of their class.' (*International Press Correspondence*, Volume 8, no 53, 23 August 1928, p 941) And Togliatti knew this better than almost anyone else present at the congress, since his own party, together with the entire Italian labour movement, 'social fascist' as well as revolutionary, had been smashed by the genuine fascists. This speech proved to be Togliatti's last as a secret supporter of Bukharin's. His supple spine and elastic principles enabled him to make the transition to the Third Period - and then back again in 1935 to the right opportunist line he always preferred.

47. E Thälmann, 'Report to Sixth Comintern Congress', *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 8, no 50, 16 August 1928.

48. Stalin gives the following account of this episode, which if true, confirms that differences over domestic policy had already spilled over into the International: 'How did the disagreements in this sphere [that of 'driving the Rights out of the Communist Parties' - RB] begin? They began with Bukharin's theses at the Sixth Congress on the international situation. As a rule, these are first examined by the delegation of the CPSU. In this case, however, that condition was not observed. What happened was that the theses, signed by Bukharin, were sent to the delegation of the CPSU at the same time as they were distributed to the foreign delegations at the Sixth Congress. But the theses proved to be unsatisfactory on a number of points. The delegation of the CPSU was obliged to introduce about 20 amendments to the theses... In order that the fight against Social Democracy may be waged successfully, stress must be laid on the fight against the "Left" wing of Social Democracy... It is obvious that unless the "Left" Social Democrats are routed it will be impossible to overcome Social Democracy in general. [The core of Stalin's policy at the time of the British general strike in 1926 had been an unprincipled bloc with these same lefts on the TUC General Council - Hicks, Cook and Purcell - RB] Yet in Bukharin's theses the question of "Left" Social Democracy was entirely ignored.' (JV Stalin, 'The Right Deviation in the CPSU', speech to the Plenum of the CC and Central Control Commission of the CPSU (April 1929), *Works*, Volume 12, pp 21-23)

49. *Programme of the Communist International*, 1 September 1928 (London, 1932), p 13.

50. E Schneller, 'Report to Sixth Comintern Congress', *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 8, no 58, 1 September 1928, p 1016.

51. NI Bukharin, 'Report to Sixth Comintern Congress', *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 8, no 59, 4 September 1928, p 1039.

- 52.** G Zinoviev, *Die Monarchistische Gefahr und Taktik der KPD* (Berlin, 1925), p 6.
- 53.** Zinoviev, *Die Monarchistische Gefahr und Taktik der KPD*, p 11, emphasis added.
- 54.** The beginning of Zinoviev's fall from grace in the ECCI dates from December 1924, when the putsch he ordered in Estonia - partly it appears to restore sagging confidence in his leftist line that the revolutionary wave in Europe was still in the ascendant - ended in fiasco with several hundred Communists killed. Working initially through the exiled Hungarian Béla Kun, Stalin began to build up an anti-Zinoviev bloc in the Presidium of the ECCI. The methods employed were the same as those used to undermine Trotsky's position in the CPSU: 'A Stalin faction is being organised in the Comintern. They attempt to cut off Zinoviev from his contacts abroad. Important documents and information are kept from him. His secretaries are sabotaged... Much malicious pressure is applied to the "impure" [a term used to describe former Comintern leaders currently out of favour - RB]. Stalin has their complete sympathy. He uses every opportunity to demonstrate to the foreign comrades his contempt for the Comintern regime of Zinoviev... He comes out for democracy and solidarity within the Comintern. He opposes Zinoviev's system of building up and dismissing leaders... Bukharin goes along with Stalin on every single question and is instrumental in creating an atmosphere of confidence in the Comintern for him.' ('From the Papers of Comrade X' (a former Comintern official), in Ypsilon, *Pattern for World Revolution*, p 102) This eye-witness account of the split developing early in 1925 between Stalin and the ECCI chairman helps to explain the complexities of the factional struggle in the KPD. As in the USSR, Stalin did not select his (what usually proved be temporary) allies on the basis of principles, but expediency. He was perfectly capable of making demagogic attacks on bureaucracy if in doing so he could win over its past victims to a factional bloc against his current opponents. This was the device he exploited in his campaign against Zinoviev in the ECCI, which in Germany led to a fleeting alignment with the new, anti-Zinoviev ultra-left against the pro-Zinoviev group on the party Central Committee of Maslow and Fischer.
- 55.** JV Stalin, 'Speech Delivered at a Meeting of the Polish Commission of the Communist International' (3 July 1924), *Works*, Volume 6, p 279.
- 56.** JV Stalin, 'Concerning the International Situation' (20 September 1924), *Works*, Volume 6, pp 294-95.
- 57.** JV Stalin, 'The Results of the Thirteenth Congress of the CPSU', *Works*, Volume 6, p 247.
- 58.** Stalin, 'Concerning the International Situation', *Works*, Volume 6, p 299.
- 59.** JV Stalin, 'Interview with the Participants in the Conference of Agitation and Propaganda Departments' (14 October 1925), *Works*, Volume 7, p 242.
- 60.** Stalin, 'Concerning the International Situation', *Works*, Volume 6, pp 304-06.
- 61.** Stalin, 'Interview with the Participants in the Conference of Agitation and Propaganda Departments', *Works*, Volume 7, p 242.
- 62.** JV Stalin, 'The Fight Against the Right and "Ultra-Left" Deviations: Speech to the Presidium of the ECCI' (22 January 1926), *Works*, Volume 8, p 2.
- 63.** JV Stalin, 'Speech Delivered in the German Commission of the Sixth Enlarged Plenum of the ECCI' (8 March 1926), *Works*, Volume 8, pp 116-17.
- 64.** Stalin, 'Speech Delivered in the German Commission of the Sixth Enlarged Plenum of the ECCI', *Works*, Volume 8, p 120.

Fascism in Germany. Robin Blick 1975

Chapter XVII: The World Crisis and the Fall of Müller

The theory of 'general over-production' is only an apparition conjured up by empty speculation. It is neither theoretically tenable, nor proved by existence. Are we not producing at a fabulous tempo? (Emil Lederer, SPD 'theoretician', August 1929)

... social fascism [that is, Social Democracy]... is the weapon-bearer of the fascist dictatorship. It is very difficult to maintain the line of separation between the development of a social fascist dictatorship when it has reached the stage, as in Germany, of a Social Democratic government using the most reactionary weapons of violence, and the methods of fascist dictatorship... We are [therefore] of the opinion that the present Social Democratic government will remain at the helm for a long time. (E Thälmann, 'The Problem of the KPD', report at the enlarged Presidium of the ECCI, *Communist International*, Volume 7, no 4, 15 April 1930, pp 112-13)

For all their mutual hostility, German Social Democracy and Stalinism embraced an identical principle; namely that it was possible to build 'socialism in one country'. Stalin invented nothing when he first enunciated this anti-Communist theory in the autumn of 1924. The notion of 'national roads to socialism' had been implicit in the practice of nearly all the parties of the Second International many years before its reactionary implications were confirmed in the carnage of the First World War, when almost the entire leadership of European Social Democracy went over to its 'own' bourgeoisie and the defence of the capitalist nation state against rival imperialist powers. In doing so, it claimed that it was not only protecting the national labour movement from its foreign and internal foes, but that in helping the ruling class to wage war, Social Democracy was defending the sacred frontiers of a fatherland that, one day, the worker would claim as his own. For numerous cadres of the Second International, and even a portion of its leaders, this theory was not just a cynical justification for supporting imperialism, but a genuinely held view that had arisen in the course of the movement's adaptation to the most privileged layers of the proletariat within the advanced nations of Europe.

In breaking irrevocably from the theory, programme and organisation of the Second International, Lenin demarcated himself as sharply and demonstratively as possible from all advocates, covert no less than overt, of nationalism within the workers' movement - a tendency he contemptuously dubbed variously as 'social imperialism', 'social chauvinism' or 'social patriotism'. Without this split from the International of Kautsky, there could have been no October Revolution, for the Bolsheviks were only able to win the support of the majority of the proletariat, and a strong base in the poor peasantry, as a direct result of their principled opposition to the imperialist war, an opposition which did not content itself with pacifist yearnings for peace, but strove to transform the imperialist war into a civil war, a policy of revolutionary defeatism. The Bolsheviks owed no loyalty to state frontiers established by the Tsars, but to the international proletariat and the labouring masses oppressed by imperialism. As far as the leaders of the revolution were concerned (and this included Stalin up to the end of 1924), the seizure of power in Russia was but the prelude to far more serious blows to be inflicted on world imperialists in the centre and west of Europe. This thoroughgoing internationalist perspective underlay all the preparatory work for the Communist International, and was codified in all the main resolutions adopted at its founding congress in March 1919. The theory of 'socialism in one country' was explicitly condemned in the *Platform of the Communist International* (approved on 4 March) which declared:

The international, which subordinates so-called national interests to the interests of the international revolution, will embody the mutual aid of the proletariat of different countries, for without economic and other mutual aid the proletariat will not be in a position to organise the new society. On the other hand, in contrast to the yellow social-patriotic international, international proletarian Communism will support the exploited colonial peoples in their struggles against imperialism, in order to promote the final downfall of the imperialist world system.

The *Congress Manifesto*, written by Trotsky, was even more adamant in rejecting the conception of class struggle and socialism evolved in the period of the Second International:

... the centre of gravity of the workers' movement during this period remained wholly on national soil, wholly within the framework of national states, founded upon national industry and confined within the sphere of national parliamentarianism. Decades of reformist organisational activity created a generation of leaders the majority of whom recognised in words the programme of

social revolution but denied it by their actions; they were bogged down in reformism and in adaptation to the bourgeois state.

Therefore the world economy and the world division of labour, already established in a distorted and one-sided fashion by the development of imperialism, became the foundation for the construction of socialism in any single nation. Socialism, as a system of production that seeks to harness the resources of the planet, natural as well as human, in a democratic, planned and harmonious way, can only be built on this international basis. Cramped within the confines of a single state (however vast and bountifully endowed by nature), nationalised production and state planning cannot, on the basis of autarchy, raise the productivity of human labour above that of the most advanced capitalist states (which are, by virtue of their relationship to the world market, able to exploit the advantages of the international division of labour), which alone can provide the material basis for the flowering of a genuine socialist society and culture. Stalin's 1924 statement that socialism could, and indeed, had to be built independently of the world economy and therefore without all the enormous advantages that flow from the exploitation of the principle of the international division of labour, was therefore a clear break with the programme of the Leninist Comintern, and a turning back towards the national conceptions of the Second International. The very way in which Stalin posed the question showed that he conceived of internationalism not as a principle which flowed from the nature of the world economy, but as acts of solidarity on the part of the workers in the capitalist countries, whose task it would be to protect the USSR from imperialist attacks.

Stalin soon became far more bold in his formulations when he saw how enthusiastically the more conservative elements in the party rallied to his new perspective. Thus in January 1925, we find him writing:

Let us assume that the soviet system will exist in Russia for five or ten years without a revolution taking place in the West; let us assume that, nevertheless, during that period our Republic goes on existing as a Soviet Republic, building a socialist economy under the conditions of NEP - do you think that during those five or ten years our country will merely spend the time in collecting water with a sieve and not in organising a socialist economy? It is enough to ask this question to realise how very dangerous is the theory that denies the possibility of the victory of socialism in one country. But does that mean that this victory will be complete, final? No, it does not... for as long as capitalist encirclement exists, there will always be the danger of military intervention. ^[1]

It was only a matter of time before this reactionary nationalist theory spread into the sections of the Communist International, finally becoming endorsed as official Comintern policy with the approval of its programme at the Sixth Congress in 1928, which schematically divided up the world economy into two self-sufficient wholes, and deduced from this purely artificial separation that full socialism could be built in the sector dominated by the USSR, provided only that imperialist intervention could be kept at bay. ^[2] Stalinist diplomacy, far from supplementing the struggles of the working class for socialism, became an active brake upon them as the ruling Kremlin clique employed the national sections of the Communist International as bargaining counters in Stalin's dealings with imperialism and those who represented its interests within the workers' movement. This tendency was already evident in the right opportunist policy adopted towards the British TUC and the Kuomintang, both being seen as valuable bulwarks of the USSR against a possible imperialist attack on the Soviet West and East respectively. Similar and even more conscious motives lay behind Stalin's repeated interventions in the affairs of the KPD during Hitler's rise to power, when Kremlin diplomacy assigned to Germany the role of a counter-weight to imperialist France (until 1934 regarded, with Japan, as the main threat to the USSR), so enabling the USSR, without the aid of further revolutions in the imperialist countries, to build 'socialism in one country'.

Stalin was far too shrewd to challenge openly the entire internationalist doctrine of Marxism, all the more so in view of his April 1924 speech to students of the Moscow Sverdlov University, in which he declared categorically that 'for the final victory of socialism, for the organisation of socialist production, the efforts of one country, particularly of such a peasant country as Russia, are insufficient...'. In the revised edition of the same speech, republished towards the end of 1924 under the title *The Foundations of Leninism*, this passage now read as follows:

After consolidating its power and leading the peasantry in its wake the proletariat of the victorious country can and must build a socialist society. But does that mean that it will thereby achieve the complete and final victory of socialism, that is, does it mean that with the forces of only one country it can finally consolidate socialism *and fully guarantee that country against*

intervention, and, consequently, also against restoration? No, it does not. For this, the victory of the revolution in at least several countries is needed. ^[3]

Stalin still asserted that the final victory of socialism in one country was impossible. But the grounds he gave for doing so had shifted, in the course of the summer months of 1924, from economics to those relating to military intervention. It was no longer a question of Russia's economic, cultural and technological backwardness, isolated from the economies of the advanced capitalist nations, that stood between the Soviet Union and the construction of a fully socialist society, but simply the danger of imperialist invasion.

Under the Stalinist regime both in the USSR and the Communist International, the Communist parties in the capitalist countries were progressively transformed from movements struggling to lead the working class of their own countries to power, into submissive tools of Kremlin foreign and domestic policy. They were repeatedly called upon to approve both Stalin's latest diplomatic *volte face* and his murder of Lenin's closest comrades. And through all these twists and turns abroad, and barbarous repressions at home, the theoretical foundation of the Stalinist course remained 'socialism in one country'. And here we have the theoretical point of contact - and at times of confluence - with the parties of the Second International. In both cases, the class struggle, and the building of socialism, was viewed through the prism of the capitalist nation state, while the national-reformist perspectives of both tendencies led them not to welcome the periodic crises of imperialism as opportunities to strike powerful blows at a dangerous but now divided and weakened class enemy, but to view them with dismay and foreboding, as unwelcome intrusions into a smooth evolutionary process which at some unforeseeable future date would lead to the establishment of socialism. ^[4] Such was Bukharin's conception of the construction of socialism in the USSR, one shared by Stalin until rudely shattered by the grain strike and near-revolt of the kulaks in the winter of 1928-29.

And thus too did the pundits of German Social Democracy reason, as their party prepared to assume office for the first time since the crisis days of November 1923. Like the Stalin - Bukharin utopia of the Kulak 'growing into socialism' at a 'snail's pace', the iron logic of world economic reality was to reduce it to tatters.

The Müller government took office at the precise point in time when the fortunes of both Social Democracy and German capitalism had reached their postwar peak. But as we have already noted, this joint revival was attributable far more to a temporarily favourable conjuncture of the European and United States economies than any vitality that either German capitalism or reformism might still have possessed. It was the dollar that breathed fresh life into the movement Rosa Luxemburg had once described as a 'stinking corpse', just as US credits provided the funds for German monopoly capitalism to rationalise its plant and continue the process of concentration that began with the cartel system under Bismarck. After 1924, when the revival in the economy had become apparent, the leaders of German Social Democracy quite consciously trimmed their sails to the wind of Wall Street largesse blowing in from across the Atlantic. The citadels of world capitalism were allotted the unaccustomed role of the benefactors of the SPD's experiment in 'socialism in one municipality'. What did the banking houses of Morgan, Chase and the rest care as long as they received their annual seven per cent?

Wherever the SPD held office, whether in the communes, the city councils or on a state level (as in Prussia) the party undertook vast welfare programmes involving the construction of well-appointed workers' flats, public baths, clinics, maternity homes, theatres, cultural centres, sports facilities, libraries, child-care centres and numerous other projects designed to raise the living standards of the working class. But almost without exception, they were financed by funds borrowed from Wall Street brokers. It was one of the most grotesque partnerships in the history of the German or any other labour movement. The reasoning behind this programme of social reform was as clear as it was faulty and utterly opportunist. Why provoke a head-on clash with the business community in Germany by pressing for even higher social taxation and insurance levies when far larger sums were readily forthcoming from another and even more lucrative source? The SPD's Fabian-style 'gas and water' socialism could be built, municipality by municipality, city by city, state by state, without waging class war against the bourgeoisie - in fact even with their toleration, since at no time would their property rights be in question, merely their attitude to their social responsibilities. The German worker was to be rescued from the abuses of capitalism not by revolution (only barbaric Russians indulged in such excesses) but by his party's encasing him in a protective cocoon. If he was a paid-up member of the SPD - and throughout the boom year of the republic, more than a million workers were - then nearly all his social needs would

be catered for by the party, even more so if he lived in a state, city or commune where his party held office. His wife would shop at the local cooperative, his children spend their holidays and their evenings with the Nest Falcons (6-10 years), Young Falcons (10-12), Red Falcons (12-14), Socialist Workers Youth (14-20) and the Young Socialists (18-25), while all his own cultural and sporting needs could find their outlets in the numerous SPD-run societies ranging from chess clubs to theatre groups and athletics associations. Unifying this entire structure was of course the party itself, with its gigantic propaganda machine of 187 daily papers and scores of journals devoted to specialist and theoretical questions. Running parallel to the political movement, and to a certain degree merging with it, were the free trade unions of the ADGB, whose resources were even more enormous. Millions of German workers, by no means all labour aristocrats, dyed-in-the-wool anti-Communists or hardened reformists, genuinely believed that this all-embracing movement could not only defend them against any attacks by the ruling class on their hard-won political rights, working conditions and living standards, but eventually carry them forward to socialism. The average German worker believed in and desired socialism with a passion and firmness of conviction that found its highest expression in his devotion to the organisations which he and his ancestors had built up at such enormous financial sacrifice in the face of a barbaric and utterly ruthless class enemy. The sheer magnitude of this edifice is a tribute to the noble struggle of an oppressed class for dignity and emancipation. The Müllers, Kautskys, Eberts and Scheidemanns forfeited all right to represent that tradition when they deserted the German proletariat in its hour of greatest need in August 1914, chaining the party of Marx and Engels to the war chariot of Krupp, Thyssen, Stinnes and Hindenburg; and in November 1918, when, after the political power dropped into their laps, they handed it back to the ruling class and launched their bloody campaign of extermination against the finest leaders of the German working class. Yet even then, the party leadership could not afford to effect an open break with the Marxism which it had betrayed. Fearing the attractive power of the KPD, the true historical inheritor of the Marxist legacy, the SPD wove around its reformist and, in moments of crisis, counter-revolutionary policies, a tapestry of pseudo-Marxist phrases and analyses. Thus at a time when the party's leaders were carrying their begging bowl to the richest bankers in the world, the 1925 SPD Congress at Heidelberg adopted a programme which declared, in the grand style so beloved of the pre-1914 Kautsky:

The number of proletarians is growing; the conflict between exploiters and those who are exploited increases in violence; the class warfare between the capitalist rulers of economy and those whom they oppress becoming fiercer... The goal of the working class can only be achieved by transforming the capitalist private ownership of the means of production into social ownership. When capitalist production is replaced by socialist production by the people for the people, then the growth and development of productive forces will become the source of great prosperity and universal betterment. Only then will society, in harmony and solidarity, rise from its subjection to blind economic forces and from general disintegration, and achieve free self-government.

The revolting hypocrisy of those who drafted this programme almost defies description when one recalls that it would have been redundant had the SPD taken in 1918 the measures against the Junkers and the big capitalists that the proletariat and a sizable minority of the middle class were demanding. And even if we take its socialist pretensions seriously, there immediately arises the question - how was such a programme to be implemented? Rudolf Hilferding, who blandly brushed aside calls for socialisation of heavy industry at the Congress of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils in December 1918, gave the answer at the 1927 SPD Congress in Kiel:

We are now in the midst of a period of transformation, a time of peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism... the task is set for our generation of organising capitalist economy with the aid of the state, and of transforming the capitalistically organised and conducted economy into an economy conducted by the socialist state. This signifies nothing more nor less than our generation has to solve the problem of socialism.

Hilferding's notion of 'organised capitalism' and a neutral state provided the theoretical gloss for the opportunist, class-collaborationist policies of the SPD and ADGB leaderships. They dinned into the heads of millions of workers that capitalism could be gradually abolished through the agencies of the Weimar Constitution (namely the articles pertaining to trade union and works council participation in economic affairs) and through legislating social and economic reforms at a national and local level. The main task of the movement was therefore deemed to be the preservation of the machinery that would make these measures possible - namely bourgeois democracy and its various institutions - against attacks from the counter-revolutionary right and the revolutionary left. Meanwhile, within the shell of Weimar democracy

would grow, slowly but surely, the embryo of a future German socialism. Indeed, some claimed that the chicken had already begun to sprout some feathers, like Herr Klemens, who told the August 1928 Congress of the German Transport Workers Union:

I challenge the view that in the German republic we are still justified in talking of a capitalist and bourgeois state. In such a country as Germany, which in so many ways is already organised in accordance with our desires, where we have comrades and colleagues on almost all the government and social organs, it is ignorant nonsense to talk of a capitalist, bourgeois state, which one has to struggle against.

A similar line was taken by ADGB Chairman Leipart, who wrote shortly before the formation of the Müller government:

Working-class property, producing cooperatives, labour banks, etc, also exercise considerable influence on economic life today. Representatives of the working class even took part in the negotiations for commercial treaties, workers' representatives have positions on the administration of the councils of the Post, National and State Railways, and on the canal councils, on all the bodies concerned with production and administration of the affairs of the nation and of the state, and are provided for on the supreme national economic council. ^[5]

As far as the facts went, Leipart was certainly not exaggerating. The deal of November 1918, as we have repeatedly emphasised, involved the big employers in a series of concessions to organised labour that they would never have entertained in any other predicament than a revolutionary crisis. Social Democracy exercised the influence that it did in the economic, social and political affairs of Weimar for this reason more than any other. It was the reformist bureaucracy's reward for betraying the November Revolution. But like all social phenomena and processes, the pact of November 1918 contained a contradiction. The entire history of the Republic from the earliest counter-revolutionary blood-lettings of Noske's Free Corps, through the Kapp and Munich Putsches, to the abortive coup of May 1926, had testified to the existence of a hard core of industrialist, Junker and military opposition to the Weimar Republic, which, since it flowed from a fulminating hatred and fear of the proletariat, could not but direct itself against the largest and historically the most influential wing of the German labour movement. Every Social Democrat, however reformist, however great his detestation of revolution (and we need only recall President Ebert's heartfelt comments on this subject) was for them a red-blooded Marxist who had merely chosen another than the Communists' road to subvert the integrity of the German nation. Indeed, some looked with even more suspicion on the Social Democrats, who had succeeded in capturing literally thousands of posts in the central and local government machinery, than the Communists, whose threat was easily identifiable. So here the subjective factor, though of course having its objective roots in the history of the German bourgeoisie and its half-century battle against German labour, played an important part in shaping relations between the ruling class and the reformist wing of the workers' movement in this period.

In November 1918, the formation of a Social Democratic government proved to be the salvation of the German ruling class. Yet in 1928, we find this same bourgeoisie now bitterly hostile to an identical Social Democracy, even though in the course of the intervening 10 years, the latter had proved time and again its undying loyalty to capitalism. The reasons are not hard to discover, though they utterly escaped Third Period Stalinism, ever anxious to prove to doubters that Social Democracy, far from becoming an obstacle to the strategy of the German bourgeoisie, was functioning as the advanced guard of fascist counter-revolution and dictatorship. At no time during the lifetime of the Müller government was the possibility seriously discussed of the bourgeoisie seeking to eject the Social Democrats from the cabinet. According to the Stalinist theory of social fascism, the reformists were the chosen instrument for the 'fascisation' of the German republic. Thus declared Stalin's protégé in the KPD, Heinz Neumann, at the Tenth Plenum of the ECCI in July 1929:

While Italy is the classic country of fascism, Germany is the classic country of social fascism. There is no country in the World where social fascism has already found such completion, such thorough formation, also ideologically, as it has in Germany. What is one of the most decisive levers for the acceleration of the social fascist tendency? *It is the part played by Social Democracy in the government...* [down to the small local administrations]. All this implies the *coalescence of the SPD apparatus with the state machine, and the police machine*, which has accelerated the development of social fascism. ^[6]

Although couched in obligatory 'Third Period' jargon, Neumann's estimation of the relationship between the SPD and ADGB bureaucracy and the capitalist state was in its essentials identical with that of the 'social fascists' Leipart and Klemens. All three, as is evident from their quoted statements, shared the illusion that the German ruling class had made its peace with Social Democracy, and had finally accepted the latter's permanent presence in the leading as well as subsidiary organs of state and government. Neumann, like the leaders of German reformism he denounced with such shrill and empty demagoguery, depicted the formation of the Müller government as accelerating a process of fusion between the reformist apparatus and the capitalist state, including even its directly repressive organs such as the police. In fact, the basic trend was in the opposite direction. Even before the May 1928 elections which lifted Müller into the chancellorship, issues had arisen which were destined to place enormous strain on the new government from the moment it took office.

Early in 1928, the new Defence Minister Gröner (Ebert's saviour in November 1918) had won - with very little difficulty - the support of President Hindenburg for a warship building programme, which was to commence with the construction of cruiser 'A'. With the evidence that is now available, it is clear that this proposal was part of a far broader plan to prepare German imperialism for a new European war. And as such, it immediately became a central issue in German politics, with the workers' and middle-class radical parties ranged against the cruiser plan, and the entire forces of the Junkers and big bourgeoisie in its favour. It was a line-up similar to that which crystallised around the election of Hindenburg and the referendum on the princes' property. As the date for the Reichstag elections approached, the entire Social Democratic campaign revolved around this single, immensely important issue. Hermann Müller, as SPD Reichstag fraction leader, was well to the fore in denouncing the war-mongering activities of the right-wing parties and their allies in the military. In fact the main SPD slogan, one which earned a truly heartfelt response from a war-weary working class, was 'Cruisers or feeding centres for children?'. In the crisis-laden months that followed, Müller and his fellow reformist leaders must have bitterly regretted the employment of that slogan. For President Hindenburg made it a condition of Müller's taking office that he accept into his cabinet Gröner as Defence Minister, and proceed to implement the cruiser programme proposed by the out-going centre-right coalition. Müller, after hesitations that were resolved with the assistance of Scheidemann, capitulated to the general staff just as he and his predecessors had done in August 1914. But in stark contrast to those heady days, when Social Democracy became elevated overnight to a status undreamt of in peacetime Imperial Germany, the reformists received precious little thanks for their servility. And to add to Müller's troubles, the issue was to provoke a revolt not only among the party's more militant members, but even within the ranks of the predominantly right-wing Reichstag fraction, who when the question finally came before the house on 17 November 1928, voted against the policy being pursued by their party comrades in Müller's cabinet. The decision to begin building cruiser 'A' was carried with the enthusiastic support of all the right-wing parties, against the votes of the SPD and KPD, by 225 to 203. But by this time, new and even greater problems confronted the Müller government.

By the end of 1928, the SPD's election programme was in ruins. The Müller government had already agreed to build warships for the imperialists, and now there were to be no more feeding centres for children. The SPD's crawl to 'socialism in one municipality' had ground to a halt not because the cruiser programme had eroded funds previously allocated for social welfare (building did not commence until some time later), but for an altogether different reason, one for which the SPD had made no provision whatsoever in their political and economic planning. Religious faith in United States capitalism proved to be their undoing. June 1928, the month the Müller government took office, was also by coincidence the period of the highest US investment in Germany. In the second quarter of 1928, 153.8 million dollars flowed from the US into the German economy, much of it of course in the form of loans to Social Democratic administrations to finance their welfare programmes. But the next quarter showed a dramatic drop to barely 14 million dollars, only partially offset by a rise in the last quarter to 62.4 million. This drying-up of US investment, unlike the total famine of a year later, was due to a new upsurge in the boom on Wall Street, where far quicker and higher returns could be secured than by lending money to a German industrialist, municipal council or government authority at a modest seven per cent interest.

This trend continued into 1929, with 21.0 million dollars in the first quarter, and negligible amounts in the second and third. So a full year before the Wall Street crash of September-October 1929, German capitalism, and with it Social Democracy, was beginning to suffer the negative effects of its subordinate relationship to the USA, established after the defeat in 1918 and formalised under the terms of the Dawes Plan. As for the German working class, what would be the consequences of this sharp downturn in

foreign investment? Within months it would mean a rapid rise in the number of jobless workers, as firms starved of new capital and raw materials began to trim their labour force to lower levels of production and an anticipated drop in sales. Deprived of US credits, firms would be forced to accumulate capital almost exclusively either with loans from German banks, or through increased exploitation of their own workers. In the latter case, this would inevitably lead to a sharpening of the wages struggle. The proportion of foreign loans to domestic share issues brings out this trend. Domestic share issues were at their highest between the third quarter of 1926 and the second quarter of 1927, when they reached 395.5 million marks. Over the next three quarters, however, foreign loans ran at 657, 566 and 336 million marks. Thus any appreciable fall in foreign investment in German industry, unless compensated by an approximate equal rise in investment from domestic sources, would obviously have a catastrophic effect on the German economy, and consequently on the living standards of the German working class. And here much was indeed at stake. In the five years of boom that followed the crises of the early postwar years, the German working class had succeeded in restoring its pre-1914 level of real wages. With 1913 as the base year of 100, skilled workers' real wages had climbed from a low of 58 in 1923 to 93 by 1927, while unskilled workers, gaining from the Republic's system of collective bargaining, had risen over the same period from 86 to 105. No other working class in Europe had managed to force up its wages at a comparable rate (in Fascist Italy, wages had remained stationary over the period, while in France they had actually fallen). In terms of food consumption, the German worker had also restored much of what he had lost as a result of wartime deprivations and the periodic near-collapses of the economy in the early postwar years:

Consumption per head of population (kg or litres)			
	1913	1923	1927
Rye	153	90	97
Wheat and Spelt	96	47	78
Barley	108	29	71
Oats	128	57	95
Potatoes	700	560	381
Meat	50	40	50
Sugar	19	13	22
Coffee	2.4	0.6	2.0
Fruits	4.6	0.7	6.9
Beer	102	45	81

Modest and inadequate though they were, these hard and recently-won improved living standards, together with the eight-hour day and the rest of the social legislation enacted under the Weimar Constitution, became an increasingly intolerable burden for a German employing class starved of capital investment by the sudden decline in loans from the United States, and under growing pressure from its falling profit margins. Far from welcoming the formation of the Müller government (as the Stalinists vainly attempted to claim), the monopoly capitalists saw it as an unmitigated evil, since it would raise hopes amongst millions of workers for a continued improvement in their wages and social conditions, and therefore find it all the more difficult to come out openly on the side of the employers in any big confrontation between the classes. The only consolation for the big industrialists was the presence in the cabinet of two representatives of the DVP whose task it was to veto any measures Müller and his SPD colleagues might propose that did not accord with the interests of big business; the remainder of the Cabinet posts were taken by the DDP (two), BVP and Centre (one each), and Gröner (non-party).

But as had so often been the case in previous periods of political and economic crisis, the traditional party of heavy industry found itself bitterly divided over what policy to adopt towards the Social Democrats, a rift further widened by the DVP's participation after June 1928 in a cabinet headed by a 'Marxist'.

The dwindling band of Ruhr industrialists who still remained loyal to the party were much perturbed by the catastrophic decline in capital accumulation which followed the sharp decline in loans from the USA.

The 1929 level of industrial investment was barely 25 per cent of that in 1928, which in its turn was down on the previous year.

Even before the formation of the Müller cabinet - in November 1927 to be precise - heavy industry had begun to exert pressure for a drastic revision of national and local financial policy. On 23 November, 1927, the Federation of German Industries Presidium presented a memorandum to Chancellor Wilhelm Marx containing a series of far-reaching economic and by implication, political proposals:

The most important objective of all financial measures in the immediate future must be a minimum reduction of 10 per cent in the expenditure of national, state and local authorities compared with the 1927 budgets... We are convinced that this demands a radical change in the constitution. However, circumstances demand such action. As long as reparations responsibility lasts, it cannot be denied that the lack of moderate financial responsibility by the people's representatives at state and local level make it impossible for the Reich government to function on sound economic and financial principles, and at the same time a successful foreign policy is endangered.

In the discussion that ensued the next day (24 November 1927) between a deputation from the Federation Presidium and the Marx government, the following points were argued for vigorously by Privy Councillor Kastl on behalf of the deputation:

The need to strengthen cabinet powers in the economic sphere and to combat a) the all too great eagerness of the Reichstag to spend money; b) the opposition of the state governments to cooperate actively [in proposed economies]. Finally, German industry must aim to keep to world market prices. It was [therefore] the duty of the Reich government to avoid anything that would raise price levels. That applied specially to wages policy, social taxes and guaranteed working hours.

If the industrialists stuck to this programme - and they did - then they were certain to collide with the new Müller government, which had pledged itself in SPD pre-election agitation to continue with its policy of expanding social welfare, raising wages and improving working conditions. Particularly ominous in this regard was the remark made in the discussion by the arch-reactionary heavy industrialist Paul Reusch, a co-thinker of Vögler, who said:

The attitude of foreign countries which in England and America a year ago had been favourable towards Germany, has recently turned rather alarmingly against Germany. *Therefore the struggle against the masses and with the Reichstag must be taken up with the utmost inflexibility.*
[Emphasis added]

From the beginning of 1929 - nine full months before the crash on Wall Street made its impact felt in Europe - German heavy industry applied yet greater pressure through its political and propaganda agencies to secure a drastic cut in the social welfare programmes which had been pursued with such vigour by the reformists over the previous five years. And the first step towards their goal of slashing social expenditure, cutting real wages, lengthening hours and so increasing profits and funds for capital accumulation was naturally the removal of the reformists from office and what was even more integral to the success of their strategy, the progressive whittling away of the influence of the SPD and trade unions in the affairs of the national economy and the administration of the machinery of state and government. Stresemann sympathised with the motives behind such belligerent thinking, while rejecting the methods proposed to realise them. He still clung to the hope - vain as events were to demonstrate - that a *modus vivendi* could be preserved between organised labour and organised big business. It had proved difficult enough during the years of boom. How could such a policy of compromise work when capitalism in crisis offered not reforms, but demanded the clawing back of all that it had conceded in more prosperous days? Not that Stresemann denied the need for economies along the lines proposed by heavy industry. But he looked at them from another and more sophisticated angle, with one eye on the dangerous political situation that could be created by a policy which neglected the economic interests of the millions-strong propertied petit-bourgeoisie, the traditional backbone of the moderate German conservatism personified by Stresemann.

This was the central theme of his remarkable speech to a session of the DVP Central Committee on 26 February 1929. The meeting had been convened to define the party's attitude to the Müller government following the withdrawal of the Centre Party from the cabinet two weeks earlier. Stresemann was under strong pressure from the right wing in the DVP to follow the Centre's example, ^[7] and indeed a

resolution had been passed in November 1928 by the DVP Central Committee that the party was not irrevocably committed to supporting the Müller government (this decision had been taken in the light of Social Democratic opposition to the cruiser programme). Stresemann implored the assembled representatives of heavy industry not to pursue a policy of naked class warfare, since its repercussions would be felt far beyond the confines of the labour movement:

We are faced by a crisis in the parliamentary system which is more than a crisis of confidence... One thing must not be forgotten; that the silent reserves of industry are also the silent reserves of the state. If a boom is followed by a slump, these reserves hold the balance... Unless we encourage the formation of these reserves, we cannot extricate ourselves from the intolerable state of affairs in which the modernisation, and to some extent, the very maintenance of undertakings, is dependent upon foreign capital... Since the days when I was engaged in industry... I have always taken the view that *we must take care to maintain what may be called the independent middle class, and especially the independent businessmen* that have not yet assumed the form of a company, and can set a personal initiative and responsibility against the lack of accumulated capital. There is no doubt that this entire branch of independent German industry will meet a speedy death through want of capital backing. We shall be confronted, if matters go on as present, *by trusts on the one side, and millions of employees and workers on the other. Social distinctions will also become intensified.* All this may stimulate the financial forces of German competitive industry, *but the forces of personality and independence will sink to zero.* Nothing can hasten this course of events so much as the continued rise in the expenditures [on unemployment pay, welfare, etc - RB] approved by parliament, which is expressed in the continued rise in taxation... Our production is suffering from Germany's want of purchasing power, and indeed, nearly the whole of that industry has come to a crisis that amounts to a catastrophe... *That is the reason why the parties must give up competing in the race for popularity.* The DVP proposed that in the Budget estimates expenditure shall not be raised nor introduced without the consent of the Reich government... ^[8]

In order to prevent the rapid erosion of the mass basis of bourgeois rule in Germany, Stresemann was arguing, the big monopolies would have to pursue a more flexible economic as well as political policy towards the middle class. Certainly there had to be drastic cuts in social expenditure. This was not in dispute between Stresemann and the Ruhr tycoons who were increasingly dominating his party. But whereas a capital-hungry and profit-starved heavy industry wanted all the spoils, Stresemann, sensitive as ever to the moods of the petit-bourgeoisie, insisted that the smaller independent producers should be permitted to share in the capital reserves released by a more stringent economic policy. So once again, the struggle for the division of the surplus product became a key factor in German politics.

Stresemann's advice fell on deaf ears. The party he had originally founded to represent the broader stratum of German burgherdom was fast degenerating into an ultra-reactionary mouthpiece of heavy industry, ^[9] as he admitted to a close party colleague:

The discontent within the party is strengthened by the fact that we are associated with the Social Democrats in a government. On the right, the word 'traitor' is used in connection with the Social Democrats... we are no longer a party with a broad view of affairs, we are more and more developing into a purely industrial party... Today the group can no longer muster the courage to enter into opposition to the great employers' and industrial associations. We are quite concerned that 23 members [out of a total of 45] of the [Reichstag] group should be directly or indirectly connected with the control of industry, and are indignant when a second wage earner is to become a member of the group. ^[10]

The belligerent stand of the 'Ruhr lobby' in the DVP was but a pale reflection of the class war it had been waging throughout the Rhine-Westphalian industrial belt since November 1928. A clash over wages had only narrowly been averted the previous year, but now, with recession already biting deep into the reserves of even the biggest concerns, the leaders of Ruhr industry decided it was time to resist the demands of the trade union leaders for their customary annual wage increase. The old contracts covering 200 000 workers in the iron industry lapsed on 1 November 1928, and so well before this date the ADGB unions put in for a 15 pfennig wage rise; partly on the grounds of the increased cost of living, but also because the employers had only recently increased the prices of their products. Naturally, the Ruhr bosses rejected this classic reformist argument, since prices had been raised not with a view to paying more wages, but to increasing profits and so, partially at least, enabling them to offset the decline in capital

accumulation resulting from the dramatic falling off in foreign credits. The trade union leaders naturally looked to their allies in the Müller government to lend them support in the forthcoming conflict with the Ruhr iron masters since the Minister of Labour, Rudolf Wissell, was himself an old trade unionist with something of a left reputation (as Minister of Economics in the first SPD government of 1919, Wissell had resigned when the cabinet rejected his proposals for the socialisation of industry). With the negotiations deadlocked, and all the stages of local arbitration exhausted, the chairman of the Düsseldorf arbitration board ruled on 26 October (five days before the current contracts lapsed) that the unions should be awarded an increase of six pfennigs an hour. Even though this sum was well under half the original claim, the employers still found it exorbitant, while the union leaders readily snapped it up. Thus on 1 November 1928 began the biggest lock-out in the history of Ruhr heavy industry. In taking this momentous step, the iron masters were not only challenging the unions, but openly defying the Müller government and the Weimar Constitution, whose arbitration procedure had determined the level of the wage award. It was the opening salvo in a war that was to end four and a half years later with the total destruction both of German trade unionism and the party of Hermann Müller. The issues involved in the lock-out were indeed of enormous significance. Here were at most a few score employers defying with impunity a government headed by a party that less than a year before had won the votes of more than nine million German workers, and which enjoyed the backing of the most powerful and richest trade union movement on the continent of Europe. Yet the legally elected government, acting in accordance with the constitution - its own constitution - and armed with a massive Reichstag majority of 208 in support of welfare for the locked-out workers, found itself paralysed when confronted with this challenge to its authority from the arrogant iron masters of the Ruhr; the same men who two years later would be financing Hitler's Nazis in their final onslaught on German labour. As a last bid to find common ground between the Metal Workers Union and the employers, Müller appointed the notoriously right-wing Social Democrat Carl Severing, the Interior Minister of Prussia, as the final arbitrator in the dispute. Both parties agreed in advance to accept his ruling, and when he finally gave it on 21 December 1928, the employers' confidence in him was vindicated. Severing found that the Düsseldorf award had been too generous to the workers, and they had to accept another cut in their original claim, to take effect from 1 January 1929. Thus did the reformists bend to the pressure of organised big business, even when it was in their interests to resist it. For far from reconciling the iron masters to the rule of the reformists, it served as an example to all German industrialists that with a little more firmness, the whole 'Marxist' crew could be driven from office for good.

The victory of the iron masters over Müller and the Metal Workers Union led on directly and immediately to demands being made in the DVP Central Committee and Reichstag Fraction for a break with its SPD coalition partners. With the Centre Party temporarily outside the cabinet, the DVP held the fate of the Müller government in its hands, and even the more liberal elements in the party were in favour of using this leverage to extort far-reaching concessions from the Social Democrats. In view of the dangerous situation for the working class created by the Ruhr lock-out defeat, how treacherous was the smug comment of the SPD official organ on the Düsseldorf award of 26 October, which the paper regarded not only as a great victory for the metal-workers, but proof that under Social Democratic rule, the capitalist state was in the process of discarding its repressive functions:

Ten years ago the conflict over wages would have been settled entirely by a social struggle by force only of trade union resources. Ten years ago the workers' organisations would have found no protection from the state and its organs, they would then have had to be convinced in practice of the bitter truth that the state was on the side of the employers. But now the state guarantees the collective agreement. The great social differences are settled not only by resort to the trade union method of struggle, *but simultaneously by the force of the political influence which the workers possess in the state.* ^[11]

The employers' answer to that utterly opportunist argument had been given in the course of the Ruhr lock-out. The methods of 'social struggle' were not so outdated as the SPD leaders fondly believed. And the contention that under the Müller government, the workers exercised a political influence on the state invited the reply - which was not long in coming - that this was an excellent justification for removing the Social Democrats from the government. But first some more softening up had to be done, and the annual budget, drawn up by Finance Minister Hilferding, provided the big employers and bankers with their opportunity. Presenting his budget to the Reichstag on 14 March 1929, Hilferding was at pains to point out that the financial difficulties being encountered by the Müller government were not the responsibility of the Social Democrats, but originated from two sources: the drying-up of foreign loans,

and deficits incurred by previous ministries in 1926 and 1927. The crisis had been further exacerbated by an unprecedented and totally unexpected increase in the number of unemployed. The 1927 unemployment insurance act had been approved on the general understanding that the jobless rate would not go much above the half million mark, and this seemed a reasonable assumption in the boom conditions then prevailing. But with unemployment now nearing the three million mark - and this, it will be remembered, was still six months before the Wall Street crash - the funds set aside for dole payments were proving hopelessly insufficient to meet the most elementary needs of the unemployed. Already 150 million marks had been borrowed from the Treasury to meet this crisis, and another 250 million would probably be needed for the next fiscal year, even on the basis of the prevailing jobless rate. Where then were the cuts to be made? Hilferding proposed economies and taxes amounting to 379 million marks, but since these were to be mostly made from and imposed at the expense of propertied interests, the Müller government was once again confronted with the same ruling-class intransigence that had forced it to retreat in the Ruhr lock-out. After prolonged bargaining, with the Social Democrats predictably making most of the concessions, the budget was finally approved by the Reichstag on 10 April 1929, only now the cuts proposed by Hilferding had been whittled down to a mere 110 million marks. Once again, landed and industrial interests had found that concerted pressure, supported from within the coalition by the bourgeois parties, paid off. But still they were not satisfied. The Social Democrats had not been persuaded to yield on the basic question of unemployment insurance and other welfare benefits, since to do so would open up its entire left flank to the inroads of the KPD. Refusal to budge on this issue produced an angry comment from the highly influential organ of heavy industry and finance, the *Berliner Börsen Zeitung*:

[The]... regulation of the finances of the Reich... calls for an immediate rigorous cut in unemployment insurance, particularly in the direction of an exclusion from benefit of the seasonally and permanently unemployed. The rates of unemployment insurance must be reduced all round, while the supervision of unemployment and the exemption of all cases of proved unemployment must be far more severely carried out. Economies can also be effected in other directions in regard to national insurance, which should gradually be divested of its coercive government character and transformed into an optional matter of thrift [sic!]. ^[12]

The article, a clear indication of the dominant trend of thinking in big-business circles, also demanded a revision of the tax system, away from direct taxation (a progressive income tax hampers the accumulation of capital) towards taxation on consumption, which always hits the lower income groups hardest. Reductions in death duties, company taxes, etc, were also demanded. Finally, the article called for a new wages policy, one which marked a clear break from the established Weimar system of 'political wages':

The economy of labour within the country must also be subjected to a fundamental change. The coercive regulations governing wages and working hours must be abolished and we must introduce the freedom of employment and a wage system on the basis of the work actually performed. ^[13]

Merging with the controversy concerning the Müller government's domestic policies was the equally fierce and emotionally charged debate on the terms of the new reparations agreement being negotiated with the Allies. After nearly four years of operations under the Dawes Plan, it had been proposed that yet another schedule of payments should be devised at a conference in Paris under the chairmanship of the American Owen Young, from whose name the new plan derived its title. The very composition of the German delegation gave a clear indication of who really ruled in Berlin. Arriving in Paris in the February of 1929, ostensibly to represent the Müller government, were the following leaders of German big business: Reichsbank President Hjalmar Schacht, United Steel Works General Manager Albert Vögler, Ludwig Kastl, Privy Councillor and Director of the Federation of German Industries, and Carl Melchior, of the Hamburg bank of Warburg and Co.

No Social Democrat dared so much as show his face at this summit of international high finance and industry. Schacht, the main spokesman for the German delegation, presented a memorandum which clearly indicated the growing aggressiveness of imperialist-oriented circles of the bourgeoisie. Not only did it propose a drastic reduction in annual reparations payments (which were anyway being met largely out of loans borrowed from the Allies), the memorandum called for Germany's right to acquire colonies to be recognised by the Allies. It rapidly became obvious in the course of the Paris conference - which dragged on until May - that Schacht and Vögler were acting as independent agents, and not as representatives of the German government. Stresemann, Müller's foreign minister, and the entire SPD

leadership, were committed to a policy of *détente* with Germany's former Western enemies, and Schacht's aggressive stance threatened to disrupt what for the dying Stresemann was now his life's work. Once again, big business had indicated the contempt it felt for the politicians who ruled Germany. Before long, both Schacht and Vöglér were to translate their scorn into active support for fascism.

The Reichsbank President had already given a clear indication of the direction of his thinking in April 1929, at a meeting with government leaders in Berlin on the progress of the talks. When Carl Severing warned Schacht that his belligerent behaviour at the Paris conference could endanger Germany's fragile economic stability, and that the withdrawal of Allied support credits would immediately precipitate mass unemployment and political upheavals, Schacht replied coolly: *'Then we will simply have to shoot.'* But who was to do the shooting? True, Severing, as Prussian Interior Minister, had no hesitation only a few days later in ordering the Berlin police to fire on Communist workers celebrating May Day, a crime applauded in every bourgeois paper, however hostile their attitude towards the Social Democrats. But firing on demonstrations of SPD workers was another question altogether, and both Severing and Schacht knew it. The latter's evolution from being a founder of the republican-radical DDP to an open supporter of National Socialism was well under way.

Meanwhile, as the controversy raged over the Young Plan, the Müller government became increasingly bogged down by the inability of its constituent parties to agree on economic and social policies. Any prospects of a deal between the reformists and the DVP were killed stone dead by the collapse of the US boom in October 1929. From this date onwards, however much the Social Democrats desired it, no stable compromise or coalition with the bourgeoisie was possible. Subjectively, the overwhelming majority of the SPD leadership gravitated organically towards a policy of coalition with the left flank of the bourgeoisie, spurning the possibility of a bloc with any party or tendency to its left against the capitalist parties. But such a strategy - the essence of the 'grand coalition' - demanded not only an economic situation which permitted at least a modest programme of reforms to render the exercise palatable to the millions of workers who followed the SPD. *There had also to be a significant fraction of the bourgeoisie itself willing to cooperate in such an undertaking.* The basis for such a collaborationist trend in the bourgeoisie, quite wide in the first months of the republic, had been eroded not only by the steady decline of the DDP, but by the rise of an ultra-reactionary tendency in the Centre headed by Monsignor Ludwig Kaas, who replaced Marx as party leader in December 1928, and the increasing isolation of Stresemann in the DVP. As for the largest ruling-class party, the DNVP, there had never been any question of its collaboration with representatives of the SPD in a coalition government. From the birth of the republic until the Reichstag elections of September 1930, when the Nazis erupted from obscurity to the position of Germany's second-largest party, governments had the choice of anchoring their parliamentary support either on the SPD or the DNVP. As Count Westarp declared at the Nationalists' congress in September 1927: *'We or the socialists.'* And in the unlikely event of both parties going over to a policy of all-out opposition, no majority could have been commanded by any other parliamentary combination, since together with the KPD, which rejected the Weimar system as a matter of principle, they comprised a permanent majority of the Reichstag from January 1919 to the eve of the September 1930 elections. Any alliance policy pursued by the SPD was therefore of necessity predicated on a clear preference on the part of the remaining bourgeois groupings for a bloc with reformists, rather than an homogenous 'national' bloc with the DNVP. Schacht's defection to the ultra-nationalist right was immensely significant in this respect, since in the early days of the republic, it was he more than almost any other bourgeois who had initiated a policy of close collaboration with the reformists against the threat of Communist revolution. Now, with the crisis gathering momentum almost hourly, ^[14] he had only one political aim: the destruction of the Müller government, and its replacement by a regime that could, without hesitation, do the necessary shooting. Within weeks of the slump on Wall Street, and with United States loans now being recalled in a panic bid to meet debts incurred at home as a result of the crash, German big business stepped up its offensive against the Social Democrats and the trade unions. Carl Duisberg of IG Farben told a conference of 3000 industrialists in Berlin on 13 November 1929 that Paul Silverberg's proposed policy of mass redundancies and intensified exploitation must have the support of all employers. Evidently not having either himself or his audience in mind, he declared that *'the German people must learn to work more and eat less'*. Willi Wittke, the spokesman for Saxon industrialists, went even further, and demanded to loud applause that the Müller government should make way for *'tougher men who could stand unpopularity'*.

Three weeks later, on 2 December 1929, the all-powerful Federation of German Industries issued a manifesto under the intimidating title *Go Ahead Or Go Under*. Although couched in often abstruse

phrases and long-winded economic jargon, its message was as clear as it was brutal. The German working class had to be reduced to conditions of near pauperism and servitude such as it had not experienced since the years of oppression and unfettered exploitation under Bismarck:

The German economy is at the parting of the ways. If it is not possible to adjust taxation and to bring about a decisive turnabout of our economic, financial and social policy, then the collapse of the German economy is inevitable. Rationalisation of the economy has undeniably been energetically pursued and has had some success. It would, however, have had more favourable results had it not been impaired by increased burdens. [Precisely the point made and illustrated statistically in Chapter XIV! - RB] It has often had disadvantageous consequences for individual concerns and can only benefit industry as a whole if it is relieved of unproductive expenditure, if interest rates are reduced and if private investment is assured of a reliable return. [In other words, the problem of the falling rate of profit, also discussed in the same chapter - RB] The German economy must be made free. It must not be interfered with by experiments and political influence. The process of socialisation leads to the destruction of the economy and the distress of the masses [sic!]. We therefore reject the attempts at industrial democracy [that is, the system of works councils and trade union 'participation' in economic affairs - RB] as a means of socialisation and therefore as a precursor of collectivisation. German industry sees this as a great danger, not only for employers and workpeople, but for the nation as a whole. The democratisation of the economy for which the socialists are striving, stifles initiative and destroys the sense of responsibility without which no progress is possible. [Therefore we demand]... the building up of capital. This is a prerequisite for increasing production... The German economy must be freed from all economic restrictions. Production must be freed from taxation... There must be a fundamental recognition of the limit to which the state can interfere in the economy. State enterprise must be limited to those areas where individual enterprise cannot or should not operate. Where public enterprise is justified, it must be run on private business lines. It must have no preferential financing [an obvious attack on Social Democratic welfare financing - RB] or taxation and must work under the same conditions as private enterprise... The claims of social policy must be limited to what the economy can support. Economic productivity is the source of social achievement. Recognising this, we unanimously demand: As regards the social insurance laws, their present basis may remain, but payment of benefits and their administration must, unlike at present, conform to what the economy can support. Unemployment insurance: the partial reforms of 3 October [wherein the Müller government sanctioned the disqualification of certain categories from benefit, and reduced benefits for others - RB] does not go far enough. Contributions must be sufficient to meet benefits... Arbitration and compulsory wage regulations: state compulsory regulation of wages and working conditions must be abolished... Finance and taxation policy. Taxation in recent years has increased so much as to make the return on investment below the customary rate of interest. This will eventually lead to the disappearance of investment capital... Indirect taxation must be increased, with the abolition of profits tax as soon as possible, at once by at least one half. ^[15]

Schacht was thinking along similar lines, as became evident when he published his attack on Social Democratic economic and social policy, *The End of Reparations*, in the year following the fall of the Müller government:

It cannot be denied that the postwar policy of Germany has through its socialistic system of financial irresponsibility, hidden from the world the exhaustion of Germany's economic and financial life... since socialism has so extensive an influence upon the conduct of business and finance in Germany, it remains to be seen whether the productive forces of the people will be adequate to pay for the welfare measures, the bad economics and expensive bureaucracy of this Marxism [that is, Social Democracy]... Not less arbitrary and injurious to the national economic system has been the evolution of wage regulations under the Marxist system... The result is that often enough the profitability of an undertaking depends upon political rather than economic conditions... The more the political domination of the socialist trade unions succeeded, by the wage agreement system, in equalising wages, the more emphatically the employers demanded that wages should correspond to actual performance. The decisive historical mistake which must be charged against the SPD is that it seized the occasion of a lost war to promise the masses of the population greater comforts than they had enjoyed before the war. ^[16]

Schacht penned these incredibly reactionary lines, full of scorn for even the most modest demands of Social Democracy, shortly after he made his fateful decision to support the Nazis.

The severity of the economic crisis was further underlined by the Federation at its extraordinary general meeting held 10 days after the publication of its document. A succession of employers took the floor to deliver blistering attacks on the Müller government and especially the trade unions, which they quite correctly saw as the first obstacle to the implementation of plans to cut wages and to speed up the tempo of work. Wittke was again prominent in the discussion, drawing the remarks of earlier speakers on the need for a new economic policy to their logical political conclusion:

To carry out what today's speakers have demanded, requires a firm and durable government. Our present party system does not give this. I am not alone in saying that an enabling act can perhaps be the only means to get us out of our predicament... This of course demands, above all, civic courage, an attribute which unfortunately is in short supply and which brings temporary unpopularity.

Director Eugen Schnaas of Berlin went still further, proposing not only the suspension of parliamentary party government, but, by implication, the destruction of the trade unions. The wild shouts of approval which greeted his anti-union diatribe, and even more, the invocation of the name associated throughout Europe with anti-socialist terror and repression, gave more than a hint of the direction in which German big business was moving:

Those who have had occasion in recent years to sit down at the table with the trade unions in wage negotiations must have realised that they haven't got a clue about economics ... I echo the words of the late President Ebert that there will be no industrial peace in Germany until 100 000 party officials have been expelled. [Cries of 'Bravo!' and 'Mussolini!'] I don't have to say that this radical measure is necessary.

And Germany's Mussolini was already waiting in the wings...

Between the publication of the Federation's manifesto and the meeting of 12 December there exploded the biggest anti-Müller bombshell of them all - the *Schacht Memorandum*. Issued by the Reichsbank President on 5 December, it not only announced Schacht's repudiation of the Young Plan agreement he had signed in Paris on 7 June, but his total opposition to the domestic, principally economic policies of the government whose servant he supposedly was (the *Memorandum* was not even shown to the government before its release). Echoing the arguments of heavy industry, Schacht claimed that a:

... true balance of the budget has yet to be achieved; no steps have been taken toward an organised settlement of the former deficit; while new, constantly increasing deficits and fresh demands keep appearing, deficits and demands which in the final analysis can only be covered by further taxation, that is, by a still greater financial burden on the nation.

Schacht had succeeded in drawing first blood. For the immediate target of his attack was Finance Minister Rudolf Hilferding, who, having lost the confidence of the head of the state bank, decided to resign rather than fight it out. ^[17] Hilferding's successor was not a Social Democrat, but Paul Moldenhauer, a professor of insurance at Cologne University and, what was more to the point, a member of the DVP. The SPD government leaders had already retreated over the questions of cruiser 'A', the Ruhr lock-out, the 1929-30 budget, the Young Plan talks in Paris, unemployment insurance, and now Schacht's attack on their own party comrade Hilferding. What followed was even more capitulatory. Although in no sense a member of the government, Schacht in effect laid down the guidelines for its future budgets by compelling the government, on pain of being denied credits by the Reichsbank to meet its debts, to establish a 'sinking fund' of 450 million marks. Once this deflationary proposal was acceded to by a thoroughly intimidated Reichstag and Cabinet, Schacht authorised a consortium of German banks to provide the government with the required funds to meet its more pressing obligations (Schacht's financial dictatorship was rendered all the more effective by the drying-up of other sources of loans as a result of the slump in the USA).

Continued differences with the Müller government over the Young Plan (and not, it should be noted, financial policy) eventually precipitated Schacht's resignation from the Reichsbank on 3 March 1930, nine days before the Plan was ratified by the Reichstag by 266 votes to 193. Schacht had gone, much to the relief of many rank-and-file Social Democrats and trade unionists (he was to return three years later as Hitler's Reichsbank chief), but his aim - the removal of the SPD from the government - was now only days away. On the day of the Reichstag vote, Heinrich Brüning, leader of the Centre Party Reichstag

fraction and a fast ascending protégé of Kaas, visited Hindenburg to inform the President of his party's determination to carry out the financial 'reforms' Schacht and the big employers' organisations had been demanding with mounting urgency over the previous year. And like those from whom he took his cue, Brüning declared he would not shrink from by-passing normal parliamentary methods to achieve his goal. The Centre organ *Germania*, whose editorial policy was directed by von Papen's reactionary Catholic clique, revealed that in the course of the conversation, Hindenburg had promised Brüning that he would 'make use of all constitutional means' to bring about such a reform of German financial policy. And *Germania* added darkly, in tones clearly inspired by von Papen himself, that 'if the German parliament cannot accomplish this task, then the President will assume whatever powers are appropriate and necessary... The dissolution of the Reichstag, or Article 48, or both, stand ready for service if the parties fall.' With this Bonapartist injunction, sentence had been pronounced on the Müller government, ^[18] all that needed to be done was to carry it out. The SPD now stood alone, its 'grand coalition' in ruins. The DVP had voted to withdraw its support from Müller at the end of 1929, and now, with Brüning's decision to invoke the authority of the President to force even more reactionary policies on the government, the Social Democrats were obviously about to lose the support of their other main coalition partner, the Centre Party. The issue on which Müller's government finally fell was that of unemployment insurance. In January 1930, the number of workers without jobs had risen to well over the two million mark, and even with the reduction in categories qualified to receive benefit undertaken by the government in October 1929, there was no hope of their being maintained at subsistence level unless new funds were made available to replenish the exhausted treasury. The SPD proposed that the deficit be made good by a four per cent levy on higher income groups, notably civil servants. The DVP, whose support was drawn from just these privileged layers of the population, rejected the plan point blank. Then Finance Minister Moldenhauer came up with a compromise solution. He proposed on 24 March that unemployment contributions, which currently stood at 3.5 per cent for employers and workers alike, should be raised to four per cent providing that a majority of the trade union and management representatives on the directorate of the national unemployment service agreed to this. The DVP turned down this plan also, even though the sum involved was the seemingly trifling one of a half per cent of employers' incomes. Then with the other two government parties, the Centre and the DVP, acting as mediators, a third plan was drawn up. It now involved an increase of a mere quarter per cent in contributions, and only then in the event of a government subsidy of 150 millions failing to make good the deficit. This version seemed to satisfy both the DVP and the SPD cabinet members until, at the very last moment, Müller's Minister of Labour Rudolf Wissell declared that he could not vote for it. Wissell was not speaking for himself alone. Thirty-seven per cent of the SPD Reichstag fraction were trade union officials and leaders, among them being five members of the ADGB Executive Committee. On 27 March 1930, Wissell informed his other three party colleagues in the Cabinet - Müller, Severing and Schmidt - that the trade union delegation in the Reichstag could under no circumstances vote for the proposed reform of the unemployment insurance scheme. They were in fact unanimous in their opposition to it, and were assured of a majority in the SPD Reichstag fraction by the support of sympathetic party deputies. Outvoted for the second time by his party, Müller had no choice but to hand in his resignation on 28 March 1930. The last 'grand coalition' had collapsed, torn apart by forces that none of its members could properly comprehend. The liberal *Berliner Tagblatt* was utterly bemused by what it called the 'crisis over one-quarter per cent', and superficially it must have indeed seemed absurd that a government that had swallowed so many capitalist camels now strained at such a minute gnat. In fact the fall of Müller had proceeded in accordance with a law first enunciated - in an idealist form - by Hegel; namely the dialectical transition, the leap, from quantity into quality.

In his *Science of Logic*, Hegel says that an objectively existing thing, a 'Being-for-Self, is not only constituted qualitatively (thus demarcating itself from and setting itself in opposition to other Beings-for-Self), but 'is also essentially a relation of Quanta, and therefore open to externality and variation of Quantum: it has some play, within which it remains indifferent to this change and does not alter its Quality'. ^[19] However, this degree of tolerance or 'play' is not infinite. There exist objective, and as Hegel observes, often unpredictable limits beyond which quantitative changes (either negative or positive) become impossible without subverting the Being-in-Self, 'a point in this quantitative change at which Quality changes and Quantum shows itself as specifying so that the altered quantitative relation is turned under our hands into a Measure and thereby into a new quality and a new Something'. ^[20] The very nature of this process - a protracted period of quantitative change within a seemingly permanent or at least stable framework, culminating in an explosive and often dramatic leap to a new qualitative state -

leaves all but the most perceptive bewildered. For it appears that the last quantitative addition or subtraction was responsible for the sudden transformation, that, to return to the subject in question, the ADGB's refusal to sanction a reduction one quarter of a per cent in employers' contribution to unemployment insurance was the cause of the rift in the Müller cabinet between its Social Democratic and bourgeois partners. Hegel explains how this illusion arises:

Men like to try to make a change conceivable by means of the gradualness of transition; but rather gradualness is precisely the merely indifferent change [that is, that which is containable within the existing quality - RB], the opposite of quantitative change. Rather, in gradualness the connection of the two realities - whether taken as state or independent things - is suspended; it is posited that neither is limit of the other, but that one is just external to the other; and hereby, precisely that which is needful in order that change may be understood is eliminated, however little may be required to this end. ^[21]

And after illustrating the working out of this law in the natural world with the famous example of liquid water becoming transformed, by quantitative additions and subtractions of heat, into the qualitatively different states of steam and ice (a process which in both cases culminated in a sudden and not gradual change of state), Hegel detects it also in human history:

Thus too do states - other things equal - derive a different qualitative character from magnitudinal difference... The state has a certain measure of its magnitude, and if forced beyond this it collapses helplessly under that very same constitution which was its blessing and its strength for as long as its extent alone was different. ^[22]

These lines could well serve as fitting epitaph on the fate of Weimar democracy, and as a judgement by Germany's foremost exponent of objective idealist dialectics on the miserable theoretical degeneration of that same nation's most vulgar evolutionists.

The political relations and institutions established by the November Revolution held together only so long as they were able to absorb the quantitative additions in class tension (that is, between the polar opposites which comprise the quality in question) precipitated by the general crisis of world imperialism as refracted and mediated through the specific and chronic crisis of German capitalism. On one historic occasion, in the summer and autumn of 1923, an historic opportunity presented itself to bring about a qualitative leap in this struggle between the classes. For unlike the transformation of water into steam or ice, historical change, and most of all the proletarian revolution, requires deep-going transformations in the consciousness of men, a change which reaches its highest theoretical and practical expression in the revolutionary Marxist party. Such a leap in political thinking, in the form of revolutionary tactics, strategy and organisation, did not take place. The opportunity slipped by, the process of addition was replaced by subtraction, and the stabilisation of 1924-28 supplanted the crisis of 1919-23. Then, beginning with the formation of the Müller government in June 1928, and the simultaneous onset of the economic crisis, a renewed process of quantitative change began; one however which found the bourgeoisie, and not the working class, on the offensive.

That it was able to retain this initiative beyond the fall of Müller and through the next three years to the triumph of Hitler was not an inevitable outcome of the objective nature of the crisis, but entirely the consequence of the policies pursued by the two main tendencies in the German workers' movement.

Appendix: The Comintern, the KPD and the Müller Government

How did the Stalinist leadership of the Communist International and the KPD analyse and respond to the events and crises discussed in the foregoing chapter? Did the very obvious deepening of the conflict between the SPD and the reformist trade unions on the one side, and the entire bourgeoisie on the other, occasion any revision of the theory that Social Democracy had now turned fascist, and was in Germany, more than any other country, destined to spearhead the bourgeoisie's bid to install a fascist dictatorship over the working class? On the contrary, the more evident these tensions became, the more the Stalinists frantically tried to deny their existence, since to admit that a split was indeed taking place within the Müller cabinet was to concede that the 'new line' ushered in at the Sixth Comintern Congress was founded on theoretical quicksands. Equally important was the fact that Stalin had openly fallen out with the Bukharin group in the Politbureau of the CPSU, and had finally opted for a course of breakneck industrialisation and forced collectivisation as his bureaucratic answer to the deepening crisis of the

Soviet economy. On 19 October 1928, Stalin delivered a report to party officials in Moscow in which he spoke of a 'right danger' in the CPSU, though he repudiated suggestions that it had any supporters on the Politbureau. Significantly, in view of the holocaust that was about to descend on Bukharin and his followers in the Comintern, Stalin linked the 'right deviation' in the CPSU to a similar, and equally - at this stage - anonymous tendency in the International:

Under capitalist conditions, the Right deviation in Communism signifies a tendency... of a section of the Communists to depart from the revolutionary line of Marxism in the direction of Social Democracy. When certain groups of Communists deny the expediency of the slogan 'class against class' in election campaigns (France [where in the elections of 1928, the French Communist Party had, contrary to earlier practice, refused to stand down on the second ballot to support better-placed socialist candidates - RB]), or are opposed to the Communist Party nominating its own candidates (Britain [this had been the line of a right-wing group headed by JR Campbell and A Rothstein - RB]) or are disinclined to make a sharp issue of the fight against 'Left' Social Democracy (Germany), etc, it means that there are people in the Communist parties who are striving to adapt Communism to Social Democratism. ^[23]

This trend, whose supporters in Germany were near to exercising a decisive voice on the KPD Central Committee, Stalin equated with the Right deviation in the Soviet Union, which 'denied the need for an offensive against the capitalist elements in the countryside' and thereby adapted 'to the tastes and requirements of the "Soviet" bourgeoisie'. ^[24] This speech is important in that in attacking Stalin's rightist opponents in the CPSU, it gave a broad hint that war was shortly to be declared on those in the sections of the Comintern and its central leadership who, justly or otherwise, were alleged to share their views. From October 1928 onwards, Stalin's onslaught on the Kulak - far more severe than anything envisaged by either Trotsky or Lenin, who had both stood for *voluntary* collectivisation of the peasantry - and forced march to an industrialised economy were organically fused with his fight to gain total control of the International, a battle waged under the banner of war to the death against 'social fascism'.

The biggest challenge to Stalin came from the KPD, the largest party of the Comintern outside of the Soviet Union, and one that even after its series of maulings and decimations at the hands of successive cliques in the ECCI leadership, still retained something of its former independent and critical revolutionary spirit. A new crisis in the KPD forced Stalin's hand, since it threatened to overturn the leadership of his most trusted representative in Germany, Ernst Thälmann, who even before the Sixth Comintern Congress had been vociferous in his support for the theory of 'social fascism'.

Throughout the summer of 1928, rumours had been rife in the Hamburg party organisation (where Thälmann began his career) that KPD funds had been embezzled. A commission set up to investigate the charges finally discovered, after an anonymous tip-off over the telephone, that the culprit was none other than the secretary of the Hamburg party organisation, Wittorf, and that several leading party members, including two of those serving on the Control Commission that was investigating the affair, had known about it from the beginning, and had done everything to cover it up. Then an even deeper scandal broke. The two commission members - Presche and Riess - together with Johnny Schehr, KPD Organising Secretary and a close friend of Thälmann, had been ordered by none other than Thälmann to protect Wittorf from the consequences of his act. And Wittorf was Thälmann's brother-in-law! If Wittorf had to be expelled - and on this there was no disagreement - then at the very least, Thälmann had to be disciplined as an accessory after the fact. On 26 September 1928, a plenary session of the KPD demanded that Thälmann return to Berlin from Moscow to face the music. On his arrival in Berlin, the party Central Committee carried the following resolution:

The CC sharply disapproves, as a severe political blunder, the attempt on the part of Comrade Thälmann to keep the events in Hamburg secret from the proper authorities within the party. On his own initiative the affair is referred to the ECCI. He is removed from all party functions until a decision by the ECCI has been reached.

When Stalin heard the news of Thälmann's fall from grace, he was enraged, immediately dispatching a telegram instructing a delegation from the KPD Central Committee to attend a meeting in Moscow to 'discuss' the matter with leading ECCI officials - Piatnitsky, Kuusinen, Molotov (Stalin's new rising star in the ECCI political secretariat), Manuilsky, Kun and the Swiss supporter of Bukharin, Humbert-Droz. Stalin did not deign to break his holiday-making in Sochi to see the KPD delegation, but simply sent a curt telegram which rendered all further discussion superfluous: 'Thälmann to be confirmed in all his functions, the [Right] opposition to be excluded from the CC.' Only Droz, who also had close ties and

sympathies with those being excluded so high-handedly from the German party leadership, voted against this ukase. As one who participated in both the investigation and the 'meeting' in Moscow comments, 'what had at first seemed a petty financial scandal in Hamburg became a major turning point. The moral backbone of a great working-class party had been broken.' [25]

The official Stalinist stamp of approval was put on Thälmann's leadership on 6 October 1928, when the ECCI Presidium issued its decision on the Wittorf affair. After mildly rebuking Thälmann for his failing to report the embezzlement as soon as he learnt of it (an oversight put down to his desire to protect the party from 'the class enemies of the proletariat') the resolution unleashed a barrage of invective against those who voted originally for Thälmann's removal from the Central Committee. This 'crass mistake' was part of a conspiracy against Thälmann being organised by his 'political opponents within the CC', and 'an attempt to change the party leadership and so obstruct the execution of the political line adopted by the Sixth World Congress', a line, the resolution significantly emphasised, that was best represented in the KPD by none other than Thälmann. The resolution ended by expressing the presidium's 'complete political confidence in comrade Thälmann' and called upon him 'to continue to discharge the functions in the party and the ECCI imposed on him by the Essen party congress and the Sixth CI congress'. For once, the presidium's confidence was justified. Thälmann never deviated once from the line imposed on his party from Moscow, even when it entailed placing his own head in the Nazi noose.

With his trusty servitor now bound even more closely to him as a result of his intervention on Thälmann's behalf in the Wittorf affair, Stalin felt free to move openly against the German supporters of Bukharin. In December 1928, the Stalinised Central Committee of the KPD voted to expel, against the solitary vote of Ernst Meyer, not only Brandler and Thalheimer, but Walcher, Frölich and Enderle, who up until the recent crisis had been prominent in the party leadership (and even more significantly all five were old Spartacists and comrades of Rosa Luxemburg). The purge went both wide and deep. Ten members of the Central Committee and more than a hundred on the district committees now found themselves outside the party they had devoted their lives to building. And climbing over them to the top were careerists who, unlike the disgraced Luxemburgists, found it easy to adjust their bureaucratic phraseology to the latest zigzag of Stalinist policy. On 19 December 1928, Stalin summed up the results of the purge in the German party in a speech to the Presidium of the ECCI. His main theme was that the Rights (real and alleged alike) denied that the period of capitalist stabilisation was drawing to a close, to be replaced by a 'Third Period' of the 'sharp accentuation of the general crisis of capitalism'. Singling out Humbert-Droz as the main spokesman for this tendency in the ECCI - Stalin's open break with Bukharin was still two months away - Stalin criticised him for maintaining that the struggles of the working class against the employers were 'in the main only of a defensive character, and that the leadership of this struggle on the part of the Communist parties should be carried out only within the framework of the existing reformist unions'. Now Stalin employed this centrist conception to smuggle in an alternative, ultra-left line on the trade unions, one which set the pace throughout the Communist International, but especially in Germany, for the drive towards parallel 'red' unions that almost without exception lacked real stability and deep roots in the factory proletariat:

At the time of the Ruhr battles [the lock-out of November 1928 - RB] the German Communists noted the fact that the unorganised workers proved to be more revolutionary than the organised workers. Humbert-Droz is outraged by this and declares that it could not have been so. Strange! Why could it not have been so? There are about a million workers in the Ruhr. Of them, about 200 000 are organised in trade unions. The trade unions are directed by reformist bureaucrats who are connected in all manner of ways with the capitalist class. Why is it surprising then that the unorganised workers proved to be more revolutionary than the organised? *Could it indeed have been otherwise? ... a situation is quite conceivable in which it may be necessary to create parallel mass associations of the working class, against the will of the trade union bosses who have sold themselves to the capitalists.* We already have such a situation in America. [Lozovsky had, it will be recalled, written off the AFL as a 'fascist' union at the Fourth RILU Congress in July 1928 - RB] *It is quite possible that things are moving in the same direction in Germany too.* [26]

Those such as Lozovsky who were already inclined towards such leftist tactics were strengthened in their desire to foist them on the parties of the International by the open breach between Stalin's faction and the Bukharin group, which came at the end of January 1929. For the first time, Stalin spoke openly of:

... a separate Bukharin group... consisting of Bukharin, Tomsky and Rykov, [with] its own separate platform, which it counterposes to the Party's policy. It demands, firstly - in opposition

to the existing policy of the party - a slower rate of development of our industry, asserting that the present rate is 'fatal'. It demands - also in opposition to the policy of the party - curtailment of the formation of state farms and collective farms, asserting that they cannot play any serious part in the development of our agriculture. It demands thirdly - also in opposition to the policy of the party - the granting of full freedom to private trade and the renunciation of the regulating function of the state in the sphere of trade, asserting that the regulation of the state renders the development of trade impossible. In other words: Bukharin's group is a group of Right deviators and capitulators who advocate not the elimination, but the free development of the capitalist elements of town and country. ^[27]

On this occasion, Stalin made no reference to the issues in dispute in the Communist International. But he did so two months later in a long speech to the April 1929 CPSU Plenum, convened to take organisational measures against the Bukharin Right Opposition.

After slanderously linking the Bukharinites with the Left Opposition (who were their bitterest critics) on the strength of a single conversation in the summer of 1928 between the renegade Left Oppositionist Kamenev and Bukharin (a discussion which mooted the formation of an unprincipled anti-Stalin bloc of former Lefts and supporters of Bukharin's rightist course), Stalin answered Bukharin's charge, made in a declaration to the CPSU Central Committee on 30 January, that 'the Central Committee is disintegrating the Comintern'. Evidently Bukharin - still nominal head of the Comintern - could no longer acquiesce in the 'new line' which was daily lurching further and further to the ultra-left with its adventurist slogan of new 'red' unions and claims that the entire Social Democratic movement from top to bottom was turning 'social fascist'. And while in contrast to Trotsky, Bukharin's opposition to the tactics of 'Third Period' Stalinism was not based on a rejection of the theory of 'socialism in one country', he nevertheless, precisely because of his organic leaning towards centrist tendencies in the Comintern and the left elements in the reformist parties, grasped more quickly than most the suicidal implications of the Stalin - Molotov line. Thus Stalin:

... capitalist stabilisation is being undermined and shaken month by month and day by day... the swing to the left of the working class in the capitalist countries, the wave of strikes and class conflicts in the European countries... all these are facts which indicate beyond a doubt that the elements of a new revolutionary upsurge are accumulating in the capitalist countries. Hence the task of intensifying the fight against Social Democracy, *and above all, against its 'Left' wing* [the same 'Left' with whose British trade union representatives Stalin had been aligned during their betrayal of the General Strike and the nine-month struggle of the miners - RB], as being *the social buttress of capitalism*. Hence the task of intensifying the fight in the Communist Parties against the Right elements, as being the agents of Social Democratic influence. Hence the task of intensifying the fight against conciliation towards the Right deviation, as being the refuge of opportunism in the Communist Parties. Hence the slogan of purging the Communist Parties of Social Democratic traditions. [A task allegedly accomplished a full four years previously by the Stalin - Zinoviev 'Bolshevisation' campaign, which on that occasion was directed at supporters of Trotsky - RB] *Hence the so-called new tactics of Communism in the trade unions.* ^[28]

The German party, destined to serve as the proving ground for the new leftist course, figured most prominently in the clash between Stalin and Bukharin over international policy. According to Stalin, Bukharin had supported the initial move to depose Thälmann over the latter's involvement in the Wittorf affair:

... instead of swinging the tiller over and correcting the situation, instead of restoring the validity of the violated directive of the Sixth Congress [on the 'fight against conciliation towards the right deviation' - RB] and calling the conciliators to order Bukharin proposed in his well-known letter to sanction the conciliators' coup, to hand over the KPD to the conciliators, and to revile Comrade Thälmann... If the Sixth Congress decided to declare war on the Right deviation and conciliation towards it by keeping the leadership in the hands of the main core of the KPD, headed by Comrade Thälmann, and if it occurred to the conciliators Ewart and Gerhart to upset that decision, it was Bukharin's duty to call the conciliators to order... ^[29]

Bukharin was also taken to task for procrastinating over:

... routing the Brandler and Thalheimer faction, and... expelling the leaders of that faction from the KPD... At bottom, it was the fate of the KPD that was being decided. Yet Bukharin and his friends [Humbert-Droz], knowing this, nevertheless continually hindered matters by

systematically keeping away from the meetings of the bodies which had the question under consideration... presumably for the sake of remaining 'clean' in the eyes of both the Comintern and the Rights in the KPD. ^[30]

Finally, Bukharin had sinned against the new Stalinist code of conduct in the Comintern by objecting to the intrigues being woven in the KPD on Stalin's behalf by Neumann.

Bukharin, who had good cause to doubt Neumann's motives in the light of the Canton adventure of December 1927, demanded his recall. No other party of the Comintern was referred to by Stalin in his diatribe against Bukharin, underlining the fact that the battle between the Stalinist 'centre' and the Bukharin Right was being waged not only in Moscow, but Berlin. The Stalinist faction in the CPSU could not tolerate an oppositional tendency - of whatever complexion - gaining ascendancy in the largest party of the International. Therefore the leftist line assumed a more exaggerated form in the KPD than almost any other section in a party which, had it pursued a Leninist tactic (and not a Bukharinite adaptation to left Social Democracy), could have won the leadership of the majority of the German working class and through a determined struggle for power, blocked the road against the advance of National Socialism. Stalin's ultra-leftist line cut clean across such a development, isolating the KPD from the Social Democratic workers in the trade unions and the SPD with its dictum that the reformists were 'social fascists', and that no tactical agreements were permissible between the KPD and the Social Democratic organisations. With the removal of the Brandler faction, the KPD was now ready to implement Stalin's suicidal policy. The Ruhr lock-out provided the first opportunity, where the KPD came forward with the line, first propounded at the Fourth RILU Congress in July 1928, that the reformist unions were fast becoming transformed into strike-breaking machines tied to the capitalist state and the employers' organisations - this despite the fact that the lock-out arose as result of the reformist-led Metal Workers Union's *failure to agree* with the iron masters over a new pay claim! Stalin's already-quoted reference to the alleged emergence of a revolutionary layer of workers completely outside (and presumably hostile to) the reformist trade unions in this dispute - never substantiated by any evidence - became converted into an entire system of trade union tactics and strategy. Thus in an article on the Ruhr lock-out, S Gusiev (a Soviet Stalinist) wrote that the old slogan of 'Make the [trade union] leaders fight' now had to be withdrawn. 'The new united front tactic is the direct projection of the former tactics in the face of conditions which have changed.' But despite this brave attempt to preserve a semblance of outward continuity between the old and now discarded line of a united front from above and the new line of a united front only 'from below', Gusiev's article marked a clear shift in Comintern, and especially KPD tactics:

Now we are strong enough to have been able largely to extend our tactics of the united front, *spreading it among the wide mass of unorganised workers*. Our activities have come to depend much less on the conduct of the leaders of Social Democracy, and that dependency grows weaker every day.

In other words, the KPD was now seeking to anchor itself on the unstable masses outside the unions, and beginning to turn its back on the five million strategically crucial workers organised in the ADGB, and largely still loyal to the SPD. The 'new line', with its brash talk of 'independent leadership', simply became a *left cover* for capitulation to the continued domination of the reformist bureaucracy over millions of German workers without whose support or at the very least, passive sympathy, there could be no question of a successful revolution.

The Stalinist course also rendered impossible inside the KPD a serious discussion of the highly unstable compromise that existed between the reformist leaders and the big employers and their political spokesmen, a compromise that, as we have seen, was being rapidly undermined by the gathering crisis of German capitalism. Gusiev would have none of it:

Class against class connotes the organised capitalist class (*including the Social Democrats in this category*) attacking the proletariat on the one hand, and on the other, the swiftly organising working class, driving and leading a counter-attack against the capitalists *under the direct leadership of the Communist Party*. Such are the tendency and prospect in the coming weeks and months.

And if this were so then obviously there could be no question of the big bourgeoisie falling out with the very Social Democrats with whom it had concluded an organised bloc:

It is erroneous... to explain the capitalists' attack [on the Müller government] (as does *Vorwärts* and as certain Communists think) by the influence of the DNVP, who are said to be striving to inflict a blow at the existing coalition government... A number of political differences exist among the various of the *bourgeois parties (including the SPD)* but none of these differences has any importance in the struggle now unfolding. ^[31]

With the SPD now designated as a 'bourgeois party', the Müller government's problems could be depicted - quite wrongly, as subsequent events proved - as normal differences within the ruling class, and having no relation to the struggle between classes, mediated in a highly attenuated form through the SPD's participation in a cabinet which also included the leading party of big business. This false leftist analysis left KPD workers completely unprepared both theoretically and politically for the political crisis which erupted over the issues of cruiser 'A', cuts in wages and unemployment insurance, the Hilferding - Schacht conflict, and finally the refusal of the trade unions (who were, of course, in a bloc with the employers) to accept the DVP's revised schedule of unemployment insurance contributions. The remoteness from reality of the new Comintern leadership's analysis is illustrated in this excerpt from an article in the Comintern organ on the 'Right Danger in the KPD', which declared that the basis of the party's trade union tactics was:

... the most recent evolution of the Social Democrats and the reformist trade unions, their complete assimilation into the bourgeois state machine and trust capital, their new methods of strangling the independent struggles of the proletariat, their social fascist splitting tactics... [hence] the emphasis laid on the necessity for the Communist parties and revolutionary trade union opposition of winning the leadership in mass struggles, and on the question of new forms of struggle and new organisations for the greatest possible mobilisation and activating of militant workers. ^[32]

The ECCI 'May Day Manifesto' dwelt at some length on this theme of the organic fusion of Social Democracy with the bourgeoisie. First it quite mechanically, without any regard for the uneven development of the capitalist crises and the class struggle in the imperialist world, projected an identical political perspective for every section of the Comintern - one of imminent civil war: 'The accentuation of the class struggle leads with all capitalist governments to civil war methods in their dealings with the toilers.' We find a similar schematic approach to the current crisis being adopted today by *Workers Press*. On 24 November 1973, *Workers Press* carried a headline on page 3: 'Military Coup a Threat In All Major Countries.' And indeed, over the previous two months, confident predictions of such imminent coups and civil wars had been made for the USA, Ireland, Japan, West Germany, Mexico, France, Italy and Britain. The method which leads the WRP Central Committee to this conclusion bears a remarkable resemblance to the idealist schematicism of Third Period Stalinism, since this perspective is put forward for 'all major countries' irrespective of whether they are already ruled by military or fascist regimes (such as Chile, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Indonesia, Brazil, to name but six cases), a bourgeois parliamentary system with the direct representatives of the capitalist class in office (as in France, Japan, Britain) or a government comprised either wholly or in part of representatives of the Stalinist or Social Democratic movements. Thus reformists, Stalinists, bourgeois liberals and conservatives, militarists and fascists are lumped together, after the manner of the original draft of the 1891 SPD Erfurt Programme so sharply criticised by Engels, in 'one reactionary mass'. We are told that 'the admiration at the top of the Tory cabinet for President Pompidou's Bonapartist regime is part of the Europe-wide preparation for civil war against the working class', and that the 'purpose of the Pompidou club is to pool the experience and knowledge of the heads of state in order to organise counter-revolution throughout the Common Market'.

^[33] Anyone familiar with Trotsky's writings on Germany, and especially on the policies the Stalinists pursued in that country between 1929 and 1933, will of course know that he took enormous pains to emphasise the differences between the Social Democratic, Bonapartist and fascist varieties of reaction. Brandt will not and cannot, without severing all his links with the SPD and the entire German labour movement - and at the moment he does that, he loses all value for the bourgeoisie! - join with Heath and Pompidou to 'organise counter-revolution throughout the Common Market', since the goal of such a counter-revolution can only be to eliminate bourgeois democracy and the existence of independent workers' organisations, and to establish fascism. Yet in *Workers Press* we can read (in an article reprinted from *Der Funke*, the organ of the Socialist Workers League, which at the time of writing is in political solidarity with the WRP) that 'under the Social Democratic government [of Willy Brandt] civil war preparations are being made which have no precedent in the history of the West German republic'. No one doubts for a moment that the technical preparations being made by the West German police are

for use against the working class. But what this article overlooks - in fact, studiously avoids mentioning, although the history of Weimar should surely teach its writer not to do so - is that the repressive machine being built up under the rule of Brandt can and in all probability will be turned against Brandt and his fellow Social Democratic leaders, just as Noske's Free Corps revolted against the Frankenstein that created them. The fact that *Der Funke* does know this is revealed unwittingly by its demand, which, in the context of the rest of the article, is absurd, that 'the unions must force this government to reverse all its civil war measures' and that 'the working class must demand that they [the FDP liberals] should be thrown out of the government and force the SPD to carry out socialist policies'.^[34] So there is a difference - and a vital one at that - between Pompidou's regime and that of Brandt. For who, unless he is an inveterate opportunist, would consider addressing such demands to the French Gaullists, Heath, the Greek military or the Italian Christian Democrats, all of whom, we are told, are plotting counter-revolution and civil war in cahoots with Brandt? Yet, in other articles published in the *Workers Press*, no distinction is made between Brandt's reformist-liberal coalition and purely bourgeois cabinets on this most vital of all questions - that of the destruction of the workers' movement and the installation of fascism. It is a false perspective that just as surely as in the last years of Weimar Germany will lead the working class to certain defeat if it is permitted to gain ascendancy in the workers' movement. Such leftism supplements to perfection the open opportunism of the Stalinists, Social Democrats and centrist revisionist groups, as once again, the example of Weimar Germany, to which we now return, proves.

From its arid, non-dialectical appraisal of the world situation, the conclusion was drawn by the ECCI manifesto that 'in Germany, France, Great Britain, United States, conditions of an open dictatorship are maturing', obliterating not only widely differing degrees of manoeuvre available to the ruling class in these countries on the foundations of bourgeois democracy, but also the actual composition of the governments in the countries concerned. But according to the Stalinist theory of 'social fascism' that did not matter in the least, since all governments and parties (save those of the Soviet Union and the Comintern respectively) were becoming 'fascised' and therefore capable of serving as the 'instruments' of fascist dictatorship. The class struggle therefore assumed a new form - the working class, led by the Communist Party, against a bloc of the trade unions, the Social Democratic parties, fascists, all the bourgeois parties and the capitalist state:

The struggle of the CI against the Second International... will not be simply an ideological struggle within one class, but a struggle between two classes developing into civil war against the bourgeoisie who the Social Democrats are now serving.

A Communist-led civil war against the SPD and the ADGB - this was the lunatic perspective foisted on the KPD at the precise moment when the bourgeoisie was preparing to launch its own offensive against the same organisations. Oblivious to the crisis of the Müller government, the anonymous author of the already-quoted article 'Social Fascism in Germany' declared with rare conviction that:

... it would be incorrect to conclude that Germany is directly faced with the establishment of a fascist government *à la Mussolini*... The great change that has taken place is the growth of fascism within Social Democracy, and in German Social Democracy in particular. The German capitalists have found a strong support with increasingly definite fascist tendencies. And Germany shows, more clearly than elsewhere, how correct our programme was in its description of the relations between the bourgeoisie, Social Democracy and fascism, and of the openly fascist role of the Social Democrats. Facts seem to show that the German capitalists are getting ready for a bourgeois Social Democratic coalition with fascism... in every respect, a synthesis of Social Democracy and fascism is provided for the regime in a political form of the dictatorship of finance capital.^[35]

Stalinist stalwart Walter Ulbricht developed this theme with two contributions in the same organ, emphasising that the new line determined that 'the policy of the united front becomes exclusively the policy of the united front from below', and that there now existed a 'tendency towards fascism both in the government and in the SPD and trade union reformist leadership'. For good measure, he called for the 'break-up of the *Reichsbanner*', the SPD paramilitary organisation, and counterpart to the KPD's own Red Front Fighters League. The ever-vigilant Ulbricht also detected the influence of the Brandler school in the thinking of some party officials, 'who expect to secure tactical victories by mobilising the masses to the call of the reformist leaders in order to prove later to the workers that everything had been done to secure "unity in the struggle"'. These officials had not grasped the new Stalinist truth that the trade union leaders were now 'strike-breakers' and that therefore the demand of the hour was no longer to work for a

united front within the trade unions both at the top with the leaders and at the base with the workers, but to devise 'new organisational forms' that would create a pole of attraction against the reformist unions. [36]

There must have been many rank-and-file KPD workers whose doubts about the validity of the new line were set to rest by the conduct of the SPD leadership in first banning, and then dispersing by force, the Communist May Day March in Berlin. The actions of the Prussian Social Democratic leaders in authorising the use of armoured cars as well as armed police on the marching workers was entirely consistent with their behaviour in the even more tumultuous clashes of January 1919, when Noske's Free Corps were set loose on the Spartacists in the same working-class quarters of Berlin that witnessed the barricade fighting of May 1929. But once again it has to be said quite categorically that the KPD leadership deliberately sought such a 'confrontation' with the Berlin reformists, and gloried in the bloody repressions that followed. It will be recalled that the KPD, having dubbed the SPD a fascist party and an instrument of fascist dictatorship, obviously could no longer march jointly with that party in Berlin's traditional May Day celebrations. A separate march was called, one whose purpose could be divined from the appeal published in *Die Rote Fahne* which summoned all workers to demonstrate with the KPD on May Day 'for the united proletarian front against the bourgeoisie and reformism'. Thus the march was explicitly an anti-SPD one, the reference to the 'united front' being purely decorative. The same appeal also spoke of the march as being a protest against the SPD's 'social fascist coalition politics'. [37] So well before the banned march got under way, Communist workers had been quite cynically and demagogically incited to single out as the *main* object of their class hatred the reformist movement, a hatred not confined to its leaders, but the millions of workers who understandably ignored the ultimatic demand for a 'united front' against their own 'social fascist' organisations. Justly enraged by the murder of their comrades, the KPD workers swung solidly behind the new line at the party's Twelfth Congress, held in a suitably militant venue at Wedding (the centre of the barricade fighting) between 5 and 10 May. If Thälmann, Ulbricht, Remmele and Neumann required proof of their theory of 'social fascism', then henceforth they could - and often did - point to the May Day massacre to silence their critics. Yet shooting workers, as Trotsky pointed out in 1924, does not constitute fascism. On that basis, the Ebert government must be designated a fascist regime! Fascism is the total destruction of all independent workers' organisations, and while the reactionary policies and repressions of the SPD *facilitated* the victory of fascism, they did not *constitute* fascism. To introduce and administer a fascist corporate state, *the SPD and ADGB would have had to destroy themselves!*

Lubricated with the blood of Berlin workers, who lost their lives in a reactionary adventure that had nothing to do with the struggle against either Social Democracy or German capitalism, the 'social fascist' bandwagon really began to gather pace throughout the Communist International. A statement issued after a meeting of the West European Bureau of the ECCI on 16 May demanded that 'all parties... systematically continue the international campaign of enlightenment regarding the bloody terror of German social fascism in the May days...', and that in their agitation they should expose Social Democracy 'as organiser of the war against the Soviet Union', with the hardest blows being delivered against left Social Democracy. How this particular tactic served to strengthen the SPD right wing will become evident when we come to the 1929 Magdeburg Congress of the SPD, held simultaneously with the KPD Congress at Wedding. Grave unrest had been generated in the SPD, and not only in its working-class base, concerning the policies of the Müller government, which marked a big retreat even from its modest election programme. The issue which rankled party members most was Müller's reversal of the SPD's official pre-election opposition to the building of cruiser 'A' (it will be remembered that the SPD had fought - and largely won - the May 1928 election on the slogan 'children's feeding centres before cruisers'). While by no means adopting a consistent internationalist position on this question, a caucus of left delegates to the congress succeeded, much to the discomfort of the party leadership, in forcing a debate on the SPD's military policy. In three separate votes related to the military budget, the Social Democratic left secured the following percentages of the total vote of delegates: 35.4 against a motion from the party executive to table resolutions against the building of cruiser 'A', the military budget and - most important of all - further participation in a coalition with the bourgeois parties; 42.5, a resolution to delay the finalising of military policy to the next party congress (in 1931) - this being an unprincipled delaying tactic; and 38.6, the percentage of votes cast against the SPD executive's statement on military policy. Bearing in mind that as at all SPD Congresses, the votes and procedure were heavily stacked in favour of the established leadership, which did all that it could to ensure that the 'right' delegations were sent to the congress, this marked a serious setback for the Müller leadership, and confirmed that after less

than a year in office, the SPD was undergoing a severe party crisis that contained all the symptoms of leading to an open split. Had the KPD pursued the correct Leninist tactic towards the SPD as a whole, and its growing left flank in particular, enormous gains would have been registered for Communism in the following months and years. But we already know that in accordance with Stalin's schema of the left Social Democrats (who were to be dubbed 'left social fascists') being the main enemy of the working class, no such tactic would be employed. No attempt was made to differentiate between the right and left wings of the SPD, despite there being open rifts between them on several important issues. Thus the Comintern organ, in an editorial on the May Day events, utterly failed to exploit this conflict by appealing to the left elements to dissociate themselves from the massacre ordered by Severing and Zörgiebel, and to wage a struggle inside the SPD to drive them out of its ranks. Instead, the entire party was branded as having 'openly taken the road of fascism', and as having become an 'openly social fascist party'.^[38] Hardly conducive to opening up a dialogue with the leftward moving elements in this 'social fascist party'. Even worse was the article on the SPD Congress by Karl Kreibich. Once again, the main task to be accomplished was the justification of the Stalin line that Social Democracy, left, right and centre, was turning fascist at full speed. Therefore, there could be nothing but ridicule for the challenge mounted by the 'left social fascists' to the executive at Magdeburg:

The 'lefts' are an even more indispensable and dignified part of Social Democracy. Their task is to play some seemingly radical accompaniment to the SPD's rapid progress to fascism. The most outstanding characteristic of the Magdeburg congress is that it completed not only the transition of Social Democracy to social fascism, but also the recent capitulation of the 'lefts'.^[39]

Then Kreibich, writing as if a 35.4 per cent vote against continued participation in the coalition had never taken place, drew the predictable conclusion - one on which his job (and possibly neck) depended - that 'never has a Social Democratic congress so unanimously recognised in principle the policy of coalition'. As if there could be degrees of unanimity! This seemingly blind denial of a reality that was staring the KPD in the face was taken up not only by Trotsky, who roundly denounced the Stalinist ultra-left course from a Leninist standpoint in his *The 'Third Period' of Comintern Errors*, but by the Brandler group in Germany, who in their centrist organ *Against the Current* made the correct observation that by describing the SPD as a fascist party, the KPD was repelling workers who were moving to the left away from Social Democracy towards Communism. For at this stage, 'the Social Democratic workers do not understand the policy of their leaders at all as a betrayal'. To which Gusiev replied: 'But if that is so, then one has to admit that the Social Democratic workers are in favour of a fascist dictatorship.'^[40] And that was soon to become the opinion of a considerable section of the Comintern, RILU and KPD leaderships.

In yet another article on the May Day events, H Kurella (later purged by Stalin), the editor of *International Press Correspondence*, roundly proclaimed that:

... the Social Democracy *as a whole* has become an inseparable part of capitalist society. Broad cadres of functionaries of the SPD and of the reformist trade unions are firmly bound up with the state apparatus of the bourgeoisie. [How firmly Hitler was to prove four years later! - RB] The party apparatus of the SPD and of the reformist trade unions have themselves become a part of the apparatus of suppression, have become prop and executive organs of the capitalist state in the working class... The SPD is developing into a social fascist fighting organ of the bourgeoisie.^[41]

This even more leftist analysis and perspective was aired at great length at the Tenth ECCI Plenum held in July 1929. Kuusinen's opening report rambled on about the 'fascisation of the bourgeois class rule' and its being accompanied by 'the process of the fascisation of the reformist trade union bureaucracy and of the parties of the Second International', adding that as a result of this process, and 'since German fascism openly declares in favour of bourgeois dictatorship [quite false - RB], since social fascism openly shows itself up as fascism, it will no longer be difficult to win the majority of the working class in Germany for the proletarian revolution'. This is one of the first instances of that notorious Stalinist theory which found its most malignant expression in the slogan that gained currency in the last months and weeks of Weimar: 'After Hitler - us.' Manuisky plumbed even murkier depths on the second day of the Plenum in his report on 'the struggle for the majority of the working class'. Far from the bourgeoisie ever seeking to eject the reformists from the German government - already the declared aim of a sizeable group in the DVP Reichstag fraction, not to speak of the entire DNVP! - Manuisky envisaged that the SPD 'will take ever greater initiative from the bourgeoisie in the suppression of the working class. It will become the more savage, it will become the more rapidly fascised, the more its influence on the working class will decline'. In other words, the SPD was even more reactionary and eager to crush the proletariat

than the bourgeoisie itself! How easy then to 'expose' it, and 'capture' the majority of the working class for Communist policies:

... it follows that although the power of resistance of Social Democracy increases, the task of the Communist parties of exposing the social fascist nature of contemporary Social Democracy is being facilitated.

Now there could be no room for doubts. Only one form of 'united front' could be pursued - that 'from below':

The united front is neither a coalition with the Social Democrats at the top nor a policy of compromise with their officials below. It is a direct appeal of the Communist Party to the mass of workers, to the Social Democratic and non-party workers, to the organised and unorganised. The united front tactic could be the easiest thing in the world if it were to consist of the formation of more or less 'cordial' agreements of the Communist Parties with the other lower organisations in the factories for the purpose of common action.

But:

The united front tactic means a most irreconcilable struggle against the reformist and Social Democratic organisations for the mass in the factories. [Not, as in Lenin's day, for the unity of the class in struggle against the bourgeoisie, be it noted - RB] We do not idolise the Social Democratic lower officials in the factories (members of factory committees and delegates, etc. [In other words, not 'officials', but Social Democratic *workers* - RB] ... The task of the Communist Party is to press these elements to the wall in the face of the working masses of the factories, to give them no chance to spread illusions to the effect that they, being connected with the rank and file, are of a different quality from their leaders, that they are capable of fighting honestly in the interests of the workers. We must isolate them, advancing commensurate with the degree of our influence, the demand on behalf of the entire mass of the workers, that the Social Democratic workers should leave their party. ^[42]

And this was called the united front.

But worse was to follow. There had been a running debate in the Comintern leadership between partisans and opponents of a policy, favoured by the RILU leadership, of calling on workers to leave the 'social fascist' trade unions and set up Communist Party-dominated 'red' unions. Stalin had encouraged this leftist trade union tactic when he declared, in his already-quoted attack on Humbert-Droz, that workers outside the trade unions were more revolutionary, as a matter of course, than workers organised in the reformist unions. RILU chief Lozovsky declared, at the beginning of 1929:

... where is the most backward, the most reactionary part of the working class today? That part of the working class which is organised in the reformist unions and follows the reformist leadership is the most consciously reactionary part of the working class... the workers following Social Democracy are sabotaging the movement. A split in the unions in Germany is [thus] approaching, to fail to see it is to commit a crime against the German proletariat... During the Ruhr conflict our comrades put forward the slogan 'unorganised workers, join the reformist unions' as though the reformist unions were better than the Christian and Hirsch-Duncker [liberal] unions. I consider that slogan unsound. It deludes the workers.

Lozovsky then drew the conclusion that since the reformist unions had ceased either to be organs of class struggle or movements where one could find large numbers of class-conscious workers, it was necessary to launch new, pure, revolutionary unions, starting in Germany: 'First we must organise the opposition in the metal-workers' union on an all-German scale, the same in regard to the miners and other industries.'

^[43] After that would come the founding of the new 'red' unions. Piatnitsky, while not denying the social fascist nature of the unions, favoured what was by comparison a more moderate course:

Should we now adopt the slogan for Germany 'abandon that work and form mutual aid societies'? I consider that dangerous. Comrade Lozovsky's proposal plays into the hands of the shirkers who do not wish to work in the enterprises and the unions, for them it is easier to organise new unions.

But he wisely left the door ajar lest the line continue to veer leftwards as it had done throughout 1928:

I think that at a certain moment the KPD may, with a development of the class struggle and for the purpose of transforming the unions into fighting class organs, create parallel unions from the members of reformist unions - members who at the call of the KPD abandon those unions. ^[44]

How deserting the reformist unions *en masse* was to ‘transform’ them ‘into fighting class organs’ was understandably left unexplained, but one can appreciate Piatnitsky’s dilemma in seeking to combine his own line with that of Lozovsky.

The dispute appears to have remained unresolved until the Tenth Plenum, where Lozovsky found an influential supporter for his new trade union tactic in Thälmann, now the unchallenged leader of the KPD and close *confidant* of Stalin. In the general discussion on the main reports, Lozovsky returned to his argument that the reformist parties and unions were turning fascist from top to bottom:

It is clear that fascistisation cannot only affect the leading cadres. There is... a very strong preconceived notion in Communist circles that only the upper stratum is reactionary, whereas the lower cadres are less reactionary... we will find that reaction is rife not only in the middle and upper strata, but also among the lower functionaries who are dragging with them a certain stratum of demoralised corrupt workers. The development of Social Democracy into social fascism will take, on the one hand, the fascistisation of *all strata* with the exception of a few insignificant groups, and secession in Social Democratic ranks will take place precisely to the right [sic: why to the right, when the party has already turned fascist! - RB] and to the left. ^[45]

A little later, Thälmann took the floor to deliver his report entitled ‘The Economic Struggle, Our Tactics and the Tasks of the Communist Parties’, whose second section was headed ‘The Fascisation of the Trade Unions, Their Merging With the State Apparatus and Finance Capitalism’. It provided a broad hint of what was to follow:

Today we no longer advocate indiscriminate entering of all workers into the reformist trade unions. We advocate only entering of class-conscious revolutionary workers to strengthen the revolutionary opposition. ^[46]

What was to become of non-revolutionary workers who nevertheless wanted to engage in the economic struggle? No answer was forthcoming to this awkward question, since the line was still in transition from the old tactic of ‘transforming the unions into organs of class struggle’ to that of establishing ‘red’ unions that would also seek - quite fruitlessly - to enrol reformist as well as revolutionary workers. Lozovsky’s report on trade union work brought the new line a little nearer when, in rebutting Brandlerite and Trotskyist criticisms of the breakaway union tactic, he declared, in a remark obviously also directed at his ECCI rival Piatnitsky, that ‘it is necessary to abandon the somewhat hackneyed idea so frequently encountered... that to form a new trade union means to follow the line of least resistance’. ^[47] Yet that is precisely what it did mean.

The main theses adopted at the Plenum marked a new stage in the further evolution of the Comintern line to the adventurist ultra-left, since it endorsed Lozovsky’s line of setting up, in the not too distant future, ‘red’ unions; even though it did so in a cautious, ambiguous formulation:

The rising tide of the labour movement and the growing crisis of the reformist trade unions have brought forth the dangerous tendency of refusing to work in the reformist trade unions. At the same time this rising tide of the labour movement has brought forth the new problem of establishing at certain stages, under certain conditions, *new* revolutionary unions... Communists cannot be opposed on principle to splitting the trade unions... The growth of the strike movement [a claim, which as Trotsky pointed out at the time, was not born out by any strike statistics - RB] since the Sixth Congress, and the further onslaught of the social fascist bureaucracy, has created in a number of countries the conditions under which it has become necessary to establish new revolutionary unions. ^[48]

A Plenary session of the RILU in December 1929 presented Lozovsky with the opportunity to carry his offensive on the trade union tactic even closer to the point when he could call for the formation of breakaway ‘red’ unions in most of the capitalist countries. In his closing speech Lozovsky stressed once again that the reformist unions were useless as organs of class struggle: ‘The new fact in the situation is that the higher and middle officials and large sections of the lower officials of the reformist trade unions and a great section of the Labour aristocracy are already fascist.’ ^[49] This theory - false to the core - was inscribed in the final resolution of the Plenary session:

The reformist trade union bureaucrats have passed over from covert sabotage of strikes to the open recruitment of blacklegs and the direct organising of police-reformist raids on strikers and their strike committees. Today every strike is opposed by the open blackleg machinery of the reformist unions. We find a rapid fascistisation of the reformist trade union apparatus taking place...

our most important task is to intensify the struggle for the trade union masses [such as were not, by Lozovsky's exacting standards, 'consciously reactionary' - RB] and to pit them against this blacklegging trade union machine, to sharpen the struggle against the scab functionaries of social fascism. ^[50]

How did the ultra-left Stalinist course and the theory of 'social fascism' equip the advanced workers in Germany to strengthen their party in its fight against reformism, and the bourgeoisie which it sought to serve? The brutal fact is that the KPD was unable to make even the slightest impact in the developing crisis, on either the SPD or the trade unions, where the ADGB leadership had been forced by the sheer pressure of the capitalist offensive to take up a partially oppositional stance on the question of unemployment insurance. Indeed, how could the KPD intervene fruitfully in these favourable situations when its entire analysis led rank-and-file workers of the party to believe - often against their better class judgement - that the ADGB unions had turned fascist, become tied to or fused with the state machine, and were nothing but instruments for exploiting and repressing the working class? The only logical conclusion from such a false premise was that the sooner one left such 'unions', the better, and that any conflict that did arise between the ADGB leadership and the employers was nothing more than a stunt to dupe such class-conscious workers into believing that the trade unions were still fighting the boss. In fact these conflicts were being fought out - certainly on the part of the employers - in deadly earnest, as can be seen from the statements of the Federation of German Industries and Reichsbank President Schacht, reproduced in the foregoing chapter. The arguments employed to explain away the bourgeoisie's offensive on the Müller government were tortuous even by Stalinist standards, and produced the most calamitous results. The following extract is from an article that appeared in the Comintern organ *after* the fall of the Müller government, an article devoted entirely to proving that such an event was impossible:

As for the monopoly capitalists, they also, in the person of their DNVP, manoeuvre. They pretend that they are now directing their main attack against the 'dangerous' Social Democratic and reformist trade unions, against their 'socialist' policy, and against 'economic democracy' and state capitalism, with which it was 'time to end'. This manoeuvre tripped up even certain of our German comrades, who thought that having exploited Social Democracy, monopolist capitalism was now ready to dismiss it. That was a great mistake. The monopoly bourgeoisie knew very well that modern social fascism is one of the most important instruments for the fascisation of the state, with which Social Democracy has now organically fused. The outcry raised by the great bourgeoisie against 'economic democracy' was a pure comedy. [One that ended for many Social Democrats in the death camps of the Third Reich - RB] ... The German great bourgeoisie had no intention of eliminating the Social Democrats from participation in the fascist dictatorship. ^[51]

A little earlier, Hermann Jacobs of the Berlin party organisation had written, in similar vein, that the 'social fascists' were 'an indispensable instrument of the fascist dictatorship'. ^[52] It was hardly surprising therefore when following the removal of the SPD from the government coalition, and the formation of Brüning's all-bourgeois cabinet, neither the KPD nor the ECCI were eager to discuss the reason for Müller's fall. The only coherent - if false - analysis attempted was that by A Norden of the Berlin organisation, who lamely argued that 'as it is now a question of carrying out the inner Young Plan [that is, attacks on workers to pay for it - RB]... it is more advantageous for the big bourgeoisie to have a sham opposition of the SPD than that the latter should remain in the government'. ^[53] The theory however remained unchanged, since for the KPD leadership, there could still be no question of a genuine (as opposed to 'sham') conflict between the reformist leaders and the bourgeoisie. Every denunciation of the SPD's 'Marxism', its programme of 'economic democracy' (that is, those articles of the Weimar Constitution which provided for trade union and works council representation on local and national economic boards, etc) and municipal reforms, was ridiculed as a put-up job to delude workers into remaining loyal to Social Democracy. For this Stalinist, idealist method could conceive of no other conflict than that between a revolutionary working class struggling for power under the exclusive leadership of the Communist Party, and a united front of the bourgeoisie reaching from Trotskyists and 'left social fascists' to the main bourgeois parties and the fascists. Everything else was a pure show, or a 'manoeuvre' staged to dupe the less advanced workers. Yet the events of the next three years were to give ample evidence that far from shamming, the monopolies were in deadly earnest when they demanded an end to the reforms of the SPD, and the interference of the trade unions and works councils in the running of their plants and mines. For how else can we explain the enthusiastic support the trusts later gave to Hitler's secret programme of crushing these same 'social fascist' trade unions, which, according to the Stalinists, were capable only of conducting a 'sham' fight with the employers'?

One would have thought that after the experience of Germany, and especially on the basis of Trotsky's voluminous writings on the subject, no tendency calling itself Trotskyist today would repeat this most crude of all ultra-leftist errors: namely that of denying the existence of a contradiction (not a social, but a political one) between big business and reformist labour. Yet this is precisely what the *Workers Press* did in its analysis of the 1973 Labour Party conference. The entire bourgeois press fulminated against the line being put forward by certain speakers on the need for extensive nationalisation if and when a Labour government was returned to office. Naturally, Labour lefts such as Anthony Wedgwood Benn and Eric Heffer will not be able to implement the type of programme they said was necessary if a Labour government was to make serious inroads into the power of big business. That is the task of the working class mobilised and led by the revolutionary party. But does that mean that the ruling class and its press see things in the same Marxist light? Was Benn attacked simply because the bourgeoisie and the Tories wanted to build him up as a fake alternative to the WRP? In other words, was it a 'sham fight' or a 'manoeuvre' such as the KPD Stalinists claimed was being pursued by the German bourgeoisie on the very eve of the fall of the Müller government? Or is it rather a case (similar to, though by no means identical with the capitalist offensive unleashed against the German reformists in 1929-30) of the Tories and the big employers *quite genuinely* fearing the impact that the election of a Labour government, committed to a radical-reform programme along the lines proposed by Benn, could have on the millions of workers who voted for it? Is it not the case that in this period of rapidly worsening capitalist crisis, the economic basis for concessions to the working class, concessions mediated through their reformist leaders, is in the last stages of erosion, and that therefore capitalism will find even the most modest reformist demands of the trade union and Labour leaders intolerable, as the German bourgeoisie did in the last four years of the Weimar Republic?

We often encounter analogies in *Workers Press* between the present situation in Britain and that of Germany in the early 1930s. But let us make the analogy a correct one, let us emphasise that just as the reformists sought to betray in Germany, yet were spurned, persecuted and even murdered by the fascist agents of the bourgeoisie, so too in Britain the ruling class will reach a point in the development of the crisis and the class struggle when it will dispense with the services of the reformists (as it did in Chile) and, however strong may be the desire of the latter to continue serving the capitalist master, this ruling class will turn to other, far more brutal forces, uninhibited by any links with the organised workers' movement, to complete the job that the labour and trade union reformists, with their policies of class collaboration, have begun. The capitalist press onslaught on the 1973 Labour Party Conference was the harbinger of just such a strategic turn:

The doctrines of class conflict and state ownership are Marxist doctrines, and so long as both are preached at their conference, the Labour Party really must not complain at being described as under the influence of Marxist ideas... [The Labour Party is] ... increasingly socialist, believing that the working class should use state power in order to enforce an egalitarian society... [54]

How did *Workers Press* respond to this almost unprecedented attack on the Labour Party? Amazingly, in view of the WRP's claims to Trotskyist orthodoxy, the paper saw the attack - for such it was - *through the spectacles of classic Third Period Stalinism*. The whole thing was a sham:

There must be two conferences going on at Blackpool this week. There is the one being covered by *Workers Press*, and the other being covered by *The Times*. Take Monday's coverage. On that day the *Workers Press* revealed that the 'lefts' had done a deal to sabotage the proposal to nationalise the top 25 companies in Britain. But *The Times* carried the front-page headline 'Marxist Challenge to Party Leadership'. The paper's illustrious political editor said that the nub of the conference was the 'power struggle between Marxist and non-Marxist'... By feeding these fraudulent distortions to the capitalist press they [the alleged source of these stories - the Labour Party and trade union leaders - RB] achieve two ends: The working class knows that the capitalist press is lying - there is no Marxist challenge in the Labour Party nor is there a fight for socialist policies. Cynicism, a plague on political consciousness, results. The middle class is terrified into believing that Labour's half-baked solutions will tax them into pauperism and industry will be brought into chaos... It is done wilfully by professional confusion-mongers who want to keep the Labour Party free of any specific commitment to the rank and file at the next general election. [55]

In fact, there were three Labour Party conferences, just as in Germany, there were three Magdeburg Congresses of the SPD. The German bourgeoisie, like *The Times*, saw only Marxists on the rampage,

seeking to commit the SPD leadership to a policy of total pacifism, all-out socialisation and brutal class war. Supplementing the bourgeois right analysis was that of the Stalinists, who dismissed out of hand the existence of *any* conflict, either between the SPD and the trade unions as a whole and the bourgeoisie (an analysis wrecked within a year) or the possibility of a split between the SPD left and the bureaucracy. Here too, events proved the Stalinists wrong, for after a protracted battle lasting more than two years, a sizeable segment of the Social Democratic lefts, together with a proportionally far smaller number of former party workers, split from the SPD to form the Socialist Workers Party (SAP), a development predicted and welcomed by Trotsky. And this was the real Magdeburg Congress, a contradictory and many-sided reality that could not be forced into the arid schemas of Third Period Stalinism without doing violence to the Marxist method and disorienting literally millions of German workers.

Likewise with *The Times* and *Workers Press*. They each caught only *one side* of the Labour Party Conference, abstracting it from its national and international setting, not to speak of the entire history of British and world Social Democracy. Where *The Times* could see only the so-called 'Marxist intellectual base of the Labour Party' and a concerted campaign by its main exponents to drive the party further and further to the left, *Workers Press* only had eyes for betrayal, deception, confusion-mongering, lying. That these were all present in abundance at Blackpool is not in dispute. But there was much else that should have caught the attention of a trained Marxist journalist, but which escaped *Workers Press* because the entire orientation of the movement is towards a perspective which has the trade union and Labour Party leaders moving steadily towards their enthusiastic creation of - *and participation in* - a corporate state. Such also was the perspective of the KPD after the official inauguration of the 'Third Period' at the Sixth Comintern Congress, and for that very reason it too could neither detect nor exploit the growing tensions arising between the reformist leaders and the gathering forces of reaction and fascist counter-revolution.

We could continue to point to other and related flaws in this article - for example, that the very demand to nationalise the 25 top companies sabotaged by Wilson and the lefts was, when first proposed by the Labour Party National Executive, roundly denounced as 'corporatism' - *Workers Press* said of the proposal to nationalise 25 top companies that it was 'not socialist nationalisation but its opposite - corporatism... by implication a clear move to the right...'.^[56] But the central question is one of method. The *Workers Press* treatment of the reformists is based on a *rationalist* conception of the class struggle. Since every Trotskyist knows that the Labour Party is neither led nor influenced by Marxists, then when *The Times* says that it is, it must be lying, and that its only motive must therefore be to deceive the working class, who are searching for an alternative to reformism. Let us overlook the rather obvious fact - one that should have immediately occurred to whoever wrote and checked the article in question - that *The Times* is written for and read by the ruling class, and not 10 million trade unionists or 13 million Labour voters: a fact which, when it suits *Workers Press*, it too is prepared to admit. On 30 April 1973, when commenting on the fact that the more 'popular' daily papers were going out of their way to 'play down the abject capitulation to the Tories uttered by TUC general secretary Victor Feather', *Workers Press* observed: 'Of all the capitalist newspapers, only *The Times*, which is not widely read by workers, told the real story ... *The Times* has a clear duty - to tell the truth to the class it represents.'^[57] Except, it seems, when it violates the ultra-leftist perspectives and schematic analyses of *Workers Press*.

There still exists the possibility that *The Times* is worried by the repeated, if vague and, as the *Workers Press* correctly points out, ineffectual demands for nationalisation heard at the Labour Party Conference. For if we adopt the position that the ruling class and its various agents are always lying when they describe those Communists known to be reformist traitors as 'Marxists'; then how are we either to understand or fight fascism? Did not Hitler in his *Mein Kampf*, not to speak of his numerous speeches to leaders of big business, everywhere and always refer to the Social Democrats, the men who permitted the murder of Liebknecht and Luxemburg, who voted for the Kaiser's war credits in August 1914, who betrayed the November Revolution of 1918, who time and again preferred coalition with the bourgeoisie to a fighting united front with the KPD - *did not Hitler without fail refer to these historic traitors to the German and international working class as Marxists?* What then are we to make of fascism? Does it too *consciously* build up the Social Democrats in this way - by calling them Communists and Marxists, agents of Moscow, etc - in order to head off the working class from the real Communists? Can those responsible for the production and political line of *Workers Press* really argue this? Yet that is the direction in which their rationalistic method, exemplified by their treatment of the 1973 Labour Party Conference, is leading them. Should a big right-wing movement develop in this country towards fascism, and should its leaders declare war on the 'Marxist' Labour Party and the 'Communist' TUC (not to speak of those who merit such labels), what will the *Workers Press* say then? That such fascist leaders are

lying? *As if it was just a question of truth or falsehood.* Yes, it is quite correct to say that the reformists are not Marxists and, almost without exception, never will be. Yet that still does not answer the vital question - why does *The Times* say they are? (Just as the KPD never answered the same question in relation to the big business and then Nazi onslaught on the 'Marxists' of the SPD and the ADGB.) Every KPD official could repeat by rote all the betrayals - small as well as big - of the German reformists. Yet that did not prevent them suffering the same fate at the hands of the Nazis as the 'social fascists', just as similar recitations by *Workers Press* will not in themselves insure either the WRP or the working class in this country against ending up in the same camps and death cells as those whom it so glibly and recklessly dubs as 'corporatists'. Trotsky gave the answer to this question more than 40 years ago, but tragically few were prepared or able to listen. Can it be that the leadership of the WRP is also deaf?

Brüning's regime rests upon the cowardly and perfidious support of the Social Democratic bureaucracy which in its turn depends upon the sullen, half-hearted support of a section of the proletariat. [The SPD policy of 'toleration' adopted by the reformist leaders after the sensational Nazi election triumph of September 1930 on the spurious grounds that Brüning was a 'lesser evil' to Hitler - RB] The system based on bureaucratic decrees is unstable, unreliable, temporary. Capitalism requires another, more decisive policy. The support of the Social Democrats, keeping a suspicious watch on their own workers, is not only insufficient for its purposes, but has already become irksome. [Witness the anti-SPD tirades of Schacht in his *The End of Reparations* - RB] The period of half-way measures has passed. In order to find a way out, the bourgeoisie must absolutely rid itself of the pressure exerted by the workers' organisations; these must be eliminated, destroyed, utterly crushed. [Please note, not 'tied to', 'fused with' or 'incorporated into' the capitalist state, as Third Period Stalinism - and now *Workers Press* - tells us - RB]

[58]

Hence the fulminations against 'Marxism' by the bourgeoisie and its fascist agents. For this is the word with which they can best express their hatred of the organisations - and leaders - that bar their way to the goals outlined by Trotsky. Only a political simpleton can reduce this conflict to one of a 'sham' fight, or in the case of *The Times* (though we are far from lapsing into Third Period Stalinism by identifying this paper with fascism) to a ruse for the deception and demoralisation of workers, the vast majority of whom never read *The Times* from one year to the next. Despite its own monumental record of betrayals, British Social Democracy can also become an expendable commodity for the British bourgeoisie, should the working class not be broken from it before this point and led towards the direct struggle for state power. Its leftist line and false analysis of Social Democracy will mean, unless these faults are corrected, *openly* and in good time, that the WRP will be unable to exploit the opportunities presented by such a sharp turn in the political situation, one that will obviously demand, given the growth of the revolutionary party to a serious mass force, the tactic of the united front. And on such a tactical turn could rest the entire fate of the British working class. That was the lesson of Germany. Has the leadership of the WRP forgotten it?

Notes

1. JV Stalin, quoted from a letter written in January 1925, in 'The Results of the Work of the Fourteenth Conference of the RCP' (9 May 1925), *Works*, Volume 7, p 120.
2. 'The principal manifestation of the profound crisis of the capitalist system, is the division of world economy into capitalist countries on the one hand, and countries building socialism on the other...' The USSR possesses 'in the country the necessary and sufficient prerequisites not only for the overthrow of the landlord and the bourgeoisie, but also for the establishment of complete socialism...' (*The Programme of the Communist International*, p 44)
3. JV Stalin, 'Foundations of Leninism', *Works*, Volume 6, pp 110-11 (emphasis added).
4. Two examples will suffice. Rudolf Hilferding, next to Kautsky the leading theoretician of German Social Democracy (though an Austrian by birth), lectured delegates to the all-German congress of workers and soldiers in December 1918 on the impracticability of 'socialising' the heavy industries. It was a task that would have to be deferred until calmer times, he argued. It was impossible to legislate a socialist economic programme in a period of capitalist breakdown. Hilferding was a prominent member of the 'socialisation commission' appointed by the Ebert government ostensibly to devise a programme for the

expropriation of the biggest trusts and monopolies. Thanks partly to Hilferding's pseudo-Marxist sophistries, the tycoons who later backed Hitler survived the holocaust of November 1918 with their property intact. But Hilferding did not. Fleeing from the Nazi terror in 1933, he sought exile in France, where in 1940 fate finally caught up with him. Deported to Germany, he died in a concentration camp in 1942, a victim of protracted political suicide. The second instance concerns the Stalinist - and not Social Democratic - bureaucracy. Stalin's bloc with the bourgeois-landlord Kuomintang was threatened from the left throughout 1926 by the upsurge in the peasant movement, which had gone over to direct seizures of the land, much of which belonged to pro-Chiang Kai-shek landlords. Stalin attempted to restrain this elemental movement by sending a telegram to the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party, who were allotted the thankless task of not only restraining such seizures, but actually restoring seized property to its former owners.

5. *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, 10 March 1928.

6. H Neumann, 'Discussion at Tenth ECCI Plenum' (July 1929), *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 9, no 51, 17 September 1929, p 1082, emphasis added.

7. The Centre's temporary withdrawal arose as a result of a dispute over the allocation of cabinet posts. The DVP would only accede to the Catholics' demand for three seats in the Müller cabinet if, in return, the Centre would make two portfolios available to the DVP in the Prussian cabinet, where the Centre was in a coalition with the SPD. The Centre won out on this occasion, and in April 1929 returned to the government with its three ministerial seats.

8. G Stresemann, *Diaries, Letters and Papers*, Volume 3 (London, 1940), pp 459-64, emphasis added.

9. On 2 October, the DVP Reichstag fraction voted down a proposal by Stresemann to accept a new unemployment insurance bill being presented to the Reichstag the next day by the Müller government. Its proposed cuts in benefits and eligible categories were not nearly severe enough for the DVP industrialists, who succeeded in defeating Stresemann's resolution to accept the bill by 17 votes to 10, with two abstentions. It marked a decisive defeat for the DVP Chairman's avowed and well-known policy of collaboration with the SPD. On 3 October, Stresemann died of a stroke. The DVP then decided to remain in the Müller government only until the ratification of the Young Plan, due in March 1930.

10. G Stresemann to Geheimrat Kahl (13 March 1929), *Diaries, Letters and Papers*, Volume 3, pp 468-69.

11. *Vorwärts*, 3 November 1928, emphasis added.

12. *Berliner Börsen Zeitung*, 30 May 1929. Walther Funk, later Hitler's Minister of Economics, was the editor-in-chief of this organ of German high finance, taking up his appointment in 1916. With the development of the economic crisis in Germany, a group of reactionary industrialists (Thyssen, Vöglér, etc) invited Funk to lead an 'Economic and Political Service' to serve as a liaison between heavy industry and the newly-emerging Nazi Party, an offer which Funk readily accepted. He joined the NSDAP in 1931. The *Berliner Börsen Zeitung* was a thermometer for the political temperature of the big concerns and banks throughout the crisis up to and even beyond the formation of the Nazi regime.

13. *Berliner Börsen Zeitung*, 30 May 1929.

14. In terms of share prices, the German boom had reached its peak more than two years before the Wall Street Crash, with the share index ascending to 168 in May 1927, as compared with an average of 100 in the years 1924-26. From June 1927 onwards, it slid slowly downwards to 125 in September 1929. Then followed the headlong plunge to 107 by the end of the year, and a rock bottom of 45 in April 1932. The extreme fragility of the German boom is brought out by the continued upwards swing of the stock market in all the other major capitalist countries until the spring or summer of 1929, when stagnation, and then slump, set in. Measured by the index of production, however, the German boom survived until the very eve of the Wall Street crash, the peak being attained in July 1929. Production alone, however, gives a distorted picture of the health of German capitalism,

because for more than a year before this date, its industry had been progressively starved of new capital, which alone provides the basis for continued expanding production. The rapid shrinkage in the number of bankrupted firms brings this last point out well. There were 31 543 business ‘deaths’ in 1928, but only 26 864 in the following year, and nearly 2000 less in 1930, suggesting that the capital famine of 1928 had bitten deep into the soft underbelly of the credit-financed firms well before the first reverberations of the US crisis were being felt on the Berlin Bourse.

15. *Go Ahead Or Go Under*, Memorandum of the Presidium of the Federation of German Industries, 2 December 1929. There were also demands for drastic economies by public corporations, state and local government authorities, etc.

16. H Schacht, *The End of Reparations* (London, 1931), pp 111-202.

17. Hilferding’s resignation was celebrated in papers close to industry and finance. But as the organ of the iron and steel industry, the *Deutsche Bergwerkszeitung*, cautioned on 29 December 1929, an alternative regime and policy had to be ready to take over when the final *coup de grâce* was administered. Meanwhile, the Social Democrats still had some useful work to perform: ‘... there is much to indicate that the Social Democrats are thirsting to return to opposition again. The bourgeois parties should by no means render it too easy for Social Democracy to realise these intentions. The government will only have successes when the prerequisites are established for a radical abandonment of the present methods, for a break with the ruling system, against the destructive economics of socialism in all spheres. We are drawing near to this, but we have not yet arrived at this state. Before that, let all the nation call for salvation from slavery and exploitation as the result of socialisation, arbitrariness, imprudence and corruption.’ Hilferding’s removal certainly aroused anger in Social Democratic circles. On 15 January, *Vorwärts* headlined a report of the controversy surrounding the finance minister’s departure ‘Away with Schacht!’, while the next day, it declared that his ‘disappearance is an urgent political necessity. In what manner that is to be achieved is a matter of secondary importance.’ And also on 15 January, the *Berliner Börsen Zeitung* declared in confident tones that it ‘would not mind at all if the Social Democrats were to bring about a Parliamentary Schacht crisis. It would at least demonstrate to them that the party of trade union secretaries is not qualified to take part in the discussion of great things and decisions.’

18. Although Brüning is generally regarded as the pioneer of rule by Presidential decree based on Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution, the idea had first been mooted a year earlier by Carl Severing, who in a speech in Essen on 3 March 1929, declared: ‘If it should really come to pass that this country should be governed by Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution, I am not afraid of the responsibility. I place myself at the disposal of the Republic.’ In July 1932 Severing, as Minister of Interior in the Prussian State government, was deposed along with his fellow SPD Ministers by von Papen, who of course, invoked this same Article 48.

19. GWF Hegel, *Science of Logic*, Volume 1 (London, 1961), p 387.

20. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, Volume 1, p 387.

21. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, Volume 1, p 388.

22. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, Volume 1, p 390.

23. JV Stalin, ‘The Right Danger in the CPSU’ (19 October 1928), *Works*, Volume 11, pp 233-34.

24. Stalin, ‘The Right Danger in the CPSU’, *Works*, Volume 11, p 235. Stalin should have known all about these, because while his alliance with Bukharin endured, he had been instrumental in catering for the prejudices and greed of the rich in town and country alike.

25. ‘Financial Agent of the Comintern: From the Memoirs of Comrade Y’, in Ypsilon, *Pattern of World Revolution* (New York, 1947), p 132.

26. JV Stalin, ‘The Right Danger in the KPD’, *Works*, Volume 11, pp 309-15, emphasis added.

27. JV Stalin 'Bukharin's Group and the Right Deviation in Our Party, Speech to a Joint Meeting of the CPSU Politbureau and Presidium of the Central Control Commission of the CPSU' (end of January 1929), *Works*, Volume 11, pp 332-33.
28. JV Stalin, 'The Right Deviation in the CPSU, Speech to the Plenum of the CC and the CCC of the CPSU' (April 1929), *Works*, Volume 12, pp 7-18, emphasis added.
29. Stalin, 'The Right Deviation in the CPSU', *Works*, Volume 12, pp 26-27.
30. JV Stalin, 'The Right Deviation in the CPSU', *Works*, Volume 12, p 27.
31. S Gusiev, 'Lesson of the German Lock-Out', *Communist International*, Volume 6, no 3, 1 January 1929, pp 76-82, emphasis added.
32. 'The CI and the Right Danger in the KPD', *Communist International*, Volume 6, no 6, 15 February 1929, p 180.
33. *Workers Press*, 20 November 1973.
34. *Workers Press*, 19 October 1973.
35. 'Social Fascism in Germany', *Communist International*, Volume 6, no 11-12-13, pp 529-30.
36. *Communist International*, Volume 6, no 14, 1 June 1929, pp 498, 574-77, 582.
37. *Die Rote Fahne*, 12 April 1929.
38. 'May Day in Berlin', *Communist International*, Volume 6, no 16, 15 June 1929, p 620.
39. The obligatory quotes denote that there could be no question of a genuine left tendency in Social Democracy - a notion also to be found in circles that on paper at least repudiate Third Period Stalinism.
40. S Gusiev, 'On the Road to a New Revolutionary Rise', *Communist International*, Volume 6, no 19, 16 August 1929, p 720.
41. H Kurella, 'The Bloody First of May', *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 9, no 9, 19 April 1929, p 497.
42. *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 9, no 40, 20 August 1929, pp 848, 855-56, 860.
43. *Communist International*, Volume 6, no 17, 15 July 1929, pp 659-61.
44. O Piatnitsky, 'Speech to Trade Union Commission of ECCI' (28 February 1929), *Communist International*, Volume 6, no 17, 15 July 1929, p 655.
45. *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 9, no 47, 11 September 1929, p 1038.
46. *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 9, no 55, 4 October 1929, p 1185.
47. *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 9, no 55, 4 October 1929, p 1197.
48. 'On the International Situation and the Immediate Tasks of the Communist Parties', *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 9, no 46, 4 September 1929, p 985.
49. *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 10, no 1, 2 January 1930, p 15.
50. *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 10, no 12, 6 March 1930, p 217.
51. 'Decaying Capitalism and the Fascisation of the Bourgeois State', *Communist International*, Volume 7, no 2-3, 1 April [sic!] 1930, p 73.
52. *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 10, no 3, 23 January 1930, p 66.
53. *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 10, no 17, 3 April 1930, p 331.
54. 'Mr Wilson and the Liberals' (first leader), *The Times*, 4 October 1973.
55. *Workers Press*, 5 October 1973.
56. *Workers Press*, 11 June 1973.
57. *Workers Press*, 30 April 1973, emphasis added.

58. LD Trotsky, 'What Next?' (27 January 1932), *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany* (New York, 1971), p 144.

Fascism in Germany. Robin Blick 1975

Chapter XVIII: 14 September 1930

The culminating point in the influence of National Fascism [that is, National Socialism] coincides with the beginning of its break-up... The present crisis of National Fascism is the beginning of its decomposition... ('On the Question of National Fascism in Germany', *Communist International*, Volume 7, no 10, 1 September 1930, p 168)

From the earliest days of the *volkisch* movement, its leaders sought to combat the growth of Marxism in the working class by converting the proletariat to the 'national idea'. But in each and every case, these attempts failed completely. The fight to establish a base for ultra-imperialist and racialist policies in the masses continued; but, of necessity, in other directions. Here the example of the Hohenzollern Court Chaplain Pastor Stöcker is instructive. He launched his 'Christian Social' party in 1878 with high hopes of detaching large numbers of workers from the Social Democrats, who that very year had been driven underground by Bismarck's anti-socialist laws. But within two years, Stöcker had been forced drastically to revise his strategy. Apart from the inevitably lumpen-proletarian elements which everywhere gravitate towards demagogues promising them a quack, pseudo-socialist remedy to their problems, the Christian Socials made scarcely any inroads into the banned SPD's hard core of supporters. Such plebeian forces as did rally to Stöcker's brand of radical anti-Semitism were mainly petit-bourgeois: small shopkeepers, artisans, traders; those who both worked *and* owned, who regarded themselves both as 'productive' *and* as men of property, however small, or dependent on credit. They were attracted by Stöcker's double-edged attack on Marxism as the enemy of nation and property, and 'Jewish' finance as a parasite growing fat on the labour of the industrious *Kleinburgher*.

Further south, in Vienna, Dr Karl Lüger succeeded in raising himself to the mayorship of the Austrian capital on the backs of precisely this class, a triumph whose political significance certainly did not escape Hitler:

He understood only too well that the political fighting power of the upper bourgeoisie at the present time was but slight and inadequate for achieving the victory of a great movement. He therefore laid the greatest stress in his political activity on winning over the classes whose existence was threatened and therefore tended to spur rather than paralyse the will to fight... Thus he adjusted his new party [like Stöcker's, named 'Christian Social' - RB] primarily to the middle class menaced with destruction, and thereby assured himself of a following that was difficult to shake... ^[1]

These lines were written during Hitler's stay in Landsberg prison, yet he did not really grasp the full implication of Lüger's strategy and intimate knowledge of the psychology of the German petit-bourgeoisie until a good four years later. From his first political activity in the army, right through to the Munich Putsch and beyond, Hitler's main efforts were directed towards winning over the German worker to National Socialism. In this respect, his aim did not differ from that of the north German 'radicals'. Where he fell out with the Strasser brothers and Goebbels was over their undue emphasis on the 'socialist' elements of the NSDAP programme. Neither could Hitler countenance their claims to equal participation in the political direction of the party. But with these two disputes resolved - entirely in the Munich leadership's favour - Hitler was certainly not averse to exploiting the undoubted demagogic talents of Goebbels, whom in October 1926 he dispatched to Berlin to win over the capital's workers from the Marxists. From this time on, with Hitler setting his course towards an alliance with big business, no party member, be he rank-and-filer or one of the high command, would be permitted to outbid the worker's parties in radicalism unless on the expressed permission of Hitler himself. This meant an end to the freelancing pseudo-leftism of the Strassers, ^[2] although not, as has been noted already, the termination of attempts to base the party on a 'nationalised' proletariat.

Slowly but surely, the former 'radicals' of north and west Germany either left the party or adjusted to the official line emanating from Munich. Since Hitler held the purse strings for the entire movement, there was little they could do about it had they even wanted to. For example, the Lower Saxony *gau* of the NSDAP, once a stronghold of the Strasser - Goebbels faction, offended the strictly orthodox Rust by advertising his forthcoming speech in Brunswick as being 'The Struggle Against Capital - The Demand of the Hour', whereas it should have read 'The Struggle Against Capitalism'. For, as Rust was quick to point out, the Nazis did not wage war against all capital, but only 'parasitic' finance, 'Jewish' capital. The culprits responsible for this lapse into Marxist terminology later made amends. An article published in

1927 in the offending paper, the *Niedersächsischer Beobachter*, declared in the best style of Hitler and Feder:

The Marxist is a capitalist. He only thinks of himself and is thus as far away from socialism as any bourgeois... The class struggle of the National Socialist is not, like that of the Marxists, concerned with material gain, but is the moral commandment, the moral urge of all exploited, productive working people of hand and brain to free work from the yoke of parasitic capital. In other words, the struggle of the productive classes [that is, proletarians together with their 'productive' capitalist exploiters - RB] against the parasitic class, the struggle of the working people against the Jewish parasites.

Right through 1926, and well into the next year, the NSDAP continued to pursue Hitler's strategy of ignoring the rural regions (except those of Bavaria) and concentrating its still rather meagre forces in the main towns where, it was hoped, the workers could be detached from their long-established allegiance to their traditional parties. Meanwhile Hitler pushed ahead with his campaign to gain admission to the inner circles of industry and high finance (the very 'stock-exchange' and 'parasitic' capital the Nazi press denounced daily as exploiters of the German people), and in August 1927, after more than a year of addressing meetings of largely sceptical business leaders, achieved an important breakthrough. In that month, Hitler published privately a pamphlet for secret distribution amongst Germany's leading industrialists, a pamphlet moreover that was sponsored by the king of them all, Emil Kirdorf. The most reactionary of Ruhr tycoons - he had openly criticised Kaiser Wilhelm II during the war for the latter's acceptance of Social Democratic collaboration - Kirdorf, despite his advancing years, also happened to be among the most influential. He ruled over two important employers' organisations, the *Bergbaulicher Verein* (Coal-Mining Association) and the North-West Iron Federation. After his conversion to National Socialism, which dated from a meeting with Hitler on 4 July 1927, at the house of the Nazi publisher Hugo Bruckmann, ^[3] Kirdorf actively campaigned for the party amongst his fellow industrialists and made available to the Nazis considerable sums of cash between the summer of 1927 and their victory six years later. The cover of the pamphlet (a copy of which was unearthed in 1966 in the offices of a large Ruhr firm) was inscribed 'presented by Emil Kirdorf'. Kirdorf (whose idea the pamphlet was) moreover promised to distribute it widely throughout German heavy industry. Although running along the lines of Hitler's earlier addresses to business leaders (such as his first, to the 1919 National Club of Hamburg), this pamphlet emphasised even more strongly the fragile, superficial nature of the economic boom then at full swing, and warned that an altogether different political policy would have to be pursued if German industry was not to be swept away by crisis and eventual Marxist-led revolution:

... even with the most unprejudiced intentions I cannot bring myself to view our folk's present situation as satisfactory or hopeful, or even to concede that any time in the past 10 years any signs whatsoever of improvement or... an upswing have become evident. Even in the economic sphere, so-called consolidation is either an unthinking fallacy or a deliberate lie. The fact is that Germany's balance of trade has remained unfavourable and in the past few years has been deteriorating rapidly. The nation spends more than it earns. The practice of offsetting this imbalance by means of foreign loans does not help us resolve the dilemma... quite the contrary, the annually increasing burden in debt payments plunged us into an even greater dependency on the outside world. In other ways, too, a significant portion of the nation's economy is falling under the impersonal control of international finance capital, while innumerable medium and small livelihoods are going under... I must take a very firm stand against those who from time to time imagine they discern symptoms of a political upsurge in the vacillating game of party battles or the ever-changing outcome of elections... *the German folk is splitting ever more pronouncedly into two camps that oppose each other as mortal enemies. These camps are rapidly becoming mutually exclusive, and are transforming themselves into closed, self-sufficing entities, one of which, the Marxist, a foreign body within its own folk, disclaims all ties to the nation so that it can ally itself with analogous bodies in other nations...* a true resurgence of the German nation is contingent not on the fulfilment and satisfaction of so and so many daily demands, but on regaining the inner strength of the nation... instead of raising aloft the merits of race and folk, millions of our folk pay homage to the idea of internationalism. The strength and genius of the individual personality are, in line with the absurd nature of democracy, being set aside in favour of majority rule, which amounts to nothing more than weakness and stupidity. And rather than recognise and affirm the necessity of struggle, people are preaching theories of pacifism, reconciliation among nations, and eternal peace. *These three outrages against mankind... are the*

characteristic symptoms of the Marxism which is progressively gaining a hold on our folk... Once a folk has fallen prey to these vices... there can be no more talk of 'resurgence'... Our supreme duty today is not to capitulate in the face of signs of degeneracy but to confront them heroically. [The Nazi movement is not a parliamentary party but]... the germ cell and shock troop of a new Reich. It sees the problem not in the search for some parliamentary majority or another, in creating any particular coalition, or in setting up some new government or preparing for better elections, but, rather, exclusively, in instilling the... principles [of 'folkdom and race', 'individual personality', 'readiness for sacrifice and a positive attitude towards struggle'] and ridding our national body of the lacerations caused by disregard for these principles and by the effects of Marxism. The new movement categorically rejects any divisions into estates or classes and in their place proclaims an all-German outlook. It does not imagine that this changeover can be achieved by pious teachings alone. No, it is convinced that the movement will first have to prove by its own example that such a changeover is possible and, further, that some day it will be possible to impose a general education along these lines on the nation, if necessary, by means of the hardest kind of struggle... In place of the currently prevailing internationalist outlook, the movement thereby consciously and deliberately substitutes a sharply defined nationalistic orientation; in place of democracy's worship of the masses, the unconditional authority of the individual personality; and in place of pacifism, training to resist and struggle. The movement knows first of all that such a development cannot be launched from above, but rather has to be generated in the heart of a nation and develop from there, as is the case with all great phenomena in the history of the world. It feels that an independent national economy is a necessity, but does not consider it a primary force or the moulder of a strong state but rather just the reverse: only a strong nationalist state can safeguard such an economy and give it the opportunity to survive and develop freely. The National Socialist movement furthermore recognises that complete incorporation of the so-called Fourth Estate [that is, the proletariat] into the national community is the most essential precondition to the fulfilment of this task and the establishment of a cohesive national body... It wishes that these million-strong masses who number among our national assets, will be delivered from the hands of their present international and mainly un-German seducers and leaders and will be completely incorporated in the nation and state. [4]

Again we see the same stress on the plebeian basis of the Nazi movement that characterised all Hitler's major political speeches and writings. The great changes that were proposed for Germany's political system could not be 'launched from above', but only generated in the heart of a nation, from 'below' in the 'Jacobin' manner. Yet precisely in this direction, where Nazi strategy finally proved to be vastly superior to all its conservative competitors and *volkisch* imitators, Hitler had experienced nothing but setbacks. Certainly 1927 was not a year in which a counter-revolutionary movement could expect to be swamped by votes and applications for membership. The onset of the economic crisis lay a year ahead, workers' wages were rising steadily, unemployment was falling fast, and even the urban petit-bourgeoisie were beginning to share in the transitory affluence of the boom. But the orientation of the Nazi Party itself was also partly responsible for its consistent failure to match Hitler's fighting talk with deeds.

Since the early months of 1926, the party had been conducting its so-called 'urban drive' in selected industrial regions - the Ruhr, Saxony, Thuringia - which were all strongholds of proletarian radicalism (Saxony and Thuringia were at the centre of the 1923 aborted bid for power by the KPD, while the Ruhr witnessed the heaviest fighting in the wake of the Kapp Putsch). The bulk of the propaganda was directed towards workers already enrolled in the ADGB trade unions and the two workers' parties, and for this very reason made no noticeable impact. The German worker's allegiance to what he understood to be Marxism, rooted deep in the collective consciousness of his class, and the product of more than half a century of sacrifice and struggle against Hitler's reactionary forerunners, could never be undermined by propaganda alone. And it should be remembered that in the spring of 1926, the Nazis had exposed themselves as open defenders of property and privilege by opposing the joint SPD-KPD campaign for a referendum on the question of the expropriation of the princes. This was the price Hitler had to pay for maintaining and strengthening his still tenuous links with the world of industry and finance. When put to the test in a series of local and state elections, the Nazi party's 'urban drive' proved itself to have been a serious, though not fatal, error of judgement. On 31 October 1926, the NSDAP recorded a miserable 3.5 per cent of the vote in the Saxon Landtag elections, while in Mecklenburg on 22 May 1927, the Nazi share of the vote dropped to 1.8 per cent. Clearly the fascist seed was falling on stony - proletarian - ground.

Yet in May 1924, when the Nazi vote averaged 6.5 per cent nationally, the party's share in Mecklenburg was 20.8 per cent. Clearly there existed in this largely rural state a large segment of former Nazi voters who for a number of reasons had not been induced to vote Nazi three years later.. Once again, the causes of this reticence were in part due to the prevailing strategy of the NSDAP, which led to its concentration on winning the urban, Social Democratic or Communist worker. The beginnings of a new orientation can be detected in the period following the Nuremberg party conference of September 1927, when discussions amongst party leaders on the recent poor election results, combined with reports of awakening interest in the Nazi cause from distinctly non-proletarian sections of the population, led in the later part of 1927 to a drive amongst the urban, and especially rural, middle class, and students in the universities. Even before this turn had been consolidated, the party suddenly found itself working in a sympathetic environment for the first time since 1923. Rural support for the Nazis, though obviously having its historical roots in the deeply reactionary traditions and prejudices of the German peasantry, increased at this time as a direct result of the profound crisis that had gripped German agriculture.

Firstly it should be remembered that although Europe's foremost industrial power since the early twentieth century, Germany, unlike its main rival England, had carried the burden of a millions-strong rural population whose economic productivity, knowledge of technology and general cultural standards remained in many regions closer to those of the middle ages. In 1871, the year of the formation of the Second Reich, 64 per cent of the empire's population lived in the countryside. Rapid industrial expansion under Bismarck sucked several million landless labourers and small peasants into the mills, mines and factories of the Ruhr, Saxony, Thuringia and the north, until by 1907 those engaged in agricultural occupations had fallen by nearly half - to 34 per cent of the population. But from this date onwards, the decline slows down. In 1925, 30.5 per cent are still employed in either farming or forestry, and in 1933, 28.9 per cent.

The productive forces of German capitalism had ceased to expand - on the contrary, with the slump of 1929, they had begun to contract drastically. Rationalisation, with its emphasis on increasing output per worker, also cut the demand for new labour, thus helping to block the time-honoured route of escape from rural idiocy and poverty to the relative enlightenment and prosperity of the 'big city'. In the first years of Nazi rule, it was the cities that disgorged their jobless proletarians, driving them to work as slaves on farms, roads and marshlands of the Third Reich. But it was in the countryside that the crisis of German capitalism first made its effects felt. While big business rationalised and concentrated its forces, the smaller and medium peasant ruined himself in a desperate bid to modernise and mechanise his farm. Lacking both the resources and the scale of operations to make such investments profitable, they simply had the effect of dragging hundreds of thousands of small-holders deeper and deeper into debt with the city money-lenders. The structure of landownership illustrates this graphically.

Size of farm	No of farms	% of farms	% of land
0.5 to 1(ha)	834 014	27.4	2.3
2 to 5	787 526	25.8	6.2
5 to 20	1 069 710	35.1	25.7
20 to 100	321 567	10.6	27.9
100 +	33 831	1.1	37.9

Therefore only in the top two categories - the rich peasants (or *Kulaks*, to use the Russian term) and the Junkers, the rich agrarians of East Prussia - could farming be both modern and competitive. For the remaining 88 per cent, and of course especially for the very smallest units, hopes of breaking even, let alone making a working profit, were dim indeed, as the following figures, published after a survey conducted by the German government in 1926, suggest. In 38 per cent of the 2568 farms investigated, expenses exceeded receipts, and after deducting taxes, 51 per cent were found to be making no net profits (the survey sample included large farms as well as medium and small ones). Bearing in mind that these figures exclude deductions from receipts made to pay interest on loans, we have a picture of utter catastrophe for literally millions of German households, on a scale far greater than anything that was being experienced in the towns until the early 1930s. Here indeed was fertile soil for the Nazi seed - a massive stratum of small property-owners several million strong, deeply conservative by political tradition yet now threatened with destruction by what the Nazi agitators and press told them was a

conspiracy of Jewish money lenders and Jewish Marxist politicians. It was a class which proudly regarded its labour as productive, and its property as honestly acquired. Deeply nationalist, and for centuries the backbone of the Prussian infantry, it was now burning with frustrated shame and anger at the spectacle of Germany disarmed and humiliated by its bitterest enemies. And once again, the Nazis assured them, those responsible were the 'Jewish Marxists' who ruled the republic that millions of peasants had come to identify with their own misfortunes. Only amongst the farm proletarians, the land labourers, could there be found the forces to stand firm against this reactionary rural floodtide, and even then they would require the powerful support that only a united and combative urban working class could provide. Social Democratic opportunism, and Stalinist ultra-leftism, ensured that the German farm proletarian never received it.

The chronic distress in German agriculture finally convinced Hitler that it was in the village and farm, rather than city and factory, that the initial breakthrough to a genuine mass party could be achieved. On 10 December 1927, he addressed - for the first time - a meeting of agrarian leaders in Hamburg. By early 1928, the turn had ceased to be a pragmatic adaptation to a previously unconsidered opportunity, but had become a firm strategic line. As Feder noted some years later, in 1928: 'Hitler directed his attacks especially against the senseless manner in which the farmers and middle classes were being ruined.' ^[5] Nazi propaganda was adjusted accordingly, with attacks on capitalism being played down, and those on Marxism receiving special emphasis. The main theme was that Jewish money lenders, aided by the 'Marxist' politicians who created and still ruled the Republic, were responsible for the ruinous state of German agriculture. And naturally, the peasant was depicted as the backbone of a future Nazi Reich:

The maintenance of an efficient agricultural class... is a cornerstone of National Socialist policy... [today] the farmer is forced to run into debt and to pay usurious interest for loans. He sinks deeper and deeper under this tyranny, and in the end forfeits house and farm to the money lender, who is usually a Jew. ^[6]

The one - and very real - enemy of the German peasant not singled out by Feder for abuse was of course the class of big agrarians, the Junkers, for it was precisely towards this old élite of Imperial Germany that Hitler was looking for support in his drive to overturn the republic and smash the workers' movement. So here Feder trod very gingerly. He could not on any account offend the Junkers, but he also had to ensure the Nazis did not appear before the smallholders as stooges of the richest agrarians. Hence the following tortuous exposition of NSDAP farm policy:

No hard and fast rule can be laid down as to the size of agricultural holdings. From the point of view of our population policy large numbers of prosperous small and middle-sized farms are all-important. Farming on a large scale, however, has its special and necessary part to play, and if it preserves a sound relation towards the smaller farms it is justifiable. ^[7]

The analysis made by the Nazi chiefs towards the end of 1927 was fully borne out by the Reichstag elections of May 1928. A conference of party leaders held on the day the results were declared heard Hitler spell out the new strategy, which now became imperative in the light of the party's abysmal performance in regions dominated by the two workers' parties. Only in rural areas did the Nazi vote hold up against the powerful national trend to the left. In his analysis of the returns, Hitler paid particular attention to the big increase in the vote for the KPD and the SPD, drawing the conclusion - a correct one as later events proved - that the NSDAP had to look elsewhere for its main and most firm supporters. In Berlin, where Goebbels had been hard at work for 18 months winning the German worker to the 'national idea' away from his 'Marxist seducers', the Nazis had been crushed by a combined SPD - KPD vote of 63.6 per cent. The NSDAP received a derisory 1.5 per cent. In the Ruhr, the picture was even worse, with the Nazi share of the vote plummeting to 1.3 per cent. Hamburg, another stronghold of the labour movement, was little better at 2.6 per cent, while the workers' parties aggregated 53.6 per cent. But the performance of the party in some key rural regions was, by comparison, much more promising: Schleswig-Holstein (4.0 per cent), Weser (5.2 per cent), South Hanover (4.4 per cent), Franconia (8.1 per cent) and Oberbayen-Schwaben (6.2 per cent). Echoing the conclusions drawn by Hitler from the results, the *Völkischer Beobachter* commented on 31 May that 'certain districts did less well than expected', and went on to underline the need to consolidate the party in the rural regions where its largest potential social reserves were to be found:

The election results in the country show that with less expenditure of efforts and money and time greater successes can be achieved there than in the large towns. National Socialist mass meetings in small towns and market communities are important events and form the topic of daily

conversation for weeks afterwards while in the large towns meetings even with 3000 and 4000 people sink into insignificance and pass away. ^[8]

Despite initial opposition from certain SA ‘radicals’ who drew their support from declassed proletarian elements in the big cities, the ‘rural drive’ became official Nazi policy after a conference of top party leaders in August 1928. To help smooth Hitler’s projected alliance with the agrarians and the propertied rural population, instructions were issued on 30 October 1928 banning joint meetings or other activities with the KPD, a tactic occasionally indulged in by both Nazi ‘radicals’ and Stalinists as a device to ‘capture’ the other’s working-class following. (Significantly, the KPD pursued this utterly reactionary policy while refusing to form a united front with the SPD, a genuine, if reformist workers’ party!) Workers were excluded from the central and *gau* leaderships, and all the plum posts in the party machine made available to those with higher social standing. At the August conference it was also decided that the party would place more emphasis than hitherto on the defence of private property, while ceasing all attacks on religion (a favourite pastime of the pagan pseudo-radicals). Neither were inter-denominational feuds to be permitted, since Hitler was bidding for the support of Catholic as well as Protestant peasants. Together with the consolidation of the new Nazi line, with its concentration on small-propertied strata in the rural regions, developed a similar appreciation of the hitherto largely untapped reservoirs of support for the party amongst the ‘small people’ of the towns and cities; those millions who, like the small peasant, represented a stubborn but increasingly crisis-prone relic of a bygone, pre-capitalist era.

At a meeting of NSDAP *gauleiters* in Weimar on 27 November 1927, Hitler concluded from the poor showing of the party in the recent *landtag* and city council elections that the urban as well as rural petit-bourgeoisie should become the main target of future Nazi agitation and propaganda. Reporting back from the meeting to his own *gau* in North Hanover, Rust confided that the new party strategy would be to seek support ‘from the small businessman, who is the most vigorous opponent of department stores and consumer cooperatives, and, further, from the shop assistant, who as a member of the DHV [the *volkisch* white-collar ‘trade union’] is already an anti-Semite’. And on the same theme, Adolf Wagner of the *gau* Grosse Munchen declared in a directive to party members issued prior to the September 1930 Reichstag elections that:

In future we want to carry on the struggle against these gravediggers of the German people in such a way that we not only avoid department stores and cooperative societies, but also take practical steps to show the German tradesmen and craftsmen that it is we who know how to organise energetically the struggle against his enemies...

In order to appreciate fully the importance of this new Nazi orientation, it is necessary to quantify the balance of class forces that prevailed in Germany in the period of the Weimar Republic. The occupational census of 1925 provided the eminent German sociologist Professor Theodor Geiger with the raw statistical data to conduct his now well-known inquiry into the class structure of modern Germany. His method of stratification entirely excluded categories based either on ‘status’ (as with the Weberian model) or even more subjective notions of social rank, and placed the population in one of three broad groupings capitalist, middle class and labour class, according to their stated occupations. Under the heading ‘capitalist’ were grouped either big employers of labour, or individuals with an income above 30 000 marks per annum. ‘Middle class’ embraced smaller property owners, professional workers on a salary below 30 000 marks but above 1000 marks, while under the heading ‘labour’ were placed all those dependent on the sale of their labour for their livelihood and with an income of less than 3000 marks. Using this method of classification (which Geiger then refined and revised in a further breakdown of the statistics), the following picture emerged:

Class	Gainfully employed	% of total	With families	% of total
Capitalist	299 630	0.84	574 752	0.92
Middle	8 745 252	24.39	16 026 135	25.68
Labour	26 808 848	74.77	45 809 732	73.40
Totals	35 853 730	100.00	62 410 619	100.00

What immediately stands out is the almost total social isolation of the big bourgeoisie and agrarians who, while owning the major portion of the nation’s wealth and productive resources, between them comprised

less than one per cent of its total population. As was and remains the case in every capitalist country, the continued rule of the big bourgeoisie is not in question for any save the most advanced sections of the masses while boom conditions, or at least those of relative economic stability, prevail, and while the petit-bourgeoisie and proletariat are permitted to enjoy a steady increase in their living standards. In such times, the bulk of the middle class, together with a sizeable minority of the proletariat, not only acquiesce in, but actually endorse the continuation of bourgeois rule by voting for one or other of the parties of the ruling class at election times. For the rest of the year, the ruling class expects them to lay dormant, and merely conduct themselves as humble and obedient citizens - which of course many of them do. This familiar - and for the bourgeoisie comforting - pattern of politics is dramatically undermined by the onset of great economic and social crises, such as those unleashed upon Germany from 1929. The old equilibrium is shattered. The previously loyal middle class now finds that its traditional political leaders and spokesmen, those it supposed to be men of honour, are nothing more than liars, vote-catching careerists, manipulators of those who had so foolishly trusted them for decades. When expansion and boom yields almost overnight, as it did in Germany, to contraction and slump, then the political outlook and party loyalty of the 'small man', tied up intimately with a whole host of quasi-mystical prejudices and vanities about property, 'status', nation, 'race' and religion, are thrown into crisis. Yesterday's leaders become today's traitors, and today's raving demagogues, tomorrow's saviours. And precisely at this point, when the old political system is visibly breaking up, the big bourgeoisie also finds itself driven to seek new forms of rule to protect its social domination. Thus the problem arises - how can the ruling class retain its grip on the millions of petit-bourgeois and backward workers who are being torn from the traditional bourgeois parties by this same social crisis? By its very nature, the task cannot be accomplished by the big bourgeoisie itself, since it is against this class that the hitherto passive millions of 'small people' are in revolt, albeit in a highly confused and potentially reactionary fashion. And so the stage is set for the entry and rise of the 'plebeians', swept into power by the elemental outburst of a perverted petit-bourgeois radicalism that, despairing of salvation by the proletariat, turns to the exponents of fascist counter-revolution, to those who promise not only the destruction of the Marxist enemies of property, but the taming of the trusts, banks and chain-store owners. Where did the Nazis find the social reserves to build such a movement? The above table tells us only part of the story. For contained within the category 'labour class' were in fact widely heterogeneous social layers ranging from the hard-core industrial proletariat to artisans, shopkeepers and clerical employees in the towns; and in the country, from farm labourers to peasants who not only worked themselves, but were also employers of wage labour. Taking into account these subdivisions (which again rest on objective criteria) Geiger arrived at a more refined - and accurate - picture of the middle class, which he now grouped under three headings: old middle class, being the small property-owners (artisans, traders, peasants, etc, whose origin was largely pre-capitalist); new middle class (professional employees, school teachers, clerks, civil servants, etc) and finally, quasi-proletarians, those who whilst wholly dependent on work for their income, were self-employed - the so-called 'independents'. Since a large proportion of these last two groups had, in Geiger's first table, been included under the rubric 'labour class' (their income deriving from their own work, and not primarily from the ownership of property), this necessarily resulted in a considerable reduction in the numbers of those now described as 'proletarians', as can be seen from the table below:

Class	Gainfully employed (% of population)	With families (% of population)
Capitalists	0.84	0.92
Old Middle Class	18.33	17.77
New Middle Class	16.04	17.95
Quasi-Proletarians	13.76	12.65
Proletarians	51.03	50.71

It would of course be quite wrong to reduce the relationships between the classes to the quantitative plane, as does Geiger's classification. The potential social and political weight of the proletariat is not primarily a question of numbers, but one of its role in production, which, even in countries where the capitalist mode of production has been stunted or delayed in its development, enables the working class, given correct revolutionary tactics and strategy, to exercise a decisive voice in political affairs. Thus it was in Russia in 1917, where the proletariat comprised but a small minority of the working population,

and thus it could have been in China and later in Spain, had not the Stalinist bureaucracy diverted the proletariat away from the struggle for state power towards the chimera of a bloc with the 'democratic' national bourgeoisie. But these two later negative experiences, together with the most tragic defeat of all in Germany, also highlight the immense dangers which face the proletariat should it not succeed in rallying the broad exploited masses to its side in the struggle for state power and socialism. The working, non-proletarian strata of town and country, which in Germany comprised a good third of the population, were not only potential *allies* of the working class in its struggle for socialism. The least waverings in the revolutionary leadership of the working class (not to speak of Social Democratic and centrist betrayal) could convert these potential allies of the proletariat into the bitterest of foes, the foot soldiers of fascist counter-revolution. As Trotsky said of the French petit-bourgeoisie, when in the mid-1930s, under the blows of the deepening economic crisis, it began to desert its traditional Radical Socialist Party leaders for the fascists on the right and the Socialist and Communist Parties on the left:

Renaudel, Frossard [leaders of the French Socialist Party]... imagine that the petit-bourgeoisie is attached above all to democracy, wherefore it is necessary to hang onto the coat-tails of the Radicals. What monstrous confusion! Democracy is only a political form. The petit-bourgeoisie is not concerned with the shell but with the kernel. It wants to save itself from misery and ruin. If democracy proves impotent - then to the devil with democracy! Every petit-bourgeois reasons or feels this way. The principal social and political source of fascism is in the growing revolt of the lower petit-bourgeoisie against its own, 'educated' upper layers in the municipalities, the districts and in parliament. To this must be added the hatred of the crisis-shattered intellectual youth for the lawyers, the deputies and the parvenu ministers. Here also the lower petit-bourgeois intellectuals rebel against those above them. Does this mean that the passage of the petit-bourgeoisie to fascism is inevitable and inescapable? No, such a conclusion would be shameful fatalism. What is really inevitable and inescapable is the doom of Radicalism [the nearest equivalent of which in Germany would have been the DDP - RB] and all the political groupings which link themselves to its fate... The end of the Radical Party is the inevitable result of the fact that *bourgeois society can no longer overcome its difficulties with the help of so-called democratic methods*. The split between the base of the petit-bourgeoisie and its summit is inevitable. *But that does not at all mean that the masses who follow Radicalism must infallibly place their hopes in fascism*. Certainly the most demoralised section, the most declassed and the most avid of the youth of the middle classes have already made their choice in that direction [as had, by 1928-29, similar elements in Germany - RB]. It is out of this reservoir particularly that the fascist bands are taking form. But the basic [petit-bourgeois] masses of city and country have not yet made their choice [again, the same situation that prevailed in Germany up to 1929 - RB]. They hesitate before a great decision... Political developments in the coming period will move at a febrile rhythm. *The petit-bourgeoisie will reject the demagogy of fascism only if it puts its faith in the reality of another road. That other road is the road of the proletarian revolution.* ^[9]

In France, fascism had to contend with a strong democratic tradition amongst the urban and rural petit-bourgeoisie, one still feebly nourished by the heritage of the great Revolution of 1789 (whose heir the Radicals claimed to be). National Socialism encountered no such obstacles in Germany, where wide layers of the middle class had time and again demonstrated their hostility to parliamentary democracy and moderate republicanism well before the rise of the Nazis by voting for the openly monarchist DNVP and a host of even more reactionary parties such as the anti-Semitic Economic Party, the Landvolk and, in Bavaria, the BVP (a right-wing splinter from the Catholic Centre Party). The proportion of the petit-bourgeois masses adhering to parties of extreme conservatism was without doubt greatly augmented by the early betrayals of the SPD, which having received a mandate for radical social change from several million middle-class voters in 1919 promptly came out as a champion of the status quo, of a republic that offered and gave the 'small people' nothing. This betrayal could not but widen the gulf that already existed between the mass of the working petit-bourgeoisie and the organised proletariat whose living standards, if not political and social outlook, it largely shared. The progressive (though uneven) alienation of Germany's small propertied classes from the Republic, and especially from the labour movement, can be measured not only in terms of the growth in the right-wing vote, but by the decline in support for the Social Democratic white-collar trade union, the AfA (*Allgemeine freie Angestelltenbund*). Whereas in 1920, it was the largest of the three competing white-collar unions, with a membership of nearly 700 000, by 1930 it was the smallest, having lost nearly half its members to either the ultra-nationalist General Association of German white-collar trade unions (now the largest of the three) or the more moderate,

liberal federation affiliated to the Hirsch-Duncker manual organisations (which, since they quite openly embraced the principle of a community of interests between the classes, scarcely merited the title of trade union). The decline of the ADGB white-collar trade union was without doubt partly due to its declared solidarity with the struggles and aims of the manual workers' movement. Intensely 'status' conscious, even the lowliest and poverty stricken German petit-bourgeois more often than not considered it beneath his dignity to adopt either the forms of struggle or proletarian class outlook of those who, in every other respect, were potentially his allies in the fight against the big capitalists and bankers who exploited them both (even though in different ways). This attitude was particularly deeply ingrained in the artisans, who in the Weimar Republic numbered some two million. They clung just as stubbornly to their quasi-medieval guilds as their ancestors had done during the revolutionary upheavals of 1848, contemptuously spurning all offers of solidarity from the socialist proletariat, whom the largely self-employed artisans despised as men devoid of either property or national loyalty. Clerical workers, while often recognising the need for some form of class-based organisation, were nearly as reluctant to join forces with the working class, even though their economic plight might lead them to turn in that direction. As one white-collar workers' leader commented towards the end of the First World War, at a time when manual workers were beginning to take strike action to press their claims for better living and working conditions:

... we are well aware that there are at the lower levels conditions and attitudes favourable to cooperation with the manual workers, [but] we do not belong to the masses and we cannot act *en masse* like the workers, our contracts are individually negotiated. We have a different relationship to our employers... We shall stick to the specific character of our situation and demand a specific 'white-collar' policy.

The only occasion on which this class-collaborationist policy seemed likely to collapse was, significantly, in 1919, when even the reactionary DHV was forced by the militancy of its members to endorse strike action in support of wage and other demands. Thereafter, the bloc of right-wing clerical and shop-workers' unions stood squarely against actions of this nature. So naturally they provided the Nazis with their programme of a 'people's community', in which workers and employers would live in harmony with one another, with a plentiful supply of recruits once the economic crisis began to bite deep into the already scanty reserves of the lower petit-bourgeoisie.

Nazi agitators skilfully exploited this subjective chasm that walled off the middle class from united action with the organised proletariat, a gulf greatly deepened, it must be said, by the policies of both the KPD and the SPD, who between them prevented the working class from acting in the decisive fashion necessary to win over or neutralise the middle class.

Neither did the Nazis neglect a third strand of the petit-bourgeoisie - its numerically small, but politically significant and influential intelligentsia. As the most sensitive layers of any class to deep-going but as yet molecular process of change, the youth were from the early days of the crisis polarised between the main parties of revolution and counter-revolution. Here the youth cult of the Nazis paid handsome dividends,^[10] as did their demagogic anti-intellectualism, which ironically (but understandably) made spectacular headway in the universities well before the NSDAP emerged as a force of the first rank in national politics.

The Nazis founded their student organisation, the National Socialist German Student League (NSDStB) as late as 1926. Yet in the course of the next six years, it overhauled the hitherto largest political student movement, that of the SPD, with 7600 members as against 6000 for the Socialist Student League (SS). Naturally, the class composition of the student community greatly favoured the Nazis in their drive to capture the leadership of the universities. A survey of the parental background of university students in the academic year 1928-29 revealed that only 2.3 per cent of all students had fathers with a manual occupation, while 46.9 per cent came from families of middle-class employees, 31.2 per cent from self-employed, and another 21.2 per cent from families where the father had also received a university education. No fewer than 28 per cent of students' fathers were middle-ranking civil servants. And certainly, after 1930, when the slump denied graduates the careers for which they had been studying, the economic conditions clearly favoured the growth of right-wing extremism in the universities. But it still cannot be denied that once the party leadership had made their strategic turn of 1928 towards the middle class, the Nazis were far ahead of the two workers' parties in seeing the need to secure and extend a foothold in Germany's main seats of learning. Many of the student recruits to National Socialism later became prominent party activists and, later still, key functionaries in the Nazi state apparatus. Baldur von

Schirach, who later won notoriety as leader of the Hitler Youth, first emerged to prominence in the NSDAP as Chief of the Nazi student movement, when in the winter of 1930-31 the NSDStB ran out a clear winner in student elections held at nine main German universities. In fact the German students associations were the first bodies of the Republic to be penetrated by the Nazis in this fashion, so much so that in 1931, the German student conference was presided over by an open Nazi. Finally there was the bid made by the Nazis for leadership in cultural affairs, one which in keeping with Hitler's ultra-conservative opinions on art, ^[11] waged war on 'cultural Bolshevism' and all forms of modernism and experimentation. To this end the 'Militant Association for German Culture' was founded in October 1927.

This organisation was headed from the beginning by Rosenberg, who fancied himself as something of an authority on cultural matters. The following extract from his *Myth of the Twentieth Century* gives more than a hint of the tone and level of Rosenberg's 'criticism':

... what Picasso had shamefully hidden behind geometrical patterns came out openly and insolently after the war. Mongrelism claimed that its bastardised progeny, nurtured by spiritual syphilis and artistic infantilism, was able to represent 'expressions of the soul'. One should gaze long and hard upon something like Kokoschka's *Self Portrait* in order to gain a half-way understanding of the monstrous inner-nature of this idiot-art...

On all these fronts then, the NSDAP entered the crisis year of 1929 well prepared to exploit the political opportunities created by the decay of the bourgeois party system - far more so than either the SPD or even the KPD.

Required now was an issue on which the party could campaign, presenting the Nazis as defenders of the German people, and at the same time enabling Hitler to establish the political links he so urgently needed with the leaders of the anti-Weimar bourgeois and Junker right. On the previous occasion when Hitler aligned his party with the conservative nationalist right, it was over a cause that was distinctly lacking in popular appeal - namely his opposition, together with all of the bourgeois parties save the DDP, to the demand for the expropriation of the princes. What Hitler - and the monarchist, ultra-nationalist right - required was a cause at once popular and 'national'. The Müller government's acceptance of the Young Plan, signed by its representative Schacht on 7 July 1929, provided them with just the club with which they could beat the Republic and its 'Marxist' rulers.

From the Young Referendum to 14 September

Exclusion from the government after the Reichstag elections of May 1928 accentuated the already powerful faction in the DNVP demanding a policy of all-out opposition to the republic. Its main spokesman was Alfred Hugenberg, former managing director of Krupps, and press and film tycoon extraordinary. In October 1928, he in fact deposed Count Westarp (regarded as the representative of Junker interests in the party) as DNVP Chairman, and used his position of leadership to draw the party, hitherto identified largely with the big agrarians, closer to the heavy industrialists of the Ruhr, who were becoming increasingly uneasy with Stresemann's policy of coalition with the Social Democrats at home, and *détente* with Germany's former imperialist enemies abroad. For Hugenberg, just as much as Hitler therefore, opposition to the Young Plan provided his party with an opportunity to indulge in a barrage of chauvinist demagoguery against the exploitation of the German people by international finance and the 'Western plutocracies'. Neither was Hugenberg alone in seeing the Young Plan in this light. Reactionary business leaders such as Vöglér (who withdrew in protest from the German delegation to the Paris conference at the severity of the terms being imposed on German industry) and Schacht (who after some slight changes were made in its terms, denounced them as an attempt 'to squeeze out of German industry special payments and sacrifices which go beyond the terms of the Young Plan') certainly saw a campaign against the Young Plan as a double-edged sword. It was not only the first step that Germany had to take along the long road to the recovery of its lost imperialist and military might, but an issue around which the entire 'national opposition' could rally its divided forces for an assault on the entire Weimar system.

But Hitler entered the ranks of this bloc not, as befitted his social origins and murky political pedigree, a junior partner and loyal ally, but as a confident competitor, who understood that deprived of his party's unrivalled abilities in reaching and mobilising the nationalist masses, the Hugenbergs and the Vöglers would fail just as their predecessors Kapp and Stinnes had done.

A Nazi leader of the time, Kurt Lüdecke, summed up well the ambivalent and always uneasy nature of the collaboration between Hitler and the traditional ultra-right when he observed:

Hugenberg had everything but the masses; Hitler had everything but the money. Financial difficulties had in fact continually hobbled the Nazi movement. Allocation of Reichswehr funds and large gifts from industrialists had virtually ceased with the failure of the Beer Hall Putsch... It was of the utmost importance to open up new sources. Hugenberg the monarchist and Hitler the Nazi dictator needed each other, and each was perfectly willing to use the other in the final onslaught on the despised Republic: both wanted to annihilate Marxism and destroy the Versailles Treaty. ^[12]

On 9 July, two days after the signing of the Young Plan, the leaders of the 'National Opposition' met in Berlin to found their 'Reich Committee for the German Referendum'. The most prominent of its members were Hugenberg (DNVP) Class (Pan-German League), Seldte (*Stahlhelm*) ^[13] and Hitler (NSDAP). A little more than two years later, this alliance reassembled at Bad Harzburg to demand the removal of the Brüning government, branded by Junkers, military and big business alike for its reliance on the 'toleration' of Social Democracy; and for the last time in January 1933, when Hitler headed the now triumphant National Opposition as Chancellor of the government of 'National Concentration'. The *Völkischer Beobachter* meant exactly what it said when at the outset of the campaign for a referendum on the Young Plan, it declared: 'This is a struggle for control of the state.' And Hitler's future Interior Minister Wilhelm Frick left room for no doubts as to what this would mean for the workers' movement when he declared to an anti-Young Plan rally in Pyritz on 18 October 1929, that:

... we [that is, the 'National Opposition'] are determined to promulgate by force that which we preach. Just as Mussolini exterminated the Marxists in Italy, so we must succeed in accomplishing the same through dictatorship and terror.

Indeed, the final demand of the National Opposition's four-point programme, drawn up by Hugenberg and adopted by the Reich Committee on 28 September 1929, specifically called for the imprisonment for a term of not less than two years for any politician (other than the President, who being Hindenburg, had to be exonerated from the 'crimes' in question) who betrayed Germany by 'signing treaties with foreign powers'. (The other three demands were concerned with repudiating the 'war guilt' clauses in the Versailles and subsequent treaties forced on Germany after her defeat in the war and the imposition of heavier reparations payments.) The logic of the so-called 'penitentiary clause' would lead (if approved by either a majority of the Reichstag, or failing this, of the German electorate in the proposed referendum) to the arrest, trial and conviction of not only the SPD cabinet ministers, but also those of the bourgeois parties with whom they shared office at frequent intervals in the lifetime of the Republic. Even some of Hugenberg's party colleagues shrank from pressing this demand, since it widened the gap between the DNVP and those parties and leaders whom the 'moderate' monarchists still hoped to win over to their bloc against Weimar. Naturally Hitler could only be delighted at the prospect of such a split, since it would render Hugenberg, irrevocably committed to a collision course with the bourgeois compromisers, even more dependent on the Nazis than hitherto. The rift in the DNVP burst into public view when, in accordance with the Weimar Constitution, the National Opposition's so-called 'Freedom Law' (having gained the necessary number of signatures - 10 per cent of the total electorate) came before the Reichstag. On the first three demands, the Hugenberg - Hitler bloc held together well, registering 82 votes on each occasion (the DNVP had 73 Reichstag deputies, the NSDAP 12). But when the vote was taken on the final clause, the anti-Weimar bloc disintegrated. Twenty-three DNVP deputies refused to follow Hugenberg and the Nazis in supporting the demand for the jailing of past and present government leaders and state officials. Once again the internal divisions within the German ruling class had proved themselves to be so profound as to be impossible to conceal. An entire section of the DNVP leadership including Hans Schlange-Schöningen, Hans von Lindeiner-Wildau, Walter von Keudell, Martin Schiele, Otto Hoetzsch, Count Kuno Westarp and Gottfried Treviranus all broke with Hugenberg; the last-named to found his own party, the small but in agrarian circles highly influential 'People's Conservative Association'. In fact the split flowed not only from Hugenberg's determination to pursue his alliance with Hitler at the risk of alienating his more moderate party colleagues, but from the former's line of promoting the interests of heavy industry in the party to the detriment of the big agrarians. Not only Westarp, but Schiele, the President of the *Landbund*, found their position in the party challenged on this issue, and this undoubtedly accelerated their departure. While the Young Plan referendum campaign brought little but strife for the monarchists, the Nazis went on from strength to strength, thriving on the notoriety their rabble-rousing earned them in more respectable bourgeois circles, and exploiting their newly-won foothold in the 'national' camp to gain access to doors that previously had been firmly shut in their faces. The early fruits of Hitler's participation in the 'National Opposition' were already evident at

the NSDAP rally at Nuremberg in August 1929, where, for the first time, the Nazis were able to parade in their tens of thousands the forces won over the previous year and a half, as the result of Hitler's turn towards the rural and urban petit-bourgeoisie.

With party membership now climbing above the 100 000 mark, Hitler was at last beginning to attract and organise the masses on which his goal of unleashing a counter-revolution 'from below' depended. ^[14] And also present, as the representative of the other and equally necessary partner in this reactionary strategy was Ruhr tycoon Emil Kirdorf, Hitler's guest of honour. Kirdorf must have been deeply impressed by what he saw and heard at Nuremberg, for on his return home he wrote a letter to his host, one full of praise for the Nazi Party and its struggle against 'the brutal attacks of the Communists':

We shall never forget how overwhelmed we were... at the sight of your troops marching by... of thousands and thousands of supporters, their eyes bright with enthusiasm, who hung on your lips and cheered you. The sight of the endless crowd, cheering you and stretching out their hands to you at the end of the parade, was positively overwhelming. At this moment I, who is filled with despair by the degeneration of our masses *and the failure of our bourgeois circles* towards the future of Germany, suddenly realised why you believe and trust unflinchingly in the fulfilment of the task you have set yourself... Any man who in these days, dominated by a brutal destruction of the patriotic qualities, could gather together and chain to himself such a troop of *national-minded racial comrades*, ready for every sacrifice, is entitled to nourish this confidence. You may be proud of the honours and homages done you; there is hardly a crowned head who receives their equal... Even if my doubts in the future of the German people cannot be entirely dispelled, since my observation, extending years back into the Bismarckian golden age of Germany and farther, *has shown that the German bourgeoisie are nationally speaking at a low level such as can be found in no other country*, yet I have taken with me from the Nuremberg Congress the consoling certainty that numerous circles will sacrifice themselves to prevent the doom of Germanism from being accomplished in the dishonourable, undignified way I previously feared... [Emphasis added]

What stands out in this letter is not merely Kirdorf's easy assimilation of certain Nazi turns of phrase (such as 'racial comrades') but his far more important agreement with Hitler's estimation of the political and 'national' capacities of the German bourgeoisie. This could only mean that a significant, if as yet small, proportion of the industrial and banking bourgeoisie were beginning to rebel against the tutelage of their governmental and party representatives; which, when taken together with the more advanced and contradictory revolt of the petit-bourgeoisie against the entire Weimar system, marked a definite shift in German politics away from the compromise of 1924-28 towards the crisis years of 1930-33. Kirdorf's open espousal of the Nazi cause, together with Hitler's participation in the National Opposition, showed that the old party system and relationships were being threatened and undermined not only 'from below' by the Nazi plebeians, but 'from above', by the king-makers - and breakers - of the Ruhr. For what Hitler offered them - at a price that in more peaceful times they would never have paid - was a mass movement that could, unlike the *Stahlhelm* and the other monarchist and traditional leagues, really achieve what reactionary tycoons and financiers such as Kirdorf, Thyssen, Vöglger and Schacht had been demanding over the past years - the annihilation of Marxism. Only a movement that matched mass for mass, violence for violence, could hope to defeat the millions-strong organisations of the German proletariat, the truth Hitler hammered home to Kirdorf and his 60 000 assembled Nazis at the 1929 party rally:

Let us glance at the development of Marxism in Germany! Wherever a revolt takes place, it is always against weakness and never against strength. Marxism created a community of force-filled men... Where force, determination, boldness, ruthlessness - where these qualities are harnessed to the service of a bad cause, they can overthrow the state. The presupposition is a demand which it itself in turn demands force of the individual... That is why great movements in world history have been able to conquer despite apparently insuperable obstacles... Therein lies [also] the future of our movement, that slowly, imperturbably, by this process we assemble the historic minority which in Germany perhaps will constitute six to eight hundred thousand men. If you have these men united as the membership of a movement, you have created the centre of gravity of the state... That is the number which alone is worth anything. All the others only come along when we line up in march columns... *First* we shall draw their valuable men from all the *national*

parties, and *finally* from the *international* ones as well. What then remains is the crowd; not persons but numbers that hand in a ballot. That is the great mass. [Emphasis added]

Note the change of emphasis and priority in Hitler's recruitment perspective. First the 'nationals', the bourgeoisie and middle class; and only then, when the Nazis 'line up in march columns' and are able therefore to supplement their verbal and written propaganda with massively applied brute force, will inroads be made into the 'internationals', the workers of the SPD and the KPD. Also of importance was Hitler's declared belief that the progress of his movement would continue to be as slow and unspectacular as it had over the previous period. Neither Hitler nor any of the Nazi high command seems to have had the least presentiment of the stupendous election victory their party would be registering a mere 13 months later.

The Nazis did not limit their search for influential allies to industrialists and monarchist politicians. Preparing for the day that in 1929 still seemed far distant, Hitler was already busy tunnelling under one of the most important foundations of the rickety Weimar edifice - the loyalty of the armed forces. Tested and found wanting in the Kapp Putsch, Hitler quite correctly saw it as being highly vulnerable to a movement that pledged itself to restoring all Germany's lost military might and glory; and more than that (for such had been Kapp's intention), had given tangible proof of the ability to honour its promises.

Here Nazi propaganda was skilfully directed not so much at the senior officers of the general staff, for the most part conservative monarchists who to a greater or lesser degree had adapted themselves to the republic and even the Versailles Treaty, but the young junior officers. Nazi emphasis on the 'dynamism' of youth, Germany's mission as an organising force in European politics, the sacred tradition of Prussian arms despoiled by the pacifists and internationalists who ruled Weimar, the treacherous 'stab in the back' that robbed Germany of victory in the Great War - these themes all no doubt played their part in attracting to National Socialism a sizeable section of the middle and lower-ranking officers of the *Reichswehr*, many of whom had not the slightest prospect of promotion (or seeing active service) while Germany remained subject to the strict military limitations imposed by the Versailles Treaty. The year of 1929 saw the publication of the first of a series of NSDAP pamphlets on military affairs, their constant theme being that only a regime anchored in the masses could provide the basis upon which could be rebuilt the army that every 'national-minded' German and especially soldier yearned for. In the words of Major H Foertsch, who wrote the first of these pamphlets:

.... revolutions which are made by the army alone usually destroy the foundations of the army. They do not last long; the confidence of the people has always been a sounder basis for state leadership than guns or bayonets.

So in making his bid for the leadership of the younger 'idealistic' officers of the army, Hitler was not for one moment yielding on the principle that had led to the resignation of Röhm from the SA command. The first duty of a National Socialist officer was to forge the political weapons that alone could make possible the resurgence of German militarism and imperialism. And on this issue, Hitler was proved right. The first obstacle to be overcome was not the Versailles Treaty (however useful opposition to it might be for demagogic purposes) but the domestic enemy. As Hitler declared to a rally in Munich on 15 March 1929:

You, as officers, cannot maintain that you do not care about the fate of the nation... Either you have a healthy state with a really valuable military organisation, which means the destruction of Marxism, or you have a flourishing Marxist state which means the annihilation of the military organisation capable of serving the highest purposes... [Under a democratic-Marxist government]... you may then become hangmen of the regime and political commissars, and if you do not behave, your wife and child will be put behind bars; and if you still do not behave, you will be thrown out and perhaps stood up against a wall... [Which is precisely what happened to scores of officers in July 1944 after the failure of their attempt to assassinate Hitler! - RB]

There was in fact little need to draw in such lurid colours the possible fate that awaited the German officer under 'Marxism'. Many were convinced that the Nazis possessed not only the answer to their own private career problems, but also held the key to the solution of the 'social question', without whose resolution the entire proletariat would become increasingly estranged from the 'national' cause and its arms bearers. On 6 March 1930, the young lieutenants Richard Scheringer and Hans Ludin, both of the Fifth Artillery Regiment, were arrested at the Ulm garrison on the charge of spreading Nazi propaganda in the army (an Order of the Day issued by Defence Minister Gröner on 22 January 1930, had condemned the NSDAP for its attempts to subvert the loyalty of officers to their commanders and to the state). Subsequent investigations revealed that the two officers had, after reading Nazi periodicals, visited the

party headquarters in Munich, where they met SA leader von Pfeffer and chief of staff Otto Wagener. Plans were agreed whereby the two lieutenants would work among their fellow officers to extend Nazi influence in the army, which Scheringer and Ludin proceeded to do with much enthusiasm and little discretion. The trial of the two officers (together with a third, First Lieutenant Hans Wendt, who was arrested shortly after Ludin and Scheringer as one of their first converts) took place only days after the Nazi election triumph of 14 September 1930, and therefore at a time when the NSDAP had firmly established itself in the public eye as a serious contender for power. But their arrest earlier the same year gave proof that Hitler's new strategy of seeking allies from within the prevailing economic, military and political structure, rather than of challenging it head-on from without, was bearing fruit. Further evidence of the party's success in tapping the social reserves latent in the disaffected petit-bourgeois masses came in the *landtag* elections in Thuringia and Saxony. In the former state, the NSDAP had, as late as 1927, won but 4.6 per cent of the total poll. Two years later, in December 1929, the NSDAP vote more than doubled to 11.3 per cent.

With its representation in the state parliament greatly strengthened, the party was able to gain admittance for the first time to an all-bourgeois coalition cabinet, with Dr Frick enjoying a trial run for his future post in the Third Reich as Thuringia's Minister of the Interior. Without Hitler's participation in the National Opposition campaign against the Young Plan, Frick, despite his impeccable bourgeois credentials and views, would scarcely have landed such a strategic post. The Nazi upstarts had 'arrived'. The next big election advance was achieved in Saxony. Here, in May 1929, the NSDAP gained five per cent of the total vote. Thirteen months later, this proportion nearly tripled, to 14.4 per cent! Clearly, deep-going and hitherto largely subterranean shifts were in progress among wide layers of the German population, ranging from the upper levels of the bourgeoisie, down through the middle class to its very lowest reaches, and even beyond into the fringes of the more backward and unorganised sections of the proletariat. The crisis now confronted every small property owner with the immediate prospect of bankruptcy, pauperisation and, worst of all, the sudden brutal plunge into the ranks of the despised working class. Nazi propaganda harped on this dread for all it was worth. For two years now they had been preparing for such a situation.

Far ahead of all the bourgeois parties (and indeed also the workers' movement) in propaganda methods, the NSDAP harnessed all the latest techniques of mass communication to drive home their brutally simple 'big lie' that the Jews and the Marxists were the cause of all Germany's woes. Schools were regularly run to recruit and train agitators and public speakers to work among the masses in the big cities and towns in direct competition with the SPD and KPD (even using tunes from workers' songs set to Nazi words), while film units were equipped to take the fascist gospel to the remotest hamlets. Target areas would be selected on the basis of past performance and class composition, and subjected to a veritable blitz of demonstrations, rallies, meetings, door-to-door canvassing and the massive distribution of free Nazi literature. Even in the Saxon elections of May 1929, the party staged more than 1300 rallies in the state, more than half being held in the Erzgebirge region, where marginal farmers were threatened with ruin as a result of the rapidly worsening agrarian crisis. But despite its formidable array of propaganda resources (only made possible by the increasing supply of funds from heavy industry) the Nazis still found the going very tough in the proletarian quarters of the big cities. Thus in the December 1929 communal elections, the NSDAP improved markedly on its poor vote in the Reichstag elections of May 1928, in Berlin netting 5.7 per cent of the poll as compared with 1.5 per cent in 1928. However a closer examination of the Berlin returns indicates that even here, in a city overwhelmingly proletarian in composition, the NSDAP was only attracting the petit-bourgeoisie to its banner. While the party did well in middle-class districts, no Nazi candidates were returned in the strongly working-class areas of Wedding, Prenzlauer Berg, Friedrichshain, Neuköln, Treptow, Köpenick, Lichtenberg, Weissensee and Pankow. (The same pattern emerged in the Reichstag elections of 1930. Whereas the NSDAP vote was 17.7 per cent in upper and middle-class Zehlendorf, and 25.8 per cent in middle-class Steglitz, the Nazis could only register 8.9 per cent in proletarian 'red' Wedding, as compared with a national poll of 18.3 per cent.)

As polling day approached (Chancellor Brüning had asked President Hindenburg to dissolve the Reichstag after it had voted down his emergency proposals to deal with the economic crisis) and the whole of Germany resounded to the blast of Nazi propaganda, it became obvious to most political observers - though not, as we shall see in a note to this chapter, to all - that Hitler's participation in the Young Plan referendum, while exposing him to charges from the old Nazi 'left' that he had sold out to the bourgeoisie, had helped provide his movement with the political links and resources, without which

all his plans for a fascist counter-revolution would remain idle dreams. Lüdecke commented that while Hitler did indeed have to take account of the opinions of the 'radical wing of the party - the Strassers, Feders and Reventlows' - they had to be 'made to understand the expediency of his policy, knowing only too well that propaganda costs money, and that somebody has to pay for it'. ^[15] Hitler cared not one jot that on 22 December 1929, when Germany voted on the Young Plan referendum, only 5.8 million of the 21 million electors required to make it law bothered to ballot in favour of the Hitler-Hugenberg proposals.

What did count was that Hitler had seized the opportunity to address and subvert the millions of petit-bourgeois ultra-nationalists who previously had loyally followed the DNVP:

The referendum was a failure, but that did not matter. Hugenberg's defeat was Hitler's victory. Hugenberg had provided the Nazi chief with profitable and promising contacts with Big Business and with the prominent men of the land. At last political funds, dependable and abundant money sources were open to him... Hitler found himself finally established in North Germany, in Prussia. He could be sure that at least half of the six millions who had voted for the DNVP would go Nazi at the next elections. Hugenberg had given Hitler his chance to make the Nazi movement a really popular party. ^[16]

Lüdecke's estimation of the value of the Young Plan campaign to the Nazis is shared by another member of Hitler's entourage at that time, Ernst Hanfstaengl:

Hitler had succeeded in impressing his abilities as propagandist and politician on several of the Ruhr magnates, who had previously confined their support to Hugenberg. [Thus Hitler was undermining the DNVP leader both from above as well as from below - RB] Through a young man named Otto Dietrich, who had family connections in the Ruhr ^[17] and had become Hitler's press relations officer, Hitler met Emil Kirdorf, who with Fritz Thyssen started paying the Nazis quite large subsidies. It was certainly a larger and more regular income than they had ever had... Needless to say, this gave a great fillip to the party organisation, and with political success and an appeal which was now for the first time national rather than regional, Hitler and his supporters started to bloom visibly. A large mansion on the Brienner-strasse was purchased as party headquarters and became the famous Brown House. It was the turning point, and with the spread to Europe in general and Germany in particular of the consequences of the economic crisis in America, Hitler once more had fertile political ground in which to sow his seeds. ^[18]

Indeed, certain of the Ruhr tycoons were already proving themselves most solicitous where the comforts of the Nazi leadership were concerned, as Thyssen freely admits in his own memoirs:

Rudolf Hess was instrumental in bringing about a closer personal association between the Nazis and myself. He came to me sometime in 1928, on the initiative of old Geheimrat Kirdorf, for many years the director-general of the Rhenish-Westphalian Coal Syndicate, with whom I was on friendly terms. Hess explained to me that the Nazis had bought the Brown House in Munich and had great difficulty in paying for it. I placed Hess in possession of the required funds... Hermann Goering ^[19] I came to know in the following manner. One day the son of one of the directors of my coal-mining companies, a certain Herr Tengelmann, came to me. 'Listen to me', he said, 'there exists in Berlin a Herr Goering. He is trying very hard to do some good for the German people, but he is finding little encouragement on the part of the German industrialists. Wouldn't you like to make his acquaintance?' In consequence of this suggestion I met Goering in due course. He lived in a very small apartment in those days, and he was anxious to enlarge it in order to cut a better figure. [Purely to 'do some good for the German people' of course - RB] I paid the cost of this improvement. ^[20]

And, in the vital election of 1930, for a lot more besides. As his closest aides and business supporters confirm, without the greatly increased and more frequent cash gifts from the Ruhr, the Nazis would have lacked the financial resources essential for a movement that relied to such a great extent on the written word and mass meeting to win its mass support. Hitler could not appeal to old party loyalties in the way that the leaders of the main bourgeois parties did. On the contrary, he was fighting to wrench their middle-class following away from the old party system and over into the camp of National Socialism. By the very nature of its tasks, Nazi propaganda had to be aggressive, offensive, intolerant and all-pervading. Ultra-reactionary industrialists such as Thyssen, Kirdorf and the Tengelmans, and the Saxony textile manufacturer Mutschmann (who Hitler once said 'collected the most money for the party') ensured that it

was. By 1930, the NSDAP had built up from a single daily - the *Völkischer Beobachter* - to 19, while party membership, which in the early months of 1929 had been below the 100 000 mark, stood a year later, in March 1930, at 210 000 - almost double that of the KPD. Not that Hitler had won the confidence of all the business world, or even the majority of heavy industrialists, who were most attracted to his programme of militant anti-communism and an aggressive foreign policy backed by a mighty German army. While Thyssen was busy canvassing and raising cash for the Nazis, ^[21] the all-powerful Federation of German Industries, not without some inner qualms and conflicts, came down prior to the September 1930 Reichstag elections on the side of those parties that supported both the republic and the need for drastic financial reforms, which could only mean the DVP and possibly the Centre. But there was praise, if not open endorsement, for all parties that opposed 'collectivism' and supported private enterprise, under which heading could of course be included the NSDAP.

The election results themselves stunned everyone. Neither the Nazis nor their opponents had expected the NSDAP vote to multiply itself more than eight-fold on the 810 000 recorded in May 1928. Certainly not Hitler's erstwhile 'national comrades' in the fight against the Young Plan, who in a DNVP manifesto published on the very eve of the election that gave 6 409 600 votes to the NSDAP (making it the second party in the land) ridiculed Hitler's claims to leadership of the national movement:

How can any party pretend to be patriotic and so save the fatherland, if it fights against the largest of the national parties? How can these little [sic!] parties and groups help the fatherland when they fight constantly amongst themselves and jeopardise therewith the victory of the national movement? National Socialism is just as evil as Marxism. The future of Germany does not rest with National Socialism, but with the unity of the entire national movement.

Hugenberg, a politically obtuse man, simply could not appreciate the unpalatable truth that, like his counterparts in the other bourgeois parties with the exception of the Centre, the economic crisis was transforming him into an officer without an army. The election returns for the voting of 14 September showed that while the two workers' parties had stood up well to the Nazi onslaught (with the KPD gaining at the expense of the SPD), the grip of the DVP, DDP (which fought the elections under its distinctly authoritarian new name of State Party) and DNVP on the middle-class masses was being loosened and, in some key areas, broken. First, the national results.

Party	Votes (millions)		Per cent		Deputies	
	1930	1928	1930	1928	1930	1928
SPD	8.6	9.2	24.5	29.8	143	153
KPD	4.6	3.3	13.1	10.6	77	54
KPD & SPD	13.2	12.5	37.6	40.4	220	207
DDP	1.3	1.5	3.8	4.9	20	25
DVP	1.6	2.7	4.5	8.7	30	45
DNVP	2.5	4.4	7.0	14.2	41	73
Landbund	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.6	3	3
Other agrarians	1.4	1.0	4.0	3.3	25	18
Total bourgeois & agrarians	7.0	9.8	19.8	31.7	119	164
Economic Party	1.4	1.4	3.9	4.5	23	23
NSDAP	6.4	0.8	18.3	2.6	107	12
Centre	4.1	3.7	11.8	12.1	68	62
BVP	1.0	0.9	3.0	3.0	19	16

Set out in this way the above table indicates how successful had been Hitler's post-1927 strategy of seeking support amongst the followers of the 'national parties', chiefly the urban and rural petit-bourgeoisie. The results also showed that the party which, as a legacy from Hitler's early years under the tutelage of Feder and Drexler, styled itself both proletarian and socialist, had made not the slightest

impact on the following of the two workers' parties (indeed, their combined vote had increased by 0.7 million). The 5.6 million new Nazi voters came mainly from the old bourgeois-agrarian parties, those 'marginal' sections of the population who had never bothered to vote in previous elections but had now been stirred into action by the depth of the crisis and the sheer volume of Nazi propaganda; and finally, young people voting for the first time. The Economic Party stood up well to the Nazi challenge partly because it, like the NSDAP whose pale reflection it was, also put forward a programme designed to attract the small property-owner. For this reason, since it had no pretensions to serving the big bourgeoisie, it has been placed in a separate category. Likewise, though for different reasons, the two Catholic parties retained their following by virtue of their appeal to centuries-old confessional loyalties.

The social and party sources of the Nazi vote are also indicated by the returns from the individual electoral districts.

District	Bourgeois Parties		NSDAP		KPD & SPD	
	1930	1928	1930	1928	1930	1928
Berlin - I	18.2	26.6	12.8	1.4	61.0	63.6
Pomerania - A	30.6	50.0	24.3	1.5	33.5	36.3
S-Holstein - A	18.0	39.4	27.0	4.0	40.4	43.2
E Düsseldorf - I	12.1	24.7	17.0	1.8	39.7	41.4
Franconia - A	5.8	24.4	20.5	8.1	30.3	31.5
Leipzig - I	16.3	25.6	14.0	1.9	52.1	53.1

I = industrial; A = agricultural

The same pattern prevailed throughout the remainder of Germany's 35 electoral districts, being one of the Nazis gaining everywhere from the main non-confessional bourgeois-Junker parties, and registering their biggest successes in regions with a large rural and therefore petit-bourgeois population. And, as we have already noted in the case of Berlin, even where Nazis gained votes in the big towns, it was once more in those districts where middle class predominated over proletariat. The first conclusion we must therefore draw from the 1930 Reichstag elections is that the Nazis were well on the road to capturing the middle-class mass following of the old capitalist and landlord parties, but as yet had utterly failed to dent the armour of the workers' movement, represented politically by the SPD and the KPD. But, as Trotsky warned in his article on the German situation in the wake of the Nazi election success, grave dangers awaited the German proletariat and its vanguard in the KPD if the threat posed by the vote of 14 September was not appreciated and combated in good time by those whose political duty it was to sound the alarm:

The fact that it [National Socialism] gained the possibility of taking up such a powerful starting position *on the eve* of a revolutionary period and not at its conclusion is not the weak side of fascism but the weak side of Communism. The petit-bourgeoisie does not wait, consequently, for new disappointments in the ability of the [Communist] Party to improve its fate; it bases itself upon the experiences of the past, remembering the lesson of 1923, the capricious leaps of the ultra-left course of Maslow - Thälmann, the opportunist impotence of the same Thälmann, the clatter of the 'Third Period' etc. Finally - and this is the most important - its lack of faith in the proletarian revolution is nourished by the lack of faith in the Communist Party on the part of millions of Social Democratic workers. The petit-bourgeoisie, even when completely thrown off the conservative road by circumstances, can turn to social revolution only when the sympathies of the majority of the working class are for a social revolution. Precisely this most important condition is still lacking in Germany... Fascism in Germany has become a real danger, as an acute expression of the helpless position of the bourgeois regime, the conservative role of the Social Democracy in this regime, and the accumulated powerlessness of the Communist Party to abolish it. Whoever denies this is either blind or a braggart. In 1923, Brandler, in spite of all our warnings [and, one might add, on the advice of Stalin - RB] monstrously exaggerated the forces of fascism. From the wrong evaluation of forces grew a hesitating, evasive, defensive, cowardly policy. This destroyed the revolution. Such events do not pass without leaving traces in the consciousness of all classes of the nation. The overestimation of fascism by the Communist

leadership created one of the conditions for its further strengthening. The contrary mistake, this very underestimation of fascism by the present leadership of the Communist Party, may lead the revolution to a more severe crash for many years to come. ^[22]

And as the following note bears out, they did not merely underestimate the fascist threat from the Nazis - they even denied its existence. Fascism was indeed coming, said the Stalinists, *but via the SPD*.

Appendix: The KPD and the Nazi Threat

Throughout the year between the commencement of the National Opposition campaign against the Young Plan to the very eve of the Nazi election triumph on 14 September 1930, the KPD paid scarcely any attention to the monster that was daily growing stronger and more bold within their midst. For acting strictly in accordance with the Stalinist line laid down with ever more insistence and emphasis since the Sixth CI Congress of 1928, the KPD hurled all its bolts against the ‘main enemy’ of the working class - the ‘social fascists’ of the SPD and the ADGB. They, and not Hitler’s Nazis, were deemed to be the agents of ‘fascisation’ in Germany. Gusiev, for example, heaped scorn and derision on the Brandler group for (quite correctly) insisting that the Social Democrats were not social fascists, that ‘they are only [sic!] laying down the road for fascism... “at a time when the policy of the Social Democratic leaders represents the policy of trust capital and is preliminary work for the fascist dictatorship [while] the Hitlerite fascist bands and the *Stahlhelm* are on the other side gathering in order to make the fascist dictatorship the question of the day”’. (The excerpt quoted by Gusiev is from *Against the Current*, no 20) This analysis did not at all please Gusiev, anxious to win his Stalinist ultra-left spurs. For it depicted as the executors of the coming fascist dictatorship not the SPD leaders who had been allotted the humble role of ‘preliminary work’ but the Nazis and their monarchist allies. How could this be, when the Stalin line ordained that everywhere, from Australia and Latin America to Britain and Germany, the Social Democrats were the force selected by the bourgeoisie to institute and implement the fascist dictatorship? Gusiev had at least grasped this essential, for he declared quite bluntly that:

... the Müller and Macdonald governments have accepted the task entrusted to them by the bourgeoisie - to break up the rising movements of the workers, establish a fascist dictatorship and prepare for war, war first and foremost on the USSR. ^[23]

Never for one moment did it occur to such products of the Stalin school of leftism that Hitler, and not the reformists, might undertake these tasks - smashing *en route* the movement led by the Müller ‘social fascists’. And even when, later that same year, the launching of the Young Plan campaign by Hitler and Hugenberg compelled the Stalinists finally to acknowledge the existence of the Nazi Party (till then, it had hardly received a single mention in the Comintern press, a truly fantastic state of affairs), it was presented in such a way calculated to downgrade its counter-revolutionary significance. Thus one article, attempting to give a ‘theoretical’ basis to the theory of social fascism, blandly declared in complete defiance of the facts, that Social Democracy was seeking to base its ‘fascist’ rule on the labour aristocracy, a stratum most ill-suited to defending a Nazi-style dictatorship, since it would mean the end of all its economic, social and political privileges, which would be usurped by the fascist petit-bourgeois plebeians. Such subtleties, which could have been verified by the experience of Fascist rule in Italy, were of no concern to Gerber, the author of the article in question. His job was to ‘prove’ that Social Democracy had not only turned fascist, but had become irrevocably fused with the bourgeois state, together with hordes of its working-class members and supporters:

A wide labour bureaucracy arises, rooted below in the mass organisations and reaching above to all branches of the state apparatus. Thus bureaucracy serves as an excellent means of imposing the will of finance capital on the workers influenced by the reformists... The character of German social fascism is determined by this new type of corrupted labour aristocracy. ^[24]

So ‘excellent’ that these same finance capitalists were within months of driving the political representatives of this bureaucracy from office, the first step in the onslaught that was to lead to its destruction at the hands of the Nazis in the spring of 1933. But even these wildly inaccurate statements concerning the relationship between Social Democracy and the crisis-ridden German bourgeoisie did not suffice. Above all, it had to be ‘proved’ that the ‘social fascists’ were more fascist than the real fascists: ‘The element most prominently developed in German Social Democracy is the fascist economic programme. It is clearer and stronger than in the openly fascist organisations.’ ^[25] (The latter surely therefore should have been termed henceforth the ‘less openly fascist organisations’.) And for good measure, the ADGB was brought into the act: ‘The greatest political advance of German social fascism at

the present time is probably the progress of the trade unions and other mass organisations along this road.’ [26] The stage was thus set for the complete social transformation of the reformist party and unions from organisations comprised of workers into a classic fascist party of petit-bourgeois masses and declassed proletarians:

Magdeburg brought the ideological development of German social fascism to a certain provisional conclusion. In its counter-revolutionary activities Social Democracy will cast off the last ‘shackles’ of its past - and also thousands of workers it has misled in the past - and, by virtue of its position, will become *the strongest counter-revolutionary force in the country*, attracting to itself the labour aristocracy *and numerous petit-bourgeois elements*. Every step on the road to social fascism means accelerating and extending the next steps, as it affects the social structure of the party, repulsing the workers and attracting the petit-bourgeoisie. The new elements that have come into the party will start with the ‘provisional’ justification of war and dictatorship and will, in practice, reach their ideological justification, *will reach 100 per cent fascism (which the leaders have done long ago)*. [27]

All a worker could conclude from reading such an article, one truly astounding for its abysmal lack of a theoretical approach to the workers’ movement, was that the German bourgeoisie had no need of an alternative fascist movement to the reformists, since they were perfectly capable of doing the job of smashing the working-class movement (which now by definition excluded the six million strong organisations of the reformists) by themselves. And moreover, no such mass fascist alternative to the SPD and ADGB could appear, since according to Greber, the Social Democrats were attracting all the petit-bourgeois elements who provide the core of any fascist party. Reality was quite different. The 1930 election results were to show that a significant fraction of the SPD middle-class vote defected to the Nazis, an *opposite* trend to the one portrayed in such loving detail by Greber.

The most conceded by the Stalinists was that the ‘social fascists’ might permit the bourgeois parties to share power with them, but even then it was obligatory to depict the reformists as the dominant partners in such a bloc. Anything less than this, even to give a hint that the Social Democrats might be in danger of ceding their cabinet posts to right-wing parties such as the DNVP, was taken as a sign of opportunism, of conciliation towards the ‘right deviation’, or worse still, actual support for it. Thus it was by no means the wildest of ultra-lefts who wrote, in relation to the Young Plan referendum (specifically directed against the Müller government and the reformists) that:

... the aim of German trust capital [that is, those backing the National Opposition] is to create a broad and stable [sic!] coalition extending from the agrarians [DNVP] to the social fascist bureaucracy and the trade unions, [for] the social fascist civil servants, police presidents, police ministers, etc, are counted among the most useful and efficient tools for promoting the imperialist development of the German bourgeoisie. [28]

Again we should note that these ‘most useful and efficient tools’ were unceremoniously booted out of office by either von Papen or Hitler, even on one famous occasion ending up on the wrong side of the Police Minister’s own prison! But most criminal of all was the line being peddled that the trade unions, five million strong, and faced with a life or death struggle for their very right to exist, were already totally under the control of the bourgeois state. What conclusion was a Social Democratic (or Communist for that matter) trade unionist supposed to draw from the following pronouncement? Only, surely, that the fascists had already destroyed his union, and the sooner he left it for a pure ‘red’ one, the better:

The social fascist leaders of the trade unions are without exception going over to the camp of the class enemy... [therefore] at present the German workers, since their unions have turned fascist, even lack that organised basis for their struggle which they possessed before the war. [29]

So defeatist was this line - which flowed organically from Stalin’s brilliant discovery that the best, most revolutionary workers were to be found outside the ‘social fascist’ unions - that it provoked open opposition inside the KPD. Those who doubted the final destruction of independent class trade unionism in Germany (and under a reformist government remember) were warned that inside the party ‘strong trade union legalist tendencies still exist’ - a euphemism for the healthy class instinct of the worker who wanted to continue the struggle in his trade union to make its leaders do the job they were paid to do - fight the boss. But for the Moscow and Berlin apparatus men, who cared not a hoot for the fate of the German or any other trade unions, the fascisation of the ADGB was a blessing in a rather thin disguise. What was a defeat for the five million workers of the ADGB was a victory for the KPD. It could now prepare the launching of its own untarnished trade union movement:

There is, as a result [of this ‘trade union legalism’], a lack of understanding of the great importance of the new forms of organisation which will serve to strengthen the party’s influence among the masses. ^[30]

Once more, we see the utterly false notion that with every advance of fascism (still social fascism at this stage) favourable conditions are created for the strengthening of Communism. The prize for the most obtuse contribution of all on this question of the ‘fascisation’ of the SPD and the ADGB must, however, be awarded to the *Communist International* editorial on the Wall Street crash. The coming slump, it was argued, far from cutting the ground from under the feet of the reformists and forcing them out of office (as in fact did happen, not only in Germany, but a year and a half later in Britain) would, the Comintern organ said, only facilitate greater and more rapid fusion between a rapidly fascising Social Democracy and the bourgeois state:

Everywhere the bourgeoisie is entering upon a swift and resolute liquidation of ‘democracy’ [if the quotation marks imply that such democracy is not real then why need fascism to liquidate it? - RB] and the establishment of a fascist regime, whether by a legal parliamentary path or by a *coup d’état* is a matter of indifference [sic!]... There is no longer any need for discussion whether the state is being fascised, whether ‘bourgeois democracy’ [again the implication being that no such system of government ever existed - RB] is being outlived, whether the Social Democratic parties are transformed into social fascist parties or not... At this late stage there is surely no need to show that Social Democracy, now transformed into social fascism [having accomplished the transformation in a couple of lines! - RB] has played and is playing the most active part in the process of transforming bourgeois democracy into fascist dictatorship. Everything, literally everything that the Comintern Sixth Congress and the ECCI Tenth Plenum stated concerning the evolution of Social Democracy into a social fascist organisation, welded for good and ill with the bourgeois state apparatus, and also being fascised, has been brilliantly confirmed by the course of events. [The author of this article would have been well advised to display a little more modesty: his ‘brilliant confirmation’ was to soon take a nasty knock with the fall of Hermann Müller, ‘welded for good and ill with the bourgeois state apparatus’, and in July 1932, with the forced ejection of the SPD government in Prussia by Chancellor von Papen - RB] ... Everywhere the bourgeois states are becoming more fascist and everywhere at the present time Social Democracy, closely fused with the state machine and with the ruling capitalists, has become social fascist, is actually participating in the fascisation of the state. ^[31]

And still the Comintern and the KPD clung to their obstinate denial of the existence of any save a theatrical struggle between Social Democracy and fascism. To admit that this conflict might have some basis in the incompatibility of Social Democracy with the rule of fascism (something the *Workers Press* also experiences difficulty in conceding, as if this would somehow imply an opportunist capitulation to reformism - hence its strident and monotonous incantations of ‘corporatism’ every time a trade union leader engages in class collaboration with the employers and the Tories) was to run the risk of undermining the entire theoretical structure of Stalin’s proposition, first made in 1924, that fascism and Social Democracy were not ‘antipodes’ but ‘twins’. But the greatest textual dexterity and audacity were demanded to accomplish this task, since the Nazis were swarming in their thousands all over Germany, attacking and breaking up the meetings of their ‘twins’ in a most unbrotherly manner:

For their part, the great bourgeoisie, dominating in the state, contraposes the national fascists [that is, the Nazis] to the social fascists, frightening the latter with the former, in order to hasten the social fascist lackeys in their unconditional acceptance of the bourgeois fascist programme.

Why the ‘social fascists’ should have been frightened by their ‘national fascist’ twins is beyond comprehension. However, some explanation had to be given to Communist Party workers who were finding the line that the two were ‘fused’ into a single bloc refuted every day by their own experiences in the class struggle. And so the article continued:

At the moment we have the semblance of a struggle or even an intensification of the struggle between the national fascists and the social fascists, whilst in fact both of them are now cooperating by all means with finance capitalists in establishing an open fascist dictatorship... Consequently at the present time one of the most urgent tasks of the Communist parties is to struggle against the illusion that social fascism is capable of or is preparing to wage a genuine struggle against national fascism, even out of ‘competitive’ motives. ^[32]

But that was, hardly the issue, as Trotsky repeatedly emphasised in his polemics against ‘Third Period’ Stalinism. The real point, and the one that not only the KPD denied, but also appears to have eluded *Workers Press* in its analysis of the relations between the ruling class in Britain and its Social Democratic servitors, is that it is completely irrelevant whether reformists seek such a confrontation with the bourgeoisie and its most reactionary political agents. As the example of Germany - and much more recently, Chile - proves beyond all doubt, *this conflict is forced upon them*: inability to grasp this very fundamental fact of political life left the KPD groping to find an answer as to why the ‘national fascists’ and the ‘social fascists’ were coming to blows in Germany when, according to Stalin’s theory, they should have been working in the closest harmony. Likewise with the *Workers Press*; it too is at a complete loss to explain how and why left reformists such as Benn can arouse the ire of the bourgeois press, since according to their updated and superficially ‘de-Stalinised’ version of the Third Period theory that reformists are social fascists, Benn and his ilk are ‘corporatists’. Any conflict with the bourgeoisie must therefore be a creation of the ‘confusion-mongers’ of the press, specially devised, staged and reported to dupe workers who would otherwise find their way into the ranks of the WRP. Its revision of Trotsky on this question becomes increasingly obvious - and criminal - the more we study the line being pumped into the heads of literally millions of workers in Germany at a time when the forces of counter-revolution were gathering speed almost daily. For what does the article in question say?

That our task today consists in explaining to the masses that the question today is not a ‘struggle’ between social fascism and national fascism, but their increasing cooperation with each other, which at a certain stage will pass into an organisational fusion. ^[33]

Now it is perfectly true that the WRP has not yet degenerated theoretically to the level of claiming that the British reformists - the ‘corporatists’ - have fused with fascism. But the theoretical and methodological premises of such a degeneration are indeed already present and visible in the *Workers Press*. At its mildest, it takes the form of accusing the trade union leaders of being in total agreement with the Tories in their attempts to destroy free trade unionism and reduce real wages. Entirely glossing over the highly complex and contradictory relations between the trade union leaders and the ruling class (highlighted in the inability of the miners’ and train drivers’ leaders to reach a quick settlement with the government in the disputes which began at the end of 1973), the *Manifesto of the CC of the SLL* on the founding of the WRP (dated 21 October 1973) stated that:

... the trade unions leaders have *completely deserted* any fight against the Tory government. On Monday, 15 October, the special TUC General Council *decided to continue its policy of collaboration with the Tory government against the working class*... The right of free collective bargaining has been abolished *with the agreement of the union leaders*... The TUC leaders have passed from reformist protests against the Tories, through class collaboration *to complete capitulation*. [Emphasis added]

These statements are patently untrue, they distorted in a crude and typically ‘Third Period’ manner the real relationship between the TUC and Tory government. There *was* a conflict between the union leaderships and the Tory government - not over the question of private property in the means of production, but over the distribution of the national product, over their relationship to the state and the employers. But if the TUC had indeed agreed to help the Tories fight the working class, abolish free collective bargaining, and have now ended up in a position of complete capitulation, then *Workers Press* is obliged to explain how some of these same leaders are, at the time of writing (1 January 1974), the target of bitter government, capitalist and press abuse for ‘holding the country to ransom’ by their continuing with the miners’ overtime ban. If this be ‘complete capitulation’, a naive worker could be forgiven for thinking, then it can’t be so bad. The effect of all this strident and unsubstantiated invective is to *numb the senses*, to immunise workers against further and far more serious betrayals, which according to the WRP, *cannot be forthcoming*, because the TUC has already reached the ultimate in treachery - ‘complete collaboration’ with the class enemy and ‘complete desertion’ of the fight against him. And this was, as the older leadership of the WRP knows full well, precisely the effect of similar (though not identical) claims by the KPD Stalinists that the decisive betrayal *had already taken place*, that the Social Democrats had turned ‘social fascist’ (or ‘corporatist’), that they had handed the working class over to a fascist regime ruled first by Müller, then with his fall in March 1930, by Brüning, then Papen and finally Schleicher. By the time the real fascists were about to take power, the KPD had shouted itself hoarse crying wolf, and many workers understandably thought that Hitler was just another in a succession of fascist dictators. We must always beware the defeatist who hides behind leftist phrases

about all other tendencies in the workers' movement being in complete agreement with the class enemy on every single issue. For we have to ask ourselves: if that is indeed so, how come the working class still puts its confidence - to one degree or another - in these same tendencies and leaders? This is a question *Workers Press* has steadfastly avoided either asking or answering.

Despite its highly 'revolutionary' sounding phrases and militant posturings, Third Period Stalinism also contained a strongly defeatist element which reflected the opportunist content of the 'new line' enthroned at the Sixth Comintern Congress. There was no real struggle against either Social Democracy or the bourgeoisie. The Communist Parties walled themselves off from the rest of the working class by their ultra-leftist policies, thus preventing - as in the case of Germany - their proletarian members and supporters from taking their rightful place in the front rank of those fighting to defend the past gains of the working class, embodied in the ADGB unions and, yes, the SPD as well. At the Tenth ECCI Plenum in July 1929, where the ultra-left elements, led by Thälmann and Lozovsky, reigned supreme, the notion was put forward in all seriousness by the RILU chief that it was not the fascists who were going to drive the Communist parties underground, *but the Social Democrats*. As far as Lozovsky was concerned, the banning of the Comintern sections in countries where Social Democratic parties held or shared office was already a foregone conclusion. The only question was - when?

If the analysis that Social Democracy has been converted into a social fascist organisation, that Social Democracy is rapidly developing into social fascism is true - and it is absolutely true - all our legal parties are confronted by the question *of their conversion into illegal parties*. In Czechoslovakia, France and Germany, the situation is such that our parties and the revolutionary trade unions must be expected to be driven underground at any moment. ^[34]

Clearly with such a perspective mapped out for it, the KPD could hardly fail to detect in each and every measure of the SPD a plot to drive the Communist Party underground. Little wonder that the party destined to accomplish this counter-revolutionary task stole up unseen on the backs of the KPD, and carried off its election victory of September 1930 even as the KPD was merrily proclaiming the fast approaching 'disintegration' of the NSDAP, and warning its members that the real fascist threat continued to lurk behind the socialist mask of the SPD. As Thälmann put it so succinctly in his report to the ECCI Presidium Plenum in the spring of 1930 (just before the fall of Müller): 'In the present situation the fascists themselves cannot surpass the reactionary onslaught of the social fascists.' ^[35] Thälmann, who spent the last nine years of his life in the jails of the 'national fascists' and who pursued his political activities under the rule of Müller without once seeing so much as the inside of a police station, was soon to be given ample time to reflect on these almost unbelievably and suicidally obtuse words. Even the totally unexpected success of the Nazis in the Saxon *landtag* elections of June 1930, where the NSDAP won 240 000 votes and emerged for the first time as a mass force in the country, did nothing to shake the KPD or Comintern leaderships out of their complacency. True, an article on the results, written by Norden of Berlin, did reflect the genuine alarm felt by rank-and-file workers, and lower officials, that the Nazi threat was far more real than their leaders had permitted them to think. 'It must be admitted', wrote Norden, 'that for a long period we underestimated the danger of the National Socialist movement.' ^[36] 'Underestimated the danger of National Socialism.' As if Hitler had only been in business a few weeks or months! It was not a question of 'underestimation' as Norden belatedly tried to make out, but of *ignoring* and then *minimising* the growth of the Nazi threat, obviously on the basis of the theory that the main danger came, as Thälmann himself declared more than once, from the 'social fascists'.

But soon all was back to normal in the Kremlin and the Karl Liebknecht House, the KPD's Berlin headquarters. A dispute between Hitler and Otto Strasser over the former's policy of seeking money and political support from big business was seized on as proof that the Nazis were already cracking up. An article entitled - wildly optimistically as the author was soon to learn - 'The Disintegration Crisis in the Fascist Camp in Germany' was intended to show that the Saxon election results had been a flash in the pan, and that Hitler had already landed himself in a hopeless situation by promising socialism to his plebeian followers and bourgeois reaction to his big business backers:

Its [the NSDAP's] inability to carry out a real anti-capitalism in favour of the workers, employees and unemployed is bound to become apparent every day in its political practice... the disintegration of the Hitler party means a serious crumbling of German trust capital. ^[37]

Disintegrating... as barely two months later, the NSDAP vote soared nearly two millions above that of the KPD. And yet even then, when the full dimensions of the counter-revolutionary menace posed by the rise of National Socialism were made obvious even to the blindest, the Kremlin refused to turn the helm

back towards a united front with the reformists. For now that the real fascists had arrived and in such force as to make their early disappearance impossible, a use could be found for them. If the KPD could not break the resistance of the reformist leaders, then perhaps Hitler might.

Notes

1. A Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (London, 1943), p 100.
2. When the Strassers raised once again the question of *volkisch* 'trade unions' towards the end of 1926, they received a sharp reprimand from Rosenberg, who shared Hitler's stolidly reactionary views on this question. He was particularly incensed by their blanket condemnations of capitalism, which 'would never have come to dominate in its existing form if it had not been for the Jews'. Rosenberg also branded Otto Strasser as a 'parlour Bolshevik' on account of the latter's opposition to the pro-British, anti-Soviet orientation of Hitler's foreign policy.
3. Kirdorf first encountered Hitler when the latter addressed a meeting of industrialists in Essen the previous year. Of his talk with Hitler at Bruckmann's house, Kirdorf recalled some 10 years later that 'the inexorable logic and clear succinctness of his train of thought filled me with such enthusiasm that I declared myself in complete agreement with what he had said. I asked the Führer to put together in pamphlet form the talk he had held with me before. This pamphlet I then distributed in industrial and business circles. Shortly after the Munich conversation, as a result of the effect of the pamphlet written by the Führer and distributed by me there took place several meetings of the Führer with leading personalities of the industrial region, on which occasions Adolf Hitler presented his views in terse and clear words.' (*Preussische Zeitung*, 3 January 1937) Possibly Kirdorf was exaggerating the importance of his own efforts in introducing Hitler to the Ruhr industrialists, but it is evident that such contacts were being established several years before the eruption of the great economic crisis in 1929-30.
4. *Hitler's Secret Pamphlet for Industrialists*, translated by HA Turner, *Journal of Modern History*, Volume 40, no 3, September 1968, emphasis added.
5. G Feder, *Hitler's Official Programme* (1934), p 24.
6. Feder, *Hitler's Official Programme*, pp 30-31.
7. Feder, *Hitler's Official Programme*, p 33.
8. *Völkischer Beobachter*, 31 May 1928.
9. LD Trotsky, *Whither France?* (Ceylon, 1961), pp 12-13, emphasis added.
10. The foundation of the Hitler Youth in fact dates from 1926, when, still under the strong influence of the parent party's orientation towards the working class, it took the name 'League of German Workers' Youth'. Its early attempts to undercut the rival organisations of the two workers' parties - the SPD's Red Falcons and Young Socialists and the KPD's Young Communist League, are reflected in the manifesto issued in 1927 by the north German section of the movement, which was clearly following in the footsteps of the Strasser brothers: 'We call upon all activist [NB] revolutionary elements among German youth to free themselves at last from the tutelage of reactionary and Marxist organisations. Your place is in the ranks of those who are involved in a passionate struggle for the reorganisation of the German people and state in a national and socialist spirit. Break the fetters of bourgeois cowardice and Marxist mendacity. Join the League of German Workers' Youth.'
11. Hitler's views on art, literature and music differed little from those of that other notorious enemy of freedom and experimentation in culture - Josef Stalin. In *Mein Kampf* we find Hitler fulminating against precisely those forms of modern art that, 10 years later, the Soviet bureaucracy found to be incompatible with the official canons of 'socialist realism'. Ironically, Hitler found them all to be examples of 'cultural Bolshevism': 'In nearly all fields of art, especially in the theatre and literature, we began around the turn of the century to produce less that was new and significant, but to disparage the best of the old work and represent it as inferior and surpassed... and from this effort to remove the past

from the eyes of the present, the evil intent of the apostles of the future could clearly and distinctly be seen. By this it should have been recognised that these were not new, even if false, cultural conceptions, but a process of destroying all culture, paving the way for stultification of healthy artistic feeling; the spiritual preparation of political Bolshevism. For if the age of Pericles seems embodied in the Parthenon, the Bolshevistic present is embodied in a cubist monstrosity.’ (*Mein Kampf*, pp 261-62) The brief flowering of modernism in Weimar Germany must have greatly disturbed Hitler, for he dealt at length with the subject in a speech at the beginning of 1928: ‘What we experience today is the capitulation of the intellectual bourgeoisie to insolent Jewish composers, poetasters, painters, who set miserable trash in front of our people and have brought things to such a pass that for sheer cowardice the people no longer dare to say: that doesn’t suit us; away with this garbage... These are indications of the decay of taste and hence the racial decomposition of our people.’ As for modern music, ‘the people do not want that in the least [like Stalin and his Soviet, Chinese and East European successors, Hitler had a sure instinct for what was good for the people in cultural, as in all other matters - RB], but no one dares to stay away. The wretched sound is an insult to the ears; they look around: beside them sits a blasé young chap or an old bouncer who begins to applaud and looks impudently around, and the others, instead of giving the young chap a licking, begin to wonder in all earnestness whether they haven’t heard something profound after all, and finally they begin to clap too, though they haven’t the slightest desire to clap.’ So the Jewish-Bolshevist terror even penetrated into the sanctity of German concert halls, theatres and art galleries! And when they were strong enough, the Nazis were not averse, as their disruption of the pacifist film *All Quiet on the Western Front* showed, to quite genuinely violent counter-measures. These few selections from Hitler’s comments on art not only reveal him as a deeply reactionary, petit-bourgeois cultural snob with a pseudo-veneration for the ‘old’, but also help to explain how such views evoked a sympathetic response in millions of equally conservative middle-class German philistines, unable and unwilling to appreciate the artistic experiments which Hitler saw as the cultural harbinger of the coming Bolshevik revolution.

12. K Lüdecke, *I Knew Hitler* (New York, 1937), p 339.

13. The *Stahlhelm*, the monarchist war veterans’ association, wasted no time in denouncing the newly-formed Müller government. At a *Stahlhelm* rally shortly after the elections which gave the SPD its opportunity to form a government for the first time in eight years, a speaker warned that ‘the parties which claim to fight for German freedom and against internationalist Marxism will either have to prove their ability to carry this fight to a victorious conclusion or will have to let others take over’, while in September the same year, a declaration of the Brandenburg section of the *Stahlhelm* bluntly declared: ‘We hate the present regime... because it has made it impossible to liberate our enslaved fatherland, destroy the war guilt lie and win needed *lebensraum* [living space] in the East. We declare war against this system which today rules the state and against all those who support this system by a policy of compromise.’ It was statements such as this which the Stalinists of the KPD dismissed as being ‘sham’ attacks on the Müller government, delivered in order to create the illusion of a conflict between the bourgeoisie and its ‘social fascist’ servants in the SPD. Subsequent events proved the *Stahlhelm* meant every word.

14. Schacht fully appreciated the appeal Hitler’s brand of ‘socialism’ had for the property-conscious German petit-bourgeoisie: ‘The Communist and National Socialist votes swelled enormously with the increase in unemployment. [But]... what is striking is the difference in the success of both parties. Both promised the voters the elimination of unemployment and liberation from social oppression. Their propaganda methods were in no way inferior to each other. The Communists also promised bread and a living wage and anti-capitalist freedom, but they wanted to abolish private property, replace personal initiative by the collective, incorporate the family into the state and do away with religion. National consciousness concerned them little. This was all quite different with Hitler. He promised protection for the family, protection for private property and of the individual, the preservation of the Christian confessions, and national self-esteem. This obtained him the huge advantage, the numerical preponderance of voters over Communism.’ (H Schacht, *Wie eine Demokratie stirbt* (1933),

pp 25-26) Hitler of course won the petit-bourgeoisie not because of the KPD's hostile attitude towards religion or the bourgeois family, but through the false policies pursued by the Communist International in the period prior to the Nazi victory in Germany. But what Schacht says about the prejudices of the German petit-bourgeoisie - for it is about this class that he is writing, and not the proletariat, who had little or no property to lose - is right on target.

15. Lüdecke, *I Knew Hitler*, p 340.

16. Lüdecke, *I Knew Hitler*, p 341.

17. Otto Dietrich had previously served on the staff of the Bavarian paper the *Munich Augsburg Evening News*, and had, even then, been a secret sympathiser of the NSDAP. He was married to the daughter of Dr Reismann-Grone, editor of the *Rhine-Westphalia News*, a paper which faithfully represented the interests of the Ruhr industrial magnates. Dietrich's father-in-law had also been a prominent official of the Federation of German Industries, and this link proved of inestimable value in opening up for Hitler access to the kings of heavy industry.

18. E Hanfstaengl, *Hitler: The Missing Years* (London, 1937), p 148.

19. Herman Goering fled Germany after the collapse of the Munich Putsch, staying for a brief while in Vienna, where he attempted to rally some of the scattered remnants of the party until such times as events in Germany would permit them to return. There then followed several years of enforced political idleness, during which Goering met Mussolini in Rome, until an amnesty declared by President Hindenburg in the autumn of 1927 enabled him to resume his position in the general staff of the NSDAP. His close links with high society - partly attributable to his illustrious career as a wartime fighter pilot - served the Nazis in good stead at a time when big donors of cash were hard to come by. Goering took up a position as a business agent in the rapidly expanding civil aviation industry, and developed a liaison with Erhard Milch, a senior executive with Lufthansa. Other business links included the Bavarian Motor Works and the aircraft builders Heinkel. Hitler obviously valued Goering's business contacts, because he rewarded him with a seat in the Reichstag after the elections of May 1928 - one of the 12 deputies selected to represent the NSDAP. Once ensconced in his newly-fitted apartment, Goering felt free to convert his Berlin home into a fascist political salon, and over the next two years, a stream of guests, hailing not only from industry and finance, but the highest layers of the nobility and aristocracy, paid him the honour of a call. Not only Thyssen, but former (and future) *Reichsbank* President Schacht and Prince Henkel Donnersmarck, a Silesian industrialist, and landowner, helped bestow on Hitler's ambassador the aura of respectability the Nazis so desperately craved for. Goering's wife Carin wrote at this time that 'our house is so full of politicians that I would be driven mad if it were not so fascinating'. Goering was the bourgeois anchor-man of the Nazi high command, and he saw to it that Hitler's precious links with the bourgeoisie were not cut or jeopardised in any way by the antics of the NSDAP 'radicals'.

20. F Thyssen, *I Paid Hitler* (London, 1941), pp 129-31.

21. In April 1930, Thyssen told a meeting of industrialists at the Honourable Merchant Inn in Hamburg that 'the NSDAP needs money. If we pay, Hitler will see to it that we have peace in our industries and no more strikes.' Hamburg *gauleiter* Kaufmann took the cash collection, all those present paying something, and a few, a great deal. An indication of Nazi desperation for funds at this time was the speed with which the cheques were cashed while the meeting was still in progress!

22. LD Trotsky, 'The Turn in the Communist International and the Situation in Germany' (26 September 1930), *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany* (New York, 1971), pp 60-61.

23. S Gusiev, 'On the Road to a New Revolutionary Rise', *Communist International*, Volume 6, no 19, 15 August 1929, pp 717-20.

24. R Gerber, 'The Face of German Social Fascism', *Communist International*, Volume 6, no 21, 15 September 1929, p 802.

- 25.** R Gerber, 'The Face of German Social Fascism', *Communist International*, Volume 6, no 21, 15 September 1929, p 803.
- 26.** R Gerber, 'The Face of German Social Fascism', *Communist International*, Volume 6, no 21, 15 September 1929, p 807.
- 27.** R Gerber, 'The Face of German Social Fascism', *Communist International*, Volume 6, no 21, 15 September 1929, p 808, emphasis added.
- 28.** 'The Development of the Revolutionary Class Struggle in Germany', *Communist International*, Volume 6, no 25, 15 November 1929, p 1019.
- 29.** 'The Development of the Revolutionary Class Struggle in Germany', *Communist International*, Volume 6, no 25, 15 November 1929, p 1021.
- 30.** 'The Development of the Revolutionary Class Struggle in Germany', *Communist International*, Volume 6, no 25, 15 November 1929, p 1024.
- 31.** 'The Pace Must Not Slacken', *Communist International*, Volume 6, no 26, 1 December 1929, pp 1031-33.
- 32.** 'The Pace Must Not Slacken', *Communist International*, Volume 6, no 26, 1 December 1929, pp 1031-33.
- 33.** 'The Pace Must Not Slacken', *Communist International*, Volume 6, no 26, 1 December 1929, pp 1031-33.
- 34.** *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 9, no 47, 11 September 1929, p 1039.
- 35.** *Communist International*, Volume 7, no 4, 15 April 1930, p 1130.
- 36.** *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 10, no 30, 26 June 1930, p 537.
- 37.** *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 10, no 32, 10 July 1930, p 566.

Fascism in Germany. Robin Blick 1975

Chapter XIX: 'Toleration'

We must keep Brüning alive so long as he is determined to resist fascism. (Hermann Müller to the SPD Congress, May 1931)

When Chancellor Heinrich Brüning, leader of the Centre Party Reichstag fraction, took office on 29 March 1930, hopes were high in business, agrarian and military circles that with the ousting of the SPD 'Marxists', it would at last be possible to implement the programme each had been demanding since the onset of the economic crisis - namely drastic cuts in the wages and living conditions of the working population, and abroad, a more aggressive and imperialist foreign policy, epitomised by the High Command's insistence on the building of cruiser 'A'. Wilhelm Gröner, Müller's Minister of Defence had, as early as January 1930, resolved that army policy could not be fully carried out while the SPD remained in the cabinet:

The SPD is afraid of losing the mass of its constituents to the Communists if it joins the bourgeois parties in swallowing the financial reforms [proposed by big business and Schacht - RB]... During my official absences from Berlin my 'cardinal for political affairs' has been doing excellent work behind the scenes. I have the best trumps, and the lead is on my left. And so we shall wait to see what 1930 will bring.

Gröner's 'political cardinal' was that arch-intriguer General Kurt von Schleicher, who, as Gröner's *protégé* from the earliest days of the Republic, had been promoted a little earlier to the highly influential post of Chief of the Defence Ministry Office. Tired with Müller's inability to break free from the stranglehold of his own party's links with the working class, Gröner and Schleicher were already looking for an alternative Chancellor who would be free from such inhibitions. As the fall of Müller drew near, their attentions turned towards Brüning, the leader of the third-largest party in the Reichstag, a man who while willing to work within the Weimar framework (unlike the Hugenberg Nationalists) was, as his approach to Hindenburg over the question of financial reforms indicated, ready to employ methods of rule that for Müller would have resulted in his political suicide. Indeed, Brüning had no choice but follow the path towards Bonapartism. Rule by decree was the only means left open to him to force through the programme being demanded by big business, since his cabinet did not, like its predecessor Müller's, command a majority in the Reichstag. It included four representatives of the Centre, two from the DVP and one each from the BVP, DDP, Economic Party and an anti-Hugenberg DNVP, the agrarian leader Schiele. Even allowing for the score or so DNVP deputies who abstained on clause four of the Hugenberg - Hitler 'freedom law', Brüning could count on at the most 190 votes in any important Reichstag division, leaving the remaining 300 either intransigently opposed, like the KPD or the Nazis and their DNVP bed-fellows, or wavering between a policy of guarded support and hesitant opposition, as was the case with the SPD. The Centre Party, as a party which in doctrine and social composition, if not policy, transcended any one particular class interest, was peculiarly well suited to play the part of fulcrum in the opening stages of the republic's swing towards Bonapartism and, finally, fascism. Its left face, represented by Labour Minister Adam Stegerwald (a former Catholic trade union leader) was turned beguilingly towards the Social Democrats and the ADGB bureaucracy, while to the right, die-hard reactionaries such as the party leader Kaas, ^[1] and the even more obscurantist von Papen, reassured the exploiting classes that the Centre was grounded firmly on the Christian virtues of respect for private property and the defence of the state against rebellion. Holding the balance in the middle would be Brüning himself, who in a period of cataclysmic economic and attendant political crises, attempted to placate everyone, and ended up by satisfying none. Yet as we have said, at the start of his two-year tenure of office, important sections of the ruling class were hoping that Brüning would carry and deliver the goods. Above all, the leaders of industry and finance desired an end to party government, the constant eruption of cabinet crises, the inner-party splits and defections. They were frustrated with the near-impossibility of securing the passage of legislation through a Reichstag that, for a host of reasons, could not give its assent to bills that would undermine the parties' following amongst the mass of the population (only the two confessional parties in the new cabinet felt confident enough to put the loyalties of their supporters to such an exacting test - such was the power of the priest in German politics). Thus Funk's *Berliner Börsen Zeitung*, commenting on the fall of Müller, declared:

It will of course be better if the government is able to pass laws for a few months without disturbance than if an election campaign and new elections were to hinder the practical utilisation

of the theoretical legislative work [that is, Brüning's proposed financial reforms - RB] and destroy it by inner political upheavals.

And very much in the same vein, the *Vossische Zeitung* stated:

An election in a country where there are several million unemployed, and where great excitement prevails as a result of the Young Plan, would result in a considerable growth of the extreme parties of both the Right and Left.

Bismarck had no time for the rabble-rousing antics of the anti-Semites. He had fought the Marxists with the traditional weapons of the police, the courts and the bureaucracy - and with just a mild dose of 'state socialism'. How different must the Nazis have seemed, with their shameless demagogy, their mimicking of Communist slogans, tactical support of strikes, mass demonstrations, clashes with the police, brash, plebeian-styled propaganda and carefully cultivated disdain for social airs and graces. And quite apart from the 'Jacobin' methods of the Nazis, there was the question of their 1920 programme, which declared its hostility to trust and finance capital. What were the less politically aware business leaders to make of such a party, which fought the Bolsheviks with what must have appeared to be simply a Bolshevism of a different hue? Far better to leave the task of ruling to the old and trusted parties, which, for all their faults, were led by men of their own class and outlook. Better the devil you know...

These qualms were aggravated considerably by the sensational victory of the Nazis in the May 1930 elections to the Saxon *Landtag*. Both Brüning and his supporters in the business world would therefore obviously have preferred to postpone a Reichstag election for as long as possible, in the hope that the crisis might abate and the parties of the extreme left and right in consequence begin to lose ground. But this was not to be. Right from his first days of office, Brüning had been faced with the possibility that his minority government could be brought down on a vote of no-confidence. Brüning's answer to this threat was to make it clear from the beginning that such an adverse vote on his policies would compel him to dissolve the Reichstag and ask President Hindenburg to call new elections, from which, as all the parties knew, only the Nazis and KPD would gain. Thus Brüning hoped to blackmail at least the SPD into supporting his cabinet, even though the party was now excluded from it. Not to do so was to court serious reverses at the hands of the KPD in the Reichstag elections which would almost certainly follow the SPD's defection in the Reichstag to the anti-Brüning camp. Therefore Brüning's government declaration of 1 April 1930 made two things clear. Firstly, his was not a 'party' cabinet (a point inserted into the declaration on the request of President Hindenburg, who was growing increasingly restless with the comings and goings of party politicians), and secondly, that the cabinet 'had been formed for the purpose of solving as quickly as possible those problems which are... vital to the nation's existence'. For that reason, they would embody 'the last attempt to arrive at a solution with this Reichstag'. Brüning - and Hindenburg - pointed a pistol at the heads of those party leaders who stood to lose most in a crisis election - namely everyone save the KPD on the left and the NSDAP on the right. Yet the SPD could hardly afford *not* to oppose Brüning, since openly to support his proposed cuts in wages and insurance would just as quickly, if not more so, drive its restless working-class supporters towards the KPD (needless to say, had the KPD been pursuing the correct tactic at this juncture, the haemorrhage would have been immeasurably more rapid).

The dilemma of the Social Democrats was further compounded by the quite blatant sop to the agrarians contained in Brüning's programmatic declaration. Obviously at the instigation of President Hindenburg himself, Brüning proposed to pay a massive cash grant to distressed farmers in East Prussia - the so-called *Osthilfe* (nearly all of which ended up in the pockets of the richest Junker landlords, Hindenburg included). This, coming on top of the cuts in living standards demanded by Brüning, was too much even for the reformists to swallow, and so on the motion of Rudolf Breitscheid, the Brüning government was subjected to the indignity of a vote of no-confidence on the occasion of its first appearance before the Reichstag. Each of the participants in the series of dramatic clashes that ensued would have rather acted otherwise, but the sheer force of the crisis, the pressure of the contending classes as they were thrown into battle by the daily-deepening slump, left them no choice. Brüning on this occasion carried the house with him by a vote of 253 to 187, but only because Hugenberg's faction voted with the dissident DNVP deputies against the SPD motion - obviously because with the Nazis breathing down their necks, they were anxious to be seen voting for the interests of the small and poverty-stricken peasants of East Prussia, whence the DNVP collected most of its votes. Brüning's government had survived only by permission of one of its most bitter opponents, and its leader at once drew the appropriate conclusions. A few days after the Reichstag vote, he told a meeting of the Centre Party national committee: 'As the parliament becomes

increasingly sterile and the parties increasingly divisive, the position of the President grows automatically more powerful.' *This was the unadulterated language of Bonapartism.* Its purpose was to frighten the reformists into dropping their oppositional tactics and thus once more make possible the 'rule of the parties' which the President was yearning to end. But still the SPD leaders feared to expose their vulnerable left flank to the KPD. On 12 April, when Brüning jointly presented his financial and agrarian aid bills in a composite form (hoping thereby to induce the DNVP to vote its approval for both), the SPD cast its mandates once more against the government, an attack which on this occasion (with Hugenberg leading 23 Nationalists to register a negative vote) Brüning survived by a desperately slim majority of 217 to 206. Two weeks later, Brüning suffered another body blow when the DNVP executive decided to extend no more help to his government. Parliamentary rule in Germany now had little more than three months to run. On 7 July, the annual budget came before the Reichstag. It contained several highly controversial proposals to expedite the cuts in government expenditure being demanded by both bankers and industrialists. Economics Minister Hermann Dietrich (of the DDP) had devised a special tax of 2.5 per cent on the salaries of government officials, balanced, for political as well as economic reasons, by a reduction in unemployment relief payments, which, it was hoped would realise an economy of 100 million marks. He also proposed an increase in contributions of 0.5 per cent. Other smaller 'reforms' included stricter controls over municipal spending and a tax on alcoholic drinks. When the debate began on 15 July 1930, the SPD found itself in an agonising quandary. Previously, they had been able to vote against Brüning, knowing that sufficient other votes would be forthcoming to prevent the defeat of the government, thus averting the Reichstag elections they so feared. But now, with the DNVP on a collision course with Brüning, their own negative votes would tip the balance against the government. In the first vote on the budget, the SPD attempted to steer a middle course between the twin dangers of voting for Brüning's cuts, and running the gauntlet of an early election contest with the KPD, by abstaining. Only the DNVP, the Nazis and the KPD voted against. That same evening, with the vote due the next day on the proposed tax on government officials' salaries, it was made known - obviously to intimidate would-be oppositionists - that President Hindenburg had already granted Brüning the necessary emergency powers to carry out his reforms under Article 48, should the Reichstag reject them. Now the aspiring Bonaparte was climbing onto his horse! On 16 July - a fateful day in the history of the Weimar Republic - Brüning's budget was voted down in the house by a clear majority of 256 to 193, with the SPD no longer abstaining, but voting against. The budget became law nevertheless, under Article 48 of the constitution. Rule by decree, the classic technique of Bonapartist government, whereby the executive, embodied in the Presidency, dominated the legislature, had been set in motion. At first, shocked by the severity of Brüning's action, the SPD deputies refused to accept the decrees. They moved a resolution in the Reichstag declaring the decrees null and void, and this too was carried by the more narrow majority of 236 to 221 (Westarp having succeeded in inveigling a group of DNVP rebels into the Brüning camp). This act of defiance, though conducted strictly in accordance with the constitution, availed the Social Democrats nothing. Brüning had already taken the precaution of securing a dissolution decree from the President, which he proceeded to read to the now electrified Reichstag. And so the battle shifted to the electoral terrain so feared by all save the two parties whose doctrines - incompatible in every other respect - were mortally hostile to parliamentary rule.

For the shrinking band of politicians and bourgeois who continued to cling to the utopia of a 'middle way' between Communist revolution and fascism, the results of 14 September 1930 were an unmitigated disaster. The sharp increase in the KPD vote, and the spectacular leap in that of the Nazis, now meant that even if all the DNVP deputies (reduced by 32 to 41) voted with the government, Brüning would have to continue ruling by decree, unless the SPD reversed its vacillating course towards opposition, and came down firmly on the side of the government. *The combined strength of the KPD, SPD and NSDAP in the new Reichstag was 327 seats, out of a total of 577.* The SPD stood at the crossroads. Should the party, as many of its more left activists (and even Reichstag deputies) were arguing, continue to take no responsibility for the Brüning government's unpopular legislation? Or was the correct course that of 'tolerating' Brüning, remaining outside his cabinet yet defending it against attacks from extreme right and left alike? The advocates of this class-collaborationist line argued that if the SPD did not support Brüning from the left, then he would be compelled to seek allies on the far right, possibly even amongst the Nazis. And so, this fallacious but highly persuasive theory concluded, better to support Brüning as the 'lesser evil' than have Hitler as the 'greater evil'.

Those who argued in favour of the policy of toleration - one that viewed the struggle against fascism purely on the plane of parliamentary combinations, and not as a battle between classes - found their

room for manoeuvre greatly restricted by their own characterisation of the Brüning regime in the campaign for the September elections. The SPD's main slogan had denounced Brüning as the 'ally of big capital' who 'wished to destroy the rights of the working class'. One election leaflet issued by the SPD went so far as to describe Brüning's government as 'the most reactionary since the [November] revolution'.

The SPD leadership had been driven to adopt this left stance in the elections on two accounts. Firstly the party felt threatened by the steady drift to the right in the entire bourgeois party system, from Brüning and the DDP right through to Hugenberg's Nationalists and their extra-parliamentary arm, the *Stahlhelm*. Their unceremonious eviction from the government in March - greeted jubilantly by the entire capitalist - Junker press as marking a return to economic sanity - together with Brüning's brutal response to the party's bid to block his reactionary legislation, left the SPD with two alternatives: either crawl back to lick the boot that was kicking it, or kick back. The party leadership opted - briefly - for the second line of action, since recent election results had showed a clear trend in the working class away from the SPD towards the KPD (though this shift was nowhere near so rapid as the defections from the bourgeois parties towards the Nazis). In all probability, the SPD's left line prior to the Reichstag elections saved it from far larger losses to the KPD (the SPD vote fell by 576 000, while the KPD's rose by 1 328 000), as did the latter's incessant abuse of the Social Democrats as 'social fascists', a policy that repelled untold numbers of SPD workers moving towards Communism under the stress of the crisis.

The debate as to which of these two policies to pursue - opposition or 'toleration' - raged at every level of the party and trade unions in the months between the elections of 14 September and the re-opening of the Reichstag on 13 October. Even the highest echelons of the reformist bureaucracy were divided. Otto Braun, Prime Minister of the Prussian state government, a man hardly noted in the party for his radical views, was at first quite adamant that to support Brüning, at a time when he would be forced to introduce batch after batch of economic and financial measures that would drive down the living standards of the SPD's own members and voters, would be to court disaster. A close colleague of Braun's in the Prussian government, Albert Grzesinski, took part in these heated discussions, and commented later:

After the first great election victory of the Nazis... Braun urged the Social Democratic Reichstag members to force the resignation of Chancellor Heinrich Brüning and his government. He was convinced that it would be a fatal mistake to bar the Nazis from government responsibility. His idea was to have the Nazis participate in a new government in the hope that they would soon dig their own graves. In that event, however, the Nazis would have endeavoured to influence Prussia and that seemed to me and others who shared my views most inadvisable. Today we know that the overthrow of Brüning in October 1930, as advocated by Otto Braun, would have been the soundest policy for the Social Democrats to follow. It would have clarified the tense political atmosphere and opened the opportunity of crushing the Nazi movement at a time when it was comparatively weak and the republican forces strong and determined. ^[2]

Like the advocates of 'toleration' (whom Braun soon joined), the Prussian Prime Minister conceived of the struggle against fascism through the prism of parliamentary blocs and manoeuvres. Let the Nazis come to power, so the argument ran, and they will expose themselves in no time before their petit-bourgeois following as stooges of reaction, of the big banks, trusts and landlords. Then, with the collapse of the Nazis, would come the removal of the threat that Brüning was employing to blackmail the SPD to support a rightist bourgeois cabinet. The road would be clear for the restoration of the old parliamentary system, so beloved of the reformists and the dwindling ranks of bourgeois liberals, with its tacit agreements, compromises and orderly rotation of ministerial portfolios. And for all their ultra-radical phraseology, the KPD Stalinists shared Braun's illusion that the German labour movement could both survive and gain from a short spell of rule under the Nazis. They too argued that the sooner the Nazis came to power, the better, as a Hitler government would 'expose' itself quicker than any other capitalist regime. Thus argued Hermann Remmele in a Reichstag debate on 14 October 1931:

We declare to the bourgeoisie: there will be still less a way out when you let the fascist hordes come into power. That is what Herr Brüning plainly said. When they come into power, the united front of the proletariat [from which were excluded the millions of workers who still followed their 'social fascist' leaders - RB] will be set up and sweep everything away. *We are the victors of tomorrow* and the question is no longer, who will be beaten? *This question has already been decided.* The only question now is: When shall we overthrow the bourgeoisie? ... *We are not afraid of the fascists. They will shoot their bolt sooner than any other government.* ^[3]

Remmele was also the victim of another illusion shared by the Social Democrats. He prefaced his remarks on the advantages of a Nazi government by quoting from a declaration of the SPD issued in 1881, which said of Bismarck's anti-socialist act that 'so long as the law recognises us, then we will recognise the law. But the moment the law places us outside the law, we snap our fingers at the law.' Not only the SPD reformists but even the ultra-radicals of the KPD could conceive of a Hitler government in no other terms than a new edition of Bismarck's anti-socialist laws.

If this were so, then why fear the Nazis? Did not the Marxist pioneers not only withstand, but even thrive under Bismarck's repressions? This dangerous theory, all too common in left-wing and even allegedly Trotskyist circles, was epitomised in the slogan of SPD co-chairman Otto Wels, coined after the assumption of power by Hitler in January 1933: 'Tyrants do not rule for long.' And so reasoned Otto Braun in the days that followed Hitler's election victory of September 1930. Then Müller soon convinced him that support for Brüning was the only possible policy for the party to follow, having already said this to a meeting of the SPD Reichstag fraction where demands had been made for a continuation of the oppositional line that dominated during the election campaign.

Here the small group of lefts found themselves heavily outnumbered, and on 3 October 1930 the fraction approved by a large majority the policy of 'toleration' advocated by Müller. A memorandum circulated by the Reichstag fraction to all party organisations justified the decision by playing on the very real and justified fears of party cadres and members that a government under the influence of or dominated by the Nazis would:

... take over all the instruments of power in the country and would bring the Reichswehr and the police under their control... It would be the aim of a Hitler government to wipe out the Reichstag completely and to destroy all the democratic rights of the people. It would aim to follow the Italian example; in other words, it would destroy all working-class organisations, it would put the Reich under a permanent military state of siege, it would suppress all political freedoms including press freedom and the right of assembly; in short, it would mean civil war at home and expansionist war abroad.

The very correctness of these warnings about the disaster that would ensue from the victory of National Socialism greatly helped to stampede the waverers and the reformist workers in the party into supporting Müller's policy of defending the 'lesser evil', little realising that by so doing they would make possible the victory of the ultimate evil, fascism.

But this was not the sole factor militating against a leftwards movement in the party rank and file. Just as damaging, and even more pernicious, was the influence of the Stalinists. Ever since the SPD Congress of May 1929, when the lefts mustered nearly 40 per cent of the delegates for critical votes on the party's conduct in the Müller cabinet, they had been heaping abuse of the vilest and most slanderous kind on those fighting (with all the limitations of centrism and left Social Democracy) against the right-wing, class-collaborationist policies of the Müller - Wels leadership. 'Left social fascists' was the sobriquet their efforts earned them from the champions of working-class unity and the 'united front from below'.

Had the KPD offered to support - *critically* - the struggle of the SPD lefts against Müller's toleration policy, then without the least doubt the Social Democratic right would have been immeasurably weakened, and the fight against fascism correspondingly strengthened. And by the same token, the political spotlight would then have fallen on the SPD lefts, whose every move would have been subjected to the closest scrutiny by the millions of workers who would now turn to them for leadership. The Stalinist course decreed otherwise. It was the right wing, and not the lefts, that made all the running. The theoretical groundwork for the policy of 'toleration' had already been performed by Karl Kautsky earlier that year, when he wrote, in an attack on Bolshevism, that:

... the political tasks of the proletarian parties have been radically transformed by the [1918] revolution and its consequences... Our function is now to maintain the Republic, that is, the existing state, and not to overthrow it; insofar Social Democracy ceases to be revolutionary and becomes conservative... Thus the idea of a political revolution *after* the political revolution becomes nonsensical. ^[4]

The KPD however was not calling for a second *political* revolution (one that would, as in 1918, simply transfer the political power from one section of the ruling class to another, leaving the property relations intact) but a *social* revolution in which the capitalist system of production, distribution and exchange would be supplanted by a socialist mode of production. Since the Social Democrats held that such an

economic transformation could and would take place through the agencies created by the November Revolution, then everything had to be subordinated to their defence, even the living standards of the Social Democratic workers. Thus reasoned Kautsky's co-thinker Rudolf Hilferding, who in a comment on the political dilemmas facing the SPD after the September elections, wrote:

The ground for negotiations (in view of the anti-parliamentary attitude of some of the parties with which one must negotiate for the purpose of forming a majority on a parliamentary basis) is very narrow. These negotiations must in the first place aim at securing parliament since this general political postulate stands above all special demands in the present phase of economic and political crisis. If this understanding is to be arrived at, the Centre must do everything to unite upon this basis the other former government parties in order to maintain parliament...

This became the principal goal of the SPD leadership - the maintenance of parliament just at the point when its economic, social and political foundations were crumbling under the irresistible pressure of the world slump. Hunt for them as he might, Hilferding could find not a single party or leader in the bourgeoisie prepared to take the Social Democrats back into the cabinet, for despite his magnanimous pledge to sacrifice the economic and social interests of the working class for the greater glory of parliamentary democracy, the bourgeois parties doubted his ability to honour it. They remembered the circumstances that brought about the fall of the last SPD - bourgeois coalition in March 1930, when the trade union leaders vetoed an already agreed plan to 'reform' the unemployment insurance system. How could the SPD bureaucracy, with the plight of industrial workers worsening almost daily, guarantee that such a thing would not happen again? Not that the ADGB leadership was unsympathetic to the Hilferding - Müller policy of 'toleration' even at the expense of living standards. ADGB Executive member Naphtalie had declared in the spring of 1930, when the Müller government was still in office, that 'it is better during the present period not to raise any economic demands, it is better to get less pay than to create the danger of compelling the employers to close down shop altogether', an utterly reactionary argument that could be, and indeed was, applied to the 'defence of parliament'. Better to take a cut in wages, or dole payments, rather than provoke the bourgeoisie to end its support for Brüning and turn to even more right-wing political forces. And sure enough this did become the policy of the ADGB. Its official organ, *Arbeit*, of April 1931, declared that the 'supreme law' of the trade unions was 'the avoidance of strikes wherever possible, as the organisation exists as a permanently [sic!] acting force and has other means for protecting the labour conditions threatened by the crisis'.

And what were these 'other means'? To 'tolerate' a government that was imposing intolerable burdens on five million German trade unionists!

Since the KPD deemed the conflict in the SPD over 'toleration' to be of no consequence (the struggle, like all those not conducted under the exclusive leadership of the Stalinists, was a pure 'sham', being one between left and right 'social fascists'), the main burden of the fight fell by default on the centrist group led by Max Seidewitz, Kurt Rosenfeld, Heinrich Strobel and Max Adler, all of whom a year later seceded from the SPD to form the Socialist Workers Party (SAP). Their main base was the radical stronghold of Saxony where, seven years before, left Social Democrats had joined with the KPD in forming a coalition government. The group launched their own organ, *Klassenkampf*, and in its first number Seidewitz attacked from a centrist position Hilferding's theory that the working class had to sacrifice its living standards and jobs in order to preserve its democratic freedoms:

Those who play with the idea that Social Democracy shall tolerate the government, proceed from the standpoint that in no circumstances must a government come about with the cooperation of the National Socialists. Even if a government under the influence of the Nazis would be something terrible, we cannot avert it by the unconditional capitulation of the SPD to the Brüning government.

This did not yet mark a clean break from the class-collaborationist line of the SPD right wing, since Seidewitz spoke only of rejecting *unconditional* support for Brüning. And neither was he able to develop a seriously thought-out alternative to 'toleration'. What the increasingly restless Social Democratic workers were demanding was a fighting plan to defeat the Nazis, and the Saxon lefts had no such perspective to offer them. Indeed, Seidewitz conceded that the Nazis might well come to power if the policy of toleration were abandoned, showing that he too saw the struggle against them in mainly parliamentary terms. At this stage, the opposition hoped to gain support by coming out as more consistent Social Democrats than the party right wing. Thus Seidewitz wrote on 7 October that a vote for Brüning in the Reichstag:

... contrary to the promises made during the election, will be so devastating for the party and the trade unions, and would, in view of the desperate economic situation, bring about a crisis in the Social Democracy which it will be scarcely able to overcome.

While the lefts remained bogged down in arguments about alternative combinations in the Reichstag, they could not hope to make any headway in the party. On this level of parliamentary cretinism, the right wing held all the trumps. They could with some justification point to the fact that there existed only two possible Reichstag government blocs: either Brüning 'tolerated' by the SPD, or Brüning (or some other, even more reactionary leader) tolerated by, or sharing power with, the Nazis. There was no room for any other Reichstag combination, and not only Brüning and Müller, but Seidewitz knew it. Therefore as long as the lefts counterposed parliamentary opposition to parliamentary support (or 'toleration'), they would be exposed to the charge of unwittingly favouring the formation of a Nazi-dominated coalition.

Even where the lefts had a majority behind them, as at the Berlin district conference called in October 1930 to discuss the party crisis, they did not know what to do with it. Hilferding was hooted and heckled when he demanded support for Müller's toleration policy, yet Siegfried Aufhaeuser, leader of the white-collar workers' trade union federation AfA, failed like Seidewitz to pose the question of a clean break with coalition (in effect Popular Front) policies:

Brüning submits a programme, and says, swallow it or die. We intend neither to swallow it nor to die. To be capable of participating in the coalition does not mean to live by the grace of the Centre. A change of course must be introduced, otherwise a coalition will be fateful. ^[5]

What type of coalition did the SPD left have in mind? Obviously one where the Social Democrats, and not the bourgeois parties, called the tune. But the impossibility of such a combination had been demonstrated with the break-up of Hermann Müller's 'grand coalition'. Now that the crisis was even deeper, there existed no chance whatsoever of drumming up the necessary votes in the Reichstag to support a leftward-leaning government coalition on the lines proposed by Aufhaeuser and Seidewitz. They were asking for a coalition with fading political ghosts, those of German liberalism and radical republicanism.

And so the debate raged inside the party - confused at the best of times, and always within the framework of Social Democratic conceptions of parliamentary manoeuvres and combinations. It ended on 13 October, when *Vorwärts* carried a prominent article by Braun, now converted to the policy of toleration. Once again, he began by stating the truth - that the basis of parliamentary democracy had been eroded by the crisis and the rise of fascism. But unlike a Marxist, he argued that the working class was called upon to make 'enormous sacrifices' to preserve its superannuated institutions:

In these times when, unlike 1848, the number of those members of the German bourgeoisie who are ready for real democracy has been steadily shrinking, the SPD has an historical duty of tremendous magnitude, and one that will force us to bear the weight of enormous sacrifices: we must exert all our forces to keep the German republic from lapsing into a fascist dictatorship.

That same day, the new Reichstag met for the first time, with thousands of Nazis swarming outside the building as their heroes - 107 all told - swaggered in to take their seats in the institution they were dedicated to destroying. The first test of the Brüning government - still not assured of a majority - came on 16 October, when voting took place on its financial and economic proposals, which entailed still more cuts in social welfare. Each was carried by a margin of some 80 votes, with the SPD fraction casting its mandates, as dictated by the policy of 'tolerating' the 'lesser evil', for Brüning, now dubbed by millions of workers as the 'starvation chancellor'. ^[6]

The SPD and ADGB bureaucracy must at this juncture have quite genuinely believed that their new tactic was working. The Nazis had been kept at bay, and a working majority provided for a government that still recognised - on paper at least - the niceties of parliamentary democracy. But things were not so simple. Brüning had come to power on the understanding that he would be able to build a new coalition that extended, not like its predecessor, from the bourgeois centre to the left, *but from the centre to the extreme bourgeois - Junker right*. Now, however, this strategy was in ruins. The antics of the Hugenberg Nationalists and the massive influx of Nazis into the Reichstag meant that he could only turn to the reformists for support - or become a prisoner of the ultra-right 'National Opposition'. Brüning was not just a bourgeois, but a *Catholic* bourgeois, a politician who saw as his task not only the implementation of a policy for his entire class, but also the defence of the highly sectional and internally complex interests historically represented by the Centre Party. Confessional as well as tactical and strategic factors

therefore prevented him from cutting adrift entirely from the parliamentary-republican camp, and going over to a policy of close collaboration with the Junker - heavy industry bloc personified, at this stage, by Hugenberg and the right-wing faction in the DVP. So there could be nothing stable about the alliance between Brüning and the SPD. Neither partner really wanted it, each desired to get closer to the class forces upon which they rested. They therefore found themselves meeting in the no-man's land that lay between the big battalions of the industrial proletariat on the left, and, on the right, the monopolist bourgeoisie and agrarians. In both class camps, enormous pressures were being generated that would burst through this compromise. For as long as there existed in Germany a government dependent on the support, albeit grudging, of Social Democracy, the big bourgeoisie and Junkers would seek to overthrow it, ^[7] however loyal to capitalism its leader might be. While in the proletariat, for as long as the SPD continued its reactionary policy of 'tolerating' a regime which cut workers' living standards and forced them out of their jobs, millions of proletarians would turn towards Communism as the only answer to the crisis and the only means of combating the growing fascist threat. It now became a race against time. The class that struck the first decisive blows against Brüning would gain an enormous tactical advantage in the life and death battle that was certain to follow. As had so often been the case in the brief history of the Weimar Republic, leadership, the subjective factor, was to prove itself all-important in deciding the outcome of this titanic world-shaping struggle.

Appendix I: The KPD and the 1930 Elections

The Reichstag election of September 1930 confirmed that Germany was plunging towards a political crisis of cataclysmic proportions. Ever since May, when the Nazis recorded their first substantial success in the Saxon Landtag election, the eyes of not only Germany but all Europe and even the United States had been riveted on the activities of this party, one that, for bourgeois commentators, defied all analysis, since it fitted into neither the category of a revolutionary, proletarian-based socialist party nor a conservative, nationalist party based on the propertied classes.

Only in the Kremlin could be found politicians who displayed not the slightest visible interest in the rise of the movement that 11 years later was to bring the Soviet Union to the verge of destruction. Stalin, so the legend has it, was always vigilant in his defence of the USSR and workers throughout the world, especially against the threat of fascism. Yet one will search in vain for a single reference to the rise of National Socialism in Germany in any of his writings or speeches published in the official Soviet edition of Stalin's *Works*. The Sixteenth CPSU Congress, which convened in June 1930, presented this vigilant anti-fascist with a splendid opportunity to alert the Soviet party and working class to the growing menace of fascism in Germany, since the Congress opened less than a month after the declaration of the Saxon Landtag election results. Here was a movement that in the words of its leader, 'took up where we broke off 600 years ago... If we speak of soil in Europe today, we can primarily have in mind only Russia and her vassal border states.' ^[8] The attitude of the Nazis towards the Soviet Union was well known in the leading circles of the Soviet government and party, who were kept informed of the activities and policies of the German parties through their highly organised system of Comintern agencies and couriers. Yet in the section of Stalin's opening report to the Sixteenth CPSU Congress (delivered on 27 June 1930) devoted to 'The Growing Crisis of World Capitalism and the External Situation of the USSR' (a section which in published form covered 25 pages) the Nazi movement did not, in Stalin's estimation, warrant a single mention. The report did indeed dwell on fascism - but as might have been expected, it was of the 'social' and not 'national' variety:

Will many workers be found today capable of believing the false doctrines of the social fascists? ... the best members of the working class have already turned away from the social fascists... the bourgeoisie will seek a way out of the situation through further fascisation in the sphere of domestic policy, and will utilise all the reactionary forces, including Social Democracy, for this purpose. ^[9]

This section of the report was, needless to say, replete with the routine Third Period chatter about the crisis striking 'crushing blows' against Social Democratic illusions, the 'desertion of the masses from the Social Democrats... towards Communism', 'the wave of strikes in which the Communists are taking a leading part' - all of which was the purest fantasy, and existed only in the heads of Stalin and his clique. As the September elections in Germany showed, the hard core of the reformist-led workers remained loyal to their party, and had been dislodged from supporting it neither by the crisis nor accusations that, in so doing, they were defending 'social fascism'. This speech naturally set the tone for Molotov,

Bukharin's replacement as leader of the Communist International, who delivered his own report on the activities of the CPSU delegation to the ECCI. Molotov's entire speech consisted of nothing but a garrulous chewing-over of the few choice morsels on 'social fascism' and the 'revolutionary upsurge' tossed to him by his master's voice:

A further sharpening of the contradictions is taking place within the capitalist countries. The expression of this is the growing fascisation of the bourgeois states. Similarly, Social Democracy is rapidly proceeding along the road of degeneration into social fascism... The growth of elements of a new wave of revolution is an unquestionable fact. From this follows the changes in the tactics of the Communist parties. ^[10]

This last refers to the new tactic of refusing a united front with the reformists, and declaring them to be the main, 'social fascist' enemy of the working class. But unlike Stalin, Molotov did make a reference - a vague one it is true - to the recent growth of Nazism in Germany. But he at once hurried on to emphasise that the reformists, as before, remained the main enemy:

The rise of the revolutionary wave in Germany... is reinforcing the yearning of the bourgeoisie for fascism, for the fascisation of the state. The growth of fascism at the expense of the bourgeois parties has been displayed most vividly in Germany. [But not vividly enough for Stalin to deem it worth a mention! - RB] Social Democracy in its turn, as the principle bulwark of the imperialist bourgeoisie in the working class, is also moving along the road to fascist degeneration. It has already developed the ideology appropriate to this end. ^[11]

Molotov also detected that trend so beloved of all ultra-leftists - that of Social Democracy and its trade unions 'more and more rapidly moving towards fascism, following the path which leads to the growing together of the Social Democratic and reformist trade union apparatus with the more and more fascist bourgeois state'. He found examples of such a process of fascisation in 'Yugoslavia, Austria, Romania and Finland' where 'fascist elements have openly come to power'. ^[12] If fascism had come to power in Austria by July 1930, and the reformist union fused with the capitalist state, this rendered totally inexplicable and superfluous the military offensive launched against the Vienna proletariat in February 1934, and the outlawing of the reformist organisations, together with the Communist Party, by the Dollfuss regime in the wake of the Vienna defeat.

Nowhere in either Molotov's report or reply to the 'discussion' (the euphemism for the ceremonial endorsement of the current Comintern line) was there any reference by name to the menacing activities of the German Nazis, who as the Congress concluded, stood on the verge of the biggest sensation in the history of modern parliamentary elections. Small wonder that when the truth dawned on the KPD leadership (who had been faithfully applying Stalin's line that the 'social fascists' were the main enemy) that the previously scorned Nazis, deemed to be 'disintegrating' and therefore hardly worth worrying about, had increased their support by a larger amount than the *total* Communist vote, panic set in.

Two lines of the elections existed side by side, reflecting an obvious split in the highest levels of the KPD leadership over how to cope with the Nazi threat. Sublime optimism predominated in the analysis of 14 September conducted by Werner Hirsch. The elections were a 'magnificent victory for the German Communists and fully and strikingly confirmed the whole policy of the KPD and the Communist International'. The KPD had 'forced a breach in the camp of reformism'. The enormous, eightfold increase in the Nazi vote (compared with a 30 per cent rise in the KPD's) was blandly shrugged off as a 'regrouping of the bourgeois forces in Germany'. Nevertheless, there was one - for Stalin - sour note struck in this article. Contrary to the 'general line' of the Comintern, Hirsch ventured the rash opinion that as a result of the sudden growth of the Nazis into the largest bourgeois party (save for the SPD, which the Stalinists also included under this category):

... the role hitherto played by the Social Democracy, is historically regarded, played out... The importance of the other body guard of capitalism, fascism, is increasing on the general front of the class struggle... Every coming government will stand under the knout of the Hitler party. ^[13]

Little guidance on this thorny issue was provided by the ECCI telegram of congratulations to the KPD on its 'success' in the elections. Dated 14 September 1930, it referred to the KPD as having 'dealt a heavy blow to Social Democracy' - a patent exaggeration, since the SPD vote, at a time when the bottom was dropping out of its reformist world of capitalist stability, fell by only 0.5 million - almost a victory. Of the Nazis, the ECCI merely stated that their 'great success' had been 'attained by the help of radical phrases, for deception of the masses who are turning away from the parties of the big bourgeoisie' - as if

the Nazis were cheating. No warnings were issued about the immense dangers posed by the election victory of the NSDAP. Instead:

The role of the KPD is growing enormously as the decisive factor in the struggle. We are firmly convinced that the party will concentrate its revolutionary proletarian forces on developing on the broadest scale the economic struggle and will consolidate organisationally the successes it has won. Forward in the fight for Soviet Germany.

Yet this brash optimism, flourishing in the comparative safety of Moscow, was not shared by all the KPD leadership or lower cadres. Neubauer, in an article on the elections and the Brüning government, had to take issue with the 'tendency to represent to the masses in too gloomy colours the success of the Nazis. Whoever does that fails to see the contradictory basis upon which the Nazis have achieved their temporary election success.' In fact, Neubauer saw positive advantages in the Nazi victory, since 'the fight against fascism gives us quite new possibilities of winning the workers for our Red Front'. 'Contradictions' were seen in the basis of the Nazi Party, but not in that of the SPD or its relationship to the fascists. On the contrary, 'with the development of fascism in Germany the line of the SPD will approach considerably nearer to fascism'. ^[14]

So it still never occurred to the KPD leadership - not, at least, those who agreed with the Moscow line - that the SPD and the Nazis would be forced into opposition to one another by the incompatibility of their different social bases (proletarian and petit-bourgeois respectively), forms of domination over the working class, and relationship to bourgeois parliamentary democracy. As far as Neubauer was concerned, the Nazis and the SPD were drawing yet closer together. All was not well in the CPSU either. A former comrade of Trotsky in the Left Opposition until his defection to Stalin after the latter's ultra-left turn in 1928 on economic policy, Radek (together with Smilga and Preobrazhensky) contended that Stalin was carrying out, albeit bureaucratically, the economic programme of the Left Opposition. Radek wrote an article on the German situation which came far closer to the realities of the crisis than anything that had thus far appeared on the subject. He chided the KPD for having ignored the Nazi menace right up to the elections, and made a shrewd analysis of the dilemmas facing the Brüning government - either with the SPD on the left, the 'National Opposition' on the far right, or a balancing, Bonapartist course in between: 'Whichever way the bourgeois government decides, it risks losing one of its supports.' ^[15] Radek's article was in fact a discreet critique of Comintern policy, since it made no mention of 'social fascism' nor its fusion with the Nazis, pointing out that reliance on one or other of these two parties were two different and even opposed courses of action for Brüning. That Radek could veer so far away from the official line suggests that in the period immediately following the elections, neither the ECCI nor the KPD knew quite how to cope with the totally unexpected new situation created by the Nazi election victory.

The Comintern organ, in its first comment on the results, found no little comfort in the fact that:

... a considerable proportion of those who voted for the fascists were the millions of new electors who had awakened from their political apathy for the first time, and sought a way out of the crisis. Does not this, along with the tremendous success of the Communists, show more clearly than anything that Germany is on the verge of revolutionary events? ... the fascist success means that ever increasing masses are becoming disillusioned with capitalist Germany as it is at present, and that revolt has begun. The fascist success, taken together with the success of the Communists, is a clear sign of the decomposition of bourgeois society in Germany now taking place... A revolutionary crisis is maturing in Germany, this is the chief indication given by the elections. ^[16]

Not a glimmer of an awareness that Germany might also be on the verge of counter-revolutionary events! But how could it be, so this argument ran, if not only the KPD votes, but those for the Nazis, were cast against capitalism? It would be only a matter of time before these radicalised masses found their way to the KPD and so made possible the revolution. Meanwhile, without wishing to, the Nazis performed the valuable work of 'politicising' and 'activating' the previously inert and backward masses. This done, the KPD could then 'capture' them in manoeuvres such as that employed in the Nazi - DNVP-inspired referendum to depose the SPD government of Prussia. This the KPD supported, so its leaders claimed, to 'expose' the Nazis, who were said to be, in reality, in league with the Social Democrats (this was only the most infamous case where the KPD, rejecting as a matter of principle any tactical alliance with the reformists, *formed a united front with the Nazis*).

As was to be expected, Ernst Thälmann, Stalin's representative on the KPD Central Committee, hailed the elections as 'a severe blow not only at the SPD, but also at the whole Second International'. On the Nazi vote, which presumably was a blow struck against nobody in particular, Thälmann said:

As to the importance of the National Socialist vote, can this numerically extraordinary vote increase be put on a level with the success of the KPD? Not the least. Actually the success of the Nazis represents a sort of [sic!] regrouping within the bourgeois camp.

And even though they had become 'the strongest bourgeois party' - an 'opportunist lapse' on Thälmann's part, since the SPD won a clear two million votes more - there was no need to worry, since the Nazis were already, at their moment of triumph, 'decomposing'.^[17] Trotsky appraised these same results from an entirely different standpoint, one that earned him the epithet 'defeatist', even though it was the only one from which a correct revolutionary line could proceed:

The official press of the Comintern is now depicting the results of the German elections as a prodigious victory of Communism, which places the slogan of a Soviet Germany on the order of the day. The bureaucratic optimists do not want to reflect upon the meaning of the relationship of forces which is disclosed by the election statistics. They examine the figure of Communist votes gained independently of the revolutionary tasks created by the situation and the obstacles it sets up. The KPD received around 4 600 000 votes as against 3 000 000 in 1928. From the viewpoint of 'normal' parliamentary mechanics, the gain of the party pales completely beside the leap of fascism from 800 000 to 6 400 000 votes. Of no less significance for evaluating the elections is the fact that the SPD, in spite of substantial losses, retained its basic cadres and still received a considerably greater number of workers' votes than the KPD... if we should ask ourselves what combination of international and domestic circumstances could be capable of turning the working class towards Communism with greater velocity, we could not find an example of more favourable circumstances for such a turn than the situation in present-day Germany: Young's noose, the economic crisis, the disintegration of the rulers, the crisis of parliamentarism, the terrific self-exposure of Social Democracy in power. From the viewpoint of these concrete historical circumstances, the specific gravity of the KPD in the social life of the country, in spite of the gain of 1 300 000 votes, remains proportionately small.^[18]

Only when the SPD opted for 'toleration' did a clear - and even more leftist - line begin to emerge from the floundering of the previous four weeks. Since the 'social fascists' had offered to protect Brüning's regime, then the latter must also be fascist. This, taken together with Brüning's cuts in wages and social welfare, and his method of ruling by decree rather than reliance on parliamentary majorities and votes, finally convinced the KPD leadership that the Brüning - SPD bloc, and not Hitler, was the main enemy. Ushering in this new line, Philipp Dengel fumbled his way through the article 'The Capitulation of the SPD to Fascism', writing of both an *existing*, Brüning 'fascist dictatorship' and an as yet not realised 'fascist *danger*'.^[19] The line was thereafter gradually consolidated, with Neubauer's assertion that 'social fascism supports Brüning's fascist dictatorship',^[20] and finally the declaration by the official KPD daily *Die Rote Fahne* in December that:

... the semi-fascist Brüning government has taken the decisive step to the setting up of a fascist dictatorship. The fascist dictatorship no longer threatens: it is already here. The bourgeois-democratic state form of the German republic has ceased to exist. We have a fascist republic.^[21]

The event that precipitated this completely false and defeatist characterisation of the Brüning regime was its promulgation on 1 December of a series of decrees (under article 48) protecting agrarian interests while making cuts in workers' wages and welfare payments. The measures passed through the Reichstag by a vote of 293 to 253, with the SPD, true to its treacherous policy of 'toleration', voting with the government parties. Brüning's measures were indeed a serious blow struck against the living standards of the working class (the reduction in wages amounted to eight per cent), and it was perfectly in order to castigate the SPD for endorsing them. But the KPD went much further. It said that rule by decree and cuts in wages on the order of a Presidential regime constituted the sum total of fascism (or as the *Workers Press* might say, 'corporatism'). Yet if we look at Italy, where Mussolini had been in power for eight years, we can see what fascism really involved for the working class. Not simply state reductions of wages, not rule by decree, *but the physical destruction of all workers' organisations*. This is the essence of the fascist corporate state. He who says corporatism has already been established where the working class retains its organisations, and is in a position to make them fight even the most defensive of battles, *is conceding defeat in advance of the decisive struggles*. That is just what the KPD did in the autumn and

winter of 1930, with its claim that the Brüning regime had become a fully-blown fascist dictatorship - a statement which the Stalinists were permitted to repeat almost daily in their party press without the least hindrance from Brüning's 'fascist' police and courts. Hitler was to teach them - too late - the difference between semi-Bonapartism and fascism. Once again, we must ask *Workers Press*, which also muddles the two - is this lesson lost on the WRP?

Appendix II: Stalin - 'Anti-Fascist'

What of Stalin himself? Did he at last consider it time to pronounce on the growth of fascism in Germany? Examining his speeches and writings after 14 September, we record the following:

November 1930: 'Letters to Comrade Ch' - being two communications on the question of industrialisation and collectivisation.

12 December 1930: 'To Comrade Demyan Bedny' - being a lecture on poetry to a leading Soviet satirist.

12 January 1931: 'Anti-Semitism' - a denial of the existence of anti-Semitism in the USSR. Stalin had used this most reactionary of political weapons in his struggle against the Left Opposition, many of whose leaders were Jewish in origin.

4 February 1931: 'The Tasks of Business Executives' - a speech at the first all-union conference of leading personnel of socialist industry. ^[22]

And so we could go on throughout the remainder of the two and a half years between the first election success of the Nazis in September 1930 to their final triumph in March 1933. And nowhere would we be able to unearth a single reference to the German fascists! Trotsky's writings on this subject would fill several sizeable volumes - Stalin's would leave a postage stamp unmarked. Neither was it a question of sheer indifference to the Nazi menace in Germany. Stalin had at least a dim perception of the dangers posed to the German and international working class by the rise of the Hitler movement. He kept silent about it, as a future chapter will attempt to illustrate, because he hoped to exploit it.

Notes

1. Monsignor Ludwig Kaas replaced Wilhelm Marx as the Centre Party leader at its congress in December 1928. Earlier that year, in August, he told a party rally of his 'longing for leaders to lead us along the thorny path ahead' - hardly the words of a man dedicated to upholding parliamentary democracy. In fact he proved to be a keen advocate of Brüning's system of rule by decree, declaring in November 1932 (when power was passing from fellow Catholic Papen to another Catholic, General Schleicher): 'We do not want to relapse into parliamentarianism; we want to give the President moral and political support for an authoritarian government inspired by him.' With Hitler safely in power, Kaas devoted his energies to rallying his flock in support of the Nazi regime. In a statement on his attitude to Hitler, Kaas declared: 'Hitler knows well how to guide the ship. Even before he became chancellor I met him frequently and was greatly impressed by his clear thinking, by his way of facing realities while upholding his ideals, which are noble... it matters little who rules so long as order is maintained. The history of the last few years has well proven in Germany that the democratic party system was incapable.' And this was the clerical obscurantist and pro-fascist whom the SPD leaders were to 'tolerate' for one and a half years - in the name of defending parliamentary democracy!
2. A Grzesinski, *Inside Germany* (New York, 1939), pp 114-15.
3. *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 11, no 54, 15 October 1931, p 977, emphasis added.
4. K Kautsky, *Der Bolschewismus in der Sackgasse* (1930).
5. The left SPD Saxon daily *Leipziger Volkzeitung* tried to combine toleration with opposition. In a comment on the Reichstag fraction's decision to support Brüning in the Reichstag, it said: 'The resolution is to be welcomed as it especially emphasises "while safeguarding the vital interests of the working masses, to secure the parliamentary basis, and to assist of the most urgent financial programme of the government..." It is an omission that

nothing is said regarding the economic and financial programme of the government, which according to the previously mentioned statement of the fraction must be sharply combated.’

6. The toleration policy of the SPD was warmly welcomed in the shrinking bourgeois circles who still support Brüning. The *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* made the shrewd comment on the SPD Reichstag fraction’s decision to keep Brüning in office that their resolution ‘abandoned all Marxist phraseology, and raised no serious objection to the programme of the government’. Brüning’s own Centre Party organ *Germania* was even more fulsome in its praise: ‘The Social Democracy recognising the serious political situation, has adopted an attitude which deserves the fullest recognition.’ But unlike 4 August 1914, when the SPD leadership also ‘recognised the serious political situation’, it did not win any favours from the bourgeoisie, only kicks in the teeth and, finally, annihilation.

7. This dramatic reversal in Brüning’s strategy had not passed uncensured by the paper that had been loudest in its approval of the Chancellor when he first took office. Funk’s *Berliner Börsen Zeitung* commented acidly on 20 October (after the SPD had rescued Brüning on a vote of no-confidence) that Brüning ‘had not found the courage to decide, if necessary, to govern without the help of parliament at once, a decision which must be taken sooner or later, if his government does not intend becoming an executive organ of Social Democratic policy and control’. It had taken little more than six months for the financial interests represented by the organ to lose patience with Brüning’s stopgap solutions. The time was obviously drawing near when the big banks would join heavy industry in the search for a viable, more stable form of rule, one that did not depend on the support of the ‘Marxists’.

8. A Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (London, 1943), p 654.

9. JV Stalin, ‘Political Report of the CC to the Sixteenth Congress of the CPSU’, *Works*, Volume 12, pp 260-62.

10. V Molotov, *The Developing Crisis of World Capitalism and the Revolutionary Tasks of the Comintern* (Report to the Sixteenth Congress of the CPSU from the Delegation of the CPSU to the ECCI, delivered 5 July 1930) (London, 1930), p 5.

11. Molotov, *The Developing Crisis of World Capitalism and the Revolutionary Tasks of the Comintern*, p 24.

12. Molotov, *The Developing Crisis of World Capitalism and the Revolutionary Tasks of the Comintern*, p 24.

13. ‘Communism Advancing in Germany’, *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 10, no 43, 18 September 1930, p 902.

14. T Neubauer, ‘The New Bourgeois Dictatorship in Germany’, *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 10, no 45, 2 October 1930, p 946.

15. *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 10, no 45, 2 October 1930, p 949.

16. ‘The Historic Elections in Germany’, *Communist International*, Volume 7, no 12, 15 October 1930, p 247.

17. E Thälmann, ‘The KPD after the Elections’, *Communist International*, Volume 7, no 13, 15 November 1930, pp 290-92.

18. LD Trotsky, ‘The Turn in the Communist International’ (26 September 1930), *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany* (New York, 1971), p 57.

19. P Dengel, ‘The Capitulation of the SPD to Fascism’, *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 10, no 48, 23 October 1930, p 961.

20. *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 10, no 48, 23 October 1930, p 999.

21. *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 10, no 55, 4 December 1930.

22. JV Stalin, *Works*, Volume 13, pp 21-23, 24-29, 30, 31-44.

Chapter XX: Hitler's Road to Harzburg

In many ways, Hitler's decision to align his rapidly growing party with the 'National Opposition' against the Young Plan had proved an enormous success. Money, influence, a wider and new audience for his policies - these were the direct results of the formation of his bloc with the Hugenberg monarchists. However there were also drawbacks. By drawing close to the leaders of the traditional right, Hitler exposed himself to charges inside his own movement - namely from the new and older 'radicals' - that he had sold out to 'reaction'. The rumblings of disgruntled SA men were first heard in Nazi ranks in 1928, when the party leadership decided to switch to Hitler's 'rural' strategy, a policy which involved concentrating most of the movement's forces in areas of agrarian unrest such as Schleswig-Holstein. Here, where the crisis in German farming was at its most acute, the Nazis gained a foothold amongst the small independent farmers either already bankrupt or faced with imminent ruin. Their revolt had initially been directed against the larger landlords of the region, but with the arrival of the Nazis, the movement began to take on a very different character. Active from the beginning of the revolt had been the remnants of the old North German Strasser group, and they, together with 'National Bolsheviks' such as Ernst Niekisch and the ex-Free Corps officer Ernst von Salomon, had pushed it further to the left than Hitler thought desirable, in view of his new strategy of seeking allies in the business and landed classes. Nazi policy was to sidetrack and defuse the revolt (which frequently exploded into riots and attacks on government tax collectors and officials) by directing it against the Versailles Treaty, the source of all Germany's ills. But the Nazis found they were riding a tiger, and a large section of the desperate peasantry stuck to their original leaders, one of whom, Claus Heim, acquired almost legendary stature for his terrorist activities, being dubbed the 'peasants' general'. There were also splits inside the Nazi leadership itself, with the journalist Bodo Uhse, editor of the NSDAP Schleswig-Holstein daily, defecting to the KPD. The Nazi leaders revealed their true opinions on the agrarian question when in a heated argument with Heim, who refused to accept either their policies or leadership, they told him 'in a burst of irritation at the distrust and stubbornness of the peasants... that after the [Nazi] seizure of power the Schleswig-Holstein peasants would be driven from their farms with whips'.^[1] Having failed to capture what was at its base a militantly anti-landlord and potential anti-capitalist movement, the frustrated Nazi leaders proceeded to denounce its leaders to the police and the local authorities, a move which produced fresh wave of unrest on the party's plebeian wing.

The larger the party grew, the more precarious became Hitler's balancing act on the tightrope between his newly-won allies in the business and Junker world on the old monarchist right, and the masses of radicalised petit-bourgeois and backward workers to his 'left'. Fascism, which once in power displays many of the features of a Bonapartist regime (though with the essential difference that it has to contend with a plebeian base), also exhibits all the contradictions of Bonapartism even before it comes to power. Every attempt by the Nazi demagogues to extend their mass base by wild promises of action against big business tended to undermine the other and complementary side of Hitler's strategy, which was to win the support of these very capitalist interests. And by the same token, each new conquest in the ruling class, whether he be banker, industrialist, Junker or monarchist politician, rendered less plausible Nazi claims to represent the interests of the downtrodden and poverty-stricken. Try as he might, Hitler could never completely escape from or resolve this dilemma. From the revolt of the Strasser - Goebbels faction in 1925 right through to the massacre of the Röhm group in June 1934, Hitler was faced with the threat of a rebellion by the plebeians, those who had fought the workers' movement not simply in order to make Germany safe for big business, Junkers and the general staff, but to carve out for the Nazified petit-bourgeois hordes a niche far larger and more luxurious than anything they had enjoyed under the rule of the 'Jewish' and 'Marxist' Weimar Republic. Not once, but many times, the KPD took the revolts of the Nazi 'pebs' and pseudo-radicals to be a groping towards genuine proletarian socialism. In fact their goal was a petit-bourgeois utopia in which all the 'bad' sides of capitalism - monopoly, the class struggle, exploitation, poverty, etc - would be removed, while preserving its 'good' aspects, the most important being the 'nation' and protection of private property. That is why none of these revolts, though undoubtedly embarrassing for Hitler, ever came anywhere near undermining his position of supreme leadership. Being based on the middle class, and expressing all its political confusion and inability to develop an independent stand on any basic question, such challenges to the 'reactionaries' in the Nazi leadership, after promising much, fizzled out, leaving the KPD with nothing save a 'capture' of aristocratic 'National Bolsheviks'. (In fact one of the main reasons why Hitler was able to hold his

movement together as well as he did, despite its enormous internal social contradictions, was the policy of Third Period Stalinism, which deepened divisions within the proletariat, the only force that could have broken the oppressed but confused petit-bourgeois masses from National Socialism. Instead, the KPD turned its back on the reformist workers, and went chasing after the Nazi 'radicals' in a way that could only have even more alienated workers loyal to the SPD.)

Illustrative of the difficulties involved in building a mass counter-revolutionary movement (one in which support from decisive segments of the ruling class is also essential) were the Nazi Party's zigzags over the anti-Young Plan campaign. Goebbels, still finding the going tough in solidly proletarian Berlin (where more than 60 per cent of its inhabitants - in other words, nearly all its workers - voted either SPD or KPD), struck a radical pose against the Hugenberg monarchists by vehemently denying in his *Angriff* that the Nazis intended to join the 'National Opposition' of reactionaries in their anti-Young Plan referendum. Goebbels claimed that such talk was an invention of the 'Marxist press' put about to discredit the true socialist friends of the German workers. When Hitler did announce his party's adherence to the National Opposition, he had to reassure the 'radicals' that the move was only a manoeuvre, which in part it was. At the same time, Hitler now found himself more exposed to the charge of betraying the movement's programme than at any time since the dispute over the Princes' property referendum. In Saxony, where the party was making rapid headway amongst the poorest sections of the artisans and small textile employers, a local party leader, Captain H von Muecke, resigned from the NSDAP, revealing that in his own district the organisation was in the pocket of the big textile manufacturer and one of Hitler's keenest capitalist financiers, Robert Mutschmann. In an open letter dated 3 August 1929, von Muecke declared it an 'open secret that the influence of Herr Mutschmann is due to the fact that being a rich manufacturer, he has laid Herr Hitler under a financial obligation to him'. Von Muecke's resignation and revelations, while symptomatic of the problems facing Hitler as he edged closer to the ruling class, aroused little interest at the time because neither the Nazi Party nor its Saxon critic were regarded as national political factors of the first rank. Altogether more sensational, and indicative of Hitler's chosen course, was the defection of Otto Strasser.

Once again the dispute originated in 'Red' Saxony, where in April 1930 an official strike brought all industry to a halt. Otto Strasser, anxious that the party should not be exposed as a tool of the big employers, engaged in one of the left manoeuvres at which he and his fellow north Germans had proved themselves such past masters:

I decided to support it [the strike] with the full weight of the NSDAP of the North and to put my papers at the disposal of the cause... It is easy to imagine the fury of the pundits of industry with whom Hitler had recently come onto terms. For some time now the SA had only been financed by Thyssen... Without his new friends Hitler could count himself lost, and he received from the Federation of German Industrialists of Saxony an ultimatum couched in rather abrupt terms: 'Unless the strike order [of the trade unions] is condemned and opposed by the NSDAP and its papers... the entire German Federation of Industry will cease its payments to the party.' Such an ultimatum to the party could not remain secret. We knew the contents of this shameful ultimatum; we knew that Hitler was sold to the capitalists and we realised that there was nothing more to hope from him, for he accepted the ultimatum. A resolution of the Reich [Nazi] Party Executive forbade any member of the NSDAP to take part in the strike. It was signed by Hitler himself. ^[2]

Otto Strasser and his small group of supporters (who did not include his brother Gregor, who had temporarily made his peace with Hitler) decided to confront Hitler over the Saxon affair and its implications for the future course of the party. What ensued was the now well-known debate on 21 and 22 May 1930 between Hitler and Strasser, preserved for posterity in the latter's memoirs. They contain the most candid remarks ever put on record by Hitler about the Nazi leadership's attitude to big business, socialism and the working class:

OS: You want to strangle the social revolution for the sake of legality and your collaboration with the bourgeois parties of the right.

AH: ... Your kind of socialism is nothing but Marxism. The mass of the working classes want nothing but bread and games. They will never understand the meaning of an ideal, *and we cannot hope to win them to one...* There is only one possible kind of revolution, and it is not economic, or political or social, but racial, and it will always be the same; *the struggle of inferior classes and races against the superior races who are in the saddle...* What I want is a picked number from the new ruling classes who... are not troubled with humanitarian feelings, but who are convinced that

they have the right to rule as being a superior race, *and who will secure and maintain their rule ruthlessly over the broad masses...*

OS: Are you convinced, as I am, that our revolution must be a total one in the political, economic and social spheres? Do you envisage a revolution which opposes Marxism as energetically as capitalism? Do you consequently admit that our propaganda should attack both equally in order to obtain German socialism?

AH: It is Marxism... In fact, it's Bolshevism. Democracy has laid the world in ruins and nevertheless you want to extend it to the economic sphere. [The same theme already encountered in *Mein Kampf* and Hitler's addresses to business leaders, where he upheld 'personality' in economics and politics - RB] It would be the end of the German economy. [Strasser says that at this point: 'Hitler launched into a long tirade in which he tried to prove that capitalism did not exist, that the idea of autarchy is nothing but madness (this being the policy of the Strasser group)... and finally that nationalisation or socialisation... was nothing but... Bolshevism.']

OS: Let us assume, Herr Hitler, that you came to power. What would you do about Krupps? Would you leave it alone or not?

AH: Of course I should leave it alone... Do you think me crazy enough to want to ruin Germany's greatest industry?

OS: If you wish to preserve the capitalist regime, Herr Hitler, you have no right to talk of socialism. For our supporters are socialists, and your programme demands the socialisation of private enterprise.

AH: That word 'socialism' is the trouble... I have never said that all enterprises should be socialised. On the contrary, I have maintained that we might socialise enterprises prejudicial to the interests of the nation. Unless they were so guilty, I should consider it a crime to destroy essential elements in our economic life. Take Italian Fascism. Our National Socialist state, like the Fascist state, will safeguard both employers' and workers' interests while reserving the right of arbitration in a dispute.

OS: But under [Italian] Fascism the problem of labour and capital remains unsolved. It has not even been tackled. It has merely been temporarily stifled. Capitalism has remained intact, just as you propose to leave it intact.

AH: ... There is only one economic system, *and that is responsibility and authority on the part of directors and executives*. That is how it has been for thousands of years, and that is how it will always be. *Profit-sharing and the workers' right to be consulted are Marxist principles*. I consider that the right to exercise influence on private enterprise should be conceded only to the state, *directed by the superior class... The capitalists have worked their way to the top through their capacity, and on the basis of this selection, which again only proves their higher race, they have a right to lead*. Now you want an incapable government council or works council, which has no notion of anything, to have a say; *no leader in economic life would tolerate it*.^[3]

Rather self-flatteringly, Strasser recalls that Hitler:

... relieved of the millstone represented by the real revolutionaries among his followers, sailed full steam ahead towards the reactionary forces of the old regime. Nothing was left to stop him from contracting a close alliance with capitalism and heavy industry... Thyssen was a harbinger, the first swallow announcing the spring. The prize he was really after were Hugenberg and Schacht.^[4]

Strasser gives some revealing details about the way Hitler finally managed to gain entry through the door of big business and high finance; not to speak of the terms on which it was opened:

One man in his [Hugenberg's] confidence was Councillor Bang [Pan-German leader] of Dresden, one of the industrial leaders who had issued the ultimatum to Hitler [on the Saxony strike]. This man was also in contact with the Führer. The councillor adroitly brought the two together. Schacht and Hitler were brought together in similar fashion. Dr Schacht had recently left the DDP because of his opposition to the expropriation of the princes and, unknown to the party, a meeting between Schacht and Hitler took place a little later. [the meeting took place in Goering's Berlin home, provided for out of funds supplied by Thyssen - RB] ... We later learned that Schacht had

made his cooperation with Hitler dependent upon the latter's sacrificing the Strasser brothers. The road was thus cleared, or very nearly cleared. ^[5]

But not quite, for there still existed several strong barriers - objective and subjective - preventing Hitler from consummating his strategy of aligning the Nazi movement with the interests of big business. Subjective, because many industrialists and bankers still took seriously the 'socialist' aspects of the Nazi programme, while others - even those who had secretly financed and supported the party in the pre-election period - now feared that the sheer magnitude of Hitler's success on 14 September would enable him to take up a more independent political stance and press yet harder for the ousting of the old bourgeois parties and leaders - a step that not even Thyssen or Kirdorf were as yet ready to countenance. Finally, big business feared that the workers' movement would close its ranks in the face of the Nazi menace, and that either the Social Democrats would be driven into total opposition (forming a bloc with the KPD) or that, if the SPD continued to cling to the ghost of the liberal bourgeoisie, the party's working-class base would go over *en masse* to the KPD. The German bourgeoisie had Müller and Thälmann (supported, needless to say, by the formidable authority of Stalin and the entire Comintern apparatus) to thank that neither dreaded alternative came to pass. But just as a considerable section of the bourgeoisie failed to grasp the class essence and counter-revolutionary role of fascism, so too did others in the ruling class mistake the KPD's bellicose adventurism and leftist-inspired attacks on Social Democracy for genuine Communist policy and tactics. These impressionist moods and reactions greatly influenced the conduct of the German - and indeed international - bourgeoisie in the immediate aftermath of the elections.

No sooner were the elections results known than *Geheimrat* Kastl of the Federation of German Industries, a man who had been pressing harder than most since the beginning of the economic crisis for a complete reversal of the SPD's reformist policies, expressed to business and political colleagues his 'concern about further political developments', and informed the Chancellor that the Federation (many of whose members only a few days before had been demanding that he renounce the support of the SPD in the Reichstag) considered that Brüning should widen the basis of his government - not, as one might have been led to expect, by seeking agreement with the 'National Opposition' but 'in cooperation with the Left'. And only a week later, Papen wrote to Schleicher (both of whom desired a government leaning to the far right) that 'the bankers are clamouring at Brüning's door - and mostly those who gave election money to the Nazis are wailing now for the immediate formation of the Grand [Weimar] coalition'.

The run-of-the-mill German businessman, who until the crisis had relied on one or other of the main bourgeois parties to represent and defend his interests, was utterly bewildered by the election results of 14 September. He was capable neither of comprehending the titanic social contradictions refracted in the stupendous rise of the Nazi vote, nor of grasping how such a movement as Hitler's, with all its extreme social demagoguery and attacks on the world of business, could still be employed to crush the enemies of capitalism. On the Berlin stock exchange, where share prices had been declining steadily for the last two years, panic set in, with the Reichsbank losing 10 points in a matter of days. Other shares hit by the political crisis included IG Farben (six points) and Siemens (seven). The recall of foreign loans, which had of course been under way since the crash of October 1929, now accelerated as overseas investors took fright at the possible implications of the Nazi success. Neither were these fears due solely to the magnitude of the Nazi vote on 14 September. Nine days later, there opened at the Supreme Court in Leipzig the trial of the three young officers arrested earlier in the year for pro-Nazi activities - Scheringer, Ludin and Wendt. Called as a witness by the defence lawyer Hans Frank (later to serve Hitler as the butcher of occupied Poland), Hitler was pressed by the President of the Court to define the often-used Nazi term 'national revolution'. Here Hitler had to tread warily. For his supporters in the business world and the monarchist right, it meant purely the destruction of Marxism and the entire workers' movement, the restoration of the monarchy and a return to the imperialist policies of the Hohenzollerns. But for the millions of 'small people' who had rallied with such fanatical zeal to the Nazi banner in the previous weeks and months, the 'national revolution' meant jobs, the protection of small property, action against the big banks and department stores as well as the organisations of the working class. Hitler had to walk the tightrope between these two conceptions, and he did so with all the skill of a consummate and experienced demagogue. Legality and revolution; respect for the constitution and the destruction of the 'system' on which it rested; loyalty to the army and its permeation by Nazi ideology - Hitler reconciled them all:

I have always held the view that every attempt to disintegrate the army was madness. None of us has any interest in such disintegration. We will see to it that when we have come to power, out of the present Reichswehr shall rise the great army of the German people. There are thousands of young men in the army of the same opinion... Our movement does not require violence. If we have two or three more elections the National Socialist movement will have the majority in the Reichstag and then we shall make the National Revolution. [Its]... concept is always taken in a purely political sense, but for National Socialists this means exclusively a rescuing of the enslaved German nation we have today...

At this juncture, the President of the Court reminded Hitler of a remark made during the Ruhr occupation, when the Nazi chief had warned that one day, 'heads would roll in the sand', and asked him to reconcile this with his claims of legality. Hitler replied:

I can assure you that when the National Socialist movement is victorious in its fights, then there will come a National Socialist court of justice, then November 1918 will find its retribution and then heads will roll.

At which pledge the Nazi-packed public galleries erupted in frenzied applause. Hitler had found the perfect formula - the legal 'national revolution' and then the equally legal massacre of those responsible for the 'November crime' - the leaders and activists of the German labour movement. And this in fact proved to be the course taken by the Nazis towards their seizure and consolidation of power. But in the autumn months of 1930, few in the ruling class could be expected to believe him. They saw only the brown-shirted hordes howling for the blood of bankers and Weimar politicians. Neither were they reassured by the conduct of the party on the reopening of the Reichstag on 14 October. Under orders to stage a rowdy demonstration of contempt for the ruling body of the hated 'system' (for it was this hatred that had, paradoxically, thrust the 107 Nazi deputies into the Reichstag), the NSDAP fraction hooted, screamed and whistled their abuse at the leading representatives of the government parties, and even jostled Carl Severing of the SPD. Even more horrifying for the staid monarchist right was Feder's Bill, couched in the classic language of the 'struggle against the thralldom of interest', calling for the expropriation of the 'bank and stock exchange princes', the nationalisation of all large banks, the limitation of interest rates to four per cent, and, as a 'national' touch, the expropriation of all 'eastern Jews' and all 'persons of foreign race in general'. Was it for this that Hugenberg and his monarchist brood had joined with Hitler in the National Opposition? Had bankers and industrialists been doling out their subsidies to Hitler now to discover that, far from fighting the Marxists, he and his movement had joined and even surpassed them in their radicalism? ^[6]

Obviously themselves disturbed at the largely hostile reaction of the business community to their election victory, the Nazi leaders immediately set out to reassure it that only National Socialism had prevented a far greater increase in support for Communism. Industry and finance had to learn that Nazi demagoguery directed against capitalism was now becoming a condition of its survival:

If we were to imagine a Reichstag without the 107 elected National Socialist deputies the consequences would not be an increased mandate of 107 voters for the Brüning coalition, but instead of the 107 National Socialists *there would be at least 200 Red and Communist comrades in the Reichstag... Having considered this possibility is to be put to the credit of the National Socialists alone.* ^[7]

Not all business circles reacted in this panicky fashion. The *Bergwerkszeitung*, organ of Ruhr heavy industry, was as opposed as ever to a return of the Social Democrats to the government. Commenting on the lessons of the elections results, it said:

The broadest segments of the population (first and foremost the bourgeoisie) wish not parliamentary tactics but action; they want not parliamentary impotence, but unqualified clarity, and this even of the hard variety. They have served notice that they want to know nothing of complex deliberation, of 'problems', and the like. What they want is a train of thought and the kind of slogans that are absolutely simple and, precisely for this reason, will enable them to see the underlying causes. The elections were prompted by the economic problem. The present Reichstag will confront the question whether socialist or capitalist thought is to prevail in Germany... The industrialists have no choice but to apply their greatly enhanced political dynamism... *which must be manifested above all in the dynamism of a strong personality.* [Emphasis added]

Speaking for those industrial interests where Hitler had secured his firmest footing, the paper invited the Nazis to join the ranks of the anti-Marxist front of the bourgeois parties:

This [invitation] applies equally to the party which scored the biggest success in the last elections, which will therefore, according to parliamentary procedure [sic!], be inducted into the new government and which has already declared its consent. The latest elections showed that National Socialism recruits its forces not from socialism, but from the [petit] bourgeoisie. The sooner National Socialism is politically enlisted to assume responsibility, the greater will be the chances of keeping it within politically tolerable bounds. If, on the other hand, no responsibility is placed on it... it will sooner or later gain still greater success, and will hardly be able to assume political responsibilities without a grave upheaval, for then the party will, at least externally [NB], have to become a revolutionary party, whereas now it can still adopt a conservative stance.

The usually pro-DVP *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* was also sanguine about the sudden emergence of the Nazis as a national force contending for power:

No new compromises and no endless talk about coalitions, which cause nothing but indignation among the broad, not even National Socialist, circles, and are sure to whip up still more hatred (if this is at all possible) of everything to do with parliament. What we need are firm and effective reforms. The lesson of the elections, the elections of national protest... can only be the following: effect reforms not only against the Social Democrats, who have shown conclusively their opposition to these reforms and are now in dread of the Communists, but reforms against parties generally and against parliament. The National Socialists are captives of their own agitation. It would be better for them to have entered the Reichstag in lesser numbers. With 50 or 60 seats they could depart more easily from their line, at least in economic matters... [However]... many voted for the National Socialists because they were sure their socialism should not be taken too seriously. Indeed, if the National Socialists come to power, the socialist aspect will be quickly jettisoned.

And one banker not begging for the return of the Grand Coalition was Hjalmar Schacht. Out in the political wilderness since 1926, when his party's support for the KPD - SPD referendum on the expropriation of the princes led to his resignation from the DDP on the grounds that it had deserted the sacred cause of defending private property, and for the previous six months, a vehement critic of government economic and financial policy, which he considered to be far too conciliatory towards the working class, the former Reichsbank President was among the first to grasp the real significance of the Nazi victory on 14 September.

Schacht was in London *en route* to the United States when he heard the news of Hitler's staggering success at the polls. He recalls that he was 'astounded' at the Nazi performance since he had previously 'taken hardly any notice of the National Socialist movement'.^[8] That was a state of affairs Schacht soon remedied. Meanwhile, during his speaking tour of the USA, where he addressed meetings of businessmen and politicians on Germany's economic problems, he let it be known that the rapid growth of Nazism in that country was greatly due to the Allied powers' reparations policy. Schacht had therefore already appreciated how the Nazis could be used as a threat to pressurise Britain, France and the USA into relaxing their financial grip on the German economy. It did not take him much longer to see that the NSDAP was an even more effective means of counteracting the still quite powerful influence of the SPD on the Brüning government, which of course relied on Social Democratic support in the Reichstag. Schacht's political views and economic programme on the eve of his first meeting with Hitler are faithfully recorded in his book *The End of Reparations*, this being based on the 50 or so lectures Schacht gave during his tour of the USA:

The mass lacks the initiative which the individual puts forth. That is why the masses are so eager to follow a real leader. The Social Democratic system attempts in vain to replace the individual sense of responsibility and initiative by a bureaucratic body of officials... For industry this means that the inspiring struggle to obtain the maximum product and the maximum economic success gives way to the ruinous thought of crawling to public charity... This Marxist system affects not only the material but the moral foundations of human society... Men who hope to rise and make themselves count as a result of distinctive achievement become indifferent workers who insist upon their political guaranteed rights... The sense of duty to work, the impulse to save, in short that which makes a nation great and exists in every healthy human being - this... socialism kills. This will to save is weakened, the impulse to squander money extravagantly is fortified... The

more the political domination of the socialist trade unions succeeded, by the wage agreement system, in equalising wages, the more emphatically the employers demanded that wages should correspond to actual performance. ^[9]

Such ruggedly 'social Darwinian' views were remarkably close to those of Hitler, who both in *Mein Kampf* and in his speeches to businessmen repeatedly emphasised the virtues of 'personality' and the harsh ethic of the 'survival of the fittest' in economic as well as political life. In this book, Schacht posed quite sharply the alternatives before Germany. The future lay with one or other of the two movements which were gaining from the consequences of the economic crisis. He saw quite clearly that the era when the Social Democrats would exert pressure on a government through their domination of the working class and their strong position in the Reichstag was drawing to an end. But - publicly at least - Schacht did not propose an alternative to a government relying on the support of the SPD. He instead pointed out the dangers implicit in a policy which ignored the revolt against the Weimar system:

Part of the SPD still believes that by manipulating the power of the state it can still maintain its system of special privileges, but the conviction is spreading through the working class and in the expropriated middle class that this [that is, reparations] is a problem of life and death for every individual, particularly for the man of small means; Communists and National Socialists are competing in the effort to exploit this feeling politically and are attacking the privileged Social Democratic trade union bureaucracy. To meet such a movement with military force would be to risk arousing forces of which any responsible and thoughtful political leader may well be afraid. ^[10]

Schacht demonstrates here how far ahead he was of the vast majority of the German business community at this time. He not only desired an end to Social Democratic influence over government policies, regional authorities and the administration of the economy in all its aspects: this he shared with thousands of bankers and industrialists. He also understood why the era of German reformism had drawn to an end, and the nature of the forces - both from the far right as well as the Communist left - that were squeezing it out of its last footholds of power. The Social Democratic and trade union bureaucracy was, with the onset of the crisis, under attack simultaneously from the radicalised proletariat and the newly politicised but highly reactionary petit-bourgeoisie - those of 'small means'. Having indicated the polarities of the range of options open to the German bourgeoisie, Schacht made his own choice at the end of 1930. The approach from Hitler came from an old colleague of Schacht's at the Deutsche Bank, von Stauss, who was already converted to the Nazi cause. Schacht recalls that Stauss:

... asked me to a dinner one evening to which he has also invited Hermann Goering. I was naturally very pleased to have the opportunity of meeting one of the foremost leaders of the National Socialist movement. This dinner of three discussed the universally burning topics of the economic situation, the rising unemployment figures [now at an horrendous four million - RB], the timidity [sic!] of German foreign policy and all the other relevant questions. Goering turned out to be a pleasant, urbane companion... I could not possibly have deduced from the conversation anything that might have been described as an irreconcilable or intolerable political radicalism. Consequently when, not long afterwards, I received an invitation to dinner from Hermann Goering and his wife, I had no scruples about accepting, particularly as the invitation was accompanied by a note to the effect that Adolf Hitler would be there. ^[11]

This was to prove a truly historic meeting. But first let us put the record straight on Schacht's claim that Goering gave no hint of his movement's 'intolerable political radicalism'. This was scarcely necessary, since the banker was already well acquainted with the policies and philosophy of the Nazi party's leader, as he admitted in a testimony to the Nuremberg war crimes tribunal:

When in the elections of September 1930 Hitler's party suddenly and surprisingly obtained 108 seats [actually 107], I began to take an interest in the phenomenon [sic!] and on board ship going to the United States I read *Mein Kampf* and, of course, also the Party Programme. ^[12]

Hitler was, therefore, no political stranger to Schacht when the two met for the first time in Goering's Berlin flat on 5 January 1931. Schacht later gave three accounts of this meeting - one to the International Military Tribunal, another in his *apologia, Account Settled* (1949) and a third in his autobiographical *My First Seventy-Six Years* (1955). In the most recent, he simply says that Hitler's 'ideas were not unreasonable and were entirely free from propaganda pathos', ^[13] while in his earlier book, we learn just a little bit more, that Hitler's two-hour speech 'contained nothing calculated to shock us' and that 'everything he said revolved around the two points which were closest to the hearts of all Germans,

namely the recovery of political equality with foreign nations and the problem of how to provide the 6.5 million [unemployed] with work'. ^[14] Under pressure at Nuremberg, however, Schacht was more forthcoming. True, Hitler's programme was close, if not to the hearts of all Germans, then certainly to bankers like Schacht and industrialists such as Thyssen. Neither indeed would these same business interests regard what Hitler proposed as 'unreasonable'. But what Hitler in fact declared as the goal of his movement was not simply equality with other nations, nor the 'solution' of the unemployment problem:

In social questions Hitler expressed a number of good ideas; he was especially intent on avoiding class struggle and on *eliminating strikes*, lock-outs and wage disputes by decisive intervention of the state in *labour relations and the direction of economic affairs*. *There was no demand for abolishing private enterprise, but merely for influence in its conduct*. It seemed to us these ideas were quite reasonable and acceptable... Hitler... asked that we as representatives of economy should have understanding for his ideas *and give him practical advice*. ^[15]

Schacht and Thyssen did just that. Schacht says that:

... following the experience of this evening I took the opportunity during the ensuing weeks of urging the Chancellor and other politicians with whom I was in touch to incorporate the National Socialists in a coalition government as soon as possible. Only thus, it seemed to me, could the complete transfer of power into the hands of this radical right-wing movement be avoided. In a coalition... National Socialism might have been kept within reasonable bounds by having to share the responsibilities of government. ^[16]

'Domesticating' the Nazis was also the goal of Thyssen at this juncture, since the big business revolt against Brüning and his reliance on the Social Democrats lay some months ahead. However the Nazi leaders, especially the ex-radical Goebbels, were wary of drawing too close to a politician who, for their millions of newly-won supporters, symbolised the hated Weimar 'system'. Thyssen recalls that the Nazis were:

... willing to tolerate Brüning [that is, perform the same function as was currently being undertaken by the SPD - RB] if the Chancellor would be prepared to say that he would part company with the socialists. Josef Goebbels at that time said: 'If Brüning breaks with the socialists we will support him without entering the cabinet.' That should have been done, but the offer was refused. ^[17]

Could the Bonapartist nature of Brüning's regime have been illustrated more succinctly? The Chancellor's cabinet, standing on the narrow foundations of a confessional party itself the amalgam of hostile class forces and political tendencies, clung onto power for as long as Brüning could succeed in playing off his support on the left - the crisis-ridden Social Democrats - against the growing Nazi menace on the right. It was a cunning game, but left out of account the rapidly deepening economic crisis, with its consequent effects on the already deeply distressed petit-bourgeoisie and industrial working class. These two massive social layers, between them comprising more than 90 per cent of the German population, faced each other as mortal enemies (not because of any objective incompatibility between their social interests, but through the utter bankruptcy of the leadership of the workers' movement, which proved itself totally unable to convince the middle class of its ability to solve the problems of the petit-bourgeoisie). Beyond a certain, though unpredictable point, the further growth of one - or indeed both - of these poles would compel a drastic change of course at the top of the Bonapartist pyramid. Instead of a regime leaning on the reformist left, the leaders of the economy would demand one that rested to one degree or another on the extra-parliamentary as well as parliamentary forces of the extreme right which, after the elections of 14 September, meant primarily the Nazis. This was the significance of Schacht's meeting with Hitler at the beginning of 1931, for that year was to witness not only the severest crisis in the history of German banking and a continued growth of the NSDAP, but the formation, on a much broader and more menacing scale, of the National Opposition which first saw light of day two years previously in the campaign for the Young Plan referendum.

Others in the world of business had already been active on behalf of the Nazi cause some years before Schacht. Apart from Thyssen, Borsig, Kirdorf and Mutschmann, there was Wilhelm Keppler, who joined the party in the spring of 1927. A manufacturer with a wide circle of contacts in industry and finance, he from quite early on acted as unofficial adviser to Hitler on economic questions, gradually usurping Feder, whose conception of National Socialism was too radical for many prospective supporters of the NSDAP. Keppler was entrusted with the task of winning them over, as he explained at the Nuremberg Trials:

I met the Führer in the fall of that year [1927] when he visited me. I told the Führer at that time that the economic programme of the Party and their ideas were not to my liking, and that I thought it suitable that they should be altered. If I, in spite of it, had become a member of the Party, this had been for different reasons, particularly social-political reasons. This criticism of the economic work I often repeated to the Führer... The position of business toward the Party was rather sceptical. The Führer had tried during the years 1927-28... through lectures before industrialists in the Ruhr, to find more understanding for his economic programme. These efforts were not very successful. First of all the lecture halls remained empty, later on they were overcrowded, the enthusiasm during the lectures was also there but it never lasted very long. Suspicion against the Party was caused to a great extent by the fact that these industrialists were also of the opinion that the economic programme of the Party did not allow success to be anticipated. So, when I approached these members of industry and economy and told them quite frankly that the Führer had ordered me to reconsider all economic questions and asked whether they were prepared to give me their advice, there was a definite sense of relief among those industrialists. ^[18]

Keppler's appointment as mediator between the party and big business dates from the autumn of 1931, ^[19] at a time when large numbers of prominent industrialists and bankers, exasperated with Brüning's inability to sever his last tenuous links with the SPD, were pressing for the formation of a government of 'National Concentration'. But even in the early months of that year, there were clear signs that Brüning was losing the support of important sections of the business community. Addressing a meeting of Saxon industrialists in Chemnitz on 23 January, Brüning found himself heckled by a clique of pro-Nazi employers who vociferously demanded a 'change of system'. His retort that such a 'change of system' was 'already being carried out in Germany' utterly failed to temper their charge that the Chancellor was capitulating to the Social Democrats (and this was the government the KPD had designated as being fully fascist!). Not that Brüning attempted to play down the depth and extent of the crisis. Two weeks earlier, in a speech at Ratibor on 9 January, he admitted that after the September elections, 'a panic mood had been called forth with the result that in the autumn and winter, the state economy for months long hovered between life and death. Hitherto it has been necessary to keep silent regarding this, but now it must be proclaimed openly.' All this was grist to the mill of the Nazis and them alone, since a weakening of Brüning's grip on the political situation would turn the eyes of the bourgeoisie and Junkers towards the only viable alternative to the prevailing leftward-leaning, semi-Bonapartist cabinet - one that leant decisively towards the far right. With party membership running at about 400 000 (more than thrice the KPD, and nearly half the SPD) and with a rapidly swelling street army, the SA, 1931 was obviously going to prove a fruitful year for Hitler if the workers' parties continued on their current courses of rampant opportunism and ultra-left adventurism. Lending strength to Hitler's challenge was the split in the leadership of Brüning's own party, where von Papen was becoming increasingly disgruntled with the Chancellor's policy of working within the Weimar party framework. Like many others of his ilk who later conspired to bring Brüning down, von Papen was initially quite sanguine about the political prospects for the government which followed the fall of Müller:

Now that the Socialists had withdrawn their support from the coalition, the new Prime Minister should have sought his majority in combination with the right-wing parties... Dr Brüning was not prepared to adopt this approach because he feared having the Socialists in opposition at a period of economic crisis... Dr Schacht... had pleaded with Brüning in... February [1931] to take the Nazis into coalition. Such coalitions existed in Thuringia, Brunswick and Oldenburg, where the Nazis had had to temper their programme to that of their coalition colleagues. There was no good reason why this could not be done in the Federal Government. Brüning does not appear even to have considered this possibility. He preferred to make the fate of his government dependent entirely on the attitude of the Social Democrats and resisted every suggestion of a coalition with the right. ^[20]

While von Papen was busy undermining Brüning's government inside the Centre and among his old army friends and Junker acquaintances, Walther Funk, editor of the *Berliner Börsen Zeitung*, was doing precisely the same thing in industrial circles, thereby supplementing the parallel efforts of Schacht amongst his banking colleagues, and the explanatory activities of Keppler. His Nuremberg testimony on this question provides perhaps the most comprehensive account of the relations that were developing between the Nazis and big business at this time, and for this reason is reproduced nearly in its entirety:

Funk: Since the middle of 1931 I headed an economic-political information service and before that for 15 years was editor-in-chief of the *Berliner Börsen Zeitung*. I headed the *Economic and Political Service* at the request of German industry and economy and joined the party in 1931... It (the service) was mainly for leading people of leading offices. I was press chief in the office for only seven months and then took over as [Nazi] party press chief.

Question: Were you asked to become liaison in the Ministry of Economics [presumably of a future Nazi-dominated regime]?

Funk: A wide circle of industries, mainly coal and mining people and especially certain organisations called Bergbauverein in Essen.

Question: What are the names of the people who asked you?

Funk: Albert Vögler [of] Vereinigte Stahlwerke, Knepper [of] Gelsenkircher Bergwerksverein.

Question: Was IG Farben [the chemical trust] on your list?

Funk: All mining companies. [IG had a coal mining interest in the Flick trust - RB]

Question: Name the individuals with whom you had contacts.

Funk: Thyssen... Peter Klockner, had old mining industry. Diehn [of the] Kalisyndicat [Potash syndicate]. Rosterg [of] Wintershalls. [Funk also named Krupps - RB] They approached me. When I was editor-in-chief of the Berlin paper, people approached me saying they wanted someone to exert economic and political influence in the new party which they assumed would eventually gain power in Germany - but these people were in doubt as to the economic aims of the party and wanted them clarified. I was in touch with the party men in Munich - Gregor Strasser and later Hitler.

Question: Did you get a contribution from the industries for the Nazi Party? ^[21]

Funk: Not directly but whenever I put these people in touch with Hitler - then there would be a conference with Hess or someone and they would organise collections for the party. It was only in some instances during the elections in 1932 [the Reichstag elections of November 1932 - RB] when the party was seriously financially embarrassed that they would contact me and I would obtain initial funds for the party from industries.

Question: How much?

Funk: In three or four cases where direct intervention was sought, the total was approximately half a million marks.

Question: Were there any other funds or gifts for the party from industry?

Funk: No, they were always for Hitler - they went through [his deputy] Hess.

Question: What position did you hold in the party?

Funk: ... I was recognised as the economic adviser of the party. Before I joined, the paper [the Nazi *Economic and Political Service*] was relatively small and since I had a well-known name [with the *Berliner Börsen Zeitung*] a good many industrialists started to subscribe. The paper was owned by a Nazi, Dr Wagener, who held some sort of economic position with the Nazi party. I think there were approximately 60 [subscribers in industry] but they paid very well. ^[22]

Funk then explains how with varying degrees of success he began to detach business leaders from their loyalties (which in many cases were already nearing breaking point) to the traditional parties of the German bourgeoisie. Once again, we note that this activity, while reaching a climax in the last months of the Weimar Republic, began on a large scale in early 1931, following the conversion of Schacht:

The economic circles with which I was mainly connected belonged... predominantly to the DVP, the DNVP and the DDP. August Heinrichsbauer in Essen, who I had known as editor of an economic publication, introduced me to [SS] Oberlieutenant Schatz who played a role in the party as closest helper of Gregor Strasser, to whom he introduced me personally. Strasser, Schatz, Heinrichsbauer and his friends in industry, especially the leading personalities of the Association for mining interests in the Rhineland and Westphalia ^[23] [the so-called 'long name association' - RB] strengthened me in my decision to enter the NSDAP in order to persuade the party to follow the cause of private enterprise. At that time the leadership of the party held completely contradictory and confused views on economic policy (Feder, Wagener, Keppler). I tried to accomplish my mission, by personally impressing on the Führer and the party as a whole that

private enterprise, self-reliance of the businessman, that is, the creative powers of free enterprise, be recognised as the basic economic policy of the party. The Führer stressed time and again during talks with me and industrial leaders, to whom I had introduced him, that he was an enemy of state-economy and of so-called 'planned economy' and that he considered free enterprise and competition as absolutely necessary in order to gain the highest possible production. My industrial friends and I were convinced in those days that the NSDAP would come to power in the not too distant future and that this *had* [emphasis in original] to be if Communism and civil war were to be avoided.

At that time (early 1931) I learned of the existence of friendly relations between Dr Emil Kirdorf, the leading personality of the Ruhr coal industry, and the Führer... Through Kirdorf and later Fritz Thyssen the Führer was introduced to influential Rhenish-Westphalian industrial circles who supported the party financially. Among the Rhenish-Westphalian industries the following men (among others) stayed aloof during the early days (1931-32), Krupp, Peter Klinker, Reusch... Definitely in favour of National Socialism [at this time] were besides Kirdorf, his nephew Kauert, Thyssen, Tengelmann, Springorum, Vögler, Knepper, Winkhaus, Buskuhl, Kellerman... In the IG Farbenindustrie, the following were liaison men to the party: Director von Schnitzler and Dr Gattineau who was the private secretary of *Geheimrat* Duisberg. I personally after an hour-long discussion [at the IG Plant] at Leverkusen, won over *Geheimrat* Duisberg [the one-time exponent of close collaboration with... organised labour! - RB] to an attitude toward the NSDAP that at least could be termed neutral. Director von Winterfeld tried to obtain understanding for the party at Siemens [electrical combine] whose management was [like IG] DDP. The AEG [also DDP] stood aloof. ^[24]

From this account it is evident that the quickest and greatest successes were won in the centre of German heavy industry - the Rhine-Westphalian region - and that the going was far harder and slower in other centres where either the residues of a more liberal political tradition were more resistant to erosion by the crisis, or where the nature of industry itself, oriented more towards the consumer market, rendered it less susceptible to the ultra-imperialist and bitterly anti-labour policies of heavy industry. Bankers stood in the main somewhere between these two extremes:

The large industrial enterprises in central Germany had a definitely reserved attitude in those days. It was possible for the Führer to win to his side parts of these circles with an address at a meeting of leading personalities of the central brown coal industries (Deutsche Erdael, Brebag, Leopold, Anhaltsche Kohlenwerke). The potassium industry under the leadership of Rosterg and Diehn already at that time had a positive attitude toward the Führer and the party. Baron von Schröder (Cologne) had the closest relations to the party in the banking world. His senior chief Stein was a friend of Dr Schacht. I introduced Dr Otto Fischer (Deutsche Credit Gesellschaft) and Friedrich Reinhart (Commerzbank) to the Führer personally. Dr von Strauss of the Deutsche Bank had connections with the Führer, Goering and Goebbels [which, as we have seen, brought Schacht towards the party - RB]. Late in 1931 or early in 1932 I was visited by Dr Schacht who told me that he had joined the party as he too was convinced that the NSDAP would soon take control of Germany. Schacht, who at that time was working with Dr von Strauss, had already made personal contacts with Goering. He again had contact with Dr Schmitt and Hilgard of the Allianz Insurance Corporation and the Munich Corporation (Reinsurance). I introduced Schmitt and Hilgard, as well as Dr Kubbert of the Verkehers AG and the Baugesellschaft Lenz and Co, to the Führer. Hamburg shipping circles under [former Chancellor] Cuno [Hamburg-America Line] and commercial circles in Bremen under Roselius also had relations to the party. The powerful Cologne industrialist and businessman Otto Wolf [linked to the Flick steel trust] supported the party financially through Dr Ley. Individual provincial party leaders probably had their own connections with concerns within their territory [Gaus] that is, Rust-Hanover - with Conti-Rubber: Murr-Stuttgart - with Krehn-Trossingern... Wilhelm Keppler, who later became State Secretary and who served as economic adviser to the Führer for many years before me, assembled a special circle of industrialists, but also with Krupp and concerns in Hanover, and he also knew Baron von Schröder (Cologne). He participated in the famous F von Papen meeting held with Schröder and was also founder of the [SS] Reichsführer Himmler's organisation 'Friends of the Economy'. ^[25] Other members of the organisation were Krahnfuss, who with Keppler's friends (Rasche, Maier and Luer) dominated the Dresdner Bank and who later became

general director of the Brebag. The fuel products of the entire brown coal industry were included in the Brebag. ^[26]

On another occasion, Funk added more names to this already impressive list.

Question: What were the industries which you represented in your negotiations with the Nazi Party in 1931?

Funk: Represented is not the word. It would be better to say, which of the circle of industrial people urged me to enter the Nazi Party [on their behalf]. Especially those from the mining industry. Knepper, in the coal industry, Kellerman, Vögler, Tengemann, Diehm, Rosterg, also some businessmen from banking contingents such as Fischer, Reinhardt, from insurance companies Schmidt, Hilgard, Winterfeld (Siemens), Pönsen (United Steel Works [Flick combine]), Duisberg (IG Farben), Kastl [who had after the September 1930 elections, taken fright at the Nazi success and called for a return to the grand coalition! - RB], Herle (Federation of German Industries).

Question: Who, besides you and Schacht, were negotiating with industry for support of the Nazi Party prior to 1933?

Funk: Secretary of State Keppler. He worked in Cologne area with Schröder... Heinrichsbauer in the Ruhr industry (Essen). That's all. ^[27]

Hitler and the Bank Crisis

To appreciate fully the enormity of the crisis which brought German capitalism to its knees in the summer of 1931 (thereby creating the political as well as economic conditions for the strengthening of ties between big business and National Socialism) we have first to retrace our steps to the spring of the previous year, when the new Brüning government took its first tentative steps towards implementing the 'reforms' being vociferously demanded by industry and the banks. On 12 April 1930, with unemployment running at about two million, and a wave of farm bankruptcies threatening to devastate entire sectors of German agriculture, Brüning chose simultaneously to hit the working class and to bolster the agrarians by opting for a policy of protectionism, which necessarily involved higher food prices. Then on 7 July, and again by Presidential decree, Brüning further deflated an already rapidly contracting economy by slashing expenditure on the unemployment insurance fund by 100 million marks. Other savings were effected through increasing various direct and indirect taxes. But even these measures, severe though they were, made scant impact on the colossal unemployment insurance fund deficit, now running at 750 million marks, and the public works fund deficit, which stood at 100 million marks. In fact each deflationary measure enacted by Brüning (a policy partly attributable to the haunting memories of the 1923 inflation, which most economic experts were determined to avoid at all costs) quickly proved counter-productive in these spheres since they led to an increase in the number of workers without jobs and a consequent rise in the numbers of those seeking various forms of relief benefits. So on 1 December 1930, with the jobless figures now double the level of a year previously, Brüning once again resorted to article 48 ^[28] in securing President Hindenburg's approval of a further batch of deflationary emergency measures, involving not only cuts in dole payments and categories of workers entitled to them, but increases in insurance contributions and reductions in wages. Thus spending powers were greatly reduced, leading directly to an accelerated decline in production of consumer goods and an even more catastrophic drop in output in heavy industry, which supplied the consumer goods industry with its means of production and raw materials. With the rapid contraction of world demand hitting German exports, Ruhr industry was on the verge of grinding to a total halt. Under-utilisation of capacity, always a problem for heavy industry with its proportionally high fixed costs as compared with light and medium industry, now became chronic, as the following table illustrates:

	1929	1932
Industry as a whole	67	36
Production of means of production	68	30
Production of means of consumption	67	43
Production of iron and steel	80	35

Production of non-ferrous metals	78	35
Engineering	68	27
Textiles	72	50
Superphosphates	53	40
Nitrogen	51	37

Profits had declined by much more, falling in 1930 to a mere 33 per cent of their boom peak level of 1928. The big banks, in contrast to heavy industry, had thus far survived the worst effects of the crisis. Their profits had only dropped to 69 per cent of the 1928 level, while the withdrawal of foreign (mainly US) short-term loans after the Wall Street crash had, until the panic of the September 1930 election, resulted in a loss in foreign exchange of only one million marks - a trifling sum compared with the vast quantities that were to be disgorged in the summer of 1931. However the boom-time policy of the big banks, one of reducing their liquidity ratio from the customary 10 per cent to as low as three per cent in order to facilitate loans to a capital-starved heavy industry, rendered Germany's financial structure particularly vulnerable to a depression of the type that set in from 1929. The intimate links established over the previous half century and more between the banks and industry necessarily meant that finance would share not only in the profits of the latter, but also its losses and crises. And so it proved.

The first link in the banking chain broke, not in Germany proper, but in Austria, where the prestigious Credit-Anstalt bank published, on 11 May 1931, a balance sheet revealing that the bank had over the previous financial year lost 140 million Austrian schillings - *all but five million of its total capital*. It was in effect a declaration of virtual bankruptcy, and it at once precipitated panic throughout not only Austrian banking circles, but those of Germany where, it was discovered, the Credit-Anstalt had raised short-term loans amounting to several millions of schillings; obligations which it was now clearly unable to meet.

Those German banks that had lent to the Credit-Anstalt (in the belief that its security of 145 million schillings was good) could not hope to recover these loans, let alone the interest, since the Anstalt had in its turn loaned them to industrial concerns in Austria, which (like their German counterparts and rivals) were experiencing drastic reductions in both production and profits. The news of the Anstalt's near-bankruptcy broke on 11 May 1931. The very next day, the run began on all Austrian banks, which by the end of the month had stripped the Anstalt of 25 per cent of its foreign credits. The bank's directors then went cap in hand to the national bank, which rediscounted the Anstalt's bills to avert - or at least postpone - its total insolvency and collapse. The haemorrhage was such that in three days, the National Bank of Austria's cover for the currency in gold and foreign reserves *fell from 83.5 per cent to 67.5 per cent*. That the government was prepared to take such risks to save the Credit-Anstalt is only explicable by the bank's having important holdings in almost every sector of the Austrian economy. It was in fact the country's major industrial bank. If the Anstalt was permitted to crash, it might well drag down the whole of industry with it, unleashing cataclysmic social and political turmoil. The Austrian government consequently turned abroad for aid, and on 16 June, the Bank of England forwarded a loan of 150 million schillings as a short-term measure pending more comprehensive steps to rescue the Austrian financial structure. But by this date, the crisis had ceased to be an Austrian one.

The run on the Credit-Anstalt spread at once to the German banks. Foreign investors (many already under pressure at home to meet obligations), finding that the Austrian bank was unable to honour its debts, withdrew deposits from the big German banks instead. There was also the understandable fear that the Anstalt's close connections with German finance would, sooner rather than later, lead to serious embarrassment for its Berlin business partners. Hence the panic rush to withdraw while the reserves were still available to pay out. From 11 May to the beginning of June, no less than 11 million dollars of short-term credits were withdrawn from German banks by US investors. The run accelerated in the early days of June, with the Reichsbank losing in the first week 180 million marks and in the second, 540 million. To stem the outflow, the interest rate was raised from five to seven per cent, but this proved counterproductive, since it was seen as a panic measure. On 19 and 20 June, the Reichsbank lost 150 million marks, bringing the total loss in the three weeks ending on 23 June to 974 million in foreign exchange, while its holdings of discounted bills rose to 534 marks. This outflow and increased liability brought it near to the point (forbidden under reparations agreements) *where it could no longer provide the minimum cover for the national currency*. Germany's national bank was teetering on the brink of

insolvency, just as Austria's had done a month previously. Neither was it a question of the Reichsbank alone. The Berlin 'big five' had also suffered an enormous loss of funds as a result of the panic withdrawals by foreign - mainly American - investors. For the Darmstadter und National (Danat) Bank, the crisis was shortly to terminate its independent existence, its losing 97 million marks of foreign credits. Only the Berliner Handelsgesellschaft, which had pursued a cautious policy during the boom years, escaped unscathed. The remaining four, the Danat, Deutsche Bank, Commerz und Privat and Dresdner, lost between them in May alone a total of 263 million marks. Then on 5 June appeared a press report that the Danat was bankrupt (vehemently denied, but confirmed by subsequent developments), followed on 17 June by the thunderbolt that the textile giant, the Norddeutsche Wollkammerei (Nordwolle) was insolvent. What rendered this news all the more shattering was the fact, revealed on 31 June, that the firm's largest single creditor was the Danat bank. Total liabilities amounted to 250 million marks, of which more than 40 million was owed to the Danat. Now there could be no question of the Danat meeting its own considerable debts to domestic and overseas investors. On 12 July, the Danat closed its doors, a decision explained the next day by its chairman, Jacob Goldschmidt:

The fact that the hope of foreign credits was not fulfilled, gave foreign customers cause to act according to the principle '*sauve qui peut*' [save himself who can]. This movement was further strengthened by constantly renewed rumours which, as time went on, could no longer be contested. *Originating in a political atmosphere*, the nervousness became continually greater, owing to the failure of the Nordwolle. [Emphasis added]

Meanwhile, Brüning had secured partial and temporary relief by the US President Hoover's moratorium on all German war debt payments, which became effective from 21 June. There was then a brief lull during which the withdrawal of foreign credits ceased, and, for a period of two weeks, it seemed as if the storm was abating. Then early in July, withdrawals began once more, forcing the closure of the Danat bank (which had now lost 650 million marks), with British investors now for the first time heavily involved, since many had money tied up in the bankrupted Nordwolle.

Beginning on 11 July, and with the closure of the Danat now inevitable, the Brüning government commenced a series of crisis meetings with economic leaders, diplomats and foreign government leaders. The initial upshot of these talks was that on Monday, 13 June, the government announced approval for the closure of the Danat, while refraining from intervention in other almost equally hard-pressed sectors of the banking system. Once again, this stop-gap measure further undermined confidence, since millions of small investors and savers now rushed to withdraw their deposits from the other banks while they still remained solvent or open. By the end of 13 July, the Berlin savings banks had paid out seven million marks, leaving them with a bare one million to meet the expected next day's panic rush. The petit-bourgeoisie, already in the grip of political fever that had swept them *en masse* towards National Socialism, were seething with desperation, haunted by the memories of 1923, when a breakdown in Germany's financial system had reduced them to pauperism. Brüning now had no alternative than to declare a banking holiday, while fresh attempts were made to seek international support for the tottering German economy. Brüning's first move was to introduce exchange controls, bringing all movements of foreign exchange under the control of the Reichsbank, and forbidding all dealings in precious metals. This had the immediate effect of severely reducing Germany's import bill, and therefore hit hardest those industries dependent on imported raw materials.

Then there broke the news of two more banks in difficulties - the Dresdner and the Bremen bank of JF Schröder, the latter having sustained losses with the Nordwolle. Worse still was the bank's close involvement with an important industrial concern, Deschimag, the machine tool combine. For this reason, both the Brüning government and Bremen local authorities decided to bail out the Schröder bank before the rot spread to such a strategic sector of German industry as engineering. But as fast as one hole was plugged, another appeared. On 27 July, the Ultraphon company suspended all payments to its creditors, while in Cologne the Ford works closed down through lack of orders, throwing thousands more on to an already severely curtailed unemployment relief. Brüning's next task was to rescue the Dresdner bank, now only days away from collapse. His solution was to underwrite the bank's debts by government purchase of a share issue of 300 million marks. The Danat's reprieve was brought about by the intervention of heavy industry (in which it had its largest investments), with Flick's United Steel leading a rescue bid which involved a consortium of Ruhr tycoons taking over the bank's share capital with money provided by the state. In both instances, therefore, the crisis had led to a further growing together of the banks, industry and the capitalist state (in fact, the two banks merged before the year was out,

reducing the number of big banks from five to four). Defending the government's role in the bank crisis, the Dresdner chairman declared on 28 August that state support for private banking was 'not only a question that involved the Dresdner Bank, nor the German banks alone, but perhaps of the whole system'. It is important to bear in mind that throughout this crisis, Brüning had ruled entirely by Presidential decree. The Reichstag, adjourned on 26 March with the approval of the Social Democrats, did not meet once during the entire period of the run on the big banks and the attendant business failures. The deeper the crisis, the more the centre of decision-taking and policy formulation moved away from elected bodies towards the minority cabinet of Brüning's 'experts' ^[29] and other unofficial advisers. Measures were enacted, without any attempt to seek the approval of the Reichstag, by the simple device of securing the signature of the President in accordance with Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution. This massive erosion of bourgeois democracy took place with the tacit agreement of its self-appointed custodians - the Social Democratic leaders of the SPD and the ADGB.

It was in the midst of this economic and political maelstrom that the already growing interest in and partial support for the policies and activities of the Nazi party among big business began to transform itself into something more tangible and, for the German working class, far more ominous. Brüning's rigidly deflationary policies irked heavy industry especially, ^[30] since they provided no basis for the economic expansion necessary to secure fresh contracts from its customers in other sectors of the economy. With unused capacity running in some cases as high as 70 per cent, the Ruhr barons were demanding an expansion of the economy which, at the same time, denied to labour the traditional advantages it enjoyed in such periods of growing production. An upturn would, unless counteracted by other, non-economic factors, inevitably lead to an increased demand for labour, and a consequent enhancement of the bargaining position of the trade unions. This the heavy industrialists sought to avoid at all costs, since with organised labour once more on the advance, and wages and social benefits rising, all the old problems experienced with profit margins and capital accumulation would return in an even more acute form. It is in this context that we have to consider the strenuous attempts being made throughout the summer of 1931 to renew the National Opposition, a campaign finally consummated in the joint Nazi - monarchist rally at Bad Harzburg on 11 October.

For Hitler, his renewal of the bloc first formed to fight the Young Plan had but one purpose - that of widening the breach already opened in the wall of exclusiveness that surrounded the world of German high finance and big business. Desperate times demanded desperate remedies, and the Nazi leadership seized with both hands the opportunities provided by the banking crisis and the increasing hostility being displayed amongst industrialists towards Brüning's political and economic policies. As riots flared up in Germany's industrial heartlands, with hungry unemployed workers deprived of their benefits breaking open food shops and fighting pitched battles with the police, the Ruhr correspondent of the liberal *Berliner Tageblatt* commented:

Nowhere are the contrasts in the present period to be seen more plainly than here. Two fronts are emerging more and more clearly, for there will soon be only two wings, the Communists and the reaction. The actual middle parties play no political role any more. The Social Democrats, the party of stability, in the present state, is nowhere more weakened than here, is nowhere losing influence faster than here, which is the bitterest sector of the latest struggle between master and men. ^[31]

And this was true. In the crisis months of June and July, the SPD, not at its strongest in the Communist-dominated Ruhr region even before the banking crisis, lost ground rapidly to the KPD as even hardened reformist workers took to the streets to vent their hatred of the SPD-tolerated Brüning regime and the capitalist system it was so patently defending. In the 'struggle between master and men', the Social Democratic bureaucracy found itself powerless to perform its accustomed role of mediator and buffer. As for the old bourgeois parties, their following had deserted almost *in toto* to the Nazis. Only the Centre stood firm in this, the most deeply Catholic of regions outside of Bavaria. Where indeed were the 'masters' to turn if it was not to the Nazis, the 'reaction'? Two days later, on 15 July, the Nazi tycoon Thyssen addressed a meeting of industrialists in this same Ruhr, demanding a complete change of course on the part of the government in both economic and political policy:

It is now necessary to aim at a definite policy to be pursued in the future. Palliatives cannot alter the situation. A radical and fundamentally clear reform in the German economic system must be carried through. The only way out of the present situation is a new inflation. With this, the German economic system can kill two birds with one stone. First, the burden of foreign debts will

diminish [with the fall in the exchange rate of the mark - RB], and, secondly, there will be a considerable reduction of wage costs and expenditure for social services. The result will be that Germany can again compete on the world market.

This was the authentic voice of National Socialism, and it found a partial echo four days later in the right-wing *Deutsche Zeitung*, which called for a 'National Dictatorship', and the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, which was even more explicit with its demand for a 'national concentration cabinet' that included representatives of the Nazi Party. In little more than 18 months' time, the paper was to see its wish fulfilled. [32]

German big business was therefore ripe for the new initiative Hitler was about to launch in the summer of 1931. According to the account of his press chief and liaison man with heavy industry, Otto Dietrich:

Adolf Hitler, more than anybody else, had always considered the value of individuality as the main factor of his thought and deed. He soon realised that, *besides striving to gain the support of the broad masses, he must make every possible appeal to economic magnates, the firmest adherents of the old system.* These magnates had individually accomplished much in past years. *In the summer of 1931, in Munich, our leader suddenly decided to concentrate systematically upon convincing the influential magnates, who ruled the civic parties of the centre... Whoever had witnessed the great power of conviction, which Adolf Hitler himself exerted upon the most resolute opponents, knew that this plan of undermining the old system must mature into valuable success. Immediate action followed this quick decision.* In the following months, our leader traversed Germany from end to end in his Mercedes, holding private interviews with personalities. Any 'rendezvous' was chosen, either in Berlin or in the provinces, in the Hotel Kaiserhof [the NSDAP Berlin headquarters close to the government buildings - RB] or in some lonely forest glade. *Privacy was absolutely imperative, the press must have no chance of doing mischief. Success was the consequence. The pillars of the government began to crumble.* [33]

What had set Hitler on this new course was not some sudden intuition, but the gathering economic crisis, and, we can be sure, information from his various contacts (Keppler, Schacht, Funk) that a political climate more favourable to National Socialism was detectable in big business circles. [34] The first step towards the formation of what became known after the October rally as the Harzburg Front was taken by Hitler in May, when through the good offices of Dietrich, the Nazi Party chief gave a confidential interview with Dietrich's former paper, the ultra-nationalist *Leipziger Neuste Nachrichten* (on which Dietrich had worked until 1930 as its Munich correspondent). As in all his exchanges with leading representatives of or spokesmen for the big bourgeoisie, Hitler spoke with a very different voice from that which he employed at mass rallies. Indeed, Hitler prefaced his remarks at the first interview (details of which only became available in 1971, when they were published in book form) on 4 May by insisting of the *Leipziger Neuste Nachrichten's* editor Richard Breiting that he 'promise that what we discuss here will remain a matter between us and that no word of it will be published'. [35]

And we can appreciate why Hitler was so anxious that the interview be kept secret (except from those to whom his remarks were directed) since it was on Hitler's part nothing but a plea for a more understanding attitude towards his movement by the leaders of the German economy - hardly a position that could be reconciled with the public Nazi stance of attacking big business and all its works. First Hitler acknowledges that at last, his party is beginning to win the recognition it deserves from industry and finance:

The day of reckoning is not far off. An increasing number of industrialists, financiers, intellectuals and officers are now looking for a man who will at last bring some order into affairs at home, who will draw the farmers, the workers and the officials into the German community once more. [36]

Hitler then goes on to make an observation which remains to this day, a crushing refutation and indictment of the ultra-leftist line being pursued by the Stalinists, with their rejection of the united front with the reformist organisations, and denunciation of Trotsky for his insistence that the two workers' parties form a bloc against fascism. Hitler asserted that neither big business nor fascism could achieve their aims if they faced a united working-class movement, and that therefore the greatest menace was the policy being advocated by Trotsky:

The Bolshevik Trotsky calls upon the Socialists and Communists to make common cause against National Socialism. High finance must recognise that, with a common Marxist front [that is, a bloc of the 'Marxist' SPD and the KPD - RB], the economic crisis cannot be overcome. [37]

Hitler not only reveals in this interview a considerable grasp of the main tendencies and disputes within the German workers' movement (not to speak of the many factional groupings within the bourgeoisie). His conception of how the struggle for power would proceed is also remarkable for its grasp of essentials. For example, he declares that the Nazis are 'prepared to support a transition government against the Communist menace' and that in fact there would be such a government 'before we ourselves seize complete power'. [38] And such proved to be the case, with the Nazi-'tolerated' regime of von Papen blasting the road for the Nazi assumption of power in January 1933. But before this penultimate stage could be reached, it was first necessary, as Dietrich correctly points out, for Hitler to detach the main economic leaders from their already half-hearted support for the Brüning government, which still clung obstinately to its policy of depending on Social Democratic toleration for its survival:

When Krupp, [the banker] Schröder and the other captains of industry realise that we stand for order, they will be happy to be accepted into the party. They are supporting our movement financially - but they have not the courage to allow a German state a national government and a national leader. I have no alternative but to bring them to that decision by pressure from the people. [In other words, the 'plebeian', 'Jacobin' solution whereby the bourgeoisie is forced 'from below' to accede to a solution of its problems by fascist methods - RB] ... At the next elections we shall win 15 million votes. [The Nazi vote was in fact 13.7 million at the Reichstag elections of July 1932 - RB] Then Hindenburg, Schleicher, Hugenberg, von Papen and the financial captains of the Ruhr will realise that order cannot be established in Germany without our collaboration. Our emissaries are already in contact with their people, and things are moving our way. [39]

Aware that there still existed grave doubts as to the economic policy the party would pursue when in power, Hitler explains what the Nazi programme really meant by socialism:

We have an economic programme. Point no 13 in that programme demands the nationalisation of all public companies, in other words, socialisation or what is known here as socialism. It is a bad word. It does not mean that all these concerns must be socialised, merely that they can if they transgress against the interests of the nation. So long as they do not do that, it would, of course, be criminal to upset the economy... I want authority; I want individuality; I want everyone to keep what he has earned subject to the principle that the good of the community takes priority over that of the individual. [40]

In public Hitler and the rest of the Nazi leadership vehemently denied charges that they sought the destruction of the free trade unions. National Socialism simply desired their 'liberation' from political - namely Marxist - influences. Nor were the Nazis opposed to economic and social demands of the workers, so their spokesmen and press claimed. Here again, this private interview gives us an opportunity to contrast the public, pseudo-radical face of fascism with its secret, real and utterly counter-revolutionary aims:

Do you think that I shall compromise with Marxism when [our] revolution comes? I make no compromises - none whatsoever. If I compromise, then Marxism will revive in 30 years' time. Marxism must be killed. It is the forerunner of Bolshevism... For us the great question mark is simply: Bolshevism or Fascism? These are the two great new concepts. The great ideologies, on which the future must decide... We can only fight Bolshevism if we confront it with a stern ideology... If we do not succeed, we shall go to the dogs... Naturally an end must be put to trade union policy in its present form. The trade union policy has ruined us. Between 1925 and 1928 the budget increased by 18 milliard marks as a result of the trade union policy on wages, social security, unemployment insurance, etc. *The two milliard annual reparations payments are nothing compared to this.* If we had no more reparations to pay, Social Democracy, in other words trade union policy, would immediately demand wage increases to absorb the two milliard saved. That is nonsense and it should not be. *As you will realise, I cannot say that at a public meeting. Similarly I cannot express my views on private property at a popular meeting in the same way as I have done here.* [41]

The interview resumed some three or four weeks later, with Hitler concentrating on foreign policy questions. Once more, the Nazi leader proves himself conversant with the latest developments within the

workers' movement, drawing attention to Stalin's nationalist policy in the Soviet Union, which of necessity ran counter to the struggle for a genuine revolutionary policy in the KPD:

Even if in our propaganda we equate our Communists with those of the Soviet Union, they are in fact two different worlds. *In the KPD there are forces and tendencies representing their own interests and struggling for their own existence.* We have no need to be frightened of intervention by the Russians for a long time to come. We shall isolate Russia before she becomes a danger to us. We shall rouse the anti-Communist forces in all countries. If we do not do so, one day we shall be threatened both militarily and politically by this Bolshevist Russia. The political threat will be there on the day we seize power. *Even today, therefore, we are thinking of an anti-Comintern policy in all countries.* Once Germany is provided with a modern army, the Soviet Union will never be a danger to her. But this Weimar Germany will be an easy prey for the Bolshevists... It is in the interests of Italy, England, France, Belgium, Holland and the Scandinavian countries to keep Bolshevism as far from their frontiers as possible. Once this East European rear... has become a German military protectorate, the destruction of this colossus with feet of clay - should it oppose German interests - will be a mere bagatelle. ^[42]

Hitler's optimism regarding the strictly non-interventionist attitude of the Soviet government was proved more than justified by subsequent events, as indeed were his expectations that the Vatican would put no obstacles in the way of the creation of a Nazi regime, despite the implications that the formation of such a 'totalitarian' system would have for the continued existence of Germany's numerous Catholic organisations:

There will definitely be no Vatican crusade against us. We know Monsignor Pacelli since he was the Vatican's diplomatic representative in Germany for 12 years; as Secretary of State and adviser to Pope Pious XI it is greatly in his interest that the German Catholics should at last have a statute. People like von Papen and many others in Munich are already at work and are establishing good relations with the Vatican... Pacelli saw the Red [Soviet] Republic in Munich; so have no fear, there will be no second 'kulturkampf' [a reference to Bismarck's struggle against the 'anti-national' Catholics - RB] in Germany. ^[43]

Returning to domestic problems, Hitler emphasises one of the main lessons learned from the Nazi Party's fruitless 10-year struggle to break the German worker from his allegiance to his traditional class organisations, whether they be reformist or Communist:

It is due to Marx that *we can no longer recapture the proletariat by words alone.* It will not even be enough simply to solve their social problems. *We shall find ourselves forced to use administrative [sic!] methods... We intend to recapture the politically-minded masses by this method.* The internal and international [Marxist] criminal gang will either be forced to work *or simply exterminated.* I wish to transform the non-political police into a political instrument of the highest state authority... *We shall set up great labour camps... Even today we must calculate how we can best render innocuous those who try to incite people to internal unrest and general strikes.* ^[44]

It is on this note of a war unto death against the class-conscious German proletariat that Hitler concludes the interview. To turn these pledges into deeds, however, first of all required the formation of what Hitler had termed in the interview a 'transitional government' - one composed of the most reactionary, pro-Nazi leaders of the old 'national' and monarchist right. That the forces were already being assembled for the formation of such a regime is clear from Hitler's revealing remark in the second interview that 'there will shortly be a meeting between people from the *Stahlhelm* and the *Landbund*, representatives of the Reichswehr and of finance such as Schacht, to find some common basis for reconstruction'. ^[45] This projected meeting proved to be the rally of the National Opposition at Bad Harzburg on 11 October 1931.

Rivals during the election campaign of the previous summer, the Hugenberg Nationalists and the Nazis had nevertheless worked closely together in the Reichstag, with the NSDAP deputies setting a new all-time low in chauvinist demagogy and pseudo-radical attacks on the 'system' and its leading party representatives. Where Goering and Goebbels stridently led, Hugenberg and ageing bands of monarchists bravely attempted to follow. The alliance began to assume an extra-parliamentary character in June 1931, when just as two years previously (only now with the DNVP cast in a very reduced role) the two parties came together to campaign for the referendum to hold new *landtag* elections in the state of Prussia. The DNVP had been demanding such a poll since the Reichstag elections of September 1930, which, argued the extreme right, had given conclusive proof that the SPD - Centre coalition in Prussia no longer

reflected the desires of the majority of the electorate. Meeting in Hugenberg on 9 July 1931, Hitler agreed once more to combine with the monarchist Right in a 'National Opposition' against the Weimar 'system'. The first joint blows would be struck on 9 August in the referendum for the dissolution of the Prussian parliament. Here the Nazi - monarchist bloc met with a severe setback, for even with the support of the Stalinists, who carried their ultra-leftism to the revolting extreme of aligning their party with the Nazis against the 'social fascists', ^[46] their referendum failed to secure anything like the necessary majority of Prussian voters (nine million voted for the Nazi - monarchist - Stalinist referendum - 37 per cent of the Prussian electoral roll).

Also in August, Hitler paid a call on Chancellor Brüning, offering him a final opportunity to ally himself with the 'national' right by ending his policy of relying on the parliamentary toleration of the Social Democrats. Brüning declined, leaving Hitler with no alternative but to press even harder for the Chancellor's downfall. To this end, Hitler invited some 30 to 40 leading industrialists to a meeting at a hotel owned by Kirdorf. Aware that heavy industry was turning against Brüning's deflationary policies, not to speak of his continued reliance on the 'Marxists' of the SPD and the ADGB, Hitler insisted that they withdraw all support from the government and work for the formation of a cabinet of 'national concentration'. No agreement was reached at this conference, held at the end of August 1931. Hitler had no more success at another and similar gathering in Berlin on 11 September, ^[47] when once again the main leaders of the economy balked at the ultimatum Hitler presented to them - either overthrow Brüning or be dragged down to economic ruin and political chaos. (Active in preparing these two meetings were Vögler, Thyssen, Knepper and Pönsgen of the United Steel Works, and Ernst Brandt and Fritz Springorum of the Hösch Steel Works.) The tide only began to run Hitler's way after 20 September when following the devaluation of sterling by the newly-formed Macdonald National Government in Britain, the big employers found their hopes of a revival in the export markets dashed. German products could now only compete against their main European rivals on the basis of severe price cuttings, which in turn demanded wholesale wage reductions throughout German industry, not to speak of other 'economies' in social services, unemployment insurance and the like. This, the Schacht plan, now became the programme of the dominant sectors of industry and high finance, and it was with an acutely-felt necessity for an onslaught on the living and working conditions of the German working class that the big employers began their serious turn towards a bloc with the Nazis. On 20 September, the day of the British devaluation, the Berlin Bourse shut its doors, while the bank rate jumped from 4.5 to 6.0 per cent. Two days later, the unemployed figures indicated an increase of 109 000 over the previous two weeks, and now stood at 4 324 000. On 25 September, at the Hamburg municipal elections, the NSDAP emerged as the second largest party in what had, since the pioneer days of the workers' movement, been a stronghold of German labour and a hotbed of proletarian radicalism. ^[48]

In this same week, when preparations were nearing completion for the National Opposition rally in Bad Harzburg, the Federation of German Industries issued a declaration in the name of all employers' organisations which demanded far larger cuts in wages than Brüning had either carried out in the past or could, in view of his continued reliance on the SPD and ADGB bureaucracy, dare implement in the future. Also included in the declaration were calls for further economies in social expenditure and as a means of reducing the costs of big business, the lowering of postal and freight charges. And finally, at the end of this crisis-wracked month, with the German stock and money markets closed indefinitely as business confidence plunged hourly, the coal barons of the Ruhr rebelled against an arbitration decision of the coal industry, just as the iron masters had done under Müller in the winter of 1928-29. Even though the court had found for a seven per cent wage cut, and a working week of only 30 hours (both proposals being turned down by the trade union concerned), the Krupps and the Kirdorfs found such measures ludicrously inadequate. And they said so with such vehemence as to intimidate the arbitration court into declaring the wages ruling not binding on the coal employers. They were now free, for the first time in the history of the Weimar Republic, to cut workers' wages by as much as they could enforce (and with unemployment in the pits running as high as 50 per cent, the ability of the miners to resist such cuts was gravely weakened). Now it was not only Hitler and Hugenberg, but leaders of industry, banking and the armed forces who bayed for Brüning's blood. ^[49] The Chancellor's last-minute bid to blunt the Harzburg offensive by restructuring his cabinet on 10 October (the eve of the rally) proved a fiasco.

Gröner - hated by the far right - assumed the duties of Minister of the Interior as well as of Defence, while the dismissed Foreign Minister Curtius' responsibilities were taken over by Brüning himself. Only the inclusion of Hermann Warmbold, non-party Minister of Economics, could be considered a move in the direction of openly appeasing big business, since Warmbold had close links with IG Farben. But even

here, it was not the appointment big business would have liked, since the chemical trust had still to break from its long-established policy of supporting the moderate, pro-Weimar bourgeois parties, notably the DDP. The deepening economic and political crises, and the patent inability of Brüning to cope with either, proved powerful incentives for those hovering on the brink of opposition to desert the Brüning camp entirely and to join forces with the National Opposition gathered at Bad Harzburg.

As a final boost for its Nazi participants, their leader secured an audience with President Hindenburg on its very eve, which while not bringing any immediate rewards (on the contrary, the old Junker monarchist was visibly discomfited by his confrontation with the 'Bohemian corporal' upstart from Braunnau), at least established Hitler as a serious contender for the highest office in the eyes of the political 'establishment'.

The Harzburg Rally

Five principal groupings were represented at Bad Harzburg on 11 October, first being the rally's main instigators and organisers, the Hugenberg monarchists of the DNVP and the Nazis, represented by their leader Hitler. The monarchist veterans' league, the *Stahlhelm*, which had also adhered to the National Opposition two years previously, was present in great force, even outnumbering the massed ranks of the SA and Himmler's SS (the latter élite Nazi squadron collaborating with the local police in stewarding the rally). Seldte, now drawing close to Nazis, and Duesterberg were the two main spokesmen for the *Stahlhelm* at the rally, while representing the agrarian interest were Gayl, Wendhausen, von Sybel, Sieber, Bethge, Lind, von Kreisheim, von Wangenheim, von Munchhausen and von Helmut-Hessen. The old monarchists, while forbidden under the terms of the rally from openly demanding the restoration of the Hohenzollerns (the Nazis could scarcely afford to expose themselves as allies of such die-hard reaction), were also there in strength: Schulze-Naumburg, von Morozowicz, von Kleist-Schmenzin, von Zitzwitz, together with several scions of the former royal houses - Prince Eitel-Friedrich of the House of Hohen, the Prinz zu Lippe and the Prinz zu Salm-Horstmar. Hitler's mentor Dr Class, together with von Vietinghoff-Scheel and Count von Brockdorff von Hertzberg attended on behalf of the Pan-German League, while the armed forces sent the largest delegations of all - no fewer than 15 officers of general or admiral rank, including for the *Reichswehr* Generals von der Goltz, von Dommès, von Seeckt (whose sister had recently become a keen Nazi supporter) and for the Navy, Admiral Levetzov. Finally there arrived what was for Hitler the most important contingent of all - that of German industry and finance.

Headed by Schacht, it contained some of the leading personalities of industry, trade, manufacturing and banking: Schlenken, an agent of several Ruhr iron and steel concerns; Pönsgen of the United Steel Works; Ravene, an iron and steel merchant; Blohen and Gok, Hamburg shipbuilders; Brandi of the Essen Mineowners Union; Kruger of the Potassium Trust; Delius (textiles) and Reinacker (engineering). Thyssen and Gustav Krupp, *en route* by steamer to the United States, sent their apologies for not being able to attend. Schacht's speech set out the economic programme of the National Opposition - one of unrelenting war on the already declining living standards of the German working and lower middle classes:

The fact that a business man with no party affiliation is able to speak to you today is a further sign that the purport of this assembly extends far beyond the framework of any party-inspired affair. The interests of German economy are indeed most vitally bound up with the ultimate success of the National movement [that is, the Nazi - monarchist bloc - RB]. Production has shrunk by at least a third; huge unemployment figures look like being permanent; a daily increasing toll of bankruptcies ^[50] is simply an expression of our liabilities at home, just as the impossibility of repaying our foreign loans as they fall due is an expression of our liabilities abroad; our currency no longer serves to promote regular trade, but merely to conceal the liquidity of our financial institutions and our public authorities. Such is the state of affairs in Germany today. Further, we have a public financial system of which even the Minister of Finance himself cannot say on what it is to continue to subsist during the coming months, or even weeks. Truly the new government will inherit a heavy burden. Yet even more serious than these staggering facts are the wrong foundations underlying the hitherto prevailing system, its insincerity, its dubious legality, its lack of freedom of action. Our financial situation in particular has always been - and still is - far worse than has been suggested to the public. Our foreign liabilities, for instance, are considerably greater than represented in the Basle report. But no one ventures to state such facts openly. No one says that the Reichsbank portfolio now consists of a mere fraction of Reichsbank bills - for

fear that the public might grow nervous and in reckoning the gold coverage some hundred million foreign exchange bills are included which will shortly fall due for repayment... [Another]... feature is deserving of censure, namely lack of courage when it comes to taking action. The others are no whit cleverer or wiser than we are, and the whole business world would breathe a sigh of relief if Germany were to take the initiative in bringing about a recovery. They demand that we should put forward a programme. But even the finest programme which the present authorities could seize upon could only work out detrimentally in their hands. Germany's recovery is not a question of individual items in a programme; it is not a question of intelligence; it is a question of character. The restoration of a permanent and assured justice, of uprightness and honesty in all matters of public life, and the determination to act on one's own initiative - those are the things that matter. No magic, no printing of paper money, no foreign loans can help us. The programme which a National Government [that is, one headed by the National Opposition leaders represented at Harzburg: Hugenberg, Seldte, Hitler - RB] will have to carry out rests solely on a few fundamental ideas. It is the same programme that Frederick the Great [of Prussia] carried through after the Seven Years War [1756-63]; namely, *to depend solely on our own resources, to extract from our native soil whatever can be extracted, and, finally, to live frugally, to save, and to work hard for an entire generation.* I have had the personal experience of what it means to fight the foreigner at the conference table, while one's own government at home fails to back one up. *That is why I hope that the national hurricane which is now sweeping over Germany many not subside until the roads are once more open to self-determination and ultimate success.* ^[51]

Hitler's speech harped on the grave dangers to 'National' Germany posed by the growth of working-class radicalism, and declared 'either Communism or National Socialism must prevail in Germany'. But the stark alternative was still not accepted as valid, not even by those such as Hugenberg and his fellow monarchists who, while desiring the downfall of Brüning and the Weimar system, had no intention of handing over the monopoly of political power to the Nazi plebeians. Tensions were indeed clearly visible at the rally itself. Fearful that his party's pseudo-revolutionary image would be compromised by too close an identification with the traditionalist, conservative right, Hitler refused to take part in the official parade of the National Opposition that preceded the rally and left before the *Stahlhelm* units had completed their march past the saluting base.

Historians of the period have, however, tended to dwell on these undeniable conflicts to the near-exclusion of any serious appreciation of the importance of Hitler's participation in the Harzburg rally and front. ^[52] Few bother to refer to the programme of the National Opposition subscribed to by all its constituent members, and this is a serious omission for the resolution adopted on 11 October at Bad Harzburg not only mapped out the short-term policies of the Right (namely the overthrow of Brüning and the removal of the Prussian Social Democrats - both achieved within less than a year), but the programme of the Hitler 'government of National Concentration':

For years the National Opposition has been warning against the failure of governments and state institutions in face of the bloody terror of Marxism, increasing Bolshevik ideology, of the destruction of the nation by the class struggle, of a policy which in the political, economic and military debilitation of Germany goes even beyond the Versailles Diktat, of a policy which abandons domestic self-help in favour of universal Utopianism, of a policy of subservience to the foreigner, which achieves for Germany neither equality of status nor protects the ravaged East against invasion. We are resolved to secure our country from the chaos of Bolshevism, by practical self-help to save our country from the vortex of economic bankruptcy and thereby to help the world to genuine freedom. We are prepared to take on the responsibility of government of the Reich and of Prussia. We will reject no honourably offered helping hand. We must however refuse to support and camouflage a government which props up the present system and the forces behind it [that is, the SPD and ADGB]. Any government formed against the wishes of the National Opposition must reckon on our enmity. We demand the immediate resignation of Brüning and Braun [Prime Minister of Prussia], the immediate repeal of the dictatorial powers of those governments whose composition does not correspond to the will of the people and who now only rule by emergency decrees. [The National Opposition was not averse to making demagogic capital out of Brüning's Presidential system of rule, even as it cleared the road for its own eventual triumph - RB] We demand immediate new elections to the superannated representative bodies, first of all in the Reich and Prussia. In full awareness of the responsibility entailed, we declare that the groups comprising the National Opposition will defend the life, home

and property and workplace of those who publicly support us, should there be any disturbances, but that we refuse to shed one drop of blood in defence of the present government and system. We demand the restoration of German military grandeur and equality of armaments. We stand united on these demands. Whoever tries to break our front is outlawed. We vow to President Hindenburg that he is the choice of millions of patriotic men and women and in the final hour the appeal from a truly national government will lead to salvation by a change of course. The advocates of this national government know the wishes and needs of the German people. They have foretold the development of recent years. Events have shown the correctness of their proposals and demands. We are most sincerely convinced of the justification for taking over the government. Only a strong national state can protect the economy and the ability to work. Only a strong national state can bring about maximum efficiency and carry through the necessary social measures for a genuine people's society. We ask for duty and sacrifice from all comrades. We have faith in the realisation of our objectives because we trust in German strength and the culture of our people.

The Reichstag representatives of the National Opposition were as good as their word. When parliament re-convened on 13 October, the NSDAP and DNVP delegations moved a joint resolution demanding that 'the Reichstag withdraw its confidence from the government'. It was a move that had immediate repercussions inside the deeply-divided DVP, whose industrialist members were now calling for Brüning's head. When put to the vote on 16 October, Brüning scraped home by 295 mandates to 270 ^[53] with a mere five DVP deputies casting their ballot for the defence of a government in which their party was officially represented. On the announcement of the result, the Nazis and Hugenberg Nationalists marched out of the Reichstag in a calculated and prearranged display of contempt for the Reichstag and the 'system' it symbolised in the minds of their supporters. The KPD deputies, who had voted with the 'National Opposition', remained in their seats, once more finding themselves outmanoeuvred by the Nazis. The Reichstag was then prorogued, with the tacit support of the Social Democrats, to February 1932.

Hitler had good cause to be satisfied with the first fruits of the Harzburg front. He had drawn the magnates of industry and finance, the power and purse behind the main bourgeois parties, closer to the Nazis, while even in the *Reichswehr* leadership, a change of attitude towards the NSDAP could be observed. ^[54] There remained several hurdles to clear before his movement could consider itself an actual, as opposed to potential contender for power - namely the Brüning government, and the Social Democratic administration in Prussia, a state which embraced not only two-thirds of the German population, but the bulk of its industrial resources. Holding court in the Kaiserhof with British and United States press representatives in November 1931, Hitler declared with genuine conviction - and much truth - that '*the decisive battle against Bolshevism will be fought in Germany. The National Socialists feel that it is their task to win this fight for the whole [capitalist] world.*' Only in the persecuted and numerically insignificant ranks of the International Left Opposition were the horrific implications of this statement fully appreciated and acted upon. As for the Stalinists, they were hell-bent on undermining and even destroying the principle target of Hitler's offensive - the five-million-strong trade unions of the ADGB.

Appendix: The NSDAP in 1931

The year of 1931 saw the continued growth of the Nazi Party into a truly formidable mass counter-revolutionary movement. Periodic revolts by deluded radicals, while embarrassing for a leadership that claimed to be fighting 'the reaction', did little to detach the petit-bourgeois masses from the party, and certainly helped to convince the more cautious of business circles that Hitler really intended to defend their interests when he came to power. The year of 1931 also witnessed the consolidation of the two main fighting units of the party: the SA, from 1 January under the command of Ernst Röhm, and the SS, the élite Security Squadron of Heinrich Himmler. Röhm's return from Bolivia was occasioned by Hitler's turn towards 'legality' and his policy of seeking allies in the old ruling élites and propertied classes. Röhm was an old friend of General Kurt von Schleicher, chief of staff of the *Reichswehr*, and his return to the SA command heralded a marked improvement in relations between the party and the army leadership, which had deteriorated to freezing point with the arrest and trial of the three Nazi officers. The previous SA chief, von Pfeffer, had been sacked by Hitler on 2 September 1930, after failing to squash promptly enough a revolt by disgruntled members of the Berlin SA, a unit whose lumpen-

proletarian elements had earned a reputation, both within and outside the party, for indiscipline and often criminal conduct. Röhm's first task was to project a new image for the SA, one of working within the system for the destruction of Marxism and its allies - while defending the existing organs of law and order. To this end, Hitler issued a proclamation to the SA on 20 February 1931, instructing the Brown Shirts to end street fighting with their enemies. 'I understand your distress', he explained in plaintive tones to his frustrated and trigger-happy followers, 'but you must not bear arms.' This formal repudiation of any intention to usurp the functions of the regular army and state police certainly helped smooth Hitler's chosen path towards an alliance with the monarchists and the leaders of the economy and the armed forces. But it almost at once angered his own 'plebeians', not to speak of those in higher society who had taken seriously the party's demagoguery about a socialist as well as nationalist Germany. In his prison cell serving his 18-month sentence, Lieutenant Scheringer learned that Hitler had made his peace with the very bureaucratic caste that he and like-minded young officers had joined the Nazi Party to fight. He openly broke from the party, and declared his support for the... KPD! ^[55] Hitler's pronouncement on the future role of the SA also led to a revolt in the north German section of the Storm Troop command against his leadership.

The last straw came on 29 March, when Hitler ordered the SA to obey a Brüning decree issued the previous day curbing 'excesses' of political warfare - namely street-fighting and the carrying of arms. Headed by Berlin SA chief Captain Walter Stennes, a former officer of the 'Black Reichswehr', the rebellion against Hitler's order spread from the capital to other disaffected units, mainly in areas which six years before had been the preserve of the north German 'radicals'. When expelled from the party by Hitler at the beginning of April, Stennes, the prime mover in the revolt of the previous summer, did in fact adhere for a while to Otto Strasser's 'Black Front', which claimed to represent the true 'revolutionary' traditions of National Socialism now betrayed by the NSDAP leadership. (Following the victory of the Nazis, he collaborated briefly with the Black Front exile centre in Prague, and then quit German politics for good by entering the service of Chiang Kai-shek as commander of the Chinese dictator's bodyguard.) On his removal from the party, Stennes wrote in *Angriff* (still under the control of the dissident SA men in Berlin) on 2 April that 'the political leadership of the NSDAP in Munich has strayed from the idea of revolutionary National Socialism... The revolutionary force of the SA has been saturated with bourgeois liberal tendencies.' Hitler could not afford to permit this charge to go unanswered, and two days later replied in the Munich-based *Völkischer Beobachter* that the Stennes group represented the 'buffoons of salon Bolshevism and salon socialism' who wanted 'to introduce into the SA a series of concepts that... belong to the continuously seditious prerequisites of the Communists...'. The liberal *Berliner Tageblatt* had already come to this conclusion when it wrote on 3 April:

Where are the discontented elements to go when the split is there? He [Goebbels] knows just as we do, that they will go straight to the Communists, who are holding out their arms to receive the fugitives. There is only one place for the straying elements: it is the revolutionary party, it is Moscow to where their path leads. ^[56]

The SA unit of Hanover East deserted *en masse* from the party, and on 10 September 1931 published an open letter to Hitler, whom they accused of betraying the original goals of the movement:

For years our SA has worked hard for you and the NSDAP; for years the party membership have undergone the severest sacrifices. Comrades have been thrown into prison because of their Nazi beliefs and no party leaders have shown concern for them. Unemployment among the SA men is catastrophic [in some Berlin troops, it ran as high as 60 per cent - RB] and yet their contributions have been ruthlessly squeezed out of them. Anyone who could not pay was thrown out... Through your striving after ministerial posts [this was shortly after Hitler's meeting with Brüning - RB], you provoke the opposition of all true National Socialists... We do not dream of supporting you in your plan to join a Brüning government... It will be our task to open the eyes of all SA men so that they recognise that Germany cannot be saved by a parliamentary party, but only through revolutionary action.

Their heads stuffed with chauvinist petit-bourgeois 'National Bolshevik' fantasies, and full of hatred for Marxism and the organised proletarian movement, the Nazi dissidents endured the same dismal fate as their predecessors. All SA commanders except Stennes' own staff submitted to Hitler's demand for a personal oath of loyalty to him as the sole leader of the movement. Goering, the contact man for big business, was placed in charge of a purge of the SA 'radicals', while a ban on further recruits was

maintained until Goering had completed his assignment. Unruly 'plebeians' were ousted from their commands and more reliable party members put in their places. A police report dated 15 June 1931 stated that the new SA leadership being groomed by the party nearly all 'belonged without a doubt to the better classes'. Typical in this respect was the appointment to the vacant Berlin SA command of Count Wolf Heinrich von Helldorf, who in this capacity later began negotiations on behalf of the party with Friedrich Flick of the giant United Steel Works (Helldorf was also involved, together with Röhm, in the talks with von Schleicher). The plebeians were not of course driven out of the SA entirely - such a move would not only precipitate further revolts, but certainly lead to a rapid decline in its following amongst the lower reaches of the working petit-bourgeoisie and the backward, mainly unemployed strata of the working class. What Hitler needed to hold the SA in check was another movement selected from different social layers, and trained along more conservative political lines. Such was the role of Himmler's SS.

Himmler came from a family background typical of so many of the top Nazi leadership - stolidly nationalist and middle-class, staunchly Catholic (like Goebbels, Hitler and Goering) and earnestly seeking to advance its offspring yet further up the ladder of social respectability (Himmler enjoyed a head start in this respect, having been godfathered by Prince Heinrich of Bavaria, to whom his teacher father had been a personal tutor in languages). Born in 1900, and therefore too young to fight in the war, Himmler was nevertheless a rampant chauvinist, eagerly following the exploits of the German army. Russians he despised especially - they 'multiplied like vermin': a remark made just before his fourteenth birthday! Himmler first donned a uniform in earnest as a member of his local Bavarian (Landshut) Free Corps unit, not to fight either the French, British or Russians, but the German proletariat, whom Himmler's thoroughly bourgeois-nationalist upbringing had already taught him both to fear and hate. His reactionary outlook was further buttressed during his stay at the Technical High School of Munich University, where he studied for a diploma in agriculture (Himmler later put this training to profitable use when he became the owner of a poultry farm). Membership of various student societies introduced him to that unique brand of romanticised chauvinism, tinged with anti-Semitism, only to be found in the German universities of the period, and which did so much to prepare an entire generation of intellectuals for service under the Third Reich. While still a student, and a member of his local Free Corps unit, he met Ernst Röhm at a rifle club meeting in Munich, finding the Nazi pioneer 'very friendly' but 'pessimistic about [defeating] Bolshevism'. Röhm found little difficulty in drawing Himmler towards the young NSDAP, which he formally joined in August 1923. He took part in the abortive Munich Putsch as an ensign to Röhm's contingent, but his role was such a minor one that he escaped even the mild punishments handed out to the main instigators of the coup.

After more than a year's political freelancing on behalf of the various *volkisch* groups that functioned in lieu of a centralised fascist movement, Himmler rejoined the reconstituted NSDAP in August 1925, and after a short period as assistant to the Strasser brothers, became second-in-command of a small party formation, numbering no more than 200 men, known as the *Schutzstaffel* (Security Squadron) - the SS. This body had been in existence for three years, and represented Hitler's first attempt to fashion an élite corps that owed its allegiance not to the Nazi movement as a whole, but personally to its leader. Founded in March 1923, their all-black uniforms, military-style decorations and the notorious 'death's head' insignia from the very beginning set them apart from - and above - the brown-shirted SA, which in the early days of the movement, looked more to its former Free Corps officers for leadership and political programme than to the Nazi Party headquarters in Munich. First seeing service as Hitler's personal bodyguard, the SS under Himmler's guidance and, after January 1929, direct leadership, became transformed into the élitist backbone of the Nazi Party, just as ready to swoop on any internal 'radical' dissidents as to carry out intelligence missions (under the supervision of future Third Reich security chief Reinhard Heydrich) inside the organisations of its left-wing enemies. As already stated, the turning point for the SS was reached in 1931, the year of Harzburg and the intensification of the economic crisis, of Hitler's secret negotiations with big business and of the biggest SA revolt against the Munich leadership. It was the SS units which restored order to the Berlin and other rebellious SA units, and from the summer of 1931, it was the SS which increasingly became a centre of recruitment to the party among the highest echelons of German society. In June 1931, the former Naval intelligence officer Heydrich, a new recruit to the Hamburg SS, journeyed to Munich to seek a post on Himmler's rapidly-expanding staff. Impressed both with his social connections (he was on intimate terms with the family of Commander Canaris, a future intelligence officer of the Third Reich) and his political background (like Himmler he had been from his earliest youth a fanatical nationalist, and at 16 had joined the Free Corps), the SS chief placed him in charge of a new department, the *Sicherheitsdienst* (Security Service) or SD. Heydrich's sole task

was to hunt down and earmark for destruction all the party's enemies, actual or potential, and to extend the scope of his investigations up to the highest levels of the NSDAP itself.

Himmler issued an order of the day for Heydrich's new department:

Our enemies' efforts to Bolshevise Germany are increasing. Our information and intelligence service must aim to discover, and then to suppress, our Jewish and Freemason enemies: this is the most important task of the SS today.

Each SS district leadership was charged with the responsibility of spying on the local left-wing movements, and with reporting all information so gathered to the central office in Munich.

And as the role of the SS became more obviously counter-revolutionary, so the most reactionary elements of the bourgeoisie and aristocracy flocked into its ranks - or rather leadership - eager to don the uniform of Himmler's custodians of racial purity and anti-Bolshevik intransigence.

While the SA sported a mere three counts - Helldorf, du Moulin and Sprei - the SS could parade some of the leading representatives of the former royal houses. Giving evidence before the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg, *Freiherr* von Eberstein, a member of Himmler's staff, declared that 'before 1933 a great number of aristocrats and members of German princely houses joined the SS'. These included Prince von Waldeck, Prince von Mecklenburg, Prince Lippe-Biesterfeld and the Prince of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen. Three other prize recruits to Himmler's élite murder squad included General Graf von Schulenburg and a brace of worthy clerics, the Archbishop Gröber of Freiburg and the Archbishop of Brunswick. The aristocracy infiltrated the SS to such good effect that by 1935 they provided 58 of its 648 leaders from regimental commander up (that is, roughly nine per cent) while comprising less than one per cent of the total German population (the percentage of persons whose name began with the aristocratic prefix 'von' was 0.74). A similar takeover of the SA began following the purge of Röhm's 'radicals' in June 1934. By 1935, no fewer than seven of the 19 SA top commanders were aristocrats. Sales of black leather, swastika armbands and death's head badges were also booming in other illustrious quarters. Hitler's economics adviser Keppler had for some time been a close collaborator of Himmler's in the party (it was in fact Himmler who introduced Keppler to Hitler, and was partly responsible for the Nazi businessman's rapid rise to the top circles of the NSDAP), and now that Keppler was at last succeeding in his task of drawing prominent fellow capitalists towards the Nazi movement, Himmler took this opportunity to integrate them still further by offering them membership of the SS. Keppler's 'circle' took on a new title - Himmler's 'Circle of Friends of the Economy'. According to the testimony of the Nazi banker, Baron Kurt von Schröder, the founder members of Himmler's 'circle' were Schacht, Rosterg of the Potash Syndicate, Reinhard of the Commerz und Privat Bank; the leading Hamburg merchant Krogmann; Meyer, Chairman of the Dresdner Bank (one of the 'big five'); Otto Steinbrinck, Director of the *Mitteldeutsche Stahlwerke* (a subsidiary of the Flick combine, the United Steel Works) and Count Bismarck, a government official and leading agrarian. All donations to the Nazi Party from the circle were collected by Meyer and paid into Himmler's private account with the Dresdner bank. A letter from Steinbrinck to Karl Raabe, Chairman of Flick's *Maximiliansheutte* steelworks, dated 28 March 1936, reveals that this link with the SS leader was established in the same year that saw Hitler's big campaign for support in industry and finance, and the beginning of the ascendancy of the SS 'élite' over the SA 'rabble':

If it [donations] concerns an SS regiment, then you may safely point to the fact that - in accordance with a special agreement between our group and the Reich leader SS [Himmler] - we undertook to make any contributions whatever direct to the Reich leadership SS. *This agreement has been in existence since 1931 and had been, at that time, approved by the Führer himself.* ^[57]

This new source of funds enabled Himmler to expand considerably membership of the SS. A mere 280 in 1929, it had risen to more than ten times that number by the end of 1931, being open only to those of spotless 'racial' and social pedigree (after January 1932, SS members were obliged to obtain from the leadership a certificate of the racial purity and worthiness of their intended wife before permission for marriage could be granted - a measure foreshadowing the Third Reich's experiments in 'racial breeding' - and, by the same token, elimination of 'inferior' peoples and other 'defectives').

But Hitler could not for one moment afford to neglect the protection of his 'left' flank, now rendered all the more vulnerable by the rise of the SS, the demoting of the SA and his party's participation in the National Opposition. Here the activities of Goebbels' propaganda department and the section of the party devoted to work in factories - the NSBO - took on a special importance. Goebbels was a past master in

the dissemination of a vague but strident brand of populism, that while appearing to promise everything to the oppressed and exploited, committed the party to nothing specific. A typical product of his demagogic pen was the pamphlet produced for the 1930 election campaign:

We are nationalists because we, as Germans, love Germany, and because we love Germany, we demand protection of its national spirit and we battle against its destroyers... We are socialists because we see in socialism the only possibility for maintaining our racial existence and through it the reconquest of our political freedom and the rebirth of the German state. Socialism has its peculiar form first of all through its comradeship in arms with the forward-driving energy of a newly-awakened nationalism. Without nationalism it is nothing, a phantom, a theory, a vision of air, a book. With it, it is everything, the future, freedom, fatherland! It was a sin of the liberal bourgeoisie to overlook the state-building power of socialism. It was a sin of Marxism to degrade socialism to a system of money and stomach. Socialism is possible only in a state which is free inside and outside. Down with political bourgeois sentiment; for real nationalism! Down with Marxism: for true socialism... We are enemies of the Jews because we are fighters for the freedom of the German people. The Jew is the cause and the beneficiary of our misery. He has used the social difficulties of the broad masses of our people to deepen the unholy split between Right and Left among our people. He has made two halves of Germany. He is the real cause for our loss of the Great War... That is the reason why we, as nationalists and as socialists, oppose the Jew...

This seemingly crude but in practice brutally effective brand of propaganda was especially designed for the nationalist petit-bourgeoisie, awakening to political consciousness under the impact of the economic crisis, but utterly unable on its own to fight in a coherent or united way against its real exploiters, the monopolist bourgeoisie. 'Socialism' was presented to this class as a natural and inevitable complement and outgrowth of their nationalist prejudices, hatred of Jews and detestation of Marxism and the workers' movement. Nazi 'socialism' was the 'true socialism', while the Marxists had betrayed it to the sinister moneyed powers and crude materialism. Indeed, Nazi propaganda was directed quite consciously at the small propertied strata, depicting the party as a defence organisation for the artisan, trader and peasant. Thus a new recruit to the NSDAP, explaining why he joined the party, wrote at the end of 1931 that the middle class had become 'the whipping boy of the system':

Now the fight must begin... Craftsmen, now we have our chance. If we miss this opportunity to join the German Freedom Movement, then we have lost everything. Look back at the last 10 years again and ask yourself the question: What would have become of our *Mittelstand* [middle class] if we had no Hitler, where would we be today? Social Democracy and Communism are the same in their basic ideas and from time immemorial have been one in their suppression of the *Mittelstand*. Only in the last few years has Adolf Hitler torn the mask from their face and they are now beginning to waver. ^[58]

And to be sure, the plight of the *Mittelstand* was grave indeed. Retail trade, conducted for the most part through small, independent establishments owned by a family and employing but a few hands, had fallen from a turnover of 36.6 milliard marks in 1929 to 23.1 milliards in 1932, a drop attributable mainly to the sudden decline in the spending power of the masses due to the rising unemployment rate and the Brüning government's deflationary policy of wage and welfare cutting. By 'tolerating' the reactionary Brüning regime, one that was quite patently bringing ruin to millions of small traders, peasants and artisans, the Social Democrats were providing the Nazis with a golden opportunity to divert the justified wrath of the middle class away from the monopolist bourgeoisie towards the *political* representatives of the 'system' - namely the dwindling band of Brüning supporters and the 'Marxists' of the SPD. Here too, support for the 'lesser evil' helped prepare the victory of the ultimate one.

However, an even more demagogic brand of propaganda was required to intercept the many thousands of previously conservative workers moving, under the impact of the crisis and the mounting unemployment, towards the SPD and, more frequently, the KPD. Such figures as are available tend to confirm Nazi claims that but for their intervention, support for the workers' parties would have been much greater after 1930. For while the bulk of the Nazi vote came from the petit-bourgeoisie, the collapse in support for the old bourgeois parties between 1930 and 1933 was also partly due to the defection of their working-class supporters (akin to British working-class Tories) to the Nazi banner. Only marginal successes were registered by the KPD in attracting these newly awakened, but enormously confused, layers of the proletariat, just as the Nazis made scarcely any impact, despite their many years of campaigning, on the

compact masses of the German labour movement, who remained loyal to their parties and unions to the end. The joint KPD - SPD vote for the last four Reichstag elections was 1930: 13.2 million, July 1932: 13.3 million; November 1932: 13.2 million; March 1933 (conducted under conditions of terror and with the KPD already outlawed): 12.0 million.

Goebbels also knew how in his writings and speeches to pander to the confusions and prejudices of a worker who, while breaking free from the tutelage of the bourgeois parties, rejected the class discipline and basis of the proletarian movement. Here the main target of Nazi propaganda was the bourgeoisie, not only the more customary 'political' variety, but the big employers as well. Thus in his pamphlet *Questions and Answers for National Socialists*, Goebbels departs from normal Nazi practice by justifying the notion of class struggle:

There can surely be nothing more hypocritical than a fat, well-fed capitalist who protests against the proletarian idea of class struggle... Who gave you the right, to throw out your chest, swollen with national responsibility, in indignation against the class struggle of the proletariat? Has not the capitalist state for some 60 years been an organised class state, which brought with it as an inevitable historical necessity the proletarian idea of class struggle? ... Yes, we call ourselves the workers' state. This is the first step away from the capitalist state. We call ourselves a Labour Party, because we want to set labour free, because to us creative labour is the progressive element in history, because labour means more to us than property, education, rank and bourgeois origin. That is why we call ourselves a Labour Party... We call ourselves socialist, as a protest against the lie of capitalist social compassion. We want no compassion, we want no social outlook. We despise the rubbish which you call 'social legislation'. It is too little to live with and too much to die with... We demand a full share of what heaven gave us and what we create with our hands and our brains... That is socialism!

But even in the midst of such a flow of pseudo-Communist rhetoric, Goebbels took care not to cross the class Rubicon:

We protest against the idea of class struggle. Our whole movement is one great protest against the class struggle... But at the same time we call things by their right names: if on one side 17 million proletarians see their only salvation in the class struggle, this is because from the Right side, they have been taught this in practice for 60 years. How can we find any moral justification in fighting against the class struggle unless the capitalist class state is first absolutely torn in shreds and abolished, through a new socialist organisation of the German people? ^[59]

But propaganda alone, however accurately pitched, was not sufficient to ensnare the backward workers the party was seeking. For this task, a special organisation was required, one that carried the fight right into the territory of the Social Democratic and Communist enemy, into the union branch, factory, mill and mine. The year of 1931 was one of important advances for the Nazi factory cells, the NSBO. Under the leadership of Muchow and Krebs, two former officials of the nationalist white collar 'union' of the DHV, and encouraged by Goebbels, the NSBO was, after several years in the doldrums, at last able to make a serious bid for influence in the main industrial centres of Germany. Muchow's directive on propaganda style, issued on 1 January 1931, showed how much the Nazi 'lefts' had learned from the workers' movement, especially their most bitter enemies, the Communists:

The style of our propaganda must be clear, unequivocal, concise, unromantic and non-prolix. It will be suited to the background and character of the masses. For the execution of our propaganda, it is always worthwhile to consider the fact that our propaganda in technical, mechanical form cannot turn its back completely on the linguistic usage of Marxist propaganda which the masses have lived with for decades.

An example of this technique of employing Communist-sounding language to impart a Nazi message is Goebbels' already-quoted pamphlet.

Eight months later, on 1 September 1931, the NSBO launched its first serious offensive to gain a firm foothold in industry under the slogan 'Into the Factories'. Goebbels wrote in his *Angriff* of 29 August that the fight to break workers from their allegiance to the SPD and KPD would involve the use of propaganda that 'placed the primary stress... on the presentation of our revolutionary socialistic purpose'. Little headway could be made in such a drive, however, while the Munich leadership continued to maintain their ban (imposed at the dictates of their newly-won adherents in industry and finance) on supporting strikes called by the ADGB trade unions. As late as 1 April 1931, the NSBO organ

Arbeitertrium had eschewed strikes against employers, declaring ‘if we German workers want to lead a strike that would really be crowned by success then it can only be the general strike against the Young Plan’.

So here again, the Nazi high command found themselves balancing precariously between a ‘left’ course that would alienate all but the most perspicacious of their business supporters, and an openly reactionary one that would provoke fresh revolts and defections among the party’s deluded ‘plebeian’ following. Hitler’s solution was to permit the NSBO to back already existing strikes only when not to do so would leave the party hopelessly compromised in the eyes of its proletarian members and supporters. In fact the NSBO endorsed only four strikes in the year between March 1931 and March 1932. On, one occasion, in August 1932, Röhm’s SA men were employed as strike-breakers in a big dispute, and when the NSBO protested, Röhm ruled that the brown-shirted scabs would honour NSBO picket lines (which were, because of the lack of its following, almost non-existent) but not those of the ADGB. According to Muchow’s January 1931 directive, the NSBO was ‘not to concentrate on individual employers as objects of hate, but only on employers as the inevitable product of the liberal-capitalist economic system’. Neither were the trade unions to be attacked as such, but simply, after Hitler’s teachings, as the perverted instruments of Marxist class war: ‘The point of National Socialists remaining in the trade unions is to penetrate and conquer them’, a goal forced on the Nazis after their realisation that the mass of the workers could never be induced to desert their traditional organisations for a bogus Nazi ‘trade union’. And neither did the NSBO accomplish its goal of ‘conquering’ from within. Well into 1932, the ADGB leadership (the ‘social fascists’ or ‘corporatists’) replied to these Trojan Horse tactics by expelling each and every Nazi who dared to show his true political colours in a trade union branch or in a plant organisation. Consequently on each occasion that the NSBO measured its strength against the established workers’ parties in elections for posts in the factory councils, they received a drubbing, scoring their only successes amongst clerical workers. Only in the high tide of the Nazi advance, in the early months of 1932 through to the Reichstag elections of July that year, did the NSBO threaten to gain heavily at the expense of the workers’ movement in the big industrial concentrations. This truly horrific episode belongs to a later chapter, and so we shall conclude by emphasising once again the point made throughout this work - that the Nazis were only able to secure, deepen and maintain their hold on the broad, largely petit-bourgeois masses and youth by default, by the criminal opportunism of the Social Democrats, who drove masses of former middle-class democrats into the arms of reaction by upholding the rule of the parties that had so cynically betrayed them to big business and the banks. This betrayal was supplemented by the ultra-leftist course of the Stalinists, whose refusal to adopt Leninist united front tactics in the face of the mounting Nazi menace prevented the proletariat from exerting its potential power of magnetic attraction on the exploited petit-bourgeoisie, without which there can be no question of a challenge to the rule of capital. These were the twin pillars of opportunism - right and left - which in 1931 raised the Nazi Party towards Hitler’s goal of total power and the annihilation of the German workers’ movement.

Notes

1. E von Salomon, *The Answers of Ernst von Salomon* (London, 1954), p 148.
2. O Strasser, *Hitler and I* (London, 1940), pp 99-100.
3. Strasser, *Hitler and I*, pp 123-24, emphasis added. Thus the leading exponent of the corporate state explicitly and quite vehemently set himself against a Social Democratic (in Hitler’s eyes, ‘Marxist’ or even ‘Bolshevik’) proposal to regulate and smooth over the class struggle. *Workers Press* seems unable to grasp that far from welcoming trade union or other elected workers’ representatives onto the boards of big companies (a policy which the paper quite correctly denounces as reactionary), this was precisely the system of reformist class collaboration that Hitler and his big business supporters were, after 1929, seeking to end with the utmost speed and brutality. And Hitler kept his word. There were no profit-sharing and ‘worker directors’ under the Third Reich. Yet in *Workers Press* of 12 February 1973, we read the following gross over-simplification - and in fact distortion - of this vital theoretical and historical point: ‘The TUC is cooperating with the Tory government to implement a scheme of worker-directors in British industry. This corporatist move is in line with legislation on “industrial democracy” which the Common Market will be introducing throughout the nine member countries later this year.’ (‘TUC Study Group Approves Corporatist Moves’, *Workers Press*, 12 February 1973, p 10) This not only makes the TUC

an actual supporter of the corporate state (of the system of class rule introduced first by Mussolini and then Hitler and Franco), but by implication also *the entire trade union leadership of the Common Market countries*, all of which by the end of 1973 were, along with Britain, living under a corporate state disguised as industrial democracy. Principled opposition to all such forms of *class collaboration* (for that is what they are, not fascism, which is based on a *rejection* of class collaboration) does not involve denouncing every variety of reformist betrayal as corporatism, as the *Workers Press*, following in the footsteps of Third Period Stalinism, seems to believe. In order to fight a tendency, one has to designate its historical origin, class nature and role as accurately as possible. Blurring the all-important distinctions that exist between the most right wing of reformists and corporatists does not aid, but obstructs such a task.

4. Strasser, *Hitler and I*, p 124.

5. Strasser, *Hitler and I*, p 124.

6. Feder's proposed bill (which had been moved as a matter of routine by the Nazis at previous Reichstag openings) caused so much consternation in business circles that Hitler at once ordered him to withdraw it. Whereupon the KPD deputies reintroduced Feder's bill without changing a word - not even the clause pertaining to the expropriation of Jews and other 'aliens'. Clearly the KPD leadership had already embarked on the dangerous and reactionary manoeuvre of 'unmasking' the Nazis by claiming to be the more consistent nationalists as well as socialists.

7. *Völkischer Beobachter*, 19 September 1930, emphasis added.

8. H Schacht, *My First Seventy-Six Years* (London, 1955), p 272.

9. H Schacht, *The End of Reparations* (London, 1931), pp 199-202.

10. Schacht, *The End of Reparations*, p 210.

11. Schacht, *My First Seventy-Six Years*, pp 278-79.

12. H Schacht, 'Testimony', *IMT*, Volume 12, p 419.

13. Schacht, *My First Seventy-Six Years*, p 279.

14. H Schacht, *Account Settled* (London, 1949), pp 29-30.

15. Schacht, 'Testimony', *IMT*, Volume 12, p 421, emphasis added. Evidence of Schacht's views at this time was an article by him in the right-wing daily, the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* of 1 December 1930, which called for a Hitler-led government. Von Seeckt, former army chief of staff, also wrote on the same theme, while the paper itself carried long extracts from *Mein Kampf*.

16. Schacht, *My First Seventy-Six Years*, p 280. Other banking circles were also beginning to take an interest in the Nazis, undeterred by the party's noisy radicalism. On 17 November 1930, Fritz Klein, chairman of the Darmstadter National Bank (the 'Danat'), wrote to a banking friend that the Nazis 'could contribute to the removal of internal difficulties', though there was still some 'economic dirt' to be erased from the NSDAP programme. He considered it 'crazy' to reject Hitler's services because of his anti-Semitism, since 'the Jews themselves were to blame for anti-Semitism'.

17. F Thyssen, *I Paid Hitler* (London, 1941), p 123.

18. W Keppler, 'Testimony at the Flick Trial', *IMT*, Volume 12, pp 289-90.

19. Party leaders had been busy for some time reassuring big business that Nazi 'socialism' had nothing in common with the socialism of the workers' movement. The local NSDAP chief in Dresden wrote in a letter dated 18 February 1930 to a factory manager named Fritsche in Weimar: 'Do not let yourself be continually confused by the text of our posters... Of course, there are catchwords like "Down with capitalism"... but these are necessary (unquestionably), for under the flag of "German national" or "National" alone, you must know, we should never reach our goal, we should have no future. We must talk the language of the embittered socialist workmen... or else they wouldn't feel at home with us. We don't come out with a direct programme... for reasons of diplomacy.'

20. F von Papen, *Memoirs* (London, 1941), pp 132-41.

21. With their Reichstag representation now greatly enlarged, the Nazis were in a position more than to compensate some of their business benefactors. On 21 January 1931, at a session of the Reichstag appropriations committee, the NSDAP deputy Reinhardt proposed a subsidy of 600 000 RM for the Lahn Freigerlander Mining Company, Flick's United Steel Works (by now in serious financial difficulties) and Krupp AG. Also on 21 January, the Nazi Reichstag fraction voted for a subsidy of seven million RM for the firm of Mansfeld AG. Apart from replenishing the depleted coffers of the investment-starved firms, the party's active support for government aid to big business did much to dispel doubts concerning Hitler's economic and social policy.

22. W Funk, 'Testimony at Interview', 4 June 1945, PS-2828.

23. Heinrichsbauer wrote shortly after the war (in his *Heavy Industry and Politics*, 1948) that 'in making these payments the mining industry reasoned that contact must be established and maintained continuously with the [Nazi] Party, and that this could best be done by steady subsidies. It was believed that the party could count on a considerable increase in membership because of the deepening economic crisis, as a result of Communist propaganda for a civil war, and in view of the ever more evident failure of the parliament, the government, etc, it would be dangerous to leave a party that had so many deputies, who were trained only in propaganda and not in constructive work and responsibility, to its own designs. There were no scruples against taking that sort of an interest, in as much as relations were maintained with other parties also, and as the avowed programme of the NSDAP... seemed to be one to which everyone could subscribe. It was considered opportune, however, not to place the subsidies in the hands of the party's executive, as there could then be no check upon the uses to which they were put, but rather someone should be selected in whose political common sense and honest administration of funds one could have confidence. Gregor Strasser, organiser for the Nazi Party, who enjoyed a splendid reputation in the [Rhine-Westphalian] region, seemed the proper person. Accordingly, beginning in the spring of 1931 [NB], a monthly sum of RM 10 000 was placed at Strasser's disposal. The chief argument for this form of subsidy was the desirability of consciously strengthening the hands of persons and offices within the party whose views were in contrast to those of men like Goebbels and Goering...' This last observation throws a new light on relations between heavy industry and the Nazis. If Heinrichsbauer is right in what he says, then the coal barons did not share either Schacht's or the iron and steel masters' confidence in Goering, preferring to work through the party organiser Gregor Strasser, who in some business circles was regarded as a member of the party's radical wing. Therefore it must have been in the former capacity that he received funds from the Rhenish-Westphalian coal syndicate.

24. W Funk, Statement of 28 June 1945, EC 440.

25. The meeting referred to was that held at the Cologne house of banker Baron Kurt von Schröder, on 4 January 1933. Present apart from Schröder, who arranged the meeting, were von Papen, Keppler, Himmler and Hitler, who was using Papen's intimate relations with President Hindenburg and his son Oskar to secure the removal of his rival von Schleicher and the formation of a government of 'National Concentration' headed by Hitler and staffed largely by leaders of the monarchist right. The 'Friends of the Economy' was in fact an enlarged version of the original Keppler circle set up in 1931 on Hitler's initiative. Under Himmler's leadership, the circle enrolled businessmen into the officers' corps of the SS (rather than the plebeian SA) thus further cementing the already burgeoning alliance between reactionary big business and the Nazi Party. The 'Friends of the Economy' continued to function throughout the 12 years of the Nazi rule. Its activities will be examined in the chapter 'Capital and Labour in the Third Reich'.

26. W Funk, Statement of 28 June 1945, EC 440.

27. W Funk, 'Testimony at Interview', 26 June 1945, 2828-PS.

28. The shift towards Presidential-Bonapartist rule initiated by Brüning can be illustrated graphically. In 1930, the Reichstag passed 98 laws, in 1931 only 34, while Hindenburg

issued 42 emergency decrees under Article 48. In 1932, a mere five laws were made by the Reichstag, while President Hindenburg approved 60!

29. Among those called in to advise the hard-pressed Brüning government was Schacht, whose connections with the Nazis were by this time well known. This did not dissuade the Chancellor from offering the former Reichsbank President the post of Reichs Commissioner 'and in that capacity to bring order out of the chaos of the bank crisis'. It was an invitation that Schacht, busy undermining Brüning's standing in business circles, politely but firmly declined. 'Nor would I budge an inch, even when President Hindenburg sent Herr Meissner, his Secretary of State, who conveyed the President's own wish that I would accept the position.' (Schacht, *My First Seventy-Six Years*, p 288) Schacht was playing for far higher stakes than a post in Brüning's doomed cabinet.

30. According to a report of the special advisory committee of the Bank for International Settlements dated December 1931, 'in the first seven months of 1931, 2900 million RM (690 780 000 dollars) short-term credits were withdrawn, principally in June and July... The Reichsbank reserves which stood at 2685 million RM at the end of 1930 and even at 2576 million RM at the beginning of June 1931 had fallen to 1613 million RM on 31 July 1931. Of this last amount, however, it owed at short term 630 million RM in respect of the rediscount credits granted to it by the BIS and the central banks, and to the Golddiscountbank and by an American banking consortium. [Despite emergency measures]... the reserve has fallen still further, until on 15 December 1931, it was no more than 1161 million RM of which 630 million RM represent the amounts due under the rediscount credits referred to above. The percentage for the note issue has thus fallen to 25.6 per cent or if the 630 million RMs be excluded, to 11.7 per cent...' The report then outlined the measures taken by Brüning to effect reductions in central government and local expenditure to counter this drastic drop in currency reserves: 'The decline of economic activity, the fall of profits resulting from the falling prices, and the lower yield of the taxes on wages due to increasing unemployment and lower wage rates have seriously reduced the yield of taxation. This fall (taken in conjunction with the cost of maintaining the growing amount of unemployed) had produced a critical situation in the public finances of Germany. In the five years preceding the depression, the revenue and expenditure of the Reich, the Federal States and the communes showed a rapid increase... The revenue receipts for 1930-31 fell considerably short of the original estimates... Fresh estimates made in September 1931 showed an estimated fall in the total receipts from taxes collected by the Reich... of not less than 1000 million RM... Apart from the increase in taxation, attempts are being made to meet the falling off in revenue by sweeping reductions in expenditure. So far as the Reich is concerned, expenditure on all objects other than service of the debt transfers to the Federal States, extra war burdens and emergency unemployment relief, were reduced from 1929 to 1932 from 4780 million RM to 3720 million, that is, a reduction of 1060 million RM or 22 per cent... [the German government] devoted all [its] efforts in securing the balance of the budget, not only in the Reich but also in the states and communes. Direct taxation was augmented by two increases of the income tax; indirect taxation by the imposition of further heavy duties on beer and tobacco, while finally the turnover tax has lately increased from 0.85 to 2.0 per cent. Sweeping economies have been effected in the expenditure of the Reich; a series of cuts in the salaries of all public servants, reducing them by over 30 per cent, has been made in the last 18 months, so that salaries will be now on a lower level than at the beginning of 1927. Similar measures have been taken with regard to the budgets of the Federal States and communes. The latter have been authorised, and in certain cases compelled, to levy new and additional taxation in the form of a poll tax, a local beer duty and a tax on beverages. The reductions in salaries also apply to officials employed by these bodies... In the sphere of wages, a general reduction approximately the level prevailing at the beginning of 1927 has to take place.' (*Federal Reserve Bulletin*, Volume 18, no 1, January 1932) And still the industrialists and bankers were not satisfied.

31. *Berliner Tageblatt*, 13 July 1931. Fears concerning the outcome of the crisis were not confined to the German bourgeoisie and its press. A letter dated 15 June 1931 from the US Ambassador in Berlin to his state secretary Stimson reported that 'the situation in Germany

is exceedingly critical... more critical than, at any time during the last six years... The key to the situation seems to rest with the US and France... It is no use disguising our fear that if confidence is not speedily restored we may be faced not merely with a complete cessation of reparations payments, but with a financial collapse in Germany and Austria, involving serious risk of political and social trouble in those countries, and consequent repercussion on the rest of Europe.’

32. The necessity of a political solution to the chronic problems facing German capitalism did not escape the economic experts of the Institute for Business Research, which, at the end of 1930, produced a detailed and searching analysis of the causes behind the current credit crisis and the acute shortage of capital reserves for industrial investment: ‘An ample supply of credits for the German economy depends, as before, on the influx of long-term foreign credits... The prerequisite... is... that the economic and political confidence necessary for the granting of credits be established.’ This conclusion, implicitly a criticism of Brüning’s policy, was echoed by von Papen’s journal *Germania*: ‘The business situation is not unlikely to experience a further deterioration. Much could, however, be done to counteract such factors as make for a further recession, if the politically engendered “crisis of confidence” could be eliminated.’

33. O Dietrich, *With Hitler on the Road to Power* (1934), pp 12-13, emphasis added.

34. Industrialists and bankers were not the only men of property to take an increasing interest in Hitler’s party during 1931. Hermann Rauschning, agrarian leader and DNVP President of the Danzig Free State Senate, who joined the Nazis in that year, writes: ‘I believe today just as much as I did 10 years ago that we were driven into the Nazi movement by justified misgivings and apprehensions... justified on the ground that the late fruit of the revolution in Germany... was entirely out of date and that this admittance of the idols of national democracy was as mistaken for Germany as for all the new national states of Central Europe... I entered the party in the summer of 1931... It is perhaps an indication of the fact that the great crisis brought into the political arena elements that had seen no inclination until just then of playing any active part in political life. Just as the mass of the lower middle class suddenly became interested in politics and crowded into Nazism, so sections of the educated felt compelled to play their part in public life. It was not Nazism but necessity that made these classes politically-minded and brought them into action - the necessity born of the inadequacy of the political leaders and the failure of essential problems to find a solution.’ (H Rauschning, *Make and Break With the Nazis* (London, 1941), pp 87, 130)

35. E Calic, *Unmasked* (London, 1971), p 20.

36. Calic, *Unmasked*, p 22.

37. Calic, *Unmasked*, p 23, emphasis added.

38. Calic, *Unmasked*, p 24.

39. Calic, *Unmasked*, pp 24-25.

40. Calic, *Unmasked*, p 32.

41. Calic, *Unmasked*, pp 36-40, emphasis added.

42. Calic, *Unmasked*, pp 59-62, emphasis added.

43. Calic, *Unmasked*, pp 86-87. Pacelli negotiated the Concordat between the Vatican and the Third Reich. Concluded on 8 July, and negotiated on Hitler’s behalf by the Catholic von Papen, it granted what the Nazis had long sought - the liquidation of all Catholic political and trade union organisations, and greatly facilitated Hitler’s onslaught on the Catholic youth. On its conclusion, German and Vatican Catholic leaders subscribed to a statement issued by Hitler which asserted that the Concordat furnished ‘sufficient guarantee that the German citizens of the Roman Catholic faith will from now on place themselves in the service of the new National Socialist State’.

44. Calic, *Unmasked*, pp 78-79, emphasis added.

45. Calic, *Unmasked*, pp 78-79.

46. A full analysis of the so-called ‘red referendum’ appears in Chapter XXII, ‘Stalin Over Germany’.

47. The following invitation for this meeting was sent to Gustav Krupp by the Nazi agent in the Ruhr, Heinrichsbauer. Dated 3 September 1931, it reads: ‘Dear Mr [Krupp] von Bohlen, Mr Hitler is very anxious to meet a circle of gentlemen from the Rhenish-Westphalian Industry for a fundamental discussion of the present situation. It appeared expedient for certain reasons not to arrange this discussion in the [Ruhr] district, but in Berlin. Since Mr Hitler has asked me to act as intermediate, I take the liberty to inquire if you are interested in such a discussion. It is arranged for 11 September, 8.30 pm in the flat of Prince Wied, Berlin, W62, Kurfursten Street 122. I have further approached the gentlemen Brandi, Fickler, Hold, Kirdorf, Kootzbach, Knepper, Ernst Pönsen, Reusch, Springorum, Fritz Tengelmann, Vögler and Winkhaus, in this matter. I would be obliged for a speedy reply. I take the liberty to ask for confidential treatment. Yours truly, signed, Heinrichsbauer.’ (N1446). Taken together with Hitler’s claim in the already quoted interview that Krupp was giving money to the Nazis as early as May 1931, this letter throws fresh light on the oft-repeated assertion that only after Hitler was in power did Gustav Krupp reveal any political sympathies for the Nazis.

48. Seats, with previous results in brackets, were distributed as follows: SPD 46 (60), KPD 35 (27), NSDAP 43 (3), DNVP 9 (22), DVP 7 (20), State (DDP) 14 (21), Economic 2 (4), Centre 2 (2), Christian Socialists 2 (0). Once again the pattern of the September 1930 Reichstag elections emerges, with the Nazis mopping up a huge slice of the former bourgeois party vote, while the two workers’ parties hold their ground, with the KPD gaining appreciably on the SPD.

49. Naturally Papen was among those clamouring at this time for a sharp change of course. In his *Germania*, Papen wrote: ‘The concealed dictatorship of the Chancellor must strip off its parliamentary trimmings. The Chancellor should and must direct a national cabinet, a government, a dictatorship on a national foundation...’ Of the growing Nazi movement, Papen said it was Brüning’s duty to ‘forge these glowing masses before they overflow with hostility; above all this youth, still undisciplined, to be sure, but valuable material, must be fitted into the state, and by education won for the state’.

50. Business failures for the first nine months of 1931 totalled 15 461, with September recording 1341 bankruptcies compared with only 759 for the same month in 1930.

51. Quoted in Schacht, *My First Seventy-Six Years*, pp 291-92, emphasis added.

52. Erich Eyck writes that the Nazi-monarchist alliance consummated at Bad Harzburg ‘was a complete miscarriage’, and that ‘the total effect of the raucous meeting at Bad Harzburg was the addition of one more entry to the dictionary of political terminology: “The Harzburg Front”...’ (*A History of the Weimar Republic*, Volume 11, p 333, p 355). William Shirer also deemed it of little or no import: ‘Within a few days the Harzburg Front was facing collapse; the various elements of it were once more at each others’ throats.’ (*The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (London, 1962), p 154); while Alan Bullock takes a similar line in his biography of Hitler, devoting less than a page to the rally: ‘The united front of the National Opposition had virtually collapsed before it was established...’ (*Hitler* (London, 1960), p 169) All overlook the contradictory nature of the Hitler - monarchist alliance; that it flowed from an agreement on aims - the destruction of Marxism (by which was meant the entire German workers’ movement) - and a bitter disagreement over the methods and as to whom should wield the political power in a truly ‘national’ Germany - the old élites or Hitler’s plebeians. The latter dispute repeatedly forced the two main partners in the National Opposition apart, but the even more fundamental unity over social and economic goals just as often pulled them together again - long and hard enough to make possible the formation in January 1933 of the government of the ‘National Opposition’. Thus ‘vulgar’ Marxism - the mechanical projection of economics into politics - and liberal conceptions of historical and social development - namely the denial or, more often, minimisation of the class basis of National Socialism - tend to supplement each other. They both fail to penetrate to the contradictory

reality that lay beneath Hitler's antagonistic relationship with all the parties and leaders of German conservatism.

53. On the eve of the vote, Hitler addressed an open letter to Brüning in the *Völkischer Beobachter*, which declared that 'although I have the greatest respect for you personally, Herr Chancellor, I regard the vanquishing of your system and your government as the overcoming of the last obstacle to the emancipation of the German people for their historic task of combating Bolshevism'.

54. During November and December, Hitler conducted talks with chief-of-staff General Kurt von Schleicher, the preliminary work for this reconciliation having been conducted by Ernst Röhm in the period after his return to leadership of the SA at the beginning of 1931 (the first fruits of Captain Röhm's return were the lifting of a *Reichswehr* ban on the employment of NSDAP members in army arsenals and depots). Commenting on the talks, which were correctly seen in ruling class circles as a further recognition of the growing power of the Nazi movement, Funk's *Berliner Börsen Zeitung* wrote: 'After the open-minded talk between Adolf Hitler and the *Reichswehr* Ministry we may hope that the relationship between other governmental agencies and the strongest German party on the right will also be re-examined.'

55. Scheringer's defection to the Stalinists, and its wider political implications, are discussed in Chapter XXII.

56. Stennes and his supporters had no intention of enrolling in the ranks of the KPD, but the *Berliner Tageblatt* was certainly nearer the mark when it asserted that the Stalinists would have welcomed their arrival with open arms.

57. N18497, emphasis added.

58. Anton Aigner, 'Why Did I Become a National Socialist? Die Mittelstands Front', supplement to *Die Front*, 28 November 1931.

59. Goebbels struck an entirely different note in his propaganda after the Nazi seizure of power. One of his definitions of Nazi 'socialism' likened it to 'the legacy of the Prussian army, of Prussian officialdom. It is that kind of socialism which enabled Frederick the Great and his grenadiers to carry on a war for seven years', a parallel that quite possibly had been stolen from Schacht's speech to the Bad Harzburg rally two years before.

Fascism in Germany. Robin Blick 1975

Chapter XXI: 'Red Unions'

Whether the trade unions and their leaders are good or bad one thing is clear, namely, that the workers regard the trade unions as their bastions against the capitalists... Hurling abuse and violent epithets at the reformist leaders will not help, on the contrary, abuse and violent epithets can only create the impression among the workers that the aim is not to secure the removal of bad leaders, but to wreck the trade unions. (JV Stalin, *Interview With the Participants in the Conference of Agitation and Propaganda Departments*, 14 October 1925)

The trade unions are directed by reformist bureaucrats who are connected in all manner of ways with the capitalist class. Why is it surprising, then, that the unorganised workers proved to be more revolutionary than the organised? Could it indeed have been otherwise? (JV Stalin, *The Right Danger in the KPD*, 19 December 1928)

The central thrust of Trotsky's critique of Third Period Stalinist policy in Germany was that far from its flood of invective against 'social fascism' weakening the hold of reformism on the working class, the net result of the German Communist Party's ultra-left tactic of the 'united front from below', and the refusal of any agreement with the reformist organisations from above, was quite opposite to the one intended. Instead of the Social Democratic Party's workers deserting their 'social fascist' and a thousand times 'exposed' leaders *en masse* for the KPD, the theory and practice of 'social fascism' erected a barrier between Communism and the reformist workers. Far from accelerating the disintegration of the reformist bureaucracy at a time when Social Democracy came out quite openly for the defence of a hideous capitalist status quo, the verbal leftism and tactical adventurism of the KPD leadership played into the hands of the reformists, permitting them a new lease of life that historically they never merited. Thus the Social Democrats were, despite the objectively favourable conditions for the victory of Communism over reformism, allowed to live on to perpetrate a betrayal no less monumental than those of 1914 and 1918 - capitulation to fascism without even a token gesture of opposition. That the reformists were in a strong enough position to commit this act of perfidy was due not to any inner virility of Social Democracy - it had exhibited all the signs of decay in the earliest years of Weimar Germany - but exclusively the political and historical responsibility of the KPD leadership, and, above all, of the guiding circles of the Communist International headed by Stalin, who alone determined the ruinous course pursued by the party in Germany. And there could be no better example and lesson of ultra-leftism, *the craving for an opportunist short cut to winning the 'independent leadership' of the entire working class*, than the adventurist policies adopted by the KPD in the trade unions.

While errors of tactics, emphasis and perspective were undoubtedly made, it had never been the intention of the Red International of Labour Unions (RILU) in its early years to split a minority of revolutionary-minded workers away from their reformist brothers in the Social Democratic-led trade unions of the International Federation based in Amsterdam. To what extent the decision to launch 'red' breakaway unions in Germany, taken by the KPD and Communist International leadership towards the end of 1930, violated the spirit as well as letter of official RILU policy can be seen from a brief examination of the main resolutions and manifestos adopted by the Communist trade union centre in the first two years of its activity. The initial proposal to found a trade union centre rivalling that of the reformists came from Zinoviev, who made it in March 1920 at the Ninth Congress of the Russian Communist Party. The next month, a letter proposing the formation of a red trade union international was sent 'to the trade unions of all countries' calling on them to break from Amsterdam and adhere to the Comintern centre. Bearing in mind that this letter was drafted at a time when hopes were at their highest of a revolutionary breakthrough in Central and Western Europe (the Italian proletariat was still on the offensive, and in Germany, the flames of revolt lit by the Kapp putsch were still burning brightly in the Ruhr and other industrial centres), we can understand why it adopted a perspective that proved to be unduly optimistic.

^[1] The letter announced that:

... in opposition to the yellow international of unions which the bourgeois agents are trying to recreate in Amsterdam, Paris and Washington [the venue of a proposed 'international labour conference' to which the reformist trade union leaders had been invited - RB], we should put up a genuinely proletarian *red* international of trade unions, marching side by side with the Third International.

To this end, sympathetic and interested trade unions or leaders were invited to attend the forthcoming Second Congress of the Communist International where the formal decision was taken to launch the new red trade union international. Here too, the manifesto of the new organisation was on several counts proved wrong in its perspective of reformist trade unionism withering away under the double blows of an ever-deepening capitalist crisis and a progressively more radicalised proletariat. Far too simple was the idea conveyed by the phrase ‘the working masses are for the revolution, the old trade union organisations are against it’, for if it were indeed true that the majority of proletarians had made a conscious decision to reject reformism and go over to Communism, then the reformist bureaucracy was certainly doomed to a very rapid and violent death. But this telescoped and to a degree vulgarised conception of the complex, oscillating and contradictory fashion by which the masses accomplish the break from opportunism (one confirmed by the experiences of Bolshevism in Russia) does not negate the value of the general tactical proposals developed by the RILU in this and other documents of the period. And in fact, it soon became obvious to the RILU leadership that with the decline in the immediate postwar revolutionary wave and the onset of a phase of strong capitalist reaction (heralded by the betrayal of the Italian revolution in September 1920) a longer perspective would have to be adopted in relation to the reformist-led trade unions and their international. At no time did the RILU advocate splits of ‘red’ minorities, which then proclaimed their adherence to Moscow. From the very outset, the goal was the winning of a clear and firm majority *within* the existing trade union, then in the national trade union centre, and only then *on the basis of these consolidated victories for Communism over reformism*, adherence to the RILU. ^[2]

The Third Comintern Congress, held in the summer of 1921, was almost entirely taken up with the struggle against leftism, whose most dangerous and virulent expression had been the KPD-initiated revolt in central Germany in the spring of that year - the so-called ‘March Action’. Leftism was also attacked in the congress theses on the Communist International and the RILU, the latter organisation having held its founding congress in July 1921 (380 delegates attended from 41 countries, the vast majority representing not the unions, but minority revolutionary tendencies within reformist or syndicalist trade unions). Opposition to consistent work in the reformist trade unions had been advocated at the Comintern congress by delegates from the syndicalist splinter from the KPD, the KAPD, their arguments being mainly a stale rehash of the old Spartacist theory that participation in trade union and parliamentary activity was unbecoming for a revolutionary, and a capitulation to opportunism. F Meyer of the KAPD anticipated the line of Third Period Stalinism when he claimed that in the period of capitalist decline, the trade unions were finished as bodies for winning reforms, and consequently should be deserted by revolutionaries. New ‘red’ unions had to be built up alongside and against the doomed reformist ones (these leftist views, the logical outcome of syndicalist thinking, were endorsed by shop steward delegates from Britain, and syndicalists from France, Italy and Spain). The theses repudiated their line of a retreat from the trade unions:

Communists must explain to the proletarians that salvation is to be found *not in leaving the old trade unions and remaining unorganised, but in revolutionising the trade unions*, ridding them of the spirit of reformism and of the treacherous reformist leaders, and so transforming the unions into real mainstays of the revolutionary proletariat. In the forthcoming period the chief task for all Communists is to work steadily, energetically and stubbornly to win the majority of the workers in all unions, *not to let themselves be discouraged by the present reactionary mood in the unions*, but to seek, despite all resistance, to win the unions for Communism by the most active participation in their day-to-day struggles. [Emphasis added] ^[3]

This remained the RILU perspective throughout the next two years, a period which, contrary to the early expectations of the Comintern leadership, saw the temporary stabilisation of capitalist rule and with it a retrenchment of its left support in the proletariat, the reformist bureaucracy. Thus the ECCI resolution *On the Tasks of Communists in Trade Unions*, adopted at its first enlarged plenum in February 1922, at a time when the Comintern was pressing hard for a united front with the Second and Vienna Internationals, stressed the necessity of continuing the fight to win the existing unions and union federations for Communist policies, and to combat any tendency in the working class or the Communist parties to turn their backs on the reformist trade unions:

In the forthcoming period the task of Communists is *to extend their influence in the old reformist trade unions*, to fight the splitting policy of the Amsterdam leaders, *and to carry out carefully and consistently the tactics of the united front in the trade union movement*. However large the minority within an individual union or trade union federation is, *Communists must see that this*

minority stays within its organisation and fights for carrying through the programme and tactics of the minority. The adherence of such trade unions to the RILU *can only be an ideological one*, which they must demonstrate by the practical execution of the decisions of the first congress of the revolutionary unions and by following RILU tactics... We remain inside the national trade union associations *and only join the RILU as organisations if we succeed in winning the majority for the principles of the RILU.* At their trade union congress *workers of every country will have to decide whose programme and tactics serve the interests of the working class - those of the Amsterdam International or those of the RILU. This is the only way in which the broad masses will learn who are the splitters, who are hampering the formation of a powerful centre against the powerful employing class.* [Emphasis added]

Stalinist trade union policy in the Third Period violated every one of these tactical recommendations and principles, and nowhere more so than in Germany, where the ADGB unions were deeply rooted in the culture, consciousness and struggles of the working class, and where their sectarian neglect would serve only the purposes of the monopolist bourgeoisie and the Nazis who sought their destruction. But, as we have already seen, this ultra-leftist turn was prepared as well as preceded by a period of right opportunism, during which the leadership of the Soviet bureaucracy allied the parties of the Comintern - notably the British party - with the uppermost circles of the Social Democratic trade union bureaucracy in the capitalist countries - a united front *only* at the top, a bloc which tied the hands of the Communist parties in their fight for the leadership of the working class against the reformists, left as well as right. Such was the nature of the Anglo-Soviet Trade Union Committee, formed following a visit to the Soviet Union by a TUC delegation towards the end of 1924. Founded initially to organise the joint defence of the Soviet Union against possible imperialist intervention, under the combined leadership of the Stalinist faction in the USSR (which included at that time the future Right Oppositionist Tomsky, head of the Soviet trade unions) and the General Council of the TUC, it made possible the betrayal of the British General Strike and the isolation and eventual defeat of the miners. The Communist Party-influenced trade union organisation, the National Minority Movement, limited itself both before and during the strike to the slogan 'All Power To the General Council', thus providing an essential left cover for the trade union bureaucracy as it sought only to capitulate to Prime Minister Baldwin at the earliest possible moment. Trotsky was scathing in his criticism of the Stalinist course during the period surrounding the British General Strike, and he attacked it ferociously both in the programmatic document of the Left Opposition (*The Platform of the Left Opposition*, 1927) and in one of his last speeches to a Soviet party body, that of 1 August 1927, to a joint session of the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission:

Is it possible to pose seriously the question of a revolutionary struggle against war and of the genuine defence of the USSR while at the same time orienting towards the Anglo-Russian Committee? Is it possible to orient the working-class masses toward a general strike and an armed insurrection in the course of a war while simultaneously orienting towards a bloc with Purcell, Hicks and other traitors? I ask: will our defencism be Bolshevik or trade unionist? ... You turned the Minority Movement bound hand and foot to the gentlemen of the General Council. And in the Minority Movement itself you likewise refuse to counterpose, and are incapable of counterposing, genuine revolutionists to the oily reformists. You rejected a small but sturdier rope for a bigger and an utterly rotten one. ^[41]

Trotsky at no time turned the tactic of the united front into a fetish or, after the manner of the Brandlerites, a strategy. If its continued application fails to serve its original purpose (which for a Communist is that of strengthening the unity of the working class in its struggle against capitalism), then the united front must be terminated forthwith, and a merciless campaign of exposure conducted against the reformist leaders who have, under the cover of unity, sought to weaken the fight of the working class against capital, and to adapt it to their policy of class-collaboration with the bourgeoisie. The experience of the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee (and, indeed that of Brandler's centrist bloc with the German left Social Democrats in the autumn of 1923) serves as a warning as to the ever-present dangers of an opportunist adaptation to reformism, one that can transform the united front tactic into a weapon not of struggle against capital (and in the longer term, as a means of clarifying workers on the role of Social Democracy and therefore of eventually breaking them from it), but as a sophisticated means of preserving its rule and with it the continued domination of the reformist bureaucracy over the working class.

The British General Strike of 1926 provides the classic case of a trade union bureaucracy being protected by the openly right-opportunist policies of Stalinism: namely those that prevailed in the Communist

International and the RILU in the period between 1925 and the end of 1927, which found Stalin's faction closely allied with the Bukharin group and dependent for social support on the richer elements of town and country. Germany in the period between 1930 and 1933 provides us with the other classic instance of Stalinism insulating the trade union bureaucracy from the pressure of its radicalised workers, only on this occasion this role was performed from the ultra-left, in the period when the Stalinist leadership had undertaken a sharp turn towards the 'liquidation' of its former *Kulak* allies, and had broken from the group of Bukharin, Tomsy and Rykov. ^[5]

As we saw in Chapter XVI, the 'new line' on trade union tactics and strategy was formally introduced at the Fourth Congress of the RILU in the spring of 1928. At the congress, the RILU chief Lozovsky set the tone for the trade union policy pursued in Germany in the three years before Hitler came to power, when he declared that the Amsterdam unions were becoming fused 'with the employers' organisations' and transformed 'into organisations for strikebreaking'. The evidence available suggests that if Lozovsky had had his way, the KPD would have been instructed to launch its breakaway 'red' unions in 1928, and not towards the end of 1930, as was in fact the case. And why not, if indeed the reformist bureaucracy which dominated these unions had been transformed 'into the instrument of fascism in the trade union movement... working in the united front with fascism'? 'Part of the leaders of the reformist trade unions are already in open and full ideological and political union with fascism' was the contention of one of the theses approved at the RILU congress. However, both in the ECCI and the KPD itself, more 'moderate' forces succeeded in delaying this drastic - and disastrous - turn for another two years. But the ever-leftwards drive was irresistible, nourished not only by the adventurist economic policy of Stalin in the Soviet Union, but the opportunist errors of the Communist International in the previous period and the continued betrayals of the reformist trade union bureaucracies in the capitalist countries. ^[6]

The Reichstag election of September 1930 indicated that despite the false leftist line being pursued by the KPD in relation to the reformist-led workers, the party had begun to make inroads into the working-class supporters of the SPD. Where the Stalinists erred was to transform this tendency - one that flowed from the deepening economic and political crisis, and not from any tactical prowess on the part of the KPD leadership - into a victory of the first magnitude. Only in a few though important regions was the KPD on anything like equal terms with the local reformist organisations in terms of popular support; as can be seen from the following table, which gives the comparative votes in the 1930 elections for the two workers' parties, in selected districts.

Percentage of Popular Vote		
District	SPD	KPD
Berlin	28.0	33.0
Magdeburg	37.2	10.0
Meresburg	19.5	25.0
East Hanover	28.1	7.5
South Hanover	39.4	5.5
Westphalia North	19.8	11.3
Westphalia South	21.3	17.0
East Düsseldorf	13.7	26.0
West Düsseldorf	11.8	17.5
Dresden	34.7	12.4
Leipzig	34.9	17.2
Chemnitz	28.3	18.5
Hamburg	32.0	18.0
Thuringia	28.9	15.2

And in fact these figures give an inflated impression of the real influence of the KPD in those strategic positions where Communist leadership counts most - namely in the workplaces and the trade unions. The high-point of KPD influence in the ADGB unions had been reached in the crisis year of 1923, when wholesale defections from the reformists led to Communist fractions assuming positions of leadership in many districts. Even in 1924, when the trend was overwhelmingly back towards the reformists and away from the defeated KPD, Communist candidates recorded their best ever successes in elections to the works councils set up by the Weimar Constitution. On the railways - always a stronghold of the reformists - KPD candidates won 19.46 per cent of the total votes recorded. In the radical Ruhr, the figures were even better, the KPD winning 34.23 per cent of the votes in the mines, as opposed to 33.85 per cent running on the official ADGB ticket (the remaining votes went to Catholic and other non-socialist union candidates). Thereafter, with the consolidation of the bourgeoisie and its reformist agencies in the workers' movement, came decline, until by 1926 in the elections to the railway works councils, the KPD won a mere 2.06 per cent of the total votes. Neither had these weak positions been markedly improved when, with the inauguration of the new trade union tactic in 1928, the ECCI and the RILU instructed the KPD to make its bid for 'independent' leadership of the class struggle in the plants, mines and other workplaces. Another enormous obstacle to the party's securing a broad base in the trade unions was the chronic instability of the party membership itself. The bureaucratic style of leadership by decree, first instituted by Zinoviev in 1924, and taken to its ultimate under Stalin through his henchmen Thälmann, Neumann and Ulbricht, together with the constant zigzags in policy from ultra-leftism to right opportunism and back again to even wilder adventurism, had the inevitable (and under Stalin, desired) result of driving out of the party the most critical-minded and class-conscious workers without whose aid the KPD could not hope to gather around itself the majority of the proletariat. There thus developed an incredibly rapid turnover of membership, at a rate far above that arising from the process of selection, necessary to every revolutionary party, of assimilation and rejection. The training of a powerful cadre in the workplaces and in the unions capable of challenging the reformists for leadership of the class was therefore hampered at every turn, since few workers remained long enough in the party to receive such a basic Leninist training (quite apart from the fact that under the party's Stalinist regime, no such training could be provided anyway). Yet another handicap was the KPD's reliance on unemployed workers as its main source of recruitment and field of activity. While no revolutionary party should neglect the task of organising workers excluded from production (to do so would invite and facilitate the intervention of fascists), it remains a basic truth of the class struggle that it is the workers at the point of production and, in countries where there is a strong tradition of trade unionism, in the unions who are going to make the revolution. For that reason, the main energies and the strategic orientation of the revolutionary party must be directed towards this layer of the proletariat. ^[7] This had been one of the cardinal principles insisted upon by the RILU in its early years. Now, on the expressed order of the ECCI and the RILU, it was to be openly flouted.

A clear hint of the line that was shortly to be forced on the KPD in the trade unions came at the Plenary session of the RILU held at the end of 1929, where Paul Merker, who had been one of the most vocal advocates of the 'new line' (and had even taken it to excesses that embarrassed the ECCI), declared on behalf of the German delegation that 'the social fascist apparatus was merging more and more with the state apparatus and the national fascist [that is, Nazi] movement...', adding the warning that 'whoever opposed or sabotaged the new policy of the RILU would be removed from the leadership'. ^[8] Lozovsky, not to be outdone in verbal radicalism, pointed out that 'the new fact in the situation was that the higher and middle officials and a large section of the lower officials of the reformist trade unions and a great section of the aristocracy of labour were already fascist...'. ^[9] The sixth session of the RILU, held several weeks later, upheld this judgement - one that consigned not only the entire German trade union movement, but several million workers, to the camp of fascism - in its main policy resolution:

The reformist bureaucracy have passed over from covert sabotage of strikes to the open recruiting of blacklegs and the direct organisation of police - reformist raids on strikers and their strike committees. Today every strike is opposed by the open blackleg machinery of the reformist unions. We find a rapid fascistisation of the reformist trade union apparatus taking place... our most important task is to intensify the struggle for the trade union masses and to pit them against this blacklegging trade union machine, to sharpen the struggle against the scab functionaries of social fascism... ^[10]

A resolution of the February 1930 enlarged Presidium of the ECCI on the forthcoming fifth congress of the RILU (held in August 1930) demanded of the Communist parties that they 'ensure that preparations

for the fifth congress be made with wide application of severe self-criticism and determined struggle against trade union legalism and opportunism in practice...'.^[11] It soon became clear what was meant by 'trade union legalism'. In his report to the Sixteenth Congress of the CPSU on 5 July 1930 (a month before the Fifth RILU Congress) Molotov dwelt on the opposition that existed inside the KPD to its new tactic of running on a separate 'red' ticket in the factory council elections earlier that year (previously party candidates had stood as individual Communists on a joint list with the SPD candidates). Three hundred Communist candidates had been expelled from the party for refusing to follow the new policy of running as candidates of the Red Trade Union Opposition (RGO), the KPD trade union fraction within the ADGB. The resistance to the new tactic, said Molotov, highlighted the need to 'struggle against subordinating our policy to trade union reformist legalism, the struggle against all blocs with Social Democracy and for the Bolshevik application of the tactic of the united front from below'.^[12] Molotov, who was currently fast emerging as one of the leaders closest to Stalin in the USSR (he also served him as Bukharin's successor in the ECCI), then revealed that important changes were being planned for the RGO's activities:

We must bind this struggle with the strengthening in every possible way of our trade union opposition in the reformist unions and with the transformation of that opposition into the genuine centre of organisation of the working masses against Social Democracy and against the reformist trade union bureaucracy. *In Germany we have already taken a number of steps in that direction.*^[13]

Molotov returned to the question of the KPD and the German trade unions in his reply to discussion two days later:

In connection with the increased acuteness of class contradictions and increased activity of the proletarian masses, the CI advanced and consistently applied the tactic of 'class against class'. The essential principle of these tactics consists in rejecting any agreement whatsoever with Social Democracy and in reinforcing the struggle to win the working masses away from social fascism by achieving the united proletarian front from below... The adoption of the tactics of 'class against class' meant not only the complete abandonment of any blocs with the Social Democrats but the beginning of an intensified struggle against social fascism all along the line. The transition to the tactics of 'class against class' meant more than the elimination of electoral agreements with Social Democracy. In Germany... such agreements, even previously, used not to be concluded. But in the sphere of economic struggle, the KPD, like the Communist parties in other countries where there are no red trade unions, worked almost exclusively within the framework of the reformist trade unions. [However]... the sharpening of the class struggle, and the creation of the triple alliance of the employers, the bourgeois state and the Social Democrats against the workers have brought new tasks before the Communist parties. [They]... have been faced with the question of the *independent leadership* of class battles... Hence inevitably there followed the struggle against the subordination of the Communist parties' policy to reformist trade union legalism, and, in connection with this, such fighting tasks as the organisation of the unorganised, the setting up of mass struggle in spite of and against the Social Democratic and trade union leaders, the promotion of 'Red lists' at factory elections, etc...^[14]

There then followed the long-awaited Fifth RILU Congress, which the most extreme of the leftists hoped to use as a springboard to launch the KPD on its suicidal course towards the formation of 'red' unions in direct competition with those of the 'social fascist' and 'blacklegging' ADGB. In his report, Fritz Heckert of the KPD said that 'comrades have dropped the old dangerous slogan of "make the leaders fight" and adopted the line of organising and leading the independent struggle of the workers, alongside but apart from and in opposition to the reformists...'. He also attacked Trotsky's call for a united front against unemployment between the RILU and IFTU unions, a demand that had to be rejected in favour of 'creating a united front from below against the reformist trade union bureaucracy merged in the bourgeois state...'^[15] The congress resolution pushed the KPD to the banks of the trade union Rubicon when it endorsed the RGO's decision to drop the slogan of 'into the reformist unions'. For the next step, and one that flowed logically from a refusal to strengthen and recruit to the existing trade unions, was a repudiation of a Communist's basic duty to defend the organisations of his class, however reactionary the policies being pursued by their current leaders. And finally, by recommending to workers that they remain outside the ADGB unions, the KPD was forced to take the ultimate sectarian step of proclaiming its own 'revolutionary' and 'red' unions, organisations which, by their very minority nature and leftist

political line, could only further weaken and divide the working class, and so play directly into the hands of its enemies. As far as the ADGB leadership were concerned, nothing suited them more than to have the most class-conscious militants in their unions march off into the Stalinist wilderness, to organise the make-believe 'independent leadership of all economic struggles' that had been prescribed for such 'unions' by the RILU Congress. And as a double bonus for the bureaucracy, it enabled them - with some justification - to depict the Stalinists as the splitters and wreckers of trade union unity, which in Germany, with its long tradition of organisational discipline and solidarity, was an enormous crime in the eyes of millions of workers. All the Stalinists now required was a pretext on which to split - and here the ADGB bureaucracy proved most obliging.

The Berlin Metal-Workers' Strike

October 1930 was in many ways a crucial month for the German working class. It saw the SPD leadership torn on the rack between preserving their cherished links with the 'liberal' bourgeoisie (represented by the semi-Bonapartist regime of Brüning) and protecting their increasingly menaced position in the working class by going over to a policy of opposition against the government. October was also the month in which the Brüning cabinet made its first serious attempt to reduce the living standards of the working class by a direct cut in wage rates, and in which a strategically important and powerfully organised section of the working class undertook the first large-scale action to defend its existing conditions and democratic rights. On 10 October, wage cuts of eight per cent were announced for all adult workers in the metal (engineering) industry, to come into effect on 3 November. Berlin, the centre of German engineering, immediately became the focal point for resistance to this decree when more than 75 per cent of its metal-workers balloted to reject the cut and take strike action to defend their existing wage agreements with their employers. By 15 October, 140 000 metal-workers in the Berlin area were on strike. Not a single enterprise in the industry remained open. Three days later, with the ADGB metal-workers' union leadership forced into a position of leading a directly political strike against the wage-cutting edicts of the Brüning government, the SPD Reichstag fraction voted against a motion of no-confidence in the government. By this act of support (and not mere 'toleration') of Brüning's regime, the SPD leadership had ranged itself against the metal-workers' union. Could a Communist fraction in a trade union have asked for a more favourable situation? Here, presented on a plate, was the perfect issue with which to deepen the gulf between the rank-and-file SPD worker and trade unionist, and the SPD bureaucracy, a development that required the most careful approach to the trade union leaders who had been forced - against their wills in most cases - into a fight against the SPD-supported Brüning government. Above all, it was necessary to exploit this momentary but tactically priceless antagonism between the two segments of the reformist bureaucracy; a tactic that could only be pursued if the KPD avoided like the plague all sectarian experiments with RGO 'independent leadership' and ultimatism towards the many thousands of workers who still followed the leadership of the metal-workers' union. But as we know, the KPD was committed to an altogether different course. Right from the first day of the strike, the RGO set out to 'capture' it and by a series of bureaucratic manoeuvres, hopefully prevent the official union leadership from exerting any control over the course of the strike, even though a majority of the strikers themselves remained loyal to the reformist union leadership right to the end of the dispute and beyond.

As evidence that a majority of strikers had broken from the reformists, Paul Peschke cited the recruitment of '20 000 new members in two weeks' into the RGO, a fact that was also taken as proof of the possibility 'for building up a red metal-workers' union in Berlin...'.^[16] Apparently it did not suffice to announce, even as the strike was in progress, that the RGO intended to split away from the embattled metal-workers' union to form a 'red' rival. No, Peschke had to prove that he had learned his leftist lessons from Molotov, Lozovsky *et al*, and that therefore, despite a lack of tangible evidence to back up his wild claims, 'the national and social fascists are working hand in hand in order to disintegrate the strike front'. If this were indeed true, then there may well have been some basis for his claim that 'the majority [of strikers] are following the RGO and the KPD...'.^[17] But in fact, the rash and unfounded charge that fascists and reformists were jointly strikebreaking could only serve to alienate reformist-inclined workers from the RGO, and so buttress the bureaucracy in the metal-workers' union. Moreover, the KPD was able to coast along on the waves of a strike militancy only so long as the workers themselves were not faced up with the stark alternatives of accepting a return to work recommendation by their reformist leaders, or continuing the strike under the 'independent leadership' of the RGO, which had now staked out its claim to full red union status. The moment of truth for the Stalinists came when

Carl Severing (on behalf of an SPD leadership that found itself increasingly embarrassed by a strike directed against a government dependent on Social Democratic support for its survival) intervened in an attempt to end the dispute. Acting as an unofficial arbitrator between the union leaders and the employers (who included the big engineering works of the pro-Nazi Ernst Borsig), Severing 'persuaded' the metal-workers' officials to recommend a return to work, on 29 October, even before a ballot had been conducted, as in accordance with union rules. Here the RGO leadership made a fatal tactical error, one which flowed directly from their false analysis of Social Democracy which, according to Stalinist theory, had become organically fused with the capitalist state and the employers. The terms of the return to work were that the old wage contracts should prevail until a final decision on the dispute had been made by an arbitration court, and that there would be no victimisation of strikers. The arbitration court, composed of 'three impartial persons', was to give its ruling - binding on both parties - by the beginning of November. The Berlin Stalinist leadership responsible for the line of the RGO in the strike grossly misread the reactions of the majority of the strikers to this deal. Walter Ulbricht, secretary of the Berlin-Brandenburg District party organisation, brashly declared to a conference of 4000 RGO metal worker 'delegates' (precisely whom they represented became something of a mystery in the next few days) that:

Urich [a leading official of the metal-workers' union], Severing and Co can carry on what negotiations they like with Brüning and Borsig. Only the central strike committee, elected by the workers themselves, is entitled to represent the demands of the workers... The metal-workers will continue to carry on the strike in defiance of the arbitration award. ^[18]

This was a model of 'red' unionism in action. Totally ignoring the existing workers' organisations - the trade unions, factory councils and reformist parties - and (especially important in Weimar Germany) the complicated mechanisms devised by the constitution for regulating labour disputes - procedures which in the eyes of millions of reformist workers contrasted favourably with the high-handed practices of the employers in Imperial Germany - the Stalinists proclaimed their own rival centre to be the 'real' and 'only' leadership of the strike, irrespective of whether its delegates and committees represented a majority or minority of the men. The RGO's intention to split from the official union was once again proudly announced, when Dahlem told the meeting that 'thousands and thousands of workers are coming to the RGO, a revolutionary trade union organisation springing up out of the ground. The foundation is being created for the coming red metal-workers union...' ^[19]

But even as Ulbricht made his arrogant, ultimatic claim that only the RGO was entitled to represent the 140 000 striking metal-workers, the strike had begun to crumble. Many plants obeyed Urich's call for a return to work before the ballot, though the giant enterprises of Siemens and the AEG remained strike-bound for several more days. The real distribution of forces amongst the Berlin metal-workers became clear for all - except those wearing regulation Stalinist Third Period blinkers - after the ballot. Of the 73 000 who voted (out of a total strike-force of 140 000 workers) 32 847 voted to continue with the strike, and 40 431 for a return. At this point, 25 000 workers were still out (less than those who had voted for such a stand), mainly in the Osram, Telefunken, Krupp and North German Cable works (at Osrams, strikers had voted 300 - 12 to stay out). The correct tactic at this point, given the obvious deep divisions in the ranks of the workers, was to secure a united return to work, and to channel the hostility towards the union bureaucracy, shown during the strike by many workers, into a concerted campaign to replace the leadership of the existing ADGB union on the basis of a principled fight for Communist policies. The KPD took precisely the opposite course. First it persisted in maintaining the fiction that the RGO remained the sole authorised leadership of the fast-disintegrating strike, and then, when it found the ground shifting under its feet, it retreated into the isolated pockets of militancy still to be found in some plants where feeling ran highest against the deal. When the collapse became complete, the RGO leadership then decided, in the wake of this serious setback, to launch their first 'red' union. This, and not a fight inside the ADGB metalworkers' union against the treacherous reformist bureaucracy, was to be the Stalinist shortcut to 'capturing' a majority of the working class and 'smashing the social fascists'. *Die Rote Fahne* commented on 3 November, 'the reformists must be deprived of the possibility of betraying the metal-workers a second time' - to be done, in other words, by splitting off the most advanced, class-conscious minority from the reformist and as yet slowly-awakening and still confused majority! Two days later, in Wedding, the new 'red' metal-workers' union was founded at a conference attended by 'over 1600 delegates' - less than half the number that had been present at the RGO conference held just before the strike ended. Defeat had therefore already taken its toll of a wide section of the RGO's support, but the Stalinists were oblivious to unpalatable realities such as this. The 'line' was to build 'red' unions, so built they had to be.

The Stalinists spoke scornfully of the trade union bureaucracy, denying its roots in the working class and attributing its survival purely to the 'fusion' of 'social fascism' with the capitalist state and the employers. But in reality, they capitulated to its domination of the working class, and, in their saner moments, inadvertently conceded that the formation of 'red' unions was based on a tacit recognition that the bureaucracy could not be defeated on its 'own' territory in the ADGB unions. Thus Erich Auer, in an article heralding the foundation of the red metal-workers' union, wrote that 'the strike of 130 000 Berlin metal-workers had proved once against that the reformist trade union apparatus has become a centre of organised strikebreaking' ^[20] - a centre supported in these activities by the majority of its members! All Auer's talk of 'sham ballots' was an evasion of this inescapable conclusion. Nor were the Stalinists averse to blaming the working class for their own failings of leadership. In this same article, Auer sneered at the 43 000 Siemens workers (more than a quarter of the entire strike force) 'who on the command of Urich and under the leadership of Urich's creatures were the first to abandon the strike, [who]... slunk back to the factories...'. ^[21]

Yet despite what Auer considered to be an abject capitulation to the employers and the Brüning government by the largest contingent of strikers in Berlin, he concluded that 'the Berlin workers were not defeated in this strike'. It was just a question of the RGO not yet being 'strong enough organisationally to render ineffective the strikebreaking of the social fascist trade union leaders'. But defeat it was, for on 8 November, the arbitration court handed down its ruling, one which entirely upheld the original wage-cutting decree of the Brüning cabinet. All that had changed was the eight per cent cut was to be introduced in two stages: three per cent on 17 November, and the remaining five per cent on 19 January. This may have been a defeat for one of the most politically advanced and best organised sections of the German working class, but as far as the KPD and ECCI leaderships were concerned, it had been a tremendous victory for the 'new line'. F Emrich of the Berlin party organisation wrote on the Wedding conference of the new union that 'in Germany the time is past when the revolutionary trade union members contented themselves with replying to the shameful treachery of the Amsterdamers with empty protests...'. ^[22] while Manuilsky saw in the defeated Berlin strike 'a sign of the *collapse* of the buttresses of social fascism, of the reformist trade unions, and the turning point of the masses to Communism and to the red trade union opposition'. ^[23]

This last claim deserves to be examined in more detail. Towards the end of November, the RGO announced that 16 000 workers had joined the new 'red' metal-workers' union, compared with a total of 140 000 workers who had been on strike the previous month. Even if we take the considerably smaller number who voted in the ballot to stay out, the RGO had signally failed to attract into its ranks the main body of workers who comprised the core of the strike movement. Nor did this 16 000 approach even the KPD membership for the Berlin-Brandenburg district, which at the beginning of 1931 stood at around 30 000. The first German 'red' union clearly represented little more than a small and highly unstable collection of militant workers eager to fight the treacherous reformist bureaucracy, but prevented from doing so by the leftist trade union tactics and strategy of the RGO and its KPD leadership.

The Lozovsky - Molotov - Stalin line of breakaway unions not only aided the reformist bureaucracy, but also the employers. The wage cuts imposed on the defeated Berlin metal-workers became the pattern for other industries, as the government and the employers saw that despite their militancy, even the best-organised workers could be pushed back through the treachery of their leaders and the pressure of the Social Democrats. On 18 November, the Rhine steamboat firms announced their intention of sacking all employees who did not accept, by 21 November, wage cuts ranging from nine to 25 per cent. The same day, 100 000 woodworkers had their existing wage contracts torn up by their employers, while Baden and Bavarian metal-workers faced wage cuts of 15 per cent imposed by an arbitration court. Textile employers were also pressing for wage cuts ranging from 10 to 15 per cent. But it was in the coal-fields that the biggest battle loomed, where a quarter of a million miners confronted the Ruhr coal barons, many of whom were already ranging themselves behind the rapidly growing Nazi movement.

The Ruhr Miners' Strike

On 25 November 1930, the Ruhr coal barons announced their intention of cutting miners' wages by 10 per cent, while the price of coal (in accordance with Brüning's deflationary policies) was to be reduced by only six per cent. The RGO's role in the impending conflict was, if anything, even more crucial than had been the case in the Berlin metal-workers' strike, since concentrated in the compact Ruhr mining region was perhaps the most combative and battle-steeled detachment of the entire German and even

Central and West European proletariat. The Ruhr miners had pioneered the formation of the Red Armies at the time of the Kapp Putsch, and had been to the fore in a series of bloody clashes with the armed forces of the state from the very first days of the Weimar Republic. Now the miners were to be pitted against the most reactionary employers in Germany, at a time when the halting of Brüning's offensive against wages was imperative for the stiffening of the resolve of the entire working class, which in turn could greatly enhance its ability to close ranks against the fascist menace.

If the KPD did appreciate the strategic significance of the looming miners' strike, its conduct both before and during the strike suggested the contrary. On 2 December, with the deadline for the proposed cuts only a month distant, the International Mines Committee of the RILU convened a conference in Essen for 20 December to prepare the fight against the coal owners and the Brüning government. The next day, the Reichstag voted its approval for another package of Brüning emergency measures, involving further cuts in social services and higher taxes. At once, smouldering discontent against the 'Hunger Chancellor' flared up into open revolts in major industrial centres across Germany. Unemployed workers, many of whom had just been deprived of their benefits by Brüning's decrees, clashed with police in Hamburg, Dresden and Chemnitz, while in Leipzig, a march of unemployed workers on the town hall was met by police with fixed bayonets. Two workers were killed and nine seriously injured when the police opened fire on the demonstrators. Here the KPD was in its element, staging 'confrontations' with the state, which while provoking enormous resentment against the Brüning government and its reformist supporters, failed to dislodge the trade union bureaucracy from its dominant position in the trade unions, which as always were the real cockpits of the political struggle for leadership of the working class. More fighting broke out in Hamburg on 11 December, with police shooting dead an unemployed worker, while in Düsseldorf, 165 workers were arrested after a march by unemployed. Then into this ferment the Ruhr coal owners tossed their own bombshell - they now increased by a further two per cent their original demand for a 10 per cent wage cut, a demand that was due to come before the industry's arbitration board on 19 December. The next day, the RILU miners' conference opened in Essen, with 25 delegates attending from Poland, Belgium, France, the USSR, Britain and Czechoslovakia. It quite correctly made plans to ensure that no 'black' coal reached Germany for the duration of the anticipated strike. This conference, however, since it was conducted on the basis of the leftist tactics and strategy of Third Period 'red' unionism, could provide no Communist leadership for the German miners. Determined to repeat the disastrous experience of the Berlin metal-workers' strike, the RGO convened its own miners' conference in Gelsenkirchen on 21 December. The RGO claimed that the 506 delegates represented 121 pits and no less than 180 000 miners - a clear majority of those involved in the dispute. But once again, the struggle itself was to expose the hollowness of these claims, just as had been the case in the Berlin strike of October 1930. The expected strike against the wage cuts began on 1 January, but only in pits where the RGO had a clear majority of miners behind it - 22 pits in all, involving 65 000 miners (and not 180 000). At no time did the reformist-led miners, or those adhering to the Catholic unions, respond to the strike call of the RGO in the manner that had been so confidently predicted. No attempt had even been made to draw them into the struggle, since the 'new line' in the trade unions ruled out approaches to the 'social fascist' bureaucracy for united action on wages or any other issue. And since the majority of miners, despite their criticisms of their reformist leaders, chose to follow them rather than the RGO (which they saw as a rival, usurping trade union and not as a firm ally in struggle against the common capitalist enemy), the Communist vanguard was isolated, and eventually forced back to work on the terms of the coal owners. The strike was over in little more than a week, proving that the whole undertaking had been an ill-prepared and ill-conceived adventure, which far from advancing the solidarity of the miners, greatly undermined it. But once more, the lesson could not be learned. Even though the RGO had not been strong enough to lead or sustain a strike of miners, it nevertheless felt strong enough to launch a 'red' miners' union. On 12 January, Germany's second red union saw the light of day, doomed like its forerunner never to lead a single serious battle of workers against the employers and the government, let alone to challenge effectively what the Stalinists presumably deemed to be the 'rump' reformist union (the previous day, the RGO initiated a third such abortion when it held a port workers' conference in Hamburg ostensibly to fight a proposed 14 per cent cut in wages). Two unions had been launched in the worst possible circumstances - in conditions of widespread demoralisation created by defeat and the abject surrender of the official ADGB leadership. By creaming off the most resolute and militant workers, and turning its back on the problems of those left inside the reformist unions, the RGO became an active agent in the further weakening of the resolve of the working class to fight back against the mounting capitalist offensive and the increasingly brazen assaults of the Nazis. Perhaps the greatest indictment of Stalinist

trade union strategy were the membership figures for the RGO at the end of 1931, after a full year of red unionising. At the beginning of 1930, the Red Trade Union Opposition, still mainly working inside the ADGB unions, stood at 106 000, compared with a party membership of 120 000. Thus the RGO had signally failed even to enrol all party members into the Communist trade union fraction! Far worse, however, were the figures for December 1931. KPD membership had doubled to around 240 000 but the RGO's had meanwhile, after a string of brilliant 'victories' over the ADGB 'social fascists', blackleggers and policemen of the working class, managed to increase by precisely 914.

A Balance Sheet of Red Unionism

How had the ADGB unions fared in this period, organisations which, according to the Stalinists, had become irrevocably fused with the fascist bourgeois state and the employers? While hit hard by the massive growth of unemployment, which in some trades rose well above 50 per cent, the reformist trade unions clung onto the bulk of their members, registering a decline from 4.9 million in 1929 to 4.1 million by 1931. Various theories were devised to explain away this continued ability of the 'social fascists' to hold their own against the challenge of the RGO - all of them so putrid that they do not even deserve mention, let alone refutation.

That all was not well in the affairs of the RGO was discernable not only from the static membership of the red unions, but reports delivered to the eighth session of the RILU Central Council at the beginning of 1932. Lozovsky conceded that 'the mass influence of the social-fascist strikebreaking bureaucracy has still not been undermined', that, as admitted by the Central Committee of the KPD in a recent report on its trade unions work, 'the leading party organs have not been the organs of resistance against the attacks upon the workers' living standards', ^[241] and that 'the wage cuts in the North-West German metal industry were carried out without any resistance on the part of the party and the RGO. The same can be said of most of the other branches of industry.' ^[25] A speech by Dahlem of the KPD at the same session helped to explain why the RGO had not become the focal point of resistance to the offensive of the employers and the Brüning regime. He outlined how an RGO group in a large Berlin department store had put forward a programme of economic demands on which the workers could fight against wage cuts, for a seven-hour day, free supply of stationery, etc - all well and good. But such a programme was not 'political' enough, it did not demarcate itself with the required sharpness from the 'social fascists', who might even (for purely demagogic purposes, of course) support it. So to preserve the red purity of the RGO faction, and to ensure that the 'social fascist bureaucrats' would not enter a joint struggle for this programme, the cell ended its list of demands with the call, from the heart of a Berlin store, 'for a free socialist Soviet Germany'. Commented Dahlem, obviously proud of the way in which his RGO cell had accomplished in one sectarian bound the leap from the minimum to the maximum programme, 'this is an example of general [sic!] demands which are applicable to the position of the whole country and should be concretised for every individual enterprise in conformity with its conditions'. ^[26] For the KPD and its trade union fractions, there was no question of developing a *transitional* programme of demands (of the type laid down by the founding programmatic documents of the RILU, not to speak of those of the Communist International in 1921-22), demands which took into account the existing level of struggle and consciousness, not only of the Communist workers, but those still tied to reformism, and which through their transitional - and not maximalist - nature, led the mass of the working class forwards towards the realisation of the need to seize state power in order fully to implement the programme on which they were united. By insisting on the maximalist demand, 'for a Soviet Germany', the RGO immediately repelled the majority of German workers, who had proved by their continued adherence to Social Democracy that they rejected with varying degrees of conviction the KPD policy of the revolutionary, Soviet road to socialism. Thus the 'red unions', by campaigning on a maximum and not transitional programme (always bearing in mind that in a period of capitalist crisis in which economic conditions and political rights are being constantly eroded, elements of today's minimum programme can acquire a transitional character) could only attract those workers who had already become convinced of the need for a Communist revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. There could be no question of a united front with the ADGB unions or even of one 'from below' with their reformist members since such united action was conditional on the acceptance of the KPD - RGO maximum programme. ^[27] And Dahlem made this quite clear:

No, there can be no united front with the leaders of the Social Democracy and the ADGB, with the assistants and henchmen of fascism. But on the other hand, we proposed to the Social

Democratic workers and members of the trade unions to form united fronts from below... we emphasise that in the struggle against the chief enemy, capitalism, the chief enemy within the working class is the Social Democracy. Here began the demagogy of the Social Democrats, the manoeuvre of following the masses. [Hardly a charge that could be levelled against the RGO - RB] The Social Democrats declared that the Communists were the assistants and henchmen of fascism... We have found that such manoeuvres of the Social Democracy evoke a certain response in the ranks of the SPD and ADGB, *and even a portion of our supporters*. For instance, in one factory in Berlin, at which a reformist, a member of the factory shop committee, declared that we should bury the hatchet, and abandon discussions about our differences, our comrades agreed to act on this basis. [While it would indeed have been wrong to silence their criticism of the reformists, the workers in question would have been a hundred times right to seize on this offer of a united front, while upholding their rights to an independent political line and mutual criticism - RB] We have another example *where the local heads of the KPD, the SPD, the RGO and the ADGB formed jointly a so-called [sic!] defensive cartel against fascism. This shows that the importance of fascism has not been sufficiently explained, that sufficient clarity has not been introduced into the question of the role of Social Democracy in the capitalist front, which is the fascist front...* I must point out a mistake which the RGO made in the Ruhr area, when it *proposed to the heads of the ADGB to hold a joint conference for the organisation of a 24-hour mass strike against the one before the last emergency decree of the Brüning government*. It was proposed to hold this conference as means for the exposure of their manoeuvres. [Not of course, in order to achieve a united front against the mine-owners and the government - that would have been even more sinful - RB] But in practice, it turned out to be an illusion and snare, as though there was still some possibility of maintaining the interests of the workers in common with the treacherous trade union bureaucracy. *The task therefore, is the necessity of intensifying the struggle against reformism.* ^[28]

Need one ask for any more evidence as to why 'red unionism' aided the victory of fascism? This quotation alone bears out everything that Trotsky wrote against the trade union policy of Third Period Stalinism:

The Comintern must strip off the last remnants of the theory of the 'Third Period', must begin to investigate concretely the economic and social terrain of the struggle and must stop issuing dictatorial commands to the proletarian vanguard [a method derived in part from the Stalinist bureaucracy's relationship to the Soviet proletariat - RB], but through the latter guide the real development of the class struggle. In the very first place is work in the trade unions. Lozovsky's 'Third Period' as well as Manuilsky's 'Third Period' must be discarded, and an end put to the policy of self-isolation. The question of restoring the unity of the German trade union movement through the integration of all RGO members into the mass of the 'free trade unions' must be posed with the greatest sharpness. Every party member who can must be obliged to join a trade union. The development of the economic struggle [which, in the autumn of 1932, weeks after these lines were written, acquired a new momentum - RB] will place enormous tasks before the reformist bureaucracy. The exploitation of their difficulties can best be accomplished by a flexible and energetic united front policy. ^[29]

The programmatic declaration of the first conference of the International Left Opposition, drafted by Trotsky only days before Hitler's assumption of power on 30 January 1933 (the conference was held between 4 and 8 February) was, if anything, even more scathing in its judgement on Stalinist trade union policy:

The paralysis of the proletariat in this critical period is to be traced above all to the abandonment of a real united front policy with the proletariat, and especially in the splitting policy of the RGO. This policy of the RGO is all the more criminal since it prevents the workers from using the weapon of the strike, particularly of the general strike, and since the workers are less armed than in the historical years 1923, 1919, 1918. The latest experiences with the proclamations of a general strike [notably the RGO - KPD strike call on the overthrow of the Prussian Social Democratic government by von Papen on 20 July 1932, a call rendered all the more insincere in the eyes of reformist workers by the fact that up to the very day of its removal, the Prussian government had been denounced as a fascist regime! - RB] *have proven that it is the Social Democracy which still has the dominant influence over the workers who are still employed in*

production, while the influence of the KPD in general rests on the unemployed. The [Left] Oppositionists who join in the mistake of the RGO policy [of calling on workers to leave the reformist unions - RB] support, whether they want to or not, the handing over of the masses to Hitler, and the execution of the betrayal of the Stalinist faction. ^[30]

This handing of the masses over to Hitler was underway a full year before his final victory in January 1933. Involved in this monumental betrayal were not only the ADGB bureaucrats, with their declared policy of accepting wage cuts imposed by Brüning (the lesser evil) in order to avoid even worse impositions on their members under Hitler, but the Stalinists. Their adventurist policy split the trade unions in their hour of mortal peril, a tactic which succeeded only in demoralising thousands of workers by leading them into a blind alley, isolated struggles that, following their inevitable defeat, exposed them to the demagoguery of the Nazis, with their propaganda that the KPD took its orders from a foreign power, and was using the workers as tools of Stalin's foreign policy. The fruits of 'red unionism' first became visible in the early months of 1932, when, with unemployment at its peak of six million, and millions of other workers on short time, the trade unions were at their weakest. All the alibis in the world cannot conceal the responsibility of the Stalinists for the successes achieved by the Nazi factory group, the NSBO, in penetrating deep into the plants in the early months of 1932, a development so sinister that the RILU central leadership was compelled to report on it following an investigation into the industrial work of the KPD conducted in the spring of 1932. Despite the fact that the RILU central leadership was itself politically to blame for the crisis in the German plants, this does not detract from the value of the truly horrific picture painted by its team of investigators, since the reader will find in the account that follows a terrible warning of the fate that awaits the British workers' movement if its Stalinist, reformist and would-be 'Trotskyist' (but in reality, either centrist or ultra-leftist) leaders are permitted to repeat the criminal betrayals and errors committed by their counterparts in Germany.

Appendix I

Extracts from 'Result of the Investigations on the Work of the RGO in the Halle-Merseburg District' (Report by Comrade Farkash), *RILU Magazine*, Volume 2, no 16, 1 September 1932, pp 655-63:

... There are 740 000 workers in the Halle-Merseburg District. Eighty thousand are employed in the chemical industry [IG Farben], 60 000 in the mining industry, and 40 000 in the metal industry. The number of unemployed amounts to 270 000 persons. The RGO has 63 factory branches and 265 unemployed committees in this district. ... [KPD membership at the end of 1931 - shortly before this survey was conducted - stood at 13 061. In the November 1932 Reichstag elections, the party polled 27.1 per cent of the total vote - 220 755 - as compared with 17 per cent for the SPD. It was therefore a region where the Stalinists could claim to have won the majority of the working class - RB]... The fascists [that is, the real ones, and not the 'social fascists' - RB] are trying to penetrate the factories in Halle-Merseburg with the aid of the officials and the staff. In the Launa enterprise they have 180 members, including 50 to 60 workers. What is the attitude of our comrades to this group? They do not wage any struggle against factory fascism. In March [1932] the political leader of the RGO factory group in the Launa enterprise was still trying to convince us all that the fascist group in the factory represents no danger, that the fascists are conducting themselves peacefully, that they do not come out openly, and that they therefore provide no concrete possibilities for their exposure. The comrades have entirely forgotten the illegal work of the fascists; they have calmly tolerated the working up of individual workers by the fascists, the visits of the fascist agitators to the homes of workers, etc. Even in April, after the second round of the Presidential elections [in which several hundred thousand workers who had voted for Thälmann on the first ballot switched to Hitler as the more likely anti-Weimar candidate on the second - RB], our brigade saw leaflets of the RGO in which there was not a word about the danger of fascism and the struggle against it. And at the same time the indignation of the workers against fascism is growing more and more... The fascists... have organised a number of food kitchens and dining-rooms for the unemployed. The *Stahlhelm*, for instance, is issuing in Halle dinners for 800 unemployed daily, and besides this the Nazis are providing dinners for 200 unemployed. These organisations have also organised the collection of old clothes, provisions of food, etc, for distribution among the unemployed. The *Stahlhelm* and the Nazis frequently organise for the unemployed so-called evenings of culture with the object of diverting attention of the unemployed from the class struggle... The unemployed committee and

the RGO have paid no attention to these machinations of the fascists. The consequence of the passivity of the RGO in this sphere is the fact that the fascists have succeeded in penetrating the ranks of the unemployed clerks who, particularly in Halle, form a considerable part of the unemployed, and whom... the fascists are utilising for penetrating into the enterprises and among the masses of unemployed...

Extracts from 'Activities of the RGO and the Red Trade Unions in the Ruhr District' (Report by Comrade Karolsky), *RILU Magazine*, Volume 2, no 16, 1 September 1932, pp 664-73:

Over 200 000 miners are employed in the Ruhr mining industry, and 100 000 workers in the metal industry. There are 900 000 unemployed workers in this district... In March last [1932] the RGO had 1600 dues-paying members in the enterprises and 7000 unemployed members. The Red Miners' Union had 2400 members in the pits and 7000 unemployed members. [KPD membership: 24 512; votes in the November 1932 elections: 24 per cent (589 000) - twice that of the SPD in the region - RB]... In all the enterprises we visited we observed hostility to the fascists. But this did not lessen the danger of the organisational strength of the fascists in the enterprises. In some places they have already penetrated into the thick of the workers... It must be said that the issue of the Presidential elections strongly affected the sentiments of the workers in the enterprises. They were greatly surprised, stating that on the whole, the enterprises had voted for Thälmann [on the first ballot, on 13 March 1932, the voting had been Hindenburg (with SPD support) 18.7 million, Hitler 11.4 million, Thälmann 5.0 million and Duesterberg (monarchist-DNVP) 2.6 million; in the run off on 10 April, Hindenburg increased his vote to 19.4 million (53 per cent of the total) and Hitler his to 13.4 million (from 30.1 per cent to 36.8 per cent) while Thälmann dropped badly to 3.7 million and from 13.2 per cent to 10.2 per cent - RB], but that in the second round matters would have a different aspect, and that some of the workers who voted for Thälmann were buying fascist uniforms. A tendency has even crept in to underestimate the fascist danger. One comrade in the group of the RGO in the Hescha factory declared that the possibility of Hitler having recourse to a putsch was excluded. In reply to my question, what should be our stand in case of a putsch, he said: 'Let them scrap; we'll stand aside, and our turn will come later.' The group understood that this statement was incorrect, but was unable to explain the mistake to him. [No wonder! It was simply taking to its logical conclusion the official party line that the conflict between the Nazis and the 'social fascists' was a sham, and of no concern to the class-conscious worker: 'After Hitler - our turn.' - RB] What is the way in which the fascists penetrate into the enterprises? They penetrate, not through the basic cadres of workers, but through the office workers, the foremen, and the members of the Hirsch Dunker unions... In some places, organisationally and numerically, the fascists have larger nuclei than the RGO, but politically the influence of the fascists over the masses is slight. Through the hostility of the workers in the enterprises the fascists are having recourse to illegal methods of work... they put leaflets in the workers' bags or pockets. It is characteristic that the fascists penetrate into the enterprise according to a definite plan. They strengthen themselves, primarily, in the strategical commanding heights, in the Krupp and Hescha factories, the blast furnaces, in the Duisburg port; they have taken strong root in the tow boats, which are of great importance, for without them the steamers in the fairway cannot be brought into port. They employ the crassest social demagoguery in their factory literature. In the Wedau railway shops they literally reprint in their paper materials which they have taken from our factory paper... Activities among the youth, among whom the fascists have very great influence, assume tremendous significance. While, on the one hand, in our factory press, we see exaggerations with regard to the workers who follow the fascists - for instance, the statement that the fascist workers have the same interests as Thyssen - on the other hand, there are also cases... as that in the Zolverein pit, when our comrades turn to the fascists and propose to them that they demand that their leaders fight for wage increases. [These same workers would, on the other hand, never have considered addressing such a demand to the ADGB 'social fascists', since this would have been denounced as an example of the old, 'opportunist' slogan of 'make your leaders fight' - RB]... To a certain extent it is explained by the widespread opinion among our comrades that it is far easier to talk with the fascists than with the Social Democrats... [Being criticised here was simply the extension into the trade unions and the plants of the tactics adopted - on Stalin's direct orders - at the time of the Prussian referendum of August 1931, when the KPD blocked with Nazis and monarchists against the 'social fascists' in the state government - RB]

Extracts from 'Investigation of Trade Union Work in the Factories and Amongst the Unemployed in Berlin' (Report by Comrade Ondracheks), *RILU Magazine*, Volume 2, no 16, 1 September 1932, pp 652-53:

... When we started our investigation in Berlin and raised before factory groups the question about the positions occupied by the Nazis in the factories, we got an answer to the effect that the Nazis occupy no positions at all in the factories, there are individual Nazis who represented no force in the factory. However, the second ballot of the Presidential elections might convince us of the fact that the Nazis consolidated in a number of factories and workplaces. We had to state that the Nazis deeply penetrated into some factories and exercise their influence in some significant strata of workers, particularly in Siemenstadt. On the last decisive day before the second ballot we received a directive from the district committee of the party in Siemenstadt for the distribution amongst the Siemens workers of 30 000 copies of a special issue of the *Rote Fahne* containing special material on Siemens... All the comrades... had to go to the factory gate in order to distribute the newspapers... A crowd of newsboys selling the *Angriff* [the 'radical' Nazi daily edited by Goebbels, which featured articles on industrial issues and gave prominence to the activities of the NSBO - RB] were standing together with us at the gate of the M factory. When the gate opened and the workers rushed onto the street, hundreds of them did not take the *Rote Fahne* but the *Angriff*... As a consequence of this event our comrades decided to find out the number of Nazis in Siemens... The results were striking. We are absolutely isolated from the overwhelming majority of the departments of the F Factory, and even where we have some supporters we found that a great number of workers were organised by the Nazis... in the electrical assembling department, in which 30 workers are engaged, all of them, with the exception of only one, are affiliated to the Nazis' organisation [the NSBO]. At the Wernerwerk F Factory, the chauffeurs of the electrical cars, who are fulfilling an important function in the factory, are organised in the ranks of the Nazis. After the second ballot of the Presidential elections those workers were coming to the factory with Nazi badges on their shirts. While driving the electrical cars they were demonstratively greeting one another with shouts: 'Long Live Hitler!' We observed a similar fact at the Werner M Factory, and partly at the cable works. At the AEG Plant... there is a group of 60-70 Nazis... They [the NSBO activists] work according to quite a definite system which is based on the secret and inconspicuous organisation of work in the departments. They seldom demonstrate openly at any rate, never before they have become a certain organisational force in the factory. Only then they begin to act openly. At first they carry on propaganda amongst the office workers; they then pass over to the foremen and fitters, seize the commanding heights in individual departments, attract those people exercising a certain influence on the departments, and make the workers, through these people, join their organisation by means of persuasion, intimidation and persecution... the Nazis take care to attract to them people who would help them to maintain contacts among various departments. This refers first of all to porters, lift boys, etc. They conduct the whole work in Siemens very skilfully, so that our comrades do not notice it, until the Nazis become a greater force and begin to act openly. Then our comrades say they cannot understand how this happened. The Nazis in Siemenstadt have for a few months already had a special Factory and Political Secretariat... They do not wait until the workers come to them, but daily send their people to the factory gate, before the working day is up, and these individuals instruct all the workers organised by the Nazis... Thus the Nazis go to the factory workers themselves, while our comrades are waiting for the workers to come to them.

Appendix II: Trotsky and Workers' Control

In line with the tactics and strategy developed and codified by the first four congresses of the Communist International, and especially by the experiences of the Russian Revolution, Trotsky and his supporters in Germany attempted to win the KPD for a policy of workers' control, through which, it was hoped, the reformist-led workers could be drawn into a broad movement for the rebuilding of the decaying German economy on socialist foundations and in a fraternal alliance with the planned economy of the USSR. In arguing for such a policy, Trotsky clashed with both the left and right opportunist opponents of workers' control. There were those such as the Stalinists who chanted the slogan 'workers' control' without regard to either the political and economic situation, or the consciousness of the workers; and the Brandlerites, who equated workers' control with the workers' management; that is, with the forms of industrial administration introduced *after* the overthrow of capitalism and the expropriation of the bourgeoisie.

Trotsky, following the principles applied by the Bolsheviks in and after the Russian Revolution, insisted that workers' control corresponded on a factory level to the situation of dual power in the state:

Control lies in the hands of the workers. This means: ownership and right of disposition remain in the hands of the capitalists. Thus, the regime has a contradictory character, presenting a sort of economic interregnum. The workers need control not for platonic purposes, but in order to exert practical influence upon the production and commercial operations of the employers. [In other words, contrary to the notions of the ultra-lefts, the employer is still the legal owner of his plant: he has not been 'nationalised without compensation and under workers' control' as the WRP incantation would have it - RB] This cannot, however, be attained unless the *control*, in one form or another, within such and such limits, is transformed into direct *management*. In a developed form, workers' control thus implies a sort of economic dual power in the factory... [31]

Now we can see how remote from Leninism is the approach of the WRP (not to speak of the revisionist International Marxist Group and International Socialists) with its demand, addressed to the Labour leaders, to nationalise the basic industries, banks, etc, 'without compensation under workers' control'. Workers' control is the vital *preparatory* step that alone can make possible the expropriation of the bourgeoisie, it is not a gift handed down by Parliament to a working class that is the passive onlooker of a reformist government legislating socialism. The *WRP Policy for the Crisis* (1 December 1973) says the following:

A Labour government must nationalise... the basic industries and... all large companies, banks, building and insurance societies... Workers' control of these, as well as the present nationalised industries, will run them in the interests of the workers and consumers.

What does Trotsky say about the place of workers' control in the struggle for state power and a planned economy?

What state regime corresponds to workers' control of production? It is obvious [to all, that is, except the WRP leaders - RB] that *power is not yet in the hands of the proletariat*, otherwise we would have not workers' control of production *but the control of production by the workers' state as an introduction to a regime of state production on the foundations of nationalisation*. [32]

Thus workers' control pertains to private ownership, under a capitalist regime. Workers' *state* control is the stage passed through by the dictatorship of the proletariat *on the road* to the nationalisation of the means of production, which then makes possible workers' management. The WRP obliterates these stages (which are objectively determined by the development of the revolutionary struggle) and instead transposes the first stage - workers' control - to the last - workers' management. We must therefore ask, since the bourgeoisie has now been expropriated, *whom are the workers controlling?*

Let there be no confusion on this issue. Trotsky writes:

What we are talking about is workers' control *under the capitalist regime* [that is, what the WRP would call 'corporatism' - RB] *under the power of the bourgeoisie*. However, a bourgeoisie that feels it is firmly in the saddle will never tolerate dual power in its enterprises. Workers' control, consequently, can be carried out *only under the condition of an abrupt change in the relationship of forces unfavourable to the bourgeoisie and its state*. Control can only be *imposed by force upon the bourgeoisie*, by a proletariat on the road to the moment of taking power from them, and *then* [and only then] also ownership of the means of production. Thus the regime of workers' control, a provisional, transitional regime by its very essence, can correspond only to the period of the convulsing of the bourgeois state, the proletarian offensive, *and the falling back of the bourgeoisie*, that is, to the period of the proletarian revolution in the fullest sense of the word. [33]

Workers' control therefore opens up the road *towards* the seizure of power within the plant, and does not follow it, bestowed by decree *after* the expropriation of the bourgeoisie. In fact there can be no question of nationalising the trusts and banks unless such state measures rest on the massive mobilisation and active participation of the workers in the plants, who have already established workers' control over the employers, and are preparing themselves to run, to manage, the enterprises, on a planned foundation. The WRP's conception of 'socialism' reveals a paternalistic, bureaucratic attitude to the working class, one that betrays itself in its wrong approach to the question of workers' control and workers' management.

Yet there can be no excuse for this confusion of workers' control (which *precedes* the revolution and workers' management (which *follows* it) on the part of the WRP. Two of the party's own publications

make the distinction between the two forms of economic administration abundantly clear. In *Germany 1931-1932* (a selection of writings by Trotsky published by the SLL in 1970) we read the following:

Workers' control over the outlays of industry and the profits of trade is the only real form of struggle for lower prices... Here the matter does not as yet concern the *management* of industry; the working class woman will not go so far at once, such an idea is far from her mind. But it is easier for her to pass from consumer control to *control* of production and from the latter to *direct management*, depending upon the general development of the revolution... [Workers' control]... signifies control not only over the operating but also over the partly-operating and shut-down industries. This presupposes the association in control of those workers who worked in those industries prior to their dismissal. The task must consist of setting the dead industries in motion, under the leadership of Factory Committees on the basis of an economic plan. This *leads* directly to the question of *governmental* administration of industry, that is, to the *expropriation* of the capitalists *by the workers' government*. Workers' control is thus not a prolonged, 'normal', condition, like wage-scale agreements or social insurance. Control is a *transitional* measure, under the conditions of the highest tension of the class war, and conceivable only as a *bridge* to the revolutionary nationalisation of industry... For us therefore the slogan of control is tied up with the period of *dual power* in industry, which corresponds to the *transition* from the bourgeois regime to the proletarian... They, the Brandlerites, will not allow the revolutionary slogan [of workers' control] to be 'castrated'... To them, 'control over production signifies the management of the industries by the workers'. But why then call management *control*? In the language of all mankind by control is understood the surveillance and checking by one institution of the work of another. Control may be active, dominant, and all-embracing. *But it remains control*. The very idea of this slogan was the outgrowth of the transitional regime in industry when the capitalist and his administrators could no longer take a step without the consent of the workers; but on the other hand, *when the workers had not yet provided the political prerequisites for nationalisation*, not yet mastered the technique of *management*, not yet created the organs essential for this... Workers' control begins with the individual workshop [and not, as the WRP seems to think, with the acts of Parliament - RB]. The organ of control is the factory committee... At this stage, there is no general economic plan as yet. The practice of workers' control only prepares the elements of this plan. On the contrary, workers' management of industry, to a much greater degree, even in its initial steps, proceeds from above, for it is inseparable from state power and a general economic plan. The organs of management are not factory committees but centralised Soviets. ^[34]

Ironically, the editors of this publication inserted a footnote to clarify further the distinction between control and management:

In English 'control' often, indeed usually, has a much stronger meaning than similar looking words in French, German, etc. What is conventionally translated as 'workers' control' means merely 'workers' supervision' and is not a synonym for 'workers' management'. ^[35]

Just so. But the official publications of the SLL, and now the WRP, make precisely this identification. And if by control is meant management, by what term do they propose to designate the form of control or supervision established by the working class prior to nationalisation? Corporatism perhaps?

Finally we come to the *Transitional Programme*, the founding programme of the Fourth International. Drafted by Trotsky, this document is no less emphatic than the preceding texts on the nature and role of workers' control:

The abolition of 'business secrets' ['open the books!'] is the *first step* towards actual control of industry. Workers *no less than capitalists* have the right to know the 'secrets' of the factory, of the trust, of the whole branch of industry, of the national economy as a whole. First and foremost, banks, heavy industry and centralised transport should be placed under an observation glass... *The working out of even the most elementary economic plan... is impossible without workers' control*, that is, without the penetration of the workers' eye into all the open and concealed springs of *capitalist* economy. On the basis of the experience of control, the proletariat will prepare itself for direct management of nationalised industry *when the hour for that eventuality strikes*... If the abolition of business secrets be a necessary condition to workers' control, then control is the *first step* along the road to the socialist guidance of economy. ^[36]

For the WRP, it is the last. Here too, the leaders of this party have proved themselves unable to draw on the rich experience of the Communist movement, of the revolutionary struggles in Russia, and the

criminal role of Stalinist ultimatism in Germany, where the KPD repelled the reformist workers by equating workers' control with the dictatorship of the proletariat. By babbling on interminably about 'nationalisation without compensation and under workers' control', the WRP makes a similar error, for it omits the tactical and strategic steps necessary to mobilise the working class to carry out the revolutionary expropriation of the bourgeoisie. The maximum programme of classic Social Democracy replaces the *Transitional Programme* of the Fourth International.

Notes

1. Thus it predicted that 'within a year we shall not recognise them [the 'old unions']. The old bureaucrats will be generals without armies...' In the 'Third Period' of Stalinist-inspired 'parallel' unions, this description could with much justification be applied to the leadership of most of the 'red' unions of the RILU with the possible exceptions of France and, to a lesser extent, Germany.

2. The founding RILU *Manifesto* stated: '... besides winning the trade unions in each country, the union members in all countries have the task of creating an international centre for the trade union movement, which, together with the CI, will make one whole, a single steel bloc. *This task will be accomplished when the unions reject the Labour Office.* [The ILO founded after the war, with its headquarters at Geneva - RB]... *Take into your own hands these powerful organisations, not shrinking from the most resolute struggle against those who are distorting the workers' organisations into instruments of bourgeois policy... It is not necessary to split the unions, but it is necessary to expel from them the treacherous groups of leaders who are making the unions into a plaything of the imperialists.*' [Emphasis added] We should bear in mind these remarks about winning the unions when we come to examine Stalinist trade union policy in Germany, which utterly denied the possibility of the working class re-establishing its control over its own organisations. Once again, leftism masked a thoroughly defeatist policy, *one of complete capitulation to the dominance of the reformist bureaucracy in the unions.*

3. At the Third Comintern Congress in July 1921, much attention was paid to the question of partial, transitional demands and slogans, since these were very much related to the central theme of the congress, 'To the Masses'. *The Theses on Tactics* declared: 'If the demands correspond to the vital needs of broad proletarian masses and if these masses feel that they cannot exist unless these demands are met, then the struggle for these demands will become the starting point of the struggle for power. In place of the minimum programme of the reformists and centrists the CI puts the struggle for the concrete needs of the proletariat, for a system of demands which in their totality disintegrate the power of the bourgeoisie, organise the proletariat, represent stages in the struggle for the proletarian dictatorship, and each of which expresses in itself the needs of the broadest masses, even if the masses themselves are not yet consciously in favour of the proletarian dictatorship... The workers who fight for partial demands will automatically be forced into a struggle against the entire bourgeoisie and their state apparatus...' The theses of the Communist International and the RILU adopted at the same congress further developed this tactical approach to the problem of winning the broad masses, stressing the fight against unemployment: 'The closing down of undertakings and short-time working are today among the most important means of the bourgeoisie for reducing wages, lengthening hours of work, and nullifying collective agreements,. Therefore the workers must fight against the closing down of factories, and demand investigation of the reasons for such action. For this purpose, special control commissions must be set up, to supervise raw materials, fuel, orders... Specially elected control commissions must thoroughly investigate the financial relations between the concerns in question and other concerns, to do which it will be necessary to suggest to the workers as an immediate practical task to put an end to commercial secrecy... The entire industrial struggle of the working class in the immediate future should be concentrated around the party slogan: "workers' control of production" and this control must be established before the government and the ruling class have created substitutes for control.' These ideas and forms of struggle were subsequently to comprise one of the fundamental bases of the founding programme of the Fourth International (1938), enriched by the experiences of the intervening 16 years: 'Workers no less than capitalists have the right to

know the “secrets” of the factory, of the trust, of the whole branch of industry, of the national economy as a whole. First and foremost, banks, heavy industry and centralised transport should be placed under an observation glass. The immediate task of workers’ control should be to explain the debits and credits of society, beginning with individual business undertakings; to determine the actual share of the national income appropriated by individual capitalists and exploiters as a whole... The working out of even the most elementary economic plan... is impossible without workers’ control, that is, without the penetration of the workers’ eye into all open and concealed springs of capitalist economy. Committees representing individual business enterprises should meet at conference to choose corresponding committees of trusts, whole branches of industry, economic regions, and finally, of national industry as a whole. Thus workers’ control becomes a school for planned economy. On the basis of the experience of control, the proletariat will prepare itself for direct management of nationalised industry when the hour for that eventuality strikes.’ (LD Trotsky, *The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International* (London, 1963), pp 22-23) How different in its realism and subtlety of approach from the parrot-like incantations of the WRP and its *Workers Press*: ‘nationalisation without compensation and under workers’ control’ - not a *transitional* demand but the *maximum* programme, and one that entirely overlooks - in the leftist fashion so typical of the pseudo-Trotskyists of the WRP - that both the Third Congress of the Comintern (on which, together with the first, second and fourth, the WRP claims to base itself) and the *Transitional Programme* of the Fourth International, quite specifically stated that the slogan of workers’ control pertains to the period of *preparation* and *education* of the working class for the responsibilities of running a national economy - and of seeing the need to do so - *immediately prior to the conquest of state power and the expropriation of the bourgeoisie*. Under nationalisation, not workers’ control, but workers’ *management* would be the norm (as is made clear in the *Transitional Programme*). Once again, the WRP debases and perverts genuine Trotskyism, very much to the advantage of its enemies.

4. LD Trotsky, ‘The War Danger and the Opposition’ (speech to the joint plenary session of the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission, 1 August 1927), *The Stalin School of Falsification* (New York, 1962), pp 163-64.

5. We should note that even the brief period of Zinovievist leftism that followed the defeat of the German revolution was faithfully reproduced in the RILU. Tomsky declared to the Petrograd provincial trade union congress on 17 December 1923: ‘I think that those comrades who say “Save the German trade unions!” are wrong. I think that what is needed is not to save them, but to say to them: “Rest in peace: you lived in shame, and you have died in shame.” Neither the Communists nor anyone else can at this time restore the German trade union movement.’ Tomsky could not have been more mistaken. Within a year, desertions from the ADGB unions (occasioned by the defeat of 1923) had ceased.

6. Not even the normally cerebral world of chess could escape the strident leftism of the Third Period. The RILU trade union propaganda and cultural work bulletin for September 1929 informed working-class chess enthusiasts why it was now politically necessary to effect a split from the ‘social fascist’ chess organisations of the IFTU. Henceforth proletarian chess had to take place, like all strikes and forms of class action, under the exclusive and independent leadership of the Communist International - which in this instance meant the chess section of the Red Sports International. This ‘left’ turn by Stalin’s chess pawns was all the more absurd in that one of the justifications for the split was that the chess ‘reformists’ had accused - with some justification - Soviet chess players of ‘compromising their proletarian purity’ by competing in tournaments organised by capitalist countries and ‘bourgeois’ chess federations. (However this too was consistent with the Third Period theory that ‘social fascism’ and not the bourgeoisie and its parties, was the main enemy of the working class.)

7. Of the 1927 membership of the KPD, only 27.79 per cent joined the party in or before 1920, while the following percentages were recruited over the next seven years: 1921: 14.42; 1922: 6.80; 1923: 13.34; 1924: 6.61; 1925: 9.15; 1926: 14.73; 1927: 7.88. This trend was enormously accentuated after 1930 when the KPD began to concentrate on the non-trade-

union workers and the unemployed. In Berlin, regarded as the stronghold of the KPD, 40 per cent of the membership was turned over annually between 1930 and 1932, while of the delegates to the Berlin District Congress in 1932, 109 (44 per cent) had less than one year's membership of the party to their credit, while only 15 delegates (6.5 per cent per cent) had been in the party for more than 10 years, that is, since 1922, when KPD membership ran at about 200 000 mark. Thus nearly all the workers who had passed through the history-shaping struggles of that period under the leadership of the KPD were now lost to the party, unable to transmit their invaluable experiences to the younger generations of workers attracted around and into the KPD. This lack of a battle-hardened and experienced older layer of the workers at every level of the party placed the KPD at a serious disadvantage in training its youth and in combating reformist cadres in the trade unions and plants, who had behind them many years of experience in defending their opportunist policies against attacks from the left. This already acute deficiency was further exacerbated by the KPD's weak position inside the plants. With the increase in unemployment after 1928, the KPD became a party mainly of jobless workers. From a percentage of 62.3 members in factories and other industrial centres in 1928, the ratio of employed members fell through 51.6 per cent in 1929 and 32.2 per cent in 1930 to between 20 and 22 per cent by 1931. Once again, the party's turn away from the unions and union workers to the 'pure' militancy of the non-union and unemployed worker, untainted by reformist or trade union consciousness, enabled the trade union bureaucracy to maintain its hold on its members in a situation where it should have been either forced to enter a united front with the KPD against the Nazis, or stand exposed as an open agency of the class enemy.

8. *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 10, no 1, 2 January 1930, p 15.

9. *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 10, no 1, 2 January 1930, p 15.

10. *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 10, no 12, 6 March 1930, p 217.

11. The enlarged presidium also foisted the most incredibly sectarian municipal council policy on the Comintern sections. In a document entitled 'The Need for Bolshevik Municipal Work', the pronouncement was made that 'both in the central machinery of the bourgeois state and in the municipal machinery all disparities between municipal representatives of the bourgeoisie and those of the social fascists have been wiped out. In present conditions, when the reformists have become social fascists, any course for the establishment of a so-called "labour" majority... composed of Communists and reformists, is an opportunist course... The Communists can neither support the Social Democratic candidates for mayors nor can they carry on any negotiations to obtain support for the Communist candidates... The social fascist evolution of the Social Democrats excludes all possibility of any form of cooperation between the Communist and Social Democratic groups in the municipalities... Any attempt to draw distinctions between the Social Democratic national leaders is only an attempt to find a cover for opportunist practice in municipal work.' (*The Communist Review*, Volume 2, no 9, September 1930, pp 382-83)

12. V Molotov, *The Developing Crisis of World Capitalism and the Revolutionary Tasks of the Comintern* (London, 1930), p 36.

13. Molotov, *The Developing Crisis of World Capitalism and the Revolutionary Tasks of the Comintern*, p 36, emphasis added.

14. Molotov, *The Developing Crisis of World Capitalism and the Revolutionary Tasks of the Comintern*, pp 45-46.

15. *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 10, no 40, 17 August 1930, p 849.

16. *International Press Correspondence*, no 49, 30 October 1930, p 1015.

17. *International Press Correspondence*, no 49, 30 October 1930, p 1015.

18. *International Press Correspondence*, no 49, 30 October 1930, p 1016.

19. *International Press Correspondence*, no 49, 30 October 1930, p 1016.

20. *International Press Correspondence*, no 50, 6 November 1930, p 1042.

21. *International Press Correspondence*, no 50, 6 November 1930, p 1042.

- 22.** *International Press Correspondence*, no 51, 13 November 1930, p 1058.
- 23.** *International Press Correspondence*, no 52, 20 November 1930, p 1063.
- 24.** In an article on the RGO red miners' union, S Perevoznikov admitted that after the spring of 1931 (that is, following the formation of the new union) 'the strike struggle in the Ruhr has been marked by a steady decline. In October 1931 the party and the Red Unions succeeded in leading the fight against the seven per cent wage cut only scattered groups of miners (about 25 000 to 30 000 on the whole) and keeping them in the strike for only a few days... In January 1932 the KPD and the RGO of the Ruhr mobilised an even smaller number of miners against Brüning's emergency decree, only a few thousand miners striking for one or two days in six mines. [A year previously, it will be recalled, the RGO claimed support from 121 pits, while its strike call was followed by 22 - RB] This decline of the strike movement in the Ruhr has been accompanied by a retardation of the growth of the influence of the party (and even by its weakening) and by stagnation in the party organisations, in the Red Miners Union, and in the RGO of the Ruhr province. One of the main causes of the temporary discontinuation of the growth and political decline of the influence of the party among the masses of the Ruhr consists in that the KPD and the RGO failed to organise the workers' response to the lowering of their living standards.' (S Perevoznikov, 'Lessons [Sic!] of the Miners' Strike Struggle in the Ruhr 1931-32', *Communist International*, Volume 9, no 10, 15 May 1932, pp 397-98) The inefficacy of the 'united front from below' was inadvertently betrayed in Perevoznikov's admission that an RGO miners' conference in June 1931, attended by 720 'delegates', attracted one Christian trade union miner and three from the ADGB! An improvement was, however, registered at a further RGO conference held during the abortive strike of January 1932: 'Among 800 delegates from the mines only 36 were members of the reformist union, 12 members of the Christian union and four fascists.' [Emphasis added] No wonder most reformist workers looked with distrust on the activities of the KPD and RGO, seeing that in their struggle against 'social fascism', they were prepared, while rejecting the united front with the ADGB and SPD, to enter one with Nazis.
- 25.** *RILU Magazine*, Volume 2, nos 1-2, 1 February 1932, p 29.
- 26.** *RILU Magazine*, Volume 2, nos 1-2, 1 February 1932, p 114.
- 27.** This policy was quite deliberately intended to prevent any unity with 'social fascist' trade union officials and activists, as one Comintern trade union organiser confirms: 'The aim was to unite with the rank and file against the will of their Socialist leaders. This was called the "united front from below" and was calculated to drive a wedge between the real leaders and their masses and to split the trade union. All Communist proposals were intentionally so worded as to be rejected by the Socialist chiefs. These proposals invariably ended with the appeal "Defend the Soviet Union, the fatherland of all workers". The Socialist leaders rejected this formula and the Communists then cried "Traitors! Saboteurs!"... Thus the "united front" manoeuvre became one of the main causes of the impotence of organised German labour in the face of Hitler's march to power.' (J Valtin [R Krebs], *Out of the Night* (New York, 1941), p 251)
- 28.** *RILU Magazine*, Volume 2, nos 1-2, 1 February 1932, pp 118-19, emphasis added.
- 29.** LD Trotsky, 'Perspectives of the Upturn' (18 August 1932), *Writings of Leon Trotsky 1932* (New York, 1973), pp 174-75.
- 30.** 'The International Left Opposition, Its Tasks and Methods', *Documents of the Fourth International* (New York, 1973), pp 36-37, emphasis added.
- 31.** LD Trotsky, 'Workers' Control of Production' (20 August 1931), *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany* (New York, 1971), p 77.
- 32.** Trotsky, 'Workers' Control of Production', *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, p 87, emphasis added.
- 33.** Trotsky, 'Workers' Control of Production', *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, p 78, emphasis added.

- 34.** LD Trotsky, 'What Next?' (27 January 1932), *Germany 1931-1932* (London, 1970), pp 190-93.
- 35.** Trotsky, 'What Next?', *Germany 1931-1932*, p 192.
- 36.** Trotsky, *The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International*, pp 18-19, emphasis added.

Chapter XXII: Stalin Over Germany: From Rapallo to Red Referendum

Don't you think, Neumann, that if the nationalists came to power in Germany, they would be so exclusively concerned with the Western powers that we could build socialism in peace? (Stalin to Heinz Neumann, November 1931, quoted in M Buber-Neumann, *Kriegs-schauplätze der Welt-revolution* (Stuttgart, 1967), p 332)

At all events, under all conceivable circumstances, if the German revolution does not come, we are doomed. (VI Lenin, 7 March 1918)

Social Democracy's betrayal of the November Revolution meant that the young Soviet Republic had to establish diplomatic and economic relations with a capitalist and not Soviet Germany. Only bitter necessity drove Germany's new political rulers along the path towards collaboration with the Bolsheviks. The main government parties - namely the Social Democrats, the Catholic Centre, bourgeois radicals and, from 1921, Stresemann's liberals - all naturally inclined towards a 'Western orientation'; the SPD to the Second International (whose strongest representatives outside Germany were to be found in France, Britain and Scandinavia), the Centre towards *Entente* and Catholic Italy and France, the DDP towards democratic capitalism of the West, and Stresemann, for so long the guiding hand behind German foreign policy, towards a *détente* with the victorious Versailles powers. However, with the exception of the Social Democrats, these partisans of collaboration with the West soon discovered - much to their discomfort - that no major Western power was in the least bit anxious to clasp the proffered hand of friendship of a defeated, dismembered and debt-ridden nation. All that the rulers of France and Britain wanted from Germany was the prompt payment of reparations and its permanent reduction to a second-rate continental power. Deprived of allies in the West, the Weimar parties reluctantly and with much internal dissension took the road to Rapallo, towards *rapprochement* with what was for Social Democratic as well as bourgeois Germany, the very incarnation of political and moral evil - Bolshevik Russia. In concluding the Rapallo Treaty with the Soviet Union on 16 April 1922, the representatives of reformist and bourgeois-democratic Germany were, ironically, only following a course that had been advocated for some years by the temporarily eclipsed rulers of the old Empire. Thirsting for revenge against the *Entente*, and especially 'decadent' France (the original source of all liberal - republican - Marxist infection), the monarchist 'national' right, both in the armed forces and in the agrarian-dominated DNVP, was outspoken in its insistence on the need to exploit the strong antagonism that existed between the Soviet Union and the Versailles powers, who for three years had sought the overthrow of the Bolsheviks by means of blockades, espionage and force of arms. Here was a natural, even if temporary and dangerous, ally of Germany against the 'plutocratic' West, they argued. But treating with Moscow involved no relaxation of the struggle against Communism at home. It was, even for its most fervent partisans, a marriage of convenience with the ever-present prospect of a rapid divorce. As Herbert von Dirksen, a leading German diplomat under both Weimar and Hitler, and German Ambassador to Moscow in 1929-33, explains:

The warmth of political friendship between two nations will always vary according to the events of the day and the strength of foreign pressure. The new-born Russo-German friendship was all the more susceptible to such climatic influences, as one of the partners was an emphatically novel and revolutionary state, and the other fragile in its structure by reason of social upheavals, crushing defeat after an exhausting war and control by foreign powers. Slowly the doctrine developed that the relations with the Soviet Union were to be managed strictly on a two-road basis; on one road political friendship and economic exchange were fostered; on the other, a life and death struggle encouraged unrest, trouble and chaos in Germany, with all the constructive forces in the country reacting against this subversive activity with all the vigour they could muster... Thus the mutual relations were liable to abrupt changes, the thermometer falling overnight from warm friendship to cold disgust whenever the Comintern had its way... There were comparatively few pillars on which the edifice of stable and good relations could be erected... Military relations proved to be of a more permanent value... on the German side, General von Seeckt and the Reichswehr were the most stable and reliable adherents of friendship with Russia... Economic relations never reached the strength of a solid pillar, or at least not before the great credits were granted and business done on a big and secure scale. Our industries

recovered slowly and the banks, preferring great gains with no risks, turned a cold shoulder to Russia... only individual members, like Professor Hotzsch of the DNVP, von Raumer and Baron Rheinbaum of the DVP and Wirth of the Centre... could be relied upon as supporters of an understanding with Russia. ^[1]

Rapallo was also treated as a holding operation in Moscow - at least, until the promulgation towards the end of 1924 of Stalin's doctrine of 'socialism in one country'. Karl Radek, foremost among the partisans of a strong pro-German orientation, outlined the *rationale* behind the treaty when he wrote, shortly before its conclusion:

The Soviet government knows that the first wave of world revolution has subsided and that the next will mount only slowly, it knows that the Russian economy cannot be restored without the help of European economy. It hoped that it would be the European workers with machines and the Russian peasants with ploughs... But the European workers are not yet masters in their own house. Therefore the Russian government declares: we need world capital and therefore we must give it profits... Fools who call themselves Communists and even left Communists [a reference to the KAPD, which accused the Bolsheviks of selling out the world revolution and the German working class by establishing diplomatic and economic relations with the German bourgeoisie - RB], have accused us on this account of treachery to the proletariat... We answer: 'Then show us another way.' ... Split into hostile camps, the capitalist world fears that we shall ally ourselves with the enemies of any state which tries to starve us out. We shall ally ourselves not only with the devil but with his grandmother too if it is a question of defending the rights for which the Russian working class bled and starved.

But despite this alliance - and in fact through it - the long-term strategic goal, to which the tactical requirements of Soviet diplomacy were subordinate, remained the consummation on a world scale of the revolution begun in Russia in 1917. This was made abundantly clear in the ECCI resolution of 19 May 1922 on Soviet foreign policy and specifically the recently-concluded Rapallo Treaty:

The democrats and 'Social Democrats' who are at the helm in Germany resisted for a long time the alliance with Soviet Russia although the entire working class for two years unanimously demanded this alliance. Only the merciless greed which characterised the attitude of the victor states at Genoa to defeated Germany induced the present German government to sign a treaty with Soviet Russia. The treaty between Russia and Germany signed at Rapallo is of enormous historical importance. Russia with its 150 million population and its predominantly agrarian character, in alliance with Germany with its first-class industry, represents such powerful economic cooperation that it will break through all obstacles. On the German side the treaty was signed by the present bourgeois - Menshevik government, but everybody understands that while the position of the bourgeois - Menshevik German government is a temporary thing, the German working class remains. The German working class will one day inevitably conquer power in their own country. Germany will become a Soviet Republic. And then, when the German-Russian treaty brings together two great Soviet republics, *it will provide such unshakeable foundations for real Communist construction that the old and outworn Europe will not be able to withstand it for even a few years. In this sense the fate of humanity in the next few years will be determined by the success of the German working class.* The victory of the German proletariat over 'its' bourgeoisie will involve unprecedented changes in the social structure of the whole of Europe... Workers of Germany, you must seize power in your country as quickly as possible. *In doing so you will remove the weight on the spirit of the world proletariat and accelerate historical progress...* [Emphasis added] ^[2]

Relations with Germany did not figure prominently in the political and theoretical controversies that were produced by the rise to dominance of the Stalin faction in the Soviet party and state. In so far as German affairs were discussed, they pertained to the false perspectives of the Stalin - Zinoviev - Kamenev *Troika* concerning the prospects of the imminence of a revolutionary situation in that country. The main controversies centred on Britain, where Stalin had staked the defence of the USSR on an alliance with the bureaucrats of the TUC General Council; China, where the Stalin - Bukharin orientation towards a coming purely national bourgeois-democratic revolution drove the Chinese Communist Party into a suicidal bloc with the Kuomintang (again on the grounds that its leader, Chiang Kai-shek, would prove - under pressure of the masses of course - a loyal ally of the USSR); and Poland, where the prevailing rightist line had led to the Communist Party throwing its full weight behind Marshal Piłsudski's coup of

May 1926, which the pro-Bukharin leadership of the party took to be a progressive, anti-feudal bourgeois-democratic overturn meriting the support of the proletariat and poor peasants. In each of these cases, the Stalin line, which flowed from the false perspective that it was possible to build 'socialism in one country', took as its starting point not the preparation of the working class, supported by the rural masses, for power, but the subordination of the proletariat and its Communist party to opportunist blocs with left reformists and bourgeois nationalists (such as those to be found on the General Council of the TUC - Cook, Purcell, Hicks - and the Central Committee of the Kuomintang - Wang Ching Wei, Feng Yu-hsiang) whose purpose was to provide a counterweight to the military and diplomatic pressure of imperialism upon the still-isolated workers' state. Stalin enunciated the opportunist nature of this tactic when defending his bloc with the British TUC (and this was a full two months after its betrayal of the General Strike and at a time when it was openly scabbing on the still-striking miners) at a joint session of the CPSU Central Committee and Central Control Commission on 15 July 1926:

The Anglo-Russian Committee is the expression of a bloc, of an agreement between our unions and the British unions, and this bloc is not without its political character. This bloc sets itself two tasks. The first is to establish contact between our trade unions and the British trade unions, to organise a united movement against the capitalist offensive, to widen the fissure between Amsterdam and the British trade union movement... and lastly, to bring about the conditions essential for ousting the reformists from the trade unions and for winning over the trade unions of the capitalist countries to the side of Communism.

Since this tactic was conceived of opportunistically, as a united front *only at the top*, as a supposedly clever organisational manoeuvre in which the staid British bureaucrats would be hopelessly outwitted by the shrewd Stalin, it could - and indeed did - only rebound to the advantage of precisely those whom the bloc was allegedly intended to undermine. The TUC bureaucracy emerged from the bloc with Tomsy - Stalin (the General Council broke up the Committee in August 1927) far stronger than when it had entered it in the winter of 1924-25. In this case, Stalinist opportunism supplemented the reformists by a right-wing policy.

The second task of the bloc is to organise a broad movement of the working class against new imperialist wars in general, and against intervention in our country by (especially) the most powerful of the European imperialist powers, by Britain in particular. ^[3]

Stalin's line prepared only defeats for the working class - not only in Britain, ^[4] but in Poland and China. And by the same token, it gravely weakened the international position of the Soviet Union, enabling a world bourgeoisie emboldened by its domestic victories to intensify still further its pressures on the workers' state. Chiang's bloody triumph over the Shanghai proletariat in April, facilitated and encouraged by the criminal Stalin - Bukharin policy of the 'bloc of four classes', abruptly ended the upwards thrust of the second Chinese revolution, and made possible the regroupment of imperialist forces - French, British, Japanese - not only in China but throughout South-East Asia. Instead of enjoying the protection of an ally to the south of Russia's vast and invitingly exposed Asiatic territories, there now, thanks to Stalin's policy of 'blocs', existed a bitterly anti-Communist regime prepared to align itself with almost any imperialist power or combination of powers that would protect it from a resurgence of popular revolution at home, and the magnetic revolutionary attraction exerted on China's oppressed by the USSR to the north. Piłsudski's victory in Poland also marked a very serious setback to the strategic position of the USSR, since the dictator wasted no time in strengthening Warsaw's already close ties with the *Entente*, and especially with French imperialism.

Neither were relations with Germany blossoming as 'pro-Berliners' such as Radek had hoped. Though formally separate entities, the Soviet government and the Communist International had been as one in their support for the revolution that loomed in the summer and autumn of 1923. The Red Army was alerted and prepared politically for a massive intervention to support an embattled German proletariat menaced by foreign as well as domestic counter-revolution; while the Soviet government, loyal to its international responsibilities, made ready to send precious grain and other essential supplies to Germany in the likely event that a successful revolution would be met by an imperialist blockade. The Soviet government's open commitment to the cause of revolution in Germany confirmed for even the most determined advocate of an Eastern orientation what the sceptics had always argued that Moscow placed world revolution above even the most valuable tactical alignment with a bourgeois power. Consequently in the period that followed the failure of the 1923 revolution, adherents of the 'Western orientation' gained the upper hand. As one leading German diplomat of the day, Gustav Hilger, recalls, despite

repeated and quite unbecoming protestations of loyalty to the 'spirit of Rapallo' by Chicherin and Radek to the German Ambassador to Moscow, Count Ulrich Brockdorff-Rantzau, 'the scars made by the events of October 1923 could never be removed'.^[5] With Stresemann in charge of foreign affairs, Germany moved progressively along the course that was to result, at the beginning of 1926, in Germany's application for membership of the League of Nations and (a little earlier) the conclusion of the Locarno Pact with the *Entente* powers. Underpinning this realignment was of course Germany's dependent economic relations with Western, primarily United States, capitalism. US bankers and investors had paid - or rather loaned - to the piper, and now they were beginning to call their anti-Soviet tune. Stresemann's pro-Western course naturally caused great dismay in Moscow, where Germany's impending defection to the *Entente* powers was quite correctly seen as a further weakening of the USSR's already isolated international position. Soviet diplomats were charged by the ruling Stalin faction with the task of mending Moscow's relations with Berlin, and to stress the immense advantages Germany was surrendering by turning its back on the policy of accord initiated by Rapallo. It is at this point that we begin to detect serious deviations from the principles of revolutionary foreign policy laid down and practised by the Soviet government in its Leninist period.

These had been enunciated by Lenin in the early days and weeks of Soviet power, when the tardiness of the revolution in Germany compelled the Soviet government to negotiate and finally to conclude a peace treaty with its polar opposite - imperialist Germany. Defending this line of action against his leftist critics (who as in the case of Bukharin, advanced the adventurist demand of a 'revolutionary war' against Germany), Lenin wrote:

Workers who lose a strike and sign terms for resumption of work which are unfavourable to them and favourable to the capitalists, do not betray socialism. The only people who betray socialism are those who secure advantages for a section of the workers in exchange for profit to the capitalists; only such agreements are impermissible in principle. He betrays socialism who calls the war with German imperialism a defensive and just war, but actually receives support from the Anglo-French imperialists, and conceals secret treaties concluded with them from the people. He does not in the least betray socialism who, without concealing anything from the people, and *without concluding any secret treaties with the imperialists*, agrees to sign terms of peace which are unfavourable to the weak nation and favourable to the imperialists of one group, *if at that moment there is not strength to continue the war...* The correct conclusion is that the moment a socialist government triumphed in any one country, questions must be decided, not from the point of view whether this or that imperialism is preferable [as it was under Stalin - RB], but exclusively from the point of view of the conditions which best make for the development and consolidation of the socialist revolution which has already begun... the underlying basis of our tactics must not be, *which of the two imperialisms it is more profitable to aid at this juncture*, but rather, how the socialist revolution can be most firmly and reliably ensured the possibility of consolidating itself, or at least, of maintaining itself in one country *until it is joined by other countries*.^[6]

The triumph of Stalin's theory of 'socialism in one country' in the CPSU and the Communist International inevitably found its reflection in the diplomacy of the Soviet government, which, needless to say, had no existence independent of the ruling Stalin faction in the party. Here the process of the revision and perversion of Leninist principles was more masked in its early stages than was the case with the Communist International and the Bolshevik Party. Lenin had readily acknowledged that the Soviet power, for as long as the revolution found itself surrounded by its imperialist enemies, would have to negotiate, trade and treat with sections of the world bourgeoisie, with a class that not only sought the overthrow of Soviet power, but waged often brutal class warfare against its own workers. This was a grim tactical necessity, and Lenin, unlike many leftist 'purists', minced no words in acknowledging it. Stalin's perversion of Leninist internationalism did not begin by a *frontal* assault on the principles of Soviet diplomacy as outlined by Lenin at the time of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. On the contrary, groping his way towards the counter-revolutionary line of 10 years later, he intuitively adapted the forms and phraseology of Communist internationalism to a nationalism that expressed the conservative interests and outlook of the burgeoning Soviet bureaucracy. Acting as the unwitting (in its early phase of development) spokesman of this privileged caste, Stalin began to insert into these forms the tactical and strategic conceptions that corresponded on a diplomatic plane to the theory of socialism in one country. Instead of relations with imperialist and other capitalist countries being seen as subordinate to the long-term goal of world revolution, and therefore as subordinate to the policies and activities of the Communist

International, the parties of the Communist International by almost imperceptible stages became transformed into auxiliaries of this diplomacy, which in turn represented the interests not of the Soviet working class, but the privileged bureaucratic caste which had usurped its political power. *Thermidor* in party, state and society was accompanied by no less a thoroughgoing reaction in the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs.

Each defeat for the international working class - made possible not only by the treacherous role of the Social Democrats, but the opportunist 'bloc' policy of the Stalin faction in the Comintern - rendered the Soviet bureaucracy progressively more dependent on direct relations with the world bourgeoisie. While this development certainly accorded with the most conservative elements of the bureaucracy, and especially those layers of the old exploiting classes that had rallied to the Stalin regime, it also proved a source of constant embarrassment to the Stalinist leadership, since from 1925 to 1928 it was constantly under attack from the left (from the Trotskyists) for the Comintern's policy of seeking opportunist blocs with Social Democratic and trade union bureaucrats. With the breakdown of this system of defensive blocs (with the British TUC and in China, the Kuomintang), and the beginnings of a leftwards turn in domestic economic policy, the Stalinist faction was compelled to seek new relations with world imperialism and the world capitalist market that urgently required a 'left' camouflage if the bureaucracy was to sustain its spurious claim to the mantle of October and Leninist internationalism. Once again, the processes by which this turn was accomplished were by no means premeditated or fully conscious. Stalin groped his way towards the diplomacy of the 'Third Period' just as he edged his way over from Zinoviev's leftism of early and mid-1924 to his theory of socialism in one country by the end of that same year and, with it, the notion of defending the USSR by means of unprincipled blocs with reformists and bourgeois nationalists - pragmatically, uncertainly and without for one moment seriously considering where these adaptations to the pressure of imperialism would eventually lead him.

The great irony was that in breaking from his anti-Trotskyist ally Bukharin, and opting for a programme of panic forced collectivisation and industrialisation, Stalin was thrown willy-nilly into dependence on the very forces which his theory of 'socialism in one country' had decreed were unnecessary for the construction of socialism in one country - namely the world market and international division of labour. Thus relations with Germany, the most technically advanced and heavily industrialised state in Europe, became absolutely crucial for the fate of Stalin's bid to 'catch up and overtake' the capitalist West.

Here the bureaucracy was fortunate in being able to exploit the already-established links that had been built up over the previous decade with industrial and political circles in Germany.¹⁷¹ Try as he might, with all his petit-bourgeois utopian plans for an autarkic Soviet economy (and in this, he shared much with Hitler), Stalin could not escape the laws of political economy, laws that recognise neither national frontiers nor those of different systems of production and property relations. This can be better appreciated by tabulating statistically Soviet Russia's economic relations with the major capitalist countries over the period in question. The table shows the source of Soviet imports in percentage terms:

	USA	Britain	France	Germany
1913*	5.8	12.6	4.1	47.5
1929	20.1	6.2	4.3	22.1
1930	25.0	8.0	2.8	24.0
1931	21.0	6.0	1.3	37.0
1932	5.0	5.0	0.5	46.0
* Tsarist Russia				

These few figures tell more about Stalin's German policy in the three years preceding the victory of National Socialism than any number of volumes of memoirs by those Soviet diplomats responsible for implementing his reactionary international strategy. Precisely at the point where Stalin launched his campaign to establish Soviet economic self-sufficiency, the technical and investment requirements of the First Five-Year Plan threw Stalin into the arms of the most reactionary and anti-Soviet industrialists and financiers in Europe! The key to understanding how the very industrialists who were financing the Nazis to crush the working class and its Communist Party in Germany came to be, at the same time, underwriting Stalin's First Five-Year Plan is to be found not only in the Soviet economic crisis, but that of the world capitalist system, which found German industry more exposed to its effects than any other

sector of the world economy. We have already noted that the downturn had set in even prior to the Wall Street crash of October 1929, and that, in heavy industry especially, falls in output rendered more than 50 per cent of capital installations idle. Only in the USSR, where a long-delayed but now headlong drive towards an advanced industrialised economy was generating insatiable hunger for capital investment and technical managerial expertise, ^[8] could be found the massive demand German industry so desperately required. Not even the most fascist-minded monopolists could restrain themselves from casting a greedy and envious eye on the industrial upsurge unleashed by Stalin's about-turn in economic policy after 1928. We have already tabulated the steady upturn in German exports to the USSR over the period of the Five-Year Plan - increasing from 22.1 per cent in 1929 to 46.0 per cent of all Soviet imports by 1932. Now let us consider the relative importance to German industry of the First Five-Year Plan. While Germany's overall exports to the USSR never approached the proportion of Soviet imports from Germany (obviously, since the German economy had a far larger national product, the major part of which, unlike the USSR of the period, was derived from industry and not agriculture), in certain spheres they assumed crucial importance. Thus machinery exports to the USSR in 1930 comprised 8.1 per cent of total German exports in this department, rising to 18.2 per cent in 1931 and 30.5 per cent by 1932. Here then was a clear case of mutual interdependence of the two economies, as Lenin had pointed out only a matter of weeks after the October Revolution:

In 1918 Germany and Russia have become the most striking embodiment of the material realisation of the economic, the productive and the socio-economic conditions for socialism on the one hand, and the political conditions on the other... ^[9]

But for as long as state power in Germany remained in the hands of the bourgeoisie, economic relations between the two countries would be not the harmonious and mutually beneficial ones envisaged by Lenin (and feared, we should recall, by Lloyd George) but distorted, not only to the detriment of the USSR, *but the workers of Germany*. Stalin's reliance on industrial and technical aid from the German bourgeoisie (forced upon him, as we have already noted, by his ruinous policies in Britain and China) had profound implications for the struggle for socialism in Germany, and, specifically, a disastrously disruptive impact upon all attempts by the German proletariat to close its ranks against the mounting Nazi threat. This counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism in Germany flowed directly from the bureaucracy's false, nationalist perspectives of building socialism to one country, a line that prevailed throughout both the right-opportunist period of 1925-27, when blocs with reformists were the order of the day, and 1928-33, when the reformists were branded as social fascists and the only united front permitted was one 'from below' and against the reformist leaders and organisations. It is now therefore necessary to see how the Stalinist left turn of 1928 on domestic economic questions became inextricably linked with both Kremlin diplomacy towards Germany, and the policies of the KPD between 1930 and the victory of Hitler in 1933.

Stalin and German Imperialism

Following his defection from the Foreign Division of the GPU in 1937, Walter Krivitsky revealed many of the secrets and motives behind Stalin's foreign policy, and especially his attitude towards German imperialism, which contrasted vividly with the official line of the Communist International and the KPD:

If one can speak of a pro-German in the Kremlin, Stalin has been that figure all along. He favoured cooperation with Germany from the moment of Lenin's death, and he did not alter this basic attitude when Hitler rose to power. On the contrary, the triumph of the Nazis strengthened him in his quest for closer bonds with Berlin. ^[10]

And indeed, if one looks hard enough, the evidence for this assertion can be found - even in the public speeches and statements of Stalin. For having adopted his nationalist utopia of building socialism in a Soviet Union completely encircled by imperialism, and without the advantages accruing from the socialist international division of labour and a planned world economy and market, then it was incumbent upon Stalin to prove that inter-imperialist antagonisms could be exploited in such a way as not only to postpone, but to prevent altogether the military intervention that Lenin had regarded as inevitable should the revolution not triumph in the advanced capitalist countries, the foremost being, of course, Germany. What for Lenin and Trotsky had been a tactical ploy forced upon them by the uneven development of the revolutionary forces in Europe became, under Stalin's leadership, a strategic line, one which increasingly cut across the struggle for socialist revolution in Central and Western Europe. Stalin regarded the smouldering antagonism between the victorious and vanquished imperialists' alliances not so much as an

adjunct to a strategy for world revolution, but as the principal support, or one of the most important supports, for his policy of defending the USSR while it advanced gradually towards complete socialism. Blocs with reformists and bourgeois nationalists, and inter-imperialist conflicts, together with the 'example' of Soviet power - these, and not the independent class action of the international proletariat, were to become the main pillars of Kremlin diplomacy in the first three years of Stalin's ascendancy in the CPSU and the Communist International. In fact as early as June 1924 (several months, that is, before his promulgation of 'socialism in one country') Stalin had begun to argue along these lines:

The very existence of the Soviet regime, its growth, its material prosperity [this may have been true for the bureaucracy Stalin represented, but for the mass of workers and poor peasants, it was a demagogic lie - RB], its indubitable consolidation, are all most effective propaganda among the European workers in favour of Soviet power. Any worker who comes to the Soviet land and takes a look at our proletarian order of things will not fail to see what Soviet power is... This is real propaganda, but propaganda by facts... Today everyone, both friend and foe, admits that ours is the only country that can be rightly called the buttress and standard-bearer of the policy of peace throughout the world. Does it need to be proved that this circumstance was bound to increase support and sympathy for the Soviet Union among the European masses? Have you noticed that certain European rulers are endeavouring to build their careers on 'friendship' with the Soviet Union, *that even such of them as Mussolini are not averse, on occasion, to 'profit' from this friendship? ... These... are the factors which have determined the success of our foreign policy in the past year.* ^[11]

Stalin's pro-German diplomatic orientation, one which stressed the 'national' factors in internal German politics to the neglect of the class struggle between the proletariat and its own imperialist bourgeoisie, becomes discernible for the first time in an article written for *Bolshevik* in September 1924, on the eve of his *volte face* on the question of 'socialism in one country'.

Surveying the factors making for instability in world politics, Stalin wrote of 'the desperate struggle of Britain and France for hegemony in Europe, the growing contradiction between Britain and America in the struggle for domination in the world market, and the superhuman struggle of the German people against *Entente* oppression'. ^[12] Hardly a phrase to be used by a Marxist to denote the struggle of the German imperialist bourgeoisie to regain what it had lost to its rivals in the war of 1914-18. And in a reference to the recently-convened Dawes conference, Stalin employed an equally non-Marxist, in fact national-populist, formulation when he declared that 'in settling the German problem, the conference reckoned without its host, the German people'. ^[13]

And here for the first time we find a reference to the 'intense antagonism between Germany and the *Entente*' ^[14] that overshadowed his diplomatic and political strategy in the years of the world crisis and the triumph of German fascism. With the recognition - a year after the event - that the great revolutionary opportunity in Germany had been missed, this stress became more and more pronounced. In March 1925 Stalin wrote in *Pravda* that it was 'beyond doubt that in Germany the period of revolutionary upsurge has come to an end', a fact which Stalin correctly saw as of 'positive significance for the bourgeoisie'. Stalin then cast around for other 'facts' which could be depicted as 'of negative significance for capitalism' and therefore, by the same token, positive for the Soviet Union. And first among them was the 'growth of the contradictions between the capitalist groups, a growth of the forces which weaken and disintegrate capitalism', among these being listed 'the struggle between enslaved Germany and the dominant *Entente*...'. ^[15] So it is scarcely surprising to find Stalin giving first place, in his summary of 'the tasks of the Communist Parties', to the utilisation 'to the utmost [of] all contradictions in the camp of the bourgeoisie with the object of disintegrating and weakening its forces and of strengthening the position of the proletariat'. ^[16] Now the outlines of Stalin's policy, one which flowed inexorably from the theory of 'socialism in one country', were becoming clear: namely the dangerous (for the USSR) and reactionary (for the workers of the capitalist countries) policy of relying primarily on inter-imperialist contradictions to ward off attacks on the Soviet Union. In May 1925, Stalin further developed this strategy when he spoke of 'two camps' into which the world had been divided by the Russian revolution, 'the capitalist camp, headed by Anglo-American capital, and the socialist camp, headed by the Soviet Union'. How then was the USSR to be defended against the might of this camp 'headed by Anglo-American capital' which was in the process of becoming 'stabilised'? Clearly, since the perspective was one of building 'socialism in one country' unaided by workers' revolutions in the

rival camp, then the USSR had to seek its supports in those capitalist forces and powers working to undermine the 'stability' of the Anglo-American camp:

In what way has the stabilisation of capitalism found concrete expression? ... in the fact that America, Britain and France have temporarily succeeded in striking a deal on the methods of robbing Germany and on the scale on which she is to be robbed... they have struck a deal on the Dawesation of Germany. Can that deal be regarded as being at all durable? No, it cannot. Because, firstly, it was arrived at without reckoning with the host, that is, the German people; secondly, because this deal means imposing a double yoke upon the German people, the yoke of the national bourgeoisie and the yoke of the foreign bourgeoisie. To think that a cultured nation like the German nation and a cultured proletariat like the German proletariat will consent to bear this double yoke without making serious attempts at a revolutionary upheaval, means believing in miracles. ^[17]

But here Stalin was paying mere lip service to the revolutionary capacities of the German working class. He was already looking elsewhere for forces in Germany that would take up the struggle against 'the yoke of the foreign bourgeoisie': 'Even such a reactionary fact as the election of Hindenburg as President, leaves no doubt that the Entente's temporary deal directed against Germany is unstable, ridiculously unstable.' ^[18]

Now we can see the justification for Krivitsky's statement that from the death of Lenin in January 1924, Stalin became the most outspoken advocate of a pro-German orientation in Soviet diplomacy, a line that, as the above reference to the monarchist Hindenburg's election as President shows, was not averse to speculating on the growth of the most reactionary anti-Communist forces if such a development could lead to a worsening of relations between imperialist Germany and the *Entente*. Grouped behind Hindenburg in his campaign for the Presidency were precisely those counter-revolutionary, ultra-imperialist forces - agrarian, bourgeois and military (not to speak of the Nazis, who in the second ballot withdrew Ludendorff and swung their supporters behind the Marshal) - who were demanding an aggressive stance against the Versailles powers. Only the Social Democrats (who in the second ballot withdrew their candidate in favour of Marx of the Centre) consistently oriented towards a *détente* with the West. And here was the origin of Stalin's special animosity towards the SPD, not on account of its reactionary, class-collaborationist role in domestic German politics (for he was not averse to treating with open representatives of the bourgeoisie and the *Reichswehr*), but because of its foreign policy, its opposition to the 'Eastern orientation' favoured by a section of the military, agrarians, bourgeoisie and even the *volkisch* movement (that is, the 'National Bolsheviks'). So we can see that with the beginning of the left turn in the Communist International, hostility towards the Social Democrats in Germany would receive a double impulse. Not only would they be castigated as 'social fascists' with whom no Communist or honest worker should have any dealings, but in addition - and for Stalin, engrossed in his strategy of manoeuvring between the imperialist blocs, primarily - attacked as the most stubborn obstacles to the fulfilment of the aims of Kremlin diplomacy. It mattered not to Stalin how the influence of Social Democracy on the political life and government policies of Germany was undermined and destroyed. His sole concern was to facilitate the formation in Germany of a government that would do two things: pursue a vigorous *anti-Entente* and especially anti-French policy in the West, and a pro-Soviet policy, involving large-scale economic and technical aid, in the East. To these twin aims was the KPD, a party commanding the support of millions of German workers, subordinated and finally sacrificed right up to and even beyond the conquest of power by the Nazis in January 1933.

On the very eve of the left turn in Soviet economic and Comintern policies, at the Fifteenth Congress of the CPSU, Stalin speculated at some length on the possibility of the intensification of antagonisms between German and French imperialism (though Stalin, in accordance with the dictates of Kremlin diplomacy, never used the term 'imperialism' in relation to Germany, only its rivals):

The whole [Dawes] plan is well constructed, but it reckons without the host, for it means for the German people a double yoke - the yoke of the German bourgeoisie on the German proletariat, and the yoke of foreign capital on the whole German people [that is, on all classes, Junkers and bourgeoisie as well as middle class and proletariat - RB]. To say that this double yoke will have no effect upon the German people would be a mistake... ^[19]

It is in this same speech that Stalin gives a clear exposition of the basis of his hostility to the German Social Democrats and the entire Second International, as agents of 'Locarno' and the '*Entente*' (and not, in the case of the SPD, of *their own* bourgeoisie):

It is the leaders of the Second International who are most of all leaping and dancing, assuring the workers that Locarno is an instrument of peace and the League of Nations as an ark of peace. [It would take Stalin another seven years to come around to this ludicrous notion - RB] ... What does the present position of the Second International in relation to Locarno show? That the Second International is not only an organisation for the bourgeois corruption of the working class, but also an organisation for the moral justification of all the injustices of the Versailles Peace; *that the Second International is a subsidiary of the Entente*, an organisation whose function is... to give moral justification to all the injustices and all the oppression that have been created by the Versailles-Locarno regime. ^[20]

Naturally, these statements did not pass undetected or unappreciated by those for whose ears they were intended, and whose assignment it was to record and analyse them. Imperialist Germany's enforced eastwards orientation gave an enormous fillip to the serious study in diplomatic circles of every aspect of Soviet life, not least the factional struggles that erupted inside the Bolshevik Party and the Communist International following the death of Lenin in January 1924. Here Germany proved to be far in advance of its *Entente* rivals, whose bourgeois politicians, diplomats and advisers only really came around to appreciating the significance of the struggle between Trotsky and Stalin when the Kremlin went over to its openly class-collaborationist, counter-revolutionary policy of the Popular Front. German diplomats such as Gustav Hilger (who, as a top-ranking official in the German embassy in Moscow, witnessed the signing of the Stalin - Hitler Pact in August 1939) and Berlin's Ambassadors to Moscow Herbert von Dirksen and Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, had grasped the essence of Stalin's theory of 'socialism in one country', and its implications for German-Soviet relations, some 10 years earlier; almost, in fact, from the day that it became official party and Comintern policy. For example, Hilger writes in his highly informative memoirs:

More than any other event, the failure of the 'German October' [that of October 1923] determined the subsequent history of world Communism and the strategy of the Third International. Within the Russian Communist Party it caused severe disagreements over policy and sharp personality clashes to break into the open; it was one of the immediate reasons for the outbreak of the Stalin-Trotsky feud, *and it gave Stalin occasion to develop his theory of 'Socialism in a single country'*. In Moscow's relations with Germany, *it resulted in a determined return to the Rapallo policy of friendship with the bourgeois government in Berlin.* ^[21]

Hilger was not alone in his estimation of the historic import of the struggle between the Stalin faction and the Trotskyist Left Opposition, as the following extract from his work on Soviet-German relations shows:

The Russian Revolution, they [the Left Opposition] warned, was in danger of becoming bourgeois; and only a frank return to the dictatorship of the industrial proletariat would preserve the revolutionary heritage. The fate of Soviet Russia, however, was not the only concern of the Left. *The Russian Revolution made sense to them only as part of the major world revolution they desired. In this connection they warned that the interests of the world revolution should not be subordinated to the narrow interests of the Soviet state.* The Kremlin's *raison d'état* should not interfere with revolutionary developments abroad; on the contrary, *the Soviet regime should openly identify itself with the world proletariat and support its revolutionary activities...* Against this, the so-called Centre, controlled by Stalin... was preoccupied with the problem of keeping the party apparatus in power... Stalin's programme was based on three principles: (1) appeasement of the peasantry; (2) *appeasement of the capitalist world*; (3) industrialisation. [This only became true after 1928, when Stalin's centre broke from the *pro-Kulak* Bukharin Right to introduce plagiarised and distorted versions of Trotsky's own programme for industrialisation - RB] ... Against this the Left asserted that, because the Soviet economy was dependent on the world economy of capitalism, *'socialist construction' could only succeed with the help of further revolutions in the West.* Denouncing these warnings as 'defeatism', *Stalin in a sense built his policy on the continued existence of the bourgeois governments*, even though he lived in constant fear that the bourgeois world might band together against the Soviet state in an anti-Bolshevik crusade... The development of the Stalin-Trotsky controversy took place openly enough so that the outside world could follow its main steps. In and around the German Embassy there were some disagreements over the interpretation these developments should be given, and over the future course they were bound to take. Together with the Ambassador [Count Rantzau, who died in 1929] I [Hilger] tended to regard the Trotsky faction as radical dreamers who offered nothing

constructive to Soviet Russia. Moreover, *as representatives of the German Reich, we felt that the coming to power of the faction demanding world revolution would seriously endanger the working of the Rapallo relationship which we sought to promote.* Ever since the end of 1923, when Trotsky had lent support to Petrov, the Comintern agent who had been involved in the preparations for the abortive Communist revolution of October-November, *Count Rantzau was deeply suspicious of the opposition leader; and [Soviet Foreign Commissar] Chicherin did his best to confirm Rantzau's attitude by pointing out the dangers to Rapallo should Trotsky come to power.* The Ambassador, in a report to Berlin *stressed that the elimination of Trotsky and Zinoviev would be a tremendous gain for Germany, and that it would be a great mistake to side with the Opposition out of humanitarian considerations... it would be very short-sighted, he thought, if the German press were to emphasise that aspect of the story and thus create sympathy for the fallen leader among the German people [something that would have also embarrassed, apart from the German ruling class, the Stalinist leadership of the KPD - RB].* [22]

Neither were the German diplomatic corps in Moscow taken in by Stalin's fire-eating speeches on the prospects of revolution in Germany, which in order to preserve his Communist credentials, he was obliged to make more often than harmonious Soviet-German relations would have otherwise found politic. Steeped for years in the complexities and ambiguities of inner-party affairs, Hilger and Rantzau detected the subtle nuances that distinguished Lenin's reaction to a revolutionary opportunity from that of Stalin:

Eight years after the proclamation of the NEP [1921], 11 years after Brest-Litovsk, the world depression once again provided fertile soil for revolutionary discontent, and the left-wing internationalists within the Communist movement were heartened by a new intensification of the Comintern's revolutionary activities. A new revolutionary situation seemed to be in the making. Yet it is interesting to compare Stalin's reaction to this new rise of the tide with Lenin's customary reaction. At the peak of world prosperity, on 5 December 1927, Stalin spoke before the Fifteenth Party Congress. We live, he said, on the eve of a new revolutionary period. Imperialism is rotten to the core, but, in its agony, it is preparing desperate moves. A new anti-Bolshevik crusade is being planned. How should the party meet this threat? Stalin's proposed policy is remarkable. The task, he said, is to postpone and avoid war. Soviet Russia should pay ransom to the capitalist world and try to maintain peaceful relations with it... *Lenin would have drawn the entirely opposite conclusion from Stalin's first sentence. A new revolutionary tide is rising? A crisis is ripening? How wonderful. The party's task will be to further this development and speed it up, to deepen the crisis and sharpen the class war so as to bring it to a revolutionary clash.* Now we see how much the strategy of world Communism was [under Stalin] being subordinated to the national policy of the Soviet state. [23]

So not even the ultra-radicalism of the 'Third Period' could conceal from the expert eyes of Hilger and Dirksen (who took up his duties as Ambassador to Moscow early in 1929, when the 'new line' was in full swing) the non-revolutionary content of Stalin's policies in the Comintern and, needless to say, in the party which concerned Berlin most - the KPD. Dirksen writes in his memoirs:

The slow, systematic work of organisation on the part of the relentlessly stubborn and wily Caucasian had triumphed over the brilliance, the wit, the oratorical genius and valour of the somewhat unbalanced and fickle leader of the army. The slow-working party machine, manned by carefully selected and reliable henchmen of Stalin, proved superior to the flaming appeals of Trotsky and the enthusiastic cheering of his admirers... Gradually the hard political core began to emerge... in the form of Stalin's doctrine of 'socialism in one country' as opposed to Trotsky's slogan of permanent world revolution... [24]

Now we can better appreciate how much a blow to Stalin's German policy was the formation of the Müller government in June 1928. With the pro-Western Stresemann as its foreign minister, here was a cabinet composed largely of forces hostile to the close collaboration with Moscow favoured both by the *Reichswehr* High Command (now under its pro-Eastern Chief-of-Staff von Schleicher) and influential members of the DNVP.

Hilger reveals that this was a development that Stalin, working through his top diplomats, as well as the KPD, had done his utmost to prevent:

... even though the right-wing parties in Germany claimed to have a virtual monopoly on patriotism and anti-Communism, no political group was more consistent in its opposition to

Moscow than the SPD. This opposition expressed itself not only in domestic affairs, where alliances with the Communists were almost inevitably shunned [after 1928, the KPD was to be even more rigorous in rejection of united action between the two rival workers' parties - RB], but also in an equally strong preference for the West in foreign policy. No wonder, then, that the Kremlin worked hard to prevent the establishment of a Socialist [that is, Social Democratic] government in Germany, an effort which was watched with satisfaction by some of the embassy personnel. In retrospect *it seems really remarkable that Chicherin and Litvinov* [who succeeded Chicherin as Soviet Foreign Minister after the latter's death in 1929 - RB] *could openly discuss with German diplomats the desirability of keeping SPD out of office...* ^[25]

Yet the formation of such a government was an absolute precondition for the development of the struggle for socialism in Germany, which in its turn would at last enable the Soviet Union to break the imperialist encirclement and harness Germany's advanced technology and industrial resources to modernise its own still-backward economy. The assumption of office by the Social Democrat Hermann Müller, as has been discussed in previous chapters at some length, presented the KPD with a splendid opportunity to break from reformism the nine million workers who still, to one degree or another, followed the SPD rather than the Communists. And having done his best to block the formation an SPD-dominated government (preferring one dependent on the ultra-nationalist DNVP) Stalin, by his new policy of rejecting any united action with the reformists, and in fact of aligning the KPD with any party determined to oust the pro-Western Social Democrats from positions of influence in the central or state governments (as on the occasion of the Prussian Referendum in August 1931), demonstrated how 'socialism in one country' subordinated in practice as well as in theory the interests of the struggle of the proletariat for power in the advanced imperialist states to the narrow, national requirements of the privileged Soviet bureaucracy.

At the worker-base of the KPD, and even up to quite high levels of its central as well as local leadership, the strident leftism of the 'Third Period' was taken as good Communist coin, as a genuine attempt to break Social Democracy as the essential prerequisite for the proletarian revolution. True, Stalin did seek to destroy the institutions and mass influence of German reformism - but not in order to clear the road for socialist revolution. His aim was the formation of an ultra-nationalist government in Berlin, dominated by the pro-Eastern *Reichswehr* generals, a regime bent on an aggressive anti-French course in foreign policy, and eager to collaborate with Moscow in providing Stalin with desperately-needed economic and technical assistance for his First Five-Year Plan. Even the rise of National Socialism did not divert Stalin from his chosen German policy. Indeed, all the available evidence indicates that Stalin saw in the Nazis not an enemy that sought the destruction of both German Communism and the USSR, but a potential, if unreliable, ally in the struggle against the 'social fascists', whom the KPD vied with the Nazis in denouncing as agents of French and Anglo-American imperialism.

But before considering in detail the working-out of Stalin's German policy, we should examine some of the economic factors which underpinned the Kremlin's orientation towards the most reactionary, chauvinist-imperialist segments of the German bourgeoisie.

Germany and the Five-Year Plan

For five years, Stalin had resolutely opposed Trotsky's proposals for industrialisation as 'economic adventurism', as an attempt to plunder the peasantry. First in a bloc with Zinoviev and Kamenev, and then, after their temporary defection to Trotsky, in alliance with the Bukharin - Tomsky - Rykov Right group, Stalin retreated before the growth of capitalist elements in town and country alike, until in the winter months of 1927-28, the refusal of *Kulaks* to sell their grain to the state at the customary prices drove a wedge into the heart of the ruling clique in the party and state. After a period of hesitation and vacillation, Stalin broke from Bukharin and opted for a programme of collectivisation of private farming in the countryside and, in the towns, crash industrialisation. Here in all its stark reality was posed the issue which had divided the party and the Communist International since 1924 - that of whether full socialism could be built in a single workers' state independent of the world market and the international division of labour. Stalin, as we know, insisted most vehemently that it could. Yet in 1929, in embarking on the First Five-Year Plan, Stalin now found himself compelled to go cap in hand to representatives of those very economic and technical forces he had claimed were unnecessary for the fulfilment of his policy of building 'socialism in one country'.

The establishment of formal economic links between the USSR and Germany predated diplomatic recognition by almost a year when on 6 May 1921 representatives of the two countries concluded a

commercial agreement whereby the German mission in Moscow was granted right of direct access to all Soviet economic agencies for the purposes of trade and securing concessions on behalf of private German firms. The next step followed towards the end of 1922, when the Otto Wolff steel combine launched, together with the People's Commissariat for Foreign Trade, a mixed Soviet-German trading corporation 'Rusgertorg' which operated as an agency for German firms selling in the Soviet Union. Other firms - mainly in heavy industry - quickly followed suit, and over the next few years of NEP, Junkers, the Rhine-Elbe Union steel cartel, the Himmelsbarch lumber company and Krupp either secured concessions to exploit Soviet natural resources on the basis of a division of the profits, or contracts to supply the USSR with much-needed capital equipment and finished manufactured goods. These developing links were further consolidated with the conclusion on 12 October 1925 of a comprehensive trade, economic and technical treaty between the two countries. However the upturn in the German economy which dated from the previous year turned most companies' attentions away from the Soviet market, hedged in as it was with numerous regulations, and restrictions not encountered in capitalist countries, towards the expanding domestic and European market. For the next five years, the USSR declined in importance as an investment outlet and market, and interest only revived with the onset of the economic crisis in 1929-30. As late as 1928, the USSR ranked twelfth as an importer of German goods, receiving a mere 3.3 per cent of total German exports.

The capitalist slump and, in the USSR, Stalin's crash industrialisation programme changed this relationship dramatically. The first of January 1929 saw the launching of the First Five-Year Plan, which had as its strategic target the transformation of a backward rural and semi-illiterate Russia into one of the world's front-ranking industrial states. Nine days later, there began in Moscow a 'German Technology Week' which had as its central theme the idea of German technological prowess assisting the USSR in its bid to become a modern industrial power. Organised by the German Embassy in conjunction with leading German technologists, engineers and scientists, it aroused the immediate and enthusiastic support of the Soviet government, with the Commissar for Heavy Industry Kuibyshev speaking, together with the newly-appointed Ambassador von Dirksen, at the official opening ceremony of the exhibition. Even though this was a time of bad German-Soviet relations (this was of course the period of office of the pro-Western Müller government), individual capitalists soon began to see that the Five-Year Plan offered them enormous possibilities for trade and construction contracts. This interest turned into action over the following two years as the bottom dropped out of both the domestic and world capitalist markets, and entire plants lay idle through dearth of contracts and consumer demand. The year of 1931 therefore proved to be one of boom for Soviet-German economic relations, the high point in this collaboration being the visit to the USSR in March of a team of leading industrialists from some of the largest concerns in Germany. The invitation had come from Grigori Ordzhonikidze, chairman of the Supreme Economic Council, whose Five-Year Plan had run into all the problems associated with hasty, bureaucratic methods of economic leadership - lack of coordination, bottlenecks, shortage of basic capital equipment, breakdowns due to lack of skilled staff and technologists, the exhaustion of the workers, the stubborn and sometimes even violent resistance of the peasants, the absence of any democratic control over and participation in the drawing up and application of the Plan itself by the workers, etc. Now German resources and expertise had been summoned to rescue Stalin's industrialisation programme from impending disaster, a fiasco that would not only undermine the rule of his own bureaucratic caste, but the very foundations of Soviet power. Stalin's economic zigzags had led the USSR to such an impasse that it could now only survive by relying on the aid of some of Germany's most reactionary, anti-Communist and anti-trade-union industrialists. For these were just some of the firms and tycoons to make the journey to Moscow: Krupps, AEG, Demag, Peter Klöckner, Otto Wolff, Siemens, Borsig, United Steel, Reinecker, Schichau. Hilger, responsible for trade and economic questions at the time of the visit, recalls:

At first the Russians seemed to believe that they could have the capitalists in their pockets by merely making their mouths water at the prospect of huge sales. For they immediately dangled big deals before their eyes, talking about orders amounting to over a billion RM. At the same time they demanded commensurate credits. They were greatly disappointed when the delegation declared that they had come in order to look around and not to close business deals. This, in turn, was no more than a device which gave the Germans a tactical advantage. Before the delegation left the Soviet Union [and after a meeting with Ordzhonikidze - RB], an agreement had been reached that an additional 300 million RM worth of orders would be accepted... On 24 March 1931, the Reich cabinet agreed to give default guarantees for the additional 300 million credit, and two weeks later Georgi Pyatakov [a former Left Oppositionist, but now Stalin's deputy

Commissar for Heavy Industry, purged in the 1937 Moscow Show Trial - RB] came to Berlin to discuss and sign the so-called Pyatakov Agreement which specified the precise conditions of the transaction. ^[26]

In fact the total of Soviet orders placed with German firms in 1931 exceeded this sum by more than three times. For concerns in certain spheres of business closely linked to Soviet requirements, these orders provided their main source of export trade. In the first half of 1932, sales to the USSR accounted for the following percentages of total German exports: cast iron and nickel - 50; earth-moving equipment - 60; metal-working machines - 70; cranes and sheet metal - 80; steam and gas turbines and steam presses - 90. But this reliance on the Soviet market also had a negative side so far as the German firms were concerned. Their quest for profits in a period of slump had, despite their understandable rejection of an economy based upon socialised property relations, served to strengthen a system of production whose historical tendency and mission was to supplant their own. The Soviet market was at best a stop-gap one, pending the revival of German and world capitalism. And we must go even further. There were, even during this period of collaboration, business leaders who, like Lenin, called for the unification of the Russian and German economies, but on the basis of capitalist production relations. The USSR was, they argued, destined to become a German colony, the provider of raw materials, markets, investment outlets and 'living space'. ^[27] And here of course lay common economic and military as well as political ground with the Nazis, whose leader demanded quite explicitly in *Mein Kampf* the conquest of Soviet Russia as the natural and historical zone of expansion and colonisation for German imperialists.

The industrialists' visit to Moscow resulted in some highly piquant situations in the German press. While the pro-French *Germania*, organ of the Centre Party, attacked the delegation - one of whom, Peter Klöckner, happened to be a member of the Centre Party Central Committee! - as 'short sighted' for a 'fatal' policy in aiding the Soviet Five-Year Plan (a criticism which brought the immediate riposte from the returned delegation that 'a developed Russia is bound to develop fresh requirements which European industry would have to satisfy for a long time to come'), the Stalinists weighed in on the side of the Ruhr tycoons. An article by Neubauer reflected obvious satisfaction with the prevailing trend of thinking in industrial circles, seeing it as a powerful blow against forces seeking to turn Germany towards closer links with the *Entente* (a policy favoured by Brüning and von Papen of the Centre as well as by the SPD). Neubauer's article also attempted to answer demagogic charges by the Social Democrats that the Kremlin was in league with pro-Nazi employers. An SPD press comment on the visit said: 'Borsig [who had been providing cash and political support to Hitler since the early 1920s - RB] goes on a visit to Stalin. The worst exploiters among the German employers are received by Moscow.' Neubauer, as a loyal Stalinist, could not answer this charge in a Communist manner, since to do so would have involved pointing out that the Soviet Union was compelled to seek economic assistance from capitalist countries and individual - even pro-fascist - industrialists for as long as the imperialist encirclement of the USSR continued, and for as long as the bourgeoisie continued to rule in countries such as Germany where the technical and industrial resources for the Soviet Union's advancement to a full socialist society lay. To answer in this honest, Marxist fashion was impossible, since it would demand a clear break with Stalin's nationalist utopia of building socialism in a single country. Instead, all that Neubauer could do was complain lamely of the SPD's Western policy and that instead of accompanying Borsig and Klöckner on their pilgrimage to Stalin, 'Hilferding, Brüning and Hitler are pursuing the same policy of the Western orientation'. ^[28] Neubauer was far softer on the big industrialists. These were charged with mere inconsistency and lack of resolve:

... the leaders of German industry were quite aware that business with Russia could be greatly increased if the political obstacles set up by the German capitalists which hitherto stood in the way of such a development were finally removed. The German bourgeoisie has been vacillating for years between a Western orientation and business with its powerful Eastern neighbour. It has more and more sought to rely on the Western powers and obviously yielded [sic!] to anti-Bolshevik tendencies, but at the same time has whined about every big Soviet order which instead of going to Germany has gone to some other country... There has now been a change of tactics... [but] it has still to learn that its present double game cannot be carried on indefinitely. ^[29]

Kremlin Diplomacy and the German Working Class

This leads logically on to the actual role of the Communist International and the KPD in the supplementing and disguising of Stalin's foreign policy. This was based exclusively on the bureaucracy's

mortal fear of, firstly, any revolutionary upheaval in Europe, Germany especially, that might endanger the supply of industrial goods necessary for the fulfilment of the First Five-Year Plan, and secondly, the equal dread of the formation of a united anti-Soviet imperialist front under the leadership of France, until the rearmament of Germany under Hitler, the largest military power on the continent of Europe.

The rise of National Socialism in Germany demanded, from the summer of 1930 onwards, that a united front of all proletarian organisations be formed for the purposes of mutual self-defence against the fascist terror squads. Trotsky tirelessly argued for this policy from the first days following the Nazi election success of September 1930, right through to the formation of the Hitler government in January 1933. As we have seen from numerous excerpts, from the Comintern and KPD press, together with the pronouncements of these two organisations on the main questions of strategy and tactics, united fronts with either the SPD or the ADGB were ruled out as a matter of principle. There could be no blocs with the 'social fascists'. But there was a second line of defence against those who insisted on maintaining a united front of the workers' parties against fascism - the SPD was a tool of the Versailles powers, and the Second International was little else than an organisation for organising imperialist intervention against the USSR. It never seems to have entered the heads of those who peddled this leftist nonsense that German and not French imperialism could become the major threat to the Soviet Union, and that the SPD, together with the other parties of the reformist international, might have to be destroyed in order to create the type of regime necessary for launching 'total war' on the USSR. Here the Stalinists saw future developments through the distorting prism of August 1914, when the German bourgeoisie embraced the reformists on their return to the 'nation'. The crude, simplistic leftism of Third Period Stalinism could envisage only another and even more comprehensive betrayal of the type perpetrated on the outbreak of the First World War - but with this important difference: the German Social Democrats would capitulate not so much to 'their own' bourgeoisie, but to those of the Versailles powers, primarily France. Thus we find that in Germany, the Stalinist war against 'social fascism' became invested with a special savagery not encountered in other countries where Social Democratic influences in the working class were strong. Determination to weaken and destroy the reformist organisations *by any means* led the KPD leadership - on the direct orders of Stalin - into unofficial blocs with the most deadly enemies of the entire German proletariat. Nor were the party's leaders above stealing from the demagogic arsenal of their chauvinist bedfellows in a futile attempt to convince 'national' Germany that the KPD lacked nothing in patriotism and hatred for the *Entente*. But it was not easy to swing a mass-based proletarian party, reared in the traditions of proletarian internationalism personified by its founders Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, along such a blatantly chauvinist course. The 'main enemy' was still at home but it was Social Democracy, not the bourgeoisie. That Stalin and his ECCI placemen had been pushing for a 'national' line in Germany for some time prior to 1930, when it became most pronounced, is clear from the KPD's initial reaction to the National Opposition referendum of Hitler and Hugenberg against the Young Plan, and the criticisms subsequently made of it. Thus while the Thälmann leadership was only too willing to give vent to its organic leftism by railing against the SPD for its pro-Western foreign policy (one that was deemed to be no less reactionary than Mussolini's, who at least made friendly noises in the direction of the Kremlin), it balked at supporting, even under its own banner, the Hitler - Hugenberg campaign for the German 'Freedom Law'. An article in the *Communist International* written shortly after the campaign began declared that:

The only objective of this referendum move is to distract the workers' attention from the capitalist offensive and to weaken their fighting capacity. It is therefore our urgent duty to expose this shameful manoeuvre and to appeal to the masses not to take part in it. ^[30]

This decision - a perfectly correct one - was later to be sharply condemned by the ECCI, and admitted as a serious error by the KPD leadership itself. ^[31] By the summer of 1930, the mistake had indeed been rectified. Privately disturbed at the growth of mass support for the Nazis, the KPD came out with its pre-election programme 'For the National and Social Liberation of the German People'.

What had been implicit in Stalin's repeated references since 1924 to the struggle of the 'German people' against its *Entente* oppressors, now became explicit. ^[32] For the programme began not with a call to the proletariat to struggle for a socialist policy against its German class enemies, but for demands which could be endorsed without any embarrassment to his capitalist paymaster by a Nazi demagogue: 'We Communists will tear in pieces the robber treaty of Versailles and the Young Plan and repudiate all the international debts and repayments which enslave German workers.'

The purpose behind this new turn towards 'national demands' (in a country that had consummated its bourgeois-national stage of development as long ago as 1871) was explained in an article called 'National Fascism' in the *Communist International*. After making the routine observation that the Nazis were 'breaking up' and 'at the beginning of their decomposition' - and this only weeks before the 'broken' Nazis recorded 6.7 million votes! - the prudently anonymous author went on:

What should be the tactics of our party in the struggle against National Socialism? ... The basic task consists in tearing the National Fascist mask of struggle for national independence and the social emancipation of the German people, and to counterpose their empty demagogy with a real revolutionary programme of salvation for the toiling masses of Germany... [33]

'Exposure' of the *national* demands of Nazis now became the order of the day - and a quite impossible task, since Hitler and his supporters were in deadly earnest when they proclaimed their intention of smashing the entire Versailles system. The KPD's programme stridently denounced all other parties for having betrayed Germany's national interests, especially the Social Democrats who had 'sold the goods and chattels, the life and existence of the working people of Germany to the highest bidder among the foreign imperialists'. The SPD leaders were 'not only the hirelings of the German bourgeoisie', but were 'at the same time the voluntary agents of French and Polish imperialism'. (By a strange coincidence, the Nazis were using just these terms to describe the Social Democrats, who in their eyes were not 'social fascists' but... 'Marxists'.)

All the acts of the traitorous culprits, Social Democracy, are continual high treason [another term employed by the Nazis against the 'November criminals' who allegedly, as far back as 1918, betrayed Germany to France - RB] add betrayal of the vital interests of the working masses of Germany.

Then the programme made a pledge which openly violated what Lenin had written on the question of the Versailles Treaty against the KPD 'lefts' and 'National Bolsheviks' in his *Left Wing Communism*:

We solemnly declare before all peoples of the world, before all foreign governments and capitalists that in the event of our seizing power we shall declare null and void all obligations arising out of the Versailles Treaty.

What Lenin wrote on this question is quite clear and consistent with the principles that guided his actions both before and after the revolution in Russia:

One must realise [polemicalised Lenin against Laufenberg's 'National Bolshevism'] that it is utterly false tactics to refuse to admit that a Soviet Germany... would have to recognise the Treaty of Versailles for a time, and to submit to it... The German Communists should obviously not deprive themselves of freedom of action by giving a positive and categorical promise [as in fact did the 1930 KPD programme] to repudiate the Treaty of Versailles in the event of Communism's victory... The possibility of its successful repudiation will depend, not only on the German, but also on the international successes of the Soviet movement... The Soviet revolution in Germany will strengthen the international Soviet movement, which is the strongest bulwark (and only reliable, invincible and world-wide bulwark) against the Treaty of Versailles and against international imperialism in general. To give absolute, categorical and immediate precedence to liberation from the Treaty of Versailles and to give it *precedence over the question of liberating other countries* oppressed by imperialism from the yoke of imperialism, is philistine nationalism... not... revolutionary internationalism. [34]

The KPD Stalinists were not merely repeating all the errors of the old 'National Bolsheviks'. By promising unilaterally to repudiate all Germany's foreign treaties, they were in fact opting for a German version of Stalin's 'socialism in one country', a policy which entirely discounted the development and outcome of the class struggle in the other major countries of capitalist Europe. As Trotsky insisted in his polemic against what he termed 'National Communism', the KPD should have had inscribed on its banner not the 'people's revolution against *Entente* slavery' but 'for a Soviet Germany as part of the United Socialist States of Europe'. Such a programme and perspective would have been anathema to Stalin, who viewed the political struggle in Germany and the rest of Europe through the prism of the purely domestic requirements of the Soviet bureaucracy. These dictated that the KPD should throw its considerable and growing weight, not on the side of those millions of reformist-led workers faced like their Communist brothers by the menace of fascism, but on to the other end of the class scales, with chauvinists, anti-Semites and pathological anti-Communists of the 'national' Right. Many were the

occasions on which the KPD parliamentary fraction lined up with the Nazis and DNVP in Reichstag votes when the principled position would have been either to move amendments to resolutions sponsored by the National Opposition that would have exposed their brazen demagoguery, or, failing this, to abstain. The regular sight of KPD and Nazi deputies raising their hands in unison for chauvinist resolutions directed against the Young Plan and the Versailles Treaty played straight into the hands of the SPD leaders, who without any difficulty (and with some justification) were able to demonstrate that the Communists were blocking with the most rabid enemies of the working class and, for good measure, of the USSR. ^[35]

Collaboration and imitation went beyond Reichstag divisions. Pursuant to their new tactic of exposing the 'left national fascists', the KPD leadership invited the 'radicals' Gregor Strasser and Goebbels to write in the party's evening paper *Welt am Abend* while even slimier depths were plumbed when the KPD published a collection of party statements on foreign policy (entitled *Soviet Germany Breaks the Fetters of the Young Plan*) which contained the proud boast that there was not a single Jew on the Central Committee of the German Communist Party. While this revolting capitulation to the ideology and prejudices of National Socialism predictably failed to attract the chauvinist petit-bourgeoisie towards the party (in fact it was counter-productive in so far as it further repelled the reformist workers), the manoeuvre did ensnare a sprinkling of *volkisch* aristocrats, 'National Bolsheviks' and the prize capture of them all, Lieutenant Scheringer, the officer jailed in October 1930 for his activities on behalf of the Nazis in the *Reichswehr*.

The motives for the young officer's break from the NSDAP, and his public adherence to the KPD, are themselves eloquent testimony to the chauvinist degeneration of the party. His doubts about the wisdom of Nazi policy had not been aroused by its violent anti-Communism or hostility to the organisations of the German working class, but by Hitler's order of 20 February 1931 forbidding SA men to carry arms and engage in street fighting with... the 'Reds'. Scheringer also considered that in knuckling under to the Brüning regime in this fashion, Hitler was abandoning the holy crusade against the Versailles powers. This was too much for Scheringer, who like thousands of his kind, yearned for the day when the Reichswehr, millions-strong, would avenge the humiliation inflicted on German imperialism at Versailles. Scheringer announced his break from Hitler in a fashion that indicated that he had not repudiated Nazism, but rather Hitler's supposed betrayal of the party policy. In a letter to KPD deputy Hans Kippenverger, he wrote:

Whoever compares the practical policy of the Nazi leaders with their radical phrases will realise that their deeds are in vivid contrast with what they say and write, and what we expected from them. ^[36]

Scheringer's defection (confirmed when a KPD deputy read out a telegram from the officer to a stunned Reichstag) caused a political sensation. The Stalinists set about exploiting it by building up their recruit from fascism as the focal point of a 'National Bolshevik' movement guided from behind the scenes by the KPD leadership. In July 1931, a new journal appeared - *Aufbruch* - to cater for the national prejudices of these chauvinists in 'Communist' garb. Prominent in its pages apart from Scheringer were its editor the old *volkisch* 'National Bolshevik' Beppo Romer, former Free Corps officers Count Stenbok-Fermour and Bruno von Salomon, and the Schleswig-Holstein ex-Nazi leader Bodo Uhse. The first number of the journal contained a 'National Bolshevik' manifesto signed by seven former army officers, one former police officer and four ex-leaders of the NSDAP. Through this group and its journal, says Mrs Buber-Neumann, 'the KPD intended to infiltrate right-bourgeois circles'. ^[37] But as for opening up the road to the millions of reformist workers, the undertaking proved a disaster.

Once again the reformist leaders were given an undeserved opportunity to point out gleefully that it was not they, but the Stalinists, who were guilty of consorting with extreme reaction. But the greatest blow to proletarian unity in the struggle against fascism was still to come.

The Red Referendum

As with the Young Plan referendum of the previous year, the KPD leadership's initial reaction to the proposed referendum to dissolve the Prussian state government - a coalition of Social Democrats and Catholic Centrists - was the correct one of denouncing it as a demagogic fraud. When first mooted by the 'National Opposition' following the Nazi election triumph of September 1930, the proposal to unseat the Prussian reformists was roundly condemned in the Prussian Diet on 15 October 1930 by a KPD deputy: 'This move of the Nazis has the sole aim of preparing the ground for the establishment of a

fascist dictatorship.’ Which was of course perfectly true. Yet the party leadership, even then, was not speaking with one voice, for in the first flush of what official KPD and Comintern circles deemed to be a great election victory for the German party, Neubauer wrote that:

... the party in Prussia and all other provinces will immediately take up the fight for the dissolution of the Diets [State Parliaments], the Reichstag election having shown what a glaring contradiction there exists between these bodies and the real opinions of the people. ^[38]

But once the Nazis and their monarchist allies began to raise the same demand and with almost identical arguments, nothing more was heard of this call for the dissolution of the Prussian Diet.

But behind the scenes, and especially in the Kremlin, pressure was building up for an altogether different line on the Nazi - Monarchist referendum. We now know from the account by Mrs Buber-Neumann of the events leading up to the KPD’s endorsement of the National Opposition referendum in Prussia that, as early as the first weeks of 1931, Stalin had criticised her husband Heinz for his reservations in linking the party publicly with a movement regarded by all class-conscious workers as their mortal enemy:

At the beginning of 1931, ^[39] in a talk with Neumann, Stalin criticised for the first time his methods in the fight against the Nazis. He reproached him over his ‘sectarian mass policy’ [Neumann had advanced the slogan ‘beat the fascists wherever you meet them’ - RB] and because the KPD leadership had avoided participation in the referendum in Prussia... At that time, Neumann could not understand Stalin’s attack. Almost a year later, after Neumann had been repeatedly criticised by the CI on the same grounds, Stalin had a further discussion with him. It was one of the peculiarities of the dictator to cloak his orders or opinions by suggestive questions. During this conversation, at the end of 1931, Heinz sought to defend his policy over the growing Nazi threat. Stalin interrupted him and asked: ‘Don’t you think, Neumann, that if the Nationalists [that is, the National Opposition of Nazis and monarchists who had recently held their rally at Harzburg - RB] came to power in Germany, *they would be so tied up with the West that we could build socialism peacefully?*’ ^[40]

Despite the understandable paucity of official documentation on the question, there is no room for doubt that Stalin ordered KPD participation in the Prussian referendum for reasons of foreign policy. Already the ousting of the Müller government in March 1930 had led to a marked improvement in Moscow-Berlin relations (just before Müller’s fall, the SPD journal *Sozialdemokratischer Pressedienst* commented with ample justification that ‘there can no longer be any doubt that German-Soviet relations have now reached their lowest point’), ^[41] as Molotov noted in his report to the Sixth Soviet Congress on 8 March 1931:

The chief part in creating the anti-Soviet front is played by the so-called European Committee formed on the initiative of the French Foreign Minister Briand for the purpose of creating a bloc of European states against the Soviet Union... France... represents at the present time the most belligerent imperialist circles of Europe... [However]... from the middle of 1930 [that is, after the fall of the Western-oriented Müller government - RB] these relations [with Germany] showed a favourable change, which I record with satisfaction. The fundamental line in German policy in regard to the USSR has of late been one of friendly cooperation and the further consolidation of relations which, we are convinced, can and should be developed further to the mutual advantage of both countries and in the interests of the general peace. The presence in Moscow of a delegation of leading German industrialists is further proof of the understanding which German leaders have shown of the importance and value of Soviet-German economic collaboration. ^[42]

These ‘German leaders’ most certainly did not include those of the SPD, whose departure from the government a year previously was regarded in Moscow as a precondition for improved Soviet-German relations. Betraying the cynical indifference to the internal nature of regimes that has become a hallmark of Stalinist diplomacy whether practised by Stalin himself, or his successors and emulators Khrushchev, Mao and Brezhnev, Molotov remarked, *a propos* the forthcoming meeting between Foreign Commissar Litvinov and Mussolini’s Foreign Minister, Count Dino Grandi:

As at the present time the greatest threat to peace is the creation of an anti-Soviet bloc of capitalist powers, any rapprochement between the USSR and another country, the more when it is such an important country as Italy, is bound to serve the cause of peace. ^[43]

What then could be more natural than friendship with equally reactionary forces in Germany, provided only that such an alliance ‘served the cause of peace’? This was the rationale behind Stalin’s insistence that the KPD join with the Nazis in their bid to depose the SPD government of Prussia, one of the last

remaining substantial obstacles to the removal of Social Democratic influence over the conduct of German government affairs. With the National Opposition ensconced in Prussia, a state which, quite apart from its historical significance as the political and economic heart of Germany, contained fully two-thirds of the nation's population, the road would be clear for an assault by the extreme right on the central government. And as Stalin well knew, the formation of a regime dominated by the Nazi - monarchist bloc would inevitably lead to the development of hostile relations between German and French imperialism, and indeed to an accentuation of inter-imperialist antagonisms throughout Europe and between Europe and the United States. But however willing Stalin's representatives in the KPD might have been to wage war on 'social fascism' and pursue his policy of splitting the workers in the factories through the adventurist tactic of launching 'Red Unions', they were in no hurry to satisfy the Kremlin's foreign policy requirements to the extent of helping into power their most deadly foes. In his intensely gripping and moving (not to say accurate) memoirs, the KPD and Comintern seamen's organiser Richard Krebs ('Jan Valtin') records that as early as January 1931, considerable unrest was created in the party ranks when the command was given to join with the Nazis in a combined assault on the 'social fascists'. So it had to be presented not as the cynical manoeuvre that it was, designed to further Stalin's foreign policy, but as a necessary tactical device to break up the last barrier to social revolution in Germany, this barrier being not the Nazis, but the SPD and the reformist trade unions:

The blind hatred for the Social Democrats took a decisive turn about the middle of January 1931 [the month when Ordzhonikidze invited the German industrialists to Moscow - RB] when Georgi Dimitrov, head of the ECCI West European Secretariat in Berlin, issued a secret memorandum of instructions to all leaders and sub-leaders of the Communist columns. A special committee headed by Thälmann, Heinz Neumann and Wollweber [head of KPD security] was set up to carry the instructions into effect. Summed up in one sentence the instructions were 'united action of the Communist Party and the Hitler movement to accelerate the disintegration of the crumbling democratic bloc which governs Germany'. My chief aide... and I stared at each other in consternation. 'Who is crazy? ... We or the Central Committee?' 'Without the help of the SPD the German bourgeoisie cannot survive', Wollweber growled in a meeting of party functionaries. [Important sections of the bourgeoisie were coming to the opposite conclusion - that they could not survive without the destruction of the Social Democratic organisations - RB] 'With the liquidation of the social fascists we are preparing the soil for civil war. We shall then give Hitler our answer on the barricades.' Those who objected were threatened with expulsion from the party. From then on in spite of the steadily increasing fierceness of their guerrilla warfare the KPD and the Hitler movement joined forces to slash the throat of the already tottering democracy. It was a weird alliance never officially proclaimed or recognised by either the Red or the Brown bureaucracy but a grim fact all the same. Many of the simple party members resisted stubbornly. Too disciplined to denounce openly the Central Committee they embarked on a silent campaign of passive resistance if not sabotage. [44]

Krebs describes one such 'united front' action with the Nazis against the 'social fascists' undertaken, it should be noted, some several months before their joint participation in the Prussian referendum:

In the spring of 1931 the socialist [that is, ADGB] Transport Workers Union had called [in Bremen] a conference of ship and dock delegates of all the major ports of Western Germany... It was public and the workers were invited to listen to the proceedings. The Communist Party sent a courier to the headquarters of the Nazi Party with a request for cooperation in the blasting of the trade union conference. The Hitlerites agreed as they always had in these cases. When the conference opened the galleries were packed with two to three hundred Communists and Nazis. I was in charge of operations for the Communist Party and a Storm Troop leader Walter Ticow for the Nazis. In less than two minutes we had agreed on a plan of action. As soon as the conference of the Social Democrats was under way I got up and launched a harangue from the gallery. In another part of the hall Ticow did the same... the chairman gave the order to eject the two troublemakers from the building... As soon as the first trade union delegate touched one of us our followers rose and bedlam started. The furniture was smashed, the participants beaten, the hall turned into a shambles... The next day both the Nazi and our own party press brought out front page accounts of how socialist workers incensed over the 'treachery' of their own, corrupt leaders had given them a thorough 'proletarian rub-down'. [45]

But still the KPD leadership hesitated to take the plunge of joining openly with the Nazis in the latter's campaign for the removal of the Prussian government Social Democrats. In April 1931, the following scathing remarks on the proposed referendum appeared in the Comintern bulletin *International Press Correspondence*, suggesting that Stalin had still not succeeded in winning over either the ECCI or the KPD Central Committee to his proposal to back the Nazi demand for the dissolution of the Prussian Diet: [46]

There is no doubt that it is due to the KPD and its uncompromising fight against fascism [an example of which we have just illustrated! - RB] and the Prussian government that this demagogic exploitation of the criminal policy of the Social Democrats in Prussia proved a failure among the industrial proletariat [a reference to the collection of signatures for the referendum, which had been successfully completed by April - RB]... it has been possible to expose to the main strata of the proletariat the deceitful plans of the reactionary parties and organisations and to make plain to the masses the real character of the alleged fight of the *Stahlhelm* and the Hitlerites as a mere competitive struggle for soft jobs and offices in the state apparatus. [It was to this that the theory of Third Period Stalinism reduced the mortal conflict between fascism and Social Democracy - RB] It is an important political success for the KPD and its popular action against fascism and the Prussian government. [47]

However, the door was left ajar for a change of line, since the same article insisted in orthodox Stalinist fashion that 'there is no doubt that the Social Democracy at present represents the most important support of the dictatorship of capital of the Brüning government in the carrying out of the fascist dictatorship' and that in the camp of 'national' fascism, the monarchist *Stahlhelm*, and not the Nazis, represented 'the more solid and socially reliable defence formation of fascism from the standpoint of the bourgeoisie'. [48]

So Brüning was 'carrying out... the fascist dictatorship' with the support of the 'social fascists', the main social bulwark of the bourgeoisie, while the Nazis represented the least formidable of the reactionary formations of the ruling class. The 'main enemy' therefore was not the Hitler movement, but the reformists. Theoretically the groundwork had been laid for the 'Red Referendum'. It still remained, however, to convince the KPD leadership to put it into operation. The opportunity arose at the Eleventh Plenum of the ECCI, held in Moscow in April 1931. [49]

With the KPD obviously in mind, the Plenum Theses sharply condemned what it termed a 'liberal' deviation in the sections, one which hindered the successful application of the 'united front from below':

The struggle demands the speedy and determined correction of the mistakes that have been committed which, in the main, consist of drawing, after the Liberal fashion, a contrast between the parliamentary form of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and its open fascist forms. These mistakes represent a reflection of the Social Democratic influence in the Communist ranks. [50]

As if to make the point doubly clear to the 'liberals' of the KPD delegation, the theses stressed that it was the reformists, and not the Nazis, who were 'the principal instrument for sabotaging and disrupting the struggle of the workers' and, as the Social Democrats were providing the bourgeoisie with 'direct aid towards introducing the Fascist dictatorship', the 'successful struggle against Fascism in Germany' called not for a united front with the SPD against the Nazis, but 'the timely exposure of the Brüning government as the government which is introducing the Fascist dictatorship'. [51] And how better to do this than join the campaign to oust his main supporters in Prussia, the Social Democrats? Still the top KPD leadership were not convinced, and finally, after all other methods had failed, the party *troika* of Thälmann, Neumann and Remmele were summoned to Moscow and told by the ECCI chiefs that Stalin himself had ordered the KPD to back the Nazi referendum. Whilst still in Moscow, an article by the rising Stalinist servitor Walter Ulbricht appeared in the KPD press announcing party support for the referendum. Confronted by this *fait accompli*, the three returned to Berlin to explain to bewildered and in many instances deeply-worried party members why they should now support with all their strength a measure which a matter of days before had been denounced by the KPD press as a blatantly reactionary campaign by the Nazis and their allies in the *Stahlhelm*, the DNVP and the DVP. What made things worse for the party was that this about-turn, one which produced days of complete paralysis at every level of the party, from the plants right up to the top leadership, was forced on the KPD by Stalin at the height of the banking crisis, at a time when the party needed the maximum political clarity and stability. This state of paralysis did not escape the more shrewd bourgeois commentators and observers. Thus the Polish envoy in Berlin, Dr Alfred Wysocki, reporting on political reactions to the banking crisis on 20 July 1931, noted:

Germany constantly threatens that, if it is not granted a loan or this or that political concession, it will become a stage for Communist disturbances and a Bolshevik country. This argument can be heard here at every step. However, it is difficult to believe... when the banks were closed the Communists had a unique opportunity to start disturbances. The population was stupefied, deprived of cash, and whipped into panic by the press... and what did the Communists do? They issued a rather mild proclamation and avoided clashes with the police anywhere in Berlin; in the provinces... they did shoot at the police, and the police shot back at the Communists, but it was all done so delicately that not a single man was killed or even injured. *Does this not appear as a sort of insurance of the German rear by Bolshevik organisations, with the silent blessing of Moscow?* ^[52]

The Polish diplomat, whose government had a vested interest in divining Stalin's intentions *vis-à-vis* German imperialism and the rising Nazi movement, had put his finger right on the pulse of Kremlin diplomacy. What Stalin wanted in Germany was not a proletarian revolution, but an 'insurance of the German rear', a Germany that would confront both France and its semi-vassal Poland as an enemy and not, as the reformists of the Second International intended, as a reconciled ally. The political strain imposed on the party jointly by the economic crisis in Germany and Stalin's insistence on a pro-Nazi line in the referendum drove Thälmann to distraction. When the stock exchange and the banks closed their doors on 13 July, the party Politbureau convened an emergency meeting to discuss what line the KPD should adopt, only to find its chairman missing. He had in fact beaten a panic-stricken retreat to his native Hamburg, whither Neumann was duly sent to bring him back from his family home to Berlin. These comings and goings could not fail to attract the attentions and barbs of the party's political critics on the left. The organ of one oppositional tendency enjoyed itself immensely at the expense of these super-Bolsheviks. Under the title 'World Revolution Takes a Holiday' it commented:

On Tuesday, 15 July, the French and English Communist Parties, bourgeois newspapers and pressmen enquired by telephone to Karl Liebknecht House [the KPD headquarters]. They were all asking: 'What will the KPD do? How did it judge the position? The enquirers could get no answer, because none of the responsible Bolshevik leaders were present. Thälmann and Heckert were on leave, some were in Moscow, the others kept their mouths shut, as in such a situation, responsible and independent decisions needed taking, and by doing that, a 100 per cent Bolshevik and Stalin worshipper could get his neck broken. It is an old joke that bad weather in the drawing room can cause a fever. But it has not yet happened that a revolution did not occur because the weather was fine and all the leaders were on holiday.' ^[53]

Before the news could be broken to the party membership and the working class in general that the KPD was to support the Nazi - monarchist referendum, a stratagem was employed by which, its creators hoped, the wrath of the reformist workers would be diverted away from the KPD towards their own leaders. On 21 July, the KPD addressed to the Prussian government an ultimatum consisting of four demands, so devised as to ensure that they would be rejected out of hand. They were:

1. Freedom of the press and withdrawal of all emergency legislation;
2. Restoration of all social service cuts, etc;
3. Payment of claims on banks;
4. Lifting of the ban on the KPD militia, the Red Front Fighters League, banned after the May Day clashes of 1929.

In presenting these demands, the KPD did not offer in exchange a united front with the reformist organisations against fascism. It simply warned that the KPD would:

... make its attitude towards the proposed People's [sic!] Referendum against the Prussian government dependent on the answer. [The changed nomenclature gave a clear hint of what that attitude would be - RB] The People's Referendum referred to by the Communist Diet fraction is the referendum organised by the Fascist and German Nationalist parties. Its fate at the moment is uncertain, but with Communist support its victory would be made certain and the Prussian government overthrown. ^[54]

This was no offer of a united front, but political blackmail of the lowest kind. Do as we say... *or we will unite with the fascists to bring you down.* How could the Stalinists hope to win a single reformist worker to the struggle against fascism with such unprincipled tactics? In fact, the evidence suggests that this was not the intention anyway, and that the main purpose of the manoeuvre was to justify to the KPD's

workers that the party had given the reformists a chance to prevent the united front of their party with the Nazis. Events now moved fast. The ultimatum expired on 23 July, and the next day Thälmann announced ‘to an overcrowded functionaries’ meeting of the revolutionary mass organisations in Berlin’ ^[55] that the KPD had joined the ranks of the future Harzburg Front, the ‘National Opposition’ of those militant people’s revolutionaries Hitler, Hugenberg, Seldte, Vögler, Thyssen and Schacht. Faced with the thankless task of explaining why the party now had to support as revolutionary that which it had previously, and with some vehemence, denounced as counter-revolutionary, Thälmann told the meeting:

Fighting against fascism does not mean combating only the Nazis, but above all fighting against finance capital itself, against the Brüning cabinet as a cabinet which is carrying out the fascist dictatorship. From this there follows of necessity our sharp offensive attitude towards the Prussian Severing government because it is the strongest bulwark of the Brüning dictatorship, and finally, our referendum action intensifies extraordinarily the class antagonisms... How ridiculous it is when the SPD talk of a united front with Hitler and Hugenberg. Quite the contrary... by taking over the leadership of the Referendum, we have thwarted the demagogic plans of the *Stahlhelm*, of Hitler, Hugenberg, of the DVP and the conservatives. Precisely our participation in the Referendum gives us the best possibility of exposing the Nazi and the German Nationalist office hunting and demagogy. *The more the parties of the Right sabotage the Referendum, the more deeply we shall force a breach in the ranks of the Nazis’ followers.* ^[56]

Thus the main purpose of the manoeuvre was to ‘expose’ and recruit from the Nazis, and not the SPD! Hence the frantic attempts to outbid them in chauvinism, a tactic that would have only alienated the reformist workers still further from the KPD. Now all that remained was to dress up the Nazi referendum in suitably ‘Bolshevik’ garb in order that Prussia’s 10 million or so proletarians could be induced to vote for it. Thus was born the ‘Red Referendum’. The character of the KPD campaign soon became clear when 13 ex-Nazis, including Count Stenbock-Fermour, the Free Corps officer who never tired of boasting of his prowess in murdering Communists in the fighting of 1919-20, issued a statement supporting the KPD’s decision to back the referendum, while on 1 August the KPD bulletin *Fanfare*, which devoted most of its columns to reports on the anti-fascist struggle, published a picture of the ex-Nazi Lieutenant Scheringer with the caption (a quotation from one of his writings): ‘Whoever opposes the people’s revolution and the revolutionary war of liberation, betrays the cause of the fallen who in the last war gave their lives for a free Germany.’ So the war denounced by Liebknecht and Luxemburg as one for plunder and conquest now became elevated by the Stalinists to a noble struggle for a ‘free Germany’. Stalin’s foreign policy of rekindling national hatreds between the imperialist powers in order to split up potential enemies of the USSR had led, in the case of the KPD, to the party becoming retrospective defencists in the First World War, and defencists also for the next - even while the bourgeoisie still ruled! This revolting debasement of Leninist internationalism, of Bolshevik defeatism, provoked Trotsky to write:

Marxism of course, cannot fail to take into consideration the possibility of a revolutionary war in the event that the proletariat seizes power. But this is far removed from converting an historical probability... into a fighting political slogan prior to the seizure of power... The ‘national liberation’ of Germany lies... not in a war with the West, but in a proletarian revolution embracing Central as well as Western Europe, and uniting it with Eastern Europe in the form of a Soviet United States. Only such a statement of the question can unite the working class and make it a centre of attraction for the despairing petit-bourgeois masses. In order for the proletariat to be able to dictate its will to modern society, its party must not be ashamed of being a proletarian [and not a people’s - RB] party and of speaking its own language, not the language of *revanche*, but the language of international revolution. ^[57]

The KPD’s participation in the referendum proved a godsend to the hard-pressed reformists, who, over the previous weeks and months, had fast been losing ground to the Communists in Berlin, the Ruhr and other industrial centres. Already on 22 July, *Vorwärts* had been able to depict the KPD as the allies of counter-revolution, saying that the party had ‘decided to line up with Hitler, Hugenberg and Duesterberg, against the Prussian coalition and to join them to bring about a government of the extreme right’. Next day, the KPD lamely replied to this charge by claiming that not their Nazi allies, but the Prussian Social Democratic Ministers Braun and Severing had ‘become the trail-blazers for fascism’ and that ‘in consequence the watchword must be “Red Referendum”’. This in turn drew the scornful riposte from *Vorwärts* that the Stalinists were ‘obviously suffering from colour blindness or the effect of the swastika

flag. The KPD are the accomplices of the most brutal reaction, the pacemakers and bait for fascism.' The SPD scored another bulls-eye when it published a leaflet attacking the referendum with a photograph of Thälmann addressing a *Stahlhelm* meeting! Others were more appreciative of Stalin's initiative. Goebbels wrote exultantly in his *Angriff* on 29 July that 'success was doubtful up to now. But now that the Communist Party has joined the great opposition front, success seems entirely possible and indeed probable.' Small wonder that when polling day - 9 August - arrived, no reformist workers could be seen in the vicinity of the polling booths, many of which were festooned with KPD Red Flags and the Swastika emblem of the Nazis. ^[58] Nor was the turn-out of Communist workers as high as the KPD leaders would have liked. In fact the referendum failed by 13 per cent to secure the 50 per cent plus one votes required to secure the dissolution of the Prussian Diet.

Each partner in the Nazi - Stalinist 'united front' accused the other of sabotaging the referendum. The NSDAP in its statement on the result claimed that:

... of the 10 million Prussians who gave a public demonstration against Red Prussia [a Prussia the KPD held to be already fascist! - RB], at least six to seven million can be reckoned as National Socialists. A new election in Prussia today would send the Nazis back to the *landtag* as the strongest party in the state.

Which of course was precisely what Stalin had in mind when he instructed the KPD leaders to support the referendum. ^[59] However, the Stalinists could not let this claim pass unchallenged, since it lent support to SPD charges that the referendum, despite its allegedly 'Red' hue, had chiefly been the work of the reaction. Also on 10 August, the KPD press service issued a statement on the result which declared that the referendum had been 'a tremendous mass mobilisation against the Brüning - Braun - Severing system' and that the result proved 'that over 50 per cent of the electors are against the Prussian government'. Hitler and Hugenberg were scolded for having 'sabotaged the victory of the referendum' which in industrial regions was allegedly 'completely under the leadership of the Communist Party'. This was probably so, but the statement failed to explain how it was that in precisely these areas of proletarian militancy and concentration, the poll for the 'Red' referendum was lowest. Thus to take one example, Düsseldorf West, where of a total electorate of 402 000 less than a third voted for the referendum. Taking the pro-referendum parties as a whole, they polled 150 000 votes less than in the Reichstag elections of 1930. In other words, throughout Germany, literally hundreds of thousands, possibly millions, of KPD supporters simply stayed at home on 9 August, and left voting to the supporters of the National Opposition. They had precious little love for the government of Otto Braun, but even less for one headed by Hitler and Hugenberg. Somehow this demonstration of working-class opposition to the referendum had to be obscured, so Willi Münzenberg leapt into the breach with an article claiming that the abstentionists were all to be found in the ranks of the Nazis and monarchists:

There is no doubt whatever that the National Socialists and *Stahlhelm* people carried on their campaign in a very half-hearted manner indeed, and that large masses of the supporters of the right parties kept away from the poll so as not to vote on 9 August for a Soviet Prussia. ^[60]

Supporting the referendum had proved an unmitigated disaster for the KPD. Not only had it confused and demoralised many of its own members and sympathisers, causing them to break discipline in order to prevent a possible Nazi take-over in Prussia. By openly lining up with the Nazis, the KPD leaders had provided the reformists with just the proof they needed to convince their own wavering supporters that Communism served the interests of reaction. But still Stalin and his henchmen in the KPD leadership pressed ahead with these new tactics. Neumann's slogan of 'beat the fascists wherever you find them' was withdrawn as 'sectarian', and party members were instructed instead to pursue an 'ideological' struggle against National Socialism, a movement that answered the logical arguments of its opponents with clubs, knives and pistols. Neumann himself was instructed to lead this new campaign by challenging Goebbels to a debate at a Nazi rally in Berlin, the meeting ending in uproar when Neumann, challenged by a Nazi to declare where he stood on his now-discarded slogan, declared to the massed Nazi hordes that he still upheld it.

For all their betrayals of the German working class, the reformists never descended so low in the Weimar Republic as to share the same platform with Nazis. ^[61] In the workers' movement, this was a doubtful distinction that could be claimed only by Stalinists such as Ulbricht and Neumann, whose appearances at these functions only lowered their prestige in the eyes of class-conscious workers, and did nothing tangible to break the backward proletarian elements from the grip of the Nazi demagogues. There could be no more damning testimony to the reactionary consequences of the 'Red Referendum' than the capital

made out of it by the leaders of world reformism at the Fourth Congress of the Second International, whose proceedings coincided with the campaign for the referendum in Prussia. Introducing a resolution on the ‘fight of the working class for democracy’, Otto Bauer of the Austrian party declared:

We are convinced that the German working class will not let itself be led astray by the dazzling and irresponsible appeals of those who today in the referendum that is taking place in Prussia, are, in the name of the proletarian revolution, making common cause in the struggle for power in Prussia with the Fascist counter-revolution [loud applause]... [62]

SPD Executive member Rudolf Breitscheid also attacked the KPD’s action in Prussia to some effect, since its support of the referendum enabled the Social Democrats to stand before the workers as the spurned champions of proletarian anti-fascist unity:

Comrades, nobody would more gladly than we stand shoulder to shoulder with the Communist workers! [Vehement assent] But as things stand in Germany the KPD has taken a line which unhappily renders it impossible for us to fight on the same ground with it. [Assent] Must I remind you once again what is going on at present in Prussia, in that German state which in the postwar days constituted the real stronghold of democracy? Must I remind you that the Communists there are making common cause in the referendum with the fascism of the Hitlers and the Hugenbergs? ... Those very Communists who a few weeks ago, nay perhaps a few days ago, were still reporting this referendum as a reactionary move now go and lend their support to fascism. Their support against whom? German democracy and German socialism! [Loud applause] ... Would it be a success for the Communists? No, it would... remain a success for German reaction, for German nationalism, for German fascism [loud applause] and the Communists would have the merit of having brought this about. [63]

And for once, the Stalinist propaganda machine was silent. For nearly every word was true.

Appendix: The Eleventh ECCI Plenum: April-May 1931

That the strategy and tactics of Third Period Stalinism supplemented the secret diplomacy of the Kremlin can be demonstrated by an analysis of the proceedings of the Eleventh ECCI Plenum held in Moscow in the months of April and May 1931. Here, in the resolutions and the speeches of delegates, were interwoven - in almost all cases unconsciously - the twin-pronged attack of Stalin on the reformist-led organisations of the German working class. First the *Theses (On the Tasks of the Sections)*, adopted on the reports of Manuilsky, Thälmann and Chemodanov. In line with Kremlin thinking on this question, the *Theses* referred to the ‘existence of a wide international conspiracy against the USSR led by French imperialism’ which was ‘squeezing the last ounce out of the nations enslaved by the Versailles system’ and ‘supporting and organising the Fascist regime in Europe’. As evidence of this, the *Theses* cited the recent ‘trials’ of Soviet and foreign economic experts (the ‘Industrial Party’) and of former Menshevik leaders (both of which were based on forged evidence and testimonies). These trials allegedly proved that:

... the imperialists, with the aid of the Second International, prepared for the spring of 1930, and are now preparing a counter-revolutionary war against the USSR and for this purpose are utilising the vassals of French and British imperialism - Poland, Romania and Finland. [64]

On the global plane therefore, Social Democracy was nothing but a pliant tool in the hands of Anglo-French imperialism. Domestically, it played the same role of an auxiliary of extreme reaction, not clashing with, but actually supporting the rise of the various national fascist movements. Since appearance (and reality) seemed to confound this claim that fascism and Social Democracy had become fused - ‘not antipodes, but twins’ - the *Theses* warned against taking seriously assertions by reformists that there was any real ‘contrast between the “democratic” forms of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and Fascism’. It would take less than two years for the KPD leaders who endorsed this pre-natal leftism to discover just how real this contrast was, and that for many of them and their comrades, it proved to be a matter of life or death.

Much time at the Plenum was taken up with demonstrating (in complete violation of all the available evidence) that despite the rise of fascism in Germany to the proportions of a mass movement embracing millions and commanding a militia of some 500 000 men, a movement that enjoyed the direct and indirect support of influential business leaders and politicians; Social Democracy, and not National Socialism, remained ‘the principal social support of the bourgeoisie’. This became a point of honour for

all hard-line Stalinists, for to admit the truth, that the rise to power of the Nazis spelt doom for the reformist leaders and organisations, was to discard the very theoretical foundation on which rested the tactics and strategy of not only the KPD, but every section of the Communist International. The *Theses* therefore proclaimed that far from revealing the inadequacies of Social Democracy for the task of crushing the proletariat, ‘the whole development of Social Democracy from the time of the war and the rise of the Soviet government of the USSR is an uninterrupted process of evolution towards fascism’. By the same token, the reformist parties of the Second International had been allotted by the world bourgeoisie the task of ‘the preparation for the blockade and military attack against the first proletarian state in the world’, a function which transformed the Second International ‘into a shock brigade of world imperialism which is preparing for war against the USSR’. Such wild statements as these, which totally left out of account the contradictory trends at work within parties of the Second International (developments which became clearly visible following the victory of the German fascists, when a section of the badly-scarred reformist leaders made a hesitant turn to the left) made impossible any genuine approach to the reformist workers on the question of the fight against imperialist war and the danger of intervention against the USSR. Contrast, for instance, this defeatist attitude to the task of winning the reformist workers to the defence of the Soviet Union (an aim to which the majority of them were not hostile) with the tactics employed by the Communist International at the 1922 Berlin conference of the three workers’ internationals, where agreement was reached on a limited programme of demands *which included the defence of the USSR*. Yet according to the *Theses* the reformist signatories to this united front agreement were already well on the road towards fascism! If only Lenin had known...

In ‘Germany: The Key to the International Situation’ (26 November 1931) Trotsky declared categorically and with complete accuracy of foresight that:

... a victory of fascism in Germany would signify an inevitable war against the USSR, [that] none of the ‘normal’ bourgeois parliamentary governments can risk a war at the present time against the USSR, for it would bring with it the threat of immense internal complications. But if Hitler comes to power and proceeds to crush the vanguard of the German workers, pulverising and demoralising the whole proletariat, the fascist government will be the only government capable of waging war against the USSR. ^[65]

Not so, said the Stalintern general staff:

In this criminal work for the organisation of the economic blockade and the preparation for military intervention against the USSR, the Second International and the Social Democratic parties play a direct and leading role for which they bear full responsibility... The parties of social fascism *openly take the most direct part* in carrying through the policy of armaments, blockade and intervention. The strongest party of the Second International, the SPD... *is the most active of all the parties in Germany which are organising the anti-Soviet front.* ^[66]

Of the National Opposition, with which, on Stalin’s direct orders, the KPD was shortly to ally itself to bring down the Prussian ‘social fascists’ - not a word. Let us read these simply incredible lines again: ‘The SPD... is the most active of all the parties in Germany which are organising the anti-Soviet front.’ Since the Nazis and their monarchist partners were anti-French, presumably their pathological anti-Sovietism could be excused. No such indulgences were extended to the reformists, for, you see, they favoured the ‘Western orientation’. On grounds of diplomatic manoeuvring, one can see how Stalin arrived at his fateful decision to commit the KPD to its suicidal policy of blocking with the Nazis against the Social Democrats; in effect, becoming a temporary honorary member of the Harzburg Front!

But the Nazis were not only depicted as of little or no consequence on the international political arena. Domestically too, the Hitler movement was treated as a factor of secondary importance, as a threat on the wane. Presenting his report to the Eleventh Plenum on the situation in Germany and the tasks of the KPD, Thälmann smugly declared of the 1930 Reichstag elections which gave the Nazis 6.7 million votes:

We did not permit ourselves to be led astray by the panic seizing many working-class strata at that time, and especially among the adherents of the SPD. Most comrades will remember that in our own ranks the great danger of this development was not only signalled, but was even overestimated. We however concluded seriously and soberly that 14 September had been Hitler’s best day, so to speak, and would be followed not by better ones, but by worse... Today the Nazis have nothing more to laugh about. ^[67]

Hitler's 'worse day' came almost exactly a year later, when, in the second ballot for the Presidential elections, he received 13.4 million votes, 9.7 million more than Thälmann. A similar blindly optimistic note was struck by Manuilsky in his concluding speech to the plenum. The Nazis were, despite all appearances to the contrary, on the way out, and the main danger as before remained the 'social fascists', the 'main social support' of the bourgeoisie, who anyway had no need of Hitler since they already had a fascist regime in the form of the Brüning government:

Fascism in Germany, in the Hitler form [sic!] is maybe on the downgrade, and in fact is already on the downgrade as a result of the activity of our party, but the bourgeois dictatorship in Germany, which is taking on fascist forms under Brüning and the Social Democracy, can become strengthened if one can imagine the paradoxical situation arising of the German proletariat being lulled by its victory over the Hitler form of the fascist movement... [68]

Comrades were warned not to be taken in by the 'seeming struggle' of Social Democracy with fascism. No real blows were being landed, nor could they be, since 'fascism and social fascism are two aspects of one and the same social bulwark of bourgeois dictatorship'. [69] 'The same social bulwark'? But the Nazis rested on the nationalist petit-bourgeoisie, who, in order to solve their own social crisis, sought salvation in the destruction of the organisations of the proletariat, those of the reformists (the 'social fascists'), included. The rule of the Nazis therefore necessarily involved an abrupt and brutal termination of the role played by Social Democracy over the previous decade and more, one crudely described by the Stalinists as that of 'principal social bulwark of the bourgeoisie'. But once again, to recognise this fact, the ABC of the struggle against fascism and the fight for the united front, would reduce to rubble the theoretical edifice of Stalin's dictum that Social Democracy and fascism were twins. That resistance to the idea still hindered the application of the 'new line' was evident from Manuilsky's remark that:

... mistakes in our midst which occur in the direction of opposing in principle fascist to bourgeois democracy or the Hitler party to Social Democracy... constitute the most pernicious mistakes for the Communist movement. At the moment this [that is, the notion that perhaps fascism and reformism were not the same, and that one might therefore ally with the latter against the former - RB] represents our chief danger. [70]

Manuilsky - and therefore Stalin, whose Comintern mouthpiece he was - had not finished with these obdurate 'liberals' who had still to rid themselves of the residues of Leninist tactics and strategy:

Our younger and even some of our more experienced experts endeavour to search out literally with a microscope the minutest details distinguishing the fascist form of bourgeois dictatorship from bourgeois dictatorship of a so-called 'normal' type... [Under the Third Reich, these 'details' could even be observed with the naked eye - RB] What is the use of this? In all these theoretical labours which only confuse the question, the worst of all is that they conceal the putting of fascism as a 'new type' of bourgeois rule in opposition to the old democratic type of this rule. The whole intensification of the class struggle testifies that the differences between so-called bourgeois democracy and fascism will become ever more blurred. [71]

As proof of this, Manuilsky cited the foreign policies of Mussolini and the SPD, clearly preferring the former:

Let, for example, anyone attempt to prove that the policy of German Social Democracy in regard to the USSR is 'progressive' and better than the policy of Italian fascism. The Social Democrats, in order to deceive the masses, deliberately proclaim that the chief enemy of the working class is fascism [when every good Stalinist knew it to be the Social Democrats themselves - RB], in order thereby to direct attention from the question of the struggle against the dictatorship of capital in general. [72]

The 'dictatorship of capital *in general*'? But Communists do not fight and in fact cannot fight capitalism 'in general', as an abstraction, but its concrete, historical embodiment, which in Germany took not only the form of the semi-Bonapartist Brüning regime, and the support lent to it from the left by the Social Democrats, but its right support in the camp of the National Opposition and principally the Nazis. Thus the fight against Brüning - a task which the KPD was correct to emphasise as against the class-collaborationist arguments of the reformists that to do so would open the door for the Nazis - could in fact be prosecuted only by striking the hardest blows at those forces on the right that sustained, despite their inner conflicts, the Brüning government. And since the KPD did not command the support of a majority of the working class, this task could only be carried out in concert with the eight to nine million

workers who still followed the reformist leaders - Brüning's left prop. A united front between the KPD and SPD would therefore not only have the effect of bringing together the titanic forces of the German proletariat, but would also, if correctly applied, have weakened the ties between the reformist leaders and the Brüning government, disrupting the policy of 'toleration' and so clearing the road for further splits in the camp of Social Democracy.

By denying the Bonapartist nature of the Brüning and later the Papen and Schleicher regimes, which were all classified as fascist, the Stalinist theoreticians gave to these governments an inner power and cohesion which they never possessed. The united front tactic was designed expressly for political conditions such as those that prevailed in Germany between the fall of Müller and the consolidation of the Hitler regime, for it poses the question directly to the leaders as well as workers of the reformist organisations - with the proletariat and the Communist workers in the united struggle to defend the gains of the movement; or with the bourgeoisie, and surrender to it everything the working class has won in its struggle against the class enemy. The very act of repudiating this lethal tactical weapon became the biggest single factor in the political consolidation of Bonapartist regimes that ruled Germany for the three years between the fall of Müller and the final victory of Hitler. For 'Third Period' Stalinism not only protected reformism, but in so doing enabled the Social Democrats to continue lending their support to regimes that would otherwise have been ripped apart by the very class antagonisms that brought them into being.

Manuilsky would have none of this. The reformists, not the Nazis (who only had 13.7 million behind them at the zenith of the influence), were providing the mass basis for the coming fascist dictatorship:

Social Democracy has become an integral part of the bourgeois dictatorship in all its forms. Its chief role is to provide a mass basis for fascism, for as Lenin correctly emphasised, no regime can exist without a certain mass basis. ^[73]

So the four million workers of the ADGB trade unions, the one million members of the SPD, and presumably also the nine millions who gave the party its votes at elections times, were now to serve as the 'mass basis' for a fascist regime in Germany! *Precisely against whom, therefore, was fascism directed?* The petit-bourgeoisie perhaps? Or only the members (at its peak, 350 000) and electoral supporters (six million maximum) of the KPD? Or possibly both - in which case the tactics employed during the Prussian Referendum become comprehensible, since it represented a bloc of two potential victims of fascism against the party that was introducing it - with the support of more than half the German proletariat! As if by mutual agreement, speakers at the Plenum maintained total silence on the activities of the Nazis. Manuilsky for example, had nothing whatsoever to say about the organised mass violence unleashed on workers' meetings and premises by the SA (possibly because on more than one occasion, these assaults - when directed against the 'social fascists' - enjoyed the backing of the KPD), but he had detected signs of 'the growth of fascist armed units' in other quarters - namely the *Stahlhelm*, whose monarchist leadership studiously avoided such clashes - and... 'boy scout... organisations which are in fact also fascist organisations'. ^[74] At the climax of the Popular Front, the 'fascist boy scouts' were much sought after as allies in the fight against fascism!

Such was the Eleventh Plenum of the ECCI, a convention which did as much as any gathering of Social Democratic bureaucrats to disorganise and disorient the German working class in its life-and-death struggle against fascism. There can be no better comment on its proceedings than that of *Pravda*, which in praising the plenum's resolute rejection of calls for a united front between the two workers' parties against fascism, said on 24 April 1931:

Social Democracy... is the most active party in the carrying out of the fascisation of the bourgeois state. The evolution of Social Democracy to fascism goes back to the time of the imperialist world war... Social Democracy is carrying out the fascisation of the bourgeois state under the pretext of defending bourgeois democracy, as the alleged 'lesser evil', compared with fascism. The role of Social Democracy, which in words comes out against fascism and which is praised in the press of the right wing and the Trotskyists as an opponent of fascism, must be ruthlessly exposed. There can be no compromise or bloc with the Social Democratic workers against fascism and social fascism! To support Social Democracy means to support fascism, to support the capitalist offensive against the working class, to support the preparations for war against the Soviet Union. ^[75]

This was the voice of Stalin.

Notes

1. H von Dirksen, *Moscow, Tokyo, London* (London, 1951), pp 59-61.
2. This was also the theme of the CPSU Central Committee resolution on the Rapallo Treaty, published in *Izvestia* on 18 May 1922. The treaty provided the only possible means of securing 'equality of rights of the two systems and agreement between them... until the whole world has advanced from private property to a higher system of property'. Nevertheless, a difference of emphasis could be detected in the statements of various Soviet leaders on the treaty and its political implications. Trotsky stressed its short-term, tactical nature, and denied that its conclusion betrayed a special pro-German orientation on the part of the Soviet government: 'Germany is separated from the Soviet Republic by the same contradictions of property systems as the countries of the Entente. This means that the possibility of... the Rapallo Treaty... [becoming] some offensive-defensive alliance to counterbalance other states is excluded. It is a question of the re-establishment of the most elementary inter-state and economic relations, on the principles of the Rapallo Treaty. Soviet Russia is ready to sign a treaty with any other country.' ('Reply to Question from the US International News Service', *Izvestia*, 19 May 1922) Foreign Commissar Chicherin and Radek took a more 'diplomatic' line, and tended to project the treaty further into the future than was justified by the immediate revolutionary prospects in Germany which were at this time promising in the extreme. Radek's views on Soviet-German relations greatly influenced his adaptation to 'National Bolshevism' in 1923, when he wrote that 'the strong emphasis on the nation in Germany is a revolutionary act, like the emphasis on the nation in the colonies' (*International Press Correspondence*, 21 June 1923, p 869). This opportunist view was not shared by the editors of *Izvestia*, who declared on 21 April 1922, that the 'German bourgeoisie is imperialist through and through' and that it was prevented from achieving its imperialist aims only through the defeat of 1918 and the consequent consolidation of *Entente* hegemony on the continent. And 'if she did cherish such plans then in this matter she could in no case count on support from Soviet Russia'. The reader will have ample opportunity to contrast this principled position with the opportunist one adopted towards German imperialism in later years when Stalinist policies ruled not only in the CPSU and the ECCI, but the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs.
3. JV Stalin, 'The Anglo-Russian Unity Committee' (speech delivered at a joint plenum of the CC and the Central Control Commission of the CPSU, 15 July 1926), *Works*, Volume 8, p 193.
4. The Conservative government of Baldwin used the Anglo-Russian Committee as a pretext to mount a clamorous anti-Soviet campaign which reached a crescendo at the October 1926 Tory Party conference, where a resolution was passed demanding the immediate annulment of the Soviet-British Trade Agreement (which dated from 1921), the closure of all Soviet offices and the expulsion from Britain of all Soviet officials. Winston Churchill, then Chancellor of the Exchequer and jubilant after his victory over the miners, was the orchestrator of this anti-Soviet chorus, declaring: 'I have always thought the United States policy [of non-recognition] toward Bolshevik Russia a right one.' Churchill's campaign finally bore fruit on 26 May 1927, when following the famous police raid on the premises of the Soviet trade delegation ('Arcos') and the fabrication of incriminating documents allegedly found in the police raid, the British government severed all diplomatic and trade links with the USSR, relations that were only re-established with the formation of the Macdonald Labour-Liberal coalition in 1929. Events in China followed a similar course, where days before Chiang's Shanghai coup, forces loyal to the northern warlords broke into the Soviet embassy in Peking (a raid carried out with the direct approval of the British and American governments) and, like their counterparts in London, forged materials which were then used to launch an anti-Soviet and anti-Communist campaign in militarist-dominated China, supplementing the bloody reign of terror unleashed by Chiang in the south.
5. G Hilger and A Meyer, *The Incompatible Allies* (New York, 1953), p 125.

6. VI Lenin, 'Theses on the Question of the Immediate Conclusion of a Separate and Annexationist Peace' (20 January 1918), *Collected Works*, Volume 26, pp 444-45, emphasis added.

7. The biggest event in German-Soviet relations in the period between Rapallo and Stalin's left turn in the USSR and the Communist International was the conclusion of the Berlin Treaty on 24 April 1926. It was - on the side of its German signatories - a reaction to the temporary cooling of relations between Berlin and its *Entente* partners in the recently-concluded Locarno Pact, and to the rebuff Germany had suffered in its attempt to secure admission to the League of Nations. Soviet diplomacy was quick to seize on Stresemann's frustration, the latter seeing in the Berlin Treaty a means both of insuring himself against further worsening relations with the West (over such questions as reparations) and as a clear hint that despite its defeat in 1918, German imperialism was still capable of - and ready to - pursue an independent foreign policy. And of course, throughout this period (and in fact well into Hitler's Reich) the Soviet and German High Commands collaborated intimately on a whole series of questions ranging from the secret manufacture of arms and training on Soviet territory (in order to escape the provisions of the Versailles Treaty) to political dealings of a complexity that have to this day still to be fully unravelled. It is necessary, however, to emphasise that what had under Trotsky's leadership been an exclusively technical collaboration between the two armies in the early years of Soviet-German relations became, under Stalin, a means of furthering the reactionary ends of Kremlin diplomacy, something that will be demonstrated at a later stage of this chapter.

8. In a speech to the enlarged Praesidium of the Communist International on 25 February 1930, Molotov revealed that 'most [foreign experts] came from Germany. The recruiting of new workers from Germany... will be increased in the future.' (V Molotov, *The New Phase in the Soviet Union* (London, 1930), p 39) In March 1931, the director of the supreme council of the national economy, M Gurevich, stated that 'about 5000 foreign specialists and workmen were employed in Soviet industry'. Russia's cultural as well as economic backwardness was therefore a crucial factor in accentuating the USSR's dependence on Germany precisely at the time when its rulers sought to establish Soviet economic independence from the capitalist system and world market.

9. VI Lenin, "'Left-Wing" Childishness and the Petit-Bourgeois Mentality', *Collected Works*, Volume 27, p 340.

10. W Krivitsky, *I Was Stalin's Agent* (London, 1939), p 18. Trotsky valued these revelations highly, seeing them as a confirmation of his own analysis of Stalin's diplomacy. In an interview with the *St Louis Post-Dispatch* in January 1940, he said, in relation to the Stalin - Hitler Pact concluded the previous summer: 'The former chief of the foreign GPU agency, General Krivitsky, revealed extremely interesting details of the relations between Moscow and Berlin...' However, he found one-sided Krivitsky's conclusion that 'Stalin's whole international policy during the last six years [that is, 1933-39] has been a series of manoeuvres designed to place him in a favourable position for a deal with Hitler', and that 'when he joined the League of Nations [October 1934], when he proposed the system of collective security, when he sought the hand of France [the Stalin - Laval Pact of May 1935], flirted with Poland, courted Great Britain, intervened in Spain [November 1936] he was calculating every move with one eye upon Berlin. His hope was to get such a position that Hitler would find it advantageous to meet his advances.' (Krivitsky, *I Was Stalin's Agent*, pp 18-19) Trotsky said that it 'would be incorrect to conclude that the five-year campaign of Moscow in favour of a "united front of the democracies" and "collective security" (1935-39) was a pure swindle as is represented now by the same Krivitsky who saw from the quarters of the GPU only one side of the Moscow policy [precisely that side obscured from public view - RB], not perceiving it in its entirety. While Hitler spurned the extended hand, Stalin was compelled to prepare seriously the other alternative, that is, an alliance with the imperialist democracies. The Comintern naturally did not understand what was involved; it simply made "democratic" noises, carrying out the instructions.' (LD Trotsky, 'The World Situation and Perspectives (1)', *Writings of Leon Trotsky 1939-40* (New York, 1969), p 20) Krivitsky, like his friend and fellow defector from the GPU Ignace

Reiss, was murdered by Stalinist agents. Though he did not adhere to the Fourth International (Reiss did), Krivitsky had a deep respect for Trotsky and his comrades, especially his son Sedov, of whom he writes: ‘Early in November [1937] I came back to Paris [where] through the attorney for Mrs Reiss I established connections with Leon Sedov... who was editing the *Bulletin of the Left Opposition*, and with the leaders of the Russian Menshevik socialists exiled in Paris... When I saw Sedov I told him frankly that I did not come to join the Trotskyists, but for advice. He received me cordially, and I saw him thereafter almost daily. I learned to admire this son of Leon Trotsky as a personality in his own right. I shall never forget the disinterested help and comfort he gave me in those days when Stalin’s agents were after me... In the treason trials in Moscow it was said that he received vast sums of money from Hitler and the Mikado. I found him living the life of a revolutionist, toiling all day in the cause of the opposition, in acute need of better food and clothing’. (Krivitsky, *I Was Stalin’s Agent*, pp 290-92) Neither had long to live. Sedov was murdered while in hospital by Stalin’s killers in February 1938, while Krivitsky survived another three years until he was found shot to death in a New York hotel room.

11. JV Stalin, ‘Results of the Thirteenth Congress of the CPSU’ (report delivered at the CC CPSU courses for secretaries of uyezd party committees, 17 June 1924), *Works*, Volume 6, pp 250-51, emphasis added. Stalin’s readiness to befriend the Fascist dictator aroused open hostility inside the Italian Communist Party, which by this time was on the verge of being driven underground by the Mussolini regime. Diplomatic links with Italy had been established before the March on Rome, but no cooling of relations could be detected even following the murder in June 1924 (in fact, a matter of days before Stalin made the speech in question!) of the reformist leader Matteotti by a gang of black-shirted thugs. Quite the contrary in fact. The Comintern functionary Humbert-Droz wrote from Rome to the ECCI Presidium, on 14 October 1924, that feelings against Moscow’s warm relations with the fascist regime were running high in the PCI, adding: ‘It is in this atmosphere of political isolation and scandal [for the Mussolini regime] that our Soviet Ambassador here intends to invite Mussolini to a banquet on the 7 November anniversary [of the Russian Revolution]... It would scandalise the Italian proletariat. On 7 November the workers who try to demonstrate will be beaten up and arrested in the streets, and on the same day Mussolini will be the guest of the Russian Ambassador.’ These lines have a familiar, contemporary ring about them, and bring to mind the infamous participation of a troupe of Soviet dancers in Franco’s ‘May Day’ festivities of 1971. The same day as the Kremlin’s high steppers went through their paces at the fascist rally, Franco’s police hunted down workers in the industrial centres who risked life and liberty to commemorate this day of international proletarian solidarity not under the banners and slogans of Franco fascism, but the red flag of socialism.

12. JV Stalin, ‘Concerning the International Situation’, *Works*, Volume 6, pp 298-99.

13. Stalin, ‘Concerning the International Situation’, *Works*, Volume 6, p 302.

14. Stalin, ‘Concerning the International Situation’, *Works*, Volume 6, p 302.

15. JV Stalin, ‘The International Situation and the Tasks of the Communist Parties’ (22 March 1925), *Works*, Volume 7, pp 51-52.

16. Stalin, ‘The International Situation and the Tasks of the Communist Parties’, *Works*, Volume 7, p 56.

17. JV Stalin, ‘The Results of the Work of the Fourteenth Conference of the CPSU’ (report delivered at a meeting of the active of the Moscow Organisation of the CPSU, 9 May 1925), *Works*, Volume 7, pp 98-99.

18. Stalin, ‘The Results of the Work of the Fourteenth Conference of the CPSU’, *Works*, Volume 7, p 99.

19. JV Stalin, ‘Political Report of the Central Committee’ (Fifteenth Congress of the CPSU, 18 December 1927), *Works*, Volume 7, p 278.

20. Stalin, ‘Political Report of the Central Committee’, *Works*, Volume 7, p 283, emphasis added.

21. Hilger and Meyer, *The Incompatible Allies*, pp 123-24, emphasis added.

- 22.** Hilger and Meyer, *The Incompatible Allies*, pp 211-13, emphasis added.
- 23.** Hilger and Meyer, *The Incompatible Allies*, pp 106-07, emphasis added.
- 24.** Dirksen, *Moscow, Tokyo, London*, pp 87-88.
- 25.** Hilger and Meyer, *The Incompatible Allies*, pp 152-53, emphasis added.
- 26.** Hilger and Meyer, *The Incompatible Allies*, pp 241-42.
- 27.** Dansberg, President of the Aniline Concern, a subsidiary of IG Farben, declared, in the spring of 1931, that the proposed (and abortive) customs union between Germany and Austria was but a first step towards the economic unification of Europe under German hegemony: 'Only a united economic bloc from Bordeaux to Odessa will give Europe the economic backbone she needs for her preservation.' Shades of de Gaulle's call for a united Europe 'from the Atlantic to the Urals'! Schacht was also arguing along these lines at this time, along with the Chairman of the Deutsche Bank, Solmssen, who in a speech in Zurich on 5 February 1930 declared in what was a clear attack on advocates of the Eastern orientation in the business world: 'Behind the next war stands Bolshevism... This danger is far greater than is realised by those many people who have remained caught in a one-sided [that is, anti-Entente] chauvinism. Bolshevism sees in Europe only a promontory of Asia, which one day is to be carried by storm by the throng of masses from the East... It is therefore very worthy of consideration when one who knows Russia like the late General Hoffman expresses the conviction that the destructive will of Bolshevism... will stir up the coloured races of Asia and Africa against the Europeans and will surprise the highly industrial and over-populated Western and Central Europe with the loss of its Asiatic and African colonies and with the resulting food supply crisis. The big German banks are placed in the middle of the problems arising from this. Germany is not only Russia's neighbour; it is also the power whose violent collapse would bring about the overthrow of the rampart which Germany forms against the advance of Bolshevism.'
- 28.** Neubauer, 'The Visit of the German Industrialists to Moscow', *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 11, no 15, 19 March 1931, p 288.
- 29.** Neubauer, 'The Visit of the German Industrialists to Moscow', *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 11, no 15, 19 March 1931, pp 288-89. When Brüning appealed to Western bankers and governments to provide credits to Germany at the time of the bank crisis, Neubauer wrote: 'Germany might have been able to find a support in this fight against the tribute system but the German bourgeoisie would not adopt this course, *it could not escape its class ties*. Only a consistently Eastern policy, only a definite alliance with Soviet Russia *could have created a counter-weight to the pressure of the imperialist Western powers*. The Rapallo Treaty furnished a foundation for this solidarity... the bourgeoisie used it as a basis for business dealings with the East, *but it lacked the courage to use it as a basis of an Eastern policy*. It was hindered by its class blindness. The German Reich, hitherto a tributary state of the big imperialist powers, is on the way to becoming their vassal state... But this development only proves again how absolutely right the KPD was when [it launched]... its programme on the national and social emancipation of the German people...' (*International Press Correspondence*, Volume 11, no 31, 11 June 1931, p 588, emphasis added) Neubauer could venture no further towards 'National Bolshevism' without openly declaring that Stalinist policy in Germany involved and demanded a bloc with the 'national bourgeoisie' against the 'imperialist Western powers'.
- 30.** 'The Development of the Revolutionary Class Struggle in Germany', *Communist International*, Volume 6, no 25, 15 November 1929, p 1019.
- 31.** In *Communist International* in October 1930, the admission was made that 'we Communists were late in broadcasting to the masses our revolutionary programme of social and national liberation of Germany' (*Communist International*, 15 October 1930, p 247, emphasis in original). O Piatnitsky returned to this question at the Twelfth ECCI Plenum of September 1932, where he declared: 'The fascists... opposed the Young Plan, and the only thing we did was to call on our comrades to beat up the fascists. Could the petit-bourgeoisie be expected to understand this in any other way than that we were champions of the Young

Plan? ... The victory of the Nazis in 1930 can be partly explained by this mistake. If our party, assisted by the Comintern [sic!] had not proclaimed its programme of national and social liberation, it would not have got so many votes.' (O Piatnitsky, *The Work of the Communist Parties of France and Germany* (London, 1932), p 29)

32. The first hint of a change of line on the Young Plan came in a speech by Thälmann to the Reichstag on 11 February 1930, when, not to be outdone in patriotic passion by the spokesmen for the National Opposition, he declared, in complete defiance of the fact that considerable layers of the German bourgeoisie stood to gain by the overthrow of the Versailles Treaty and its Young Plan, that 'today two fronts face each other in Germany: the victims of the Young Plan and all those who benefit from the Young Plan. The victims are toilers without exception. The beneficiaries are all exploiters along with their social fascist and National Socialist agents.' (*International Press Correspondence*, Volume 10, no 9, 20 February 1930, p 159) Even the struggle of Luxemburg and Liebknecht was given a 'national' coloration, Thälmann claiming that their murder helped make possible the imposition on Germany of the Versailles Treaty! And it was Liebknecht who coined the immortal internationalist slogan 'The main enemy is at home'.

33. 'On the Question of National Fascism in Germany', *Communist International*, Volume 7, no 10, 1 September 1930, p 168.

34. VI Lenin, "'Left-Wing" Communism', *Collected Works*, Volume 31, pp 75-77. The 1930 KPD Programme also deviated towards nationalism in that it spoke of the need for the German 'people' to struggle not only against the German bourgeoisie (who were portrayed, like the reformists, as traitors) but the bourgeoisies of the Versailles powers. This was of course an embellished, leftist version of the line taken by the SPD leadership on the outbreak of the First World War, when they called on German workers to fight against Tsarist reaction - under the banner of the Hohenzollerns. Here too, the KPD violated Comintern principles of the pre-Stalin period. From 1919 until the Ruhr crisis of 1923, it was made clear to all sections of the Comintern that the prime duty of the KPD was to mobilise the proletariat for the overthrow of its own imperialist bourgeoisie, and that it should have no truck with 'national' or 'people's' revolts against the forces of the *Entente*. Shattering the Versailles Treaty was the prime responsibility of the workers of those countries whose governments had imposed it on Germany. One example will suffice to prove how far the Stalinist KPD had departed from Leninist internationalism by applying Stalin's line of 'socialism in one country' to the class struggle in Germany. A manifesto issued on 2 September 1922 by the ECCI and addressed to the workers of France and Germany (following a meeting of the Communist Parties of the two countries on the question of the Versailles Treaty) did not call upon the German proletariat to 'shatter the bond of Versailles slavery', but, on the contrary, summoned them to fight the main enemy at home: '... *fight the German bourgeois - Social Democratic government, for a proletarian workers' government, which will relieve the French masses of the fear of a resurgence of German militarism and help them to liberate themselves from the spell of nationalism.*' [Emphasis added] In France, the tactics were different, the goal the same: '... struggle against the policy of your government, against French imperialism, not in order to help German imperialism to get on its feet again, *but so that the removal of the military pressure of French imperialism may liberate the forces of the German proletariat* [not 'people' - RB] *for the German revolution.*' [Emphasis added]

35. Vying with the Nazis in nationalist fervour more than once found the KPD hopelessly outmanoeuvred by the NSDAP Reichstag fraction. Just before the opening of the newly-elected Reichstag in October 1930, a KPD official wrote that the party's first demand 'will be the unconditional cessation of the payment of tribute under the robber Young Plan, which we shall move in the Reichstag. Here the Nazis have to show their true colours.' (*International Press Correspondence*, Volume 10, no 45, 2 October 1930, p 946) Unfortunately, the Nazis obliged, for they had not the least compunction in voting for a resolution that expressed the policy of the National Opposition. And so we find the same author, now somewhat embarrassed, admitting two weeks later that 'for demagogic reasons' the Nazis intended to vote for the KPD Reichstag resolution against the Young Plan

(*International Press Correspondence*, Volume 10, no 47, 16 October 1930, p 974). And it was certainly not 'for demagogic reasons'. The Nazis were utterly serious in their imperialist intentions - and this was precisely why Stalin believed they could be harnessed to his strategy of accentuating the divisions and antagonisms between the victors and vanquished of the First World War.

36. M Buber-Neumann, *Kriegs-schauplätze der Welt-revolution* (Stuttgart, 1967), p 317. Margaret Buber-Neumann, widow of Heinz Neumann (murdered on Stalin's orders in 1937 while seeking refuge from the Nazis in Moscow), confirms that it was the national as well as the 'social' aspects of the KPD 1930 programme that appealed to Scheringer: 'The abrogation of the shameful Versailles diktat and the destruction of the capitalist system were music in his ears. When the Communists made it plain to him that Germany would only be freed from the bonds of the Versailles peace treaty through a close relationship with Soviet Russia and the help of the Red Army, Scheringer responded more and more to their arguments.' (p 316)

37. Buber-Neumann, *Kriegs-schauplätze der Welt-revolution*, p 317.

38. *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 10, no 45, 2 October 1930, p 946.

39. January 1931 also saw a sinister turn in KPD policy with Walter Ulbricht participating in a debate with Nazi speakers at a NSDAP rally at the Friedrichshain Hall in Berlin on 22 January 1931. The main gist of his speech (reported in full in *Die Rote Fahne* of 24 January 1931) was that the employers were guilty of not fighting the Young Plan, and were consequently the 'hod carriers of international high finance' (a term frequently used by Nazis). Even more revolting was Ulbricht's demagogic attempt to appeal to Nazi workers on the basis of a shared hostility to Social Democracy, when the KPD should have been coming out clearly for a united front with the SPD against the Nazis, their deluded working-class supporters notwithstanding. A similar line was pursued by Ulbricht in his open letter to NSDAP workers 'SPD, Nazis and the Workers' published in *Die Rote Fahne* of 14 January 1931, where no distinction at all was made between the SPD-ADGB reformist programme of 'economic democracy' and the Nazis' economic policy of 'the state regulation of working conditions' under which even the class-collaborationist activities of the works councils would have been ruthlessly eliminated. And it is a distinction that would also have eluded *Workers Press*, since it too detects a fully-developed 'corporatism' - which elsewhere in WRP publications is equated with fascism - in TUC and Labour Party proposals for 'worker participation'. Unlike Ulbricht and his latter-day emulators, the German employers did appreciate the difference between the two economic programmes, just as in Britain today we can be sure that reformist and centrist schemes for 'workers' control' will be given short shrift by the monopolies when the time comes for them to make a clean sweep of reformist trade unionism and bourgeois democracy.

40. Buber-Neumann, *Kriegs-schauplätze der Welt-revolution*, p 332, emphasis added. Though confused and wrong in several ways, Mrs Buber-Neumann's explanation for this incredible remark is highly illuminating, coming from one who was privy to many of the life-and-death decisions taken by the KPD and the ECCI at this time: 'After 1930 Stalin abandoned all belief in international and world revolution in the old, Bolshevik sense and replaced it by a thorough Russian nationalism... Revolution in neighbouring countries was from now on to be accomplished with the help of the Red Army. This new foreign policy concept, which bore no relation to the original Communist programme of the Bolsheviks, also altered Stalin's policy towards Germany. In place of Lenin's hope for the German revolution, Stalin's efforts were aimed at preventing it. His aim was a nationalist Germany leading to a Communist one. He therefore did everything to make impossible any united Communist - Socialist action. He even went so far as to order the KPD to cooperate with Nazis, at the same time encouraging even more violent opposition against the SPD. Stalin might have been scared of a Socialist - Communist alliance in Germany, because he assumed that the Communists would then come to power and would thus dominate the Comintern through Germany's industrial strength. So from 1931 he did all he could systematically to weaken the fighting strength of the KPD and thus prevent a Communist revolution.' (M Buber-Neumann, *Von Potsdam nach Moskau* (Stuttgart, 1957), pp 284-85)

In this same work, the following incident is described, one that took place at Stalin's Black Sea *dacha* at Sochi early in 1932: 'It was now evening, and the whole company took themselves off to a skittle alley... Neumann likened the skittles to the Nazi leaders, and when one was knocked over, he yelled out "That was one for Hitler's head"... or whatever Nazi leader occurred to him. Stalin seemed irritated by this and finally he retorted: "Look here Neumann! In my opinion this man Hitler is one hell of a fellow."' (p 317)

41. *Sozialdemokratischer Pressedienst*, 12 February 1930.

42. V Molotov, 'Report to Sixth Soviet Congress', 8 March 1931, quoted in J Degras, *Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy*, Volume 6 (London, 1952), pp 476-77.

43. Molotov, 'Report to Sixth Soviet Congress', 8 March 1931, quoted in J Degras, *Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy*, Volume 6, p 477.

44. J Valtin, *Out of the Night* (New York, 1941), p 252.

45. Valtin, *Out of the Night*, p 253.

46. The KPD's *volte face* on the referendum was praised by Piatnitsky at the Twelfth ECCI Plenum in September 1932: 'You know that the KPD leadership was opposed to participation in the referendum on the dissolution of the Prussian Landtag. Some party newspapers had published editorial articles against participation. But after the Central Committee, in consultation with the Comintern, reached the conclusion that the party should take an active part in the referendum, our German comrades managed in a few days to get the whole party on its feet. [In reality, down on its knees to the Nazis - RB] Apart from the CPSU, no other party could have done that. It shows that the KPD knows how to manoeuvre.' (O Piatnitsky, *The Work of the Communist Parties of France and Germany* (London, 1932), pp 24-25)

47. WH (W Hirsch?), 'The Result of the German Stahlhelm Petition for the Dissolution of the Prussian Diet', *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 10, no 23, 30 April 1931, p 429.

48. WH, 'The Result of the German Stahlhelm Petition for the Dissolution of the Prussian Diet', *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 10, no 23, 30 April 1931, pp 429-30.

49. The proceedings of the Plenum, which, under the direct influence of Stalin, codified the new line of welcoming the rise of National Socialism as an objective process *accelerating* the disintegration of Social Democracy, and therefore not to be viewed with alarm, are discussed in some detail in a note at the end of this chapter.

50. Eleventh Plenum of the ECCI, *Theses* (London, nd), p 9.

51. Eleventh Plenum of the ECCI, *Theses*, pp 10-11.

52. J Lipski, *Diplomat in Moscow* (Columbia University, 1968), pp 40-41, emphasis added. Yet only a month before, after a 100 000 strong KPD rally at the Berlin *Lustgarten* on 15 June 1931, the bourgeois *Der Deutsche*, quite overwhelmed by this massive demonstration of the party's power and proletarian support, commented: 'Who will be the victor in the struggle for sovereignty in the awe-inspiring kingdom of socialism? Judging by the picture of Berlin yesterday the decision is much inclined to be in favour of Communism.'

53. *Flag of Communism*, 16 July 1931.

54. 'Communist Party Demands Presented to Prussian Government' (Berlin, 21 July 1931), *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 11, no 39, 23 July 1931, p 722.

55. *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 11, no 40, 30 July 1931, p 746.

56. *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 11, no 40, 30 July 1931, emphasis added.

57. LD Trotsky, 'Against National Communism! (Lessons of the "Red Referendum")' (25 August 1931), *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany* (New York, 1971), pp 105-06.

58. The KPD had campaigned under the slogan 'Vote for a Red Prussia'; the Nazis: 'Save Prussia from Marxism.'

59. There is corroborating evidence of a documentary nature that Stalin had indeed firmly opposed the KPD's taking a revolutionary line in the summer crisis of 1931. Around the time of the Prussian referendum, a special commission composed of representatives of the Soviet government, the CPSU and the ECCI Presidium held a series of secret meetings on the German situation, the details of which were forwarded to the commission by the Soviet Consul General in Hamburg, Krumin. Krumin's report stated that although the KPD had aligned itself for tactical reasons with the Nazis, the party was on the verge of winning the majority of the workers, but lacked the financial resources to continue with its work. The CPSU Politbureau held an emergency session on 17 August, and after ascertaining that the KPD needed 60 million RM to meet its requirements, put the matter before a joint session of the ECCI Presidium, the CPSU Politbureau and the financial department of the Soviet government. Divisions arose over what policy to pursue in Germany, with the Foreign Commissariat coming firmly down on the side of preserving the status quo and the Kremlin's strong ties with the German bourgeoisie. A final decision was made on 5 September, when after hearing both points of view, Stalin opted for the policy favoured by Litvinov, on the grounds that a civil war in Germany would worsen the Soviet Union's relations with Western Europe and would hinder the Five-Year Plan. A Politbureau resolution on the German crisis declared: 'The chances for a world revolution will be better served through the success of the construction of the Soviet Union and not through street actions which are condemned to failure.' The details of these events found their way via unknown channels to the Brüning government, the Chancellor seeing the report for the first time on 20 October 1931. He marked on it in his own handwriting 'Strictly confidential. In no case to name the source of secret report.' The report is now in the files of the German Foreign Office in Washington, AA 147/2860, 562241-6/A, and is referred to in J Korbel, *Poland Between East and West* (Princeton, 1963), pp 269-71.

60. W Münzenberg, 'The Result of the Referendum Action of the KPD', *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 11, no 44, 20 August 1931, p 811.

61. Days after the Harzburg rally, at which the Nazis had pledged themselves to work with the monarchists for the total destruction of Marxism and Bolshevism, Neubauer threw down a challenge to Hitler in the Reichstag, in effect inviting him to join with the KPD in the 'people's revolution' against the 'foreign yoke' of *Entente* capitalism: 'France is today the concentration centre of the perishing capitalist world, the concentration centre that is directed against another world, namely Soviet Russia... *What foreign policy will Hitler conduct? We put it to him concretely. Would Hitler declare to the French we shall not pay anything more?* If Hitler were even to hint at such a thing the French would shatter the German industry and the German banks... You, *National Socialists*, will have to submit to all the conditions which will be put to you.' (*International Press Correspondence*, Volume 11, no 54, 15 October 1931, pp 978-79, emphasis added)

62. Fourth Congress of the LSI, Vienna (25 July - 1 August 1931), *Reports and Proceedings* (London, 1932), p 687.

63. Fourth Congress of the LSI, Vienna (25 July - 1 August 1931), *Reports and Proceedings*, p 711.

64. *Theses (On the Tasks of the Sections)*, p 7.

65. LD Trotsky, 'Germany: The Key to the International Situation' (26 November 1931), *The Struggle against Fascism in Germany*, p 126.

66. 'The Increased Danger of Interventionist War Against the USSR and the Tasks of the Communists', *Theses*, p 24, emphasis added.

67. *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 11, no 31, 11 June 1931, p 612.

68. *Communist International*, 15 June 1931, p 343.

69. *Communist International*, 15 June 1931, p 345.

70. *Communist International*, 15 June 1931, p 345.

71. *Communist International*, 15 June 1931, p 345.

- 72.** *Communist International*, 15 June 1931, pp 345-46.
- 73.** *Speech on the Theses*, pp 2-3.
- 74.** *Speech on the Theses*, pp 41-42.
- 75.** *Pravda*, 24 April 1931.

Chapter XXIII: The Eighteenth Brumaire of Franz von Papen

We must admit that even among the revolutionary workers sentiments were expressed to the effect that perhaps after all the Braun - Severing government was a lesser evil than a Hitler - Goebbels government in Prussia. To say the least, this revealed inadequate class consciousness, and for this... we must take responsibility... (Ernst Thälmann, *Communist International*, Volume 8, no 21, 15 December 1931, p 717)

I have come to know the Reich President as a man in whose word one can trust, a man of pure intentions... (Otto Braun. Prime Minister of Prussia, 10 March 1932)

It is necessary for us to conquer Prussia. The Prussian State must become once again the bulwark of the national idea, the guardian of the Eastern frontier, threatened by death. (Alfred Hugenberg, 22 March 1932)

The 10 months that elapsed between the Harzburg rally of October 1931 and Hitler's abortive bid for the Chancellorship in August 1932 were a period of deepening economic and political crisis for the bourgeoisie, uninterrupted growth for the Nazi Party and continued headlong retreat on the part of the Stalinist and reformist leaders of the working class. This chapter will attempt to analyse each of these three interrelated processes in turn, and to show how they culminated in the 20 July coup of von Papen against the Social Democratic government of Prussia (the same government that the KPD, together with the Nazis, had attempted to bring down the previous summer in the 'Red Referendum'), and the high-tide of Nazi strength in the Reichstag elections of 31 July, when the NSDAP received 13.7 million votes - 400 000 more than were given to the two workers' parties.

Throughout the entire capitalist system, industrial production since 1929 had steadily fallen, trade declined and capital investment dwindled to a trickle. From a 1929 peak of 33 024 million dollars, world exports had plunged by more than half to 12 885 million dollars three years later. Over the same period industrial production in Europe had slumped by 30 per cent, while in the USA, where the crisis had originated, the decline was nearer 40 per cent. And in Britain, to take but one example, new capital issues declined by more than 50 per cent between 1930 and 1932. But nowhere was the economic crisis more severe, and its political consequences more cataclysmic, than in Germany. Industrial production had fallen by 40 per cent overall (well above the average for the capitalist world as a whole), but in certain key sectors of the economy, the slump was worse again. Pig iron output fell from 1.1 million metric tons per month in 1929 to 0.33 in 1932, while steel showed a similar drop - 1.35 million to 0.48 million. Machine production, even with the bonus of its Soviet contracts, fell to a mere 38 per cent of its 1929 level. However, we should also note that there were sectors of German industry not so severely hit by the crisis, namely those concerned not with the extraction and processing of raw materials, but with finished goods for the domestic consumer market, where demand, while obviously reduced by the sharp reduction in spending power of the masses, still retained a certain buoyancy. Textile production, for example, had only dropped by around 10 per cent - far less than the average for the German economy as a whole. Neither were the electrical goods industries, food, etc, so severely affected. The light and medium industries were least hit by the world crisis because they produced almost exclusively for the domestic market, while a considerable portion of Ruhr output before the slump was destined for European and overseas markets. Thus the catastrophic shrinkage of world trade that set in from 1929 discriminated more against heavy than light and medium industry. Overall German exports fell from 124.8 (on a base year of 1927) in 1929 to 53.1 in 1932 - once again, a decline of more than half. So as German capitalism moved into its peak crisis year of 1932, the leaders of the economy confronted a series of problems of a magnitude that could only be resolved by the most drastic and brutal of measures. How was production to be stimulated? Where were the capital reserves to be found to initiate a new upturn in the economic cycle? How could production be expanded when everywhere rival imperialist powers were adopting protectionist policies? How could a domestic market be created without permitting labour power a yet larger proportion of the total product? Would not a revival in production so stimulate the demand for labour power that the trade unions would once again step up their demands for higher wages and the restoration of all the social service cuts undertaken by the Brüning administration? And finally, there were political questions whose solution was imperative before any of the preceding economic issues could be resolved. Could the Weimar system (even in the castrated form that it assumed under Brüning) provide the necessary guarantees that the desired economic upturn would not impart a modicum of

resistance even to the reformist leaders of the SPD and ADGB, who, during the period of rising unemployment and the growth of National Socialism, had been intimidated into 'tolerating' Brüning's programme of economic and social retrenchment? Could the Social Democrats, so loyal in past crises, be trusted any longer to endorse and implement the counter-revolutionary programme of big business? Or were the proposed 'reforms' of such a severe and thoroughgoing nature that not even the most craven of trade union bureaucrats could be expected to acquiesce in their execution? ^[1] The nature and extent of the attack on working-class living standards envisaged by the monopolies and banks (and one privately endorsed by their Nazi accomplices) was enunciated with cold brutality by the *Berliner Börsen Zeitung* on 7 June 1932, at a time when millions of German workers, peasants and urban petit-bourgeois had been reduced to pauperism:

Certainly extreme want exists in some places... Nevertheless, in 1931, the standard of food, clothing and housing of the German people taken as a whole was greater than in 1913; *but this is incompatible with their very greatly reduced income... This increasingly low level of existence is the only possibility for a revival of production and thereby for the lessening of unemployment.* More work and simpler life - *this is the unavoidable fate for Germany.* [Emphasis added]

Until 1914, German Social Democracy had been nourished on the sap of a steadily expanding and flourishing capitalism. The outbreak of war found its leaders tying the fate of the movement to the success of the Kaiser's armies on the battlefields of Europe. There then set in, between 1918 and 1923, a period of social and political turmoil in which the reformist bureaucracy, while always rallying to defend the status quo, had not been obliged to sanction wholesale reductions in the living standards of its millions of supporters in the working class. Indeed, after 1924, a steady rise in wages and an expansion of the welfare budget had enabled the reformists to regain some of the ground lost to the KPD in the previous period of crisis. But now the big bourgeoisie were demanding 'sacrifices' far larger than any surrendered by the reformists in the early postwar years. The great historical dilemma confronting the German bourgeoisie, one resolved in spectacular fashion in August 1914 by intimate class-collaboration - *with or against the reformist bureaucracy* - had been at the heart of every major political controversy since the formation of the Müller government in June 1928. In 1932, the first serious attempts would be made to resolve it in the opposite direction to that of 1914.

The Bourgeoisie Divided

We have said, 'against the reformists'. But in making that momentous decision, the ruling class was not simply dispensing with the service of its loyal servants in the workers' movement. An end to 'toleration' of the Social Democratic bureaucracy, and with it the organisations upon which it rested and drew its privileges, at once posed the question: upon what social bases would the new regime entrusted with implementing the policies of monopoly capitalism rest? Should the banks, agrarians and trusts revert to the bureaucratic-monarchist type of regime that served them so well under Bismarck and Wilhelm II, a government that while exploiting the leverage that a powerful Nazi movement provided against the workers' parties and the bourgeois liberals, anchored its rule not on the fascist plebeians, but on their own kith and kin of the *Reichswehr*? Could Brüning's half-hearted, tentative Bonapartism be transformed into a permanent system of government, which, once it dispensed with parliamentary reliance on the Social Democrats and the toleration of the trade union bureaucracy, would by-pass the Reichstag entirely? Presidential rule, monarchy without a monarch, was seen as the solution by the majority of business leaders right up to the very eve of Hitler's accession to power. Very much in a minority (albeit a highly influential and vocal one) were those industrialists and bankers such as Thyssen and Schacht who canvassed for the formation of a Hitler cabinet, and even here they still envisaged the real political power remaining in the hands of the Nazis' bourgeois coalition partners.

These differences could be masked to a certain extent by the common struggle against the reformists, whose removal from all positions of political and economic influence united the entire National Opposition, and even those in the Centre Party who on other issues were prepared to side with Brüning. But when it came to the point of actually implementing the policies and principles jointly agreed on at Bad Harzburg, the factional struggle between the advocates of a Bonapartist or 'Presidential' solution and the supporters of a governmental bloc with the Nazis flared out into the open. The immediate issue which provoked the conflict was the choice of a new President, elections for which were due in the spring of 1932. Around this question there crystallised not two groupings in the bourgeoisie, but three: the Nazis, who at the last moment put forward Hitler as their candidate; the monarchists, represented by

Duesterberg; and the bourgeois supporters of Brüning, who came out for a renewed term of office for Hindenburg (the question of the SPD's endorsement of Hindenburg's candidature is discussed further on in this chapter).

Initially, Hitler had not intended to run as a candidate in the Presidential elections. Towards the end of 1931, he proposed a deal whereby in return for Nazi acquiescence in another term for the octogenarian marshal, Hindenburg was to effect the dismissal of Chancellor Brüning, whose continued reliance on the Social Democrats blocked the road to the formation of a 'national' government, the last step but one before the final triumph of the Nazis. That Hindenburg himself would have favoured the first stage of this development is clear from his letter of 15 February 1932, to his close friend Friedrich von Berg, explaining the reasons for the failure of the right-wing parties and leaders to unite behind a single candidate. Much embarrassed by the support given to him by the Social Democrats, Hindenburg protested:

... the allegation that I am opposed to a rightist government is entirely false. I did not put any obstacle in the path of such a development, nor did Chancellor Brüning. It was the disunity of the right, its inability to agree even on the main points. It is most regrettable that the right - torn as it is - is being led into insignificance and self-destruction *by leaders one-sidedly concerned with their party political ambitions*. Whether and when this state of affairs will change none can tell... Despite all these setbacks, I shall not give up all my efforts to further a healthy development toward the right. I hope that it will be possible *after the Prussian elections* [scheduled for 24 April, a month after the Presidential elections]... to resume the negotiations about the formation of a *National government of concentration*. [Emphasis added]

By 'leaders one-sidedly concerned with their party political ambitions' Hindenburg had in mind first of all Hitler, who, at meetings with Schleicher and Brüning on 6 and 7 January respectively, had turned down their compromise solution to the crisis over the Presidential elections. They had proposed to Hitler that the Reichstag extend Hindenburg's term, thus avoiding the damaging splits and controversies concerning his re-election. In return, Brüning promised to stand down from the Chancellorship to make way for a government of the type favoured by Hindenburg - a cabinet of 'national concentration' which dispensed with the support of the Social Democrats and even the sanction of the Reichstag. Hitler would have none of this plan, since its Bonapartist purpose was not only to exclude the SPD, but to deny any direct governmental influence to the Nazis. Instead he demanded new elections to the Reichstag in return, not for an extension of Hindenburg's term, but Presidential elections in which the entire right-wing bloc would campaign and vote for Hindenburg.

Neither Brüning nor his critics in the Hugenberg wing of the National Opposition had any desire to match their waning mass support against the Nazis in an election contest. The inevitable Nazi landslide would enormously enhance Hitler's bargaining power in any future negotiations over the formation of a 'national' cabinet, and expose the old bourgeois parties as officers without armies. Schleicher's turn towards collaboration with the Nazis was not intended to draw them into the government - certainly not at this stage - but to exploit their mass appeal among the nationalist petit-bourgeoisie as a counterweight to the reformists and the working class as a whole. As he confided to Brüning's defence Minister Gröner on 23 March 1932, shortly before the latter's dismissal, 'if there were no Nazis, it would be necessary to invent them'. But Hitler's was a movement in its own right, and was not so easily subordinated to Schleicher's political ploys as the General would have liked. Following the deadlock with Brüning and Schleicher, Hitler now sought - and gained - an audience with the President himself. What he proposed both astounded and outraged the ageing aristocrat. Hitler would indeed endorse Hindenburg's Presidential candidature if, in return, Hindenburg would dismiss Brüning and appoint Hitler as the Chancellor of a 'national' cabinet. On 12 January, Hitler received official word from the President that his deal had been rejected, that for all his leniency towards the Social Democrats, Brüning was to stay - at least for the duration of the Presidential election campaign and pending the outcome of the crucial election in Prussia. Now Hitler faced the most important political decision of his career. Should he accept the humiliation inflicted on him and his movement, and either tacitly or openly endorse Hindenburg's candidature; or should he maintain the offensive by running himself for the Presidency, risking defeat and consequent internal strife? Either course was fraught with dangers, since to acquiesce in the election of a President who enjoyed not only liberal bourgeois but Social Democratic backing exposed his leadership to fresh attacks from the Nazi 'radicals' and other *volkisch* dissidents, while to engage in an open fight against the man whom almost the entire bourgeoisie and agrarians regarded as the symbol of 'national'

Germany would, temporarily at the very least, alienate all but the most fanatical of his supporters and financiers in the business world, and at the precise time when he needed their political and economic assistance more than ever before. The dilemma that faced Hitler at the beginning of 1932 was, in essence, that which had plagued all his attempts to build a mass-based movement of counter-revolution - how simultaneously to protect and strengthen his links with the ruling class while extending the base of his movement amongst the plebeians. Small wonder that the decision whether to run for the Presidency was not taken for a full month.

Hitler's indecision is reflected faithfully in the diary entries of his propaganda chief Goebbels. On 19 January, he is discussing 'the question of the presidency with the Führer' and recording that 'no decision has yet been reached', while at the end of the month Hitler's candidacy is seen as depending on 'what the Social Democrats do'.^[2] Even as late as 9 February with the elections now only a month away, Goebbels notes that after a 'new debate [with Hitler] on the Presidential elections, everything is still in the air'. The announcement that Hindenburg is to stand again for the Presidency draws from Goebbels the cautious response that 'now we have a free hand',^[3] but to do what? Three days later the Hugenberg monarchists announce their candidate Duesterberg - but even now, with two rivals in the field, Hitler balks at joining them. Only on 22 February, after weeks of soul-searching, is Goebbels finally given permission to announce Hitler's candidacy, to a mass Nazi rally at the Berlin *Sportspalast*.

So there were now no fewer than three candidates representing various sectors of the ruling class. Around Hindenburg were grouped not merely the wretched reformist bureaucrats, who depicted the unrepentant monarchist as a bulwark of republican legality, but some of the biggest names in German industry and banking. While the Ruhr interests in the main opted either for Hugenberg's stooge Duesterberg, or in rarer cases Hitler, we find such firms traditionally associated with a more liberal policy such as von Siemens and IG Farben still clinging to the shadow of the Weimar 'grand coalition', now ironically personified by the man dedicated to its destruction. Hindenburg was only too aware of his own contradictory position, and on several occasions attempted to pacify his bemused and discountenanced allies in the national camp by explaining that his acceptance of Social Democratic and liberal support was a lesser evil when compared with the disasters that might ensue from a direct confrontation between candidates representing the polarised forces of revolution and counter-revolution. He was, he claimed in a radio address on 10 March, the candidate of national unity and class harmony:

I cannot believe that Germany is to be plunged into domestic feuds and civil war. I recall to you the spirit of 1914 and the front-line attitude which was concerned with the man and not with his social status or his party... I will not give up the hope that Germany will come together again in the new unity.

The next day, Hindenburg issued a statement repudiating charges that he was in any sense a candidate of the left, an accusation that must have outraged this relic of Hohenzollern Germany:

Had I declined, the danger would have arisen that at the second ballot either the candidate of the extreme right or of the extreme left would have been elected. It was false that I have accepted my candidature from the hands of the left or from a black-red [Centre-SPD] coalition. All classes of the population have combined to offer it to me. I would have refused to be the candidate of a party or group of parties.

Unease about the unpredictable alignments occasioned by the Presidential elections extended beyond the highly heterogeneous Hindenburg bloc. Hitler realised that his chosen strategy of assuming power legally required, at some stage in the future, a deal with Hindenburg and the political advisers grouped around him. Under the Weimar Constitution, it was the President that appointed the Chancellor. So long as Hitler sought power by this route, he was obliged to observe its conventions. So Hitler also found himself compelled to justify his candidature - not to his millions of plebeian followers, who were delighted to see their Führer cock a snook at the 'united front' of superannuated monarchists, plutocrats and 'Jewish Bolsheviks' - but to his present or potential supporters in the business world, who must have found his tactics divisive and exasperating in the extreme. This he did in an open letter addressed to Hindenburg, expressing profound regret that he could not agree to Brüning's proposal to avoid the contest by extending the President's term of office: 'Old man, we honour you too much to suffer that those whom we want to destroy should use you as a front. We are sorry, but you must step aside, for they want to fight, and so do we.'

At the first ballot, with the SPD machine working in top gear on his behalf, Hindenburg failed by a mere 0.4 per cent to secure the required majority. Full returns were: (in millions) Hindenburg: 18.6; Hitler:

11.3; Thälmann: 5.0; Duesterberg: 2.6. Quite apart from the continued upwards surge of the Nazis - from 6.7 million votes in September 1931 to 11.3 million 18 months later - there is the incredible fact that the open candidates of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat received between them only 20 per cent of the total poll. The bulk of the workers had been dragged by their leaders - in most cases against their better class instincts - behind the 'non-class' and 'national' camp of Hindenburg, leaving the Stalinists with a mere five million proletarian votes, while Duesterberg, the candidate of the Ruhr and the East Prussian agrarians, could barely secure half of this sum. The nationalist masses had deserted the National Opposition monarchists for Hitler, attracted by the latter's counter-revolutionary dynamism and social demagoguery. This contradiction was partly resolved on the second ballot, when the Hugenberg faction withdrew Duesterberg and instructed their supporters to vote for Hitler, suggesting that the Harzburg Front still maintained a modicum of inner unity when confronted by the common enemy. ^[4] As the ultra-nationalist *Deutsche Zeitung* put it: '... the present issue is whether the internationalist traitors and pacifist swine, with the approval of Hindenburg, are to bring about the final ruin of Germany.' And the paper was referring not to the supporters of Thälmann, but the Social Democrats, bourgeois democrats and Catholics behind Hindenburg!

As expected, in the second ballot held on 10 April, Hindenburg emerged the clear victor, even though the bulk of the Duesterberg vote - and a far smaller slice of that of Thälmann, who stood once again - went to Hitler. The final returns were: Hindenburg: 19.4 million (53 per cent); Hitler: 13.4 million (36.8 per cent) and Thälmann: 3.7 million (10.2 per cent). So in his first serious trial of strength with the Weimar bloc, Hitler had received a serious setback. Moreover, electoral defeat involved Hitler and the Nazi high command in fresh internal disputes over the question of tactics and strategy. On the eve of the first poll, anticipating victory, Röhm had deployed several hundred thousand SA men around Berlin, a move which not only alarmed the legal rulers of Germany, but Hitler, since he had no intention of repeating on a national scale the error and disaster of the 1923 Munich Putsch. The SA remained at full battle stations up to the day of the run-off ballot, indicating that the SA leadership had refused to acquiesce in Hitler's 'constitutional' path towards power. Goebbels, the ex-'radical', understood well the forces that were activating the SA ranks, but, as one of Hitler's closest confidants, knew that the time had not come to harness them for the task of dismembering the workers' movement. First, the Nazis had to gain a foothold in the government, and a premature 'putsch' would ruin the prospects of such a development. As he noted on 2 April:

The SA getting impatient. It is understandable enough that the soldiers begin to lose morale through these long, drawn-out political contests. It has to be stopped, though, at all costs. A premature push, or worse still, an overt gesture of compulsion would nullify the whole of our future. ^[5]

Bearing in mind that the Hitler strategy for power visualised as the intermediate stage between Brüning and a Nazi regime the formation of a 'national' government, with National Socialist support, we can understand Goebbels' alarm at the prospect of an SA revolt. At all costs, the movement's links with the 'national' opposition to Brüning and Weimar had to be preserved, especially at a time when relations between the party and the army, after years of mutual hostility, had on a joint initiative of Schleicher and Röhm begun to improve. Yet Hitler could not afford to move too openly or harshly against his SA 'radicals' for the day was not far off when he would summon them for the final battle against the organised proletariat.

Hitler was saved from the embarrassment of once again calling his plebeians to order by the action of the Brüning government, which, in the wake of Hindenburg's election victory, moved quickly to impose a ban on all paramilitary formations of the NSDAP. Although opposed by Schleicher (who, as has been noted, valued the Nazis as a counterweight to the reformists and the organised working-class movement), Brüning and his Defence Minister Gröner succeeded in persuading Hindenburg to sign the decree outlawing the SA, which became law on 14 April.

Brüning's stroke against the SA initially stunned the Nazi leadership, and superficially appeared to strengthen his own position. But in a matter of weeks, even days, it became evident that it had accelerated his own political demise.

The Fall of Brüning

Bonapartism as a species of state power can present an outward face of strength and stability. It embodies the extreme centralisation of state authority, the usurpation of the legislature and the party-political

system, and, more often than not, involves the direct intervention of the armed forces and the police in the formulation of government policy. Hence the appearance of stability, of independence from the turmoil associated with a parliamentary regime in crisis, and from the sectional interests which those parties seek to represent. But herein also lies the organic instability of Bonapartism. Arising on the basis of a temporary social and political equilibrium between the classes and within the various contending factions of the ruling class, and in attempting to maintain this equilibrium 'administratively', by regulating social conflicts and political divisions, it necessarily inherits, in an ever more acute fashion, all the contradictions which have undermined the more normal forms of bourgeois rule, and prepared the ground for the rise of Bonapartism. Resting on this temporary and precarious social equilibrium, and consequently also deriving its partial political independence from the ruling class from this mutual counter-balancing, the Bonapartist regime will immediately be threatened by any shift, however slight, in the relative strength of the contending forces at the base. Brüning's was a regime which from the autumn of 1930, when it placed its continued survival in the hands of the SPD, leaned to the left on the reformist bureaucracy, and, through this stratum, on the millions of workers who remained tied to it - largely as a result of the criminally adventurist policies of the KPD Stalinists. But although inclining to the left, where it found a degree of mass support mediated through the reformists that Brüning himself lacked, his regime also sought to extend its base to the right, beyond the bourgeois liberals, the Centre politicians and the German hierarchy, through the defectors from the Hugenberg nationalists even as far as attempting to effect a working compromise with the Nazis. Such a deal, even assuming that Hitler would honour his side of the bargain by not striving for a monopoly of power, was however impossible so long as Brüning continued to lean on the reformists. Brüning needed their 'toleration'; Hitler their annihilation. Brüning used the Nazi threat to club the trade union and SPD bureaucrats into submission, but also saw in it his own political death. Thus we find Brüning throughout his two years of office pursuing a political course which, while oscillating in both directions, back-tracked consistently towards the left and the reformists who held in their hands the fate of his regime.

It is of the very nature of Bonapartist governments that they attempt to 'freeze' social and political relations, that they attempt to preserve the equilibrium of social forces that first brought them to power. But the world economic crisis did not 'freeze' at its March 1930 level, and, consequently, neither did its most acute manifestations in Germany. The deepening of these economic and social tensions arising from the world crisis found its expression on the political-parliamentary plane in the far too slow growth of the KPD at the expense of the SPD to Brüning's left, and the continued explosive upsurge of National Socialism to his right. In September 1930, 6.7 million voters opted for the Nazis. By April 1932, this number doubled, while the combined strength of the workers' parties over the same period had slightly declined. These profound dislocations of the political equilibrium that produced Brüning's semi-Bonapartist government, with its reliance on Social Democratic support in the Reichstag on the one hand, and Hindenburg's endorsement of his decrees on the other, were already subjecting the Chancellor to unendurable pressures and tensions. Hence the ban on the SA. But what finally brought Brüning down was the shift at the top, in the bourgeoisie itself, in the army leadership and amongst the agrarians, away from Brüning's policy of maintaining the semblance of the old Weimar bloc, based on the compromise enacted in the wake of the November Revolution between the Centre, the SPD and the now-defunct bourgeois democrats.

Writing in January 1932, Trotsky characterised the Brüning regime as one which danced:

... on a tightrope between two irreconcilable camps, balancing itself with the emergency decrees instead of a pole. But such a condition of the state and the administration is temporary in character. It signals the transition period, during which the Social Democracy is on the verge of exhausting its mission, while in that same period, neither Communism nor fascism is ready as yet to seize power. ^[6]

But Brüning's fragile semi-Bonapartism was not the final transitional regime before the establishment of fascism or the seizure of power by the proletariat. Using the analogy of the Russia of 1917, the transition to each of these conclusions would be opened by a 'Kerensky' government, either of the left, *or of the right*. Such was the intended function of the von Papen regime, installed with Nazi support, and 'tolerated' by Hitler as long as Papen performed his allotted role of beating back the organised proletariat and hounding the reformist bureaucrats from their last redoubts in the state and government apparatus of Prussia. The first blows against Brüning had of course been struck as far back as October 1931, when a highly influential group of bankers and industrialists repudiated his policy of piecemeal economic and

social 'reforms' and opted for the more radical programme advocated by Schacht and Thyssen. The result was their participation in the Harzburg rally of the National Opposition. Brüning then sought to adapt to this pressure from the right, by restructuring his cabinet and introducing yet more cuts in wages and welfare payments. But there were limits to the attacks Brüning could unleash on the working class without risking an open split with the reformist bureaucracy which supported his regime from the left, and the most reactionary sections of big business were aware of them. Resistance to further attacks on the living conditions of the working class came even from within Brüning's own party, which, as we have noted, comprised a potentially unstable bloc of clerical, bourgeois and Catholic trade union elements. Minister of Labour Stegerwald, a prominent Catholic trade union official, issued a public warning to profit-hungry employers that their greed might provoke the proletariat into open rebellion unless they agreed to curb it. On 27 November 1931, with new deflationary measures by the cabinet due to be enacted on 8 December, he declared:

The withdrawal of the protection of wages, which has been demanded by the employers, would be very tactless under the present circumstances and would cause political disturbances on a large scale. A certain protection of wages in Germany will be an absolute necessity for the next few years.

The effect of Brüning's decree was to reduce all wage rates to the level of 1927, while the budget showed a reduction of 25 per cent on the previous financial year as a result of the Chancellor's cuts in social services. Yet still the monopolies and banks were not satisfied, even when the same Stegerwald boasted to a meeting of the Centre Party in Munster on 8 December that 'an attack has been made by the Reich's government not only on wages but also on prices to an extent unknown in the history of any other modern state', even claiming that Brüning 'has in many respects gone farther than Mussolini did in Italy years ago'.

While this statement spoke volumes for the real class nature and intent of 'social catholicism', it cut precious little ice with the leaders of heavy industry, who were now passing over to the side of the National Opposition. They correctly saw in Mussolini's fascist corporate state not only a regime which served capital by cutting wages and reducing social services (the National Government of Ramsey Macdonald was implementing the same programme in Britain), but which went further than any other reactionary bourgeois government by physically destroying the organisations which the proletariat had built to defend itself against such attacks. This was the appeal of fascism to the big bourgeoisie, and Brüning, for all his decrees and emergency measures, and despite all Stalinist claims to the contrary, could not institute such a system. Hence the gravitation of big business away from Brüning, through the monarchists and eventually, after a period of experimentation with the Bonapartist regimes of von Papen and Schleicher, into a bloc with the Nazis.

Although serious negotiations between Hitler and leaders of big business date from the early crisis months of 1930, the final decision to endorse the formation of a Nazi-led cabinet of 'National Concentration' was not made by the main representatives of industry and finance until the early days of 1933. A turning point in this process of the coming together of the monopolies and fascism was reached in January 1932, when Hitler delivered his speech to the assembled Ruhr tycoons of the Düsseldorf Industry Club. ^[7]

Thyssen says of this speech, made in the Park Hotel on 27 January 1932, and lasting some two-and-a-half hours, that it 'made a deep impression on the assembled industrialists and in consequence of this a number of large contributions flowed from the resources of heavy industry into the treasuries of the National Socialist Party', ^[8] a claim supported from within the Nazi movement by Otto Dietrich, who writes:

The twenty-seventh of January 1932 will always remain a memorable day in the history of the NSDAP. On this day, our leader succeeded in piercing the armour of the West German industrial magnates. On this evening, Hitler achieved decisive success in the Industrial Club in Düsseldorf. ^[9]

The Nazi press chief sets the scene for what was to be one of Hitler's most decisive political speeches:

We came from Godesberg, and drove up to the Park Hotel, amidst the hooting of the Marxists. The room was overcrowded. Huddled together sat the chief West German magnates. There were familiar and unfamiliar faces. Men in the public eye, and those quiet, but no less influential powers, who moving behind the scenes, control the fate of the economy by the soft sounds issuing from their private offices. Joyful expectation brightened the faces of those already converted. But

the vast majority bore an air of superiority and cold reserve - probably flattered that Hitler had approached them. Mere curiosity, and general interest, lured them to the meeting. They wanted to hear Hitler speak. They had no intention of being converted; they came to criticise, seeking confirmation of their own infallible opinion. ^[10]

Hitler's speech dealt at some length with a number of familiar Nazi themes - the incompatibility of parliamentary democracy and an organised and independent workers' movement with the continued existence of German monopoly capitalism; the need for imperialist 'living space' in the Soviet east; the impossibility of rebuilding Germany's military and economic strength until Marxism and the last vestiges of internationalism had been ripped out of the proletariat, and finally the unavoidable necessity of the 'plebeian' solution to the political and economic problems of the bourgeoisie, however distasteful this might be to exponents of more genteel forms of political struggle:

Private property can be morally and ethically justified only if I admit that men's achievements are different. Only on that basis can I assert: since men's achievements are different, the results of those achievements are also different. But if the results of those achievements are different, then it is reasonable to leave to men the administration of those results to a corresponding degree... Thus it must be admitted that in the economic sphere, from the start, in all branches men are not of equal value or of equal importance. And once this is admitted it is madness to say: in the economic sphere there are undoubtedly differences in value, *but that is not true in the political sphere*. It is absurd to build up economic life on the conceptions of achievement, of the value of personality, while in the political sphere you deny this authority, *and thrust in its place the law of the greatest number - democracy*. In that case there must slowly arise a cleavage between the economic life on the conceptions of achievement, of the value of personality, while in the political sphere you deny this authority, *an attempt will be made to assimilate the former into the latter* - indeed, the attempt has been made, for this cleavage has not remained bare pale theory. The conception of the quality of values has already, not only in politics *but in economics also*, been raised to a system... *This economic system is alive in gigantic organisations* [that is, those of the German working class - RB] *and it has already today inspired a state which rules over immense areas* [the USSR].

But I cannot regard as possible that the life of a people should in the long run be based on two fundamental conceptions... It is absurd to allow this principle to hold good only in one sphere - the sphere of economic life and leadership - and to refuse to acknowledge its vitality in the sphere of politics... *In the economic sphere Communism is analogous to democracy in the political sphere*. We find ourselves today in a period in which these two fundamental principles are at grips in all spheres which come into contact with each other; *already they are invading economics...* *This struggle will continue until a nation is finally engulfed in internationalism and democracy and thereby falls into complete disintegration, or else creates for itself once more a new logical form for its internal life* [that is, a fascist dictatorship - RB] ... For 50 years you may amass wealth, and then in three years of mistaken political decisions you can destroy all the results of the work of those 50 years ['very true' from the audience]... We see that since the world war there was no further important extension of export markets: on the contrary, we see the numbers of those export markets contracted, that the number of exporting nations gradually increased, and that a great number of former export markets became themselves industrialised, while finally a new wholesale exporter, the American Union, can reckon on advantages which we in Europe assuredly do not and cannot possess. And as the last momentous feature we regard the fact that, parallel with the gradual growth of confusion in Europe, *a world outlook has seized on a part of Europe and a great part of Asia which threatens to tear this continent out of the framework of international economic relations altogether...* Cannot people see that in our midst already a cleavage has been opened up... which is not merely a fancy born in the heads of a few persons but whose spiritual exponents form today the foundations of one of the greatest world powers? Can they not see that Bolshevism today is not merely a mob storming about in some of our streets in Germany, but is a conception of the world which is in the act of subjecting to itself the entire Asiatic continent? ... *Bolshevism, if its advance is not interrupted, will transform the world as completely as in time past did Christianity...* it is not as if this gigantic phenomenon could simply be thought away from the modern world... Do you believe that when seven or eight million men have found themselves for 10 or 20 years excluded from the national process of

production that for these masses *Bolshevism could appear as anything else than the logical theoretical complement of their practical, economic situation?* ...

There has arisen such an increase in productive capacity that the present possible consumption market stands in no relation to this increased capacity. *But if Bolshevism as a world idea tears the Asiatic continent out of the human economic community, then the conditions for the employment of these industries which have developed on so gigantic a scale will no longer be even approximately realised...* it was not German business that conquered the world, followed by the development of power, but the power-state which created for the business world the general conditions for its subsequent prosperity [‘very true’ from the audience]. There is only one solution - the realisation that there can be no flourishing economic life which has not before it and behind it a flourishing, powerful state as its protection... *There can be no economic life unless behind this economic life there stands the determined political will of the nation ready to strike - and strike hard...* The essential thing is the formation of the political will of the nation, that is the starting point for political action...

What use is it for a government to publish a decree with the aim of saving the people’s economic life, *when the nation... has two completely different attitudes towards economics?* One section says: the precondition for economics is private property; *the other section maintains that private property is theft...* You may raise the objection that these views represent pure theory: no! Was a view only theory when as its consequence the revolution broke out in 1918 and ruined Germany? ... I believe that such views, unless we give a clear understanding of them, *must lead to the disruption of the body politic...* the government says, the state must be saved, but another 50 per cent of the people wish only to smash the state in pieces and feel themselves to be the vanguard not only of an alien attitude towards the state... *but of a will which is hostile to the state...* It is no good appealing for national unity when only 50 per cent of the people are ready to fight for the national colours, *while 50 per cent have hoisted another flag which stands for a state which is to be found only outside the bounds of their own state...* How is a people still to count for anything abroad when in the last resort 50 per cent are inclined to Bolshevism and 50 per cent are nationalists or anti-Bolshevists? It is quite inconceivable to turn Germany into a Bolshevik state... It is also quite conceivable to build up Germany as a national state. *But it is conceivable that one should create a strong and sound Germany if 50 per cent of the citizens are Bolsheviks and 50 per cent nationally minded* [‘very true!’ from the audience]. From the solution of this problem we cannot escape [loud applause]...

For even though today there are many in Germany who believe that we National Socialists would not be capable of constructive work, they deceive themselves! If we were not, *already today there would be no more bourgeoisie alive in Germany*, the question of Bolshevism or not Bolshevism would have long ago been decided. Take the weight of our organisations, by far the greatest organisation of the new Germany - out of scale of nationalist fortunes and you will see that *without us, Bolshevism would already tip the balance* - a fact of which the best proof is the attitude adopted towards us by Bolshevism. *Personally I regard it as a great honour when Mr Trotsky calls upon German Communists at any price to act together with the Social Democrats, since National Socialism must be regarded as the one real danger for Bolshevism...*

Here [in the NSDAP] is an organisation which is filled with an indomitable, aggressive spirit, an organisation which when a political opponent says ‘Your behaviour we regard as a provocation’ does not see fit immediately to retire from the scene, but brutally enforces its own will and hurls against the opponent the retort: ‘We fight today! We fight tomorrow! And if you regard our meeting today as a provocation we shall hold another next week - until you have learned that it is no provocation when Germany also proves its belief...’ And when people cast in our teeth our intolerance, we proudly acknowledge it - *yes, we have formed the inexorable decision to destroy Marxism in Germany down to its very last root*. The bourgeois parties had 70 years to work in; where, I ask you, where is the organisation which could be compared with ours? *Where is the organisations which can boast, as ours can, that at need it can summon 400 000 men into the street, men who are schooled to blind obedience and are ready to execute any order...?*

I know quite well, gentlemen, that when National Socialists march through the streets and suddenly in the evening there arises a great tumult and commotion, then the bourgeois draws back the window curtain, looks out and says: Once more my night’s rest disturbed... Why must the

Nazis always be so provocative and run about the place at night? Gentlemen, if everyone thought like that, then one's sleep would not be disturbed, it is true. *But then the bourgeois today could not venture into the streets...* [emphasis added]

Dietrich records the changing reactions of the audience to this remarkable speech:

The general impression upon this group of most impassive listeners was astounding. After an hour, their chilly reserve gave way to intense interest. They began to flush, fixed their gaze upon our leader and it seemed as if their hearts were moved. He spoke to their very souls. Faint, then thundering applause greet Hitler at the conclusion of his speech; he had won a battle. ^[11]

Hitler's place at the speaker's rostrum (which throughout his address was flanked by a guard of SA men) was then taken by Thyssen, 'for long an ardent National Socialist' who 'sounded Brüning's death knell as he stated our creed of Liberation: Only National Socialism and its Leader's spirit could save Germany from her doom.' ^[12]

Even if the National Opposition found itself divided in the approaching Presidential elections, a considerable degree of agreement was evident in business circles over the dire need to remove the 'Marxist'-tolerated Brüning government. Here Hitler's pledge to destroy the German workers' movement 'down to its very last root' placed him in an advantageous tactical position for the political battles to come. As Dietrich (not only Hitler's press chief, but an important liaison man between the party and heavy industry) observed, 'the effect [of the speech] upon the economists... was great, and evident during the next hard months of struggle'. ^[13] And in fact the very day after his Düsseldorf triumph, Hitler:

... addressed with equal success the Crefeld silk magnates in Godesberg, [and] later the National Club in Hamburg. Everywhere the scene was the same. Our leader's power of conviction and his indefatigable pioneer work successfully pierced the armour of economy. His plan succeeded... The seed of National Socialism had found fertile soil in the important and influential circles of the old system. The clouds began to gather around Brüning. ^[14]

Also on the day following the Düsseldorf meeting there was held at Thyssen's castle at Landsberg a conference between Thyssen, Ernst Pönsen and Albert Vögler of the Steel Trust, and on behalf of the NSDAP, Hitler, Goering and Röhm. According to a later account of the meeting given by Pönsen, Goering asked the three steel barons whether they would support the appointment, as Hitler's Minister of Labour, of Ludwig Grauert, Chairman of the Employers' Federation and a recent convert to the Nazi cause. The outcome of these negotiations proved abortive (the *Stahlhelm* leader Franz Seldte, and not Grauert, became Labour Minister in the Nazi - Nationalist coalition of January 1933), but they did reveal on the part of a powerful section of the monopoly bourgeoisie a growing awareness that at some time in the near future, the question of bringing the Nazis into the government would have to be faced up to, before the movement lost its forward impetus and its effectiveness as a counter-weight to the workers' parties and the trade unions. Thyssen (by this time a party member) made no attempt to conceal his political sympathies for the NSDAP in the forthcoming Presidential elections. 'I am voting for Adolf Hitler', he announced, 'because I know him well and am firmly convinced that he is the only man who can and will rescue Germany from ruin and disintegration.'

The prospects of ruin and disintegration, though on a company and not national scale, were also instrumental in propelling towards the Nazis another illustrious name in the German steel industry - Friedrich Flick. Early in 1932, Vögler, Chairman of Flick's United Steel Works, secretly informed the German civil service that the concern would shortly collapse unless it was provided with considerable credits. The effect on the German economy would of course have been disastrous since the United Steel Works accounted, in 1932, for 38 per cent of all German steel output. ^[15] The immediate cause of the crisis in the Flick combine was, of course, the world economic situation, with its attendant slump in demand for the products of basic and heavy industries. But Flick's own methods of trust-building also contributed to the near-bankruptcy that faced him in early 1932. His system of securing control over nominally independent companies by acquiring in them a minority but controlling interest, had seriously depleted his own liquidity reserves, a policy whose dangerous implications were masked, but not overcome, by the period of industrial expansion between 1924 and 1928.

The plight of the Steel Trust was accurately reflected in the last quotation for its shares on the Berlin Bourse at the end of 1931. On their flotation, Steel Trust shares stood at 125 per cent of their nominal value. Now they barely fetched 15 per cent. The Brüning government therefore had no alternative but to pump fresh reserves into the foundering concern; buying up roughly half of its stock (worth nominally

125 million marks) not at the market price, but for 100 million marks - 90 per cent of their face value, and more than five times the price they could command on the Berlin Bourse. Flick and his associates acquired the liquid funds necessary to avert bankruptcy, and the state became a temporary part-owner of Germany's largest concern. The question which remained to be settled was - to whom would the ownership of the state's shares revert, and at what price, when the time came for private industry to claim its own? In common with not only his fellow directors of the United Steel Works, but large sectors of heavy industry, Flick had, by the beginning of 1932 at the latest, come to regard the participation of the Nazis in a future 'national' government almost inevitable. The NSDAP leadership would, therefore, have their own views on how the affairs of the Steel Trust should be resolved, and in whose favour. Accordingly, through the good offices of Walter Funk, Flick met Hitler in February 1932 to discuss this and other, broader problems concerned with future political developments in Germany. Though this meeting was Flick's first encounter with the Nazis, his private secretary Otto Steinbrinck had been in touch with the NSDAP since 1930. And at the Nuremberg Trials he explained why, in a remarkable lucid and class-conscious manner:

A concern of the importance of Flick's group cannot stay out of politics in the long run, although until about 1930, we took no notice of politics [Flick himself was a not very active supporter of the DVP - RB], particularly in view of the fact that we had close connections with the United Steel Works and through the leading members of the United Steel Works had a series of contacts with parliament and the press. When the crisis of 1931-32 began, this picture changed. In connection with the problem of unemployment the difficulties among the parties of the Left, that is the Communists and the Socialists, increased and correspondingly the movement of the groups of the Right were increased too. One has to consider that our plants were situated in the most radical territories of the Reich; that is Saxony... This district has always been one of the reddest parts of Germany, and the plants Brandenburg and Hennigsdorf, very close to Berlin, were almost on the same level as this Red Saxony. That's why our plant managements in these plants... were rather worried because the same troubles which we had experienced eight years previously might revive again... Consequently we observed the formation of radical groups, as well as of independent groups and also the formation of opposed groups. Those were the Stahlhelm, later the SA and the SS, and also the more central groups, the Iron Front [the SPD-dominated Republican Defence organisation, formed in the spring of 1932 - RB]. All of these movements we watched with great interest from Berlin and from the plants. That was one reason for our first contact with politics. Up to that time, wherever interesting political questions turned up we had always been able to rely on the support of Baron von Richthofen in the parties of the centre, and in the parties of the right on Vögler, Hugenberg and Dr Reichart. ^[16]

The affairs of the Flick concern had become such a public scandal by 1931 that the company had become a target for demagogic attacks by the Nazi press, and it was in order to silence Flick's fascist critics that Steinbrinck made his first serious approach to the NSDAP, though he had met Ley, Funk and Keppler during the course of the previous year. Steinbrinck met the aristocratic Berlin SA chief Count Helder in order to secure a better press for the ailing Steel Trust. In return, Steinbrinck agreed to take part 'in an open rally as listener on the benches of the NSDAP', ^[17] and later, to provide cash for the party treasury (much depleted by the two Presidential election campaigns of March and April 1932). Steinbrinck's other channel of communication to the Nazi leadership went through Funk's business news service: 'In this way we first made contact with Robert Ley and Count Reischach, who were the press representatives for the party.' ^[18] Funk he had known well since 1928, and it was Hitler's future Economics Minister who arranged the meeting between Hitler and Flick in February 1932. Of these initial contacts with the Nazis, Steinbrinck stated that they had the full approval of Flick himself. There was no question of their being broken off, 'because in 1932, in the big economic crisis, there was still the very grave danger of a Communist revolution, which... could only be stopped by the right-wing parties, Stahlhelm, SA'. ^[19]

Steinbrinck says little of the meeting between Flick and Hitler, merely that his chief 'had a long private chat' with the Nazi leader. Some agreement does seem to have been reached, however, on the policy a future Nazi government would adopt towards the Steel Trust. For in a later series of discussions with Goering, Flick secured Hitler's approval of the sale of the trust's shares to the Brüning Government, as was established some eight years later in a letter from Odilo Burkart, a Nazi industrialist, to Mining Director Dr Gillitzer. Dated 17 September 1940, the letter stated:

With respect to the sale of the *Stahlverein* majority shares Herr Flick has asked me to inform you *officially* as follows: ‘The sale of the majority shares in the *Stahlverein* had been personally examined and sanctioned at the time - in the year 1932 by the present Reich Marshal [Goering] in conference, at the Belle Vue Strasse which lasted several days. The Reich Marshal has further personally reported the transaction relating to the majority shares of the *Stahlverein* to the Führer with the result that the Führer has also recognised this transaction as necessary and has explicitly approved it.’ ^[20]

Although occasioned by exceptional circumstances, and being something in the nature of an insurance policy, Flick’s cautious move towards the Nazis was part of a general rightwards shift against Brüning under way in the winter and spring months of 1932. Keppler was in the early stages of forming his ‘circle’ at this time, having been told in December 1931 by Hitler ‘to get a few economic leaders - they need not be party members - who will be at our disposal when we come to power’. ^[21] Fellow Nazi manufacturer Fritz Kranefuss assisted him in this work, ‘winning for my idea men whom I had not previously known personally’, ^[22] to such good effect that by May the circle was large and sympathetic enough to hold its first meeting. Keppler related that:

... the Führer received the gentlemen in the small hall of the Kaiserhof [the Berlin headquarters of the NSDAP] on 18 May 1932... The Führer made a short speech and in it disclosed among other things, as points of his programme, *abolition of the trade unions and the abolition of parties other than the NSDAP. No one raised any objection.* These points of the Führer’s programme *met with the fullest approval of the members of the Circle of Friends*, but they expressed their apprehension *that we would not be able to carry out these excellent ideas.* ^[23]

So the leaders of German industry and finance knew exactly who and what they were supporting when they entered into political relations with the Nazis. Destruction of the parliamentary system, destruction of the trade unions - these were the twin planks in Hitler’s platform that, from the spring of 1932 on, attracted ever greater numbers of businessmen into and around the NSDAP. ^[24]

Thyssen summed up the mood of German business leaders at this time when he later told Rauschnig:

We thought [at first] Brüning was our man. But we couldn’t make out what he was up to... what will be the end of it when they start confiscating? If private property is only tolerated so to speak, there won’t be much left after the next chap has come along and taken his whack. Brüning was obstinate enough to let half the business concerns go bankrupt, and that’s what he called putting industry on a sound footing. Breaking the revolution by timely reforms, he called it. And who backed him up? Not even his own party. ^[25]

Growing dissatisfaction with Brüning in business circles (reflected in the activities of the Keppler Circle) merged with the revolt against the Chancellor by army and agrarian leaders. Brüning’s decree banning the SA outraged even moderate ‘national’ opinion, since it was not balanced by a similar outlawing of the *Reichsbanner*, the SPD defence formation. Brüning still needed his allies on the left in the reformist bureaucracy, and now not only industry but the *Reichswehr* deemed this course intolerable. And what was even more telling against Brüning and his Defence and Interior Minister Gröner, these forces had the backing of President Hindenburg. The news that Brüning’s decree had aroused deep hostility in these august circles quickly percolated back to the Nazi leadership, for on 14 April, Goebbels remarked: ‘Gröner has launched his bolt. But perhaps it will prove his undoing. We are informed that Schleicher does not agree with his action.’ ^[26] And it is easy to see why, in view of his letter of 25 March to Gröner, which after making derogatory remarks about the Prussian Social Democrats for their placing curbs on the activities of the SA during the Presidential election campaign, made the classic Bonapartist observation:

After the events of the last few days, I am really quite happy that we have a counterbalance in the form of the Nazis, even though they are ill-behaved and to be used only with greatest care. Indeed, if the Nazis did not exist, we should have had to invent them.

Death sentence on Gröner, the ‘strong man’ of the Brüning cabinet, was passed by the President in a letter to the Defence and Interior Minister, which demanded the repression of the SPD defence formation, a concession which Gröner was not prepared to grant. That Hindenburg’s communication found its way into the national press was taken as confirmation of the President’s determination to oust not only Gröner, but Brüning, the same Brüning who had, only a matter of days before, secured Hindenburg’s re-election to the Presidency. Gröner also saw things in this light, confiding to a close friend on 25 April that his ruin

was ‘being readied with all available means. Hindenburg has bared his old conservative heart and desires a government oriented even further to the Right than that of Brüning.’ The Chancellor attempted to stave off his own removal by offering Gröner’s head on a platter to his enemies after a bitter debate in the Reichstag on 10 May over the ban on the Nazi fighting organisations. A broken man, Gröner resigned three days later, full of remorse for his decision of 29 January, which lifted his ban on Nazi membership of the *Reichswehr*.

By this time, Brüning’s end was in sight too, for the elections to the Prussian Diet, held on 24 April, had administered a crushing blow to his Reichstag allies, the SPD. As in the other state elections held on the same day in Bavaria and Württemberg, the Nazis made enormous gains at the expense of the old bourgeois parties with the exception of the Centre, while on the left, the KPD was able to make only marginal inroads into the voting strength of the Social Democrats, as the table below illustrates:

Elections to the Prussian Diet, April 1932			
Party	Votes (millions)	Seats	Seats in previous Diet
NSDAP	8.0	162	9
SPD	5.7	93	137
KPD	2.8	57	48
Centre	3.4	67	71
DNVP	1.5	31	71
DVP	0.3	7	40
DDP (State)	0.3	2	22
Economist	0.2	0	16
Christian Socialist	0.3	2	4
Hanoverians	0.1	1	0

In the old Prussian Diet, the SPD - Centre coalition, though two seats short of an absolute majority, could rely on the support of the DDP and even the DVP while the two parties shared office in the Müller cabinet. The mass defection of the former liberal middle class to the Nazis had reduced the Diet fractions of the DDP (now the State Party) and the DVP to mere rumps. And what was even worse for the reformists, the results of the elections showed that while a small proportion of their proletarian supporters had deserted to the KPD, their middle-class following had passed over *en masse* to the Nazis, rendering the combined vote of the two workers’ parties in the Diet 35 seats less than in the old house. Now the parties of the National Opposition - the NSDAP, DNVP and DVP - were the dominant bloc with 200 seats as against 150 for the KPD and the SPD. In which direction would the Centre, without whose support a new cabinet could not be formed, turn? This was the question that preoccupied the German press and party leaders in the days and weeks that followed the elections. No party or class could remain indifferent to the outcome of the struggle for power in Prussia, since involved here was not simply a scramble for cabinet posts, but the destiny of Germany’s largest and historically and strategically most decisive state. Even before the elections, the Nazis had begun to make fresh overtures to the Centre. On 6 April, Goebbels addressed a meeting of the Centre Party at Aachen, and commented afterwards that ‘things are better than I thought’.^[27] On the morrow of the Prussian election, we find Goebbels taking a similar line: ‘The Centre is playing the silent wisacre. Nevertheless some of their pronouncements are worthy of attention.’^[28] and on 4 May saying that ‘the Centre is seeking to get in touch with the Leader, but he is making himself particularly elusive’.^[29] For what the Nazis desired was not simply a change of regime in Prussia, important though that would be, but the removal of Brüning himself, a step his own party, even for the sake of a common front against the ‘Godless Bolsheviks’, would hesitate to take.^[30] As Goebbels himself noted on 26 April, after the Berlin SA leader Count Helldorf had met Schleicher to discuss measures ‘to alter the political course’, ‘a change in Prussia... is only possible if it takes place in the Reich at the same time’.^[31]

Apart from these confidential exchanges, the possibility of a Nazi - Catholic bloc was aired publicly. Kube, the NSDAP Prussian Diet fraction leader, declared on 25 April that his party was:

... prepared to take over the government of Prussia and to work together with those who desire a national, ennobled Prussia filled with a socialist sense of justice. We will reject nobody who is prepared to work together with us in building up the state.

To which the Centre replied that it was ready:

... to work together with all parties which are resolved, on the bases of the Constitution, to serve the well-being of the whole people... the party stands for a policy of securing the German people's inner and outer freedom... and a place among the nations of the world.

A basis had been found for discussion between the two parties, and a few days later the Centre Party leader, Monsignor Kaas (who stood to the right of Brüning), met Hitler for an exchange of views on the future course of developments both in Prussia and in the central government. Already undermined by the near total loss of confidence in his cabinet on the part of big business, the 'national' parties, the Reichswehr and the President himself, all that Brüning needed to ensure his demise was the enmity of the big agrarians, and this he duly provoked by the presentation to Hindenburg of his plan to ease the chronic strain on the welfare budget by resettling some 600 000 unemployed urban workers in that sacred preserve of Junkerdom, East Prussia. Each settler was to be given approximately 60 acres, which meant that, in all, around 36 million acres would be allocated to people whom the east Elbian landowners regarded as proletarian riff-raff. When first presented to the Reichstag on 9 May 1932, the plan was denounced by the DNVP deputies, and especially by their mentor Hindenburg, as 'agrarian Bolshevism'. The President viewed the settlement programme as a covert attempt to socialise German agriculture, and when on 29 May he summoned Brüning to an interview in order to make plain his opposition to the Chancellor's proposals, the President declared:

We cannot continue in this fashion under any circumstances. We cannot engage in Bolshevik wage laws [under Brüning, wages had been cut by some 15 per cent - RB] and Bolshevik colonisation schemes. The two trade union leaders must get out of the cabinet. I mean you and Stegerwald... I must turn right at long last. The newspapers and the whole nation demand it. But you always refused to do so.

By 'the newspapers' and 'the whole nation' Hindenburg meant of course those of 'national', for him the only, Germany. Business, army, agrarian, clerical leaders were with a united voice daily demanding Brüning's scalp. The pressure was irresistible. Hindenburg presented the Chancellor with an ultimatum which both knew could not be accepted. Future government policy had to veer sharply and permanently to the right, collaboration with the reformist SPD and trade union leaders had to end, and the East Prussian resettlement programme scrapped.

Brüning resigned the next day, leaving the way clear for the formation of the cabinet that even more than Brüning's would make possible the triumph of Hitler and the destruction of the German workers' movement.

Von Papen Strikes in Prussia

Brüning resigned on 30 May 1932. At least three weeks before this date, however, plans were far advanced not only to secure his removal, but for the installation of a cabinet that avowedly severed all links with the party system, and dispensed with all but the trappings of parliamentary rule. It was to be, in short, a 'Presidential Cabinet', a fully-developed Bonapartism which, unlike Brüning's, leaned firmly to the far right, while basing itself full square on the permanent organs of the state apparatus - the bureaucracy, judiciary and, above all, the army. There was to be no place in such a system for even the most craven of reformists, as the dramatic events in Prussia of 20 July were to demonstrate. Von Papen claims in his *Memoirs* that the first intimation of his impending appointment as successor to Brüning came on 28 May, when Schleicher informed him 'that it was the President's wish to form a Cabinet of experts independent of the political parties'.^[32] Facts suggest otherwise. Papen's name was being mentioned by Goebbels as early as 4 May as the probable successor to the doomed Brüning. And in fact the Nazi leadership were privy to all the major moves and decisions which secured his appointment three weeks later. On 4 May, Goebbels remarks jubilantly that 'some of Hitler's mines are beginning to explode', and that 'the first to blow up must be Gröner, and after him, Brüning'.^[33] On 8 May, the propaganda chief's diary entry reflects the growing optimism in the Nazi camp that not only are Brüning's days numbered, but that his successor will lift the irksome ban on the SA and SS:

The leader has an important interview with Schleicher in the presence of a few gentlemen of the President's circle. All goes well. The leader had spoken decisively. Brüning's fall is expected shortly. The President of the Reich will withdraw his confidence in him, *the plan is to constitute a Presidential Cabinet. The Reichstag will be dissolved. Repressive enactments are to be cancelled. We shall be free to go ahead as we like.* ^[34]

By 19 May, with Gröner already out of the way, Goebbels records another important development - the selection of the new cabinet to replace Brüning's - eight days before Papen claims he first learned of the Hindenburg-Schleicher plan to appoint him Chancellor. What is not in dispute is that Papen's cabinet took office on the basis of a deal concluded with Hitler whereby the Nazis would 'tolerate' Papen in return for a lifting of the ban on the SA and SS. ^[35]

Quite apart from Papen's policy statements, which were the most reactionary uttered by a German Chancellor since the fall of the Hohenzollerns, the new Cabinet's political sympathies were easily discernible from its social composition. Apart from von Papen himself, who represented a fusion of Saar industry and Westphalian nobility, the Cabinet contained no fewer than four barons. The only one of its eight ministers who could be described in any way as a common burgher was the Minister of Justice, Dr Gürtner, who, in this same capacity in the Bavarian government, had acted as benefactor and protector to the NSDAP. The other members of this 'Cabinet of Barons' were Baron von Gayl (Interior), General von Schleicher (Defence), Professor Warmbold - the sole survivor from Brüning's cabinet - (Labour and Economics), Baron von Braun (Food and Commissioner for Eastern Agrarian Relief), Baron von Rubenach (Post and Communications), Baron von Neurath (Foreign), Lutz Earl Schewerein von Krosigk (Finance). Neurath, Papen and Krosigk also served the Third Reich as Hitler's cabinet ministers, Papen being Vice-Chancellor until his resignation after the purge of 30 June 1934. So this Cabinet served as a stepping-stone to the Nazi seizure of power in more senses than one.

Papen makes no bones in his *Memoirs* about his motives for accepting the Chancellorship. He intended nothing less than to undo all the social, political and economic reforms brought about by the November Revolution; austerity, the progressive weakening of bourgeois parliamentary democracy and the undermining of the power of organised labour - these were his goals:

The condition of the country required the collaboration and effort of every patriotic member of the community [which by definition excluded the 13 million 'anti-national' Social Democratic and Communist workers - RB], whatever their political inclinations. The financial framework of the federal, State and local government was broken, plans for the basic reform of public life had never got beyond vague proposals. Unemployment [running at roughly six million] was threatening the corporate life of the community and social security funds were exhausted. The postwar governments had embarked on welfare schemes and a system of state socialism which were beyond the country's means and had turned it into a sort of charity institution. [This was of course the argument of Schacht and the leaders of heavy industry - RB] The moral strength of the nation had been weakened. Public life, if it was to combat Marxist and atheist teachings, would have to be rebuilt on the basis of Christian principles. ^[36]

This differs only in small details from Papen's government declaration of 5 June, which in addition to warning of impending bankruptcy and the need to make an end with the 'state socialism' charity, spoke of a 'cultural Bolshevism poisoning the moral fibre of the German people', and criticised the 'Christian forces of the state' for being lax in compromising with the 'atheistic Marxist element invading the cultural centres of the country'. Press reactions to Papen's policy statement of course varied. The Catholic *Kölnische Volkszeitung*, reflecting the Centre Party's disgust for the renegade who knifed Brüning, said with some justice that 'it might be a leading Nazi article', ^[37] while Papen's former journal *Germania* (with which he had severed all connections on assuming the Chancellorship) thought it was surprising to find 'the reactionary aims of the new regime expressed with such candour'. The stolidly Protestant and right-wing *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* on the other hand found the Catholic Chancellor's pronouncement praiseworthy for its 'honesty and lack of illusions'.

The Nazi press naturally had to be more discreet. The blatantly aristocratic composition of Papen's cabinet, not to speak of its obviously pro-monarchist political orientation, made it impossible for the Nazi leaders to come out openly as the champions of the regime they had helped to install. Goebbels' *Angriff*, the most popular of the party dailies among the SA plebeians, had already pressed Nazi claims to enter the government in its issue of 30 May, when with the fall of Brüning it proclaimed:

Now or never the moment has come when the Reich President is meeting an historical hour. The right of the NSDAP to the leadership of the state is confirmed doubly and afresh. Will the Reich President simply evade this inevitable development? That is impossible. ^[38]

The editors of *Angriff* knew full well that Hindenburg had no intention of appointing Hitler Chancellor and that in fact Papen had already been selected for the post. But time was running out for the Nazi leaders. Their restless plebeian following had been kept in a state of suspended and frenzied anticipation for longer than was advisable in a movement based on social demagoguery, and incorporating such contradictory strata as declassed proletarians, pauperised peasants, industrial magnates and East Prussia landowners. Only the immediate prospect of power and a share in the rewards of office staved off the inevitable day when the movement would cease to grow and stagnation be followed by decomposition and then rapid disintegration. Closer to the party 'plebeians' than almost any other Nazi leader, Goebbels sensed the dangers of openly aligning the party with the ultra-reactionary von Papen government at a time when the SA men were demanding - and arming for - the overthrow of the Weimar system. As early as 9 May, he commented in his diary: 'It is high time we came to power. The "Reds" are tampering with our rank and file.' ^[39]

The von Papen cabinet formally took office on 1 June. Four days later, Goebbels addressed an SA rally at Schöneberg, where he obviously encountered unrest with the party's policy of 'tolerating' the new government. For in his diary he remarked that after the meeting he had 'a long conversation with a few partisans on the tactics of the coming revolution. *We must dissociate ourselves at the earliest possible moment from the temporary bourgeois cabinet.*' ^[40]

That moment, however, had not yet arrived. As far as the Nazis were concerned, the Papen Cabinet had been entrusted with three main tasks to perform - the dissolution of the Reichstag (thus making possible new elections in which the Nazis could expect to double their vote of September 1930), the rescinding of the ban on the SA and SS, and finally the forcible removal of the 'caretaker' Social Democratic government in Prussia. When Goebbels made his worried diary entry on the need to make a tactical 'left turn', only the first and simplest of those measures had been carried out. No open breach with Papen could be contemplated until the Nazi combat units were free to resume their street war on the forces of organised labour, and the last remnant of Social Democratic influence in affairs of state uprooted in Prussia. Concern that the Papen cabinet was hesitating to act on these two fronts was reflected in Goebbels' entry for 14 June (the ban on the SA and SS was lifted two days later) when we find him once more recording unrest amongst the Nazi 'plebeians' at the slow tempo of events:

Have a long conference with General Schleicher. I call him to task for all resentment and discontent that has grown up in our ranks. This government is irresolute and slow. If we make ourselves responsible for their doings, we shall lose all our chances. The 'Reds' are growing arrogant in the face of the fact that the government lets things slide. ^[41]

By 22 June, with the SA-SS ban already lifted, the decision to strike against the Social Democrats in Prussia has been taken, and, what is more, the Nazi leadership is fully informed of it. Goebbels notes that 'the Prussian question is settled at last', though as a tactical ploy the party would not be taking responsibility for Papen's overturn of a legally-elected government. Goebbels' comments at this time betray a grave fear that the Nazi tide was ebbing, and that the workers' movement, despite its deep internal divisions (accentuated by the ultra-leftist line of the KPD), was at last beginning to regain the initiative that had been lost with the defeat of the Berlin metal-workers' strike of October 1930 and the Ruhr miners' strike of January 1931:

13 June: After the first rebuff the Socialists and the Communists are in spirits again. The provinces are preparing for an attack. If it were not for us it would be only a matter of a very short time when the Bolshevik revolution would break out...

22 June: The Bolshevik reign of blood is assuming unbearable proportions. The government remains completely inactive against it...

23 June: ... the Communists have erected barricades at Moabit [a Berlin working-class suburb]... The 'Red Front' is returning the right answer to [Interior Minister] von Gayl. If this sort of man was in office for a year Germany would be ripe for a Bolshevik revolution. ^[42]

In the Ruhr especially, the organised proletariat seethed with hatred for the Nazis, the spearhead of the coal and steel barons' onslaught against German labour. Goebbels experienced this loathing at first hand in the course of his propaganda campaign for the Reichstag elections, fixed for 31 July:

12 July: We force our way through the howling mob in Düsseldorf and Elberfeld. [The town Goebbels in his radical days had dubbed the bastion of National Socialism! - RB] A wild trip. We had no idea that things would go so seriously. In all our innocence we drive into Hagen in an open car and wearing our uniforms. The streets are black with people. All of them mob and Communist rabble. They close off the road, so that we can go neither forward nor back... We cut our way through the middle of the pack. Each of us has a pistol in his hand and is determined, if the worst comes to the worst, to sell his life as dearly as possible... The meeting is on a hill, framed by a forest of beeches... The Communists have ingeniously set fire to this forest so that it is impossible to carry on the meeting... On our departure we are followed by a bombardment of stones. We manage to leave the city by detours.

13 July: The experience in Hagen has made us more circumspect. Now we travel in disguise. Constantly we pass lurking groups of Communists. We can hardly get into Dortmund. We have to take a side-street to keep from falling into the hands of the Communists who have occupied all other entrances.

14 July: A trip to the Ruhr involves mortal peril. We take a strange car, because our own with its Berlin number is known... In Elberfeld the Red press has called the mob into the streets. The approaches to the stadium are blocked off completely. It is only because they take us for a harmless passenger car that we get through... After a speech we change into a new car. Again the mob has occupied the streets...

15 July: I must leave my own native city [Elberfeld] like a criminal, pursued by curses, abuse, vilification, stoned, and spat upon. ^[43]

The reception was no more friendly in Hamburg and Altona, both centres of proletarian militancy and armed resistance to the Nazi terror. So violent was the reaction to Goebbels' appearance in the two neighbouring harbour towns that he expressed private doubts as to whether the party would ever break down these workers' loyalty to Marxism and the organisations which they had built over the previous half-century and more. ^[44]

Every day that the Prussian Social Democratic government was allowed to remain in office made it more difficult for both Papen and his allies on the extreme right to hit back at this resurgent proletariat. Two-thirds of Germany came within the ambit of the Prussian state government, including not only welfare services, education and other branches of social policy, *but the police*. Up till now, the energies of the Prussian police had been expended almost exclusively on combating the revolutionary workers. But with the Weimar system breaking up and the central government no longer in the hands of its party representatives (Papen's was an explicitly non-party regime), there was a distinct possibility that the Social Democrats would, even if purely in order to save their own cowardly hides, sanction police action against the combat units of the Nazi movement. The Nazis were fully alert to such an eventuality, unlike the Stalinists, who even at this late stage were stridently accusing the Prussian Social Democrats of being direct accomplices of the fascists. On 26 June, the NSDAP issued a statement on the Prussian crisis which demanded 'the immediate proclamation of martial law throughout the Reich and the ruthless carrying out of an order suppressing the KPD and the cleaning up of the police force, particularly in Prussia'.

Pressure on Papen to act against the Prussian Social Democrats was being applied not only from the Nazis and the *Reichswehr* (which in the person of Defence Minister von Schleicher had, for the first time, a direct representative in the cabinet) but also from the leaders of industry. At a cabinet meeting on 16 July, it was announced that no less a magnate than Gustav Krupp himself had demanded that Papen proclaim a state of siege in the strife-torn Brandenburg district of Prussia, a call endorsed by, among other industrialists, Brandes of Stuttgart. The business world was alarmed at the sudden growth in street-fighting since the lifting of the ban on the SA and SS on 16 June. Groups of workers in areas invaded by the brown-shirted army organised their own proletarian defence, frequently in defiance of commands by their reformist and Stalinist leaders; and to such good effect that the Nazis for the first time began to suffer serious casualties in their own ranks. In the four weeks since the lifting of the bans (applied one-sidedly, since the KPD defence guard, the Red Front Fighters League, remained outlawed under the 1929 ban of the Müller government) in Prussia alone there had been 99 deaths and many hundreds more seriously wounded. In the more keenly contested districts of Berlin and Hamburg, the pitched battles between Nazis and workers threatened to assume civil war proportions. The climax and day of decision for Papen came on 17 July, when the SA high command attempted to take by storm the working-class

stronghold of Altona, the harbour city which more than any other proletarian centre had remained immune to infection from the Nazi virus.

The workers of Altona hit back at their fascist enemies to such good effect that by the end of the day (it was a Sunday), the Nazis were put to flight, leaving behind them several dead and many more wounded (total casualties were 19 killed and 285 wounded).^[45] Goebbels was thunderstruck at the rout:

Terrible news from Altona. The Communist assault our SA on the march in an organised attack. Fifteen dead and 50 seriously injured. That is open civil war. When will the government intervene?^[46]

And that was a question also being asked with some insistence in the bourgeois press. The right-wing *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* ranted the next day:

It is certain that the KPD organises shootings, systematically and in accordance with orders, especially the shooting of National Socialists. There exists no doubt that these groups possess weapons and make use of them also against the police. Here it is necessary to take action - ruthless and immediate. The state of affairs which at present prevails in Germany cannot in fact be tolerated another 24 hours.^[47]

The specific measures proposed by the paper were draconian in the extreme - suspension of the Constitution, the 'setting up of courts martial and summary courts' empowered to pronounce sentence after a 'very simplified procedure'. Sentences of death were to be imposed on those guilty of 'unlawful possession of weapons'. The paper had demanded action within 24 hours. Papen concurred. That same day, he invited Prussian Prime Minister Otto Braun and Interior Minister Carl Severing to a conference on the Prussian crisis, a meeting which took place on the 20th (Braun was unable to attend through illness, and Severing was joined by two fellow ministers, Klepper and Hirtsiefer). Meanwhile the machinery had been set in motion to topple the Braun administration. Here too the Nazis were kept fully informed of Papen's intentions, since on 19 July, Goebbels commented in his diary: 'There is no other way out than to appoint a State Commissioner in Prussia... Dr Bracht of Essen is designated.'^[48]

Bracht, the Centre Party Lord Mayor of Essen, is described by Papen as a 'moderate and intelligent politician and administrator',^[49] but the mere fact that not only Papen's Cabinet but the Nazis approved of his appointment as overlord of Prussia gives the lie to this claim. When Severing and his two fellow Ministers arrived at the Chancellery on the morning of 20 June, they were confronted with a *fait accompli*. Papen informed them that Prime Minister Braun and Interior Minister Severing were dismissed, their functions to be usurped by Bracht. Severing replied that Papen's decree was unconstitutional, and that he would only yield to force. Papen had already taken the necessary precautions to deal with such a show of resistance:

Another decree of the same date had been signed by the President and counter-signed by Gayl..., Schleicher and myself. This decree, declaring a state of emergency to exist in Greater Berlin and the Province of Brandenburg, was now promulgated [precisely as demanded two days before by the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* - RB], and Lieutenant General von Rundstedt... was entrusted with the military measures necessary to put it into effect.^[50]

These 'military measures' were not exactly of the scale needed to overturn a government enjoying the support of some six million workers and the nominal control of the state's security apparatus and bureaucracy, for reasons that will be discussed below. Estimates of the number of police officers required to effect Severing's eviction from his Ministry office vary from three to five, while Papen himself says that a 'lieutenant and 12 soldiers' carried out the arrest of the Prussian Police Commissioner, Albert Grzesinski, who was unceremoniously hustled off to one of his own cells, together with his deputy and the head of the uniformed Prussian police force, Colonel Heimannsberg.

The Nazis were jubilant at the ignominious capitulation of the Prussian government. What they, together with the monarchists - and the Stalinists - had not been able to accomplish a year previously in the referendum, Papen had achieved almost at the stroke of the Presidential pen. Goebbels wrote:

20 July: Everything goes off according to plan. Bracht is appointed commissioner of the Reich. Severing declares that he will only yield to force. We only have to press the button. That would be to declare an exceptional situation in Berlin, Brandenburg... In the capital all remains quiet, *the socialists and trade unions do not stir a finger.*

21 July: Everything goes off smoothly. The Reds are done away with. Their organisations offer no resistance... The Reds have let slip their opportunity. It will never occur again... The Reds are quite tame. ^[51]

Goebbels' judgement on the decisiveness of Papen's coup was shared in retrospect by Lüdecke, who considered that 'on 20 July, Marxism sustained a body blow, for on that day the remains of the unconstitutional Red Power in Prussia were wiped out'. ^[52] And also like his then Nazi colleague Goebbels, he noted gleefully that:

... the *coup d'état* met with no resistance, no general strike - nothing but protest. The Marxian giant made a cowardly retreat; it was a miserable exit of a miserable regime. Marxism had been routed in its stronghold. ^[53]

These assessments were exaggerated, for although the reaction had scored a tactical victory in Prussia, the organisations of the working class - the KPD, SPD and the trade unions - had not been broken, had not lost their independence or the support of their members and followers, despite their leaders' joint capitulation to Papen on 20 July. Nevertheless, the purge of officials that followed the coup enabled Papen - and after him Schleicher and Hitler - to press ahead with his attack on the working class unhindered by the resistance of bureaucrats still loyal to the party that appointed them; and free from the worry that Severing's ministry might disclose evidence of a compromising nature concerning relations between Papen's Cabinet, the *Reichswehr*, big business and the Nazis. Bracht himself became the new Interior Minister, and Hans Lammers (subsequently Hitler's State Secretary), Minister of Education. In a matter of days, a clean sweep had been made of all real or suspected 'red' officials, ranging from Police Presidents of large cities such as Cologne and Altona to quite minor administrators in the municipalities. The new Prussia so fervently desired by Hugenberg was now taking shape. On 26 July, Prussian civil servants were informed they could now join the NSDAP, a move that betrayed Bracht's true political sympathies. 'Now it is necessary', declared the Reich Commissioner, 'again to write large the word State, and to set up service to state and nation as the sole objective of all our work.'

These measures followed hard on the heels of Papen's first economic and social measures, and were part and parcel of his overall attack on the democratic rights and living standards of the proletariat. On 14 June, Papen enacted by Presidential decree drastic cuts in unemployment benefit and war disabled pensions, while imposing new tax burdens on wage earners. The dole was reduced by 23 per cent, and recipients required after seven weeks of benefit to produce new evidence of need before payments could continue. This measure cut government dole expenditure by 14 per cent. The remainder of the deficit - some 11 per cent - was to be met by lowering the bottom end of the income tax scale to include all but the worst paid of workers. Unemployment, pauperism, semi-starvation, the usurpation of elementary democratic liberties - this was the meaning of Papen's 'Social Catholicism', of the programme which pledged his Cabinet of Nazi-supported Barons to 'reconstruct Germany on a basis of immutable Christian philosophy'. No wonder that Goebbels privately noted that the Westphalian aristocrat and 'gentleman rider' had stolen 'all our ideas'. But it was a complaint that could not be made in public, for with the vital Reichstag elections of 31 July drawing near, and unrest mounting daily in the ranks of the SA (now nearly half a million strong), the Nazi leaders had to steer a political course well to the 'left' of the most reactionary government in the history of the Republic.

Hitler Stalemated

The need to project a radical image was acutely felt by the Nazi leaders in the summer months of 1932. Papen's regime lacked even the semblance of popular support, and even in the Reichstag could count only on the help (grudgingly given) of its 41 DNVP deputies. The horrendous prospect of mass desertion by the party's plebeian followers to the KPD was never far from the thoughts of Hitler and the remainder of the Nazi high command while Papen held office, and this helps to account for the prominent role taken by former 'radical' Gregor Strasser in promulgating NSDAP policy in the Reichstag election campaign. It was Strasser who, following Papen's policy statement of 5 June, declared on behalf of the party that it 'decidedly refused to have its name coupled with this government' and that the party was 'resolved after the Reichstag elections to take over the helm of state'. Nine days later, Strasser broadcast an election address in which he was at pains to distinguish Nazi nationalism from that of the Papen variety. He also emphasised the 'socialist' aspects of Nazi policy, much as he had done in his days as theoretician of the north German 'lefts' of 1925-26. At the same time, while turning his face leftwards to the impatient Nazi plebeians, Strasser included in his speech references to the traditionalist nature of Nazi 'German

socialism' and his party's hostility to a 'systemless' that is, proletarian, revolution. In all it was a *tour de force* of demagogic tight-rope walking, made necessary on the one hand by the stubborn refusal of Papen and a still-decisive section of the ruling class to hand over the government to Hitler; and on the other, by exasperation in Nazi ranks with their leaders' reluctance to seize power by force:

We understand by socialism measures carried out by the state for the protection of the individual, or a larger body, against exploitation. The nationalisation of the railways, the municipalisation of the tramways, the electric light and gas works, Baron von Stein's liberation of the peasants, the Prussian officers' principles of achievement, the incorruptible German professional official, the walls of the town hall, the cathedral, the hospital of a free imperial city - all that is the expression of German socialism as we conceive and demand it. The synthesis of nationalism and socialism in National Socialism means the internal and external freedom of Germany and the freedom of his place of labour to the poorest compatriot. The Nazis do not want reaction, but healing, not a systemless revolution, but an organic new order. They are revolutionary because they want to overthrow the decaying immoral ideas of the French Revolution. They want protection for honourable labour against abuse by capitalism, they want to root out that speculation which bankrupted the people. They do not want to persecute the Jews, but they want German leadership, without the Jewish spirit, without the Jews pulling the strings, and without Jewish capital.

Now more than ever before, Hitler needed an electoral triumph. Party morale, and negotiations with the current rulers of Germany and the holders of industry's purse strings, demanded that the Nazis prove themselves to be still on the ascendant. But as Trotsky pointed out at the time, the social reserves of fascism had been drained. The nation now stood polarised between a Nazified petit-bourgeoisie and a proletariat which, despite the treachery of its leaders, remained rock-firm in defence of its organisations and social conquests. The deadlock could not be broken by sheer weight and volume of propaganda, as the election results of 31 July confirmed. Despite more than a month of ceaseless campaigning on a scale and with an intensity matched not even during the Presidential elections of the previous spring, the Nazis succeeded in pushing up their share of the popular vote by less than one per cent compared with the run-off ballot for the Presidency on 11 April.

Presidential Elections, 1930 and 1932						
Party	Votes (million)		%		Deputies	
	1932	1930	1932	1930	1932	1930
SPD	8.0	8.6	21.6	24.5	133	143
KPD	5.3	4.6	14.6	13.1	89	77
DDP (State)	0.4	1.3	1.0	3.8	4	20
DVP	0.4	1.6	1.2	4.5	7	30
DNVP	2.2	2.5	5.9	7.0	37	41
Christian Socialist	0.4	1.6	1.1	2.5	3	14
Landbund	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.5	2	3
Hanoverian	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.4	0	3
Economist	0.1	1.4	0.4	3.0	2	23
Other Agrarian	0.2	1.4	0.5	4.0	3	25
NSDAP	13.7	6.4	37.4	18.3	230	107
Centre	4.6	4.1	12.5	11.8	75	68
BVP	1.2	1.1	3.2	3.0	22	19

Taking into account the special case of the two Catholic parties (Centre and BVP) we see that the Nazi gains on September 1930 came almost entirely from the old bourgeois and agrarian parties, while no votes at all were lost by the two workers' parties, as the table below illustrates:

Bloc	1932 %	1930 %	% loss or gain
Fascist	37.4	18.3	+ 19.1
Bourgeois + Agrarian	10.4	26.6	-16.2
Proletarian	36.2	37.6	- 1.0
Catholic	15.7	14.8	+ 0.9

(The one per cent drop in the vote for the workers' parties was on a larger total poll. The combined KPD - SPD vote actually increased in gross terms by some 80 000.)

Deadlocked on the electoral plane, Hitler also found his path to power barred by the old élites that his plebeians sought to displace (or, more accurately, join). On 1 August, von Papen declared, much to the chagrin of the Nazi leaders:

The election... proves that there is no clear majority in the Reichstag and that no party can secure a majority. The government must therefore return to its original task of constructive legislation. It views the impending debates calmly since, owing to the present situation, a majority sufficient to defeat it could not be found. ^[54]

To which next day he added the curt observation 'the time has come when the Nazis must cooperate in the reconstruction of the fatherland', implying that there could be no question even now, when the Nazis had become by far the largest single party, of offering Hitler the Chancellorship. Yet this was precisely the demand being raised by the Nazi leadership. Once again, as on the eve of the Presidential elections, the SA ringed Berlin and fought bloody pitched battles with SPD and KPD workers in the streets of proletarian Germany. Hitler journeyed to Berlin on 5 August to confer with his closest ally in the Papen cabinet, Defence Minister and Army Chief-of-Staff von Schleicher. Realising that every day which passed without tangible political success brought rebellion in his own ranks closer, Hitler demanded not only the post of Chancellor, but the now-vacant office of Prussian Prime Minister. He promised Schleicher that if permitted to form a government, he would, 'like Mussolini in 1922', assemble a majority in the Reichstag for his regime, thus meeting the objections of Papen. And while their Führer horse-traded with the wire-pullers and the king-makers, his SA chieftains strained at Hitler's constitutional leash. Goebbels perhaps exaggerated when he noted that 'the whole party has prepared itself to take power. The SA men are leaving their places of work [in fact most were unemployed - RB] in order to make themselves ready.' For no one, not even Röhm, dared give the order to rise. Their leader appeared to be making headway along the legal path. There was talk of an audience with President Hindenburg, and the possibility of Hitler being invited (as was the normal constitutional practice for the leader of the largest party) to form a government. ^[55] Then on 9 August came disaster. Fearing an SA coup, the Papen government declared martial law at noon, under which the death penalty could be administered for politically-inspired acts of violence. This was the first severe setback to Hitler's bid for the Chancellorship, since it struck from his hand the stick he was employing to intimidate Papen, Schleicher and the camarilla around the President. Worse followed that same night, when five Nazis burst into the home of a Communist miner in the Silesian village of Potempa and literally trampled him to death in front of his mother and brother. Even circles far outside the orbit of the workers' movement were outraged by the sheer wanton brutality of the murder, a crime that foreshadowed the treatment which would be meted out to hundreds of thousands of workers under the tyranny of the Third Reich.

The threatened SA coup, Gregor Strasser's rekindled radicalism - now the Potempa murder, with its immediate and inevitable backlash effect on organised labour - all these factors came together in the days that preceded Hitler's interview with Hindenburg on 13 August to reinforce the already existing doubts in business, army and agrarian circles as to the wisdom of permitting this party of gutter gangsters and parvenus to guide the destinies of the German state and economy. Valued as a counterweight to the workers' parties and the trade unions, the Nazi movement had still to convince the king-makers of the general staff, the East Prussian estates and the Ruhr that it could not only subdue the proletariat but pursue a 'constructive' policy once in power. Frantic conferences ensued in the Brown House, while news arrived from Berlin via Walter Funk, party contact man with big business, that Schacht's capitalist

friends were opting for the continuation of the Papen experiment in pure Presidential rule, whose aim was counter-revolution by instalments, and not open civil war against 20 million workers.

Hitler could not afford to retreat now, even when his benefactors and protectors at the top were spurning him. Had he done so, countless SA men would have deserted him from below. On 11 August, Hitler and his entourage drove to the capital. 'If they do not afford us the opportunity to square accounts with Marxism', wrote Goebbels that night, 'our taking over power is absolutely useless.'^[56] But Schleicher and Papen, who conferred with Hitler before the latter's interview with the President on 13 August, were not even prepared to allow the Nazis any semblance of power. All they offered Hitler was the Vice-Chancellorship, the role of plebeian 'drummer' for the governing caste Hitler and his fellow parvenus so envied. Yes, they might be permitted to 'square accounts with Marxism' - but a Nazi-dominated cabinet was out of the question. The bitter truth only dawned on Hitler when he confronted Hindenburg, who still regarded the Nazi leader as an upstart 'Bohemian corporal'.

According to the testimony of the Presidential secretary Otto Meissner (who had served Ebert and was later to serve Hitler in this capacity!):

Hindenburg proposed to Hitler that he should cooperate with the other parties, in particular with the Right and Centre, and that he should give up the one-sided idea that he must have complete power. In cooperating with other parties he would be able to show what he could achieve and improve upon. If he could show positive results, he would acquire increasing influence even in a coalition government. This would also be the best way to eliminate the widespread fear that a National Socialist government would make ill use of its power. Hindenburg added that he was ready to accept Hitler and his movement in a coalition government, the precise composition of which could be a subject of negotiation, but that he could not take the responsibility of giving exclusive power to Hitler alone... Hitler however was adamant in his refusal to put himself in the position of bargaining with the leaders of the other parties and of facing a coalition government.^[57]

And on this cold note, the interview ended, with Hitler being exhorted to 'conduct the opposition on the part of the NSDAP in a chivalrous manner, and to bear in mind his responsibility to the Fatherland and to the German people'.^[58] For the first time since it was dashed to fragments by the Munich fiasco of 1923, the Nazi movement faced the prospect of political and organisational ruin. Spurned by the ruling classes, and distrusted by many of his own followers as a compromiser with 'the system', Hitler and his party began to reveal many of the symptoms of a leader and a movement in decline. The very next day, Goebbels noted in far away Heiligendamm on the Baltic coast: 'The events in Berlin have repercussions even here. Deep despondency besets the party.'^[59] And referring to Hitler's order of 13 August to the SA high command to halt all preparations for a putsch, he added: 'Their task is the most difficult. Who knows if their units will be able to hold together... the SA Chief of Staff [Röhm] stays with us a long time. He is extremely worried about the SA.'

The line in the Brown Shirts could only be held by exploiting the most reckless demagogy, even at the risk of further alienating the party's dwindling band of bourgeois supporters. On 22 August, the five Nazis who murdered the Potempa miner were sentenced to death under the provision of the martial law declared by von Papen on 9 August. So great was the outcry in the SA that neither Hitler nor Goering, the two party leaders closest to 'better' society, could afford to remain silent for fear of being branded as Papen's accomplices. Hitler dispatched a telegram to the five Nazi murderers:

My comrades: In the face of this most monstrous and bloody sentence I feel myself bound to you in limitless loyalty. From this moment, your liberation is a question of our honour. To fight against a government which could allow this is our duty.

Then rounding on Papen, Hitler declared in a public statement on the sentences:

German fellow countrymen: whoever among you agrees with our struggle for the honour and liberty of the nation will understand why I refused to take office in this Cabinet... Herr von Papen, I understand your bloody 'objectivity' now. I wish that victory may come to nationalist Germany and destruction upon its Marxist despoilers, but I am certainly not fitted to be the executioner of nationalist fighters for the liberty of the German people.

Not to be outdone in solidarity with these depraved butchers, Goering thundered on 24 August:

In nameless embitterment and rage against the terror sentence which has struck you, I promise you, my comrades, that our whole fight from now on will be for your freedom. You are no murderers. You have defended the life and honour of your comrades. ^[60]

Verbal fireworks still could not mask the fact of the party's decline following the rebuff administered to Hitler on 13 August. Support for the party was on the wane both in industrial circles and amongst sections of the petit-bourgeoisie who feared its strident social radicalism. When on 28 August von Papen unveiled his new economic programme, one which, unlike Brüning's, contained measures to stimulate investment, ^[61] the *Deutsche Bergwerkszeitung*, often sympathetic to the Nazis, commented enthusiastically: 'That is the policy for which our paper has been working for years', and, equally ominously for Hitler's future political prospects, four days later, added 'what nationalist Germany has been propagating for years is now being put into practice in the most daring fashion by the von Papen cabinet'. ^[62]

Disaffection was also rife at the plebeian base of the party. On 12 September, SA units in the Ruhr revolted against their commanders and the party tops in Munich, 18 of their number at Elberfeld going over to the KPD. Feuds amongst leaders and ranks flared up in Düsseldorf and Crefeld, while on 20 September, the SA command had to dissolve units at Eschweiler, Cologne, Hanover, Berlin and Königsberg. Ten days later, the first strikes against Papen's wage cut decree broke out in Berlin at the Zellendorf printing works, a strike which, unlike so many over the previous period, ended in complete victory for the workers. Cuts in wages were also blocked at the Rheinshagen Cable Works, Wuppertal-Rausdor, after a stoppage lasting six days, while the threat of strike action proved sufficient to halt cuts at the Leipzig metal firm of Pittler, and at Mohr and Federhoff of Mannheim. At last the proletariat was fighting back, despite and even against the wishes of its bureaucratic leaders in the trade unions. The eighth of October saw the opening of a big metal strike in lower Silesia, while more victories were recorded at the Berlin engineering works of Orenstein and Koppel, and by various groups of workers in Stettin, Hamburg and Leipzig. North Sea and Baltic fishermen and trawler-men joined the daily-swelling, nation-wide front of workers battling against the wage cut imposed by the Papen regime. And on 6 October came the first tangible evidence that the Nazis were indeed losing their grip. On that day - one that could and should have been an historic and joyful one for not only the German proletariat, but workers all over the world, the results of five commune elections - Stalluporen, Rodensleben, Grosse-Koppelsdorf, Ratekau and Neustadt - showed a drop of more than 40 per cent for the Nazi candidates. This result - a real body-blow for the Nazi leadership - confirmed the report sent to Munich a month earlier by the Gau Hanover - South Brunswick which spoke of 'a very depressed, pessimistic mood' amongst 'every strata of party members', and that 'everywhere people are saying that there would be a noticeable fall in our vote if an election were held now'. Faced with the daunting prospect of another Reichstag election contest on 6 November (Papen having dissolved parliament after one abortive sitting on 12 September, when a KPD motion of no-confidence in the government was passed by a vote of 513 to 32), the Nazi leaders braced themselves for the inevitable losses in popular support and upheavals within their own ranks. After more than two years of uninterrupted ascent and success, the political initiative was slipping from their grasp. The question of the hour was - could the KPD, with the working class daily demonstrating its determination and ability to resist the capitalist offensive, seize it?

Appendix: One Year of Retreat

We have quite deliberately abstained in the foregoing chapter from any extended comment on the policies pursued in the period under review by the leaderships of the main workers' organisations - the KPD, SPD and ADGB. Trotsky more than once in his writings on Germany drew attention to the little-appreciated fact that far from undermining the position of Social Democracy in the working class, the ultra-leftist, adventurist tactics and policies of Third Period Stalinism supplemented the openly opportunist role of the reformist bureaucracy in holding back the proletariat from a serious struggle against the bourgeoisie and its fascist agencies. And he also stressed with equal insistence that the KPD's failure to reckon with the absolute irreconcilability of the rule of fascism with the continued legal existence of the Social Democratic organisations, including their reformist leaders, dashed from its hands the very tactical lever that, properly employed, could not only have broken the backs of the Nazis, but in the very process of this struggle prepared the political conditions in the working class for the disintegration of the reformist bureaucracy and the winning of a majority of the proletariat for Communism. We are referring, of course, to the Leninist tactic of the united front.

In his review of the penultimate volume of GDH Cole's *History of Socialist Thought*,^[63] the Communist Party of Great Britain's General Secretary John Gollan makes the following claim:

The German Communists no doubt made mistakes [though we learn nothing of them from the article in question - RB], but they fought consistently for the united front both before the Nazi movement developed *and especially in the 1930s when fascism was advancing*.^[64]

Gollan cites as evidence of the KPD's eagerness for a united front with those it called 'social fascists' (a point understandably overlooked by this loyal Stalinist) a call in April 1932 for a 'struggle of all working-class organisations against wage cuts' and the KPD's general strike call on the occasion of the von Papen coup in Prussia on 20 July 1932.^[65]

Leaving to one side for a moment the strange circumstance that Gollan is able to unearth precisely two examples of the KPD applying the united front tactic in the entire period of the rise of National Socialism from 1930 to Hitler's victory three years later, Gollan's contention that the party attempted to form a bloc with the reformist organisations to halt the rise of reaction in Prussia itself merits closer scrutiny. But first it will be necessary to follow through the main developments in the workers' movement that led up to the serious reverse suffered by the proletariat in Prussia on 20 July.

As we have said, the opportunity - as well as necessity - for the united front arises when the bourgeoisie, which in more prosperous and calmer times has found it possible and even desirable to collaborate with the reformist bureaucracy, under the pressure of profound economic and political crises, makes a sharp turn to the right. This turn may stop short at the Bonapartist stage (as in Gaullist France), but it can also, depending on a whole constellation of factors subjective as well as objective, swing right through the bourgeois political spectrum to fascism. It is at the crucial point when dominant sections of the ruling class begin to shift their political stance in this direction, deserting not only parliamentary democracy, but dispensing with the services of their agents in the workers' movement, that the conditions are created for the application of the united front tactic.

Such a situation had been maturing in Germany throughout Brüning's tenure of office, and became glaringly obvious to all but the politically blind or bureaucratically blinkered in the months that followed. The united front is not primarily a question of propaganda. The tactic will only bear fruit for the revolutionary party under conditions where the reformist leaders are forced into a temporary relationship with the vanguard by the sheer pressure of events, by fear for their very necks. To what extent the revolutionary party is able to turn this tactical relationship to its advantage depends on the skill which it brings to bear in the course of the struggle for the united front, and the firmness with which it pursues its own long-term revolutionary objectives independently of the wishes of the reformist leaders *and of those workers who still follow them*.

Naturally, a party which is insensitive to the internal strains which are created inside the bureaucracy by a crisis on the scale of Germany in the early 1930s, and which is therefore unable to exploit them tactically, cannot hope to win the allegiance of the broad majority of the working class, since it is in these very periods of reformist crisis that the opportunities present themselves for breaking workers from Social Democratic ideas and leaders. A simplistic model of reformism moving ever more rapidly to the right as the crisis deepens (such as was presented by the Stalinist leadership of the Communist International and KPD in the Third Period, and again today by the WRP, though in a different guise), far from being a guide to effective intervention in the workers' movement, becomes its most pernicious obstacle. Once again, the lesson of Germany demonstrates this to be so. At the May 1931 Congress of the SPD, the party bureaucracy appeared to be in a much stronger position against the lefts than at the Magdeburg Congress of two years before, when resolutions critical of the executive secured the support of some 40 per cent of the delegates. In 1931, this percentage was roughly halved, indicating that a considerable section of the party's middle cadres (from where the bulk of delegates were drawn) had moved closer to the bureaucracy. And so too had the left elements within the SPD Reichstag fraction. Whereas a comfortable majority had been forthcoming to reject Müller's cruiser-building programme, and later to veto Müller's proposed reform of the unemployment insurance system (opposition which brought Müller down), when the question of financing the second cruiser came before the Reichstag in March 1931, all but a handful of the lefts capitulated. In the fraction meeting that preceded the parliamentary vote, 60 deputies favoured abstention, and another 40 a straight negative vote. Party discipline now dictated that all deputies abstain in the Reichstag division. In the event, a mere nine dared to raise their hands against the motion approving funds for the construction of cruiser 'B' - at a time when millions of workers' families had been reduced to destitution by the slump and Brüning's 'hunger' decrees. The retreat turned into a rout at

the Leipzig congress two months later, when the nine were condemned for their conduct by a vote of 324 to 62, with eight abstentions.

As was to be expected, the Stalinists took this as further crushing proof of 'the growing fascisation of the Social Democratic leaders', a process which could 'only accelerate the revolutionising of the masses'.^[66] But to the more discerning eye, or rather one not riveted to purely diplomatic perspectives and intrigues, the picture presented by the Leipzig congress was more complicated, and from a revolutionary standpoint more instructive. While the organic opportunism of the lefts had facilitated their capitulation to the right, there were also other forces involved. In 1929, the Nazis were a brown speck on the horizon. By 1931, the Hitler movement numbered its supporters in millions, and its fighting columns in hundreds of thousands. The genuine fear of fascism supplemented the opportunism of lefts such as Aufhäuser, Sender and Kuenstler in their making peace with the right-wing reformists at Leipzig. Just as Braun, Severing and Wels tolerated Brüning as the 'lesser evil' to Hitler, so the majority of their critics tolerated the bureaucracy as the 'lesser evil' to a party divided in the face of its enemies. Both theories were false, but both played an important part in driving the SPD to the right in the period to the fall of Brüning and Papen's coup in Prussia.

As long as Brüning held office, so the SPD leaders reasoned, the party would be protected from the ravages of fascism. Therefore any economic concessions were justified in order to preserve the political status quo. In the words of Müller, who addressed the congress on the thorny issue of 'toleration', 'we must keep Brüning alive so long as he is determined to resist fascism'. The manner in which certain speakers abased themselves in the pursuit of this goal was truly remarkable. Trade union leader Fritz Tarnow openly admitted that the role of Social Democracy was no longer to speed the death of capitalism, but preserve its life - in the interests of combating fascism!

Are we sitting at the sick-bed of capitalism, not only as doctors who want to cure the patient, but also as cheerful heirs who cannot wait for the end and would like to hasten it with poison? Our entire situation is expressed in this image. We are condemned... to be doctors who seriously desire a cure, and yet we also maintain the feeling that we are heirs who wish to receive the entire legacy of the capitalist system today rather than tomorrow. This double role, doctor and heir, is a damned difficult task.

Such cynical utterances offered scant opportunity for the KPD to develop a united front tactic at this stage of the crisis, had the party's leaders even desired to do so. The first sign of a turn in that direction came at the Congress of the Second International, held at Vienna from 25 July to 1 August 1931. Unlike the previous congress of 1928 (when the prospect of fascism coming to power in an advanced capitalist country was dismissed out of hand by the Belgian reformist Vandervelde), the proceedings were dominated by the advancing tide of reaction in Central Europe. Naturally the proposals put forward to combat the economic crisis were utterly utopian - the German workers, for example, were to be rescued from poverty and fascism by an international financial aid programme, the main recipients and beneficiaries of which would not be the proletariat, but the German employers! But there were also more realistic comments to be heard on the great perils confronting the workers' movement that only the most obtuse would have attributed exclusively to motives of demagoguery and the desire to put up a 'left front'. Thus the 'Austro-Marxist' Otto Bauer evoked 'prolonged and thunderous applause' when he declared:

If the democratic way [to socialism] is barred to the workers of Central Europe, the working class... will still fight... and if they are not allowed to fight by democratic means they will have to take up other weapons.^[67]

Even more important from the standpoint of the tactics of the KPD were the remarks of Rudolf Breitscheid, a former leader of the right-centrist faction in the USPD who after the lefts had fused with the KPD in October 1920, returned to the Social Democratic fold. He told delegates that the KPD's support for the Nazi-inspired referendum in Prussia was sabotaging all attempts to build a united workers' front against fascism. Perhaps Breitscheid was not sincere when he declared that 'nobody would more gladly than we stand shoulder to shoulder with the Communist workers [vehement applause]'.^[68]

But to reduce the argument to one of individual morality was not the point. The task of the day was to take Breitscheid at his word, sincere or otherwise, and put him and his party to the test. The Stalinist course decreed a different policy. On no account were such offers to be taken up. They represented the most cunning ploy in the armoury of 'social fascism' - the 'left manoeuvre'. That reformists will manoeuvre to the left is not in question, and the working class must be alerted by its vanguard to the dangers that arise when such a development takes place. These dangers, however, are not combated

simply by the revolutionary party denouncing each and every left turn of the reformists. They must also be exploited as opportunities to drive a wedge into the tension-wrought upper echelons of the bureaucracy; and the more left-talking of its spokesmen challenged to translate words into deeds. Here again, the KPD took the diametrically opposite line, one which in fact enabled the left flank of the reformist bureaucracy to retain its militant credentials at a time when the fascist threat *demande*d that they be put to the test before the eyes of the millions of workers who still trusted the Breitscheids rather than the KPD.

The German Stalinists were no more responsive to the impending split in the SPD. When it came on 29 September 1931, with the expulsion from the party of Seydewitz and Rosenfeld for publishing an oppositional journal *Die Fackel*, they denounced their decision to found the centrist Socialist Workers' Party (SAP) as nothing more than the creation of 'an anti-Bolshevik troop of finance capital'.^[69] Seydewitz and his comrades were 'left social fascists', and that was all there was to be said about it. In passing, it should be noted that Seydewitz must have had a most forgiving nature, for after the end of the war, he went over to the Stalinist-dominated 'Socialist Unity Party', the product of the 1946 shotgun wedding between the old KPD and the SPD carried out under the direction of Walter Ulbricht, with the Social Democrats at the business end of the barrel. A recent East German publication describes this former 'anti-Bolshevik troop of finance capital' in the most glowing terms, his departure from the SPD no longer being attributed to some deep laid plot by the 'left social fascists', but to his refusal 'to vote for a naval construction programme'.^[70]

Not even the formation of the Harzburg Front impelled the KPD leadership towards an anti-fascist bloc with the SPD. The same could not be said of Breitscheid, who again let drop a broad hint that with the reaction gathering pace, it was time for all workers to unite against fascism. Needless to say, the offer was rebuffed, but the manner in which this was done can teach us much about the theory and practice of ultra-leftism, especially since there are those who seem hell-bent on repeating these tactical blunders today. On 14 November Breitscheid publicly called on Brüning to use force to put down the Nazi terror, a demand which, if refused, would be answered by the SPD making common cause with the KPD. Breitscheid also made the observation that the KPD's recent statement opposing individual terror made it easier to reach agreement on a common programme of struggle against the Nazis. Here was a golden opportunity to forge the anti-fascist unity the KPD leadership spoke of so often and for which the entire organised proletariat yearned. On that very day, the KPD Central Committee should have proposed to the SPD and ADGB leaders a united front along the lines proposed by none other than Breitscheid. This was certainly Trotsky's reaction:

Isn't it self-evident that Breitscheid's diplomatic and equivocal offer should have been grabbed with both hands; and that from one's own side, one should have submitted a concrete, carefully detailed and practical programme for a joint struggle against fascism and demanded joint sessions of the executives of both parties, with the participation of the executives of the free trade unions? Simultaneously, one should have carried this same programme energetically down through all the layers of both parties and of the masses. [That is, the united front above and below - RB] The negotiations should have been carried on openly before the eyes of the entire nation: daily accounts should have appeared in the press without distortions and absurd fabrications. [Something that the impatient and noisy radicals of *Workers Press* would have found irksome in the extreme - RB] Such an agitation by its directness and incisiveness would tell with far greater effect on the worker than the incessant din on the subject of 'social fascism'. [Or in today's parlance, 'corporatism' - RB]^[71]

Let those who merrily prattle on about the necessity for 'independent working-class leadership' ponder on these lines, not one of which contains the least hint of a concession to reformism, but which recognise that the struggle for independent revolutionary leadership at times involves the adoption of tactics that bring the vanguard into close relations with the most opportunist elements in the workers' movement. Only those leaders who secretly fear that their members, or even they themselves, might capitulate, or adapt to this hostile environment can possibly have motives for rejecting the tactic.

Such was the reaction of the KPD leadership, most notably Thälmann, who in the course of rejecting Breitscheid's offer, wrote the following. It remains a model of how not to exploit a heaven-sent opportunity simultaneously to fight fascism and weaken reformism. It should be obligatory reading for anyone considering him- or herself to be a Trotskyist:

The SPD, which because of the recent election successes of Hitler's party, and because it knows full well that the negotiations for a coalition between the Centre and the Nazis have not been broken off for ever, *is afraid of losing its ministerial positions in Prussia...* It is therefore undertaking a new demagogic manoeuvre, *it is 'threatening' to form 'a united front with the KPD'*. [Breitscheid's speech of 14 November]... shows that the Social Democrats *are conjuring up* the devil of Hitlerite Fascism in order to keep the masses from effective struggle against the dictatorship of capital. And this bait, which is another form of the policy of the lesser evil, is to be made more palatable to the masses *by the addition of the sauce of strange and sudden friendship for the Communists...* We have to ask ourselves the question: has the KPD created the conditions that are necessary to enable us easily to counteract *this new treachery* [that is, a united front offer to the KPD! - RB] *this misleading of the masses!* We cannot answer this question with an unconditional yes... We have not conducted our fundamental struggle against Social Democracy with sufficient sharpness and clarity. The fact that, for example, in our trade union work, we have worked from above, *have made offers of a united front to local leaders or the reformist trade unions...* also demonstrated that *we are not carrying on our principled struggle against Social Democracy with sufficient determination...* the struggle, in the first place against all democratic illusions, *particularly the one which seeks to make Social Democracy a 'support in the struggle against fascism'*, is an indispensable condition for mobilising the masses for the struggle against *the fascist measures of the Brüning-Severing dictatorship...* Any attempt to draw contrast, in liberal fashion, between fascism and bourgeois democracy, *as systems contradictory to one another in principle*, would in effect help to deceive the workers and would weaken the mass struggle against fascist dictatorship. ^[72]

Breitscheid's united front offer must have evoked a more class-conscious response in the working-class base of the KPD because, over the next days and weeks, the party and Comintern press carried a series of hysterical articles attacking Breitscheid, and seeking to draw a false analogy between his united front proposal to the KPD and the official support given to the Berlin munitions workers' strike of January 1918 by Ebert and the other right-wing reformist leaders. Then, it was a case of 'taking over' a strike movement that threatened to spill over into the rest of Germany. Now, in 1931, with not revolution but fascism on the immediate agenda, the reformists were turning to the Communist workers not in the first place to knife them in the back, but because they sensed the Nazis at their own backs. This historical and tactical nuance utterly escaped the scribes of *Die Rote Fahne*, who on 17 November lectured their readers:

Nothing would be more harmful than to have any illusions regarding the meaning of Breitscheid's declaration. The leaders of the SPD are today compelled to speak of the united front of the proletariat because this united front of the proletariat has long commenced to become a fact [that is, the Stalinist 'united front from below, the KPD's united front with... itself - RB]... They wish once again to hold the rebellious masses in check, and, at the same time, to exercise a certain pressure on their masters, the capitalists in the Brüning camp... A cunning game! But Messrs Breitscheid and Wels are mistaken if they believe that the German working class are to be caught a second time. Therefore we reply to the latest manoeuvres of the SPD committee: Not an atom of faith, not the slightest confidence in the declarations of Wels and Breitscheid, who in the past 13 years have shown beyond all doubt who they are. [For the workers who trusted the KPD yes; *but not for the eight million who still followed the SPD* - RB] Intensification of the fight against the Social Democracy all along the line. Wrest the Social Democratic workers, the workers in the reformist trade unions, the comrades in the Reichsbanner, from their leaders, who can only lead them into misery and fascism. United front at any time and hour in every fight for every proletarian demand... the united front will not be forged 'from above' but 'from below'. ^[73]

An equally categorical and criminal rejection of the SPD's offer appeared in an article written by L Breuer at the same time. Gloating at the plight of reformist leaders threatened by fascism (a fear the author rashly did not share) became a demagogic substitute for serious Marxist analysis of the crisis that was compelling the bureaucracy to make its overtures, not to Brüning, *but the KPD*:

The SPD leaders are trembling for their positions. The more they lose their mass following, the less indispensable they become to the ruling class. The Social Democrats are in a tight corner. Their veiled offer of an alliance to the KPD is only an expression of their helplessness... *The*

KPD has given the only correct reply to this offer of an alliance. 'With your leaders, never! With your masses, always and at any time.' [74]

Let the Stalinist Gollan dare claim that 'the German Communists... fought consistently for the united front both before the Nazi movement developed and especially in the 1930s when fascism was advancing'. These reactions by leading KPD officials to Breitscheid's unsolicited offer of a united front of all workers' organisations against fascism prove just how false is this statement.

The KPD had rejected the 'opportunist' united front 'from above' in favour of the 'revolutionary' and 'red' 'united front from below'. The Presidential elections held in the spring of 1932 presented the Stalinists with a splendid opportunity to demonstrate the superiority of their tactics over those favoured by Trotsky, and before him by Lenin and the entire Communist International. Splendid because unlike the first ballot of 1925, the SPD declined to run its own candidate, preferring to function as vote-gatherer-in-chief for Hindenburg, the candidate of the pro-Brüning bourgeois.

As early as September 1931, the *Reichsbanner* came out in favour of a second term for Hindenburg, a proposal defended as 'the only way of preventing the Presidency of a National Socialist without civil war', a policy consistent with the SPD's support of Brüning as the 'lesser evil' to Hitler. From this date, the entire SPD and ADGB leadership swung into action to drum up reluctant and bewildered working-class support for the monarchist Field Marshal. Many and fulsome were the tributes uttered to the President, who, a matter of weeks after his re-election, authorised the ousting of his main vote collectors from the government of Prussia. *Reichsbanner* chief Karl Holtermann and Gustav Noske were among those who on 1 February 1932 published an appeal to the President to run once again. The appeal ran: 'Around this name there shines the glory of Tannenberg and the undying memory of the German army of the world war which for four years protected the soil of our homeland and carried Germany's arms victoriously to far-away lands.' Surely the KPD could not fail to attract millions of SPD followers behind its Presidential campaign for Thälmann? The SPD organ *Sozialistische Monatshefte* rashly ventured the prediction that 'the very fact he is not only the guarantor of the Constitution, but also the conservative leader assures us that the republic will be safeguarded'. Even this paled before the panegyrics of Prussian Prime Minister Otto Braun. The man who was to pronounce the death sentence on his own government he described as the:

... embodiment of tranquillity and steadfastness, of manly loyalty and devotion to the fulfilment of his duties to the entire people whose life lies open before everybody's eyes; who has shown, and by no means least so during his seven-year term as Reich President, that all those can rely on him who want to deliver Germany from chaotic conditions and lead it upwards, out of her economic misery, in peaceful cooperation of all classes, bound together in a common fate. I am separated by a deep gulf from Hindenburg in my world view and political standpoint [a claim that was open to question on the strength of these statements - RB]. Yet the human factor... has built across that gulf a bridge that has brought us together... I have come to know the Reich President as a man whose word one can trust, a man of pure intentions and detached, filled with Kantian sense of duty... [75]

The essence of the Stalinist 'united front from below' lay in its appeal to individual workers to break from their 'social fascist' leaders, and, without actually joining the KPD (or even necessarily leaving their own party or unions, which were designated as fascist), to join with the Communist Party in various actions directed not only against the fascists, the state or the employers, but the reformist leaders themselves. The decision of the SPD and ADGB to endorse Hindenburg's Presidential candidature now meant that the reformist workers could only vote for a genuine proletarian candidate - Thälmann - by breaking party discipline. The KPD's hopes of success in the elections were high, since, unlike the first ballot of 1925, it faced no direct competition from the SPD. This optimism was reflected in an article on the forthcoming elections by Remmele, which claimed 'through the whole of Germany the red united front is being welded together ever more firmly' and that the 'millions masses of the German working class are rallying to give their votes to the representative of the KPD'. [76] The results of the first ballot were therefore a bitter blow for the KPD leadership, since they palpably demonstrated the utter inability of the party to make all but the most marginal impact upon the reformists. In fact in some KPD strongholds, the KPD vote was down on the 1930 Reichstag elections - Berlin for example, where Thälmann received 685 000 votes compared with 739 000 on 14 September 1930. Overall, the KPD vote had increased - in a period that should have favoured a revolutionary party and gravely undermined reformism - by a mere 300 000 votes - a mere trifle when compared with the staggering rise in the Nazi

vote over the same period. The KPD press was predictably subdued in its comments on the result, *Die Rote Fahne* saying 'we must openly admit that we Communists have not yet succeeded in breaking away millions of Social Democratic and trade union workers from the anti-working-class policy of the lesser evil'. The paper also admitted that 'in some districts... there has been stagnation and even retrogression'.^[77] But there would be no question of a change of line. The fault lay in its wrong application, and therefore with the ranks, and not the infallible leaders, least of all those who masterminded the exercise from the Kremlin. 'We Communists will in the second round answer with a still bolder revolutionary class policy', promised the Stalinist organ,^[78] and in the second round, even bigger reverses were suffered, as Thälmann's vote plummeted from 4.9 to 3.7 million. Far from the 'united front from below' winning workers away from the reformists to the KPD, it was now operating in the opposite direction, some workers who voted for Thälmann on the first ballot opting for Hindenburg and others for Hitler.

There is evidence suggesting that, just as after the Nazi election success of September 1930, at least some of the KPD leaders were genuinely alarmed by the continued growth of support for the Nazis, and the failure of their own party to make serious inroads into the ranks of the reformists. Little press comment was made on the second ballot, while greater attention than hitherto was paid to the prospects of the formation of a Nazi government. No such qualms beset the editors of the Moscow *Pravda*, who in their snug offices clearly felt they had no grounds for fearing such a development (a decade later, with Hitler's tanks at the gates of the Soviet capital, they just possibly may have seen matters in a new light). An article of 17 March spoke of not only Hitler and Duesterberg but Hindenburg as being 'united in their open fascist convictions', their candidatures demonstrating 'the fascist unity of the German bourgeoisie towards the revolution'. If this were so, why then three and not one 'open fascist' candidates? This question was left unasked and unanswered, as was the question which necessarily flowed from it: if the German workers were confronted by the choice of a Communist candidate and what *Pravda* called the 'triple candidature of the fascist bourgeoisie', why did an overwhelming majority of them plump for one or other of the latter?^[79]

This article, distinguished only by its bureaucratic smugness and indifference to the desperate plight of the KPD and the entire German working class, concluded with what must have been unconscious irony: 'The Communists do not consider it necessary to make a great outcry over their success.'^[80] Nor did they. Following their humiliation in the second ballot came the army, bourgeois and Junker revolt against Brüning, not least for his ban on the SA. Even though the KPD leadership made the predictable 'Third Period' error of anticipating what was called 'an organic intermerging of the Hindenburg and Hitler fronts',^[81] there was mounting distaste shown in the party press for the line summed up in the notorious dictum: 'After Hitler - our turn.' A concession to this feeling even found its way into an article by Knorin, who in an analysis of the second round of the Presidential elections, declared:

No thinking Communist would for a moment entertain the idea of allowing the most naked reaction to come to power on the pretext that this would aggravate the whole situation and then it would be easier to overthrow the whole regime.^[82]

Yet what other inference could have been drawn from Thälmann's article of the previous autumn which first appeared in the KPD theoretical organ *Die Internationale*, which in part reads:

We have regarded fascism, including the growth of the National Socialist movement, too one-sidedly and too mechanically *only as the antithesis of the revolutionary upsurge*, as the defensive action of the bourgeoisie against the proletariat... We have not taken sufficiently into account the fact that fascism bears within it two elements, the element of the offensive of the ruling class *and also the element of its disintegration* that the fascist movement *can lead to a victory of the proletariat*, as well as to a defeat of the proletariat.^[83]

After Hitler - our turn. Ironically, just as the KPD veered temporarily from this suicidal line, *Vorwärts* declared on 26 April: 'Apart from constitutional considerations it is a precept of political sagacity to allow the Nazis to come to power before they have become the majority.'^[84]

Further reverses at the Prussian Diet elections on 24 April accentuated these growing anxieties about the fascist menace, and the very next day the KPD Central Committee and the National Committee of the RGO issued an appeal addressed 'to all German workers, to all trade union organised workers, to all members of the ADGB unions and to all Social Democratic workers' for a united front against the capitalist offensive. This was, presumably, the united front call referred to by Gollan: 'In April 1932 the Communist Party proposed a joint struggle of all working-class organisations against wage cuts. It was

rejected.’^[85] It could not have been ‘rejected’, since the call had not been addressed to either individual leaders or organisations. The text of the call specifically excluded either the SPD or the ADGB as organisations, but was directed purely towards their workers - in other words, it was the same old ‘united front from below’. This can be checked in the text of the appeal, which has been republished in a collection of documents pertaining to the anti-fascist struggle in Germany in 1932-33.^[86]

Then on 18 May, with Germany in political turmoil as a result of the sacking of Gröner and the mounting pressure by right-wing circles for the lifting of the ban on the SA and SS, *Die Rote Fahne* reiterated the KPD’s categorical rejection of a united front with the words:

We Communists turn to all Social Democratic, trade union and unorganised workers, to all workers in the *Reichsbanner* [frequently bracketed with the SA, SS and Stahlhelm as a fascist combat organisation - RB] and the SAP [‘left social fascists’ - RB]. We call upon them to understand that every struggle against wage cuts and reduction of unemployment relief, every economic strike, every resistance to the fascist offensive helps to activate the working class in the creation of the Red Million Front against fascism and bankrupt capitalism. *Of course, the united front against fascism cannot be a bloc with the Social Democratic leaders, the lackeys of Hindenburg and Hitler... This struggle cannot be waged either with police ministers and police presidents, but together with any genuine worker and worker official in the Social Democratic Party.*^[87]

Little did the editors of *Die Rote Fahne* suspect that Hitler and Hindenburg, with the assistance of von Papen, would soon be moving ruthlessly against their ‘lackeys’ - Police Ministers and Presidents included.

All doubts as to whether there had been a real change of front were resolved at the plenary session of the KPD Central Committee on 24 May, when Thälmann insisted that ‘the most important thing is to put the party on a course of a united front from below...’ and that ‘under no circumstances can we consider a united front with Severing, Zörgiebel or Hilferding’.^[88]

But the KPD leaders, despite their leftist bluster and pseudo-revolutionary radicalism, were frightened men. Moscow decreed there could be no question of a bloc with the reformist workers organisations - so why not therefore engage in a little horse-trading with their parliamentary representatives? Thälmann and company went even further than this. At the Central Committee Plenum an appeal was drafted and approved which not only presented the Prussian Diet deputies with a thinly disguised offer of a united front at the top only, *but one addressed to the clerical reactionaries of the Centre Party!* At the forthcoming elections of officers to the new Prussian Diet elected on 24 April, the KPD would:

... confront the Social Democracy and the Centre Party allied with it with the decision, whether they really intend by means of obstruction - or other parliamentary means - to prevent the National Socialists from taking over the government.^[89]

So encased within the husk of Third Period *leftism* were the seeds of Popular Front *opportunism*, the tactic of forming unprincipled blocs ‘at the top’ with not only the reformists - the ‘social fascists’ - but the political representatives of the liberal - and often not-so-liberal - bourgeoisie. The rising Nazi tide, although it undeniably compelled even Thälmann to consider new ways of combating it, did not drive the KPD leadership back towards the Leninist path, a step that Trotsky and his supporters in the German Left Opposition were insisting was the only means of blocking Hitler’s ascent to power. The right-opportunist zigzag briefly undertaken by the KPD Central Committee at its Plenum of 24 May *remained within the framework of Stalinist tactics and strategy*, of the Stalinist theory of socialism in one country and everything that flowed from that reactionary, nationalist perspective. And as Trotsky pointed out, this right oscillation was perfectly consistent with the nature of centrism, which constantly veers between a reformist and a revolutionary policy (Trotsky of course revised his designation of Stalinism as ‘bureaucratic centrism’ after the German defeat of 1933 and the Kremlin’s sharp turn in 1934 towards open class collaboration. It had now, he insisted, become a *counter-revolutionary force* on a world scale.)

On 24 May, the KPD Central Committee therefore made an offer to the Centre and SPD Prussian Diet fraction to support their candidates in the election to the Diet Presidium, not in order to effect a united front of the workers who followed these two parties, but ‘by means of obstruction or other parliamentary means to prevent the National Socialists taking over the government’. Without a bloc of the two main workers’ parties, from top to bottom, this proposal remained on the plane of the most blatant parliamentary cretinism, of the type denounced by Lenin and utterly repudiated by the founders of the

Communist International. Here too in this formulation were the germ cells of that Popular Front monstrosity, the alliance of all 'men of good will' against fascism and war. Its fleeting appearance in the midst of a welter of Stalinist left verbiage, red union adventurism and squalid manoeuvrings with the Nazis against the reformists gave Trotsky cause to comment, when the KPD repeated its offer of a Prussian Diet bloc with the SPD and Centre on 22 June 1932:

In the face of the danger that the Presidium of the Landtag might fall into the hands of the Nazis, all the consecrated principles flew to the devil... To explain these goat-leaps, however, is not so difficult... many superficial liberals and radicals continue to joke all their lives about religion... only to call for a priest when they face death or serious illness. So also in politics. The mark of centrism is opportunism. Under the influence of external circumstances (tradition, mass pressure, political competition) centrism is at certain times compelled to make a parade of radicalism. For this purpose it must overcome itself, violate its nature. By spurring itself on with all its strength, it not infrequently lands at the extreme limit of formal radicalism. [As the pages of *Workers Press* frequently testify - RB] But hardly does the hour of serious danger strike than the true nature of centrism breaks out to the surface. ^[90]

These zigzags assumed a feverish character and tempo, far more violent and swift than in the period between 1924 and 1928, when the Comintern line swung to the ultra-left, back through to the centrist right, and back again even further to the adventurist left. Now the oscillations were almost daily occurrences as the deepening political crisis threw all class relations into flux. On 24 May came the bloc offer to the SPD and Centre. The very next day, the KPD swung back to the left as Wilhelm Pieck, Prussian Diet fraction leader, moved a vote of no-confidence - with Nazi support - in the Centre - SPD Prussian coalition! All the brawling that ensued in the chamber between KPD and Nazi deputies during Pieck's speech could not disguise the fact that the offer to the reformists and Catholics had not been made on any principled basis, but was a panic reaction to a crisis that neither Thälmann nor any of his fellow leaders had the least comprehension of how to fight. Their paralysis in the face of the fascist offensive was all the more criminal in that the reformist bureaucracy was on the verge of having its last links severed with the government, a development that would have opened up enormously rich opportunities for forging a genuine united front from top to bottom with the SPD and ADGB.

While the SPD leaders had supported Brüning in parliament, the ADGB bureaucracy had endorsed - albeit with grave misgivings - his programme of deflation and cuts in wages and social services. The reformist press nevertheless emitted rumblings of discontent with Brüning's more severe measures in order to prevent wholesale defections to the KPD. For example, on 29 April 1931, *Vorwärts* warned Brüning:

Wage reductions and increases in the price of bread - this is the last straw. A government which permits both is heading for disaster. An end must be put to the system under which the workers are robbed in every direction. There are limits to everything, including the patience of the German workers. ^[91]

While the Stalinists recognised the truth of this last statement, they interpreted it mechanically. They believed that the reformist workers would, at some point, be driven *en masse* over to the KPD - via the 'united front from below' when they could stomach no longer the wage-cutting decrees of the Brüning regime, and their reformist leaders' endorsement of them. Where this theory erred was in its false supposition that the reformist bureaucracy's patience was limitless, that it would not be affected by the growing restlessness of its members with the policy of the 'lesser evil', and that the 'social fascists' were fused once and for all with the capitalist state and the bourgeoisie. Finally, the KPD and the Communist International asserted right up to the eve of its fall that the Brüning government, and no other, had been selected to 'carry through the fascist dictatorship'.

This is not to deny that the reformist bureaucracy did all that it could to subordinate its unions and party to the requirements of the bourgeoisie and the Brüning government. This has been acknowledged by Hans Schlange-Schöningen, a minister in Brüning's cabinet, who in its last days witnessed the following spectacle:

No party was called upon to make greater sacrifices in the interests of the whole than the SPD, and no class was called upon to make greater sacrifices than the working class. That is the bare truth. I remember one of the famous night sessions... when the government was represented by Brüning, Stegerwald and me, whilst opposite us sat workers' representatives of all shades. Once again the topic was the government demand that social expenditure should be cut. An almost

[sic!] fierce discussion proceeded for several hours, and the dawn was actually breaking when the Social Democratic trade union chairman, Leipart, said finally: 'Well, if there is no other way to do it...' ^[92]

Within a matter of days it became clear that there was to be another way, that of von Papen, whose 'Cabinet of Barons' took office precisely in order to eliminate the so-called 'trade union influence' on the conduct of government, social and economic policy.

Nor was it a case of the reformists refusing to 'tolerate' Papen, but of Papen - together with his army, Junker and bourgeois supporters - refusing to tolerate the Social Democrats. The SPD was forced to take up an oppositional line, whether its leaders enjoyed such a prospect or not. Indeed, the SPD organ conveyed a sense of relief that, at long last, the party could assume the role of opposition unfettered by any responsibilities for the unpopular policies of the government - *the first occasion on which it had been able to do so since June 1928*: 'The SPD has the best prospects of being freed from all, including indirect, responsibility for the conduct of the government. It has no reason to be annoyed with the Reich President...'

So the reaction of the SPD to the fall of Brüning was a turn towards the left - a manoeuvre which at last made possible the fruitful application of the united front tactic. Thälmann thought differently. Despite the comment of *Pravda* on 3 June that Papen's government would 'lead Germany immediately to a fascist dictatorship' (previously a task ascribed to first Müller, then Brüning), the KPD chairman told a national conference of party officials on 9 June that 'the policy of the SPD has not changed' as a result of Brüning's removal and that:

... the overthrow of the Brüning government and the more and more open use of the fascist mass party as the prop of capitalist exploitation does not under any circumstances mean that the revolutionary strategy of the KPD must be altered.

On the contrary, continued Thälmann:

... the intensification of the fascist terror in the methods of bourgeois government compelled the revolutionary party of the proletariat to launch its *main blow* with even greater energy *against the Social Democracy* in order to win the masses away from the social fascist leaders and draw them into the anti-fascist front. ^[93]

Meanwhile in the Prussian Diet, the KPD fraction continued to swing between the extremes of a parliamentary opportunism and the wildest adventurism. On 24 May came the offer of a bloc with the SPD and Centre on the elections to the Presidium, yet on 15 June, the KPD (as reported in the CPGB's *Daily Worker* of two days later) voted for a 'fascist motion demanding the trial of certain Social Democratic and democratic state officials for breaches of the constitution... The Communists and fascists voted for it.' ^[94] Then there followed the renewed 'bloc' offer of 22 June to the SPD and the Centre Party! Further tangible proof of the deepening crisis in the KPD, and especially of the impact Trotsky's searching critiques of the Stalinist line were having on sections of the membership, was Thälmann's long article 'Our Strategy and Tactics in the Struggle Against Fascism', published in the June number of the KPD's theoretical organ *Die Internationale*. Its purpose was two-fold: firstly to justify the policies which were leading the German proletariat into the inferno of fascism; and secondly, to attempt to discredit Trotsky and the German Left Opposition by linking their criticism of the KPD line with the reformists and bourgeois democrats.

First Müller, then Brüning had been designated by the KPD leadership as the chosen instruments of monopoly capital for the introduction of fascism in Germany. Unfortunately, both Chancellors were ousted by this very big business as being far too dependent on the support of organised labour. This sad experience, however, taught Thälmann nothing, as he began his article with a reference to the 'fascist Papen - Schleicher government which had come to power on 1 June'. The task of this regime was, as we know, not the introduction of fascism, but the further whittling away of the democratic liberties and living standards of the proletariat. It was not, therefore, a fascist government, as Thälmann so rashly claimed, because it did not seek and in fact, with the social reserves at its disposal, could not achieve, the annihilation of the organisations of the working class, a task which in an advanced capitalist country can only be carried through by a fascist movement and government. Papen's was a rightwards-leaning Bonapartist regime, based on the army and bureaucracy, and employing the fascists on the right to beat back the workers on the left. Such an analysis obviously could not be undertaken by any Stalinist, since the phenomenon of Bonapartism necessarily involves a balancing between hostile social forces and their

political expressions. Stalinist Third Period theory held that Social Democracy and fascism were becoming *fused*, not forced into *opposition*, by the capitalist crisis. Therefore there could be no question of a Bonapartist development, since all parties save the KPD comprised 'one reactionary mass'. By the same token, all governments were fascist - Müller, Brüning, Papen, Schleicher - and all such regimes depended to varying degrees on the 'social support' of Social Democracy. Hence the rejections of the united front with the reformist organisations since these were being drawn into the very machinery of fascist dictatorship. This was the gist of Thälmann's argument. A Hitler government was a luxury for the German bourgeoisie, since they already had their mass fascist movement in the SPD and the ADGB. A Hitler regime:

... would be conceivable - theoretically - if the Hitler party in a fully developed fascist dictatorship after the destruction of the reformist organisations [why should Hitler destroy social fascist organisations? - RB] would attract to itself very considerable sections of the working class: if the SPD were to sink to insignificance among the proletariat, without we Communists being in a position to win over the masses. That would be roughly the case as with Italy. In Germany, with its enormous industrial proletariat and strong Communist Party, *such a prospect is even theoretically improbable in view of the whole objective conditions...*' [95]

This was not the first occasion on which Thälmann had made such a prophecy. A year back, in June 1931, he had written:

The more energetically we unmask the nature of the fascist policy of the Brüning government, the more convincingly we prove to the masses that this bourgeois government is itself striving for the actualisation of the fascist dictatorship, *and need not be replaced by Hitler or Hugenberg...* then the more thoroughly do we refute and shatter Social Democratic agitation... [96]

Now Thälmann was more convinced than ever that the main danger came from the 'social fascists', and not Hitler - even though the Nazis recorded more than 13 million votes for their candidate at the Presidential elections in April:

In the fascistisation of Social Democracy a whole gamut of the most diverse methods and phenomena reach maturity... right to the 'left' agents of the SPD, the SAP and the tiny Brandler group [the pro-Bukharin Communist Opposition - KPO] who are the most dangerous disrupter of the proletarian united front in the service of the bourgeoisie and fascism... On the basis of our class policy we must, in the new situation, apply the strategy of the 'main fire against Social Democracy' *more than ever before*, without the slightest concessions to any kind of Social Democratic fraudulent manoeuvres in oppositional tendencies... *Nothing has changed* as far as this principal orientation is concerned. Through our revolutionary practice we *must put a stop to all speculations about a change of front, a new departure or a right vacillation on the part of the KPD.* [97]

Trotsky's polemical shafts delivered from faraway Prinkipo were finding their mark. Not only was the logic of the objective situation proclaiming ever more loudly the need for a 'new departure', even within the KPD leadership itself. Unease about the rising fascist menace had led to differences over the party's tactical line, which some held to be aiding the Nazis in their offensive against the working class. Thälmann's remarks were addressed to this as yet unnamed group, as well as the numerically tiny forces of German Trotskyism:

This strategic orientation of the chief fire against the Social Democracy... does not in the least signify any weakening of our fight against Hitler fascism as the slanderers of the Communists - such as those cast in the mould of Leon Trotsky - above all assert. On the contrary it is an... essential prerequisite for a successful struggle against the fascist dictatorship. Mr Trotsky occupies himself anew at the present time in the service of the German bourgeoisie in carrying through definite deceptive manoeuvres against the class-conscious workers. He preaches a 'bloc' of the SPD and KPD 'against fascism.' A considerable part of the bourgeois press accords him vociferous applause for this. Of late the official leadership of the SPD is also beginning to play with the ball thrown down by Trotsky and is attempting to cover up its real struggle against the proletarian united front against the anti-fascist mass struggle under revolutionary leadership, by treacherous 'united front' manoeuvres and 'bloc' proposals to the KPD. [98]

Papen's Nazi-supported offensive against the Prussian proletariat found the KPD leaders hopelessly divided as to what line to adopt towards the SPD leaders threatened with removal from their government posts. Richard Krebs describes the scene:

The Nazi storm brigades were reported to be concentrating in huge camps around Berlin. The Reichswehr had been put in a state of highest alarm. The storm-troopers spoke openly of the coming night of the long knives. Chancellor von Papen prepared to strike in Prussia... The cry 'drive the Marxists out of the Prussian Ministries' swelled to a thunderous surf... I repaired post-haste to a meeting in the Karl Liebknecht House. It was an extraordinary meeting. The whole Central Committee of the party was assembled there, together with the leaders of all auxiliary corps. It was a stormy meeting which lasted from eight in the evening to five in the morning. A dozen factions were at loggerheads; roars and screams punctuated the debates and at times I thought the élite of German Bolshevism would come to blows. Some advocated that the fury of the party should be turned against Hitler. Some spoke for a last minute alliance with the Social Democrats. Others held that a violent Nazi coup would drive the socialist workers into the Communist camp. However, the tenet that the socialists were the main foe of Soviet power prevailed. Ernst Thälmann raged like a maddened bull, formidably seconded by Hugo Eberlein, the party treasurer [murdered by the GPU in the USSR during the great purges - RB], Hermann Schubert, the President [also killed in the Soviet purges - RB] and by Willy Leow, Leo Flieg, Fritz Schulte and other members of the Reichstag and the Central Committee. Ernst Wollweber and Hans Kippenberger [purged by Stalin] sat silently and so did Hotopp, a leader of the League of Proletarian Writers. In the end all proposals to form an honest alliance with the Social Democrats were defeated. ^[99]

This was how the KPD leadership prepared the working class of Germany for Papen's blow in Prussia: 'Not a bloc with the social fascist leaders, nor under any circumstances a united front only from above, but a united front from below', as Thälmann put it. Little wonder that when Papen struck, not a single worker answered the KPD's strike call to defend a regime which only the previous day had been depicted as a variant of fascist dictatorship. Why should workers risk life and limb to defend one set of fascists against the attacks of another? Indeed, eyewitnesses testify to Communist workers at a KPD rally in Berlin on 20 July bursting into applause on the news that Papen had ousted the 'social fascists'! No one, their own members included, took the KPD strike call seriously, and this was quite openly stated to be the case at the Twelfth ECCI Plenum held in September 1932. Piatnitsky said that the strike call had been politically correct:

... but the party organisations did not respond to the call for a strike. That is fact - they not only failed to respond in the Berlin-Brandenburg district; not a single organisation in any other district responded. This is a fact... the work in the factories and the trade unions could not produce any other result... ^[100]

Kuusinen was even more forthright in his criticism:

... as very little work had been done during the whole year to mobilise the workers for mass actions, it was quite natural that the sudden appearance of the party with the slogan of the political mass strike should not have met with any success. There had been too little preparation for this, during the previous period, by means of strikes for partial demands. Moreover, this slogan was not supported by any organised demands. Immediately after the slogan was issued, every effort should have been made to launch and organise demonstrations. This would have been quite possible in Berlin, at any rate. Various comrades, who were in Berlin on 20 July, have told us that a definite urge towards direct action was to be observed there. But the moment was allowed to pass by. ^[101]

And this was true. There existed in Berlin, and also in other proletarian centres of Prussia, a real desire to hit back at Papen's coup. But caught between the twin bureaucratic vices of Social Democracy and Stalinism, each supplementing the other's passivity by their right and left opportunism, the proletariat was deprived of leadership, of a unified centre of struggle and resistance, of any tactic that could have enabled the proletariat to confront as a class the offensive of the bourgeoisie expressed in the coup of 20 July. And in placing such a heavy responsibility on the KPD and ECCI leadership for the defeat of 20 July, one must not for one moment underestimate the criminal role of the reformist bureaucracy, which even when faced with direct persecution by the state, preferred to retreat gracefully and await the rout of Papen at the polling booths on 31 July.

We have already seen that having been supplied with the necessary show of force, Interior Minister Carl Severing yielded up his seals of office to State Commissioner Bracht. One could argue that in this instance, it was a case of yielding to *force majeure*. His police President Grzesinski reveals, however, that when Lieutenant Colonel Rundstedt telephoned him the order to leave his office, and he sought advice from Severing on what to do, his chief replied: 'Blood must not be shed. The establishment of martial law is a perfectly legal measure.' Pressed to justify his statement, Severing continued: 'The military commander, under martial law, is the legal executor of authority. He acts within his rights in dismissing you. This is also the opinion of others in my ministry.'^[102] The bulk of the SPD and ADGB bureaucrats took their cue from Severing's cowardly compliance with Papen's coup, and were permitted to do so by the KPD, which had steadfastly refused to address any demands on them to break from their policy of class collaboration and unite with the Communist workers in a single front against fascism and the capitalist offensive.

Even so, on the morning of 20 July, sporadic strikes broke out in several Berlin plants, while at the giant Siemens and IG Farben concerns, workers stopped work and assembled in the factory forecourts in anticipation of hearing an SPD or ADGB official address them on the need for action against the coup. No one came. Members of the Iron Front, which on 4 July had staged a mammoth anti-Nazi rally, 100 000 strong, in the Lustgarten, congregated at various points in the capital to await combat instructions from their commanders, a plan agreed upon some days before the coup. Here too, no lead was forthcoming. When the ADGB executive met later that day, its members could not claim there existed no support amongst trade unionists for action. The question was - would their leaders lead? Berlin's workers did not have to wait long for the answer. The ADGB resolved to take no immediate action against the coup. Indeed, some board members even argued, like Severing, that Papen's action could not be opposed, since it was legal, while others, like the leader of the Rail Workers Union, claimed that unemployed workers would readily break any strike undertaken by his members. There was also talk of 'defeatist moods' amongst the working class which made strike action impossible. The real defeatists sat in the leadership.

On 21 July, the SPD executive met and took the same line. All party organisations were to be brought to a 'state of readiness' but no immediate action was sanctioned. In March 1920, the Kapp regime had been brought to its knees in a matter of days by a general strike called by these same two bodies. Now, when the reaction had struck again, they were paralysed. In the words of the SPD Executive's statement, workers outraged by Papen's action were advised 'to restore the dislocated republican constitution and to recover the influence on public affairs which is its due by the election of Social Democrats on 31 July'. The efforts of the bureaucracy in damping down resistance to the coup did not go unrecognised. Von Rundstedt issued a press statement which said: 'I must thank the SPD for the fact that it does not support the strike call [of the KPD] but on the contrary called for calm restraint and prudence in order not to impede the normal procedure of an election.' True to the 'Third Period' fantasy that the more monumental the betrayals of Social Democracy, and the more brutal the capitalist oppression, the greater the radicalisation of the proletariat and the more favourable the situation for the revolutionary party, Knorin wrote in *Pravda* that even though Papen had been charged with 'setting up the fascist dictatorship' and that his 20 July coup proved that the bourgeoisie intended to 'destroy the workers' organisations and do away with all the revolutionary achievements of the working class', this was a highly desirable state of affairs, since it would lead to a 'considerable acceleration of the process of mobilising the forces of the proletariat' and of the 'creation of a real united front of the working masses from below under the leadership of the KPD'.^[103] After Papen - our turn.

Exploiting the profound hatred felt by millions of workers for the reformist bureaucracy, the Stalinists succeeded in turning this healthy class feeling *against their fellow workers in the SPD and the reformist trade unions*. This chasm of hatred divided the Prussian proletariat on 20 July, and continued to keep them apart even in the days that followed the elections of 31 July, when the SA awaited Hitler's appointment as Chancellor to begin their bloody assault on Communist and reformist workers alike. Some notion of this tragic rift in the ranks of the German working class is conveyed by Lüdecke, who in the days that preceded Hitler's interview with Hindenburg on 13 August, reconnoitred enemy territory in Berlin:

In Communist circles and meetings, where curiosity led me, I heard socialists attacked as violently as Nazis, and the existing government mentioned with contempt rather than fear. It was strange to find that certain responsible leaders really seemed to desire a temporary Nazi regime as

the 'last stand of capitalism' which they believed a necessary evil before Communism could seize the reins of power. Instead of forming at the twelfth hour a common front... the Marxists in Germany... were fighting each other with such hatred that they were easily beaten in the Nazis' final onslaught. ^[104]

And this from a leading Nazi! What better refutation could there be of Gollan's wretched evasions concerning the policy of the KPD in the period of the rise of fascism? The Stalinists cleared Hitler's road to power no less than the Social Democrats; of that there can be no doubt. But even as late as the autumn of 1932, there was still time to change course, and there were sufficient reserves within the proletariat to transform a defensive battle against fascism into an offensive, revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of the entire bourgeoisie.

Notes

1. The *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* posed the problem quite candidly on 20 October 1931, when in commenting on Brüning's proposed cuts in wages and social services, it said: 'When one comes to consider the measures which must be included in the future economic programme, measures which are bound to come into conflict with the mass agitation being conducted by the trade unions, then one is justified in being sceptical whether all the trade union leaders, even if they should inwardly agree to the necessary conditions, will have the courage to acknowledge them openly.'
2. J Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight* (London, 1938), p 29.
3. Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, p 37.
4. Thus the Kaiser's eldest son, the former crown prince Wilhelm, who voted for the monarchist candidate in the first round, demonstratively declared his allegiance to the Nazi candidate on the second: 'Abstention from voting in the second ballot is incompatible with the idea of the Harzburg Front. As I consider an unbroken national front absolutely necessary, I shall vote for Adolf Hitler in the second ballot.' The turn towards Hitler by the Hugenberg bloc was duly noted by Goebbels, who obviously appreciated its strategic as well as passing tactical significance: 'We have come far short of defeating the enemy [on the second ballot], but we have managed to rope in nearly all the votes of the Conservative parties.' (Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, p 64)
5. Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, p 61.
6. LD Trotsky, 'What Next?' (27 January 1932), *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany* (New York, 1971), p 156.
7. Earlier the same month, on 9 January, Goebbels had addressed a meeting of industrialists in Essen. 'The more desperate their situation, the better they understand us', was Goebbels' terse but accurate comment on the increased interest of big business in the Nazi programme (Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, p 16).
8. F Thyssen, *I Paid Hitler* (London, 1941), p 132.
9. O Dietrich, *With Hitler on the Road to Power* (1934), p 12.
10. Dietrich, *With Hitler on the Road to Power*, p 13.
11. Dietrich, *With Hitler on the Road to Power*, p 13. Thyssen says in his memoirs that the speech 'made a deep impression on the assembled industrialists' and that as a result, 'a number of large contributions flowed from the resources of heavy industry' (Thyssen, *I Paid Hitler*, p 101). This later comment is probably somewhat exaggerated. Nevertheless. Goebbels' comments on the financial situation of the party at this time suggest that Hitler's efforts had not been without reward. On 5 January, Goebbels is 'giving them [the NSDAP gauleiters] hell because our work for the collection of gifts is going so indifferently... Money is wanting everywhere... Nobody will give us credit.' By 8 February, however, he is able to record that 'money affairs improve daily. The financing of the electoral campaign is practically assured.' And by 6 March: '... our election funds have somewhat recovered once more. We are safe for the last week [of the campaign].' (Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, pp 13, 34, 46)
12. Dietrich, *With Hitler on the Road to Power*, p 14.

- 13.** Dietrich, *With Hitler on the Road to Power*, p 14.
- 14.** Dietrich, *With Hitler on the Road to Power*, p 14.
- 15.** The Steel Trust also produced 50 per cent of Germany's coal. Other assets put at risk included its 209 electrical power stations, its private railway network, 14 harbours, 134 million square metres of land and 60 000 workers' dwellings.
- 16.** Testimony of Otto Steinbrinck, the Trial of Friedrich Flick, *IMT*, pp 346-47.
- 17.** Testimony of Otto Steinbrinck, the Trial of Friedrich Flick, *IMT*, p 358.
- 18.** Testimony of Otto Steinbrinck, the Trial of Friedrich Flick, *IMT*, p 358. Steinbrinck also had close connections with the Nazi banker Baron Kurt von Schröder, as is clear from the following letter written by Steinbrinck to Funk on 11 December 1931: 'Baron Kurt von Schröder, partner of the banking firm of JH Stein, Cologne, and a cousin of the well-known London banker, is in Berlin today and tomorrow and would like to see you for a short while. For some years he has been connected with the whole [Nazi] movement and therefore had much understanding when I told him your new ideas on enlightening foreign countries. As he has far-reaching connections abroad and sees foreign bankers frequently because of his close friendship and connection with the international firm in London, he is naturally very much interested in the attitude of the party towards the problem of foreign debts.'
- 19.** Testimony of Otto Steinbrinck, the Trial of Friedrich Flick, *IMT*, p 373.
- 20.** Testimony of Otto Steinbrinck, the Trial of Friedrich Flick, *IMT*, p 43.
- 21.** Testimony of Wilhelm Keppler, Trial of Friedrich Flick, *IMT*, p 285.
- 22.** Testimony of Wilhelm Keppler, Trial of Friedrich Flick, *IMT*, p 285.
- 23.** Testimony of Wilhelm Keppler, Trial of Friedrich Flick, *IMT*, pp 285-86, emphasis added.
- 24.** Keppler lists as the founding members of his circle (which later came into the orbit of SS leader Himmler) the following businessmen, all of whom bar Steinbrinck appear to have been present at the inaugural meeting with Hitler on 18 May: Kranefuss, Vögler, Schröder, Dr Karl Buetefisch (IG Farben), Karl Krogmann, Friedrich Olscher, Flick, Karl Lindemann, Wilhelm Borger, Karl Walz, Heinrich Schmidt, Hermann Waldhecker, Herbert Goering, Theodor Kaselowsky, August Rosterg (Potash syndicate), Rudolf Bringel (Siemens), Karl Blessing, Kurt Schmitt, Emil Meyer, Steinbrinck, Hans Kehrl, Karl von Half, Emil Helfferich (Hamburg-America Line), Friedrich Reinhardt, Hans Fischbock, Otto Heuer (Heidelberger Portland Zement Werke AG), Ewald Hecker, Otto Ohlendorf, Oswald Pohl, Graf von Bismarck, Karl Wolff, Dr Woffram Sievers, Franz Hayler, Werner Naumann, Dr Hermann Behrens, Dr Ernst Schafer, Dr Fritz Dermitzel, Erich Hilgenfeldt. Lindemann had many business interests, among them a Bremen - China trading firm, a Salzburg cement works, the Bremen Norddeutsche Kreditbank, the ill-fated Wollkammerei (of which he was the acting chairman) and the shipping line Norddeutsche Lloyd, which, like the Steel Trust, became a recipient of government aid in the spring of 1932. His career prospered under the Nazis, with the acquisition of further interests - the Hamburg-America Line, the Atlas Works, the Bremen Reichbank, Dresdner Bank and Vereinigten Industriell Unternehmen.
- 25.** H Rauschning, *Men of Chaos* (1942), pp 219-20.
- 26.** Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, p 66.
- 27.** Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, p 63.
- 28.** Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, p 72.
- 29.** Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, p 76.
- 30.** The dilemma in which the German hierarchy found itself placed by the simultaneous rise of National Socialism and proletarian radicalism was well expressed by Bishop Buchberger of Regensburg in a letter to Vatican State Secretary Cardinal Pacelli (December 1931): 'In Bavaria the National Socialist danger is growing more and more. It has fruitful ground in the dreadful and almost unbearable distress which is driving the widest circles to despair. With this despair it is a question of the irrational, simply of feelings and impulses,

and for this National Socialism is suitably equipped. [As indeed was the Catholic Church! - RB] If it comes to power, then the Bavarian Concordat is lost... And yet Communism, which proceeds from hatred of God to the radical destruction of the Christian religion and culture, is a much greater danger here...' A conclusion which indicated the direction in which the Vatican and its German representatives would travel when the time came to choose between the greater and lesser evils.

31. Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, p 73.

32. F von Papen, *Memoirs* (London, 1952), p 151.

33. Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, p 76.

34. Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, p 77, emphasis added.

35. 'When I took over the post I had been assured by Schleicher that it was the wish of both Hindenburg and the Army that the decree should be annulled. He has promised Hitler that this would be done, against an undertaking that the Nazis would not act in opposition to my Government.' (von Papen, *Memoirs*, p 150) The deal seems to have been finalised on 30 May, after Hitler had met the President. Goebbels records on that day that 'the conference with the President went well. The SA prohibition is going to be cancelled... The Reichstag is going to be dissolved. That is of first importance. Von Papen is likely to be appointed Chancellor, but that is neither here nor there.' (Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, p 87)

36. F von Papen, *Memoirs*, p 160.

37. The Centre Party's hostility towards Papen derived not from his pro-Nazi orientation, but his desertion of Brüning. The party was in fact in favour of permitting the Nazis to enter a coalition, as a communiqué issued after Brüning's fall made clear: 'The party rejects the temporary solution provided by the present [Papen] Cabinet and demands that the solution should be clarified by placing the responsibility for forming a government in the hands of the NSDAP.'

38. An even more frantic note had been struck by Frick in the *Völkischer Beobachter* on 4 May: '... the National Socialist movement for freedom is now the last hope and the last reserve force of the German people. If it is employed in vain and is wrecked, then its force will be broken and Germany will sink into the Bolshevist chaos.'

39. Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, p 78.

40. Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, pp 89-90, emphasis added.

41. Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, p 92.

42. Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, pp 92-97.

43. Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, pp 106-07.

44. 'Drive through Hamburg and Altona... Both cities are strongly "Red". Will it ever be possible to make a change here?' (Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, p 111)

45. Krebs conveys the drama and pathos of the 'battle of Altona' in the following extract from his autobiography: 'Communist spies in the storm troops ferreted out the route the Nazi parade was to take. Units of Red Front fighters were stationed in advance on the roofs of houses along the route of the storm-troop invasion... The storm-troops marched... with bands crashing and swastikas flying. Their demonstration was flanked by police. Police lorries with machine guns preceded and followed the marchers. The parade entered the sinuous old districts of the city winding forward like an immense brown snake... The side streets along the route seethed with many thousands of workers and their womenfolk shaking fists, hurling rocks and garbage at the Brownshirts and shouting their abuse. The storm-troops marched like one machine. The faces of the youngsters were set and pale. At minute intervals at a signal of detachment leaders they broke into a hollow roar: 'Death to the Red Pest! Germany - arise!' Then the first shots cracked from the roofs... The storm troopers crowded into the houses to trap the attackers on the roofs. Garbage cans hurtled out of the windows, policemen hurled gas grenades and people ran like cockroaches. The storm-troopers were broken up in irregular, badly-shaken groups. Some continued their march, most of them fled...' (J Valtin, *Out of the Night* (New York, 1941), pp 361-62)

- 46.** Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, p 109.
- 47.** *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, 18 July 1932.
- 48.** Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, p 110.
- 49.** Von Papen, *Memoirs*, p 190.
- 50.** Von Papen, *Memoirs*, p 190.
- 51.** Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, pp 110-11, emphasis added.
- 52.** K Lüdecke, *I Knew Hitler* (New York, 1937), p 372.
- 53.** Lüdecke, *I Knew Hitler*, p 372.
- 54.** Hitler would have found more favour with Papen's judgement that the 'increased strength' of the Communists 'proved what a danger Communism would have been if the government had not taken the matter in hand'.
- 55.** Among those favouring Hitler's admission into the cabinet at this juncture was Conrad Adenauer, first postwar Chancellor of West Germany, who on 6 August wrote to his friend Graf Wolff Metternich that the Centre Party would join with the Nazis in a coalition if invited to do so. Also interesting was the Cologne Mayor's sympathies for Mussolini at this time, Adenauer having written to the fascist dictator in near-adulatory terms.
- 56.** Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, p 119.
- 57.** Affidavit of Otto Meissner, Nuremberg, 28 November 1945, 3309-PS.
- 58.** Hitler issued a rather lame statement on 16 August which said: 'We are willing to support the government so long as the Nazi movement is not being weakened. But when it tends to hamper the national cause, we shall oppose it strongly.' One can understand Hitler's dilemma. Papen barred his way to power - yet the same Papen was taking stern measures against the 'reds'. Until such times as the Nazis could supplant Papen in the estimation of the bourgeoisie and agrarians as defenders of German imperialism, Hitler had no alternative than to continue performing the humiliating role of a right prop to Papen's Bonapartist regime. He had become what the Social Democrats were to Brüning - a tolerator of the 'lesser evil'!
- 59.** Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, p 123.
- 60.** Papen rescinded the death sentences a matter of days later. He could not afford irrevocably to sever links with the Nazis, despite his profound tactical differences with Hitler concerning the struggle against Marxism. Papen later justified this act of clemency with the claim that he 'did not want to provide the more radical National Socialists with unnecessary propaganda material' (Von Papen, *Memoirs*, p 200).
- 61.** Apart from undertaking public works schemes to stimulate investment and combat unemployment, the Papen economic programme anticipated future Nazi policies in other ways. For example, employers were authorised to reduce their workers' wages by 12.5 per cent if they increased their total labour force by 25 per cent. Not only production, but profits, would therefore rise. Also included in Papen's package were profits tax cuts and other forms of concessions for the propertied classes. Naturally, this programme won enthusiastic support from the big concerns, many of which had just begun to detect the first symptoms of a business upturn. Utilisation of productive capacity had increased in the iron and steel industry from 32.0 per cent to 39.1 per cent in the six months between January and June 1932, while overall, utilisation in the capital goods industries had risen from 27.6 per cent to 31.2 per cent, and against the seasonal trend, unemployment was on the downturn, from 6.0 million on 31 January and 5.5 million on 30 July to 5.1 million on 30 September.
- 62.** *Deutsche Bergwerkszeitung*, 30 August and 4 September 1932.
- 63.** GDH Cole, *History of Socialist Thought*, Volume 4, Part 2: *Communism and Social Democracy* (London, 1959).
- 64.** J Gollan, 'GDH Cole's *Socialist Thought*', *Marxism Today*, Volume 3, no 3, March 1959, p 69, emphasis added.

65. J Gollan, 'GDH Cole's *Socialist Thought*', *Marxism Today*, Volume 3, no 3, March 1959, p 69.
66. *Pravda*, 7 June 1931.
67. *Fourth Congress of the LSI, Reports and Proceedings* (London, 1932), p 695.
68. *Fourth Congress of the LSI, Reports and Proceedings*, p 712.
69. *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 11, no 52, 8 October 1931, p 945.
70. *Anti-Fascists in Leading Positions in the GDR* (Dresden, nd), p 85.
71. Trotsky, 'What Next?', *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, p 172.
72. *Communist International*, Volume 10, no 21, 15 December 1931, pp 717-55, emphasis added.
73. *Die Rote Fahne*, 17 November 1931.
74. L Breuer, 'The Political Situation in Germany', *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 11, no 59, 19 November 1931, pp 1055-56, emphasis added.
75. *Vorwärts*, 10 March 1931.
76. *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 12, no 7, 18 February 1932, p 117.
77. *Die Rote Fahne*, 16 March 1932.
78. *Die Rote Fahne*, 16 March 1932.
79. *Pravda*, 17 March 1932.
80. *Pravda*, 17 March 1932.
81. *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 12, no 18, 21 April 1932, p 346.
82. *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 12, no 18, 21 April 1932, p 349.
83. *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 11, 10 December 1931, p 1137, emphasis added.
84. *Vorwärts*, 26 April 1932.
85. J Gollan, 'GDH Cole's *Socialist Thought*', *Marxism Today*, Volume 3, no 3, March 1959, p 69.
86. See Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der SED, *Die Anti-Faschistische Aktion* (Dietz Verlag, [East] Berlin, 1965), p 11.
87. *Die Rote Fahne*, 18 May 1932, emphasis added.
88. *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 12, no 23, 26 May 1932, p 451.
89. *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 12, no 23, 26 May 1932, p 451.
90. LD Trotsky, 'The Only Road' (14 September 1932), *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, p 300.
91. *Vorwärts*, 29 April 1931.
92. H Schlange-Schöningen, *The Morning After* (London, 1948), p 48.
93. *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 12, no 27, 16 June 1932, p 544, emphasis added.
94. *Daily Worker*, 17 June 1932.
95. E Thälmann, 'Our Strategy and Tactics in the Struggle Against Fascism', *Die Internationale*, no 6, June 1932, emphasis added.
96. *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 11, 30 June 1931, p 611, emphasis added.
97. E Thälmann, 'Our Strategy and Tactics in the Struggle Against Fascism', *Die Internationale*, no 6, June 1932, emphasis added.
98. E Thälmann, 'Our Strategy and Tactics in the Struggle Against Fascism', *Die Internationale*, no 6, June 1932.

- 99.** Valtin, *Out of the Night*, pp 358-59.
- 100.** *Communist International*, Volume 11, no 17-18, 1 October 1932, pp 633-34.
- 101.** O Kuusinen, *The Struggle of the KPD* (nd), p 99.
- 102.** A Grzesinski, *Inside Germany* (New York, 1939), p 158.
- 103.** W Knorin, 'The Situation in Germany', *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 12, no 33, 28 July 1932, p 674.
- 104.** Lüdecke, *I Knew Hitler*, p 392.

Fascism in Germany. Robin Blick 1975

Chapter XXIV: The Last Chance

Once the attempt to force a recovery through the Bonapartist therapy has failed, it must be tried with fascist surgery... (LD Trotsky, *The Only Road*, 14 September 1932)

President Hindenburg had not been acting for himself alone when on 13 August he rejected Hitler's impassioned pleas for the Chancellorship. Decisive action against the Prussian Social Democrats, together with a programme of economic expansion, had persuaded many bankers and industrialists previously sympathetic to the Nazis that Papen's military-Presidential Bonapartism was a safer method of combating the working class and reviving the economy than a gamble on a government dominated by brown-shirted plebeians. Trotsky wrote in September 1932:

Through the Papen government, the barons, the magnates of capital and the bankers have made an attempt to safeguard their interests by means of the police and the regular army. The idea of giving up all power to Hitler, who supports himself upon the greedy and unbridled bands of the petit-bourgeoisie, is a far from pleasant one to them. They do not, of course, doubt that in the long run Hitler will be a submissive instrument. [And even in this, they were not wholly correct - RB] Yet this is bound up with convulsions, with the risk of a long and weary civil war and great expense... It is clear that the possessing classes would prefer a more economical path, that is, the path of Schleicher and not of Hitler, not to speak of the fact that Schleicher himself prefers it that way. ^[1]

Wishes, however, are one thing, reality, and therefore necessity, quite frequently something else. While Papen's political economic programme certainly enjoyed the support of the majority of the business community and the *Reichswehr* leadership, it failed utterly to arouse the least enthusiasm amongst even the most reactionary lower strata of the population. Papen's was a regime without any roots in the masses, a 'featureless point of intersection of great historical forces [whose] independent weight is next to nil'. ^[2] And for this reason, Trotsky continued, it was incapable of implementing its reactionary programme, 'it can do nothing but take fright at its own gesticulations and grow dizzy at the vacuum unfolding on all sides of it'. ^[3] Nor was the support of and participation in the government by the *Reichswehr* sufficient to compensate for Papen's social isolation from the masses:

... for all its preponderance over the government, the *Reichswehr* nevertheless cannot lay claim to any independent political role. A hundred thousand soldiers, no matter how cohesive and steeled they may be... are incapable of commanding a nation of 65 million torn by the most profound social antagonisms. ^[4] The *Reichswehr* represents only one element in the interplay of forces, and not the decisive one. ^[5]

Lending the Papen cabinet credence in the eyes of the bourgeoisie (and the semblance of a stability it did not possess) was not only the temporary equilibrium established between the polarised forces of the Nazified petit-bourgeoisie and the KPD - SPD-led proletariat (each camp numbering some 13 millions), but also the economic upturn which first became visible in the summer months of 1932. Unemployment ceased to rise, then steadily declined, while on the Berlin Bourse, which had resumed dealings the previous April after being closed for nine months, the index climbed from 46 points in June and July (45 in April) to 49 in August and 56 by September. On the basis of this upturn (the product of a world-wide revival of trade and production which began mid-way through 1932), together with Papen's initial successes in combating the reformists and keeping the Nazi upstarts in their place, ^[6] industry, banking and agrarian interests alike rallied to the 'Cabinet of Barons', disillusionment only setting in when the methods of military-police Bonapartism proved themselves inadequate to counter the sudden upsurge of militancy in the working class which appeared towards the end of September.

The causes of this revival were manifold. It cannot be attributed exclusively to Papen's attempted wage cuts, since under Brüning similar measures had, more often than not, been carried through without organised or protracted resistance by the workers. Just as important was the fact that the reformist workers (who comprised the large majority of the workforce in the large plants, the bulk of the KPD's following being either unemployed or in the medium and small concerns) no longer felt obligated in any sense to hold back from strike action against the government. Brüning had gone, and with him the SPD-ADGB policy of 'tolerating' his programme of wage cuts and reductions in social services. The enforced return of Social Democracy to an oppositional role (however timid) therefore became a radicalising factor in the struggle of the workers against Papen's wage-cutting offensive. Finally there was the economic

revival itself. Drawing attention to symptoms of an upturn in the production cycle, Trotsky also took note of their repercussions in the consciousness of the proletariat:

We can predict with full assurance that an upward turn in the cycle would give a powerful impetus to the activity of the proletariat, at present in decline. At the moment when the factory stops discharging workers and takes on new ones, the self-confidence of the workers is strengthened; they are once again necessary. The compressed springs begin to expand again. Workers always enter into the struggle for the reconquest of lost positions more easily than for the conquest of new ones. ^[7]

And Trotsky went on to make another prediction borne out by the events of the following three months:

Neither emergency decrees nor the use of the *Reichswehr* will be able to liquidate mass strikes which develop on the wave of the upturn. The Bonapartist regime, which is able to maintain itself only through the 'social truce', will be the first victim of the upturn in the cycle. ^[8]

Certainly the shrewdest among Papen's ministers, von Schleicher realised that his own *Reichswehr* could only act as political arbiter so long as the proletariat and the fascist petit-bourgeoisie counter-balanced one another. The question therefore remained - on what social forces would the state power consolidate itself in the event of a dislocation of this equilibrium either to the right or the left? Schleicher addressed himself to this problem in a radio speech in August 1932:

If we understand by military dictatorship a government solely supported by the bayonets of the *Reichswehr*, then I can only say that such a government would rapidly run down in a vacuum, and would be bound to end in failure. In Germany perhaps more than in any other country, the government must be borne on a broad current of the people.

Schleicher's notion of a 'broad current' involved a bloc of the Nazi 'lefts', headed by Gregor Strasser, and the trade union bureaucracy, these two unlikely bedfellows serving as the base to a pyramidal structure at whose apex rested the German Officer Corps. The fall of Papen in November would provide the General with the opportunity to put these unorthodox ideas into practice. Meanwhile, the 'Cabinet of Barons' was running into serious difficulties with the mounting strike wave ^[9] and the progressive disaffection of the business world. Early in October, the pro-Nazi *Berliner Börsen Zeitung* commented apprehensively:

From the recognition of the political character of these strikes as combating the decrees of the German government there follows the political conclusion: no government can permit its measures for an energetic and definite combating of unemployment to be sabotaged for political reasons or for the purpose of election tactics. [New Reichstag elections had been fixed for 6 November - RB]

But the Papen government had to 'permit', for it lacked the material and social resources to make its paper decrees laws that the proletariat accepted without question. The *Berliner Börsen Zeitung* would, of course, have remedied matters by bringing the Nazis into the government, even to the extent of making Hitler Chancellor. Only slightly less intransigent was the independent *Kölnische Zeitung*, which issued a stern warning to the trade union leaders in its issue of 30 September:

The government programme requires aid and cooperation of all who aim to improve the economic situation. At the same time criticism of details is possible. The trade unions do not feel responsible for the government programme. Perhaps a way can be found to include them in this responsibility and cooperation. [But if they reject this]... then it is the task of the government to make the position clear regarding the carrying out of their emergency decrees. They will definitely have to face up to the question of a strike prohibition which, it is said, has already been raised in the cabinet.

A contrary view was expressed by the liberal Berlin *Zwolf-Uhr Blatt*, a paper which still held out hopes of compromise and even collaboration with the trade union bureaucracy:

It is feared that in the event of a strike prohibition these partial strikes could degenerate into a general strike movement... For this reason there is a disinclination in government circles to issue a strike prohibition. It is believed that before long, with the support of the trade unions, it will be possible to avoid all strikes.

So once again, the question of questions was - with or against the reformist bureaucracy? The *Tagliche Rundschau* tried like Schleicher either to evade or postpone an answer by demanding a broad coalition reaching from the ADGB bureaucrats on the left to Hitler on the right:

The method of government cannot be changed for the time being, but the persons and aims can be changed. After 6 November, we need a change of Chancellor. Otherwise the situation in Germany will become dangerously acute. One can govern without parliament [as Papen was virtually doing - RB] but one cannot govern without the people. A cabinet of national concentration is necessary, but it must include real personalities from all camps. If the NSDAP is approached honestly, it will certainly be ready to send two representatives into this concentration, whilst the trade unions of all tendencies will be unable to remain outside.

This sudden and all-pervading interest in the trade unions arose as a result of the already-discussed renewal of working-class militancy. Sections of the bourgeoisie still hoped that in lieu of more drastic measures (which involved the formation of a Nazi-dominated government) the proletariat could be curbed through the classical mechanism of the reformist bureaucracy.

But this same bureaucracy, nourished by half a century of capitalist expansion, could no longer promise the workers social reforms, higher wages and regular jobs in return for another era of class-collaboration. ^[10] The bourgeoisie now sought the ADGB's participation in a government that, in order to make possible a revival of German capitalism, would be compelled to make even deeper inroads into the incomes, living standards and political rights of the proletariat. This is what was new in the proposed participation of the trade union leaders in a government of 'national concentration', whose real class purpose was betrayed by the invitation to the NSDAP. Certainly, it was a utopian programme, for as Trotsky pointed out repeatedly in his polemics against the Stalinist theory that reformism had turned 'social fascist', fascism and its ruling-class supporters desired not the collaboration of Social Democracy, but its annihilation. Therefore there could be no question of the trade unions being 'incorporated' into the capitalist state, whether that state be represented by a Bonapartist or Nazi regime. The proof of Trotsky's argument against 'social fascism' came on 2 May 1933, when Hitler *liquidated* the ADGB unions and on their ruins established on 10 May the 'German Labour Front'.

However the utopian nature of the Schleicher programme must not blind us to the immense pressures that were bearing down on the trade unions as the most basic organisations of the proletariat, and to the fact that the continued retreats of the ADGB and SPD leaderships before Brüning and then Papen had prepared the political conditions for their destruction.

The trade union question also preoccupied certain of the Nazi leadership in the autumn of 1932, for we find Goebbels making several worried entries in his diary about the growth of the strike movement and Papen's palpable inability to check it:

28 September: Minor strikes flare up throughout the Reich. The government is perfectly helpless against them. *The trade unions are being carried away by the radicalism of the masses...*

30 September: The gentlemen of the Wilhelmstrasse are beginning to feel uncomfortable. Strikes are becoming too numerous in the country. Fury and discontent everywhere. Things are getting more dangerous than they had perhaps imagined...

1 October: Strikes and rioting are increasing all over the country. The dilettantism of the present government must one day meet with an awful retribution... ^[11]

Naturally such sentiments could not be expressed openly in the Nazi press or at party rallies. Hitler had already ordered a 'left turn' following the rebuff of 13 August. To come out now against the strike movement would have ranged the Nazi Party quite unambiguously on the side of Papen's 'Cabinet of Barons'. Papen therefore had to be attacked in tones no less strident than were being employed in the KPD press, and the strikers 'supported', through the activities of the NSBO. Again the diary entries of Goebbels illustrate how and why this manoeuvre was undertaken:

31 August: There is an indescribably strong antagonistic feeling against Reaction amongst the people. It has only the apparatus of the state at its disposal, nothing else whatever. No party, no powerful group.

4 September: I write an article sharply attacking the 'upper ten'. If we wish to keep the party intact, we must again appeal to the primitive instincts of the masses.

15 September: At the *Sportspalast* in the evening, I deliver a well-thought address directed against the Cabinet and its political practices and tactics. Gradually we manage to get a firm hold on the masses again. ^[12]

‘Getting a hold on the masses again’ necessarily involved the Nazi leadership in propaganda tactics which, to say the least, disconcerted all but the party’s firmest supporters. Even before the NSDAP’s participation in the Berlin transport workers’ strike, donations to the party treasury had tailed off alarmingly. Here the sly hand of Papen was at work. The Chancellor still hoped to bring Hitler to heel by financial as well as political pressures, not only persuading industrialists and bankers to cease subsidising the party, but exhausting its resources and energies in yet another costly Reichstag election campaign. Papen also hoped that the ebbing of the Nazi tide detectable in the elections of 31 July would by 6 November have gathered sufficient momentum to convince Hitler that unless he accepted Papen’s offer of the Vice-Chancellorship, his last opportunity of entering the government would have been missed. ^[13] This plan seems to have had the approval of all but a handful of business leaders. On 16 September, Goebbels recorded that the election of 6 November ‘will be difficult this time as the Party exchequer is empty. The past elections have used up all the money at our disposal.’ And four days later, ‘the election campaign costs money, and money, at present, is very difficult to obtain’. ^[14]

The Nazi leaders’ only consolation in this bleak period was the manifest inability of the Papen government to command the support of any segment of the population. ^[15] Neither big business nor the army command relished a situation in which the *Reichswehr* and the police would be the only organised force standing between the propertied class and revolution. Somehow the state had to anchor its authority in a section of the masses.

This problem was the subject of a quite remarkable article in the confidential information and policy bulletin of heavy industry, *Deutsche Führer Briefe*, edited by Dr Franz Reuter, an official of the Federation of German Industries. Entitled *The Social Reconsolidation of Capitalism*, and published in the issues of 16 and 20 September 1932, the article comes to the historic conclusion that an end had to be put to the policy of collaboration with the Social Democratic bureaucracy if German capitalism was to preserve and consolidate its rule. Mass support there had to be, but it was to be found not among the reformist workers, *but the Nazified petit-bourgeoisie*:

The problem of consolidating the capitalist regime in postwar Germany is governed by the fact that the leading section, the capitalists controlling industry, has become too small to maintain its rule alone. Unless recourse is to be had to the extremely dangerous weapon of purely military force [the Kapp solution, and one rejected by Schleicher - RB], it is necessary for it to link itself with sections which do not belong to it from a social standpoint, but which can render it the essential service of anchoring its rule among the people, and thereby becoming its special or last defender. This last or ‘outermost’ defender of bourgeois rule, in the first period after the war, was Social Democracy. National Socialism has to succeed Social Democracy in providing a mass support for capitalist rule in Germany... Social Democracy had a special qualification for this task, which up to the present National Socialism lacks... Thanks to its character as the original party of the workers, Social Democracy, in addition to its purely political force, also had the much more valuable and permanent advantage of control over organised labour, and by paralysing its revolutionary energies chained it firmly to the state... In the first period of the capitalist regime after the war, the working class was divided by the wages victories and social-political measures through which the Social Democrats canalised the revolutionary movement [that is, the November 1918 Working Agreement between the ADGB and the employers - RB]... the deflection of the revolution into social-political measures corresponded with the transfer of the struggle from the factories and the streets into parliaments and cabinets, with the transfer of the struggle ‘from below’ into concessions ‘from above’.

From then onwards, therefore, the Social Democratic and trade union bureaucracy, and with them also the section of the workers whom they led, were closely tied to the capitalist state and participation in its administration - at least so long as there was anything left of their postwar victories to defend by these means, and so long as the workers followed their leadership. This analysis leads to four important conclusions:

1. The policy of the ‘lesser evil’ is not merely tactical, it is the essence of Social Democracy.
2. The cords which bind the trade union bureaucracy to the state method [of reforms] ‘from above’ are more compelling than those which bind them to Marxism, and therefore to Social

Democracy; and this holds in relation to the bourgeois state which wants to draw in this bureaucracy.

3. The links between the trade union bureaucracy and Social Democracy stand or fall, from a political standpoint, *with parliamentarianism*.

4. The possibility of a liberal social policy for monopoly capitalism is conditioned by the existence of an automatic mechanism for the creation of divisions within the working class. A capitalist regime which adopts a liberal social policy must not only be entirely parliamentary, *it must also be based on Social Democracy and must allow Social Democracy to have sufficient gains to record*; a capitalist regime which puts an end to these gains *must also sacrifice parliamentarism and Social Democracy, must create a substitute for Social Democracy and pass over to a social policy of constraint*.

The process of this transition, in which we are at the moment, for the reason that the economic crisis has perforce blotted out the gains referred to, has to pass through the acutely dangerous stage when, with the wiping out of these gains, the mechanism for the creation of divisions in the working class which depended on them also ceases to function, the working class moves in the direction of Communism [though at a far slower tempo than would have been the case had the KPD pursued a correct tactic in relation to the SPD workers - RB], and the capitalist rule approaches the emergency stage of military dictatorship [that is, of pure Bonapartism - RB]...

The only safeguard from this acute stage is if the division and holding back of the working class, which the former mechanism can no longer adequately maintain, is carried out by other and more direct methods, in this lie the positive opportunities and tasks of National Socialism.

Here the analysis is false. Although National Socialism did succeed in mobilising a section of the working class against the proletariat as a whole, these workers were recruited from the bourgeois parties, not the SPD. More important, fascism is principally a method of setting the petit-bourgeoisie against the working class, its social basis therefore being very different from that of Social Democracy. The document continues:

... If National Socialism succeeds in bringing the trade unions into a social policy of constraint as Social Democracy formerly succeeded in bringing them into a liberal policy, then National Socialism would become the bearer of one of the functions essential to the future of capitalist rule, *and must necessarily find its place in the state and social system*. The danger of a state capitalist or even socialistic development, which is often urged against such an incorporation of the trade unions under National Socialist leadership, will in fact be avoided precisely by these means... *There is no third course between a reconsolidation of capitalist rule and the Communist revolution.* ^[16]

Once again, we should note that this extremely class-conscious analysis is conducted from the 'Schleicher' standpoint. It speaks of the severance of the umbilical cord connecting the trade union bureaucracy with its historical parent, the SPD, and more than this, the 'incorporation of the trade unions [into the capitalist state] under Nazi leadership'. Even if the ADGB bureaucracy, or a section of it, might be ready to undertake such a role, the Nazis had no intention of seeking its assistance in subordinating the proletariat to the economic and military requirements of German imperialism. This was September 1932, and not August 1914. What applied to the SPD flank of the reformist bureaucracy held good for its trade union wing. The trade unions stood or fell with the Weimar party system and the entire structure of bourgeois parliamentary democracy. Yet as late as the autumn of 1932, a considerable section of the pro-Nazi bourgeoisie appears to have believed that the trade union bureaucracy could continue to serve monopoly capitalism under a regime which had eliminated both.

This illusion was, ironically, shared not only by the Stalinists, who, ever since the onset of the 'Third Period' in 1928, had been arguing that reformist 'social fascism' was in the last stages of fusion with the bourgeois state and, after 1930, National Socialism, but also by the reformist trade union bureaucrats themselves. Amidst this discussion - public as well as private - on the destiny of the German trade unions, ADGB President Theodor Leipart made a speech on 14 October at the trade union centre in Bernau (north of Berlin) in which he intimated that the bureaucracy was willing to do its duty by the fatherland as it had done in the war of 1914-18: 'No socialist can escape the nationalist development. We also did not when we fought in the world war for the fatherland until our sad collapse.' This hint did not pass unnoticed. Six days later, on 20 October, Gregor Strasser told a Nazi rally in the Berlin *Sportpalast*:

More important still appears to me the declaration which the leader of the ADGB Theodor Leipart made on 14 October in Bernau. In this declaration we find passages which, if they are acted upon honestly, *open up wide prospects for the future*. [Emphasis added]

In the case of the Catholic trade unions, these overtures had actually led to informal exchanges between Strasser and the Catholic trade union leader Imbusch. And behind the scenes, orchestrating this obscene dialogue was Schleicher himself. The first contacts between the general and the ADGB went back to 24 August 1932, when Dr Kubbert, a friend of both Schleicher and Strasser, and also a director of Verkehrsgesellschaft AG, paid a call on the Berlin headquarters of the ADGB at the suggestion of an executive member of the *Reichsbanner*, the Social Democratic defence organisation. On this first occasion, Kubbert's proposal that the trade unions and the NSDAP 'lefts' should collaborate in the formation of a broad-based 'national' government was turned down by three ADGB officials - Eggert, Schlimme and Erdmann. They would, they said, have nothing to do with an undertaking that might set the ADGB against its traditional ally, the SPD (Erdmann, editor of an ADGB journal, informed Leipart of this approach in a letter dated 29 August 1932).

These first tentative contacts were not resumed in earnest until after Schleicher's appointment as Chancellor in December. Meanwhile, there had been developments of an equally sinister nature in the leadership of the other, Communist, flank of the German workers' movement.

The Twelfth ECCI Plenum

The suicidal course forced on the KPD by the Kremlin after 1930 had on more than one occasion provoked conflicts within the top party leadership between critics of the 'general line' and Stalinist stalwarts such as Thälmann, Pieck and Ulbricht (though even Thälmann had joined with the majority of the KPD Central Committee in initially opposing Stalin's proposal to support the Nazi referendum in Prussia). This factional struggle, which had already led to the demotion of Neumann and Remmele from the top leadership at the beginning of 1932, came out into the open at the Twelfth ECCI Plenum held in Moscow in the September of that year, at a time when the German working class had begun to hit back at the Papen government and the Nazis.

The Twelfth ECCI Plenum coincided with a profound conjunctural crisis of the Soviet economy, Communist Party and state. The bureaucratically projected targets of the First Five-Year Plan had so hindered the harmonious development of the various sectors of the economy that, by the autumn of 1932, entire branches of industry stood on the verge of breakdown, while in the countryside enforced total collectivisation had led to such extreme conditions of famine that starving peasants had even resorted to cannibalism. Stalin's economic adventurism (itself the panicky reaction to the crisis created by the years of retreat before the *Kulaks* and *Nepmen*) had brought the USSR to the brink of civil war. The Soviet oppositionist Roy Medvedev has described the parlous state of the Soviet economy at this time in his historical survey of Stalinism, *Let History Judge*:

Stalin... brushed aside reports of famine, which appeared in many areas in 1932-33, as a result of crop failures and forced grain collections. Tens of thousands of peasants died of starvation and hundreds of thousands, perhaps even millions, left their homes and fled to the cities... In 1930, Stalin predicted an increase in industrial output of 31 to 32 per cent. The actual increase, according to the yearbooks of the Central Administration, was 22 per cent. For 1931, a new target was adopted: an increase of 45 per cent. The actual increase in 1931 was 20 per cent. In 1932, it dropped to 15 per cent, and on 1933 to five per cent... Ten million tons of pig iron were planned for the last year of the Five-Year Plan, and Stalin in 1930 declared this goal raised to 17 million tons. In 1932, 6.16 million tons were poured... Only in 1950 did the figure pass 17 million. ^[17]

Naturally not a word concerning the real state of the Soviet economy was permitted to appear in the official Comintern press. And it was not only for reasons of political prestige that Stalinist hacks and their liberal hirelings, throughout these years of famine and industrial dislocation, presented to the outside world a picture of a land flowing with milk and honey, and peopled by a loyal and happy proletariat and peasantry. Even more than worldwide exposure of his disastrous economic policies, Stalin feared invasion by the imperialist powers, a threat the USSR had never been worse equipped politically and militarily to meet than since the first days of the wars of intervention. Rural unrest had spread even into the ranks of the Red Army, and there were grave doubts as to the reliability of units composed mainly of peasants. Red Army men had been known to mutiny when called in to put down local village uprisings against Stalin's collectivisation policy. Would they be any more reliable if called upon to fight against an

invader who demagogically promised them freedom of trade, the break-up of the collective farms, and the restoration of private land ownership? ^[18]

Stalin's ruinous economic course had regenerated previously inert oppositional tendencies in the party - on the left, Zinoviev and Kamenev, and the Bukharinite right, now headed by Riutin, who was arrested in October 1932. Zinoviev and Kamenev were also expelled along with the Rights, the bogus charge being that they had become 'traitors to the party and the working class', and were 'trying to create by underground means, under the fraudulent cover of the banner of Marxism-Leninism, a bourgeois-Kulak organisation for the restoration of capitalism, especially the Kulaks, in the USSR'. Riutin, a former close ally of the Moscow Right Oppositionist Uglanov, who had been one of the first to fall foul of Stalin's anti-Bukharin drive in 1929, had drafted a programme calling for a slackening of industrialisation tempos and a temporary retreat to private farming. So great was support given to this secretly circulated programme that Stalin feared his own political defeat on the CPSU Politbureau. Certainly there were voices raised on that body against the 'excesses' of Stalin's line, and when Stalin proposed that the arrested Riutin be executed, he was outvoted by his Politbureau comrades, with only Kaganovich supporting him. Despite the eclectic nature of the Riutin programme, with its attempt to combine a Bukharinist economic policy with endorsement of Trotsky's criticisms of the Stalinist bureaucratic regime in party and state affairs (Riutin also called for the reinstatement of expelled party members, including the exiled Trotsky), Stalin had good grounds for fearing its possible disintegrating effect on his domination of the foreign sections of the Communist International, where various and in some cases contradictory oppositionist trends were beginning to manifest themselves, as we have already seen in the case of the KPD. Weeding out real, potential or imagined critics of the Stalinist line therefore became one of the main preoccupations of the Twelfth ECCI Plenum.

Finally there was the question of Stalin's foreign policy, which now more than ever before was a projection of the narrow caste interests of the Soviet bureaucracy. The near-breakdown of the First Five-Year Plan now meant that the economy was thrown even more into dependence on German technical and material aid. In 1932, nearly half of all Soviet imports came from one country - Germany. Teetering on the brink of industrial chaos, nation-wide famine and a many-millioned peasants' revolt, Stalin feared class upheavals nowhere more than in Germany, the country closest to a revolutionary crisis. The Kremlin feared that revolution in Germany could bring counter-revolution in the USSR, and, accompanying it, massive imperialist intervention. Stalin's German policy therefore had two aims. Firstly, the avoidance of major class battles of a scale that would threaten Moscow's trade and technical links with Berlin, and secondly, the formation of a government which would disrupt the threatening united anti-Soviet front by turning its guns westwards towards France, the country still regarded even at this stage as the main instigator of war against the Soviet Union.

Here Papen's government by no means filled the bill, for although stridently nationalist, from its very formation it had sought a *détente* with France, and was avowedly hostile to the USSR (before becoming Chancellor, Papen had addressed a meeting of the *Herren Klub* on 27 February 1932, in which he called for a German-French-Polish alliance against the USSR). Papen's memo of 29 June 1932, on his conversation with French Prime Minister Herriot at the Lausanne conference, denotes the direction of German foreign policy at this time:

... the German government was extraordinarily serious in its striving to remove the barriers which lay between France and Germany. As proof of this I wanted to tell him how far we are determined to go in connection with this thing. We were ready for a customs union with France... and in this field of security we could give no greater proof of our sincerity... *than that we were thinking of an entente between the French and German armies.* ^[19]

Great was the alarm among Soviet diplomats when they learned what had transpired at Lausanne. Papen was preparing to turn the Soviet Union's western defences by a military alliance with French imperialism and its vassal state Poland! Soviet Ambassador to Berlin Leo Khinchuk (purged by Stalin some five years later) demanded and was granted an interview with Chief of Staff and Defence Minister von Schleicher that very same day. According to notes made on the meeting by the general, Khinchuk had been perturbed by 'rumours of a stronger western orientation of German foreign policy' and 'that this orientation could have a harmful effect upon relations with Russia'. To which Schleicher replied that the still-intimate Red Army-*Reichswehr* relations were a guarantee against any untoward changes in Germany's attitude towards the USSR. ^[20]

That Stalin viewed the rise to power of an extreme right-wing, even Nazi government with equanimity is not only suggested by the general orientation of Kremlin diplomacy and Comintern policy at this time, but confirmed by the personal testimony of one of his most trusted and experienced international secret agents, Walter Krivitsky, who writes:

Some seven or eight months before his [Hitler's] ascent to power, in the early summer months of 1932, I met in Danzig one of the high officers of the German general staff, a confirmed monarchist who came from Berlin expressly to meet me. He was an old-school military man and believed in the restoration of the German empire in cooperation with Russia. I asked this officer for his opinion on Germany's policy in the event of Hitler's becoming the head of the government. We discussed Hitler's views as outlined in his book *Mein Kampf*. The German officer gave me his analysis of coming developments, and concluded: 'Let Hitler come and do his job. And then we, the army, will make short work of him.' [Hitler's 'job' included, among other pressing tasks the physical destruction of the German Communist Party - RB] I asked the officer if he would be good enough to submit his views in writing for me to forward to Moscow, and he agreed to do so. His report created a stir in Kremlin circles. The prevailing view there was that military and economic ties between Germany and Russia were so deep rooted *that Hitler could not possibly disregard them*. Moscow understood Hitler's fulminations against Bolshevism *as a manoeuvre on the road to power*. They had their function. *But they could not change the basic interests of the two countries*, which were bound to make for cooperation. *Stalin himself derived much comfort from the report of the German officer*. Although fully alive to the Nazi doctrine of 'pressure towards the east', he was habituated to the tradition of collaboration between the Red Army and the Reichswehr, and he had a wholesome respect for the German Army and its leadership under von Seeckt. The respect of the German Staff Officer dovetailed with his own views. *Stalin looked on the Nazi movement primarily as a reaction to the Versailles peace. It seemed to him that all Germany would do under Hitler was to throw off the shackles of Versailles...* For these reasons Stalin made no effort after the rise of Hitler to break the secret Berlin-Moscow tie. *On the contrary, he tried to keep it in force.* ^[21]

The crises in the Soviet economy and Communist Party, the danger of imperialist intervention, the possibility of a realignment of German foreign policy - all now became factors influencing and shaping the policy of the Comintern leadership and, more than any other, that of its section in Germany. Despite the extreme radicalism of phraseology, the general tenor of the resolutions adopted at the Twelfth Plenum was cautious in content, referring in only the most general way to a 'growing revolutionary upsurge' which as yet nowhere posed immediately the question of the proletariat taking power. Even more illuminating was the astonishing statement that 'capitalist stabilisation' had only just come to an end - three full years after the Wall Street crash and the onset of the world slump! These ambiguous formulations had a definite political purpose. The main task before the sections was not the preparation of the working class for power, but 'to organise and lead the struggle of the workers, peasants and all the toilers... for the defence of the fatherland of all the workers of all countries, the USSR, against the closely approaching intervention...'. ^[22] The dangers of a war of intervention against the USSR also occupied much of the main Plenum Thesis, *On the International Situation and the Tasks of the Comintern Sections*, with once again the main sources of this threat being quite wrongly located in Japan and France.

Significantly, in view of Stalin's foreign policy orientation at this time, German imperialism was depicted as a possible victim of Polish aggression. Its resistance to such pressures made Germany 'one of the main centres of the sharpest and most intense world imperialist conflicts'. Germany also stood in the way of 'French imperialism' which through 'feverish activity in the struggle for hegemony on the European continent, is trying to strengthen its old military and political alliances and form new ones...'. ^[23]

As for the Plenum's conclusions on the relations between fascism and bourgeois democracy, and the tactics to be pursued by the Communist parties in relation to the Social Democrats, nothing had changed. Whilst it was conceded that 'fascism and social fascism', in standing for 'the maintenance and the strengthening of capitalism and bourgeois dictatorship' adopted 'different tactical views', the difference amounted merely to the 'social fascists' preferring 'a more moderate and more "lawful" application of bourgeois class coercion', while the fascists stood for a dictatorship shorn of its "'democratic" drappings'. Rejecting oppositional tendencies and appeals for working-class unity on the part of Social Democratic leaders as 'manoeuvres', the sections were called upon, as before, to 'direct the main blows against Social Democracy', as 'the social mainstay of the bourgeoisie'; while 'by means of the united front from below'

they were summoned to ‘break down the wall which often [sic!] separates them from the Social Democratic workers’. [24] And as at the previous Plenum of April 1931, ‘liberal’ residues of an earlier era, when alliances with reformists and the defence of bourgeois democracy were the rule, had been detected in the work of certain parties:

In the overwhelming majority of the sections serious shortcomings and a number of serious opportunist mistakes have been discovered in carrying out the tactic of the united front from below, which have been utilised by the Social Democrats and the reformist trade union bureaucrats in their tricky manoeuvres. [25]

It transpired that in the unions especially, Communists had been guilty of putting forward the slogan ‘make the leaders fight’, which was tantamount to violating the Stalinist law of unity only ‘from below’. Summing up the various deviations in the Communist International, the Plenum came to the predictable conclusion that ‘capitulation to the reformist trade union bureaucrats’ was ‘the chief danger’, and not ‘sectarianism’, whose greatest sin was to ‘give up work in the reformist trade unions’ (an understandable error, in view of the fact that for several years, these unions had been characterised as fascist strike-breaking machines, and deserted *en masse* by Communist workers for the chimera of ‘red’ unionism).

What was remarkable about the resolutions and theses adopted at the Twelfth Plenum, in view of the unprecedented economic and political tensions accumulating in that country, was the paucity of materials devoted to Germany, then more than ever before the political fulcrum of Europe. We merely glean from the main *Theses* the quite false information that ‘the von Papen - Schleicher government, with the help of the *Reichswehr*, the *Stahlhelm* and the National Socialists, has established a form of fascist dictatorship’. But so too had Brüning, and before him, even the ‘social fascist’ Müller. What made this new ‘form’ different from its predecessors? Was it in fact different? The reader searched for the answers to these questions - vital to the future of the class struggle - in vain. The authors of the *Theses* clearly did not wish to become involved in a detailed and possibly therefore dangerous analysis of the real political situation in Germany. This becomes even more obvious in the section devoted to the immediate tasks of the parties, where little more than 100 words are expended on outlining the truly monumental and epoch-shaping responsibilities that weighed on the none-too-steady shoulders of the KPD. The tasks of the KPD were:

... to mobilise the vast masses of toilers in defence of their vital interests, against the bandit policy of monopolist capital, against fascism, against the emergency decrees, against nationalism and chauvinism, and by developing economic and political strikes, by struggle for proletarian internationalism, by means of demonstrations, to lead the masses to the point of the general political strike: to win over the bulk of the Social Democratic masses, and definitely overcome the weaknesses of trade union work. The chief slogans which the KPD must put forward to offset the slogan of the fascist dictatorship (the ‘Third Empire’) and the slogan of the SPD (the ‘Second Republic’) is the slogan of the workers’ and peasants’ republic, that is, Socialist Soviet Germany, which will guarantee the possibility of the voluntary affiliation of the people of Austria and other German territories. [26]

Quite apart from the blatant concession to chauvinism, whereby the slogan of a Soviet Germany served as a device for furthering nationalist ends, the perspective and programme foisted on the KPD was ultimatistic in nature, it lacked a worked-out series of transitional demands through which the reformist workers could be won to a united struggle against the capitalist offensive and fascism. Instead there was the administrative injunction to ‘win over the bulk of the Social Democratic masses’ - while at the same time, the line of the Comintern denied to the KPD the tactic necessary to this goal: the Leninist united front. The majority section of the proletariat still loyal to the SPD was to be detached from its leaders purely through the attractive power of the KPD, by artificially launching ‘economic and political strikes... demonstrations’, etc, steps in a campaign intended to culminate in the ‘general political strike’ - all of course under the ‘independent’ and exclusive leadership of the KPD. But what was equally to the point, the KPD had no concrete perspective for power. After the ‘general political strike...’ - what? The formation of organs of dual power? Workers’ councils? Factory committees? But these would be dominated, in their early stages at least, by representatives of ‘social fascism’. And since there could be no question of participating in bodies under the leadership of ‘social fascism’, the KPD implicitly repudiated in advance entry into genuine German workers’ soviets. The slogan of a ‘Socialist Soviet Germany’ therefore possessed purely a propagandistic and not agitational character. And a party that does

not constantly address itself to the question of power and raise this question in the minds of the entire working class in forms most appropriate to the level of struggle, does not deserve to be taken seriously.

More important issues than the fate of the German working class were engrossing the ECCI Plenum. There was the problem of the KPD leadership struggle, which although resolved in Thälmann's favour, continued to plague the ECCI bureaucrats and of course Stalin himself, who now more than ever before needed a strongly entrenched group at the head of the KPD willing and able to carry through the betrayal his foreign and domestic policies required.

According to his widow, Neumann began to oppose the Stalin - Thälmann line in the autumn of 1931, after the Prussian referendum, when he had:

... realised... that the CI was preparing the way for a new despicable and dangerous line in Germany. The formation of the so-called Neumann group coincided with this fatal political manoeuvre and Neumann's later realisation.

She adds that Neumann:

... saw the fascist danger with clear eyes. He did not underestimate the enemy and he realised that the KPD would disappear with the republic. Did he recognise that the new Comintern line for a temporary alliance with the Nazis was due to Stalin's change in foreign policy? I do not know. Anyway he opposed this new line and still stood for a militant struggle against the Nazis... He saw with horror and dark foreboding that those people who had met at Harzburg were mostly the ones with whom the KPD had made common cause over the referendum. ^[27]

Sheer fear of fascism, and the instinct of self-preservation, were the main driving forces behind Neumann's opposition to Comintern policy for Germany. It had nothing in common theoretically with Trotsky's critique of Third Period Stalinism, and does not seem to have involved even a questioning of Stalin's designation of Social Democracy as the 'moderate wing of fascism'. Even so, Neumann soon became a focal point of opposition to Thälmann in the KPD and youth leadership. Among his supporters included the veteran worker-Communist Hermann Remmele (purged with Neumann in 1937), Leo Flieg and Willy Münzenberg. Lacking a firm political and theoretical foundation for a serious factional struggle against Thälmann, and what was more important, his patrons in Moscow, the Neumann group attempted to change KPD policy by a series of bureaucratic manoeuvres. It was the method they had learned from Stalin, and now they sought to turn it against him - without success.

... the vast majority of party members knew nothing of the existence of a 'Neumann group'. *There were no discussions at the lower levels.* Neumann and his friends thought it imperative to gather like-minded support and thereby to change the balance of power within the party. A large section of the Central Committee showed sympathy for Neumann's critical attitude, and the youth leadership practically all expressed solidarity with his political line. Heartened by this, *Neumann thought he could carry out his policy behind the Comintern's back.* He believed his policy was in the interests of the German proletariat and would be the best way of preventing the Nazis from obtaining power. He had no doubts about success and hoped finally to present Moscow with a *fait accompli*. Historical developments would justify him *and the Comintern would be obliged to give him its blessing. It is significant that it occurred to nobody in this allegedly democratic organisation to ask the opinion of the mass of comrades.* ^[28]

Once Neumann's oppositional activities and views were discovered, Moscow moved quickly against him and his comrades. Stalin issued an order to remove him from the KPD leadership 'at the beginning of 1932', Neumann being summoned to Moscow in April to give an account of his sins. Nothing was said or written publicly about the disgrace of Stalin's former protégé until the Twelfth ECCI Plenum, though news of it leaked out through the press of the Left Opposition: ^[29] 'The party membership only learned of a "Neumann group" six months after he had been removed from the leadership of the KPD.' ^[30]

Reading between the lines of Thälmann's main speech to the Twelfth Plenum (published under the title 'Unleash the Proletarian Rebellion'), it is clear that serious divergences over tactics had indeed arisen within the KPD leadership, even if they did not derive from a wholly principled stand by the opposition. Thälmann referred to the existence of 'petit-bourgeois views of a defeatist and pessimistic nature which find their expression in such statements as "if fascism comes to power it's all up with us"'. ^[31] This was certainly not in accordance with the views of the ECCI, which held that:

Hitler's accession to power in Germany would mean a sharpening of the contradictions of the Versailles Treaty [something to be welcomed by Stalin - RB], unprecedentedly strained relations

in Europe, *which would speed up the growing revolutionary crisis in its central section - Germany...* We must see to it most carefully that we bring our struggle against wage robbery and emergency decrees *into correct relation with our struggle for liberation from the fetters of the Versailles Treaty.* ^[32]

Which of course was also the tactic pursued by the Nazi 'lefts' in the NSBO, who sought to blur over the class struggle against the German imperialist bourgeoisie by directing it against 'Versailles slavery'. Presumably there had also been rumblings of criticism against the KPD's chauvinist programme of 'national and social liberation', especially those of its sections which were blatantly designed to undercut the patriotic appeal of the Nazis, for Thälmann went on:

In our struggle against Versailles, we must speak a comprehensible language... which the middle strata of toilers [that is, those supporting the NSDAP! - RB] can understand... We must rid many of our comrades of certain inner inhibitions which they still possess, *of certain 'apprehensions' that we may have borrowed certain sections from the National Socialists' demands and incorporated them in our liberation programme.* We must fill the whole party with a much stronger consciousness that we were and are the first and only opponents of the Versailles system in Germany. ^[33]

Thälmann also took issue with another heretical notion prevalent in the KPD - namely that with the emergence of National Socialism as a mass movement commanding the support of some 13 millions, together with von Papen's moves against the reformists in Prussia, Social Democracy was no longer the 'main social support of the bourgeoisie', and therefore it might be permissible to approach its middle and local cadres for a united front against the Nazis. Thälmann would yield not an inch:

After the coming to power of the Papen government, certain tendencies to deviation from the general line of the party... manifested themselves among individual comrades in Germany. [An article in the KPD press on the Papen regime]... contains one absolutely false formulation, namely, *'that the bourgeoisie is temporarily renouncing the cooperation of Social Democracy as its main social support'*. *In this we see a wholly inadmissible estimation of the role of the SPD in the present situation.* The tactical conclusions which have been drawn are substantially on a par with the proposals of the Berlin District leadership - proposals which were made to the SPD with the view to holding joint demonstrations, *and which were rightly rejected by the CC of our party, and corrected [sic!] in the case of Berlin.* ^[34] ... The proposal made by the leaders of the Berlin district to the Iron Front *was sharply criticised by us*, because it expressed an overestimation of the degree of maturity attained by Social Democratic workers, *and an underestimation of our own power among the working class*, for the organisation of widespread demonstrations of the united front *from below, coupled with a surrender in the face of certain sentimental feelings of unity [sic!] which are to be met with.* ^[35]

Thälmann was clearly perturbed that after more than four years of campaigning in the KPD against the Leninist united front, there were still comrades prepared to advocate its use in the fight against fascism. Worse still, a united front between the KPD and SPD smacked of... Trotskyism:

There existed a great lack of clarity in our own ranks, in the judgement passed up on Luxemburgism, and also in the question of Trotskyism as a counter-revolutionary ideology... The historically important letter of Stalin ^[36] helped us to correct, and abolish with all speed, the vagueness... in the party and the mistakes made in *Die Rote Fahne*... Trotskyism wants in all seriousness to see the Communists going hand in hand with the murderers of Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg... Trotsky has attempted on more than one occasion to lead the working class astray by his writings, *by demanding negotiations between the leaders of the KPD and the SPD.* ^[37]

Significantly Neumann, who although disgraced was present at the Plenum, was singled out by Thälmann for failing to pose sharply enough the 'counter-revolutionary' nature of Trotskyism. In an introduction to a German translation of Stalin's attack on Rosa Luxemburg, he had lapsed into unforgiveable 'conciliationism' by designating Trotskyism simply as a 'left ideology'. The vigilant Ulbricht detected this lapse, and inserted the correct formulation, which according to Thälmann, was 'the counter-revolutionary vanguard of the bourgeoisie'. Neumann's phrase, he said, ran 'counter to the clear words of comrade Stalin'. This little incident is in fact important, for it demonstrates how greatly the Stalinist leadership of the KPD and the ECCI feared the penetration into the party of Trotsky's analysis and criticism of Comintern policy in Germany. Relations were so strained between Thälmann and Neumann

that at one point the latter challenged a claim by Thälmann that it was Neumann who was responsible for the KPD slogan ‘smash the ADGB’ and its campaign to stop trade unionists paying subscriptions to ADGB unions. Neumann burst out ‘Never!’ to which Thälmann replied: ‘I expected that everything I said about your political mistakes would be described by you as a lie.’ [38]

Although vociferous in his attacks on Neumann, Thälmann was strangely reticent concerning the situation in Germany (as indeed were the theses and resolutions adopted at the Plenum). In his concluding speech to the Plenum, Thälmann returned to the well-worn themes of the impermissibility of united fronts with reformists and the counter-revolutionary role of Trotskyism, but had absolutely nothing to say about the nature of the Papen government or the KPD’s evaluation of the likelihood of a Nazi take-over. It fell to J Lensky - *of the Polish party* - to attempt the thankless task of analysing the political situation in Germany, one which he accomplished in the classic ‘Third Period’ Stalinist manner, fudging over all distinctions between bourgeois democracy and fascism, Social Democracy and National Socialism, and between Papen-Schleicher Bonapartism and Hitler fascism:

The government which has come to power *is in the main of a fascist character*... To regard this government like the Brüning government as a transitional government would reveal a failure to understand the qualitative changes that have taken place in the situation and would be an underestimation of the real fascist menace... [Lensky quotes here from a letter of the Polish Communist Party Central Committee of 25 June on the German situation - RB] It seems to me that the fascist coup in Prussia and the further development of events as a whole have confirmed the correctness of this estimate. *The German bourgeoisie have already begun to build their military fascist dictatorship*... the fascist regime which is rising in Germany will rather resemble the Polish variety of fascist dictatorship, including the considerable role played by the militarists in both countries, each with a marshal at the head. The military-fascist dictatorship in Germany which is growing organically out of the Weimar Republic may be accompanied by the outward forms of parliamentarism, that is, *a certain amount of democratic decorations* which will help to carry through the policy of open deception [sic!] of the broad masses of the people jointly with the policy of open violence. Is the complete abolition of Social Democracy necessary? *Evidently not*. The whole experience of the development of the fascist system in Poland has *refuted* the position of the Rights and the Trotskyists on this question, *viz, that the fascist dictatorship would mean the death of Social Democracy*. From this they drew the conclusion that Social Democracy would willy-nilly have to fight against the attacking fascist regime... Further, is it necessary to carry through the so-called liquidation of the other bourgeois parties in Germany? I think that it is not. [39]

The events of the next six months were to provide crushing refutations of every one of Lensky’s contentions and predictions. One can therefore appreciate why a Pole, and not Thälmann, had been selected to speculate on the future course of events in Germany. Lensky rendered Stalin and his stalwarts in the German leadership another valuable service when quite unexpectedly, in a lengthy digression on the vacillations of the German petit-bourgeoisie and unemployed workers, he blurted out:

We must here put up the strongest opposition to any attempts to shake the leadership of the KPD. The tremendous task of fighting against fascism demands that the correct general line be pursued with complete unanimity, and it demands Bolshevik discipline in the party. [40]

There was no letting up on the drive against Neumann’s group. At the KPD conference, held in Berlin on 20 October, the party Central Committee passed unanimously a resolution condemning Neumann and others ‘who, on the basis of their political mistakes and deviations from the line of the party and with the method of group struggle, attempted to interfere with the turn of the party to intensified mass proletarian policy’. The conference significantly endorsed another resolution which approved the expulsion of the Riutin - Zinoviev bloc from the CPSU. In Stalin’s eyes at least, the two factions were linked. [41]

Two opportunities to reorient the Comintern and its German section had been lost. Neither at the Twelfth ECCI Plenum nor the KPD Conference a month later had there been any open or serious discussion of the political situation in Germany and its implications for the proletariat. Past tactical and strategic errors of the KPD leadership had been either ignored, depicted as victories or blamed on the Neumann group’s activities. At all costs, Thälmann’s position in the party as its infallible leader had to be protected, for what was at stake was the prestige of Stalin himself. Hence the fulsome tributes to the KPD leadership at the Plenum, and the pledges of support against all attempts to ‘shake’ it. That nothing had changed in relation to policy and tactics became obvious shortly after the Plenum and the KPD Conference, when

there appeared in the Comintern organ an article optimistically entitled 'The KPD Takes the Offensive'. As one might have guessed, the 'offensive' was not directed in the first place against the Nazis, but the Social Democrats. This article, it should not be forgotten, appeared less than two months before the formation of the Hitler government:

The *fascist* dictatorship, which was established in Germany after 20 July, is attempting to rally the forces of counter-revolution. But these attempts... are being brought to nought by the ever more rapid tempo of the growing wave of the revolutionary upsurge... *No one is able to stop the growing discontent and indignation of the workers against the bourgeoisie and its fascist government...* The changes in the relation of the forces of revolution and counter-revolution are continuing to move *irresistibly* in a direction beneficial to the working class and its Communist vanguard... The Social Democratic leaders are making desperate efforts to consolidate their influence over the working masses... by developing *clap-trap about the 'united front'*. By the united front they understand a bloc of leaders, the abandonment of the struggle for Communism by the Communists, the salvation of capitalism under the flag of 'saving the republic'... This new attempt at *bare-faced spoofing of the working masses, this juggling trickery with the slogan of the united front...* is also a result of the defeat of the National Socialists [a grossly exaggerated estimation of the election setback suffered by the NSDAP on 6 November, when it lost roughly two million votes - RB] and the *strengthening of the role of Social Democracy as the main social bulwark of the bourgeoisie* in connection with this... The task of the KPD remains as before - *to direct the chief blow, at the present stage, against Social Democracy*. Therefore the prompt and rapid defeat of the new manoeuvres of Social Democracy [that is, its calls for a united front with the KPD against fascism - RB] is the task of the moment. ^[42]

Strident in his denunciations of Social Democracy, the author of this article nevertheless betrays a political method and outlook which has much in common with Kautskyism, pre-1914 vintage, namely its child-like faith in the inevitability of socialism, the 'irresistible' movement of the working class towards power, which 'no one is able to stop'. And since this steady upward advance towards socialism is inevitable and irresistible, what need is there for tactics, for combinations with forces that are anyway historically doomed? Thus the united front, for which the Social Democratic bureaucrats were now frantically calling in order to save their own necks from the Nazi axe, was ridiculed and dismissed as 'spoofing' and 'juggling trickery' which no genuine Communist could have any truck with. This determination to resist each and every demand for a workers' united front against fascism had been one of the main fruits of the Twelfth ECCI Plenum. But the German workers had still to taste its bitterest.

The Berlin Transport Strike

Temporarily spurned as candidates for power by the bourgeoisie, and in danger of losing their hard-won positions in the petit-bourgeois masses and especially the more backward proletarians and unemployed, the Nazi leaders had to undertake the most radical of all their 'left' manoeuvres at the time of the strike in the Berlin Transport Company, which broke out on 3 November, three days before the Reichstag elections in which the Nazi vote fell from 13.7 to 11.7 millions. The strike itself was a high point in the counter-offensive against the Papen wage-cutting decrees which began towards the end of September, and therefore by the same token was an expression of the determination of the working class to defend its conditions against the capitalist offensive. Therefore the KPD leadership was not to be criticised for doing everything in its power to win the workers for united strike action in the ballot, and when it narrowly failed to win the necessary 75 per cent majority of all workers, for throwing its full organisational and political weight behind the strike which developed in direct opposition to the wishes of the trade union bureaucracy.

What was utterly unprincipled, and rightly earned the condemnation of Social Democratic workers involved in the dispute, was the cynical exploitation of the strike by the Stalinists as a means of establishing a bloc with the Nazi 'lefts' of the NSBO, as a club to beat the 'social fascists'. This reactionary tactic played directly into the hands of the hard-pressed Nazi leadership, who were casting around anxiously for a 'cause' that would restore their tarnished radical image in the eyes of disaffected proletarian supporters. The Berlin transport strike presented them with just such an issue, as is evident from Goebbels' diary entries of the period:

2 November: The workmen of the Berlin Transport Company are on strike. We have proclaimed a sympathetic strike in the Party. The entire press is furious with us and calls it Bolshevism; *but as a matter of fact we have no option*. If we had held ourselves aloof from this strike, *our position*

amongst the working classes... would have been shaken. The public is solidly behind the strikers, and the Red press can bring forward no arguments at all against us... Many of our staunch partisans [probably a reference to the party's rich patrons - RB] are beginning to have their doubts. But in spite of that we must hold firm. If we do a volte-face now, as some advise, we should lose everything.

4 November: If we had not acted as we have done we would no longer constitute either a socialist or workers' party... ^[43]

Given the strategic orientation of the KPD, it was inevitable that the party would gravitate towards an alliance with the Nazis during the strike, just as it had done in the Prussian referendum and numerous smaller but no less despicable attempts to break up the Social Democratic movement in concert with the Hitlerites. The Twelfth Plenum, together with numerous articles in the KPD and Comintern press, had made it very plain: 'social fascism' and not National Socialism was the main enemy, and against this enemy had therefore to be directed the main blows of the party. The Berlin transport strike fitted the bill perfectly. The Nazis - for demagogic purposes - supported it, the SPD and ADGB opposed it. Therefore, no united front with the 'social fascists' - not even with its lower cadres and officials *but a united front with the NSBO*. Naturally, every attempt was made by the KPD leadership to disguise the harmonious relations established between RGO and NSBO officials during the course of the strike action. ^[44] Nevertheless, the Stalinist and RILU press could barely conceal its embarrassment, with references to the central strike committee being 'elected on the basis of the widest united front, including representatives of the RGO, and the Social Democratic, unorganised and National Socialist workers'. ^[45] Yet the NSBO had a very weak position amongst the striking transport workers, having a year previously won only two of the 26 seats in the annual elections to the factory committee. (The ADGB had 14, the RGO 10.) As a matter of principle there should have been no collaboration with card-holding members of the NSDAP, and its union-breaking industrial arm, the NSBO, should have been excluded from the strike committee; and there is no doubt that had the RGO fought for such a policy, it would have won the overwhelming support of the strikers, demonstrating at the same time to the reformist workers that despite the KPD's profound differences with the ADGB and SPD leadership, it would always conduct its fight against the bureaucracy on a principled class basis, and not seek dubious allies among the pseudo-radicals of the NSDAP 'left', even if their origins were proletarian. For as long as they identified themselves with the Hitler movement, they remained open traitors to their class, and had to be branded as such.

Contrary to the propaganda claims of the Stalinists, the strike was directed first of all against the von Papen government, for it was under a Papen decree that the wages of the 22 000 Berlin transport workers had been cut by two pfennigs an hour, the action that precipitated the strike. The KPD leadership, true to the 'general line' of striking the 'main blow' against Social Democracy, still 'the principal social support of the bourgeoisie', with some success, and with the eager backing of the Nazis, tried to turn the strike solely against the 'social fascist trade union leaders', ^[46] while fraternising with the cadres of the NSBO. And naturally, this reactionary manoeuvre played right into the hands of the Nazis and reformists alike. The Nazis, because they would have been unable, with their weak base amongst the transport workers, to stage their show of militancy on the eve of the Reichstag elections without the support and collaboration of the KPD; the reformists, because they were once again able, as they had been at the time of the Prussian referendum, to present the KPD as a willing stooge of Hitler's drive to smash the German labour movement.

On 5 November, *Vorwärts* reported on the tactics of the NSBO in its 'united front' with the RGO:

The KPD stands quite helpless before the Nazis' 'united front from below'. It does not even march with them. The slogan until it is changed is... 'Fraternise with the Communists wherever you meet them.'

Such reports stung the Stalinist into counter-charging that the Social Democrats and Nazis were united in their opposition to the strike, and that therefore 'it was only from purely agitational considerations and in view of the election situation that the district leadership of the National Socialists tried to create the impression that it supported the strike'. The RILU press spoke of the 'struggle against the reactionary front from Hitler to Leipart, against the arbitration machine of the capitalist state [swept away by Hitler! - RB] and against the social fascist trade union policy...'. This quite obliterated the all-important distinctions between reformism and fascism, and the consequent differences between labour relations and wages policy under the Weimar system of collective bargaining and arbitration settlements; and the

fascist wage and labour laws the Nazis and their capitalist supporters sought to introduce. All this was brushed aside as the KPD, egged on by Goebbels' *Angriff* and the NSBO demagogues, led the Berlin strikers into a series of adventures and violent confrontations that resulted in four deaths, hundreds of arrests, and, when the strike was over, the sacking of more than 2000 militants. It was a repeat performance of the 1929 May Day 'battle of the barricades' - only in an infinitely more dangerous political setting. The gulf between reformist and Communist workers widened still further, and the Nazis were able to slow down the rate of defections from the SA and the NSBO to the left. ^[47]

The Reichstag Elections and the Fall of Papen

To superficial observers, it might have seemed that Papen had emerged the main victor from the elections of 6 November. The Nazis had been compelled to undertake yet another costly campaign, while their popular support had been demonstrated to be on the wane. Papen also had good cause to be satisfied with the way in which a large portion of those defecting from the Nazi camp had not gravitated to the left, but reverted to supporting Hugenberg's DNVP. Neither had the KPD made anything like the inroads in the SPD vote that the political crisis and the cowardly policies of the reformist bureaucracy warranted. Stalinist ultra-leftism had ensured that the Social Democrats went unpunished for their monumental betrayals of the German working class:

Reichstag Elections 1932						
Party	Vote (millions)		Per cent		Deputies	
	Nov 32	Jul 32	Nov 32	Jul 32	Nov 32	Jul 32
SPD	7.2	8.0	20.4	21.6	121	133
KPD	6.0	5.3	16.9	14.6	100	89
DVP	0.7	0.4	1.9	1.2	11	7
DDP	0.3	0.4	1.0	1.0	2	4
DNVP	3.0	2.2	8.8	5.9	52	37
Agrarians	0.3	0.3	1.0	0.7	5	5
Christian Socialist	0.4	0.4	1.2	1.1	5	3
Economist Party	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.4	1	2
Centre	4.2	4.6	11.9	12.5	70	75
BVP	1.1	1.2	3.1	3.2	20	22
NSDAP	11.7	13.7	33.1	37.4	196	230

Again if we evaluate the election results from a predominantly parliamentary plane (as did not only the SPD, but the KPD) we see that the relative strength of the workers' parties as against the Nazis had increased appreciably. The combined SPD - KPD share of the total vote had risen from 36.2 per cent to 37.3 per cent, while that of the NSDAP had fallen from 37.4 to 33.1 per cent. And it cannot be denied that this shift reflected the upturn in the workers' movement which had expressed itself more directly through the strike battles of the previous two months. The reaction of the reformists to Hitler's election reverse was completely in character. 'It was 10 years ago', *Vorwärts* jubilantly proclaimed after the results were announced, 'that we foretold the bankruptcy of National Socialism; it is there in black and white in our paper.' The SPD *Leipziger Volkzeitung* was no less sanguine: 'We cannot escape from the smell of the rotting carcass. Fascism is definitely beaten: it will not rise again.' Bankruptcy and rotten carcasses there undoubtedly were in plenty but not in the places suggested by the reformists.

Amazingly, in view of the party's furious and unremitting barrage of invective against the Social Democrats, the KPD's reaction to the election differed from that of *Vorwärts* only in details. Hitler was on the run, the working class was advancing, and a fascist seizure of power a fast-fading nightmare - these were the conclusions arrived at by the German, Comintern and Soviet Stalinists. Nothing could have been better calculated to facilitate Hitler's triumph. Neubauer bragged of a 'magnificent election

victory' and predicted that in view of its losses to the KPD, the SPD would 'still more shamelessly support the fascist fight against Communism, and still more openly express its social fascist character'.^[48] Kautskyite automatism was rampant in the KPD Central Committee resolution on the election results. The KPD was 'uninterruptedly continuing its victorious advance', while the Nazi loss of two million votes marked the 'rapid decline of the National Socialist movement'.^[49]

So with Hitler no longer a serious contender for power, now more than ever before, Social Democracy became the main enemy of the German proletariat:

The decline of the SPD in no way reduces its role as the major social buttress of the bourgeoisie, but on the contrary, precisely because the Hitler party is at present losing followers from the ranks of the workers... *the importance of the SPD for the fascist policy of finance capitalism increases.*^[50]

These unbelievably myopic judgements were far surpassed by those of *Pravda*, which made the following comment on the German political situation and the prospects for fascism after the fall of von Papen on 17 November:

The German bourgeoisie is for a fascist dictatorship. But the task of consolidating the fascist dictatorship encounters obstacles which the first open fascist government, the von Papen government, was unable to overcome. Now will another government of the German bourgeoisie succeed in overcoming these obstacles? While a few months ago it appeared to considerable sections of the German bourgeoisie that Hitler could lead German capitalism out of the cul-de-sac, *today Hitler's star is declining... the influence of the NSDAP is steadily waning.*^[51]

What these Stalinist confusion-mongers either obscured or overlooked in their estimation of the election results was the possibility that far from diminishing Hitler's chances of entering the government as Chancellor, the bourgeoisie might take fright at the decline in the Nazi vote and support the formation of a Nazi-led cabinet before the party's proletarian - plebeian supporters swung over in their millions, and not thousands, into the camp of Communism. These fears were indeed expressed at a meeting of the von Papen cabinet on 9 November, and, the next day, Hindenburg instructed Papen to open a dialogue with those party leaders willing to enter or support a broad-based 'national' government. Naturally neither the SPD (despite charges of 'social fascism' from the Stalinists) nor the KPD could lend their support to such an undertaking, so Papen's exchanges were mainly with the Centre and the NSDAP.

The opening shots in the fateful Hitler-Papen duel had in fact been fired during the Reichstag election campaign. Papen's repeated appeals to the Nazi leader to yield to reason and cease his demands for total power for himself and his party tell us much about the nature of the conflict between the fascist plebeians and the old bourgeois conservatives on the eve of the counter-revolutionary overturn, and the basis of the tensions that developed in its aftermath. On 12 October, Papen told a meeting in Munich:

It is an historical falsification when it is claimed today that I... had prevented National Socialism from taking over the responsibility. The offer of 13 August gave the NSDAP a share in the power of the Reich and in Prussia which could have assured his decisive influence. Hitler didn't accept this offer because he believed that he as leader of a movement represented by 230 deputies could claim the position of Chancellor.^[52]

Papen's election manifesto of 4 November contained a section addressed directly to Hitler:

It is the *exclusiveness* of your movement, *your demand for everything or nothing*, which the Reich President could not recognise and which led to his decision of 13 August. What is at stake today is this: the question is not whether this or that party occupies the Chancellor's chair, whether his name is Brüning, Hitler or von Papen, *but rather that we meet on common ground.*^[53]

What Papen still refused to recognise was that by the very nature of his movement, and its aims, and not only Hitler's intolerant personality and iron will, the Nazi leader had no choice other than to be 'exclusive' and to demand 'everything or nothing'. Following the NSDAP set-back on 6 November, Papen renewed the debate, which up to this point had been distinctly one-sided. First he approached the Centre, whose leaders 'desired a majority government with Hitler'.^[54] Hitler however 'did not wish to govern with a parliamentary majority',^[55] in other words to be dependent on such an unreliable and divided ally as the Centre Party. Papen then wrote to Hitler directly on 13 November, asking him to reopen talks on the formation of a new government:

The recent elections on 6 November have provided a new situation and a new opportunity for uniting the country... The National Socialist press has stated that it would be presumption on my part to enter into discussions with any personalities suited to this work of national concentration. Nevertheless I consider it my duty to approach you in the course of my present negotiations. I learn from your press that you still maintain your right to the post of Chancellor... I still think that the leader of a major national movement remains under obligation to discuss the situation and the measures that have to be taken with the present responsible head of affairs... ^[56]

Hitler's reply virtually sealed the fate of Papen's government. First he berated the Chancellor for laying down prior conditions that made agreement impossible - namely that Hitler had to drop his claims to the Chancellorship. He then set out four main guidelines for negotiations with Papen, the most important being the last:

You say in your letter that as a result of 6 November 'a new opportunity has arisen for the concentration of all National elements'... I am unable to understand the purport of this remark... that possibility has obviously only deteriorated through the dissolution of the Reichstag in September, because the result [that is, of the 6 November elections] is on the one hand an immeasurable strengthening of Communism and on the other a revival of the small splinter parties... The formation of a politically practicable bloc within the German people... is, from a party point of view, only imaginable by the inclusion of the DNVP and DVP, because I have to decline a prior suggestion, which you seem to have in your mind, to include the SPD. As you know yourself, the leader of the DNVP had, prior to the elections, unambiguously branded any cooperation with the Roman Catholic Centre Party as treason and a crime against the nation... and useless as long as you are unable to inform me that Mr Hugenberg has changed his mind after all.

Snubbed in every direction, Papen reported to his President the next day, and offered the resignation of his entire cabinet. There then commenced a new series of exchanges, only now between Hindenburg and the main party leaders, with Hitler once again occupying the centre of the stage. This time, the President reacted differently to Hitler's demand for total power. An official record of the second round of talks between the two, held on 21 November, shows that having explored all other combinations, the President was at last seriously considering the appointment of the 'Bohemian corporal' as Chancellor:

You have declared that you will only place your movement at the disposal of a government of which you, the leader of the party, are the head. If I consider your proposal, I must demand that such a Cabinet should have a majority in the Reichstag. Accordingly, I ask you, as the leader of the largest party, to ascertain if, and on what conditions, you could obtain a secure workable majority in the Reichstag on a definite programme.

Contrary to the obtuse speculations of the reformist and Stalinist press, Hitler's strongest card proved to be the decline in the Nazi vote registered at the 6 November elections. He said:

If this movement perishes, Germany would be in the greatest danger, for she would then be faced with 18 million Marxists, among them perhaps 14 to 15 million Communists. In the interests of the fatherland my movement must be preserved and this means that it must have the leadership. [We supported the Berlin strike]... because people are very bitter. If I had tried to restrain my people, the strike would have taken place nonetheless, but I would have lost my following among the workers; this would not have been in Germany's interests.

To which Hindenburg replied:

I can only repeat my request: give me your help. I do appreciate the great idea which inspires you and your movement, and I would like to see you and your movement join the government. I do not doubt the sincerity of your intentions, but I cannot accept a [one] party government... meet me half-way in this matter so that we can work together.

Hitler, had he even wanted to, could not oblige the President, since the formation of a majority-based coalition required the support of both the Centre and the DNVP. These two parties were, however, bitter rivals, and while this conflict raged, Hitler could not achieve his majority. The initiative temporarily passed back to Papen, who began to toy with the idea of ruling by decree pending the reform of the constitution. A state of emergency would be declared, and the *Reichswehr* alerted to put down any revolts against the government, whether originating from the Communist left or the Nazi right. This proposal proved Papen's undoing, as Otto Meissner explained to the Nuremberg investigators after the war:

Almost up to the time of his resignation, Papen and some of the ministers agreed on the necessity for pressing the fight against the Nazis by employing all the resources of the state and relying on article 48 of the Constitution, even if this led to armed conflict. Other ministers however believed that such a course would lead to civil war... [He was opposed by General Schleicher and Major Ott] ... who produced detailed statistical material... that the weakened Reichswehr... would not be equal to military operations on a large scale, and was not suited and trained for civil war... If the Nazis began an armed revolt, one must anticipate a revolt of the Communists and a general strike at the same time... If such a 'war on two fronts' should take place, the forces of the state would undoubtedly be disrupted... All present in the cabinet meeting were clearly impressed by Schleicher's statement.

That same day, Schleicher became the last Chancellor of the Weimar Republic. His aim - simultaneously to combat proletarian revolution and avert civil war. His method - a triple coalition of trade union bureaucrats, 'left' Nazis and the *Reichswehr*.

The Nazis knew better than anybody the futility of such an undertaking. Goebbels noted in his diary that day: 'General von Schleicher has been appointed Chancellor. That is the final choice left. When he is overthrown, our turn comes.' ^[57] *After Schleicher - Us*.

Notes

1. LD Trotsky, 'The Only Road' (14 September 1932), *The Struggle Against Fascism In Germany* (New York, 1971), p 278.
2. Trotsky, 'The Only Road', *The Struggle Against Fascism In Germany*, p 278.
3. Trotsky, 'The Only Road', *The Struggle Against Fascism In Germany*, pp 278-79.
4. A point that seems to have been overlooked by the WRP leadership, since it foisted on the readers of *Workers Press*, in the period following the army exercises at Heathrow Airport in January 1974, a perspective of a Tory-organised 'Police-Military provocation' whose consequences for the working class (destruction of trade unions, arrest of thousands of militants, etc, and the abolition of bourgeois-democratic rights) *would have been no different from those experienced by the German proletariat under Hitler*.
5. Trotsky, 'The Only Road', *The Struggle Against Fascism In Germany*, p 279.
6. Considerable pressure was building up in certain ruling-class quarters associated with the DNVP to carry through a programme of comprehensive constitutional and political reform akin to his reactionary measures in the economic sphere. Unambiguously monarchist in tone, this offensive against parliamentary democracy was launched by former DNVP chairman Count Westarp, who in an article written in August declared: 'Constitutional law and politics are in transition. Even the enthusiasts of popular freedom as it was created in Weimar perceive the "crisis of parliamentarism". In the uncertainties of a transition period there is only one thing certain and that is that the party rule of parliamentary democracy has fulfilled its course and will never return as its representatives conceived and practised it.' Graef, also of the DNVP, followed suit in a speech on 27 September, in which he said: 'We can never finish off the Weimar system without a violation of the constitution. Herr von Papen will take care of that.' And on 6 October, Hugenberg endorsed the call of Graef, adding that constitutional reform would if necessary have to be carried through 'without the consent of parliament'. Papen himself frankly admits in his memoirs that this had indeed been his intention: 'The new Reichstag elections had been set to take place on 6 November, and we tried to discover some method of holding them under a new system of voting. But it was not possible to change the electoral law by emergency decree... we would have [had] to persuade the President to break with the Constitution in order to elect a parliament capable of carrying out the business of the nation.' (F von Papen, *Memoirs* (London, 1952), pp 210-11)
7. Trotsky, 'The Only Road', *The Struggle Against Fascism In Germany*, p 315.
8. Trotsky, 'The Only Road', *The Struggle Against Fascism In Germany*, p 315.
9. This revival in the working-class movement produced 286 strikes between 16 September and 3 October, compared with 280 for the whole month of January 1932. Of these 286

strikes, 142 ended in a clear victory for the workers, with the employers being compelled to withdraw wage cuts sanctioned by the decrees of the Papen regime. Then between 3 October and the beginning of the Berlin transport strike, there erupted more than 200 more disputes, with similar beneficial results for the strikers. This total of 500 strikes in less than two months should be contrasted with the totals for 1929 (441 strikes), 1930 (336 strikes) and 1931 (363 strikes). Three whole years produced 1304 strikes, an annual average of 435. Now in the autumn of 1932, with both the employers and the workers on the offensive, *this average had been surpassed in six weeks*.

10. Two years of capitalist crisis and Bonapartist rule by decree had taken a terrible toll of the Weimar system of social welfare, the pride of international Social Democracy. The proportion of unemployed workers receiving benefit had fallen from 66 per cent in 1928 to 19 per cent under Papen, while the average sum allocated to a worker receiving such benefit had likewise fallen from 81 marks in 1927 to 46 marks in 1932. On the other hand, contributions by workers had been increased from 3.5 per cent of their wages up to August 1930 to 6.5 per cent by the summer of 1932. Finally, the duration of the period over which relief was payable had been cut from 26 weeks to a mere six weeks. And what is more, all these cuts had been initiated (though not consummated) with the support of the SPD while that party pursued its policy of ‘tolerating’ the Brüning regime as the ‘lesser evil’ to Hitler.

11. J Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight* (London, 1938), pp 143-45, emphasis added.

12. Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, pp 128-37, emphasis added.

13. Rauschning, who earlier than most agrarians saw the need to enlist the aid of the Nazi plebeians in preserving Junker privilege and property, later made the following observation on Papen's tactics in the autumn of 1932: ‘The danger of Papen's solution degenerating in spite of him into black reaction seemed to threaten from one side, the danger of a revolution from the other. The responsible leaders of the *Reichswehr*, especially, felt unable to accept a regime that rejected and eliminated strong national elements [that is, the Nazis] instead of enlisting them. The testing and searching for a practicable combination of forces that was in progress betrayed anything but a definite aim in view. In the midst of it all Papen's second idea, that of an alliance with National Socialism, seemed the very thing that was wanted. The new feature in Papen's plan, which remained essentially monarchist, was the idea of securing the support of the revolutionary mass movement of National Socialism, in the assumption that it would submit to control... sanguine in their superficial judgement, the monarchist elements imagined that they would easily put those attractive young men in their place. But there was another motive also, the fear that the National Socialist masses might go over to the extreme left. It was decided to avert this... even at the risk of an unavoidable interregnum of National Socialist disorder and experiment... the summons of National Socialism to power at a time when it was at its last gasp.’ (H Rauschning, *Germany's Revolution of Destruction* (London, 1940), p 9) Papen's ‘second idea’ was of course his proposal, agreed to by Hindenburg in January 1933, to install Hitler as Chancellor with himself as deputy - the cabinet of ‘National Concentration’ which took office on 30 January 1933.

14. Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, pp 137-40.

15. ‘**7 October:** Receive the news from a go-between that the government's economic programme has as yet been a failure. Consequently all branches of industry and production are seized with panic. The rats flee from the sinking ship... **11 October:** The cabinet is cracking. When will it go? **12 October:** The *Reichswehr* has already fallen away from the cabinet. *Upon what will it base itself now?*’ (Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, pp 147-49, emphasis added) The answer was given on 17 November, when the Papen cabinet, deprived even of its base in the armed forces, resigned.

16. *The Social Reconsolidation of Capitalism, Deutsche Führerbriefe*, nos 72 and 75, 16 and 20 September 1932, emphasis added. Gustav Krupp was also utterly disillusioned with the Weimar system, but unlike the author of the article in question, saw the solution more in terms of a ‘strong man’ riding rough-shod over the discredited parties and Reichstag alike: ‘It has been shown, in the September dissolution of the Reichstag, that the political parties

have eliminated themselves from all active work for the welfare of the nation and people... they have shown themselves incapable of forming and supporting a government which with vigour and determination replaces, by practical deeds, theoretical consideration of possible betterment. [In as much as]... the internal political situation can no longer be mastered by political parties, [Hindenburg should name]... a government enjoying his confidence... to step into the breach.' (G Krupp, 'Objectives of German Policy', *Review of Reviews*, November 1932) The eventual solution adopted by big business involved a combination of both these methods - the mass-based dictatorship and the 'strong man' at the head.

17. R Medvedev, *Let History Judge* (London, 1972), pp 94-105. Medvedev cites the vivid description of the 1932 famine which appears in the novel *Death* by V Tendriakov, written during the Khrushchev literary 'thaw': '... cattle died from lack of fodder, people ate bread made from nettles, biscuits made from one weed, porridge from another... You got used to seeing corpses there in the morning, a wagon would pull up and the hospital stablehand... would pile in the bodies.' (p 95)

18. Such doubts were well grounded. In 1941, millions of Ukrainian and also Russian peasants greeted the Nazi invaders as liberators. Entire brigades were quickly recruited to fight on the side of the *Wehrmacht*, eventually comprising an army some one million strong. Here again, the Stalinist line of 'socialism in one country' played a counter-revolutionary role, creating the economic and political conditions for the flourishing of quite openly restorationist tendencies and moods among wide layers of the Soviet people which in turn undermined the defence capacity of the USSR in war.

19. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Volume 1 (London, 1958), p 91, emphasis added.

20. The Kremlin was understandably, from its narrow nationalist point of view, delighted when the Francophile Papen made way for the 'eastern-oriented' Schleicher. When Litvinov met the new Chancellor in Berlin on 19 December, Schleicher assured him that 'the fact that he was sitting on this chair was a guarantee of friendly relations towards the Soviet Union, and so it would always remain as long as he occupied this office' (Memo by Dirksen). To which Litvinov replied that Schleicher 'could of course expect to find it so if the Communists in Germany were dealt with as they were accustomed to be dealt with in the countries opposed to the Soviet Union'. Unfortunately for Litvinov (who personally feared a Hitler victory), not to speak of the German Communists, Schleicher's chair was soon to be filled by another occupant.

21. W Krivitsky, *I Was Stalin's Agent* (London, 1939), pp 20-22, emphasis added. Krivitsky's estimation of Stalin's German policy is substantiated and supplemented by the German contemporary diplomat Gustav Hilger: 'In order to forestall... a change of German policy, the Russians made every effort to show their own good will even before the National Socialists came to power. A conversation I had with the manager of TASS, Doletsky, in July 1932, was typical. Doletsky voiced all the worries that were bothering Moscow, but in the same breath he expressed his conviction that *healthy political common sense would win out in a National Socialist government*... All he feared was that the accession of Hitler might be followed by a rather disturbing period of transition before normal relations could again be achieved. The general impression in the German Embassy [in Moscow] was that the Soviet government *would have liked to establish contact with the National Socialists for the purpose of preventing such temporary difficulties*.' Indeed, Hilger goes further. He asserts that 'certain circles within the Soviet government actually gave silent welcome to Hitler's succession to power', the justification for this treacherous policy ostensibly being that Hitler 'could not last long, and that his fall would speed the development of a proletarian revolution' (Hilger and Mayer, *The Incompatible Allies* (New York, 1953), pp 252-53, emphasis added). There is also the account of German-Soviet relations in the pre-Hitler period given by former Nazi Intelligence Officer Walter Schellenberg: 'From 1929 Stalin directed the KPD to regard not the NSDAP of Hitler, but the SPD as their chief enemy, and party strategy was conducted accordingly. Whether under a nationalist or under a socialist leadership, Stalin's chief aim was to mobilise Germany against the West. And when Schleicher, then Chancellor of Germany, secretly advanced Hitler 42 million marks, at a

decisive point in the rise of the National Socialist movement, it is quite certain that he did this under the influence of Colonel Nicolai, who in this was surely acting as Stalin's instrument, for Stalin hoped that Hitler would turn Germany against the Western bourgeoisie.' (W Schellenberg, *Memoirs* (London, 1956), p 43) Schellenberg furnishes no evidence to substantiate either these alleged money transactions, or their political motives. But his presentation of Stalin's foreign policy aims concurs with those of his opposite number Krivitsky, the German diplomat Hilger, and from inside the top leadership of the KPD, the wife of Heinz Neumann.

22. *Resolution on the War in the Far East and the Tasks of the Communist Parties in the Struggle Against Imperialist War and Military Intervention Against the USSR.*

23. *Theses on the International Situation and the Tasks of the Communist Parties.*

24. *Theses on the International Situation and the Tasks of the Communist Parties.*

25. *On the Lessons of Economic Strikes and the Struggle of the Unemployed.*

26. *Theses on the International Situation and the Tasks of the Communist Parties.*

27. M Buber-Neumann, *Krieg-schauplätze der Welt-revolution* (Stuttgart, 1967), p 329.

28. Buber-Neumann, *Krieg-schauplätze der Welt-revolution*, p 332, emphasis added.

29. The demotion of the Neumann group also provided the Thälmann leadership with a convenient scapegoat for the party's poor showing at the Presidential and Prussian diet elections, as the Trotskyist organ *Permanent Revolution* pointed out in its June 1932 issue: 'After the heavy defeat at the polls, there was a lot of chatter in Moscow, but no change of the course which had caused the defeat. Instead, two cliques fought one another. Thälmann on one side and Neumann and Remmele on the other. Those in Moscow did not want Teddy [Thälmann] overthrown, neither Neumann. But in the end Neumann took the rap. A new god arose in the shape of Wilhelm Pieck... Neumann was shoved off to Moscow... Leo Flieg went also... He first occupied a third ante-room with Piatnitsky, and received gradual promotion to the number one ante-room. He quietly unfolds that bundle of newspapers in which Moscow will be informed of the suppression of the KPD. Franz Dahlem is also among the fallen, another is Ernst Reinhard [former chief editor of the *Die Rote Fahne*]. Wilhelm Pieck... has now become a big man again. Moscow have stuck him in with Teddy, as there must be at least one in the secretariat who can count up to three... this then is the great change! The KPD policy is unchanged. The reckoning however will be paid by the German workers with their blood! Only chasing out their "leaders" and a complete return to the united front can save them!' (*Die Permanent Revolution*, June 1932)

30. M Buber-Neumann, *Von Potsdam nach Moskau* (Stuttgart, 1957), p 299.

31. E Thälmann, 'Unleash the Proletarian Rebellion', *Communist International*, Volume 12, no 1, 15 January 1933, p 28.

32. 'On the XII ECCI Plenum Theses', *Communist International*, Volume 11, no 17-18, 1 October 1932, p 604, emphasis added.

33. E Thälmann, 'Unleash the Proletarian Rebellion', *Communist International*, Volume 12, no 1, 15 January 1933, p 33, emphasis added.

34. Thälmann's criticism of the Berlin-Brandenburg District call for a joint demonstration with the Social Democratic Iron Front has proved no obstacle to East German historians in incorporating the proposal into the mythology of the KPD, where it is depicted as evidence of the party's earnest in desiring a united front with the SPD against fascism. Thus in Walter Ulbricht's *On the History of the German Labour Movement*, we find this initiative credited to the author, who was then the head of the Berlin-Brandenburg party organisation. The appeal was issued on 16 June 1932, in the name of the Party District Committee, and called upon the local SPD, ADGB and *Reichsbanner* organisations 'to support the demand of the working masses for freedom to demonstrate for all organisations wishing to fight fascism' (*Die Rote Fahne*, no 132, 17 June 1932, quoted - without Thälmann's critical comments - in W Ulbricht, *On the History of the German Labour Movement* (East Berlin, 1953), p 588).

- 35.** E Thälmann, 'Unleash the Proletarian Rebellion', *Communist International*, Volume 12, no 1, 15 January 1933, pp 35-36, emphasis added.
- 36.** A reference to Stalin's article 'Some Questions Concerning the History of Bolshevism', which appeared in the journal *Proletarskaya Revoliutsia* towards the end of 1931. Although ostensibly aimed at the editors of this publication for their 'rotten liberalism' in permitting criticism of Lenin in an article by Slutsky on the pre-1914 history of Bolshevism, Stalin's real purpose was to slander Trotsky and disparage all that was finest in the heritage of Rosa Luxemburg. 'Luxemburgism' Stalin denounces as a centrist tendency of the prewar Social Democratic left, little better than Menshevism, while as for Trotskyism, it was 'the advanced detachment of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie, which is fighting against Communism, against the Soviet regime, against the building of socialism in the USSR' (J Stalin, 'Some Questions Concerning the History of Bolshevism', *Works*, Volume 13, p 101). The eagerness with which the Thälmann leadership (which had long since rid the KPD of its Spartacist pioneers) seized on Stalin's excursion into German labour history suggests that it had a more immediate political purpose than the demagogic defence of Lenin against 'rotten liberalism' and 'smugglers' of Trotskyist contraband. Trotsky's principled defence of Rosa Luxemburg, 'Hands Off Rosa Luxemburg' (28 June 1932), appears in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1932)* (New York, 1973), pp 131-42.
- 37.** E Thälmann, 'Unleash the Proletarian Rebellion', *Communist International*, Volume 12, no 1, 15 January 1933, p 40, emphasis added.
- 38.** E Thälmann, 'Unleash the Proletarian Rebellion', *Communist International*, Volume 12, no 1, 15 January 1933, p 39.
- 39.** J Lensky, 'Germany and Poland: Key Points of the Revolutionary Front', *RILU Magazine*, Volume 2, no 23-24, 1 January 1933, pp 968-69, emphasis added.
- 40.** J Lensky, 'Germany and Poland: Key Points of the Revolutionary Front', *RILU Magazine*, Volume 2, no 23-24, 1 January 1933, p 971. Even more emphatic and pointed, in view of the crisis in the German party, was the declaration with which the Czech Stalinist Klement Gottwald wound up the entire proceedings of the Plenum: 'We want to say expressly that the line of the KPD is correct, and we have declared that, in agreement with the Comintern and with all other parties, we are supporting the leadership of the German party with all our power...' (*Communist International*, Volume 11, no 19, 15 October 1932, p 688) This support consisted of upholding the political line that was to send the KPD - including its leader Ernst Thälmann - to its doom.
- 41.** The several versions of Neumann's oppositional activities that have subsequently appeared in Stalinist publications have varied widely, according to the current party and international line. In June 1933, while the Third Period still had nearly a year to run, Neumann was attacked for his 'opposition to the referendum in Prussia' and his slogan of 'beat the fascists wherever you meet them' ('Resolution of the CC of the KPD on the Situation and the Immediate Tasks', *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 13, no 24, 2 June 1933, p 526). At the Thirteenth ECCI Plenum of November 1933, Manuilsky launched into a violent tirade against Neumann and Remmele. Once again, their errors were of a 'rightist' nature. Their political line reflected 'the demoralisation of those sections of the backward workers who have followed Social Democracy and lost their bearings after the capitulation of Social Democracy to fascism... Remmele and Neumann have got stuck in the Social Democratic swamp...' (D Manuilsky, *Revolution, Crisis, Fascism and War* (London, 1934), pp 11-12). Postwar evaluations of their role took an opposite slant. Neumann was now an incurable leftist and servile henchman of Stalin to boot: 'The KPD showed itself to be strong enough to oppose the attempt of such an adventurist sectarian as Heinz Neumann and to frustrate his attempts to form a faction... The victory over the sectarian Neumann group decisively enabled the party to carry out the Leninist principles of mass struggle.' Neumann was also held responsible for the KPD's acceptance of the Prussian referendum, whereas in the 1933 version of his factional activities, *he had been denounced for being its main opponent*: 'Heinz Neumann demanded a complete turnabout and participation in the referendum. He met determined opposition by Ernst Thälmann and other Politbureau

members to this opportunist line.’ (Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim Zentralkomitee der SED, *Geschichte Der Deutschen Arbeiter Bewegung*, Band 4 (Berlin, 1966), pp 300, 372-73)

42. ‘The KPD Takes the Offensive’, *Communist International*, Volume 11, no 20, 1 December 1932, pp 695-700, emphasis added.

43. Goebbels, *My Part in Germany’s Fight*, pp 159-61, emphasis added. As at the time of the Prussian referendum, the Nazis were quick to exploit and deepen this cleavage in the ranks of the German proletariat already exacerbated by the tactics of the Stalinists. Instructions issued from Goebbels’ propaganda department recommended that in their dealings with Communist workers, ‘we are the old revolutionaries who always advised to grind down the main enemy, the SPD, before the unification of the working class is to be carried out. Any attempt of the KPD to form a united front with the SPD is to be branded as betrayal to the class-conscious proletariat’. And so said Thälmann, Manuilsky *et al.* Stalin’s German policy here dovetailed almost perfectly with the strategy of the Nazis, which was to smash the mass, reformist-led organisations of the working class.

44. One example being the joint collections conducted by Nazi and KPD activists for the strike fund. NSBO and RGO members would stand together in the streets of Berlin chanting in unison: ‘For the strike fund of the RGO - for the strike fund of the NSBO.’

45. Hans Becker, ‘The Strike of the Berlin Transport Workers’, *RILU Magazine*, Volume 2, no 23-24, 1 January 1933, p 953.

46. Hans Becker, ‘The Strike of the Berlin Transport Workers’, *RILU Magazine*, Volume 2, no 23-24, 1 January 1933, p 952.

47. Almost a year passed before the remnants of the KPD leadership that had survived the Nazi holocaust ventured to criticise the tactics employed in the Berlin transport strike. In an article on work inside the Labour Front, ‘LK’ of Berlin wrote that members of the illegal RGO had supported a ‘united front’ with NSBO activists and not opposed the idea that ‘it only requires pressure from below *in order to force the Hitler government into the anti-capitalist front*’. This error ‘LK’ traced back to the tactics of the RGO in the November 1932 Berlin strike, where: ‘... some comrades, factory and trade union functionaries drew... the conclusion that “during the time of the common action, and in the interests of the common action against the common enemy”, that is, the reformists, it was necessary to weaken the fight on principle... Any lack of principle in this respect... would facilitate fascist demagoguery and, *as was the case after the Berlin traffic workers’ strike*, in which the NSBO took part, unwittingly, *conceal the fascist strike-breaker regime.*’ (*International Press Correspondence*, Volume 13, no 41, 15 September 1933, p 892, emphasis added)

48. *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 12, no 50, 10 November 1932, p 1070.

49. *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 12, no 51, 17 November 1932, p 1100.

50. *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 12, no 51, 17 November 1932, p 1100, emphasis added.

51. *Pravda*, 19 November 1932, emphasis added.

52. The same point had been made by Papen in an article published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* of 2 September, where he argued that ‘the hope in the hearts of millions of National Socialists can be fulfilled only by an authoritarian government’ and not one based on squalid manoeuvres between the parties. In other words, a government headed by Papen, and not Hitler.

53. *IMT*, Volume 16, p 256, emphasis added.

54. *IMT*, Volume 16, p 256.

55. *IMT*, Volume 16, p 256.

56. Papen, *Memoirs*, p 213.

57. Goebbels, *My Part in Germany’s Fight*, p 177.

Fascism in Germany. Robin Blick 1975

Chapter XXV: National Concentration

A Social Democratic coalition government, faced by a disunited, confused proletariat incapable of giving battle, would be a thousand times worse than an open fascist dictatorship opposed by a united class conscious proletariat ready to give battle. (*The Propagandist*, KPD internal organ, September 1931)

While Hitler had the Stalinist and reformist leaders to thank for his victory over the German working class, their aid was unsolicited and, in the subjective sense, unintended. Neither Thälmann, Breitscheid nor Hilferding consciously wished that they each would end their days in Nazi concentration camps achieving in death the unity that they prevented in the last years of their political lives. It was otherwise with the leaders of the German bourgeoisie, the captains of industry, bankers, agrarians and generals. They quite consciously sought the crushing of German labour, and finally united around the banner of fascism in order to accomplish this aim. But like every material, social process, the manner of their gravitation towards Hitler was uneven both in its tempo and in the degree to which it involved the various segments of the ruling class. In the summer of 1932, certain of Hitler's supporters took fright both at the prospects of a protracted civil war and possible Nazi economic 'experiments' inspired by the Feder - Strasser wing of the party, and swung behind Papen's Cabinet. In contrast, other industrialists and concerns that had previously stood aside from the Nazis now began to take an interest in the Hitler movement. Undoubtedly the most important recruits to the Nazi camp in this period were Dr Butefisch, Dr Gattineau and Max Ilgner, prominent officials of the giant Chemical Trust, IG Farben. The company had traditionally pursued a liberal political and social policy, supporting the left-bourgeois, democratic DDP after its foundation in November 1918. The crisis of 1929 took its toll here as in the Weimar system of compromise as a whole, and by 1931, certain of IG's directors were looking favourably towards the NSDAP as a possible contender for power - and, what was equally important, as a provider of profitable government contracts. An official IG Farben publication, *Twenty-Five Years at the Leuna Works*, recorded some 10 years later how this alliance between the Third Reich and the Chemical Trust first came about, an alliance that at Auschwitz and other Nazi slave camps ended in the systematic exploitation and then mass murder of literally millions of human beings:

The men who created Leuna gasoline between 1926 and 1932 acted as if someone were standing behind them driving them on to greater speed. Actually this was not the case by any means. All the agencies which might have had a say in the matter rather had the effect of brakes... But Geheimrat Bosch and Director Kraunch seemed as if possessed by an inner restlessness... We now know that this haste was necessary from an historical point of view... The men who urged haste at the time could one day in the not too distant future make one of the most important decisions easier for the re-creator of the German people, the Führer, Adolf Hitler. Without this hurry, *the calm certainty of Germany's independence of foreign imports of motor fuels for the Luftwaffe and the most important parts of the rest of the Wehrmacht would have been doubtful...* Economic considerations were, however, not the only decisive factor at that time. There was a very great political tension in the summer of 1932, *everyone felt that soon a great decision had to be made*. The masses of unemployed, as well as industry, which was forced to throttle production, hoped that a change would soon come. Many already anticipated what shape this would take, but no one knew with what fighting and under what conditions it would take place. Therefore, the future of German motor fuel still seemed uncertain...

The National Socialist movement, which was growing tremendously, served to counter-balance such tendencies [as were threatening the German economy and state - RB]. This movement had not yet, however, adopted a definite attitude on the question of the motor fuel [import] duties, and there were indications that the assertion that hydrogenation [the process whereby synthetic oil was extracted from coal - RB] was too expensive had also made an impression on the National Socialist side. In this difficult situation, Director Dr Butefisch decided to clarify the attitude of the National Socialist movement on the question of German motor fuel at the only really appropriate place, *that is the Führer himself*. Through Dr Gattineau he asked the personal staff of the Führer to set a date for the discussion, and this was approved. The day of this remarkable conference has remained indelibly imprinted on Dr Butefisch's memory. He reports on it: 'It was... in June 1932, the Reichstag had once again been dissolved and the German people were engaged in an election campaign... Hitler said: "Today an economy without oil is inconceivable in a Germany which

wishes to remain politically independent. Therefore German motor fuel must become a reality, even if this entails sacrifices. Therefore it is urgently necessary that the hydrogenation of coal be continued... I have to leave the technical execution in your hands... *But the road is the same*, and I hope that soon this road will lead to a tremendous strengthening of our Germany.”

This result of the conference with the Führer constituted a great support for Leuna at that time. *Now hydrogenation could be continued without hesitation, even if the power of the ‘system’ period, now about to fall, were to start a new policy on customs duties at the last moment.* Now the leading men in IG Farben industry made the important decision to maintain Leuna in full operation, even if this entailed sacrifices... *We wanted to use it [the hydrogenation plant] on a far larger scale.* We waited in vain. The decision to do this was not made during the ‘system’ time. *First 30 January 1933 had to come.* This beginning of a new destiny era for Germany *also meant an important turning point for Leuna.* ^[1]

Though among the relative latecomers to National Socialism, the Chemical Trust had evolved its own brand of corporatist ideology during the First World War, this being expounded in a remarkable document written by plant manager Werner Daitz:

A new type of state socialism is appearing, totally different from that which any of us have dreamed or thought of. Private economic initiative and the private capitalist economy will not be crippled, but will be regimented from the point of view of state socialism in that capital will be directed outwards with uniform impetus... This change in capitalism demands... a reconstruction of a former counterpoise, international socialism. It breaks up into national socialism whose election promise will be: work rather than phrases.

Largely through the good offices of Schacht and Thyssen, the Keppler (or Himmler) Circle continued to function through the difficult summer months of 1932, drawing into its orbit prominent directors of the mammoth Steel Trust. Flick’s representative Otto Steinbrinck states that he first met Himmler ‘in 1932’ and that he became a member of his circle of pro-Nazi business leaders:

... in the summer of 1932. At that time Keppler and Kranefuss [both Nazi employers] approached me, that is Vögler and Flick [directors of the United Steel Works] with the suggestion to take part in the consideration of the economic problems and of the economic-political line to be followed by the NSDAP. *The suggestion originated with Schacht...* I remember it well, because at that time Dr Vögler had his office right above the office of Mr Flick, and he sent these two men, Kranefuss and Keppler, one flight down to my office. ^[2]

Schacht, the former democrat, founder of the DDP and advocate of collaboration with Social Democracy, was now working day and night to install Hitler as Chancellor, in order to atomise the organisations of the working class and set German capitalism back on the road of imperialist expansion, even at the cost of another world war. In the summer of 1932, he paid a visit on Chancellor Papen, who was proving obdurate over the question of handing power to the Nazis. ‘He’s a very intelligent man’, he said to Papen. ‘Give him your position. Give it to Hitler. He is the only man who can save Germany.’ ^[3] (This account, which was given by Papen at Nuremberg, was confirmed by Schacht.) Schacht later justified his support for Hitler on the grounds that ‘a government under the Chancellorship of Adolf Hitler could no longer be avoided if one did not wish to run the risk of military dictatorship and civil war. I was, however, opposed to both these possibilities.’ ^[4] And Brüning must have had Schacht amongst others in mind when he wrote in 1947:

The financing of the Nazi party, partly by persons of whom one would least have expected that they would support it, is a chapter in itself... This... group included a number of bankers who exerted a special influence upon the President... At least one of them... had since October 1928 lavishly supported the treasuries of the Nazi and the Nationalist parties with money... These same bankers in the autumn of 1930 tried to influence United States Ambassador Sackett against my government and in favour of the Nazi party. ^[5]

Schacht was no fair-weather friend of the Nazis. Having joined them when Hitler’s star was in the ascendant, he now stood by them when others began to turn against the party, even during the episode of the NSDAP’s support for the Berlin strike, which alienated and alarmed wide layers of the propertied classes, ^[6] and the gloomy days which followed the election setback of 6 November. And gloomy days they were. On the night of the election, Goebbels entered in his diary:

Every new announcement is that of a new defeat... The Communists have strongly increased. That was to be expected... We have suffered a defeat... We are now on the eve of desperate effort, calling for much sacrifice. ^[7]

As for the Berlin strike, it was cracking up for lack of mass support. 'The chief thing now', he wrote the next day 'is to find a way to wind it up. The sacrifices entailed in going on with it are out of proportion to any results that could be obtained.' ^[8] Goebbels had good reason to dump the Berlin strikers, as fresh moves were being initiated by Schacht to secure business support for a government headed by Hitler. Finance, and the need for a change of course back towards the 'respectable' classes and the nationalist right, these were the two problems that predominated in Goebbels' entries through to the end of the year:

11 November: Receive a report on the financial situation of the Berlin organisation. It is hopeless. Nothing but debts and obligations with the complete impossibility of obtaining any reasonable sum of money after this defeat... Our attacks against the Communists must be pressed with greater force. During the strike we more nearly approached them than we intended. Now we must place them at arms' length again...

15 November: If now we proceed with care we shall crown the next phase of our struggle with victory... I am shaping the new course of our press. It is to be directed against Communism... ^[9]

Sure enough, two days later there appeared in *Angriff* an important article by Goebbels spelling out the new line:

We are entering a winter which lets us expect the worst and the very worst. Overnight the 100 Bolsheviks in the Reichstag may double in number as a result of the economic depression and the limitless misery in which the majority of the German people finds itself. The hopeless desperation in which the masses are vegetating allows for even the most absurd possibilities to come true. As a rule the responsible circles do not take our warning seriously; but if words carry no conviction, the facts are speaking an unmistakeable language. ^[10]

That same day (17 November) von Papen resigned. Centre Party leader Kaas at once advised President Hindenburg that unless Hitler was appointed Chancellor, his supporters would desert the Nazis for the Communists - precisely the point being made by Goebbels. He told the President:

We are facing a terrible winter, with 12 million Germans opposing the government on the Right and 13 on the Left. The goal of a National Concentration including the National Socialists is thus a necessity.

Others were also coming around to the same conclusion, following their disenchantment with Papen's experiment in 'pure' Bonapartism. The precarious equilibrium upon which its seeming stability rested had already been disturbed by the autumn strike wave. Now it was shattered by the election of 6 November which indicated an even clearer trend away from the extreme right; the principal, if unreliable, mass support of the Papen cabinet which the Chancellor had leaned on to fight the left.

The bankers Schacht and Schröder, and Thyssen of the Steel Trust, saw the terrible dangers to capitalist rule implicit in such a development. Together with Keppler and Funk, they began to canvass for the signatures of leading industrialists, financiers and other prominent businessmen to a petition calling on President Hindenburg to appoint Hitler Chancellor of the Reich. Explaining the motives for this momentous initiative to the Nuremberg tribunal, Schröder said that 'when on 6 November, the NSDAP suffered its first setback and appeared to have passed its peak, its support by Germany's heavy industry became a matter of special urgency'. ^[11] Likewise Thyssen, who told the Danzig Nazi leader Rauschnig shortly after Hitler's conquest of power: 'Should we let the National Socialists break their necks? And then have the whole tide of the masses come flowing back on us? That would be the end...' ^[12]

It has proved impossible to ascertain the exact day ^[13] on which the petition, signed by 34 prominent business leaders, reached the President (that it did so reach him was confirmed by Schacht at Nuremberg), but the intention of its main sponsors Schacht, Keppler and Schröder was that Hindenburg should be acquainted with the views of industry and finance on the need for a Nazi government before Hitler's first audience with the President on 19 November. (Papen must have been playing a double game at this juncture, for he advised the petitioners on the best form and moment of presentation. Days later, he was contemplating armed action against the SA!) Schacht kept the Nazi leadership fully informed of this new approach to Hindenburg, writing the following letter to Hitler shortly after the election of 6 November:

Permit me to offer you my congratulations on the firm attitude you have taken [against Papen] after the elections. It leaves me in no doubt that developments can only have one result - that you will become Chancellor. It seems that our attempt to get a number of signatures from industrialists in support was not without success, but I believe also that heavy industry is unlikely to cooperate. They rightly bear their name. I hope that in the coming days and weeks the small inconsistencies, which have of necessity slipped into propaganda [the class-conscious banker obviously understood why the Nazis had made their 'left turn' before and during the Berlin strike - RB], will become less conspicuous. The stronger your own internal position, the bolder can be the form of struggle. The more things go your way, the more you will be able to dispense with personal methods of contest. I am completely confident because the entire present system is certainly doomed. ^[14]

The actual text of the petition indicated that an important lesson had been learned by the big bourgeoisie from the experience of the von Papen cabinet. Capitalist rule, in order to weather the most severe of the economic and political crises which periodically beset German imperialism, had to seek and, to a greater extent than hitherto, base itself on support amongst a section of the masses - namely those who followed National Socialism. At last, after exhausting the possibilities of Brüning's SPD-tolerated semi-Bonapartism, and Papen's abortive attempt to by-pass parliament altogether by ruling exclusively through the coercive machinery of the state and Presidential decrees, important - though numerically small - elements of the ruling class were reluctantly admitting the necessity of resorting to the 'plebeian' solution to the 'social question'. What had not, and indeed could not have been achieved only from above - that is, the uprooting of all independent workers' organisations - now had to be carried through also 'from below', with the aid of Hitler's brown-shirted 'Jacobins', the SA:

... the undersigned welcome hopefully the fundamental change which your Excellency has initiated in the conduct of state affairs. We agree with your Excellency on the necessity of a government run independently from parliamentary party matters; the ideas which your Excellency formulated with regard to a Presidential cabinet bring this thought into the open. The outcome of the Reichstag elections of 6 November of this year had demonstrated that the former cabinet [Papen's], whose sincere intentions no one among the German people doubted, *did not find adequate support within the German people for the pursuit of its course*. It also demonstrated that the goal at which your Excellency is aiming has the support of a full majority of the German people if we - as we should - *exclude the Communist Party whose attitude is negative to the state*. Not only the Black-Red-White Party [DNVP, whose colours were those of the Hohenzollerns] and its related smaller groups, but the NSDAP as well are fundamentally opposed to the former parliamentary party regime; thereby they have agreed to the aim of your Excellency. We consider this result extremely gratifying and cannot imagine that the realisation of the goal should now founder at the maintenance of ineffective methods. It is evident that an oft-repeated dissolution of the Reichstag with increasingly frequent and sharpening elections would not only be detrimental to a political pacification and solidity, *but to an economic one as well*. It is equally clear, however, *that any constitutional change which is not supported by the broad mass would elicit even worse economic, political and physical results*. We therefore consider it a moral duty to ask your Excellency respectfully that, in order to attain the goals of your Excellency which all of us support, the reorganisation of the Reich Cabinet be carried out *in a manner which would line up the greatest popular forces behind it*.

We confess to be free from any narrow party-political attitude. We recognise in the national movement which penetrates our people the promising beginning of an era which, *through overcoming of class contrasts, only now creates the essential basis for a rebirth of the German economy*. We know this rebirth will claim many sacrifices yet. We believe that these sacrifices can be made willingly *only when the largest group of this national movement receives a leading share in government*. Entrusting the leader of the largest national group with responsible leadership of a Presidential cabinet which harbours the best technical and personal forces will eliminate the blemishes and mistakes with which any mass movement is perforce afflicted; *it will incite millions of people who are today standing apart, to a positive effort*. ^[15]

At about this time (late November 1932) there was also a resumption of relations between Hitler and another prominent member of the Steel Trust, Friedrich Flick. In common with many other business leaders, he had turned against the Nazis prior to the elections of 6 November, and had in fact given his

support in them to the near-defunct DVP. However, when it became clear that despite - or rather because of - Hitler's setback at the polls, moves were again afoot to install Hitler as Chancellor, Flick found it expedient to once again seek the Nazi party's approval for his transactions with the government in connection with his near-bankruptcy of the previous winter. According to his chief aide Otto Steinbrinck,

... at the end of 1932 and the beginning of 1933, we were faced with a very few important transactions - the sale of the majority interest in the Rheinische Braunkohle and the exchange for the Harpen shares, the concentration on the *Vereinigte Stahlwerke*, and the remaining solution of the *Vereinigte Stahlwerke*. All these transactions seemed only possible to me if we could make sure that on the part of the economic-political Nazi [Party] agency Keppler, who at the same time was the economic adviser to the Führer, would make no difficulties. ^[16]

However, even at this late hour, certain influential concerns and magnates hesitated to take the gamble on a government headed by Hitler. ^[17] Unlike the Stalinists, who persistently lumped together conservative, Bonapartist and fascist regimes in one sack, the big bourgeoisie intuitively sensed that Hitler would take them across the Rubicon - and that there would be no crossing back. Not that they had a viable alternative to a Nazi government - there was none, as the fiasco of Schleicher was to demonstrate rapidly and conclusively. They feared the price that a 'plebeian' solution to their crisis demanded would prove too costly, both in terms of social dislocation, and their necessary political reliance on a movement whose leaders and methods were utterly alien to the parties that had represented their interests throughout the entire life of the Weimar Republic.

Less than a week after the formation of the Hitler government, Trotsky wrote:

It was not with a light heart that the high and mighty clique made a deal with malodorous fascists. There are far too many, all too many fists behind the unbridled upstarts; and therein lies the dangerous side of the brown-shirted allies; but in that very same thing is also their fundamental, more exactly, their only advantage. And this is the advantage that decides, for such are the times now that there is no guaranteeing property except with fists. There is no way of dispensing with the Nazis. ^[18]

But first the waverers - *and even at the end of 1932 they were still the majority* - had to become convinced of the indispensability of Hitler's malodorous fist-wielders. General Schleicher's abortive attempt to find a third route, between proletarian revolution and fascist counter-revolution, did precisely that.

Like Papen before him, Schleicher's assumption of power on 2 December aroused cautious optimism in business quarters. Certainly his administration enjoyed one advantage that his predecessor never really had - the confidence of the *Reichswehr* high command. Schleicher intended that with the army as his power base, he could extend the support of his regime both leftwards and to the right, building a bloc ranging from the extreme right-wing trade union bureaucrats to Nazi 'radicals' such as Gregor Strasser. His was to be a 'social' Bonapartism, ^[19] with the class struggle being muffled and regulated through the agencies of the reformist bureaucracy and the pseudo 'state socialism' of the Nazi 'lefts'. By welding together this amalgam of incompatible forces, Schleicher hoped to avoid the political and social isolation from the masses that was Papen's undoing. The movement of the stock market reflected this initial optimism. Having sagged by two points in the last month of Papen's rule, the share price index on the Berlin Bourse rallied in December and closed at 59, five points up on the November average. No doubt industry believed that by attempting to tie the union bureaucracy to the state, Schleicher would be able to blunt the working-class offensive that had begun under Papen, and greatly contributed to his downfall. Certainly the new cabinet did not lack its backers in the business world. The *Tagliche Rundschau* reported that the general partly owed his appointment:

... to the chairman of the Federation of German Industries, Krupp von Bohlen, [who] had endeavoured to bring about the formation of the Schleicher cabinet and even brought influence to bear in this respect on the NSDAP. It looks as if a number of leaders of heavy industry, shipping, etc, insisted on the candidature of Schleicher.

However the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, which had swung in behind the carefully orchestrated press campaign for Hitler as Chancellor, saw Schleicher's cabinet as a transitional one (as indeed did Goebbels):

The purpose of the Schleicher cabinet is to secure a breathing space for German politics of 12 weeks during which negotiations can be conducted between the holder of power and Hitler... The new government will place this chief aim in the foreground, and while holding firmly to the great achievements of the Papen era - economic revival and Prussian counter-revolution - must make concessions in all minor spheres to meet the needs of the people, economy and parties for peace.

[20]

Schleicher wasted no time in putting his unorthodox theories to the test. Having been rebuffed yet again by Hitler when, on 30 November, he offered him the Vice-Chancellorship in a cabinet headed by himself, Schleicher made a new and more devious approach to the party through Gregor Strasser, head of the NSDAP organisation department, and the Nazi leader mainly responsible for the preparation of its alternative government and economic machinery in the event of the party's coming to power. Schleicher had detected signs of restlessness in the Strasser wing of the movement at the failure of Hitler's 'all or nothing' tactics, and that they were daily becoming more ready to share power in a government headed by a representative of the 'system' they were dedicated to destroying. Hitler immediately moved against Strasser, thereby blocking Schleicher's bid to split the crisis-wracked party. At an emergency conference of party leaders on 5 December, only Frick amongst them spoke up for Strasser, though Goering is generally thought to have sympathised with Schleicher's coalition plan. After an acrimonious confrontation between Hitler and Strasser two days later, the rebellion fizzled out, with Strasser resigning all his posts of responsibility in the party. On 9 December, Strasser left Germany for Italy on 'sick leave'. Schleicher's plan to anchor one flank of his regime in the Nazified 'plebeians' organised by Strasser's apparatus (one section of which included the proletarian-oriented NSBO) had proved abortive. Not even the tempting bait of the Vice-Chancellorship and a hand in shaping the general's social policy could persuade Strasser to betray his leader, even though he found it no longer possible to serve under him.

Schleicher had no more lasting success with his 'opening to the left', though here too his overtures met with a favourable response. He had presumably been encouraged by the nationalist tone adopted by the ADGB President Leipart in his speech of 14 October (quoted in the previous chapter) and the enthusiastic reception awarded to it by Strasser some days later. Even before his appointment as Chancellor, Schleicher had praised Leipart's views at a meeting of Berlin Works' Council representatives in the same month of October, and on 28 November, when it had become clear that Papen would be unable to form a new cabinet, he invited some of the ADGB executive to a private discussion. Breitscheid, one of the most left of the SPD leadership, denounced this manoeuvre publicly in *Vorwärts*, making it clear that if the union leaders should take up this offer (which they did) they would receive no support from the party. Only notorious ultra-rightists like Gustav Noske supported the talks, and they were so discredited that they carried little weight in the movement. Initially undeterred by Breitscheid's reprimand, Leipart and Wilhelm Eggert began discussions with Schleicher in the first days of his rule. Schleicher for his part tried to create a favourable atmosphere by disowning any allegiance to capitalism. He wanted to bring the classes together in social peace, not wage war on the workers on behalf of the big employers. To which the two bureaucrats replied that collaboration would only be possible if the Chancellor rescinded von Papen's wage-cutting decrees and high tariffs on imported food, which greatly increased the cost of living in order to fill the pockets of the agrarians.

One snag, however, was that as part of the deal between Leipart and the 'social general', the ADGB unions had to sever all ties with the 'Marxists' of the SPD. When news of what had been discussed between Schleicher and Leipart appeared in the Paris paper *Excelsior* on 4 December, the outcry in the SPD was so great that Leipart conducted all future negotiations with the Chancellor through intermediaries. The ADGB President hit back at his critics on 31 December, when the trade union journal *Gewerkschafts Zeitung* published an Open Letter from Leipart, addressed to all trade unionists, in which Leipart defended his discussions with Schleicher. The Chancellor was, of course, not a socialist, he argued, but his proposals for public works and other schemes to combat unemployment - including a 'labour service' which, unknown to Leipart, was to be staffed by the SA! - merited the support of responsible trade union leaders. (A week earlier, in the ADGB journal *Alarm*, Leipart had declared the trade unions were ready to observe a class truce until he saw 'whether the deeds of the government corresponded to its words'.)

The polemic had now become a public one on both sides, and since it concerned the destiny of not only the trade unions, but the entire organised working class in Germany, the SPD leadership was compelled, if only for reasons of self-preservation, to put a halt to Leipart's collaboration with Schleicher. In an SPD statement of 5 December, the party executive denounced Schleicher's government as 'one-sided' and

‘representing that capitalist economic system, the failure of which has become more apparent from day to day’. To which a Leipart partisan replied: ‘Allow Schleicher to work. Even an adjournment [a euphemism for suspension] of the Reichstag no longer frightens us.’ Naturally the SPD left was the most vehement in its rejection of Leipart’s counter-revolutionary policy, one which, if carried through unhindered, would leave the working class defenceless in the face of the attacks of the employers, the state and the fascists. One left Social Democratic journal, *Neue Blätter für den Sozialismus*, held that while trade unions could not avoid negotiations with the government of the day, they had no business collaborating with the state. The trade unions were the ‘shock troops’ of the workers’ movement, and should act accordingly.

Leipart’s proposed deal with Schleicher met with such determined and widespread opposition in the SPD (not a single executive member openly endorsed it) that on 6 January, the ADGB President, when summoned to party headquarters to explain his conduct, undertook to sever all contacts with the Chancellor. Noske relates that at the meeting: ‘Breitscheid told him that the party rejected any collaboration with the reactionary Schleicher, and expected the same attitude from him. Leipart... yielded to party pressure.’^[21] The episode was not closed, however, for even though Leipart had been pulled back into line very much against his will, a precedent had been established whose counter-revolutionary implications were to be starkly revealed in the first three months of the Hitler regime.

Exit Schleicher

Schleicher’s brief period of power was brought to an end by the same combination of forces as had destroyed Brüning - namely heavy industry, finance, the agrarians and the *Reichswehr*. And as on that former occasion, one of the main agencies in Schleicher’s downfall was von Papen. Subjective motives obviously played a role here, as it was Schleicher’s intrigues which had contributed to the collapse of the Papen cabinet in November. But Papen’s prime concern was the creation of a government able to preserve the rule of his own class, and it was in this that he found Schleicher wanting. He was sceptical from the very outset of the general’s attempt to construct a broad-based coalition reaching from the Strasser Nazis to the reformist bureaucracy. Papen claims that when Schleicher’s plan was first mooted in the last days of November, he had great doubts whether it was feasible: ‘It seemed highly unlikely... that the left wing of the Nazi Party would split off.’^[22] Even more fundamental was Papen’s opposition to the general’s avoidance of a ‘reform’ of the constitution, a project close to Papen’s monarchist heart. In departing from the system of Presidential cabinet rule instituted by Papen, and seeking a majority in the Reichstag:

Schleicher’s plan would now mean that this line of action would have to be abandoned. Even if Schleicher obtained his parliamentary majority, it would not be strong enough to put through basic reforms [since this majority would depend on the support of the SPD - RB], and therefore would not only be a provisional solution, but a far from satisfactory one.^[23]

Schacht was no more enthusiastic about Schleicher’s plan. Indeed, he had every reason to wish its failure, since, unlike Papen, Schacht had stood out for a Hitler government when others had been turning against the Nazis. He warned Schleicher after the latter had been appointed Chancellor that his scheme for splitting the Nazi ‘lefts’ away from Hitler was doomed to failure:

I think, General, that you underrate the iron discipline of the party so assiduously maintained by Hitler. Anyone who tried to speak out of turn he would send to Coventry [sic! - both Strasser and Schleicher were murdered in the purge of 30 June 1934, for their part in this abortive enterprise - RB] with no more ado.^[24]

Finally there was Thyssen, who on learning of Schleicher’s intrigues with Strasser and Leipart:

... sent Rudolf Hess a copy of the letter addressed to the secretary of a Rhenish industrial enterprise and in which I expressed the opinion that the manner in which Strasser worked against Hitler was contemptible. Hess answered me in a very cordial letter.^[25]

In his attempt to ensnare the ADGB bureaucrats, the ‘social general’ was leaning back too far to the left. And just as dangerously, his approach to Strasser had threatened to rend in half the only mass bulwark against the dreaded proletarian revolution. Slowly at first, the Chancellor’s adherents began to desert him. A matter of days later, Thyssen:

... invited a number of gentlemen to my house in order to enable them to put their questions to Hitler. Hitler answered all questions directed to him to the utmost satisfaction of all present... Directors General Kirdorf and Vögler and other great industrialists were present... [26]

Schacht's 'heavy' industrialists were stirring themselves at last.

Papen struck his first blow against Schleicher on 16 December when, on the day following the Chancellor's broadcast exposition of his 'social' programme, he addressed a meeting of the Berlin *Herrenklub*. Most of the 300 members present rightly assumed his remarks to be a thinly-veiled attack on the Schleicher government, and a call for one headed by Hitler. After assuring the club's largely aristocratic clientele that while Chancellor his aim had been to draw the 'great National Socialist freedom movement into a national concentration', Papen stressed that this should be the end of all future governments too:

No one could have longed more strongly than I for the union of all national forces and no one worked more earnestly and more sincerely for that goal than I did. How much further ahead would we be now if on the evening of 13 August we could have said to the German people: we are marching together, against all opposition at home and abroad... I expect that regardless of all tactical manoeuvres which may at the moment be needed [a sly dig at Schleicher's dealings with Leipart and Strasser - RB], the government will keep in mind the objectives which I have just outlined.

These words fell on receptive ears. After he had spoken, Papen was approached by the Cologne banker Baron Kurt von Schröder, who, as we have already noted, was in regular contact with Hitler's economic adviser Keppler, and active on behalf of the Nazis in canvassing support amongst industry and finance for a Hitler government. The gist of the conversation that followed was this: Papen proposed to Schröder that he would use his influence with Hindenburg to effect a rapprochement between Hitler and the President, while Schröder would arrange for a meeting between Papen and Hitler (this taking place at the banker's private residence in Cologne on 4 January). Schröder must have informed Keppler almost immediately of this startling development, because on 19 December, Keppler wrote to Hitler that: 'Papen wishes to have confidential talks with you in order to inform you about the previous developments and discuss with you some possible future action.' [27]

This 'possible future action' was nothing less than the formation of a cabinet of 'National Concentration' headed by Hitler in which Papen would figure as his deputy, with the remaining ministries being distributed between the NSDAP and the so-called 'Black-White-Red' bloc of assorted monarchists. The final steps towards the consummation of the Papen-Hitler deal, the role played in it by the various segments of the ruling class, and the miserable, capitulationist response that the march towards fascist dictatorship evoked from the leaders of the German working class, are best presented and analysed in the form of a chronology.

4 January: Papen and Hitler meet in the home of the Cologne Nazi banker, Baron Kurt von Schröder. The following is Schröder's own account of this historic confrontation between the principle representatives of patrician and plebeian reaction, one which results in their agreement to unite against the common class enemy:

The meeting at my house on 4 January 1933 between Papen and Hitler arose after Papen had asked me on 16 December to make the arrangements. I first spoke to a number of gentlemen in the government and got some idea of their views on cooperation with these two. The general aim of these government members [these included several of Schleicher's ministers such as the Papen 'Barons' von Neurath (Foreign) [28] and von Schwerin-Krosigk (Finance) - RB] was to install a strong leader who would form a government which could stay in power for a long time. When the NSDAP suffered its first setback in November 1932 *and was thus in decline*, it required support from German industry in fear of Bolshevism and in the hope that the Nazis if in power would bring about an enduring political and economic basis. A further common interest *was the wish to translate Hitler's economic programme into deeds*. It was expected, and it subsequently transpired, that the whole economy would be reorganised. *In it, the industrial and commercial associations would have greater say than hitherto*. It was also expected that there would be an economic boom *as a result of the award of large state contracts*. This was dependent on Hitler's projected increase of the German Wehrmacht from 100 000 to 300 000, building of Autobahns and spending by public bodies (states, local authorities, etc) for improvement of public transport systems, in particular the state railways and the orders to such industries as the automobile,

aircraft and ancillary industries. It was generally recognised that one of the foremost points in Hitler's programme was the repudiation of the Versailles Treaty and the restoration of a Germany economically and militarily strong. It was clear that in a strong Germany the economy would flourish and no longer be dependent on foreign countries. These aims, to make Germany self-sufficient, were regarded in certain quarters, not as idealistic *but as a means of profit and increase of power*. This view was specially prevalent in the sphere of synthetic oil and rubber [IG Farben and Conti]. Hitler's programme was well known to industry *and welcome...*

On 4 January 1933, Hitler, von Papen, Hess, Himmler and Keppler came to my house in Cologne. Hitler, von Papen and I went to my den where we were closeted in a discussion lasting two hours... Hitler made a long speech in which he said that if he were made Chancellor, it would be necessary for him to be head of the government but that supporters of von Papen could go into his [Hitler's] government as ministers when they were willing to go along with him in his policy of changing many things. These changes he outlined at the time included *elimination of Social Democrats, Communists and Jews from leading positions in Germany and the restoration of order in public life... Von Papen and Hitler reached an agreement in principle.* ^[29]

5 January: Goebbels notes in his diary:

The conference between the Leader and Herr von Papen has taken place in Cologne. It was meant to be kept secret, but through some indiscretion news of it got abroad and von Schleicher is making use of it... If we are successful, we cannot be far from power. [And the next day] Considering the gratifying development in politics, I scarcely feel inclined to bother about the bad financial situation of the organisation. Once we strike, all this will be over. ^[30]

The *Völkischer Beobachter* publishes Hitler's New Year Message:

The Bolshevik danger looms gigantic and the Bolshevik chances of interfering with the world order are strengthened by the blindness and the delusive ideas of the so-called statesmen. The consequences must be disastrous. Party politicians and ministers have no idea of the terrible danger which threatens the world. In a country which contains six million Communists, seven and a half million socialists and six million more or less pacifist elements *it would be better not to talk any longer of 'equal rights' and such high-sounding words*. The inner state of decay, which was looked upon as only a crisis phenomenon in 1918, has now become chronic. If Germany is to be put on its feet again *this can only be done by a movement which is as intolerant and ready to take prompt action as its opponents are. Where other movements have failed, only the NSDAP can gain victory.* ^[31]

The same day there appears in the Comintern press the KPD's perspectives for 1933. Its hallmarks are an utterly false appraisal of the real course of developments in the bourgeoisie, and an imbecilic blind optimism regarding the immediate prospects for the Communist Party. Schleicher, not Hitler, is the weapon-bearer of fascist dictatorship, and all attempts to stabilise such a regime are doomed to rapid failure. Meanwhile, the main enemy remains Social Democracy, which is becoming an auxiliary agency of the fascist dictatorship:

In view of the relations of class and groups existing in Germany at the time, the choice fell upon the Minister for War as the man most likely to solve the chief and most pressing task of the bourgeoisie, namely to create for the fascist dictatorship the mass basis which the Papen regime lacked. [On the contrary, Schleicher's is a regime seen as an alternative to fascism - RB] ... the Social Democracy is to be linked more closely to the fascist apparatus of power [wrong again, in a matter of weeks, it will be repulsed and crushed savagely - RB] ... The closer linking up of the Social Democracy with the fascist apparatus is... to be effected in stages. It is the turn of the trade union leaders [to be jailed on 2 May after Hitler spurned their offer of collaboration - RB], who are to be followed by the leaders of the Reichsbanner, and finally the leaders of the SPD [whose party will be outlawed on 22 June - RB] ... The first weeks of the existence of the Schleicher government have shown that it enjoys the toleration of all bourgeois parties, from the Nazis to the SPD... The short history of the Schleicher cabinet before and after the opening of the Reichstag already shows that the toleration front from Hitler to Leipart is functioning well... The revolutionary ranks have increased and become stronger and are facing the new year with optimism. ^[32]

6 January: The SPD Executive instructs ADGB President Theodor Leipart to break off all contact with Schleicher. The Nazi campaign for the state elections in Lippe, due on 14 January, gets under way. Hitler is determined to record a spectacular success in this tiny rural province (with an electorate of 90 000) in order to demonstrate to friend and foe alike that his movement is not disintegrating.

7 January: Papen continues to sound out support in the business world for a Hitler government, meeting a group of prominent industrialists in the Ruhr city of Dortmund.

8 January: Schleicher approaches Papen in a bid to avert a negative vote by the NSDAP against the government when the Reichstag reconvenes on 24 January. The KPD has declared it will move a censure motion on Schleicher's regime at this session. If it succeeds, then Schleicher's cabinet will fall, followed by yet another election. The outcome of the talk is inconclusive.

10 January: Papen and Hitler meet again, this time at the home of Joachim von Ribbentrop, Hitler's future Foreign Minister, where discussions continue concerning current political developments and the formation of a Nazi - Monarchist coalition.

11 January: The DNVP demands representation in the Schleicher cabinet, and that Hugenberg be given the post of Minister of Economics. The farmers' association, the *Reichslandbund*, represented by its four leaders (two of whom, Vice-President Werner Williken and Director von Sybel, are Nazis) calls on President Hindenburg to deliver to him a protest against Schleicher's agricultural policy which, like Brüning's, they hold to be 'agrarian Bolshevism'. Schleicher has little sympathy for the Prussian landowners and smaller farmers, being more concerned with the demands of industry, and seeking a *modus vivendi* with the labour bureaucracy, who have been antagonised by Papen's protectionist agricultural policies. Hindenburg upholds the complaints of the *Reichslandbund* against Schleicher, and thunders at him:

I request - and as an old soldier, you realise of course that a request is simply a polite form of a command - that your cabinet assemble this evening, prepare laws of the kind we have just discussed, and present them for my signature tomorrow morning.

Nazi demagoguery has played its part in mobilising the peasants against Schleicher and the 'system', the *Reichslandbund* leaders declaring shortly before their meeting with the President that 'the exploitation of the German farmer by the omnipotent money-bag interests of internationally-minded export industries and their vassals has not been checked by the present government'; and that the decline of German agriculture has been permitted to reach 'proportions considered impossible even under a purely [sic] Marxist regime'. First industry - and now the agrarians, headed by that sinister neo-medievalist, the Junker neighbour of President Hugenberg's East Prussian estate at Neudeck, the monarchist who finds the Nazis 'rather attractive', and Hugenberg's loyal supporter in the Reichstag, Elard von Oldenburg-Januschau - are clambering onto the Hitler bandwagon as it begins to gather speed.

12 January: Commenting on the Hitler-Papen meeting of 4 January, a KPD official writes: 'It is not Hitler who has been the main driving force against the Schleicher cabinet, but Hugenberg and the forces of landowning and finance capital behind him.' A note of reality intrudes, however, when the same writer admits that 'Schleicher's plans for the formation of a broad fascist mass basis have proved... a complete failure', even though the characterisation of Schleicher's Leipart - Strasser bloc as 'fascist' is false. ^[33]

Fresh alarms in the Hitler camp about the activities of Schleicher. Goebbels, engaged with Hitler in the crucial Lippe election campaign, records that 'politically everything is still in suspension. The Strasser clique is still agitating. Everything depends on the result of the Lippe contest.' ^[34] Another broadside from the Nazi-infested *Reichslandbund*. Hugenberg is now taking up their cause and using it as a stick to beat Schleicher into submission.

13 January: More consternation for the Nazis. Goering arrives at Hitler's temporary election headquarters - the castle of Baron von Oynhausen, yet another aristocratic Nazi sympathiser - with the news that Strasser intends to enter Schleicher's cabinet as Vice-Chancellor. The next day Goebbels writes in his diary: 'Only a great success in the Lippe contest can get us out of this dangerous situation.' But there is also good news from Berlin: 'Von Schleicher. has caused a conflict with the *Reichslandbund*. The peasants are furious with him. That is good news for us just now.' ^[35]

Hugenberg sees Schleicher, and again demands posts in the cabinet for his party. Naturally he insists on becoming Minister of Economics. Schleicher turns him down, as he still entertains hopes of a deal with Strasser.

14 January: Hugenberg is still pressing hard for representation in the Schleicher cabinet. He discusses this question with President Hindenburg, and mentions to him the possibility of bringing more moderate bourgeois parties into a coalition. He still fears handing over power to Hitler. He insists as a condition of participation in the government that the Reichstag be adjourned for at least six months to permit the implementation of his economic policies, which are reactionary in the extreme.

About this time, Schleicher begins to toy with the idea of blackmailing his agrarian opponents - and even the President himself - by publicly exposing the scandal of the *Osthilfe*.^[36]

15 January: The Nazi propaganda machine roars its claim of victory in Lippe. In reality, the returns show that while the party has succeeded in reversing the slump that set in at the Reichstag elections of 6 November 1932, it has failed to regain all the support it lost after 31 July:

Reichstag Elections, 1932-33			
	31 July	6 Nov	15 Jan
NSDAP	41.1	34.7	39.8
DNVP	8.4	9.9	6.1
SPD	29.6	27.1	30.1
KPD	9.7	15.4	11.2

Now Hitler feels he can resume his negotiations with Papen as the leader of a party that stands solidly behind him, and has proved its strength in battle. Ribbentrop hurries to see him at Oynhausen: 'Long talk with Hitler alone. Back to Berlin at night. Arranged Papen - Hitler meeting for Monday [16 January] ... or for Tuesday.'^[37]

16 January: Goebbels is now triumphant, and sensing power at last:

The papers are clearly dropping Strasser. He has lost his game... The situation of the party has changed fundamentally overnight. Our prestige is much enhanced. All sensible folk have given up the Schleicher cabinet.^[38]

Schleicher is indeed in great difficulties. Kaas of the Centre Party turns down an invitation from the Catholic Chancellor to allow Stegerwald to enter his cabinet as Labour Minister. 'Never with Hugenberg' is the angry reply. Schleicher threatens to declare a state of emergency as he finds his government becoming increasingly isolated from all major social groups and classes - agrarians, industry, the Nazis, the labour bureaucracy, the proletariat, the peasants, the hierarchy... and the President. Hindenburg refuses to give Schleicher the powers he requests. Free Corps veteran and 'left' Nazi Ernst von Salomon will write later:

As time went by Schleicher came to the conclusion that what appealed less and less to the old gentleman was Schleicher's socialism. The old man could stomach socialist views when they were presented to him by the proper people, by professional socialists as it were. But now comes along Schleicher and talks as though he were in earnest. A man from his own regiment! A deserter, you might almost say! ... on the highest level men like Meissner and Papen... kept whispering in the old gentleman's ear: 'They're coming, the Nazis, they're inevitable. And anyhow its quite constitutional that they should get in, in fact it's high time that things were made easy for them so as to save what is still to be saved, so as to avoid the worst...'^[39]

The imperialist trend in German politics hardens. With the Geneva disarmament conference less than a month away, the Federation of German Industries is aligning itself with its old friends in the *Reichswehr* to commence a programme of rearmament, and to organise the avoidance of international control over German arms production. Today the following communication has been sent from the Federation of German Industries to the War Ministry Army Weapons Department, care of Lieutenant General von Bockelburg:

With reference to the conversation at the Ministry on 13 January, we have pleasure in enclosing a summary of the interpretation of special [sic!] industry concerning the negotiations over the international control of armaments at Geneva, together with a transcript of the statements of various people on individual points of these statements... In brief, the attitude of special industry to the negotiations for international control of armaments manufacture and dealing is:

1: As the result of any agreement to set up control commissions, there must be recognition in principle of equality of status for Germany.

2: German private industry must fundamentally refuse all controls on armaments manufacture.

3: If international pressure forces the German government to do a deal over the foregoing, then the following demands will be made:

A: Germany must be represented at the consultations of all committees and sub-committees whose decisions may be of importance to the economy...

B: National control can only be tolerated on the strength of national licensing. International controls, also on the strength of already admitted publication, are to be refused...

D: Commissions may only concern themselves with actual weapons, munitions and war supply, and not with plant available for export. Term 'arms, munitions and war materials' is to be kept as restricted as possible and not to be applied to war supplies...

E: Manufacture and export shall not be subject to quota... the basis for calculations of exports must be discussed with the individual industrial groups. The participation of experts from industry and from all individual industrial groups is therefore necessary. Nominations by the Federation of German Industries will be made on request...

F: All quantitative publication of manufacture and trading is to be refused...

H: Any proposals made at Geneva must be agreed between private industry and the national federations...

The Third Reich will soon give these 'merchants of death' - and their cohorts in the army - all they desire.

17 January: An important development. Hugenberg is turning against Schleicher; he sees Hitler 'without immediate result'. They may well have discussed the inclusion of Hugenberg as minister of economics in a possible Hitler cabinet. Goebbels now exudes confidence: 'Through a conference with the District Leaders I ascertain that the party's morale is excellent again. Also the financial situation has improved all of a sudden.'^[40] Perhaps this is due not only to the good offices of Papen, but the *détente* with Hugenberg, who enjoys the closest links with heavy industry. The Cologne industrialist Otto Wolf is also proving helpful here. Goering tells the now despairing Schleicher that Hitler no longer wishes to treat with him. Hitler plans to threaten the general with a renewal of his alliance with the KPD, discarded after the collapse of the Berlin transport strike. If the NSDAP throws its 196 Reichstag mandates behind the Communist censure resolution, Schleicher will almost certainly fall.

Comments Theodor Neubauer of the KPD, which remains blind as ever to the chasm looming before it, 'the most likely government to emerge from these manoeuvres is a Schleicher - Hugenberg - Stegerwald combination'.^[41]

18 January: The twice-postponed meeting between Papen and Hitler takes place in Dahlem at noon. Röhm for the SA, and Himmler for the SS, are also present:

Hitler insists on being Chancellor. Papen again considers this impossible. His influence with Hindenburg is not strong enough to effect this. Hitler makes no further arrangements for talks.

Joachim [Ribbentrop] tentatively suggests a meeting between Hitler and Hindenburg's son.^[42]

Despite the slow progress of negotiations with Papen, Goebbels detects a favourable turn in developments, reflected in the press, which is 'abandoning Schleicher. This is an obvious sign that things are bad with him.'^[43]

The sharp increase in the sackings of Social Democratic and liberal school teachers by the Prussian education authorities (now headed by state commissioner Bracht's ultra-conservative place-men) stirs some SPD leaders to action. In the Prussian *Landtag* Professor Wilhelm Nolting denounces the trend towards chauvinism and anti-Semitism in the seats of German learning. 'In the wild ravages of the barbarians much lies trampled on the ground', he declares to the Nazi and Nationalist deputies. But like the Stalinists, he makes the fatal error of underestimating the determination and staying power of the enemy, for he goes on:

We shall see to it that your movement continues to move, but that it goes downhill... Your power of fascination is gone. You charm neither the bourgeoisie nor the political power complex. Your days of disenchantment have begun. You are in the autumn of your year.

However, there must be growing unease in the reformist camp about the comings and goings in the Brown House, the Kaiserhof, the Wilhelmstrasse and the President's residence, because detectable in Nolting's speech is a searching for a more left line than has been pursued by the SPD hitherto. He will have no truck with Schleicher, for between the Chancellor and the SPD:

... lies 20 July 1932, across this chasm can be built no bridge of understanding and unity by the coup against Prussia an unalterable hostility has been set between us and him... Schleicher personifies for us a system, and against the representatives of this system there is nothing but hostility.

Where then can Nolting and his fellow Social Democrats turn for allies but to the KPD? 'Nothing doing' is the reply of their fellow bureaucrats at the Karl Liebknecht House. The SPD has 'secretly tolerated the Leipart-Schleicher talks' (in fact the SPD blocked them on 6 January); and as for the fight against fascism 'the German working class has only one leader in the struggle against Schleicher, Hugenberg and Hitler, against the fascist dictatorship of the German bourgeoisie - and that leader is the KPD'. [44]

19 January: A busy day for von Papen. First he sees Ribbentrop, with whom he has a 'long talk'. Then off to Hindenburg to press Hitler's claims to the Chancellorship. Pressure is also being mounted on another sensitive flank. A meeting is arranged for 22 January between Hitler and the President's son Oskar, whose hand has been caught deep in the *Osthilfe* till.

Goering is now taking a hand in the negotiations. The former fighter ace, the most socially acceptable of all the Nazi leaders, will write a year later:

By the middle of the month it was already clear that the final decision was coming. There was feverish activity on all sides. From 20 January on I was, as political delegate, in constant touch with the leader of the *Stahlhelm*, Seldte [who will enter Hitler's cabinet on January 30 as Minister of Labour - RB], and with the leader of the German Nationalists Hugenberg, and was discussing with them future developments. It was clear that our goal could only be reached by the union of the National Socialists with all the remaining national forces under the sole leadership of Adolf Hitler. And then it was seen by Herr von Papen, against whom for political reasons we once had been forced to fight, now realised what a momentous occasion this was. With sincere cordiality he entered into an alliance with us, and became the honest mediator between the aged Field-Marshal and the young lance corporal of the Great War. [45]

The *Reichstag* Steering Committee is in session, and has postponed to 31 January the reopening of parliament. This move gives all the parties to the current spate of negotiations and manoeuvres a little more time to come up with an acceptable solution to the government crisis. In another chamber of the Reichstag building, the Nazis have carried out their threat to unite with the KPD. An NSDAP statement against the Lausanne agreements of the previous June is passed by the Reichstag Committee on Foreign Affairs with the votes of the KPD deputies. Still the Stalinists cling to the suicidal Kremlin line of backing any political force which, however counter-revolutionary, seeks revenge for the 'crime' of November 1918.

In the evening, Ribbentrop pays a call on Papen, who confirms 'that young Hindenburg and Meissner will come to Dahlem on Sunday' to meet Hitler. [46] The presence of Hindenburg's state secretary indicates that something really sensational is in the offing. Can the President be at last changing his mind about the 'Bohemian corporal'?

Over at the *Sportpalast*, Hitler addresses a huge Nazi rally. 'He is in excellent form', records Goebbels. He needs to be, for the Nazis are planning to hold a mammoth demonstration outside the headquarters of the KPD in the Bulow Platz on 22 January. This will be the most vital mass action Hitler has ever undertaken, since with it he intends to demonstrate once and for all to the hesitant bourgeoisie that his storm-troopers command the streets of Red Berlin. Moreover, it will give him an excellent opportunity to prove that a Nazi regime, once it has taken all the machinery of state into its hands, can make a clean sweep of the 'red pest'. This is why Goebbels is so anxious that there should be 'no hitches': 'It would be very awkward... if the police should prohibit our demonstration at the last moment', he writes. [47]

The Communists have got wind of the Nazis' plans, because a leaflet is circulating amongst the Berlin workers entitled *Red Berlin in Alarm*. The tone is bold and militantly anti-Nazi, and whilst it does not call on the reformist leaders to join with the KPD in the defence of the Karl Liebknecht House, it refrains from hurling the usual stupid abuse about 'social fascism' which has so alienated SPD workers in the past:

All the week the murderous Hitler gangs have been terrorising, shooting workers. Increasing provocation against the revolutionary Berlin working class is being prepared. On Wednesday [18 January] a troop of Nazi students in uniform appeared outside the Karl Liebknecht House and hurled abuse, under police protection. The Sunday demonstration will be the climax. All Berlin workers are seething. There is a wave of protests in the factories and at the labour exchanges. Berlin is Red. The KPD has 860 000 electors on its lists. Together with the SPD and the ADGB there is an overwhelming majority against the Nazi terror... Red Berlin, give your answer. Show your strength. Answer the Nazi provocateurs with the stormy mass protest of the entire working class. Comrades in the *Reichsbanner*, the SPD, the trade unions, form a common fighting front against the common enemy... If the fascist storm-troopers dare strike down a single worker or attack Karl Liebknecht House, every factory in Berlin must be brought to a standstill... Your own mass demonstrations must prevent the provocative Nazi assembly in the Bulow Platz. Everyone to the city centre on Sunday, to the Bulow Platz... [48]

Perhaps at the very last minute, the Communists are going to fight. With the Brown-Shirts literally at the door, they seem to have no option.

21 January: Hugenberg definitely breaks with Schleicher. Goering's influence might be telling here. Only the Centre Party supports the Chancellor now. He has ended up with no more backing in the country or the *Reichstag* than Papen. Meanwhile preparations are going ahead for two vital events. Ribbentrop sees Hitler about tomorrow's meeting with Hindenburg junior and Meissner. He will not have Schleicher present on any account. Goering will be there, however, together with Frick. These two eminently bourgeois Nazis will be Hitler's only two National Socialist ministers in the cabinet formed on 30 January. But before the coalition can be consummated 'at the top', the battle 'down below' in the streets of proletarian Berlin must be won. This is the responsibility of Röhm and Goebbels, who are whipping the SA men up into a frenzy of anti-Communist hatred ready for tomorrow's parade. Röhm is bringing in hand-picked SA units from all over Germany by train and motor vehicles. Goebbels anxiously awaits the outcome of the expected battle of Berlin, which even with the police protection assured the Nazis, is by no means certain:

The whole day goes by making plans for our demonstration on the Bulow Platz. The Communist press has sounded the alarm, and overnight the parade in consequence has developed into a matter of significance... The demonstration is permitted... which factor now exemplifies our strength...

Goebbels is also conversant with the progress of the Hitler - Meissner - Hindenburg junior negotiations, for he adds: 'The work in anticipation of the downfall of the von Schleicher cabinet is well in hand. Even the form in which the Leader is to take power is seriously discussed.' [49]

22 January: The day of decision for the workers of Berlin and all Germany has arrived. The turnout for the Nazi demonstration has not proved as large as was expected. One KPD observer estimates it as low as 16 000. Be that as it may, the Berlin proletariat possesses the numerical strength and class-consciousness to block the SA's path to the Karl Liebknecht House. At the elections of 6 November, the KPD emerged the strongest single party in the capital, with 37.7 per cent of the total poll. Then followed the SPD with 23.8 per cent and the NSDAP with 23.2 per cent. Two Berliners in three voted either KPD or SPD on that day! As for the workers, they are behind these two organisations almost to a man and woman. If the brown tide can be checked in the capital, the reverberations of such a famous victory will echo throughout proletarian Germany, giving fresh heart to its 20 million embattled workers. And it can demonstrate to the wavering middle-class elements in the Hitler camp that their leader is not all-powerful, that the abused and despised Marxists are capable of fighting and winning. This is how even old guard Stalinists like Hermann Remmele are thinking. He has begun to criticise in a confused fashion the suicidal line being forced on the party from Moscow, and now is arguing inside the KPD Central Committee that:

... this fascist provocation be answered by a Communist counter-demonstration. His view is that the German workers should not be abandoned defenceless to the Nazis, and that it is possible to avert the worst happening only through spirited resistance. [50]

But hours before the demonstration is due to begin, there appears on the streets of Berlin another leaflet issued by the KPD. No longer are the Berlin workers summoned to block the Brown-Shirts' path to the party headquarters; instead the KPD appeal talks vaguely of the need to 'defend your interests' and to 'protect your life, your party, its Bolshevik Central Committee from the provocative assault of the hirelings of capital'. The proletariat, with the brown onslaught only hours away, is merely advised to

‘stand prepared’ and to use its ‘mass strength in unity against the wave of fascist terror’. ‘Unity committees’ were to be elected - whereas in the previous appeal, specific demands had been addressed to the SPD and ADGB workers to stage a general strike in the event of the SA marching on the Karl Liebknecht House. ‘Everybody to the Bulow Platz’, had been the slogan then. Now, someone, somewhere, was sounding the most ignominious retreat in the history of German Communism, no less treacherous than the capitulation of the reformists in Prussia to Papen on 20 July. *The order to clear the way for Hitler’s onslaught has come from Stalin!* As Mrs Neumann will later recall:

... shortly before the day of the planned demonstration there came a telegram from Moscow. It was a categorical instruction that no counter-demonstration by the KPD was to take place. The party leadership was made responsible for seeing that there was no sort of clash with the Nazis.
[51]

Instead of meeting the fascist challenge with the might of the Berlin proletariat, the fire-eating leftists in the Karl Liebknecht House behave no differently from the ‘social fascists’. ‘State - help us!’, is their plaintive cry. Workers are now invited to send letters of protest to the Berlin Chief of Police, while the Central Committee issues a statement to the press saying that the KPD ‘holds the authorities responsible for what will happen in the Bulow Platz’. And what happens there, by permission not only of Schleicher’s police, but the Kremlin bureaucracy and its servile henchmen in the KPD leadership, is the blackest day yet in the history of German Communism. Goebbels cannot contain his glee at the spectacle of the headquarters of the largest Communist Party in the capitalist world encircled by a sea of leering Brown-Shirts:

Berlin has got the wind up. Our marching in the Bulow Platz has caused a great commotion. The police are patrolling the slums with machine guns and armed motor cars. In spite of the prohibition the Communists have proclaimed a huge demonstration. [Goebbels does not know the decision to call it off has been taken - RB] *If it fails, they will suffer an irreparable loss of prestige.* We can only hope the police will not thwart our plans, for as things stand, the Karl Liebknecht House could be conquered in one single assault... We assemble on the Bulow Platz... The square looks like a military camp. Armed motor cars and machine guns are everywhere to be seen. The police have posted themselves on the roofs and at the windows facing the Platz waiting the course of events. Punctually at two, the Führer arrives. The SA marches to the Karl Liebknecht House... The leader speaks in the cemetery. He points out the significance for the party of the figure of Horst Wessel [the Nazis’ anti-Communist martyr]. Outside the House the SA is posted, and in the side streets the Communists are shouting with impotent rage. The SA is on the march and overawes the Reds *on their own ground, Berlin.* The Bulow Platz is ours. *The Communists have suffered a great defeat...* This day is really a proud and heroic victory for the SA and for the Party... *We have won the battle...* [52]

The Stalinists try to save face by claiming that it is the Nazis who have suffered a defeat, and not the workers. The fact that the SA could only march with police protection ‘naturally not raised but lowered the political prestige of the National Socialists’ writes B Steinemann of the Berlin party organisation. [53] But the demonstration has not been staged to raise the prestige of the Nazis in the estimation of the Berlin workers, but to prove to those negotiating with Hitler over the formation of a new cabinet that the NSDAP has the forces to cow the ‘Reds’ in their own stronghold, and that Hitler has ended his opportunist manoeuvrings with the KPD. This is well understood in both Nazi and bourgeois quarters. Otto Dietrich, one of Hitler’s liaison men with heavy industry, sees the humiliation of the KPD as a turning point in Hitler’s bid for power:

Instead of negotiating... [Hitler] ordered his Berlin SA men to parade on the Bulow Platz, with their front facing the Karl Liebknecht House. This was a bold and brilliant demonstration of power, which the Commune, impotent and boiling with rage, was forced to witness. [54]

Some 10 years later, Hitler will recall that ‘the day after the SA assault on the Karl Liebknecht House in Berlin had resulted in a tremendous loss of prestige for the KPD and caused great indignation in Berlin, I was again invited by von Papen to a conference...’ So Hitler too understands that a turning point has been reached as a result of the Kremlin’s capitulation.

On May Day 1929, the KPD leadership had no qualms about summoning workers to the barricades in an adventurist armed struggle against ‘social fascism’. Now, with the real fascists mobilising in their last drive for power, these same leaders sound the retreat. For Stalin’s foreign policy deems that it should be so. Flushed with his victory on the Bulow Platz, Hitler travels across Berlin to the fashionable Berlin

suburb of Dahlem, where he is due to meet Oskar Hindenburg and Meissner at the home of von Ribbentrop. He takes Goering and Frick with him. Matchmaker Papen is also present: 'Hitler talks alone to young Hindenburg for two hours, followed by a Hitler - Papen talk. Papen will now press for Hitler as Chancellor...' ^[55]

Motoring back to the Wilhelmstrasse, Oskar Hindenburg remarks with a sigh to his companion Meissner: 'It cannot be helped. The Nazis must be taken into the government.' When Goebbels learns of this dramatic development, he is delighted:

Several discussions with the men who in the future will be of importance have cleared the ground. Generally speaking there is conformity among them... One thing is certain, feeling in general is everywhere against the present cabinet. In the new cabinet, the Leader will take over. Herr von Papen will become Vice-Chancellor. ^[56]

23 January: Papen sees Hindenburg, who still baulks at a Hitler cabinet. But perhaps Schleicher's admission to the President that his attempt to split the NSDAP and form a coalition with Strasser's 'left' Nazis has failed, will compel him to think again. Also ominous for Schleicher is Hindenburg's refusal to declare a state of emergency and dissolve the Reichstag, now due to reopen on 31 January. The President reminds him that his predecessor von Papen had fallen because the *Reichswehr* leaders feared the use of the army against a possible mass uprising of the left or right. 'Since then the situation has been worsening for several weeks... If civil war was likely then, it is even more so now, and the Army will be still less capable of coping with it...' ^[57] There is talk of a 'businessmen's government' headed by Schacht, but Hitler will have none of it. Such a cabinet would be no less an open incitement to revolt than one based purely on the *Reichswehr*. The German bourgeoisie needs Hitler's plebeians.

Berlin is seething with rumours of plots and counterplots. They all revolve around one question - how and when the Nazis will be brought into the government. That they must be brought in is not disputed save by a daily shrinking fraction of the ruling class.

However in Moscow, where the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party is in session, the Kremlin bureaucracy sees no cause for alarm at the most recent developments in Germany. Stalin has already delivered a lengthy report on the results of the Five-Year Plan, in which true to his metaphysical conception of political economy, he has inverted the relationship between national and world economy. For him 'the successes of the Five-Year Plan are mobilising the revolutionary forces of the working class of all countries against capitalism', ^[58] whereas in reality, as the events of the last days have shown, the menace of fascism in Germany is casting its long shadow over the Soviet economy. For Molotov, who today gives his report on the USSR's foreign policy, this relationship between the Soviet Union and Germany is simply one of maintaining friendly contacts with whoever happens to be in power in Berlin, be he Schleicher or Hitler:

The Soviet Union's international position must be regarded in the light of the results of the First Five-Year Plan. Germany occupies a special place in our foreign relations. Of all the countries maintaining diplomatic relations with us, we have had and now have the strongest economic connection with Germany. That is no accident. It arises from the interests of the two countries. ^[59]

And if there is a danger to the further development of the Soviet economy, it comes not from Germany, where the Nazis are now only one week away from taking power, but France and Japan.

24 January: Another meeting at Ribbentrop's: 'Frick, Goering, Papen, Joachim [von Ribbentrop]. Resolved to form national front which is to support Papen *vis-à-vis* old Hindenburg.' ^[60] The Hugenberg Nationalists step up their campaign against Schleicher, whom they depict as dangerously radical. A day of more manoeuvrings, with some *Reichswehr* officers now edging away from their former chief-of-staff. Others, like Colonel Walter von Reichenau, Commander of the East Prussian Military District 1, and General Werner von Blomberg, who will be Hitler's first Minister of Defence, have already made up their minds. They want Hitler. Already Reichenau and Hitler have exchanged letters concerning the political situation in Germany, Hitler writing on 2 December 1932 that it was 'just childish' to believe that Marxism could be crushed simply by military methods. It had now 'conquered a gigantic part of the world'. Neither was Germany's home front secure in the event of war. As soon as the first troops set out to meet the foreign foe, 'the red mob would break loose at home'. November 1918 would be 'child's play' by comparison. That was why neither Papen nor Schleicher could accomplish their aim of overcoming Marxism, since 'neither the police nor the army has destroyed and still less created a world

view'. Hence the need for Hitler's plebeian, 'political' army steeped and steeled in anti-Marxism. Hitler's letter to von Reichenau proposed a five-point programme on which the *Reichswehr* could find common ground with the NSDAP:

1. Total destruction of Marxism in all its forms, including the free trade unions (no question, as with Schleicher, of their 'incorporation into the state').
2. Inward 'regeneration' of Germany.
3. Rearmament.
4. Legal recognition of the Nazi state by the rest of the world.
5. Total involvement of the population in the preparations for war. 'Social' militarism.

These ideas are now seducing the younger *Reichswehr* officers. If Hitler will give them the arms and men to fight, then his lack of social pedigree can be overlooked.

25 January: Ribbentrop notes:

Again tea in Dahlem. Joachim sees young Hindenburg alone. Hitler's Chancellorship under the auspices of a national front does not appear quite hopeless. Young Hindenburg promises to talk to Joachim again before his father makes final decision. ^[61]

Goebbels is also cautiously optimistic: 'It looks pretty bad for von Schleicher. His downfall is expected on Saturday [28 January]... Even the Nationalists now are against him. He is absolutely isolated.' ^[62] Despite a continued slow revival in production (up by 10 per cent on September 1932), unemployment is still chronic. Figures released today show that the number of workers without jobs has risen by 193 000 between 1 and 15 January. Thirteen workers shot dead by police at a meeting in Dresden. Protest strikes erupt throughout the city, but lack of unity at the top prevents the movement from growing.

26 January: Ribbentrop has a 'long talk with Frick and Goering in the Reichstag. Negotiations with German Nationals. In the evening at Prince Oskar's house in Potsdam. Letter to Hugenberg.' ^[63] Von Papen meets Hugenberg, whose support for the proposed Hitler cabinet is essential if it is to carry a majority in the Reichstag. And Hugenberg is in the unique position of being able to speak for both agrarian and industrial interests. Hitler needs him - if only while he consolidates his own independent power base. Also present at the meeting with Hugenberg is that other stalwart of 'national' Germany, the *Stahlhelm* leader Franz Seldte. Papen tells them that the new cabinet being formed to succeed Schleicher will be led by Hitler. Düsterberg, also invited to the meeting, but the least important of the three monarchists, rejects Papen's proposal. But Hugenberg and Seldte agree. Like Papen, Hugenberg genuinely believes that Hitler will serve as their stooge. Having finished off the Marxists and sent parliament packing, the Nazi upstarts will be put in their place and the stage set for a comeback by the 'old gang'. It suits Hitler to cultivate such illusions. Hugenberg's conversion to a Hitler cabinet will have a big effect on Hindenburg. And so much still depends on the opinion of the President... This is now Goebbels' main worry.

The Leader is in Berlin once more. He has very difficult decisions before him to make. Von Schleicher's position is definitely shaken. The last word lies with the President of the Reich. ^[64]

27 January: Simultaneous crisis in the Nazi and government camps. The Reichstag Steering Committee upholds its decision to reopen the Reichstag on 31 January. Schleicher faces near-certain defeat there. And a blow against Hitler. General von Hammerstein calls on Hindenburg and warns him of the consequences of appointing the Nazi leader Chancellor. 'I have no intention whatever of making that Austrian Corporal either Minister of Defence or Chancellor of the Reich', replies the President. So all Papen's intrigues have so far been of no avail. Neither has the tactic of working through the President's errant son Oskar produced dividends. Ribbentrop and Hitler meet at Goering's Berlin flat.

Hitler wants to leave Berlin forthwith. Joachim proposes link up with Hugenberg for a national front. New meeting with old Hindenburg arranged. Hitler declares that he has said all there is to say to the Field Marshal, and does not know what to add. Joachim persuades Hitler that this last attempt should be made, and that the situation is by no means hopeless. Joachim suggests that the national front should be formed as soon as possible and that Hitler should meet Papen in Dahlem at 10.00 pm. Hitler agrees to negotiate with Papen and Hugenberg in the evening... Late in the afternoon Goering telephones to say that Joachim should go to the Reichstag President's house immediately. There, talks with Hugenberg, Hitler and Goering broken off because of impossible demands by German Nationals. Hitler very indignant, wants to leave for Munich immediately.

Goering persuades him to stay or at least to go only as far as Weimar. Gradually Goering and Joachim calm Hitler down, but his suspicions are revived. Situation very critical. Hitler declares he cannot meet Papen in Dahlem that evening, because he is not in a position to talk freely...

Ribbentrop takes up the story from his wife, whose diary entries these are:

I have never seen Hitler in such a state; I proposed to him and Goering that I should see Papen alone that evening and explain the whole situation to him. In the evening I saw Papen and convinced him eventually that the only thing that made sense was Hitler's Chancellorship and that he must do what he can to bring this about. Papen declared that the matter of Hugenberg was of secondary importance and that he was absolutely in favour of Hitler becoming Chancellor; this was the decisive change in Papen's attitude. ^[65]

Papen earlier pays a call on Hindenburg, to tell him that there is no question of his assuming the leadership of a new cabinet in the event of Schleicher's resignation, which is now expected hourly.

Unrest is so great in the ranks of the KPD after its leaders' capitulation to the Nazis on 22 January that they compel the party bureaucracy to hold a massive anti-fascist march past the Karl Liebknecht House. Those responsible for the humiliation of 22 January now appear to take the salute from the hundreds of thousands of workers, many of whom have come from all corners of the country, who file past in the bitter cold. Thälmann, Pieck, Schehr, Ulbricht are among them. But not Remmele, who is in disgrace for his outspoken opposition to the ECCI directive halting the planned KPD counter-demonstration of 22 January. The response to the KPD's rally - delegations are marching from the AEG, Borsig, Osram and Siemens works in Berlin - proves yet again that when the call is given, the workers will respond. But the Communist workers, many of them unemployed, cannot fight and defeat the Nazis alone. They need the active support of the workers who follow the SPD. And not only the reformist, but the Stalinist bureaucracy is keeping them apart.

28 January: Schleicher has fallen! Unable to assemble the elements of a coalition broad based enough to rule without the direct intervention of the army and police in daily politics, he tells Hindenburg that there is now only one way out of the crisis - appoint Hitler Chancellor. The President now summons his old friend and *confidant*, von Papen, to advise him on the next move. Does it have to be the 'Austrian Corporal' after all? Papen, after his conversation with Ribbentrop yesterday, will be pushing hard for such a solution. Papen reports to Ribbentrop that 'a turning point has been reached', that 'after a long talk with Hindenburg, he considers Hitler's Chancellorship possible'. ^[66] The main problem now is Prussia. Hitler is demanding Bracht's position of Reich Commissioner, which Papen - with Hindenburg's approval - covets for himself. Goering (who will soon annexe Prussia for the Third Reich) is called in to mediate in the dispute:

Goering promises to persuade Hitler to accept the Prussian settlement proposed by Papen. Goering and I [Ribbentrop] go to see Hitler. Long talk with Hitler, explaining that a solution depended on trust and that his Chancellorship does not now appear to be impossible. But first Hitler wants to think over the question of Prussia, and see Papen again on Sunday morning [29 January]... Then we arrange a Hitler - Papen meeting for 11 am on Sunday morning. ^[67]

Papen is busy sounding out the leaders of the old bourgeois parties. He learns that two fellow Catholics - von Schaffer of the BVP and Brüning of the Centre, are willing to serve as Ministers in a Hitler cabinet. But Hitler needs neither, for he already has the support of not only Papen, and Hugenberg and Seldte, but stalwarts of the 'old Germany' such as Neurath, Schwerin-Krosigk, Guertner and Eltz, all of whom have served Schleicher and are now ready to function under Hitler. The Centre is to be left out in the cold. Late at night, Papen reports back to his President that a provisional list of cabinet ministers has been drawn up, save for that of Defence, previously held by Schleicher himself. Hindenburg proposes the pro-Nazi Blomberg, who is rapidly coming under the influence of von Reichenau. Everything is now ready for the vital meeting between Papen and Hitler, fixed for tomorrow at 11 am.

29 January: Agreement! The President will appoint Hitler Chancellor:

At 11 am a long Hitler - Papen talk. Hitler declares that on the whole everything was clear. But there would have to be general elections and an Enabling Law. Papen saw Hindenburg immediately. I lunched with Hindenburg at the Kaiserhof. We discuss the elections, as Hindenburg does not want these, Hitler asks me to tell the President that these will be the last elections. In the afternoon Goering and I go to Papen, Papen declares that all obstacles are removed and that Hindenburg expects Hitler tomorrow at 11 am. ^[68]

Papen and Hitler have fixed a deal over Prussia. Fearful of massive working-class resistance to his regime, Hitler insists with Papen that the two posts responsible for security - the Interior Ministers of the Reich and Prussia, be held by Nazis - namely Frick and Goering.

Both my visitors [Hitler and Goering] insist that the Prussian police, which has been in the hands of the Social Democrats for 10 years, would have to undergo certain changes in personnel. They declare that this is necessary if the police are to be relied upon to deal effectively with the Communists... [69]

Papen agrees, while retaining formal control over Prussia in his capacity as Vice-Chancellor. Papen then sees Hugenberg, who has already agreed to take the portfolio of Economics, and the *Stahlhelm* leaders Seldte (Minister of Labour), and Dusterberg, who has now changed his mind about Hitler, and pledges the support of the monarchist war veterans' movement. By the evening, everything is settled. Hitler will be appointed Chancellor tomorrow.

The bourgeoisie has settled its internal differences. There is now no other candidate but Hitler. Social Democracy, liberalism, Catholic - reformist coalitions, Presidential and 'social' Bonapartism - all have been tried, and, in the predicament that German imperialism now discovers itself, found wanting. But that is not how the dominant group in the KPD leadership sees things. Hitler is on the down-grade, his plebeians are deserting him for the Communists, the military and the bourgeoisie are afraid of civil war - so there will be no Hitler cabinet. KPD Reichstag friction leader Ernst Torgler has his doubts however, and on this day asks Thälmann to declare a state of special alert in the party. Thälmann replies scornfully: 'You are mad. The bourgeoisie won't let Hitler anywhere near power. Let's go to Lichtenberg to play skittles.' [70] Within days, both men will be inside the prisons of the Third Reich, Thälmann never to emerge. And as for the millions they have for years misled, they are about to suffer the greatest catastrophe in the history of the international workers' movement.

30 January: At noon, after a morning of wild and as it turns out, unsubstantiated rumours of an army plot to arrest the President and install a military regime, Hitler and his cabinet of 'National Concentration' are sworn in by Hindenburg. As the former corporal takes his leave of the Field Marshal, the President says with some emotion: 'And now gentlemen, forward with God.' Hitler's cabinet goes into immediate session. There can be no question of the reopening of the Reichstag, fixed for tomorrow, as without the guaranteed support of the Centre Party, the new government will not command a majority. The minutes of this first meeting record the discussion that ensues:

The Minister of Economics [Hugenberg] said that he certainly had no wish to see a general strike. *However he saw no way of avoiding the suppression of the KPD.* Otherwise one could get no majority in the Reichstag, certainly no two-thirds majority [the proportion of votes required for the passing of an Enabling Act - RB]. With the KPD suppressed, it was possible that the Reichstag will accept an enabling act. He did not anticipate a general strike if the KPD were suppressed. He preferred the suppression of the KPD to a general election. [Naturally, as Hugenberg has every reason to expect that Hitler would use it to strengthen his own position in the Cabinet *vis-à-vis* the 'Red-White-Black' bloc represented by Papen and himself - RB] *Reichsminister* Goering reported that he had prohibited a demonstration planned for that evening. According to his information, the SPD would not at this time join a general strike. The Social Democrats relied on speeches in the Reichstag. He thought it best to dissolve the Reichstag as soon as possible and have new elections. The *Reichschancellor* had given his word that the composition of the cabinet would not be altered after the election. The Chancellor confirmed this. The Minister of Labour [Seldte] said there was rejoicing in the ranks of the *Stahlhelm* over the formation of the present government... In his view, it would be awkward if the first act of the present government was to ban the KPD *and precipitate a general strike.* The representative of the Treasury [von Krosigk] and the Commissioner for Prussia [Bracht] pointed out that what the German people needed now was a period of tranquillity. *The Chancellor said that a general strike should not be lightly risked. It would probably not be possible to use the army to suppress one should it break out.* The Minister of Defence [von Blomberg] thanked the Chancellor for his attitude and expressed the view that a soldier looked on himself *only as a possible opponent of a foreign enemy.* The Foreign Minister [von Neurath] thought it very doubtful that dissolution of the KPD would result in a general strike. Secretary of State Dr Meissner suggested an Enabling Act to give the central government power to take measures to fight unemployment... Dr Gereke

[Commissar for Re-employment] said the Centre Parties would not tolerate the government. An early general election was necessary... [Emphasis added]

The new government is evidently obsessed with the possibility of working-class resistance, even to the extent of a general strike. And since there is no question of the army being used to quell it, everything depends on Hitler's storm-troops - not the most reliable and disciplined of forces. Even at this late hour, with the Hitler cabinet now in office, there is still a chance that the working class can fight back and defeat the fascists. The strongholds remain unconquered, the trade unions are weakened but unbroken by their leaders' collaborationist policies of recent weeks, while the two workers' parties still command the loyal following of 13 million proletarians. United action now can bring Hitler down, before his brown-shirted gangsters have the opportunity to carry out their mission of pulverising the entire workers' movement.

Spontaneous strikes against the Hitler government have already broken out in various parts of the country - Hamburg, where dockers are out, Halle, Mannheim and Düsseldorf. Many Social Democratic functionaries have arrived in Berlin to receive directives from their central leadership, while members of the Iron Front are assembling weapons that have been kept hidden for just such a dire emergency. Many are therefore perplexed when they read in the afternoon edition of their party daily, *Vorwärts*, that 'any drive on the part of a single working-class organisation might very easily result in exactly the opposite of what it intended to achieve'. Obviously a reference to the general strike call issued by the KPD on the formation of the Hitler cabinet, a call issued, unlike all the party's previous summonses to strike action, not only 'below' to the reformist workers, but to their 'social fascist' leaders at the top. But one call for a genuine united front cannot overcome years of sectarianism, false tactics and strategy. Because the KPD tactic of setting up 'red' unions, splitting the vanguard away from the mass, has led to the isolation of the party from the majority of trade union workers, the KPD is now unable to exert any leverage inside these basic class organisations, without whose support there can be no successful struggle against the Nazi regime. For four years now the Stalinists have been denouncing the ADGB unions as 'social fascist' strike-breaking machines, fused organically with the bourgeoisie and the capitalist state. Now when disaster stares them in the face, these super-revolutionary bureaucrats turn themselves inside out, and address plaintive appeals to the 'strike-breaking social fascists' to... call a strike against fascism! Had the KPD deeply entrenched itself inside the ADGB unions, and established comradely, principled relations with their reformist members (and also their more left cadres and officials), neither the SPD nor ADGB bureaucracy could so easily have spurned today's call for a general strike. To compel reformists into a united front requires not only a correct demand on the day, but real forces at the core of the class. The 'Third Period' has ensured that the KPD's six million supporters are now unable to exert the pressure on the reformist movement and its leaders that the situation so desperately requires. Tonight, as hordes of triumphant and expectant SA men troop past the President's Palace, where Hindenburg, Hitler and his cabinet are taking the salute, to the north and east, in the 'red' quarters of the capital, and throughout every proletarian district in Germany, millions of workers are waiting for the word to be given, the word that will bring them into battle united against the common enemy. Generations of struggle to build and defend their organisations has taught them that individual or isolated acts of resistance are useless, and in fact serve the enemy. *They know they can only fight to win through their basic class organisations - their unions (which the Stalinists scornfully deride as strike-breaking machines), their parties, factory councils and cooperatives. Either these organisations are made to fight, or they will be destroyed, the working class enslaved, and all Germany driven to barbarism.*

31 January: The SPD has published its proclamation, approved jointly by the party executive and Reichstag fraction, in *Vorwärts* this morning:

The enemies of the working class have united in a cartel of reactionary big capitalists and agrarian interests to wage joint battle against the working class. We stand to use every means to ward off any attack upon the political and social rights of the people, guaranteed to them by the Constitution and by law. Any attempt by the government to pervert or violate the Constitution will be met by the utmost resistance of the working class and all liberty-loving people. ^[71]

True to form, the reformists are preparing to fight fascism - within the framework of the constitution. The only problem here is that Hitler is planning use the same weapon against the reformists! In the evening edition of *Vorwärts*, Franz Künstler, something of a left, declares 'the working class is ready to mount the barricades to defend its constitutional rights'. But in the meantime, while Hitler keeps to the legal path, the strike weapon must be 'kept in reserve so that the decisive moment will not find workers

already exhausted'. The same paper argues a few days later that 'a general strike at this moment would simply be firing the ammunition of the working class foolishly into the air'. Members of the SPD and ADGB are therefore asked not to take 'precipitate, and therefore, harmful, isolated actions'.

The general feeling among reformist leaders is that the Hitler cabinet has a very short life ahead of it, that neither the bourgeoisie nor the army will permit the Nazis to indulge in their promised orgy of red-baiting, and that finally the backward layers of the masses who support Hitler will very quickly sober up once they see that Hitler has nothing to offer them except long speeches and noisy demonstrations. This criminally short-sighted view is not confined to SPD and ADGB officials. Brand of the KPD places far, far too much emphasis on the uneasy reactions of certain bourgeois papers to Hitler's appointment. He cites the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung's* comment that the new cabinet is a 'leap in the dark' as evidence that the dominant sections of the bourgeoisie are not behind Hitler. Even if this were so - which it is not - this would by no means signify defeat for Hitler. Brüning held power for more than two years with only a fraction of the ruling class behind him, and without a genuine mass base in the population. Hitler has a far larger proportion of capitalist support, and an organised plebeian base numbered in millions. Those workers who yesterday hoped that the KPD's strike call to the reformist organisations marked a change of line will be saddened by Brand's references to the Social Democrats, who are once again being cast in the role of 'the most valuable buttress of the Hitler - Papen - Hugenberg dictatorship'. ^[72] If that is indeed so, then yesterday's united front appeal was nothing short of treachery! Reports are coming in of violent clashes between armed Nazis and workers all over Germany. The strike of Hamburg dockers continues, while street battles have flared up in the 'red' districts of Berlin - Wedding and Neukölln - and in Dresden, Düsseldorf and Halle. In Berlin, the *Rote Fahne* offices are raided by police, and today's issue banned. Already the shape of things to come is visible.

Pravda has a straightforward factual report of the formation of the Hitler cabinet. Yesterday there was great commotion in the editorial offices of the Soviet party paper. Over the previous weeks, the staff had been endlessly repeating to each other: 'Never will the old Field-Marshal entrust the fate of Germany to a corporal.' ^[73] The paper's political director Knorin tries to cool his staff, some of whom were KPD 'exiles' seconded to the paper:

In contrast to the excitement of the editorial staff, his mood was quiet and collected. He seemed to wish to stress through his demeanour that nothing unusual had happened or was expected. At the very beginning of his brief introductory speech, he emphasised that the paper had got to take the lead in fighting the 'panic and hysteria' that had got the upper hand in most Western press organs. It was not to be assumed, Knorin said, that the German bourgeoisie would give up even the slightest part of its powers to Hitler. The possibility of a coup by the SA was even less likely. Finally, the *Reichswehr* would in no circumstances put up with a Hitler dictatorship. ^[74]

In all essentials, the same analysis as was made the same day by the German reformists!

The Hitler cabinet meets again today, and discusses once more the necessity of holding new elections. The problem of attitude of the Centre Party also is causing Hitler some worry:

The Reich Chancellor reported about his conversation on the morning of 31 January with representatives of the Centre Party, Prelate Dr Kaas and Dr Perlitius. The representatives had told him that they did not wish to join the government at this time. They did not consider abstention from opposition to the cabinet by the Centre Party impossible... The Reich Chancellor declared that he wished to make the following binding promises: a) the outcome of the new election of the Reichstag is to have no influence on the composition of the present government; b) the forthcoming election of the Reichstag is to be the last election. *Any return to the parliamentary system is to be absolutely avoided.* ^[75]

Goebbels notes in his diary:

In a conference with the Führer we lay down the line for the fight against the Red terror. For the moment we shall abstain from direct counter-measures. The Bolshevik revolution must first burn into flames. At the proper moment we shall strike.

The London *Times* displays more class consciousness than its Moscow opposite number. An editorial on the new cabinet declares:

That Herr Hitler... should be given the chance of showing that he is something more than an orator and agitator was always desirable. Now that the Harzburg Front has been restored, the opportunity has come. ^[76]

The Berlin stock exchange presents the most amazing spectacle today. Outside the citadel of German capitalism, Nazi youths demonstrate against 'profiteers', while inside, business is booming. As one observer notes:

Hitler himself has addressed a message to the capitalists promising them there is to be 'no question of any kind of experiments in the industrial or financial fields' and on this reassurance the Bourse has done a day of roaring business. ^[77]

Shares showing an improvement include IG Farben (up from 103 to 107.25), Siemens-Schuckert (23.25 to 25.80), Reichsbank (154.75 to 157.75) and the two ailing shipping lines Hamburg-America and North German Lloyd. World capitalism also has confidence in the new cabinet, judging from the comment today of Pierre Quesnay, General Manager of the Bank for International Settlements, who is quoted as saying that 'the most powerful personages in international finance seem to have decided that the Hitler Chancellorship will bring no innovations in economic or financial policy'. ^[78]

1 February: Fears mount in the cabinet that the workers will unite against the new government. But Goering has plans to deal with that threat:

The Reich Chancellor stated that a united front extending from the trade unions to the KPD appeared to be forming against the present government. The Reich President had declared himself willing to dissolve the Reichstag. He, the Reich Chancellor, was thinking of the slogan 'Attack Against Marxism' as the election slogan of the government. Reich Minister Goering pointed out that acts of terrorism on the part of the Communists were becoming increasingly frequent. The police had partly fallen down on the job, especially in the west. Unfortunately, the existing statutes were inadequate, especially for taking action against the press. It was therefore necessary to put the so-called 'drawer decree' into effect as soon as possible. He had some doubts whether it would be possible to work with the present staff of the Prussian Ministry of the Interior. ^[79]

At the same session, Frick proposes that the government should provide one million marks for its own election campaign. Both Hitler and the Nationalists oppose this. They say that the cabinet should in these austere times set an example in frugality. Big business will be asked to finance Hitler's last election campaign.

SPD chairman Otto Wels reports to fellow executive members on measures taken to resist the Hitler government. 'We have had an all-night meeting with our comrades in the *Reichsbanner* and the Iron Front', he says. 'All is in readiness for action.' That may well be true. But when is the action going to begin? Time is vital, and the Nazis are not wasting any. Hitler's fifth column in the factories, the NSBO, is preparing to synchronise its own intrigues against the trade unions with the onslaught of Goering's purged and strengthened police. A directive from the NSBO leadership issues the slogan 'conquer the factories'. The goal - smash the red strongholds. The 'reds' will be no pushover. At the elections to the works councils in the Hamburg shipyards of Blohm and Voss, the KPD for the first time take the majority of seats - seven out of 13. Important sections of the working class are still moving left. Can the KPD give them the leadership they deserve? More clashes reported in the Ruhr towns of Essen, Düsseldorf and Crefeld, and from Chemnitz in Saxony. The danger is that the working class will dissipate its energies in these localised battles for lack of a centralised leadership, which neither the KPD, ADGB nor SPD is yet providing.

The entire thrust of Nazi propaganda is being directed against the workers' parties and, to a lesser degree, the left flank of the Centre Party. In his radio broadcast today, Hitler rages:

Fourteen years of Marxism have ruined Germany: one year of Bolshevism would destroy her... If however Germany is to accomplish this political and economic revival and conscientiously fulfil her duties towards the other nations, one decisive step is absolutely necessary first: the overthrow of the destroying menace of Communism in Germany.

2 February: The government bans all KPD open-air meetings, and institutes closer supervision of its indoor ones. The net is closing. With new Reichstag elections set for 5 March, the SPD swings into action as if it was just one more parliamentary contest. Its programme is quite radical - too much so in fact, since while it talks about the expropriation of the bourgeoisie, it has no plan for the disarming of the fascist bands that now threaten the party's very existence:

Defend yourself, defend your independence as citizens against your oppressors, against the upper ten, against the miserable minority of barons, against the capitalists; break their economic power! Fight with us for the expropriation of the landowner and the division of the land among the

peasants and agricultural labourers! Fight with us for the socialisation of heavy industry, for the construction of a socialist planned economy. ^[80]

Who then is to disarm the fascists, if not the workers? The reformists have the answer. ADGB President Leipart has written today to his friend Privy Councillor Hans von Nostitz, Chairman of the Berlin Society for Social Reform. He asks him to help in drafting a letter to President Hindenburg protesting ‘against the unprecedented partisan abuse of the German working class and of all other people’s organisations’ contained in the radio speech by Hitler yesterday. Nostitz declines to help. Hitler’s vitriolic attacks on the workers’ movement he finds ‘nothing more than electioneering’. ‘It is the same in England’, he assures Leipart ‘when extreme accusations are made of how the country has been ruined by the opposing party.’ Leipart is shown how much such protests are worth when the SPD press is suspended for three days for publishing the party’s ‘seditious’ manifesto. The KPD is also limbering up for the elections, officially confident that it is the Communists, and not Hitler or his ‘social fascist’ stooges, who will emerge the real victor. *Die Rote Fahne* declares:

We Communists grasp the banner which our deadly enemy, Hitler, yesterday derided as the ‘red flag of destruction’. We will not budge one inch before the threats of the fascist counter-revolution. Hitler rules - but Communism marches forward. ^[81]

In fact the Stalinist press positively exudes confidence. Neubauer sees definite advantages in the formation of Hitler’s cabinet. It will help to clear up confusion in the working and middle classes, and provoke deep rifts in the ranks of the bourgeoisie:

The enormous excitement [!] which has seized the broad masses, sweeps away all the illusions regarding an improvement in the economic situation, sharpens the class antagonisms to the extreme, and definitely raises the question of power. It is precisely the industrial capitalists therefore who are raising objections to this policy... a great part of the bourgeoisie already sees today looming up behind Hitler and the brown terror bands the spectre of Bolshevism. ^[82]

After Hitler... us!

Vorwärts goes in for some odious bootlicking today. It answers Hitler’s diatribes of yesterday thus:

Herr Adolf Hitler: you speak of the ‘November Crime’, but had it not been for this ‘November Crime’, a man from the working people, such as you, would never have become German Reichs Chancellor.

For once, the reformists speak the whole truth, even if unintentionally.

Goering’s police purge in Prussia has begun. Count Helldorf, the Berlin SA chief, was today appointed Police President of the capital. This means that the SA is being converted into an auxiliary arm of the existing state machine. The fascist plebeians are about to unleash their assault on the organised proletariat.

3 February: Anxious to secure the unqualified political support of the armed forces, Hitler addresses *Reichswehr* and Navy leaders on the goals of Nazi policy:

Our policy has but one aim. Reconquest of political power. The whole national leadership must be thus utilised.

I: Internally. Complete reversal of current domestic policy. In Germany, no toleration or propagation of opinions opposed to this aim (Pacifism). Those who will not be led must be forced. Extermination of Marxism root and branch. Instil in youth and the entire nation the idea that only fighting can rescue us.

II: Abroad. Struggle against Versailles. Equality of status at Geneva, but this is useless unless the nation is prepared to rearm.

III: Economy. The farmer must be saved! A resettlement policy! Increased exports purposeless. World demand is limited and there is overproduction. Colonisation provides the only possibility of reducing the army of unemployed. But this will take time and a radical change cannot be expected as German living space is too small.

IV: Building up the armed forces is the most important prerequisite. Conscription must be reintroduced. The government must see to it that those conscripted are not already poisoned by pacifism, Marxism, Bolshevism or become so poisoned after service. How shall political power be used when obtained? ... Perhaps to secure new export fields, perhaps, and much better, to conquer new living space in the East and relentlessly to Germanise it...

4 February: The ADGB bureaucrats, who have been laying very low these last five days, finally venture a comment on the new government. The *Gewerkschafts-Zeitung* says that the trade unions would treat Hitler's cabinet like any other, and present demands to it to be acted on. The watchword is 'organisation, not demonstration'.

After an adverse vote in the Prussian *Landtag*, Papen orders its dissolution. New elections are fixed for 5 March.

5 February: Former Prussian Premier Otto Braun protests to President Hindenburg about the illegality of Papen's action, but to no effect. ADGB leader and SPD Reichstag deputy Peter Grassmann indulges in a little radical noise-making. His members are getting restless, so he tells them: 'We need only press the button. Then everything will come to a standstill.' But this worthy bureaucrat's index finger is atrophied through lack of exercise. And the button is stiff for the same reason.

7 February: A huge workers' rally staged by the Iron Front in Berlin at the Lustgarten. *Vorwärts* takes the marchers' enthusiasm and determination as advanced proof of victory. With a blindness rivalled only by the Stalinists, it will write tomorrow: 'Berlin is not Rome. Hitler is not Mussolini. Berlin will never be the capital of a fascist Reich. Berlin will stay Red.' [83]

The KPD Central Committee holds its last legal session. Thälmann's report contains not a single concrete demand on which the working class can fight to stem the Nazi advance, nor a call to the reformist organisations for a united front against fascism. It is in effect a confession of political bankruptcy, an admission that after five years of the sharpest polemics against 'social fascism' its grip on the bulk of the workers is as strong as ever:

What is the balance sheet of our past fight against fascism? We were not able to prevent the establishment of the fascist dictatorship although we organised mass struggle. [In the case of the November 1932 Berlin transport strike, on the side of the Nazis! - RB] That is surely a negative conclusion. We could not achieve more *because we were not able to eliminate the influence of the leaders of the SPD, the ADGB and the Christian Socialist trade unions*. We were hindered in this struggle by the deficiencies of our work *in the trade unions and factories*, in the creation of a united front and in the battle over principles against the treacherous manoeuvres of Social Democracy. [That is, their offers of a united front to the KPD against the Nazis - RB] We could only have succeeded in the fight against fascism if we had been able to overcome these deficiencies. [Emphasis added]

8 February: The Social Democratic machine grinds on, blind to the fate that awaits it. Under the title 'A Model Official', *Vorwärts* publishes today a report on the activities of one party functionary, 'comrade Fritz Nobis', who 'recruited in 1932 no less than 78 new comrades who all became readers of *Vorwärts*. This exemplary successful work of a party comrade demonstrates the strength of Social Democracy.'

The Berlin Bourse, quiet over the last few days, shows another burst of activity following a statement by Economics Minister Hugenberg which rules out all 'experiments' in economic policy.

In Moscow, the new catchphrase being bandied about in party and Comintern circles is: 'Should Hitler dare to do anything against their will, Hugenberg and Papen, supported by the President and the army, will simply usher him out with a kick.' [84] Which of course is just what the Social Democrats are saying - and hoping - as well.

10 February: The elections campaign is in full swing, with Hitler delivering a blistering attack on Marxism at a Nazi rally in the *Sportpalast*:

The parties of class division may be convinced that, as long as the Almighty permits me to live, my determination to destroy them will be unalterable... We must abolish the cause of our decay, we must destroy Marxism... Just as treachery to the working class is the result of Bolshevism, similarly Marxism means treachery to the German peasant, and to the masses in their millions of the equally poverty-stricken members of the bourgeoisie and the craftsmen... The German peasant is the main pillar of our German house. The German worker is the second main pillar, and must be led back into the community of our people.

In the NSDAP election appeal, there is this ominous sentence: 'If Germany is to experience political and economic revival, this presupposes a decisive act: the overcoming of Communist disintegration.' The new Berlin Police President and SA leader Count Helldorf gives an interview to the Paris magazine *Le Petit Journal*. Like Goering, he is not too worried about the SPD. It is the Communist workers he fears:

The KPD represents a deadly danger for Germany and must be suppressed... we deny the workers... the right to organise in a class party... If a general strike occurs we should be the victors... the Communists are more numerous in industry than we are, but there are enough Nazis to secure the maintenance of the main industries and our storm detachments would defend them against interference. The Social Democrats are tame enough. Despite their speeches they are not really dangerous. The enemy we must destroy is Communism. That is a vital question for us. ^[85]

11 February: The Black-White-Red front holds its own election rally in the *Sportspalast*. A tame affair by comparison with last night's Nazi spectacular. Hugenberg, Seldte and Papen speak. The Economics Minister is adamant that after this one, he wants no more elections in Germany: 'Ever since 1919 I have sat in the German parliament without being a parliamentarian... I am not afraid of a new election, but this is going to be the last one.' Von Papen strikes an ethereal, aristocratic, élitist note: 'Trusting in God, we shall fight against spiritual and social proletarianisation. We want quality instead of quantity.' Papen hasn't much choice in the matter, because everyone knows that on 5 March the Nazis are going to get the quantity. And in Germany, sheer brute force and weight of numbers count for a great deal just now. *Vorwärts* editor Friedrich Stampfer addresses an Open Letter to Communist workers explaining why his party has turned down appeals for a united front against the Nazis. The KPD leaders are not genuine in their demands, they seek to undermine the Social Democratic movement. Stalinist leftism now becomes an excuse for reformists to evade their own responsibilities to the working class.

12 February: Is there a split at the top of the SPD? Yesterday Stampfer turned down the united front with the KPD. Today, Breitscheid proposes it, in the *Berliner Volkszeitung*. He is in favour of 'partial and temporary' agreements with the Communists. As for the KPD leaders, they say nothing.

Peter Grassmann tells a Berlin workers' rally that Hitler 'has declared war on the organised workers' - but says nothing about how he and his fellow trade union leaders intend to organise the fight against Hitler. His audience has to be content with the vague promise that they 'will not crawl into a mouse-hole but will take up the challenge in the firm conviction that they will meet it successfully'. A slightly more militant tone than of late is also evident in *Vorwärts*. 'Gagging the press may suppress criticism, but nothing can stop us from showing the people the historical truth. Truth must win out.' But the voice of Kantian 'pure reason' is already being drowned out by the baying of Hitler's hordes, the bastard offspring of the revolution the reformist leaders betrayed in November 1918. 'We wish to cleanse Germany of the rule of irrational passions and terror. We wish to demonstrate on 5 March that freedom and reason still rule supreme.' ^[86] These fine-sounding abstractions not only obscure the realities of the struggle developing in Germany, they befuddle the brain of any worker who takes them seriously. He is being asked on 5 March to defeat a brown army one million strong with a cross on a ballot slip.

13 February: *Die Rote Fahne* suppressed for two weeks. With it, the 'social fascist' *Reichsbanner* organ *Das Reichsbanner*, together with numerous other reformist and Communist journals. Today the RGO Red metalworkers' and builders' unions offered a united front against fascism to their reformist opposite numbers. The appeal is not rejected out of hand. The two red unions are advised to negotiate directly with the ADGB executive. Still no comment on the Hitler government in the Soviet press.

15 February: The Kremlin breaks its silence. Karl Radek, renegade from the Left Opposition and Stalin's adviser on foreign and especially German affairs, writes in *Bolshevik*. The gist of his article is that the mounting repressions against the KPD are welcome, since they will radicalise the working class. Neither is Hitler capable of crushing the entire proletariat:

Hitler may be able to destroy the legal organisation of the KPD. But every blow against it will help to rally the working masses to its support. A party that receives six million votes, deeply linked to the entire history of the German working class, cannot be dismissed from the balance sheet of history. This cannot be done by administrative decrees declaring it illegal; it cannot be done by a bloody terror, or else this terror will have to be directed against the whole working class. ^[87]

Fritz Heckert writes in a KPD journal appearing today that the SPD has 'just completed its transformation from social chauvinism to being a conscious weapon of the fascist dictatorship'. ^[88] In which case, no united front.

Vorwärts, 'conscious weapon of the fascist dictatorship', is suppressed by the fascist dictatorship for a week.

17 February: Goering makes a speech in Dortmund which gives *carte blanche* to his police and SA men to kill whoever and whenever they see fit:

Police officers who make use of their firearms in the exercise of their duties will, regardless of the consequences of this use of firearms, benefit by my protection; those, however, who, through misplaced leniency, fail in their duty will face disciplinary consequences... Every officer must always bear in mind that failure to take a measure is a graver offence than mistakes made in the exercise of the measure... Every bullet fired from the barrel of a police pistol is my bullet, if you call that murder then I am the murderer. ^[89]

Molotov addresses a conference of collective farm workers. If the news has leaked through to him that Hitler is in the Chancellery, then it doesn't seem to worry him a scrap. 'What are our views about the international situation in the near future?', he asks rhetorically. 'To this we must [sic!] reply: the international situation of the USSR has been substantially strengthened.' As for Stalin, not a word about the situation in Germany will escape his lips for another year until the Seventeenth CPSU Congress in January 1934, when he will tell the assembled delegates:

... some German politicians say... that this change [in German-Soviet relations] is to be explained by the establishment of the fascist regime in Germany. *That is not true.* Of course, we are far from being enthusiastic about the fascist regime in Germany. *But it is not a question of fascism here, if only for the reason that the fascism in Italy, for example, has not prevented the USSR from establishing the best relations with that country.* ^[90]

18 February: Confusion is rife in the SPD bureaucracy over what attitude to adopt towards the KPD. Some officials agitate for a united front (which is usually spurned by the Stalinist bureaucrats as a 'left manoeuvre'), while others, as in the Hanover organisation, oppose it. A circular dispatched today, after advising party members to stay away from Nazi election rallies ('let the Nazis have their middle-class supporters, their awakening will come soon enough' is the complacent remark), makes the following comment:

The time has not arrived for us to enter into relations with the Communists. The Communists regard us as their chief opponents in this struggle. The Communists are disrupting the united front of the working class. When they talk of the united front, the Communists should not be attacking us but the fascists. So long as they persist in this, every worker who has the united front at heart should keep clear of their meetings. On election day, 5 March, we want all our comrades to go to the poll early, so that we can check on the laggards and get all supporters on our lists out to vote. Some comrades say the hour has come. Stay united, resolved and disciplined and fight for the electoral victory of our party.

Could there be a clearer example of how Stalinist ultimatism and leftism supplements and strengthens the parliamentary cretinism of the reformists?

19 February: The SPD's main election slogan, as promulgated by party Chairman Otto Wels, runs: 'Strict masters do not rule for long.' These hopeless reformists behave as if Hitler is an updated version of Bismarck, for that slogan originated in the party's years of struggle against the Iron Chancellor. And it differs little from the Stalinist aphorism: 'After Hitler - Us.'

The LSI (Second International) calls upon the Comintern to join in a united workers' front against fascism. Neither the ECCI nor the KPD take this up. Attacks on 'social fascism' continue unabated in the Stalinist press.

20 February: The NSBO leader Muchow announces at a Nazi election rally in Brunswick that after 5 March, the NSDAP will 'take up the fight against the trade unions, and will not allow the trade unions to influence politics'. Papen is also thinking along the same lines. He declares:

I recognise that the trade unions have done much to imbue the working classes with professional honour and professional pride. Many trade unions, for instance the union of clerks [sic!], have made exemplary achievements in this respect. The conception of class conflict, however, stood in the way of real reform and constructive work in this direction... If the trade unions would recognise the signs of the times and remain out of politics to a greater extent, then they could, especially now, become a strong pillar of national life.

While Papen and Muchow soften up the union bureaucrats for the kill, big business swings its full weight behind Hitler's election campaign. Among those present at the meeting in the Reichstag President's (Goering's) house include Schacht, soon to be appointed *Reichsbank* President, Krupp, Vögler, von

Lowenfeld (an Essen industrialist), Dr Stein, head of an IG Farben-owned mine, and Georg von Schnitzler, also of the Chemical Trust. Hitler speaks first:

Private property cannot be maintained in the age of democracy. It is conceivable only if the people have a sound idea of authority and personality. Everything positive, good and valuable which has been achieved in the world in the field of economics is solely attributable to the importance of personality. When, however, the defence of the existing order, its political administration, is left to a majority, it will inevitably founder. All the worldly goods which we possess, we owe to the struggle of the chosen... The same mentality that was the basis for obtaining these values must be used to preserve these values... Our people has not yet sufficiently recognised that there are two souls struggling for it... It is an impossibility that part of the people recognises private ownership while another part denies it. Such a struggle splits the people. The struggle lasts until one side emerges victorious... No two ideologies can continuously live alongside one another. This condition of attrition lasts until one party emerges victorious or the state dissolves itself... We live in such times now, when the die must be cast, and when we must decide whether we want to adopt a form of life that supports the state or to have Communism... The Communist principle does not hold water. It is not by chance that one person accomplishes more than another. The principle of private ownership which has gone into the general conception of justice, and has become a complicated process of economic life, is rooted in this fact... Weimar imposed upon us a certain constitutional order by which they put us on a democratic basis. By that we were, however, not provided with an able governmental authority. On the contrary... Communism had to bore its way constantly deeper into the German people. The result was an ever increasing tension... Two fronts have thus shaped themselves which put to us the choice - either Marxism in its purist form or the other side... We must first gain complete power if we want to crush the other side completely...

Only when one knows that one has reached the pinnacle of power, that there is no further possible upward development, shall one strike, In Prussia, we must gain another 10 seats and in the Reich proper another 33. Then only begins the second action against Communism. Now we stand before the last election. Regardless of the outcome there will be no retreat... For the economy I have one wish that it go parallel with the internal situation to meet a calm future. The question of the restoration of the *Wehrmacht* will not be decided at Geneva, but in Germany. When we have gained internal strength through internal peace. There will, however be no internal peace until Marxism is eliminated. Here lies the decision which we must go to meet, hard as the struggle might be.

Goering follows Hitler:

No experiments will be made with the economy. However, to attain the goal, all forces must be mustered on 5 March. Above all, it is necessary to penetrate into the circles that are still discontented with Marxism and slumber uselessly in aggravation and bitterness... The National Socialists will be given a task which has no prospects for the others... Without doubt we must do the most work, for we must penetrate with our SA men into the darkest quarters of the cities and operate there from mouth to mouth and fight for every single soul.

Goering now makes an appeal for cash to finance the Nazi election campaign. He tells the assembled industrialists and bankers: 'The sacrifices asked for surely will be so much easier for industry to bear if it is realised that the election of 5 March will surely be the last one for the next 10, probably the next 100 years.' Banker Schacht appropriately conducts the collection, raising some three million RM, 800 000 coming from IG Farben alone. Gustav Krupp, who also contributes to the fund, has become a fanatical Nazi almost overnight. At the end of Hitler's speech, Krupp takes the floor briefly to declare that industry is completely with the Führer. When Schacht makes the collection, he pitches in with one million RM. After a factional struggle lasting several years, the big employers and bankers are closing their ranks behind the Nazis. The leaders of the proletariat are displaying no such tactical sagacity.

21 February: ADGB President Theodor Leipart makes a brief and as it will later prove mainly verbal left turn when he warns a gathering of trade union officials that the anti-working-class statements and actions of the new government mean the trade unions must prepare for 'a life and death battle' for survival.

Some trade unionists are taking Leipart at his word. ADGB ('social fascist') trade union district organisations in Thuringia (Ruhla, Zella-Mehlis, Kranichfeld, Graefentonna) and in Arten (central Germany) issue a call for a workers' united front against fascism to embrace organisations of all

tendencies, under the slogan 'One Enemy, One Struggle'. The unions involved are the woodworkers, metalworkers, leather-workers and general workers.

Too late, some of the SPD leaders begin to draw the lessons of their 14-year record of class-collaboration with the German bourgeoisie. Paul Löbe tells a rally of 4000 workers at Halle:

The bourgeoisie has banged the doors in our faces after we had worked for years to permeate the whole state, from the humblest village to the highest government posts, with the socialist spirit.

Very well then, we shall take up the struggle and attempt to seize complete power over the state.

We shall come back again, but we shall not hear again of coalition and compromises.

The Centre Party is gravitating towards the Nazis, though it still feels unsure where their violent methods will lead. A statement issued on the elections reads:

On the Right there are those who wage war on Marxism, on the Left there are the Marxists of two shades who are being driven into a dangerous alliance for common action. [Would that it were true! - RB] What will be the end? A life and death struggle, front against front, and Germany exposed to all the horrors of civil war.

22 February: The build-up of the forces of mass terror against the workers' movement is gathering pace. Today Goering absorbs into the Prussian police force 25 000 SA men, 15 000 SS and 10 000 from the *Stahlhelm*. The reckoning with the KPD and the SPD cannot now be far away. The Nazis' plan seems to be to exploit the split in the workers' ranks by hitting first at the vanguard - the Communist workers - and then turn to finish off the mass organisations - the ADGB trade unions and the SPD.

24 February: The KPD stages its last legal rally, at the Berlin *Sportpalast*. Thälmann, who will be arrested by Nazi police on 3 March, delivers his last speech. He calls for a united front with the reformists, but in such an ultimatic fashion that there is little chance of either the SPD or ADGB accepting, since the front is to be based on the KPD's programme. Nevertheless, that Thälmann has had to drop his abusive language and address the reformists as fellow members of the workers' movement is another sign that at the proletarian base of the party there is an enormous yearning for class unity against the Nazis. Thälmann, despite his orders from Moscow, cannot afford to ignore it. And this is why Trotsky is still refusing to write off the KPD as a revolutionary factor in the German class struggle.

27 February: Stampfer of *Vorwärts* and KPD Reichstag deputy Neubauer arrange to meet at 10 am tomorrow to make one last attempt to form a united workers' front against the Hitler government. The cabinet meets to endorse Görtner's draft of a decree authorising drastic measures to combat 'treasonable' activities. They are aimed at the two workers' parties, whose leaders will tomorrow discuss the formation of a united front. In the evening, the SPD holds a meeting in the *Sportpalast* to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Karl Marx.

The rally has scarcely begun when Nazi officials arrive to close it down. Enraged workers cry 'death to the Nazis' as they leave the stadium. They do not yet know that the Reichstag building is in flames, and that their fellow workers of the KPD are being singled out as the arsonists. Though it will never be finally established beyond all doubt, the real culprits are believed, in circles far removed from the workers' movement, to be the Nazis themselves, who have been waiting for just such an incident to unleash their onslaught on the workers' organisations.

28 February: The holocaust, predicted, warned and struggled against by Trotsky and the German Left Opposition since 1930, has begun. Hitler convenes a cabinet meeting, and declares to his ministers that:

... a ruthless reckoning with the KPD is now urgently needed. The right psychological moment for that reckoning has arrived. It is useless to wait any longer. The KPD is resolved to resort to extremes. The struggle against it must not be made dependent on legal considerations.

Nobody disagrees. This is the moment for which Papen and Hugenberg, as well as Hitler, Goering and Frick, have been waiting and preparing. A decree is promulgated - 'For the Protection of People and State' - which in accordance with Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution, drafted and approved by the Social Democrats, is now to be used as the legal foundation of the Third Reich. Articles 114, 115, 117, 118, 123, 124 and 153 of the Constitution are suspended 'until further notice'. This means the end of free trade unionism, of the right of personal liberty. Germany has become a fascist state in law without violating 'the most democratic constitution in the world'. Deed will follow within hours.

1 March: The KPD is outlawed. Funk issues a statement to foreign newsmen on the emergency laws against the workers' movement:

The Communist press will remain forbidden. There will no longer be any Communist press in Germany. It is doubtful whether there can be any socialist press either. The government campaign will be directed not only against the Communists, but against all sympathisers and indirect supporters of Communism. The days of parliament and democracy are finished in Germany.

Goebbels is just as pleased with the way things are going:

No Marxist papers are published in the Reich any more. Goering has initiated energetic measures in Prussia against the 'Red' parties. It will end in their complete destruction... Now the 'Red' pest is being thoroughly rooted out. No sign of resistance anywhere. ^[91]

The Nazis issue a new election slogan: 'Crush Communism'. Goering's terror squads, swelling daily with fresh enrolments from the Nazi combat units, the SA and the SS, swing into action, rounding up leading militants of the KPD all over Prussia. On the night of the Reichstag fire, Goering will write a year later:

... when I had given the order for the arrest of 4000 Communist officials, I knew that before dawn the Communists would have lost a great battle... Of centres in the provinces, with Berlin as the headquarters, I am kept daily, I might almost say hourly informed. We had to proceed against these enemies of the state with complete ruthlessness. It must not be forgotten that at the moment of our taking over the government there were... about 14 million supporters of Communism and Marxism... And so the concentration camps were set up to which we sent first of all thousands of officials of the Communist and socialist parties... ^[92]

Crushing a movement of 14 million workers cannot be done in the Papen - Schleicher fashion, through the *Reichswehr* and the police alone. This is the task of the SA 'plebeians', who now occupy the centre of the political arena. Just as Hitler predicted in *Mein Kampf*, mass is now pitted against mass, no longer at the ballot box, but in the streets, the meeting places and tenement blocks of proletarian Germany. Only a movement of the scale of Hitler's, and with the anti-Communist fanaticism which comes from years of indoctrination, can uproot organisations planted so deep in the soil of the working class. One who witnessed the assault at first hand will later give us this vivid account:

The first phase of the Gestapo raids consisted in the apprehension of all militants as far as they could be found - whose name appeared on the 'blood' lists. Many of the intended victims escaped capture by changing their quarters every night. But this became increasingly difficult. The number of available cover addresses decreased rapidly. The families in whose households the Gestapo found an active Communist in hiding were doomed. Neighbours distrusted each other and parents feared their children... Then the Gestapo sprang anew and in a different manner. Every member of the Nazi party was ordered to collaborate with the Secret Police. Informers were appointed to ferret out the secrets of every factory, every block and every house. An avalanche of denunciations poured in. Nazi spies who had operated in the Communist ranks for years came out into the open. They were out in motor cars together with a Gestapo squad, from dawn to dark and all through the night these cars criss-crossed the city. Whenever the spy saw a Communist acquaintance on the street he gave a signal, the car stopped and the comrade was arrested. In a city like Hamburg which harboured more than 100 000 Communist followers such tactics had devastating results... There was a third phase in the Gestapo raiding technique against which there was no adequate defence... Without warning several hundred Gestapo agents aided by thousands of Élite Guards [SS] and storm-troopers snoped down on a certain section of the city. The storm-troopers formed a defence cordon around many city blocks. No one was permitted to enter or to leave the surrounded area. A trooper was posted at the entrance of each house. No inhabitant was permitted to leave the house nor was anyone allowed to enter it. The Gestapo and Élite Guards then searched each house from roof to cellar... All who could not identify themselves satisfactorily were herded into waiting caravans of trucks. The hauls were huge. Secret printing presses, stored arms and explosives, depots of illegal literature, codes, documents and hungry-looking fugitives without identification papers were brought to light in almost every block. ^[93]

The Hitler regime, its hands drenched with the blood of countless murdered Communists, appoints its military *attaché* to Moscow, where a blind eye is being turned towards the liquidation of the German workers' movement. Litvinov informally tells a leading German diplomat in Moscow: 'We don't care if you shoot your German Communists.' ^[94]

Goering makes a broadcast speech: 'The German government's fight is not a defensive campaign: it aims at the extermination of Communism, root and branch.' Yet amazingly, the hard core of the proletariat stands firm. Elections held today to the Berlin municipal gas and electricity works council produce the following results, on a 90 per cent turnout:

Berlin Municipal Works Council Elections				
	Manual		Clerical	
	Gas	Electric	Gas	Electric
SPD	3034	2352	1916	1151
KPD	156	1298	135	-
NSDAP	83	161	443	413

The NSBO lists secure less than 10 per cent in both grades combined, and in the manual division, a paltry three per cent - 244 votes in all. *And this election is conducted in the crucible of the most ferocious red-hunting campaign ever experienced by the Berlin proletariat.* Berlin is indeed still Red - overwhelmingly so.

But the power and the initiative rests with the fascists.

2 March: The nationwide purge of Communists and other working-class militants is delighting big business, now drawing a handsome dividend on its investment in the Nazi movement over the previous three years. A financial correspondent writes that 'the anti-Communist decree stimulated the market and the tendency was firm'. ^[95]

The Nazis are still concerned that the two workers' parties might form a united front against the government. At a cabinet meeting today, von Neurath wonders 'whether the measures against the SPD cannot be softened or abolished'. Goering replies that the SPD is 'making a very strong effort to enter a united front with the Communists'.

At a Nazi election rally at the *Sportspalast* Hitler launches into yet another tirade against Marxism. He attacks it for upholding the equality of men, which:

... was long ago scientifically disproved. It is not present in the world of fact and the doctrine leads perforce to a deterioration of men of high capacity, to a lowering of the values of life. The same is true of democracy. At all times it is personality and not democracy which has created values.

Hugenberg's DNVP, anxious to prove that it is committed to the red-hunt, issues a statement on the emergency laws stressing both the party's support for them - and hinting that too much power must not be permitted to slip into the hands of Hitler's Brown-Shirts in the process:

Relentless energy must be used in suppressing the growing danger of Bolshevism, but not only energy. Violence against violence means civil war. A battle of all against all must never be allowed. The state must use a firm hand in enforcing and securing order. Germany has the good fortune of having at the head of the executive a hand which has proved its firmness - the hand of von Papen, state commissioner for Prussia. Papen's firmness is a guarantee that the Bolshevik menace will be overcome.

3 March: Ernst Thälmann, chairman of the KPD, is seized by Nazi police. He begins a term of imprisonment that will end with his murder in the Buchenwald concentration camp in August 1944. In a speech at Frankfurt, Goering declares:

... my measures will not be crippled by any judicial thinking. My measures will not be crippled by any bureaucracy. Here I don't have to worry about Justice. My mission is only to destroy and to exterminate, nothing more. This struggle will be a struggle against chaos and such a struggle I shall not conduct with the power of the police. A bourgeois state might have done that. Certainly I shall use the power of the state and the police to the utmost, my dear Communists, so don't draw any false conclusions; but in the struggle to the death, in which my fist will grasp your necks, I shall lead those down there - the brown-shirts.

The counter-revolution from below has begun, and neither Papen, Hugenberg nor even Hindenburg can stop it. Until the proletariat is crushed, its organisations shattered, its cadres murdered or imprisoned, its

spirit broken, it is the Nazi plebeians who will wield the power on the streets. *And they will be loath to surrender it.* The Nazis stage a pre-election march through bourgeois and middle-class Berlin today. An observer describes the contrasting reactions of the onlookers, and the unbridgeable class gulf that now separates proletarian from bourgeois Berlin:

The supporters kept saluting the troops as they marched by. They were nearly all middle-class and lower-middle-class people, and many shopkeepers could be seen standing outside their doors contemplating the troops with profound satisfaction... The people who seemed to take no delight in the parade were mostly workmen. Numerous houses, especially in the west end, through which they passed, were decorated with Nazi flags... In the vast and dreary working-class quarters of the north and east of the town no flags at all are to be seen - except a Nazi flag here and there. But no Socialist and no Communist flags. The people there are grimly silent. One has indeed to be not only a brave man but also a reckless man in Berlin today to put up a red flag outside one's home. ^[96]

An entire quarter of north Berlin, described by the police as 'notoriously Communist', is sealed off today as the manhunt for working-class militants continues. The regular prisons are already full to bursting point, and soon the Nazis will be setting up special camps to house, torture and kill their Socialist and Communist inmates. All of Germany is being converted into one gigantic prison for the proletariat.

As the death toll of workers mounts, so the stock exchange booms. A financial correspondent reports that 'the government's home political measures stimulated the Bourse, which ruled firm' with 'unusual all-round activity developing' and 'many quotations rising three to six points'. ^[97]

How does Moscow view the annihilation of the largest section of the Communist International outside the USSR? *Pravda*, in its first serious comment on the German disaster, writes:

The heroic KPD has already lived an illegal existence. *German fascism will not break its strength.* One can arrest hundreds of Communists and revolutionary workers, but in such a country as Germany, *it is impossible to exterminate the advance guard of the proletariat, to destroy the party for which six million workers voted...* German fascism, which has kindled the flames of civil war, *is only helping to accentuate all the inner political antagonisms...* The result of its foreign policy in the 30 days of its rule are the isolation of Germany and the worsening of its foreign political situation. *Only fools, only clowns, can conduct a policy which leads to the isolation of Germany.* ^[98]

So Hitler and his fellow Nazis are mere 'fools' and 'clowns'. Moreover, being fools and clowns, they are unwittingly accelerating the crisis of German capitalism, so paving the road to the proletarian revolution. We will read and hear a lot more of this anti-Leninist garbage in the next weeks and months. It will lead to the needless arrest and deaths of untold numbers of heroic Communist workers, who take seriously the Moscow lie that revolution is only around the corner, that Hitler's regime is the harbinger of socialism.

4 March: *Izvestia*, The Soviet government paper, and therefore Stalin's direct mouthpiece, makes haste to befriend the jailers of Thälmann:

The USSR is the only state which is not nourished on hostile sentiments towards Germany and that is independent of the form and the composition of the government of the Reich.

The Comintern has at last decided to break its silence on the events in Germany. Knorin has written an article on the Reichstag fire which while correctly nailing the big lie that the KPD is responsible, peddles the equally large falsehood that 'the increased provocation of the fascist bourgeoisie is proof of the fact that the historic time has come for the end of capitalist rule' - that 'only a short period of power remains to the bourgeoisie'. ^[99] The Stalinist Comintern leadership cannot countenance admitting a defeat in Germany, so they bend their entire propaganda apparatus to the reactionary end of proving that Hitler's victory is a pyrrhic one.

5 March: The organ of Ruhr heavy industry, *Stahl und Eisen*, is smacking its lips in anticipation of a crushing Nazi victory at the polls today:

The elections of 5 March will only be of use if they are to last a long time... only if no heed needs to be paid to votes can the outstanding great changes in constitution, administration, fiscal and social matters be carried out.

But the incredible courage of the German proletariat denies to Hitler the majority he craves. Only with the support of his Nationalist allies can his government command a majority in the Reichstag. Defections from the two workers' parties have been amazingly few, as the results show:

Reichstag Elections November 1932 and March 1933						
	Vote (millions)		Per cent		Deputies	
	Mar 1933	Nov 32	Mar 1933	Nov 32	Mar 1933	Nov 32
SPD	7.2	7.2	18.3	20.4	120	121
KPD	4.8	6.0	12.3	16.9	81	100
DNVP	3.1	3.0	8.0	8.8	52	52
Centre	4.2	4.2	11.7	11.9	74	70
BVP	1.1	1.1	2.7	3.1	18	20
NSDAP	17.3	11.7	43.9	33.1	288	196

In Berlin, the capital of the fascist Reich, the Nazis are humbled by the hounded 'reds'. Nearly one in three Berliners vote Communist today, and another 22 per cent SPD. Between them, the two workers' parties win 52.6 per cent of the Berlin poll, the all-powerful Nazis 31.3 per cent. Such defiance in the face of unbridled terror is deserving of better leadership than either the reformists or the Stalinists are providing: the former with their pathetic appeals to President Hindenburg to protect the workers' organisations from Nazi looters; the latter with their inane chatter about the imminent downfall of Hitler and the triumph of the proletarian revolution.

7 March: The cabinet assesses the election results and the next steps in the battle against the workers' movement. Hitler speaks first:

There will now have to be a large-scale campaign of propaganda and information in order that no political lethargy should set in. It must be borne in mind that the overwhelming electoral victory of the National Socialists was achieved in part with the help of persons who would ordinarily not vote and who would, if not given adequate information, soon return to the ranks of the non-voters. The assertion that many Communists have switched to the National Socialist side is not true. The situation is the contrary, that former SPD voters had voted NSDAP and former Communist voters had voted SPD. As for the voters of the Centre, they will not be won over by the national parties until the curia drops both parties... I regard the events of 6 March as a revolution. In the end, Marxism will no longer exist in Germany. What is necessary is an enabling law with a two-thirds majority. I am convinced that the Reichstag will pass such a law. The deputies of the KPD will not appear at the opening of the Reichstag because they will be in jail. ^[100]

The intensification of the anti-Communist onslaught does not seem to be causing any sleepless nights in the offices of *Pravda* and *Izvestia*. The CPSU daily organ, in a comment on the Reichstag elections, says:

German fascism mobilised all its forces in order by means of a frontal attack to shatter the advanced guard of the European working class, the proletariat of Germany. This frontal attack of fascism has been repelled... [The election results]... are an irrefutable proof of the further revolutionary upsurge in Germany. ^[101]

Karl Radek is doling out the same lies in *Izvestia*. He calls the results a 'brilliant victory' for the KPD and a 'Marne defeat' for the Nazis:

The failure of the fascists to break the compactness of the Communist masses strengthens the tendency amongst the Social Democratic workers towards a united front with the leading portion of the working class. This means that the fascists will have to go over to a regular siege, to trench warfare against the working class. Time is now the decisive factor and time is not on the side of the fascists, but on the side of the KPD. For every month of fascist policy will inevitably strengthen centrifugal tendencies in the petit-bourgeoisie, to whom the fascists can offer nothing, and will continue to increase the friction inside the fascist bloc itself. ^[102]

Sections of the Social Democracy are crawling on all fours, seeking ways and means of securing admission to the Third Reich. They are wasting their time. Nevertheless, the SPD organ *Sozialdemokratischer Pressedienst* declares today:

The new Reich government has received its mandate from an 'indisputable majority'. It is perfectly obvious that it holds power lawfully. Moderation and wisdom are therefore necessary, both in foreign policy and home policy.

8 March: After a criminal delay of more than two weeks, the ECCI has finally accepted the LSI offer of 19 February for a united workers' front against fascism. But in doing so, the Comintern leadership not only executes the turn too late, *but in an opportunist fashion*. In sanctioning the formation of defensive blocs with reformist organisations, 'against fascist attacks on workers' organisations' and 'in defence of living and working conditions', the ECCI adds that it is 'possible to recommend the Communist parties during the time of common fight against capital and fascism *to refrain from making attacks on Social Democratic organisations*'. ^[103] This is a flagrant violation of the principles of the Leninist united front, enunciated at the Fourth Comintern Congress in December 1921, when it was stated categorically:

While accepting a basis for action, Communists must retain the unconditional right and the possibility of expressing their opinion of all working-class organisations without exception, not only before and after action has been taken but also, if necessary, during its course. In no circumstances can this right be surrendered. ^[104]

Now the Stalinist ECCI is proposing to do just that - to the leaders whom until now it has denounced as 'social fascists' and as being solely responsible for the victory of Hitler. Just as was the case with the KPD's proposal to the SPD and Centre in the Prussian Diet to form an exclusively parliamentary bloc against the Nazis, we are seeing a glimpse of the line that will emerge out of the debris of the Third Period in the summer of 1934 - the 'People's Front'.

The first attacks on the trade unions begin. A squad of SA thugs invade and wreck the spacious 147-room headquarters of the ADGB at Breslau. Leipart and Grassman write a letter of protest to President Hindenburg:

We appeal to you... as the leader who combines in his person the tradition of the old Germany and the dignity of the new fatherland. In our fatherland, which is torn by political contradictions, you are the representative of the unity of our people. We appeal to you to put an end to the terror which is threatening the lives and the property of the workers. The trade unions are opposed to the use of force. During the war the trade unions were the advance guard which fought for the freedom and unity of our people. We look to you to prevent the destruction of our property, the property of the trade unions, and the persecution of their members.

Leipart believes he can protect his unions - or rather his own skin - by invoking the nationalist memories of August 1914, when the ADGB bureaucracy rallied to the imperial cause. Times have changed. Hitler is not William II. Hindenburg, elected a year ago with Social Democratic votes, ignores Leipart's plea.

9 March: Nazi Interior Minister Frick disabuses the Social Democrats of any illusions they are harbouring about their political survival in the Third Reich. They are to be dealt the same treatment as the Communists:

When the Reichstag meets on 23 March, the Communists will be prevented from attending by urgent labour elsewhere. In concentration camps they will be re-educated for productive work. We will know how to render harmless permanently sub-humans who do not want to be re-educated. But the Communists are not the only people who must disappear. Their allies the Socialists must disappear as well, for Socialism is the root from which Communism has sprung.

10 March: The first official indication that the 'plebeians' are getting out of hand, and taking the 'socialist' side of the Hitler programme a little too seriously for the comfort of either their leaders or the bourgeoisie. Hitler issues a manifesto redirecting their energies back towards the main enemy - the workers' movement:

Where resistance is being offered it must be immediately and thoroughly broken. Molestation of individual persons, interference with motorcars, or disturbances of business life, are prohibited on principle... you must take care that the national revolution of 1933 shall not compare in history with the revolution of 1918. You must not permit yourself for a minute to be lured away from our slogan, which is 'Death to Marxism'.

11 March: *Vorwärts* editor Friedrich Stampfer gives his reply to Hitler's tirade against Marxism:

They have only to act as a legal government, and it will follow naturally we shall be a legal opposition. If they choose to use their majorities for measures that remain within the framework of the Constitution we shall confine ourselves to the role of fair critics until such time as the nation calls upon us to play another part.

Goering issues a statement to the Swedish newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet* on his government's attitude towards the ADGB trade unions: 'We will not tolerate any Marxist internationalist propaganda in Germany, and for the same reasons we shall also be unable to permit socialist trade unions in Germany.'

But as Hitler's policy is to string along the union bureaucracy in their belief that it will not share the fate of the SPD and KPD leaders, he speaks not of the destruction of the trade unions, but their being 'reconstructed as in Italy and constituted as a national trade union movement'. A blatant lie, since in Italy the socialist trade unions were *outlawed* and *destroyed* by Mussolini, and replaced with the 'supra-class' fascist corporations. Some days later, after another Nazi attack on an ADGB premises (the trade union school at Bernau 15 miles north of Berlin), ADGB Deputy President Peter Grassmann sees Goering, who tells him that the raid was carried out by 'undisciplined' Nazis. But then he adds: 'I can tell you that thorough changes will have to take place in the trade unions. They shall not remain in our state what they were before.' To which Grassmann replies: 'We will not evade any discussion about that.' As if it is a matter for discussion!

14 March: Trotsky begins to revise his policy of reforming the Communist International. He writes his famous article 'The Tragedy of the German Proletariat', in which he performs the fundamental duty of a Marxist to state what is:

The most powerful proletariat of Europe, measured by its place in production, its social weight and the strength of its organisations, has manifested no resistance since Hitler's coming to power and his first violent attacks against the workers' organisations. This is the fact from which to proceed in subsequent strategic calculations... It must be said clearly, plainly, openly: Stalinism in Germany has had its 4 August [1914]. Henceforth, the advanced workers will only speak of the period of the domination of the Stalinist bureaucracy with a burning sense of shame, with words of hatred and curses. The official KPD is doomed... German Communism can be reborn only on a new basis and with a new leadership... The German proletariat will rise again, Stalinism, never. Under the terrible blows of the enemy, the advanced German workers will have to build up a new party. The Bolshevik-Leninists [Trotskyists] will give all their forces to this work. ^[105]

While shares slump in the other major capitalist countries in the wake of a new US banking crisis, 'the German stock exchange [is] experiencing almost boom conditions. The view expressed in the Frankfurt Bourse is that the Hitler government is favourable to industrial and trading interests, and extensive share purchasing is observed.' ^[106] Two weeks later, the same correspondent will write:

The German stock markets, in isolation from the rest of the world, have done a roaring trade at rising prices in the last fortnight. The Bourses, especially the government stock markets, have for four weeks [that is, since the Reichstag fire and the banning of the KPD - RB] been booming. Clothing industries were favoured on the expectations of big orders for uniforms by the defence authorities. ^[107]

Optimism rules not only on the Berlin and Frankfurt stock markets, but in the headquarters of the Comintern. An article is written for the Comintern organ entitled 'The Collapse of Weimar Germany and the Preparation for the German October'. It declares quite unambiguously that Hitler's assumption of power and bloody persecutions of Communists are speeding up the revolution:

Unprecedented fascist terror is rife in Germany. Bourgeois reaction is trying to grind down the German proletariat beneath its heel... The Hitler - Papen - Hugenberg fascist government hopes to stop the wheel of proletarian revolutionary history by its methods of savage terror, torture and shootings. But it is not within their power to stay the indomitable advance of history. The new emergency law against the Communists will cost the German proletariat big sacrifices. *But this means also that the revolutionary movement will develop and all the contradictions will increase still more.* The Hitler government... is not able to solve a single one of the contradictions of German capitalism. ^[108]

15 March: Cabinet meeting discusses measures to ensure a two-thirds majority for the proposed Enabling Act when it is put to the vote before the Reichstag on 23 March. Frick speaks first:

Now, according to the Reich Constitution, a two-thirds majority is required, therefore a total of 432 delegates will have to be present for the ratification of the Enabling Act, if the Communist vote were to be considered and we had to proceed on the basis of 647 elected Reichstag deputies. By subtracting the number of Communist deputies the result is 566. Then the presence of only 378 delegates would be required... The prohibition of the KPD is indicated. Eventually it might be necessary to commit to work camps those persons who remain faithful to Communism. ^[109]

Goering: 'Expresses his conviction that the Enabling Act will be ratified with the required two-thirds majority. Eventually, the majority could be obtained by refusing admission to a few Social Democrats.' ^[110]

16 March: Schacht is reappointed President of the *Reichsbank* three years after his resignation under the Social Democrat Hermann Müller. The Bourse continues its upward trend.

21 March: Decree issued by the cabinet establishing special courts to deal with political enemies of the regime. Its precedent is 'Chapter II, part 6 of the third decree of the Reich President, to safeguard the economy and finances and to combat political excesses, of 6 October 1931'. The SPD voted for this decree in order to defend the lesser evil - Brüning - against the greater evil - Hitler. Now Hitler is to clap these same reformists in jail under the terms of Brüning's decree. The first concentration camps are being opened up to house militant workers and their leaders who can no longer be accommodated in the overcrowded jails of the Third Reich. One is sited at Oranienburg, north of Berlin, and houses Communist and Socialist workers from the capital, while to the far south, in Bavaria the notorious Dachau camp is filling up fast. Its opening is celebrated by the *Völkischer Beobachter*:

This is where all Communist and, where necessary, *Reichsbanner* and Social Democratic officials are concentrated, because to house these officials in ordinary prisons is impossible in the long run and imposes too great a burden on the machinery of state. It has become apparent that these people cannot be permitted to remain free as they continue to agitate and to cause unrest. ^[111]

23 March: The Reichstag meets to vote on the Enabling Act. No KPD deputies are present. They are either dead, in custody, exile or in hiding. Twenty-six of the SPD's 120 deputies are also missing. Some are with the Communists in prison, while others again are lying low, fearing arrest if they present themselves at the Reichstag session. The Centre Party, following the lead of Prelate Kaas, has voted to support the Enabling Act against the objections of Brüning. All the other bourgeois parties follow suit. Hitler is therefore assured of his two-thirds majority when it is put to the vote. Only the SPD will vote against. Hitler opens the session that will mark the final liquidation of the tattered remnants of the Weimar Republic with a raging attack on Marxism; which he says will be stamped out 'with barbaric ruthlessness':

The splitting up of nations into groups with irreconcilable views, systematically brought about by the false doctrines of Marxism, means the destruction of the basis of a possible communal life... Starting from the liberalism of the last century, it is bound by natural laws to end in Communistic chaos... It is only to be the creation of a real national community, rising above the interests and differences of rank and class that can permanently remove the source of nourishment of these aberrations of the human mind.

Kinder words are devoted to the leaders of the economy:

In principle, the government will not protect the economic interests of the German people by the circuitous method of an economic bureaucracy to be organised by the state, but by the utmost furtherance of private initiative and by the recognition of the rights of private property.

But even more important from an immediate tactical point of view is Hitler's cultivation of the peasant, who has upheld the banner of National Socialism more stolidly than any other section of the movement's supporters. Hitler now thanks them - quite genuinely - for their political loyalty, and promises them - with less sincerity - their reward:

The salvation of the German farmer must be achieved at all costs. The ruin of this class in our nation would lead to the gravest inconceivable consequences. The restoration of the remunerative capacity of agriculture may be hard on the consumer. *But for the counterpoise of the German agricultural class, the Communist madness would have already overrun Germany, and thus finally ruined German business...* We must, therefore, devote our greatest solicitude in future to pursuing the back to the land policy in Germany. ^[112]

After a recess the vote on the Enabling Act is taken. Otto Wels, SPD Chairman, explains why his party will oppose the Act:

Never, since a German Reichstag has existed, has the control of public affairs through the chosen representatives of the people been eliminated to such an extent as is now the case and will still be more so as a result of the new Enabling Act... you... want first of all to eliminate the Reichstag in order to push forward your revolution... We socialists have borne responsibility in difficult times, and for this we have been stoned. What we have accomplished towards the rebuilding of the state and the economy, towards the liberation of the occupied zones, will stand up before history. We have established equal right for all... We recognise the power-political fact of your momentary domination. But the people's sense of justice is also a political power, and we will not cease appealing to that sense. The Weimar Constitution is not a socialist constitution. But we remain faithful to the principles incorporated in it, the principles of a state based on law, of equality, of social justice. At this historic moment we German Social Democrats solemnly affirm our allegiance to the principles of humanity and justice, of freedom and socialism. No Enabling Act can give you the power to destroy ideals which are eternal and indestructible... We greet all those who are persecuted and oppressed. We greet our comrades in the Reich. Their steadfastness and their loyalty deserve the admiration of the whole world. Their courageous profession of faith, their unbroken confidence, are guarantees of a brighter future for the working people.

As an exposition of classic Social Democracy, Wels' speech, courageous in that he delivers it before a largely hostile audience and in a building surrounded by SA men, cannot be bettered. But the weapons of justice, liberty and reason are a poor match for the truncheons and revolvers of Goering's police, and the death camps and torture chambers of Himmler's SS. This Hitler knows, for he leaps to this feet and screams at Wels:

I believe that you do not support this act because your mentality makes the purpose which inspires us in connection with it incomprehensible to you. I do not want your votes. Germany will become free, but not through you! ... The star of Germany is in the ascendant, yours is about to disappear, your death-knell has sounded.

The other party leaders all declare their support for the Act, which is then duly passed by the required two-thirds majority, 444 to 94, with all the negative votes being cast by those whom the Stalinists will for another full year call 'social fascists'.

24 March: The stock exchange boom continues unabated. AEG shares have climbed from 30 to 37 points under Hitler's rule, while IG Farben have improved from 96.5 to 133.75. Siemens are up from 121.5 to 155.5, and Hamburg America lines, from 16.75 to 23.5. Business is good in the Third Reich. But for the proletariat, crushed by the sheer ferocity and scale of the Nazi terror, and betrayed by its leaders, life is a nightmare. A foreign correspondent describes their agony in what was once proudly known as Red Berlin:

In the working-class quarters the inquirer will be told in almost every street that the Nazis murdered so and so living at number so and so; they have beaten so and so living round the corner. Almost all workers who were at all prominent in the local organisations of the Socialist or Communist parties, or who were known in their district as keen politicians, are in danger of their lives. Many are in hiding, they cannot emigrate with their wives and families, having no money even to pay the fare. The German working class is now dominated by an intense mass emotion compounded of fear... and a controlled fury. A hatred such as never existed before in Germany has been aroused... ^[113]

And on the Bourse? 'Firm and active... with the improved political situation in Germany.' ^[114]

Appendix I: The Destruction of the Trade Unions

There was never any doubt in Hitler's mind that when he assumed power, his most pressing task would be to destroy the free trade unions. This is made very clear in *Mein Kampf*, where he declares that the newly-formed Nazi movement only held back from a struggle against the trade unions from a lack of forces able to carry it through to victory:

Anyone who at that time would have really shattered the Marxist unions, and in place of this institution of destructive class struggle, helped the National Socialist trade union idea to victory, was among the very great men of our people... The Marxist trade union fortress can today be

administered by ordinary bosses; *but it will only be stormed by the wild energy and shining ability of an outstanding great man on the other side...* Here we must apply the maxim that in life *it is sometimes better to let a thing lie for the present than to begin it badly or by halves for want of suitable forces...* For important as these matters may be, *their fulfilment will only occur on a large scale when we are in a position to put the state power into the service of these ideas.* [115]

So the formation of the Hitler cabinet on 30 January 1933 placed the destruction of the trade unions on the immediate agenda. Big business was now eager to see this measure carried out, having exhausted every other governmental combination that either depended on the toleration of the ADGB bureaucracy, or shrank from a total rupture with it. We also know, from accounts of Hitler's discussions with economic leaders such as Schacht, and the activities of pro-Nazi industrialists and financiers in the Keppler or Himmler Circle, that a section of the bourgeoisie had been pushing for the break-up of class trade unionism from as early as the autumn of 1930. But Hitler had to move cautiously at first. He did not want so to antagonise the union bureaucracy that its leaders were driven into such an extreme position that they had no option but to form a united front with the KPD. The Communist workers bore the brunt of the initial Nazi onslaught, then the attack broadened out to embrace the organisations and press of the SPD. Apart from localised instances of SA thuggery and intimidation, however, the trade unions were left alone. This was deliberate policy on the part of the Nazi leadership. They sensed that if the bureaucracy gave the word to their members to take concerted strike action against the regime, the resulting movement could gather momentum into a revolutionary offensive that could very rapidly sweep the fascists and their capitalist supporters back into the sewers. Once again this proved that, unlike the leaders of the working class, the Nazis developed both strategy and tactics for power. Within the limitations of bourgeois ideology, refracted as it was in their case through racialist mysticism, they knew what they wanted and how to get it.

If during the period between the formation of the Hitler cabinet on 30 January and the destruction of the trade unions on 2 May 1933, the Nazis hinted that a less harsh fate awaited the ADGB than the KPD (or for that matter the SPD), then that was purely a tactical manoeuvre. Naturally the Stalinists chose to present this ploy in a false light. The ADGB leaders were 'social fascists', and would accordingly not only permit their unions to be 'incorporated' into the state, but would continue to run them on behalf of the Nazis and the employers. The Stalinists still tried to cling to this absurd theory (demolished by Trotsky in his numerous articles on Germany between 1930 and 1933) even after events had overtaken and disproved it. As will be shown, the Stalinist press was still proclaiming its inane theory of the 'incorporation' of the trade unions *and their leaders* into the fascist state when these same unions had been liquidated and their leaders thrown into prison.

History has exposed the absurdity of this theory, which originates from a false conception of the nature and role of the bureaucracy in the workers' movement, and which through its schematicism is unable either to perceive or exploit the contradictions that exist between fascist corporatism and even the most opportunist of trade union leaderships. Therefore one would expect in a movement which bases itself on the Trotskyist theory of bureaucracy (a theory which analyses and fights bureaucracy as a counter-revolutionary force *within* the workers' movement) that the notion that *bona fide* class trade unions can be peacefully 'incorporated into the state', *together with their existing leaderships and even lower cadres*, by acts of parliament and various mechanisms of wage control, would be rejected as petit-bourgeois radicalism posturing as Marxism; as in fact an ideological and methodological residue from Third Period Stalinism which has no place in the Trotskyist movement, and which should have been rooted out along with all the other reactionary lumber that bureaucracy and petit-bourgeois radicalism brings into the workers' movement and even its revolutionary vanguard. How all the more disturbing, therefore, is it when we find this theory, rampant amongst anarchists, Maoists and other anti-Trotskyist tendencies, not only tolerated in the Workers Revolutionary Party (which with all its defects, represents the living continuity of Bolshevism in this country) but raised to the plane of a veritable credo. At all costs, the entire TUC leadership - left, right and centre - has to be proved to be not merely class-collaborators, reformists and obstacles to the development of revolutionary class struggle (which they undoubtedly are, and this is quite sufficient both to designate their role and to brand them as class traitors), but as 'corporatists', as upholders of the idea and practice of the fascist corporate state. In other words (words which the *Workers Press* cannot bring itself to utter, since they violate quite brutally everything Trotsky wrote against Third Period Stalinism on this question), *they are social fascists*. We will return to this problem, absolutely crucial for the revolutionary party's strategy and tactics in the class struggle, in the appendix which ends this book. Here it is necessary to show how the WRP's false estimation of the role

of the trade union and Labour Party bureaucracy *today* has led it, perhaps against the subjective intentions of many of its older cadres (who should, and do, know better) to distort and even completely to rewrite the history of the rise to power of National Socialism in Germany, and thereby to obscure the immensely important theoretical, political and organisational conclusions that Trotsky extracted from this experience. Let us not forget (and let us also teach those who do not yet know): *the Fourth International was founded in the wake of the defeat of the German proletariat by fascism, and grounded in the lessons Trotsky and the International Left Opposition drew from the role of both Social Democracy and Stalinism in that defeat.* Those who obscure these lessons do so at the risk of undermining the theoretical foundations of the Fourth International.

To be more specific, we cite instances of where the WRP organ, the *Workers Press*, has in fact distorted the actual course of events culminating in the victory of Hitler and the destruction of the German labour movement, especially its trade unions.

The Industrial Correspondent of a workers' paper, especially when it is a paper fighting to give revolutionary leadership to the advanced workers in the trade unions, must possess more than a passing knowledge of the history of trade unionism not only of his national labour movement, but of all the major capitalist countries. It is not a question of academicism, but of the very life-blood of the Trotskyist movement, which must stand in the front rank of those fighting to defend the past gains of the organised proletariat. But we have to be very frank here. The *Workers Press* Industrial Correspondent, former Stalinist Royston Bull, exhibits an abysmal lack of comprehension of the real course of the class struggle in Germany. In its place, he appears to have substituted a make-believe history which is little more than the projection back into the past of the current ultra-leftist line of the WRP on the mass workers' organisations in Britain, and is derived also from a superficial and non-historical understanding of the nature and role of Stalinism. Since Stalinism today pursues an openly right-wing line, the argument runs, it must have always done so from its very inception. Thus we read the following in the *Workers Press*:

[Jack] Jones [the T & GW leader] is pushing the most reactionary corporatist ideology within his own union by his policies of co-partnership with the capitalist class in industry as a permanent solution to the class struggle... [The CPGB's]... acquiescence in Jones'... collaboration with the Tories... will not be the end of the matter... Eventually, *it will lead to a complete capitulation to the right wing and the corporate state...* But the pattern of *capitulation to the right wing and reformism* has often been repeated in *Stalinist* history and always with disastrous results to themselves and unfortunately to the rest of the working class as well. *Hitler's Germany is only the most famous example*, but there are many others... ^[116]

Leaving aside the radical nonsense about Jones being a pusher of 'the most reactionary corporatist ideology' within Britain's largest trade union - a state of affairs which if true, has not only escaped the notice of its 1.5 million members, but renders it a non-class union fit only for instant expulsion from the TUC - we see that Bull finds fault with the KPD in the period prior to Hitler's seizure of power not for its ultra-leftism, for its categorical refusal to enter into a united front with the reformist ('corporatist' or 'social fascist') organisations and leaders, but with its alleged '*capitulation to the right wing and reformism*'. Of course it is true - though not in the sense implied by Bull - that the ultra-left course of the KPD did protect Social Democracy, leaving it free to conduct its betrayal of the working class (we make essentially the same criticism of the sectarian, ultimatic line pursued by the WRP in the trade unions and in relation to the Labour Party). But Bull nowhere says that the Stalinists have in the past protected and strengthened reformism *by ultra-leftist tactics*. For him, Stalinism has always been an openly right-wing force, working hand in glove with the reformist bureaucracy. That we are not mistaken in our estimation of Bull's one-sided grasp and presentation of the history of Stalinism and its role in the German workers' movement, is evident from the article which he wrote on 25 August 1973, where he examines what he calls 'the mushrooming of an outright corporatist attitude among leaders of the Union of Post Office Workers'. Bull's notion of what fascism means for the working class and its organisations is that of a radical, not a Marxist. For him it is not the *annihilation* of every last independent organisation of the proletariat, of the *elimination* of its precious 'bulwarks of proletarian democracy' within the womb of capitalism. Neither is its rule established by unbridled terror carried out on a mass, plebeian-based scale in which not only militants, but the *leaders* of the workers' movement ('corporatists' and all) are hounded into submission, jail and their graves. No, it is all achieved by a few clever manoeuvres at the top, between the government, the employers and *the trade union leaders themselves*. It is nothing less

than the 'Third Period' Stalinist theory of the 'cold' or bloodless transition to fascism, carried out behind the backs of an unsuspecting working class.

This is what Bull has to say about 'corporatism' as implemented in the UPW. Bull quotes from the minutes of a meeting, held on 19 July 1973, between UPW officials and the GPO, 'to negotiate the recruitment of more temporary staff'. Hardly a *fascist* undertaking, one might have surmised. Bull thinks otherwise:

The official minutes... read like one long hymn to corporatist collaboration. The chairman, a high Post Office functionary, welcomed the unions' 'offer to help' to overcome the difficulties in recruiting postmen...

The GPO had submitted a memo to the Pay Board pointing out that staff shortages were due in part to low pay, and asked 'for improved pay policy in stage three'. Bull continues:

But the UPW delegation agreed that the Post Office would inform its regions that 'recourse should be had to the use of part-time and full-time temporary force (male or female) if the gap between resources and service on commitment could not be bridged'. Or in plain English [continues Bull]: that if the rates of pay for postmen remain so unattractive that not enough workers can be recruited to do the job, then use casualised labour. The fight for a decent living wage for postmen would presumably [NB] go by the board. *It is the perfect corporatist set-up*. The democratic decision of the industry's workers is ignored. The *corporatist-minded* [that is, fascist-minded - RB] union leaders then do a deal with the *corporatist-minded* representatives of the state industry to keep the business running at all costs - even at the cost of a proper level of wages for union members. ^[117]

So for Bull - and, we must presume (since the *Workers Press* is the daily organ of the Central Committee of the WRP), for the entire leadership of the Workers Revolutionary Party - corporatism in this instance is nothing more lethal than the UPW bureaucracy collaborating with the GPO over staffing. Bull is not even in a position to state with certainty whether this deal (one which we must condemn categorically, without giving it a false label) involves an agreement to hold down the wages of workers. He only presumes so. What words would Bull have used to describe the conduct of the ADGB trade union leaders who accepted without a struggle Brüning's wage-cutting decrees on the grounds that Brüning was the lesser evil compared with Hitler? The Stalinists, as we know, denounced these union bureaucrats as 'social fascists'. Trotsky refused to join them in this reactionary game of name-calling. He deemed them to be reformists - treacherous, counter-revolutionary, certainly - but *reformists*, *Social Democrats*, nevertheless. Bull knows better. He calls their British counterparts (who have some way to travel before they emulate the Leiparts and Grassmanns in their capitulation to the bourgeoisie) '*corporatists*'. And lest there be any confusion about this point, let us cite the last sentence of Bull's article. It proves two things. One, that Bull genuinely believes the KPD's great mistake *was to collaborate with the reformists in the period before Hitler's victory*; and two, that corporatism is fascism, *is the regime established by the Nazis in Germany*: '... leading the way into this corporatist trap is the *same* amalgam of reformists and Stalinists that took the *same* path in Germany in the early 1930s.' ^[118] The 'corporatist trap' in Germany was, as Bull is fully aware, the... Third Reich.

And in this 'perfect corporatist set-up' that was Nazi Germany, Bull presumably believes that trade union leaders and employers collaborated over such projects as staffing at the expense of workers' wages. Does he know that Hitler put the Leiparts behind bars, *even as they licked the fascist jackboot*? That there was no 'corporatist collaboration' in the Third Reich? That if the UPW leadership is taking the 'same path' that Leipart and company took in Germany, *then it will lead them into the prisons of a corporatist Britain, along with the thousands of worker-militants they will have betrayed*? Lest the reader think the author is belabouring a point, it must be made clear Trotsky held that Hitler was able to triumph over the German proletariat *precisely because the KPD failed to exploit, by use of the united front tactic, the irreconcilable antagonism between fascism and Social Democracy*. Bull's noisy abuse of reformist leaders as 'corporatists' creates the precedent for rejecting the united front with the reformists no less than did Stalin's theory that Social Democracy and fascism were not antipodes, but twins.

Indeed, there is one instance where we find Bull drawing a direct analogy between Victor Feather, former Secretary of the TUC, and Robert Ley, head of the Nazi Labour Front. Bull became annoyed when Feather declared to a 'conference on the economy' attended by Tories and CBI officials on 8 May 1973, that 'Mussolini banned trade unions as one of the first things he did'. Bull, whom as we have already shown, is hardly one to cast the first stone in such a dispute, replies:

Here, Feather simply reveals the usual contempt of trade union bureaucrats for the lessons of history. [Sic!] It is precisely the tendency towards absorption of the trade unions into the capitalist state structure that always [NB] precedes the establishment of a fully-fledged corporate state. It was so in Italy, and in Germany during the Weimar Republic. ^[119]

Here we find Bull equating corporatism - more precisely, 'fully-fledged' corporatism - with Fascist Italy and the Third Reich, the 'perfect corporatist set-up'. So Jones and Jackson actually desire a Third Reich type regime in Britain! And not only Jones and Jackson. For Bull writes:

For Feather to talk about the democratic procedures of a trade union movement which has already [NB] been stripped in law of its most important rights, the right to free collective bargaining and the right to organise, unrestricted by police and courts, *is in fact to emulate the principle of the German Labour Front under fascism.* ^[120]

Need anything more be said? *Feather is a Nazi!*

It is also sad to see those organisations in political sympathy with the WRP echoing this reactionary bombast, even to the extent of emulating Bull's cavalier interpretations of German history. The Workers League (USA) has broken from the opportunist adaptation to present-day Stalinism of the Socialist Workers Party, only now to teeter on the brink of reproducing the ultra-leftism of the Stalinism of the Third Period. The danger signal for this turn is an article, 'Watergate and Revisionism', by Melody Farrow, published in the Workers League's *Bulletin* in February 1974. It describes the policy of the SPD: '... on the eve of Hitler's rise to power, they [the Social Democrats] refused to recognise the fascist danger [more accurately, it refused to combat it by class struggle methods - RB] and relied on a section of the bourgeoisie to stop Hitler.' As we know, the sins of the KPD lay in another direction. They refused to form a united front with the SPD and ADGB against Hitler. In other words, its errors were of a *leftist*, and not *class-collaborationist* nature. Not so, says Farrow:

The American Communist Party is following in the footsteps of the German Communist Party which relied on a section of the capitalist class to stop Hitler's rise to power, the very section that turned around and handed Hitler the leadership of the country. ^[121]

In other words, *the very policy pursued by the reformists!* By liquidating all the differences between Third Period Stalinism (which Trotsky designated as a *left* aspect of bureaucratic centrism) and reformism, which since 1914 played an openly class-collaborationist role in the workers' movement, Farrow blinds her own party to the dangers of leftism. All the crimes of Stalinism are depicted as being carried through on a *rightist* line. We know that this is not so. The German betrayal was made possible through the imposition of a criminally *adventurist* policy on the KPD, and through it, onto the entire vanguard of the German proletariat. If this for one moment is lost sight of, the vanguard is again exposed to similar errors of tactics and policy, though of course in a different social and political setting.

This having been said, we can now turn to the last stages of Hitler's campaign to crush the organised German proletariat - the destruction of the free trade unions. As we have earlier observed, the Nazi tactic was to pick off the various sectors of the workers' movement singly, a policy only made possible by the tragic lack of unity between the reformist and revolutionary wings of the organised proletariat. The Hitler government only began to step up its pressure on the trade unions when thousands of Communist militants were safely behind barbed wire in the concentration camps. They were encouraged in their offensive by the conciliatory attitude of the ADGB leadership, notably its President, Leipart, and deputy Grassmann, who after making militant noises in the early days of Nazi rule, quickly - and vainly - sought ways of accommodating the trade unions to the Nazi regime. Each attack by SA toughs on a trade union building or editorial office only accelerated this drift towards attempted collaboration. Discovering to their dismay that President Hindenburg was not the benevolent protector of workers' rights it had imagined him to be, the ADGB bureaucracy threw itself on the tender mercies of the Nazis themselves. Hints - some of them none too subtle - were given through the trade union press that the trade unions were prepared to adjust to the 'new Germany', even to the point of severing their traditional links with the SPD and the reformist trade union international, the IFTU. Papen did nothing to discourage this trend, letting it be known that 'if the trade unions recognise the sign of the times, and depoliticise themselves in great measure, they can become precisely at this moment a strong pillar in a new people's order'. A few days later, on 21 March, the ADGB announced its organisational severance from the SPD, pointedly informing the Nazi government of this fact. The ADGB funds, which ran into hundreds of millions of marks all told, were brought back from abroad, whither, fearing the worst, they had been sent for safe

keeping prior to the formation of the Nazi cabinet. On 25 March, the ADGB journal *Gewerkschafts Zeitung* made the following statement:

The trade union organisations are the expression of an irrefutable social necessity, an indispensable part of the social order itself. They have been created by the working class in its effort to help itself, and in the course of their history, according to the natural order of things, they have become more and more integrated into the state. The social function of the trade unions must be fulfilled whatever the nature of the regime of the state. Having recognised the arbitration of the state and availed themselves of it, the trade union organisations have shown that they recognise the state's right of intervention in discussions between the organised workers and the employers, when the general interests require it. ^[122]

Under Weimar, the trade union bureaucracy and lower cadres had been conceded the right to exercise certain functions in the running of the enterprises and the direction of general social and economic policy. This had been a concession made by the employers as an alternative to a head-on conflict with the workers in which their expropriation may well have been posed. The character of the state into which the ADGB bureaucracy had become 'integrated' was therefore *bourgeois democratic*. The onset of the economic crisis, the rise of mass reaction, and a hard anti-union line by the monopolies, far from accelerating this trend towards integration, halted *and even reversed it*. Voices were raised not only at Bad Harzburg, but in boardrooms all over Germany, demanding the *exclusion* of the 'Marxists' from all positions of influence in the state, the economy and social policy. Only National Socialism could carry this task of eliminating the pressure of the workers' organisations through to the end, to their destruction. This process had already begun under Papen. Hitler was to consummate it, with the aid of his armed plebeians. The trend towards collaboration with the state by the reformist trade union bureaucracy, contrary to the claims of Bull, was brought to a brutal halt. Not '*integration*', based on a series of concessions to the working class (the economic foundation of the reformist bureaucracy), but *annihilation* - this was what lay in store for the ADGB unions, even though their leaders could not perceive it.

SA attacks on union offices were now a commonplace. The sheer wantonness of these raids is described by Lorenz Hagen, Chairman of the Nuremberg ADGB:

During the night of 17-18 March, the offices of the ADGB... as well as the offices of the Builders Union, and the Unions of the Bookbinders, Bookprinters, Lithographers, Textile Workers and Carpenters, were completely destroyed by the SA... All the office furniture was smashed and thrown into the courtyard, the safes overturned, forced open from the back and robbed. The typewriters, adding machines, mimeograph machines, etc, were stolen. The ADGB possessed a huge library of about 10 000 volumes for the use of its members. Every single book was torn and thrown into the courtyard. The Workers' Secretariat... had an extensive professional library of about 500 volumes... These were also thrown out and torn to pieces. A similar fate met about 750 to 800 files covering the cases of beneficiaries of pensions... whose claims for pensions were being worked on... ^[123]

In many cases, the SA vandals, worked up into an anti-Marxist frenzy, did not confine their attacks to the property of trade unions. Frequently members were seized and beaten, as one victim related at Nuremberg, namely Gustav Schiefer, Munich ADGB Chairman. His offices had first been raided by the SA on 9 March, and closed down until 15 March. When Schiefer visited his union headquarters on 13 March, 'safes and strong boxes had been smashed open... safes and tills were empty'. He therefore refused to resume his duties until these losses had been made good:

I was dragged to the great hall, paper and pencil put before me with the challenge to designate those Nazis who had committed thefts during the period of 9 to 15 March. I could not do that, since I did not know the individuals. As I refused my signature about 10 Nazis beat me incessantly and indiscriminately until I collapsed. Upon that they seized me and threw me into the bottom of the lift shaft of the Trade Union Headquarters building. After lying there for some time I summoned up my strength and tried to raise myself. When the Nazis noted that, they again dragged me into the hall and beat me until I collapsed and fainted. ^[124]

Fellow trade unionists rescued him and rushed him to hospital. On his discharge, Schiefer 'had to report to the police every third day for almost two years'. ^[125] *And this man was a thoroughgoing reformist*, in Stalinist parlance a 'social fascist' (or as Royston Bull and his fellow super-radical, Stephen Johns, would say, a 'corporatist'). If this was the 'perfect corporatist set-up', then thousands of ADGB officials and

bureaucrats wanted no part of it. The holocaust now descending on them and their members was a direct product of their own opportunist policies, pursued with such devotion not only throughout the 1929-33 crisis, but from the first days of the German Republic (and indeed, from the outset of the First World War). Their top leaders sought to deflect these blows by negotiations with those who were inflicting them.

They attempted to buy their right to survive in the Third Reich by rendering the destruction of their organisations unnecessary. De-politicisation was enforced on the branches by forbidding members to discuss politics. Certain union leaders even stooped so low as to depict the Hitler government as a potential friend of the workers. The *Metallarbeiter Zeitung* declared quite shamelessly:

The Hitler - Hugenberg - Seldte government is resolved to free the German peasants and workers from their intolerable economic misery. It said so in its first appeal and repeated it many times, and on 23 March, in the Chancellor's speech to the Reichstag, this task and the determination to accomplish it were given an importance. [As was the destruction of Marxism! - RB] After all this is it permissible to doubt that the necessity of freeing the masses of the German people from economic distress is recognised, in all its harshness, by the present government. Neither can it be doubted that the government has in its hands all the means to this end. If economic misery is now really to be combated, and energetically, no one will greet this action more warmly than the trade unions. Nothing will be lacking to make their cooperation zealous and resolute... The preceding German governments had in fact accomplished nothing towards putting an end to the economic misery of the masses. Perhaps they lacked the necessary decision and forcefulness. But both are certainly not lacking in the present government. [Sic!] Its legal and full powers allow it unquestionably to limit, and even to suppress, economic misery. And it can rest, for sure, on the loyal cooperation of the trade unions of all tendencies. If the government now sets to work with a will, it will be possible for it to make moral conquests also among the 45 per cent of the people who did not vote for it on 5 March. ^[126]

But Hitler did not seek their 'loyal cooperation', though it suited his tactical plan to pretend that he did. The miners' union organ, *Bergbauindustrie*, had meanwhile come out with a similar line: 'Our union is against any party and any government which injures or neglects the interests of the miners. It is thus for any party or government which supports and fulfil its demands.' ^[127] What makes this statement all the more disgusting is that eight days previously, the SA raided the miners' union premises and arrested three union leaders - Husemann, Martmoller and Bittner. The harder the Nazis hit the bureaucracy, the more craven its crawling before the regime.

On the day after the passing of the Enabling Act, Leipart wrote to Hitler along the lines of the article published in the ADGB journal of 25 March. In it he assured Hitler that:

... the trade unions do not make any claim immediately to influence the policy of the state. In this respect their task can only be to voice the justified wishes of the workers in regard to social and economic-political measures of the government and legislation, as well as to help the government and parliament [sic] with their knowledge and experience in this sphere...

We must repeat again if only for Royston Bull's benefit, who would doubtless have seen in Leipart's offer to Hitler the 'perfect corporatist set-up' - the Nazis had no intention of availing themselves of Leipart's 'knowledge and experience'. Not even the leaders of the Catholic trade union had been allotted a place in the Third Reich, as an entry by Goebbels in his diary for 18 March makes clear:

A few sly foxes of the Christian trade unions pay me a visit to negotiate as to the participation of their followers in the new state. I cold shoulder them. They will not be able to speak of 'followers' much longer. ^[128]

If the Nazis intended to wind up the avowedly anti-Marxist and class-collaborationist Christian trade unions, what hope was there for the ADGB? A further indication of the fate that lay in store for the free trade unions was the promulgation on 5 April of a law empowering employers to dismiss workers 'on suspicion of hostility to the state'. Employers responded by sacking the most prominent Communist and Socialist militants in their plants, and replacing them with unemployed workers attached to the Nazi Party, either through the SA or the party factory organisation, the NSBO. Also in early April, known Communists and Socialists were banned from holding office in the elected works' councils. Power was vested in the hands of NSBO 'delegates', even though the Nazi lists had won a paltry three per cent of the total vote in the council elections held in March. At this stage of the Nazi campaign to crush the unions,

Hitler found it expedient to turn his 'left' face towards the working class, in the shape of the NSBO. This bogus Nazi 'union', which even now drew its main support from the clerical workers, staged a rally at the Berlin *Sportpalast* at which one of its leaders and founders, Johannes Engel, attempted to outflank Leipart *from the left*: 'You [employers] are only servants. We do not recognise the employer as an employer. Without the people, you are a heap of dung...' This tactic began to pay dividends. The less resolute and more backward workers began to turn their backs on their own organisations and drift towards the NSBO, which not only often sounded more 'socialist' than Leipart, but enjoyed the patronage of the government. Bending to this pressure 'from below' as well as from above, Leipart agreed to discussions with the NSBO leaders, which began on 5 April. On the ADGB side, they were attended by Leipart, Grassmann, Leuschner and Eggert, and for the NSBO, Muchow and Brucker. The trade union bureaucrats, even at this late stage, still believed they could bargain their way into the Third Reich. Unknown to them, however, measures were already being discussed by the top Nazi leadership to put both them and their organisations out of business for good. Robert Ley, who became head of the Labour Front when it was established on 10 May, revealed at Nuremberg after the war that the destruction of the trade unions was being planned as early as the middle of March, at a time when the Stalinists were prattling on about their integration into the fascist state. This is what Ley recounted to the Nuremberg investigators:

... the party came to power on 30 January, and in March there were to be elections... Clashes occurred between the NSBO and the trade unions, and this conflict threatened to grow worse. The labour unions had planned to use force on 1 May, but whether this is true or not I cannot possibly know. [It was certainly untrue - RB] ... That was the middle of March. I took these reports to Hitler and stated the case. Hitler told me then he had the intention of taking over the unions *and dissolving them*.^[129]

So Leipart, Grassmann and the rest were doomed men when they began their shameful talks with the NSBO chiefs on 5 April. The only outstanding problem for Hitler was who to put in charge of the operation; Ley suggested Schumann, an NSBO official. Hitler turned this down, 'postponed the matter for 14 days, and said that I [Ley] should keep on watching these happenings, and as soon as danger threatened, to report to him'. In 'early April' - at about the time the ADGB - NSBO conference took place - Ley reported to Hitler again:

I told him time was getting shorter and that the matter was becoming more and more pressing. I also gave him details of some instances where clashes had already taken place between the NSBO and the trade unions.^[130]

On this occasion, Ley proposed Martin Bormann to supervise the dissolution of the trade unions, but again Hitler said no, and asked him to think the matter over. This then was the background to the talks between Leipart and the NSBO.

These talks had in fact been authorised by the Hitler cabinet on 24 March, for on that day, Goebbels entered in his diary: 'Now the discussions with the trade unions begin. We shall not have any peace before we have entirely captured these.'^[131] Once the discussion began, it became clear who were the masters. The NSBO spokesman demanded that the ADGB leadership resign their posts to avert the collapse of their organisations, since 'we as National Socialists have no interest in that. On the contrary, we want to create a unified trade union.'

But Leipart was not interested in a 'unified union' not headed by his own reformist bureaucracy. He declined to resign, and moreover demanded an end to Nazi attacks on trade union property and the persecution of trade union officials and activists. 'You', he retorted 'have the intention of smashing the union.' 'No we do not', was the outraged reply of the NSBO delegation. 'It is Hugenberg who wants that.' Not convinced by the affirmations of men who carried very little weight in the Nazi hierarchy (the NSBO was in fact one of the first victims of the capitalist consolidation of the Hitler regime), Leipart said that the violent acts of the regime against the trade unions were driving the ADGB leadership into opposition. Had Hitler acted otherwise, 'the attitude of the trade unions towards this government would be the same as towards any previous government'. But he could not be a traitor to a movement hounded by the Nazi regime, he insisted.

Brucker tried again: 'Adolf Hitler himself has demanded that the trade unions must not be destroyed... Every worker must be organised.' But he was not able to satisfy Leipart that the NSBO delegation carried the full authority of the Hitler government. 'We have no direct commission, but the Leader expects us to

handle everything in the sense of the new State idea.' In other words, no trade unions! Brucker admitted as much when he enunciated the principles of Nazi labour policy:

We do not recognise that trade union leaders must come from the unions and from the same trade as the workers. The chairman of a trade union can, for example, be a doctor. Wage negotiations with employers will not exist in the future. Wage contracts: no! Wage schedules: yes! In the future the state will regulate wages and prices.

Leipart and Grassmann rightly sensed that these proposals rendered not only the trade unions, but their bureaucracy, redundant. Grassmann declared heatedly:

The working-class leader must come from the same social class as the worker if he wants to be understood. We have the same upbringing and feel the same pressure. Even if the workers beef at their leader off and on, they know that he is their man.

To which an NSBO official, Fikenscher, answered: 'In our shop cells all active persons have equal rights and equal obligations: the editor, the engineer, and the doctor, side by side with the worker.' The Nazi 'union' of 'workers of hand and brain' - not the industrial and craft unions built by the German working class in struggle against the employers and the reactionary layers of the petit-bourgeoisie. Nazi 'trade unionism' placed on an equal footing the middle class and the industrial proletariat, subordinating the latter to the former, and, through the petit-bourgeoisie, to the big capitalists. Here, too, there was no place for the labour bureaucracy, which during the Weimar era had interposed itself between the employers and the proletariat. Now the state leaned for its mass support on the fascist middle classes, to the direct and brutal exclusion of the reformist bureaucracy. This qualitative shift in class and political relations lay behind the tensions between the NSBO and ADGB delegations at the conference of 5 April. Eggert, of the ADGB, expressed this perfectly when he declared:

In our trade unions we speak our own language which permits us to think and feel with the worker. If you try to approach the worker from the outside, you will never be able to get inside him. The stock of skilled workers will always stand behind us.

This was true, as long as there were legal trade unions for them to support (the works council elections of March 1933 demonstrated that the mass of the workers remained loyal to their persecuted organisations). But just because this was true, it was all the more necessary for the Nazis to smash the trade unions, and to put Eggert and his kind behind bars or at least out of a job.

Two days after the conference, which produced no agreement whatsoever, the Hitler government proclaimed May Day a national public holiday. A demagogic master-stroke, since no Weimar government, not even when headed by the Social Democrats, had dared to take this measure. Then on 11 April, the Christian trade union leaders made a new approach to Goebbels. They:

... ask for a deal with inept familiarity. They promise, in exchange, to order their followers to march with us on 1 May. Harmless, naive souls... *They do not seem to be aware of what is really going on. Six months will not have elapsed before they are swept away, root and branch.* ^[132]

More attacks on trade union premises followed, bringing forth yet another declaration of willingness to collaborate with the Hitler regime. Hans Ehrenteit of the Hamburg ADGB organisation stated at a local union congress on 13 April:

We are ready and able to fulfil the hopes and desires of the proletariat in the economic-social sphere *in agreement with the present rulers*. We do not doubt for one moment that the events of 5 March represent a revolution of enormous depth and scope; *a revolution which is to surpass the liberal and capitalist economic system*; a revolution putting an end to that democratic parliamentarianism which for the past few years has been so deceptive. The trade unions have built bridges to the state and to its rulers. We must now proclaim our attitude in respect of the state and the nation. This attitude will have a foundation. The best course... is to build bridges for those who, *through ignorance*, would wish, today more than yesterday, to destroy the trade union movement, and we hope to be able to assist in this. The function of the trade unions must be to continue to fulfil their social and economic mission. *This same duty has been carried out by the present government of the Reich, and collaboration between the trade unions and the government is therefore possible.* [Emphasis added]

Now the bureaucrats were even attempting to assume the protective coloration of the Nazi vocabulary in order to save their own skins and if possible, soft jobs in the union apparatus. On 15 April, the ADGB executive welcomed the Nazi government's decision to make May Day a public holiday a festival of

‘national labour’ - while Hitler appointed Ley to head the party group charged with the liquidation of the trade unions and the seizure of their assets. On 17 April a discussion took place between Hitler and Goebbels on the trade union question:

We shall make the First of May serve as a demonstration of our German purpose. *On 2 May, the houses belonging to the trade unions to be seized.* This may entail a few days’ disturbance, but then they will be ours... Once the trade unions are in our hands *the other parties and organisations will not be able to hold out long.* [That is, the SPD, which was still nominally legal, though its press had long since been banned - RB] ^[133]

Naturally the ADGB leaders knew nothing of this momentous decision, though they had every reason to suspect that the end was near. On 19 April they gave new emphasis to their declaration of 15 April. Trade union members were now requested *to join in the Nazi May Day festivities.* The ADGB leaders themselves resolved to take part, thus completing their prostration before Hitler. They could stoop no lower. On 22 April, the last edition of the ADGB organ, *Gewerkschafts Zeitung*, published its official welcome to the Nazi May Day rally in words that have justly earned infamy in the annals of the German and world labour movement:

We certainly need not strike our colours in order to recognise that the victory of National Socialism, though won in the struggle against a party [the SPD] which we used to consider the embodiment of the idea of socialism, is our victory as well; because, today, the socialist task is put to the whole nation. ^[134]

The day prior to the publication of this statement, the NSDAP set up an ‘Action Committee’ under its chairman Ley, whose task it would be to carry out on 2 May the ‘coordination action of the free trade unions’. The leading personnel of the Action Committee were Robert Ley (Chairman), Rudolf Schmeer, (Deputy), Schumann (Commissar for the ADGB), Pepler (Commissar for the General Independent Employees Federation), Muchow (NSBO), Bank Director Müller (Commissar Director for the Bank for Workers, Employees and Officials, which the Nazis also intended to seize along with the other assets of the unions), Brinkmann (Commissar Chief Cashier), Bialles (Propaganda and Press). NSBO members were instructed to aid in the seizure operation, while ‘SA and SS are to be employed for the occupation of the trade union properties and for taking into protective [sic] custody personalities concerned’. Targets for the operation included ‘the trade union houses and offices of the free trade unions, the party houses of the SPD in so far as trade unions are involved there; the branches and pay offices of the Bank for Workers, Employees and Officials, the District Committees of the ADGB...’. Those scheduled for arrest included ‘all trade union chairmen, the district secretaries and the branch directors of the Bank for Workers, Employees and Officials...’. Ley’s directives also included advice on the style of the operation:

The taking of the independent trade unions must proceed in such a fashion that the workers will not be given the feeling that the action is directed against them, but, on the contrary, an action against a superannuated system which is not directed in conformity with the interests of the German nation... As soon as possible mass assemblies are to be arranged for the free attendance by all trade union members. In these meetings the meaning of the action is to be set forth and it is to be explained that the rights of the workers and employees are being unequivocally guaranteed... ^[135]

The stage was now set for the last act in what Trotsky described as the tragedy of the German proletariat. The support of the ADGB bureaucracy for Hitler’s phoney ‘May Day’ rally in Berlin was already secured, which meant that they would bring with them hundreds of thousands of their own members. Those courageous workers who defied their own leaders also had to contend with intimidation from both the Nazis and the employers. IG Farben issued a notice on 25 April to all local managements instructing them to ensure a maximum turn out on 1 May:

The government requests that 1 May be celebrated as the holiday of national labour. Since it is essential that on this day all of Germany stands behind its government, we are asking all colleagues and associates to join the rally on this day of demonstration and thus prove our will to cooperate. To show the personnel of our plant as a uniform group, we request that you adhere to the published organisational chart of the NSBO which has been compiled in agreement with the other national agencies... ^[136]

The show piece of the Nazis' 'holiday of national labour' was the speech by Hitler to the rally on the Tempelhofer Feld near Berlin. Goebbels ecstatically describes the scene, which he takes as proof that National Socialism has conquered both Marxism and the class struggle:

The Tempelhofer Feld teems with the multitude. Berlin is already on its way there, lock, stock and barrel, workmen and bourgeoisie, high and humble, employers and employees now these differences are obliterated... A few years ago, machine guns were rattling in Berlin. ^[137]

Then this petit-bourgeois cynic, himself sold lock, stock and barrel to monopoly capitalism, added with malevolent satisfaction: 'Tomorrow we shall occupy the trade union buildings, there will be little resistance.' There was in fact none. That had already been broken by a combination of mass terror and state persecution, aided by the treacherous policies of class-collaboration pursued by the ADGB bureaucracy and its co-thinkers in the leadership of the SPD. And supplementing them, though unwittingly, in this reactionary work had been the Stalinists, with their sectarian policy of setting up Red Unions, of isolating the vanguard from the broad mass of workers, of refusing - until it was too late - to offer a principled, genuine united front to the SPD and ADGB; not in order purely to 'expose' them *à la* Zinoviev 1924 vintage, but in order to mobilise the entire forces and organisations of the proletariat - its press, property, financial resources, fighting spirit and discipline - against the class enemy, against principally the Nazi terror bands and the monopolists who supported and financed them. This the KPD, acting under explicit orders from the ECCI leadership in Moscow, refused to do. The end result, disastrous for not only the German proletariat but the working class of the entire world, was the destruction of the German trade unions.

Loud and long were the celebrations amongst the Nazis and their capitalist cronies following the occupation of the ADGB headquarters and local offices on 2 May. Barely concealing its glee behind the obligatory veneer of radical demagogy, the Nazi Press Agency, edited by Hitler's bourgeois friend Otto Dietrich, announced:

The first of May 1933 was the death of the hour of the Marxist class struggle. Workers from the factories, manual and intellectual workers, clerical employees, they all marched behind the Swastika banner. The folk community is here - the most splendid and exalted dream has become a reality. The working masses have testified to their faith in National Socialism. But as yet the trade associations of the German working class, the representative bodies of workers and employees, were in the hands of the Marxist leaders [by which was meant Leipart and company - RB], who did not guide the German labour movement for the benefit of the working people, but only considered it as the shock troop of their crazy international Marxist class struggle ideology. National Socialism, which today has assumed leadership of the German working class, can no longer bear the responsibility for leaving the men and women of the German working class, the members of the largest trade union organisation in the world, the German trade union movement, in the hands of the people who do not know a fatherland that is called Germany. ^[138]

All Leipart's protestations of national loyalty, his severance of the ADGB's ties with the SPD and the IFTU, had abjectly failed to appease the Nazis:

New German labour leaders have replaced the big-wigs. The proven pioneers of the NSBO, who have fought to the limit for the rights of German labour from the beginning, have taken over the leadership of the trade union associations. [This was, as we know from Ley's directive of 21 April, merely a prelude to winding them up - RB] That proves that the struggle of National Socialism is not directed against the trade union idea as such, but against the bureaucratic leaderships, because they are the foes of the German labour movement. [As we can see, the Nazi 'lefts' were not averse, when the occasion demanded, to taking a leaf out of the Communists' book, with their attacks on the union bureaucrats (*Bonzen* as they were called by Nazis and Stalinists alike) as traitors to the working class - RB] The old, painstakingly attained rights of the workers' and employees' associations will not be touched. On the contrary the new National Socialist trade union leadership will make good the harm inflicted on the German working class by class struggle and internationalism. Have confidence in the proven fighters of the NSBO! Attempts at sabotage by unscrupulous mischief makers will be avenged with the whole severity of the law. Comply with all future directives, it is a matter of your and your children's future. Now to work! Long live Socialism! Long live Germany! ^[139]

The threatening tones assumed at the conclusion of this statement revealed that the 'folk community' of workers and employers had not been established with the finality that Dietrich would have his readers

believe. The ‘social fascists’ Leipart and Grassmann, together with scores of other ADGB bureaucrats, were in custody after their arrest on 2 May. But a major task still lay ahead of the Nazi regime - the subjugation of the Marxist proletariat, which as the results of the Reichstag election of 5 March showed, still numbered at least 10 million. The enormity of this task was publicly acknowledged by Ley in his proclamation of 2 May announcing the seizure of the trade unions:

Today we are entering into the second chapter of the National Socialist revolution. You may say, what else do you want, you have the absolute power. True, we have the power, but we do not have the whole people, we do not have you workers a hundred per cent, and it is you whom we want; we will not let you go until you stand with us in complete, genuine acknowledgement. You shall also be freed of the last Marxian manacles so that you may find your way back to your people. ^[140]

The German proletariat denied that final pleasure to the Nazis. Betrayed by their own leaders, daunted by unprecedented terror from which there was no refuge except exile or death, the workers bowed their heads to their Nazi conquerors - but they never accepted them, nor embraced their barbarous imperialist ideology.

The Nazi message was dawning even on the most obtuse union bureaucrat - *May 1933 was not August 1914*. A bogus ‘national reconciliation’ for the workers - but not for their leaders:

Marxism pretends to be dead in order to plunge the Judas dagger into your back. Just as in 1914, the sly old fox doesn’t deceive us. Rather we will give him one last fatal shot so that we shall never again suffer with his resurrection. The Leiparts and Grassmanns may pretend ever so much fidelity to Hitler, but it is better that they should be in protective custody. Therefore we shall strike the main weapon out of the hands of the Marxist group and thereby take from it its last possibility of renewed strength. ^[141]

As for their followers, Ley posed as their true comrade and brother:

Not that we want to destroy the trade unions. Workers! Your institutions are sacred to us National Socialists, they are not to be touched. Workers! I give you my word, not only shall we preserve everything that exists, but we are going to extend the protection and the rights of the workers. ^[142]

Needless to say, the events of 2 May had a stimulating effect on the activities of the business community. On 5 May, Hitler declared in a speech on the winding up of the unions that:

... the Reich government has every interest in economic life becoming inwardly peaceful. All rigorous interference must and will be avoided. The economy is in a position to embark immediately on economic projects and plan a long way ahead, as the stabilisation of conditions offers the necessary guarantee. Those who commence quickly can be assured of the warmest moral support of the Reich government. Any nervousness in economic circles is quite out of place. *Now that the trade union action has been carried out, a consolidation of conditions has become apparent in economic life.* [Emphasis added]

The destruction of the trade unions had created an enormous void in the ranks of the German working class, and now the Nazis hastened to fill it. On 10 May, in Berlin, Hitler addressed the rally that founded the German Labour Front of Dr Robert Ley. Advance billing for the rally adopted a typical NSBO leftist slant:

For the first time in the German labour movement a concentration of all workers and employees will thus be reached and one of the greatest undertakings recorded in the history of the German working class brought to fruition.

So the despoilers of the trade unions were now depicting themselves as the true heirs to the traditions of Bebel! Hitler struck a different note at the rally. Rarely given, unlike Goebbels and Strasser, to radical, pseudo-socialist rhetoric, he praised the employers (now enrolled into the Labour Front along with their workers) as ‘god-favoured inventors, gifted organisers to whom we and our fellow countrymen owe their lives... One cannot therefore oppose the employer to the worker, but the point is that the mind [that is, the employer], as always in human affairs commands the ordinary forces [that is, the workers].’

Ley also took a ‘moderate’ line:

The trade unions will never return... You will realise that work should not merely be a means of earning wages, but that the organisations representing the German workers should become the representatives of a new state under the term, 'the German worker'.

In the week between the seizure of the union buildings and the Berlin Labour Front rally, Ley had been busy rounding up the secondary union leaders and sequestering their union's assets. Ley's account is undoubtedly prejudiced and exaggerated, but it conveys the capitulationist mood that had gripped the entire bureaucracy, leading it to acquiesce in the Nazi takeover:

I myself took over the headquarters of the Free Trade Unions in Berlin. The head of the union was sitting there as if he had been waiting. The whole thing took place within four days. It was on a Monday. All the heads of the unions as well as the heads of the employers came voluntarily, altogether there were 216 different unions, and they came to the Prussian Upper House where they signed papers to the effect that all their property and funds were to go over to the new organisation... On Friday, four days later; I could report to the *Führer* that the taking over of the unions had taken place, and the German Labour Front was established... The head of the Free Trade Unions in Berlin told me - he sat in his chair when I came in. When I told him 'I am taking over this', I asked him to help me, and then he told me: 'I am glad that you have come and we can finally have order.' Such were conditions... Everything was done very fast. Two hundred and sixteen of them all came voluntarily to my office. I had a paper saying, 'I turn over all rights and privileges of my organisation to the signed', and it was finished. ^[143]

A dismal - and fitting - end to their careers as the betrayers of the German trade union movement. The next few days and weeks saw Ley tidying up the legal side of his campaign. On 12 May, all property and assets of the ADGB were legally confiscated. Then on 24 June, the Christian trade unions, whose leaders had been permitted to collaborate with the Nazi government, appearing with Ley at the ILU Conference in Geneva on 8 June as his tame 'labour representatives', were wound up and their assets made over to the Labour Front. The role of the Labour Front will be discussed in the next - the last - chapter of this book. So it remains to trace the reactions within the Stalinist movement to Hitler's onslaught on the German trade unions, in fact to see once again how the theory of 'social fascism', the blind assertion that the trade unions, together with their reformist leaders, were being 'incorporated into the state' disarmed the vanguard in the face of the fascist offensive.

Even after the Nazi seizure of power and the beginning of the Hitler government's attacks on the reformist leaders, the Stalinists clung stubbornly to their theory that Social Democracy and fascism were 'twins'. Thus the Comintern publication, *Guide to the Twelfth Plenum ECCI*, spoke of the 'community' of Social Democracy with fascism, and criticised the 'opportunist idealisation of Social Democracy as an anti-fascist force'. ^[144] Far more explicit, however, on the question of the reformist trade unions is the pamphlet written by Piatnitsky, *The World Economic Crisis, The Revolutionary Upsurge and the Tasks of the Communist Parties*. The main part of this substantial pamphlet was written after the formation of the Hitler cabinet, but prior to the Reichstag fire and the resultant banning of the KPD. Piatnitsky therefore wrote a short postscript dealing with this dramatic turn in the German situation which contains the following assertion:

In order to carry out its programme of a bloody offensive against the toilers, the 'National Government' is striving to annihilate the KPD, the vanguard of the working class, *and to convert the Social Democrats into obedient executors of this programme*. For this purpose they must *transform* the trade unions into a weapon for their policy... the trade union bureaucratic leaders... are of course doing their utmost to convert the Social Democratic 'free' trade unions *into weapons of the fascist policy*. ^[145]

These lines may seem vaguely familiar. They are indeed. They can be found, in various permutations, and with the substitution of 'corporatist' for 'fascist', in numerous articles on the alleged policies and activities of the trade union leaders in this country that have appeared in *Workers Press* over the last 18 months. For has not Jack Jones, leader of the T & GW, been described by Stephen Johns (perhaps, with Bull, the most enthusiastic exponent of a petit-bourgeois, radical approach to the workers' movement and its problems) as nothing less than a 'devoted disciple of corporatism'? And has not Royston Bull likened Feather to Robert Ley, the Nazi who put the German Feathers *behind bars*? ^[146] To return to Piatnitsky, in a sense a spiritual forefather of today's leftists in the WRP. He was determined, despite glaring evidence to the contrary, to prove that there existed no significant antagonism between the labour bureaucracy and the fascist regime, even when it was hounding some of the former's leading

representatives into exile: 'The fascists want to convert the German "free" and catholic reformist trade unions into corporations of fascist trade unions on Italian lines.'^[147] But in Italy, *Mussolini did no such thing*. He wore down by terror, and then *outlawed*, the trade unions, *replacing them* by fascist 'syndicates' staffed from top to bottom by hard-line fascists. It seems that rewriting the history of fascism, and of the labour movement's struggle against it, has some long-established precedents. And that, surely, must give pause to think to those who condone the outrageous violations of Marxist theory and principles contained in the articles of Bull and Johns especially.

Even the action of 2 May 1933 did not persuade the Stalinists to look again at their 'incorporation' theory. The first Comintern report on the closing down of the ADGB on 2 May spoke of the 'incorporation of the trade unions in the National Socialist system of power' and of Leipart and company, who were by this time in 'protective custody', as 'social fascist trade union leaders'. Nevertheless, there was some explaining to be done. Hitler had jailed his 'social fascist' allies, and wound up their unions. Without turning a hair, the author of this article continued:

Up to the last moment the social fascist trade union leaders were convinced that Hitler would graciously accept their declarations of submission and allow them to place their services at the disposal of the fascist dictatorship. They were completely surprised by the violent action of the National Socialists and still more when, in spite of their slavish capitulation, they were placed under arrest.^[148]

Also 'surprised' were the Stalinists, who for years had been insisting stridently that Social Democracy and fascism, to quote Stalin's famous aphorism, were not antipodes but twins.

Brave attempts were made to sustain the 'incorporation' theory well after the establishment of the Labour Front on 10 May. On 26 May, it was said that the 'trade unions [have been] *converted* from organs of the class struggle into fascist organs',^[149] while in June, the same organ spoke of 'the *incorporation* of the whole of the trade union movement in the fascist system'.^[150] Perhaps here we have uncovered - at least partially - the historical and methodological origins of a theory that can still be encountered in left-wing and even Marxist circles: namely that Hitler did not destroy the German trade unions, but with the assistance of their leaders, 'incorporated' them into the state. The reality was far richer, as this note has tried to demonstrate. Finally, there is the question of the Stalinists' own opportunist adaptations to Nazi pressure on the trade unions, and to the Nazi factory organisation, the NSBO.

Five years of ultra-leftism, and nearly three of 'red unionism' had inculcated into Communist workers some very false and potentially very reactionary notions about work in the ADGB 'social fascist' trade unions. This bad political education, attributable largely to the Stalinist course imposed from Moscow, but also (though to a lesser degree) to the deep tradition of sectarianism on the trade union question that first emerged in the early days of the KPD, bore its bitter fruit in the first weeks of the Nazi regime. An article in the Comintern press admitted that:

... although in recent months the RGO has been emphasising the need for wholesale enrolment in the 'free trade unions' of members schooled in its own ranks... *RGO comrades have been tending to let themselves be enrolled for preference in the NSBO rather than join the 'free trade unions'*. In fact the hatred felt for the reformist leaders has been blinding them to recognition of the obvious truth to them as revolutionaries that even today, with the NSBO beginning to turn into a mass organisation, the 'free trade unions' do not lose their importance as outstanding mass organisations. Similar leanings have been observable during the shop committee elections as well. [Where the RGO candidate has been prevented from standing]... the sentiment has been created [sic!] which makes the rank and file look at things this way: Well, we're not going to vote the 'free trade union' ticket...^[151]

So much for Stalinist 'schooling'!

The net result of this schooling was that when faced with the choice of voting for a reformist or fascist candidate in the works council elections, *many KPD workers voted for the fascist*. This was the brutal logic of Stalin's theory of 'social fascism'.

Nor was this all. Certain KPD-controlled bodies actually voluntarily enrolled in Nazi mass formations, as was later admitted by Wilhelm Pieck at the Thirteenth ECCI Plenum of November 1933:

In the first period of the Hitler dictatorship, a number of groups of the RGO went over to the NSBO with the intention of carrying on revolutionary work in it. But their tactics... led to the discrediting of our movement, especially when it was a matter of leading functionaries in the

factories. In one of the larger industrial towns, a revolutionary sports organisation allowed itself to be ‘incorporated’ by the fascists [precisely the charge levelled at the reformist trade union leaders by the Stalinists! - RB] on the ground that it could thereby remain in possession of its property. [Again, a classic Social Democratic justification - RB] They were first-rate sportsmen who obtained first prize at a fascist sports meeting and they were glad to carry on the political life of their body under the mask of ‘incorporation’.^[152]

The ECCI and KPD leadership blamed the rank-and-file Communist workers for these scandalous instances of adaptation and even open collaboration with the Nazi regime. An article on the new tactics to be adopted under the Nazis which appeared in the Comintern press on 26 May 1933, said the following:

The slogan issued [by the KPD] in Germany [is]: all class conscious proletarians join the Labour Front. *There exists great possibilities for strengthening the anti-capitalist elements in the NSBO.*^[153]

This line was reiterated on 2 June, when the same organ declared:

The class front of the workers is being formed in the NSBO cells under the slogans of the economic fight for existence. Many workers in the NSBO are acting in a Marxist manner and conducting the class struggle without being aware of it.^[154]

Need more be said? The struggle against ‘social fascism’ had been transformed into a united front ‘from within’ with the Nazi ‘plebeians’. Could there be a more crushing indictment of Stalinist trade union policy in Germany than this?

Appendix II: Trotsky on Stalin’s Diplomacy

In a discussion with CLR James concerning issues raised in his book *World Revolution 1917-1936*, Trotsky takes issue with James one-sided estimation of Comintern policy in the period that preceded Hitler’s rise to power. While conceding that ‘the foreign policy of Moscow, and the orientation of the Social Democracy to Geneva’ could have played a role in shaping the Kremlin bureaucracy’s ultra-left turn of 1929-33, he added that ‘Stalin hoped that the KPD would win a victory’ and that ‘to think that he had a “plan” to allow fascism to come to power is absurd’. This Trotsky considered to be ‘a deification of Stalin’. In this exchange, Trotsky expressed the view that ‘Stalin sincerely wished the triumph of the KPD in 1930-33’.^[155]

Here the author is bound to differ with Trotsky as he expresses himself in this discussion. There is now available considerable evidence - some circumstantial, much of it documentary - that Stalin, while not desiring necessarily or specifically a Nazi victory in Germany, certainly wished to see in power an extreme right-wing, nationalist, anti-Western regime dominated or strongly influenced by the ‘Eastern oriented’ faction in the *Reichswehr* High Command. Where Stalin was ‘sincere’ was in his delusion that the generals and the old nationalist politicians could control, and if needs be, oust Hitler if and when they chose. Nearly all the texts cited in support of this theory only became available after the assassination of Trotsky by a Stalinist agent in August 1940, and therefore could not enter into Trotsky’s evaluation of the question. But it is important to record here that Trotsky put a different emphasis on Stalin’s German policy on several other occasions, suggesting that in his exchange with James, in order to ‘straighten out’ the formalist distortions contained in the latter’s book, he bent the stick, in true Leninist fashion, a little the other way. For we find Trotsky saying something very different in his article calling for a new German Communist Party, which appeared in July 1933:

In its theory the KPD did not project the possibility of revolutionary development. That is because the Stalinist bureaucracy in the USSR *wished to avoid revolutionary troubles abroad*. [Which is also the contention of the present author - RB] In practical terms, the KPD proposed as the main task increasing its influence by the parliamentary path, limiting all the activity of the vanguard to the parliamentary struggle, electoral campaigns, etc. It poisoned the workers through the theory of ‘social fascism’ and, lumping everyone together as fascists (the fascist Brüning, the fascist Papan), condemned the workers to passivity.^[156]

In the important analytical and programmatic document, ‘The Evolution of the Comintern’ (1936), we find an even more explicit linking of Stalin’s foreign policy with the line of the KPD in the period of the rise of National Socialism:

The absolutely inane estimation of the Social Democracy as ‘social fascism’ led to rapprochement with real fascism (programme of national and social liberation, support of the fascist referendum

in Prussia in 1931, etc). This programme of adapting oneself to nationalist agitation, and the bureaucratic-cowardly evasion of a military struggle against the fascist opponent *found its support in Soviet foreign policy which was solely governed by day-to-day considerations. This foreign policy saw as its task in keeping alive German-French antagonism in order thus to exclude an intervention from the West.* Soviet foreign policy is, of course, absolutely justified in exploiting for its own ends the differences between imperialist powers. *But it is an unheard-of crime to sacrifice the interests of the proletarian revolution to day-to-day considerations of foreign policy.* ^[157]

Finally there are the remarks made by Trotsky to the Dewey Commission, set up to investigate the charges made at the Moscow Trials that Trotsky and other leading Bolsheviks had collaborated with Hitler to overthrow the Soviet regime. Trotsky turned the tables, showing that it was Stalin, and not he, who had come to the aid of the Nazis (thus aiding, though unwittingly, the war moves of German imperialism against the USSR):

Stalin in the first six months of 1933 hoped to keep in good relations with the fascists in Germany. I can introduce articles, my articles against him on that occasion. I quote from *Izvestia* about 15 March [actually 4 March] 1933: ‘The USSR is the only state which is not nourished on hostile sentiments towards Germany and that, independent of the form and composition of the Reich.’ It was Hitler who repulsed it, not he. Then only did he begin to look in the direction of France and so on. ^[158]

Elsewhere Trotsky asserted that shortly after Hitler’s assumption of power: ‘Stalin declared and it was repeated in the press, that “we never opposed the Nazi movement in Germany”.’ ^[159] We have already cited the testimonies of German diplomats, KPD leaders and a leading Soviet secret service agent to substantiate that which Trotsky said in 1936: namely that Kremlin diplomacy consciously speculated on an ultra-nationalist or Nazi victory in Germany as a means of creating divisions between the major imperialist powers in Europe. Comintern functionary Eudocio Ravines reveals in his memoirs *The Yanan Way* that Stalin’s order to acquiesce, if not assist, in the victory of Hitler went hard against the grain even in the highest echelons of the KPD leadership. At a Comintern meeting held in Moscow during the Spanish Civil War, Dimitrov berated the anti-Nazi activities of the underground KPD, at which point Wilhelm Pieck could not contain himself any longer:

You simply can’t talk that way! ... The time has come to speak frankly in front of all these comrades. We are sick of being told the German Communists did not fight, that they gave up without resistance. *These things happened in order to prevent civil war from breaking out in Germany.* The Western powers would have intervened, they would have reached the borders of the Soviet Union. [Precisely *because* the KPD blocked the revolution, Hitler was to reach the outskirts of Moscow and Leningrad! - RB] ... *Moscow ordered us to give up.* I want to clarify this here in front of these comrades, because we are being held up to ridicule... ^[160]

True to form, Pieck was at this time to the fore in heaping lavish praise on Kremlin diplomacy. In his message of greetings from the KPD Central Committee to Stalin on the twentieth anniversary of the Russian Revolution, he wrote that the ‘German working class knows that the Soviet Union is a friend of the German people, and that it has only one desire: to preserve peace...’ ‘Preserving peace’ meant for Stalin, aiding Hitler’s bid for power. ^[161]

Once again, this account accords with Trotsky’s assessment of Stalinist diplomacy in the early 1930s, his exchange with CLR James (‘Johnson’) excluded. In the International Left Opposition declaration ‘On the Need for a New German Party’ (issued in the summer of 1933), the assertion is made that the KPD leaders:

... on the basis of the reactionary theory of ‘socialism in one country’ ... did everything possible to avoid battle, and thus permit Stalinism to practice its pernicious policy in the USSR. In its theory the KPD did not project the possibility of revolutionary development. *That is because the Stalinist bureaucracy in the USSR wished to avoid revolutionary troubles abroad.* ^[162]

Six years later, we find Trotsky hammering just the same point:

In 1932... Moscow’s foreign policy was entirely impregnated with a spirit of national conservatism... France, the country most interested in maintaining the Versailles peace, still remained Enemy Number One of the Kremlin. The second place was occupied by Great Britain. The United States... was in the third rank. Hitler’s coming to power did not immediately change

this estimate. The Kremlin wanted, *at all costs*, to maintain with the Third Reich the relations which had been established with the government of Ebert and Hindenburg, and continued a noisy campaign against the Versailles Treaty... ^[163]

We conclude by quoting from the reminiscences of a Comintern functionary who worked in the editorial offices of *Pravda* at the time of Hitler's assumption of power:

The foreign policy of the Soviet Union... viewed the antagonism between the victorious states of the First World War and defeated Germany as the indispensable condition for the existence of the Soviet Union in the 'capitalist encirclement'. When the outlines of a Franco-German agreement began to take shape in the course of negotiations between Briand and Stresemann, this development gave rise to veritable panic in the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, because such a development might lead to a united European front against the Soviet Union. From this standpoint, the policy of the Weimar coalition... was the arch-enemy of Soviet policy. On the other hand, the policy of the nationalist opposition parties (DNVP, NSDAP) constituted a guarantee that a bloc of capitalist states would not be formed... As the Foreign Affairs Commissariat formulated its tasks, the object was to 'drive a wedge between the capitalist states'. A nationalist government in Germany (supported by the Seeckt - Hammerstein group in the army, with whom direct links had been established since the Treaty of Rapallo in 1922) was in the opinion of leading Soviet diplomats stationed in Germany the 'lesser evil' in comparison with a left-wing government capable of forming a European bloc against the Soviet Union. Stalin was convinced that a right-wing government in Germany would turn its attention first of all to 'breaking the fetters of Versailles'. [Also a KPD slogan! -RB] It would take a good deal of time before agreement with the Western states could be reached (based on German hegemony). 'During this interval of time, the Soviet Union would put its political and economic situation on a sufficiently sound basis to be prepared for war.' ^[164]

So on the balance of the evidence - and also the weight of Trotsky's own arguments - we find for the Trotsky of 1933, 1936, 1937 and 1939 against Trotsky's single remark to James. Only those who desire infallible and all-seeing leaders will be disturbed or outraged by such a conclusion.

Notes

1. *Twenty-Five Years at the Leuna Works* (a wartime IG Farben publication), cited in 'The IG Farben Trial', *IMT*, Volume 7, pp 536-40, emphasis added.
2. 'Flick Trial', *IMT*, pp 356-57, emphasis added. Steinbrinck recounts one incident which presents the SA 'revolutionaries' in an absurd light. Two Storm-Troop aristocrats, the Counts Helldorf and von Arnim, arrived at Steinbrink's office to ask for a cash donation for the SA. 'These men said they needed money because after the elections... they were going to have a torchlight procession for Hindenburg. For this purpose they wanted to buy shoes for the SA men. When we discussed this matter, they had arrived in a beautiful white car and I told them that that was a suitable car for a film star but not for poor SA officials. So I didn't give them anything, but later they came back in a little Opel car and I gave them a thousand marks.' ('Flick Trial', *IMT*, p 351)
3. *IMT*, Volume 12, p 568.
4. H Schacht, *My First Seventy-Six Years* (London, 1955), p 295.
5. *Deutsche Rundschau*, July 1947.
6. The NSDAP's demagogic adaptation to the strike movement and the 'left' turn necessitated by growing unrest in the SA after the failure of 13 August alienated not only the party's big bourgeois sympathisers, but smaller employers too. Thus on 10 October, a Nazi activist amongst artisans in the shoe-making trade wrote to party headquarters: 'The measures which the NSDAP is now adopting are crassly opposed to the interests of the employers. I am therefore compelled to resign my posts as Leader... I welcome any wage-cuts which help us return to normal conditions and deeply regret that, as well as me, many other master craftsmen are being alienated from the NSDAP because it calls on German workers to strike.'
7. J Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight* (London, 1938), p 163.

- 8.** Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, p 164.
- 9.** Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, p 166.
- 10.** *Angriff*, 17 November 1932.
- 11.** Lending even greater urgency to these moves was the continued electoral decline of the NSDAP. In council elections held on 14 November in Saxony, the party suffered major reverses in the state's three major cities: Dresden, down from 134 000 on 6 November to 104 000; Leipzig, 129 000 to 102 000; and Chemnitz, 80 000 down to 70 000. The decline accelerated in Thuringia, where on 3 December, despite a Nazi propaganda blitz to halt the slide (Hitler even taking time out from his summit negotiations to campaign there), large losses were incurred: Weimar, 12 000 down to 7000; Gera, 17 000 to 14 000; Gotha, 10 000 to 8000. These were the returns in the urban areas. Even more disturbing from Hitler's point of view were the losses in the rural districts of the same towns, where previously the Nazi vote had been the firmest: Weimar, 21 000 to 16 000; Gera, 18 000 to 13 000. Throughout Thuringia, *the Nazis lost 40 per cent of their July vote!*
- 12.** H Rauschnig, *Men of Chaos* (London, 1942), p 220.
- 13.** Keppler wrote to Schröder on 13 November that after a discussion between Himmler and Schacht 'concerning earlier negotiations for the formation of a government', Papen's support was secured for the presentation of the petition to Hindenburg. Keppler informed Schröder: 'As von Papen is favourably disposed towards this step (it will be submitted to him in official form before dispatch) the misgivings in many circles about signing it will disappear. It will be sent off in eight days' time. We can also ensure that the *Berliner Börsenzeitung*, the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* and the *Hamburger Nachrichten* will come out for Hitler as Chancellor, which all add emphasis...' (NI-209)
- 14.** Schacht's unstinting efforts on behalf of the Nazis did not pass unrecognised. On 21 November, the day of Hitler's second meeting with Hindenburg, Goebbels noted in his diary: 'In a discussion with Dr Schacht I ascertain that his views coincide with ours. He is one of the few who stand firmly by the Leader.' (Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, p 172) This talk probably concerned the progress of the banker's campaign on behalf of Hitler amongst Schacht's numerous business contacts.
- 15.** *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, Volume 11, pp 922-24, emphasis added. Listed below the petition, and generally believed to have signed it, were the following names of leading German industrialists, bankers and employers: Helferich (Hamburg-America lines, German-American Petrol Company) Krogmann (also of Hamburg-America Lines) Slomann, Witthoft (Hamburg shipping), Cuno (former Chancellor, Hamburg-America), Kiep (Hamburg-America), Albert, Much, Woermann, Schacht, Reinhardt (director Mitteldeutsche Creditbank), Schröder, Fink, Eichborn, Vögler, Haniel, Krupp, Siemens, Springorum (Hoest-Stahl Gruppe), Tischein, Janicke, Rob, Bosch, Ullrich, Lubbert, Beidorff, Reindorff, Nentzky, Kaljreuth, von Oppen, Keudell, Rabethge, Wenzel, Keyserling.
- 16.** Testimony of Otto Steinbrinck, 'Flick Trial', *IMT*, p 358.
- 17.** Keppler refers to their anti-Hitler activities in another letter to Schröder, dated 28 November. Whilst able to report the impasse Papen had reached in trying to reform a new Cabinet under his leadership - 'the mood in the Wilhelmstrasse is said to be very pessimistic and it is therefore lucky that nobody any longer counts on a solution by continuing as at present' - Keppler had less happy news concerning the activities of certain Ruhr industrialists: 'I learn by chance that the Rhine-Westphalian organisation is working strenuously against our movement. They are said to have gone so far as to have carried out espionage in Brown House and to have sent most dangerous reports to the Chancellor and similar places.' Others, however, had remained loyal, for Keppler thanked Schröder for his 'efforts with the gentlemen of the Ruhr establishments. Dr Vögler's letter came at just the right time and has been passed on to Secretary of State Meissner...' (N1211)
- 18.** LD Trotsky, 'Before the Decision' (5 February 1933), *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany* (New York, 1971), p 340.

19. Schleicher's 'social Bonapartism' is well illustrated by his radio broadcast of 15 December, in which he gave a little with his left hand, and threatened to take back a great deal more with his right: 'In view of the undoubted calming down of the situation I have asked the President to suspend the emergency decrees. Relying on the good sense of law-abiding citizens, the President has agreed. In doing so, he let it be known that if his expectations proved wrong, he would not hesitate to enact a severe decree in order to defend the German people. The professional agitators, as well as certain atmosphere-poisoning sections of the press, are warned that such a decree is ready in its pigeonhole for instant use. I hope that its use will be just as unnecessary as bringing in the army. I must however leave the treacherous Communist movement in no doubt that the government will not shrink from using draconian special measures against the KPD, should it abuse this easing of the bridle to increase popular opposition.'

20. *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, 5 December 1932.

21. G Noske, *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Deutschen Sozialdemokratie* (Zurich, 1947), p 311.

22. F von Papen, *Memoirs* (London, 1952), p 217.

23. Von Papen, *Memoirs*, p 217.

24. Schacht, *My First Seventy-Six Years*, p 297.

25. F Thyssen, *I Paid Hitler* (London, 1941), p 138.

26. Thyssen, *I Paid Hitler*, p 142.

27. Keppler was anxious lest past conflicts between the two should poison the atmosphere at the proposed meeting, so he wrote to Schröder on 26 December: 'In consequence of the events of 13 August, which the Führer always took as a personal defeat, his attitude to von Papen was, for a long time, very bad. I have always interceded with him for von Papen and against von Schleicher; the feeling became better with time and he is said to have taken well the recently expressed wish [for a conference]. I hope that your adroitness will succeed in removing the last obstacles to the conference.'

28. Von Neurath, who served under Papen, Schleicher and Hitler, explained his motives for joining Hitler's cabinet to the Nuremberg tribunal: 'The development of party relations in 1932 had come to such a head that I was of the opinion that there were only two possibilities. Either there would have to be some participation of the NSDAP in the government, or should this demand be turned down, there would be civil war.' Neurath revealed that while German Ambassador to Rome in the Weimar era, he overcame his 'initial sharp disagreements' with Mussolini, and their relations developed into one of 'confidence on his part towards me'.

29. Statement of Baron K von Schröder, *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, Volume 2, pp 922-24, emphasis added. Otto Dietrich placed a high value on the importance of Hitler's 4 January meeting with Papen and Schröder. In the car with Hitler after the conference, he 'sensed that... [Hitler] was extremely satisfied with the success of his mysterious mission. We had no idea that on this day our leader had advanced the course of events in Cologne, and had made the moment of decision even more imminent.' (O Dietrich, *With Hitler on the Road to Power* (1954), pp 61-62) Thyssen is equally emphatic on this point: 'Whether... [Hitler] could have succeeded in his legal conquest of the Chancellorship without Papen's help is a matter of speculation. At any rate, the prospects of the party at the time were particularly poor. The Nazis had suffered great losses at the last Reichstag elections... Moreover the secession of Gregor Strasser and his group would have weakened not only the party but the SA organisations. It is certain that huge expenditures had completely exhausted the Nazi Party's funds. This was also the reason why Herr von Papen arranged the meeting between Adolf Hitler and the Cologne banker von Schröder. The party finances, which at that time were threatening to reduce the party to an unbearable position, had to be remedied. Its subsequent success in obtaining the necessary funds was complete.' (Thyssen, *I Paid Hitler*, p 146) And on 17 January, Goebbels observed: 'The financial position has improved all of a sudden.' (Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, p 200)

30. Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, p 194.
31. *Völkischer Beobachter*, 5 January 1933, emphasis added.
32. 'From Papen's Plans to Revive the Economy to Schleicher's Programme', *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 13, no 1, 5 January 1933, pp 5-6.
33. T Neubauer, 'The Schleicher Cabinet on Uncertain Ground', *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 13, no 2, 12 January 1933, pp 32-33.
34. Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, p 198.
35. Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, p 199.
36. This was the agrarian aid programme launched in 1927 to rescue insolvent, mainly small East Prussian farms. In practice, nearly all the vast sums involved were lavished on the Junkers, the biggest landowners of them all. Hindenburg's son Oskar had been prominent in these shady dealings, and this was to prove a useful lever in securing his collaboration with the Nazis in persuading his father to appoint Hitler Chancellor.
37. *The Ribbentrop Memoirs* (London, 1954), pp 22-23.
38. Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, p 200.
39. *The Answers of Ernst von Salamon* (London, 1954), pp 107-08.
40. Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, p 200.
41. T Neubauer, 'Schleicher Plans to Reshuffle Cabinet', *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 13, no 3, 19 January 1933, p 53.
42. *The Ribbentrop Memoirs*, p 23.
43. Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, p 201.
44. T Neubauer, 'Schleicher Plans to Reshuffle Cabinet', *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 13, no 3, 19 January 1933, p 54.
45. H Goering, *Germany Reborn* (London, 1934), pp 111-12.
46. *The Ribbentrop Memoirs*, p 23.
47. Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, p 202.
48. Quoted in *Die Anti-Faschistische Aktion* (East Berlin, 1965), pp 332-34.
49. Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, p 202.
50. As related by M Buber-Neumann, *Von Potsdam nach Moskau* (Stuttgart, 1957), p 294.
51. Buber-Neumann, *Von Potsdam nach Moskau*, p 294.
52. Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, pp 202-03.
53. B Steinemann, 'The National Socialist Parade in Berlin', *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 13, no 4, 26 January 1933, p 89.
54. Dietrich, *With Hitler on the Road to Power*, p 65.
55. *The Ribbentrop Memoirs*, p 23.
56. Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, p 204.
57. Papen, *Memoirs*, p 236.
58. JV Stalin, 'Results of the First Five-Year Plan' (7 January 1933), *Works*, Volume 13, pp 173-74. Stalin conceives of the international class struggle as a debate between the bourgeoisie and proletariat which is being resolved purely within the state frontiers of the USSR: '... the capitalist countries are pregnant with the proletarian revolution, and that precisely because they are pregnant with the proletarian revolution, the bourgeoisie would like to find in a failure of the Five-Year Plan a fresh argument against revolution; whereas the proletariat, on the other hand, is striving to find, and indeed does find, in the success of the Five-Year Plan a fresh argument in favour of revolution and against the bourgeoisie of the whole world.' (p 173) That the survival and development of the Soviet economy does play a beneficial role in the struggle of workers in the capitalist countries is not in dispute.

However, what the theory of socialism in one country does deny is the reciprocal relations of national and world economy, and, with them, the dominant part played by the latter.

59. V Molotov, *Report to Central Committee of CPSU*, 23 January 1933.
60. *The Ribbentrop Memoirs*, p 24.
61. *The Ribbentrop Memoirs*, pp 23-24.
62. Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, p 204.
63. *The Ribbentrop Memoirs*, p 24.
64. Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, p 204.
65. *The Ribbentrop Memoirs*, pp 24-25.
66. *The Ribbentrop Memoirs*, p 25.
67. *The Ribbentrop Memoirs*, pp 25-26.
68. *The Ribbentrop Memoirs*, p 26.
69. Von Papen, *Memoirs*, p 241.
70. E Torgler, Letter, 30 January 1942.
71. *Vorwärts*, 31 January 1933.
72. F Brand, 'Hitler Chancellor of Germany', *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 13, no 5, 2 February 1933, p 118.
73. 'Moscow-Berlin 1933: Interview with an Ex-Insider', *Survey*, no 44-45, October 1962, p 163. 'Ex-Insider' is a former KPD official and staff member of *Pravda*, the CPSU official daily organ.
74. 'Moscow-Berlin 1933: Interview with an Ex-Insider', *Survey*, no 44-45, October 1962, p 163.
75. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Volume 1, pp 6-7, emphasis added.
76. *The Times*, 31 January 1933.
77. *Manchester Guardian*, 1 February 1933.
78. *Manchester Guardian*, 1 February 1933.
79. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Volume 1, pp 15-16.
80. *Vorwärts*, 2 February 1933.
81. *Die Rote Fahne*, 2 February 1933.
82. T Neubauer, 'The Dissolution of the Reichstag', *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 13, no 6, 9 February 1933, pp 149-50.
83. *Vorwärts*, 8 February 1933.
84. 'Ex-Insider', 'Moscow-Berlin 1933', *Survey*, no 44-45, p 164.
85. *Le Petit Journal*, 10 February 1933.
86. *Vorwärts*, 12 February 1933.
87. *Bolshevik*, 15 February 1933.
88. *Unsere Zeit*, 15 February 1933.
89. Liberals and others who might fondly believe that Goering's savagery is attributable to a special 'Germanic' barbarism should be reminded of the words of Colonel Smyth, Divisional Commissioner for Munster at the time of the Irish war of independence. He told his police on 17 June 1920: 'You may make mistakes occasionally, and innocent persons may be shot, but that cannot be helped, and you are bound to get the right parties some time. The more you shoot, the better I will like you, and I assure you no policeman will get into trouble for shooting any man.'
90. JV Stalin, 'Report to Seventeenth CPSU Congress' (26 January 1934), *Works*, Volume 13, pp 308-09, emphasis added. This statement caused great excitement in Berlin, as it was

taken that despite the butchery of German Communists, Stalin still desired friendly relations with Hitler. On 30 January 1934, Hitler gave his answer to Stalin, in a speech to the Reichstag on the first anniversary of the Third Reich: ‘... in spite of the great difference of the two forms of philosophy, the German Reich continued to endeavour in this year [that is, 1933] to cultivate friendly relations with Russia. As Mr Stalin in his last great speech expressed the fear that forces hostile to the Soviet might be active in Germany, I must correct this opinion by stating here that Communistic tendencies or even propaganda would be no more tolerated in Germany than National Socialist tendencies in Russia. The more clearly and unambiguously this fact becomes evident, and is respected by both parties, the easier will be the cultivation of the interests common to both countries.’

91. Goebbels, *My Part in Germany's Fight*, p 223.

92. Goering, *Germany Reborn*, pp 128-33.

93. J Valtin, *Out of the Night* (New York, 1941), pp 403-04.

94. G Hilger and A Mayer, *The Incompatible Allies* (New York, 1953), p 252. Leading German diplomat Gustav Hilger will write later of this cynical episode: ‘... during the first five or six months of Hitler's rule we noted marked efforts at restraint in the Soviet press. While Hitler was rooting out the entire KPD apparatus which Moscow had spent so much care and money to build up, considerations of Soviet foreign policy retained paramount importance in the minds of Russia's leaders to such an extent that willingness to go on with Germany as before was expressed again and again. Such persons as Krestinsky, Litvinov and Molotov went out of their way to assure us that their government had no desire to reorient its foreign policy. The chief of the German Division in the Foreign Commissariat, Stern, went so far as to tell us that the French had more than once asked Moscow to join the free world in its condemnation of the new government of Germany, and still the Soviet press had, in the main, refrained from unfavourable comments.’ (Hilger and Mayer, *The Incompatible Allies*, pp 255-56)

95. *The Times*, 2 March 1933.

96. *Manchester Guardian*, 4 March 1933.

97. *The Times*, 3 and 4 March 1933.

98. *Pravda*, 3 March 1933, emphasis added.

99. W Knorin, ‘The Barometer Indicates Storm’, *Communist International*, Volume 11, no 5-6, 14 March 1933.

100. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Volume 1, p 114.

101. *Pravda*, 7 March 1933.

102. *Izvestia*, 7 March 1933.

103. ‘For a United Front Against Fascism’, ECCI resolution, *Labour Monthly*, Volume 15, no 4, April 1933.

104. *Directives on the United Front*, 18 December 1921.

105. LD Trotsky, ‘The Tragedy of the German Proletariat’ (14 March 1933), *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, pp 375-84.

106. *Manchester Guardian*, 14 March 1933.

107. *Manchester Guardian*, 29 March 1933.

108. ‘The Collapse of Weimar Germany and the Preparation for the German October’, *Communist International*, Volume 11, no 7, 15 April 1933, pp 211-13.

109. 2962-PS.

110. 2962-PS.

111. *Völkischer Beobachter*, 23 March 1933.

112. In a speech delivered to agrarian leaders on 5 April 1933, Hitler is even more candid about the role of the peasantry in raising the Nazis to power: ‘Believe me, the resurgence

which we have just lived through would not have been possible if a part of the people in the countryside had not always been in favour of our movement. It would have been impossible in the cities alone to conquer these starting points which have given us in our action the sanction of legality.’

113. *Manchester Guardian*, 28 March 1933.

114. *The Times*, 25 March 1933.

115. A Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (London, 1943), pp 603-05, emphasis added.

116. Royston Bull, ‘Revolution or Reform’, *Workers Press*, 30 June 1973, p 8, emphasis added.

117. Royston Bull, ‘Casual Labour for the Post Office’, *Workers Press*, 25 August 1973, p 4, emphasis added.

118. Royston Bull, ‘Casual Labour for the Post Office’, *Workers Press*, 25 August 1973, p 4.

119. Royston Bull, ‘Feather Boosts Corporate State’, *Workers Press*, 9 May 1973, p 1.

120. Royston Bull, ‘Feather Boosts Corporate State’, *Workers Press*, 9 May 1973, p 1, emphasis added.

121. M Farrow, ‘Watergate and Revisionism’, *Bulletin*, 5 February 1974, p 7.

122. *Gewerkschafts Zeitung*, 25 March 1933.

123. Statement, 17 November 1945, 2334-PS.

124. 2330-PS.

125. 2330-PS.

126. *Metallarbeiter Zeitung*, 1 April 1933.

127. *Bergbauindustrie*, 18 March 1933.

128. Goebbels, *My Part in Germany’s Fight*, p 223.

129. *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, Supplement B, p 1514, emphasis added.

130. *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, Supplement B, p 1514.

131. Goebbels, *My Part in Germany’s Fight*, p 236.

132. Goebbels, *My Part in Germany’s Fight*, p 245, emphasis added.

133. Goebbels, *My Part in Germany’s Fight*, p 246, emphasis added.

134. *Gewerkschafts Zeitung*, 22 April 1933.

135. All extracts from *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, Volume 3, pp 380-82.

136. *IG Farben Trial*, p 570.

137. Goebbels, *My Part in Germany’s Fight*, p 252.

138. O Dietrich, ‘The End of Marxist Class Struggle’, *NSK*, no 381, 2 May 1933, p 1.

139. O Dietrich, ‘The End of Marxist Class Struggle’, *NSK*, no 381, 2 May 1933, p 2.

140. *Proclamation by the Action Committee for the Protection of German Labour*, 2 May 1933.

141. *Proclamation by the Action Committee for the Protection of German Labour*, 2 May 1933.

142. *Proclamation by the Action Committee for the Protection of German Labour*, 2 May 1933.

143. Statement, 6 October, 1945, *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, p 1517.

144. ECCI, *Guide to the Twelfth Plenum ECCI*, p 66.

145. O Piatnitsky, *The World Economic Crisis, The Revolutionary Upsurge and the Tasks of the Communist Parties* (London, 1933), p 113, emphasis added.

- 146.** *Workers Press*, 9 May 1973, p 1.
- 147.** Piatnitsky, *The World Economic Crisis*, p 120.
- 148.** *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 13, no 21, 12 May 1933, pp 460-61.
- 149.** *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 13, no 23, 26 May 1933, p 502.
- 150.** *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 13, no 24, 2 June 1933, p 521.
- 151.** ‘Revolutionary Trade Union Work under Fascist Terror’, *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 13, no 20, 5 May 1933, p 445.
- 152.** W Pieck, ‘We are Fighting for a Soviet Germany’, *Thirteenth ECCI Plenum Reports*, pp 11-17.
- 153.** *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 13, no 23, 26 May 1933, p 504, emphasis added.
- 154.** *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 13, no 24, 2 June 1933, p 521, emphasis added.
- 155.** LD Trotsky, ‘On the History of the Left Opposition’ (April 1939), *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1938-39)* (New York, 1969), p 62.
- 156.** ‘A New German Party’ (9 July 1933), *Documents of the Fourth International* (New York, 1973), p 53, emphasis added.
- 157.** ‘The Evolution of the Comintern’, *Documents of the Fourth International*, p 125, emphasis added.
- 158.** *The Case of Leon Trotsky* (New York, 1968), p 293.
- 159.** *The Case of Leon Trotsky*, p 311.
- 160.** Cited in C Stern, *Ulbricht* (London, 1965), p 93, emphasis added.
- 161.** *The World Hails the Twentieth Anniversary of the Soviet Union* (Moscow, 1938), p 183.
- 162.** ‘On the Need for a New German Party’, *Documents of the Fourth International*, pp 52-53, emphasis added.
- 163.** LD Trotsky, ‘The Kremlin In World Politics’, *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1938-39)*, p 30, emphasis added.
- 164.** ‘Ex-Insider’, ‘Moscow-Berlin 1933’, *Survey*, no 44/45, October 1962, p 161.

Chapter XXVI: Capital and Labour in the Third Reich

At the doors of the factory a new world begins, a new community. A new spirit. Woe to him who would oppose it. (Dr Robert Ley, Head of the German Labour Front)

The Nazi Third Reich was founded and built on the shattered remains of the German labour movement. On 28 February, Hitler outlawed the KPD. There then followed the suppression of the ADGB trade unions on 2 May, the banning of the SPD on 22 June, and the confiscation of the party's assets on 14 July, the day on which Germany became an official one-party state. ^[1] In a purely formal sense, the economic and political organisations of the bourgeoisie shared a similar though not identical fate. One by one the old capitalist and agrarian parties *voluntarily* wound themselves up (having survived long enough to vote unanimously for Hitler's totalitarian Enabling Act on 23 March), while over a longer time-span, the various regional and national organisations of the employers were 'coordinated' into new Nazi bodies set up to regulate the German economy. Hence the demagogic Nazi claim that the 'people's community' of the Third Reich had transcended narrow 'materialist' class divergences, that all Germans were brought together under a single 'corporate' economic institution - the Labour Front - and organised politically by a single party which was at the same time 'national' and 'socialist' - the NSDAP. Reality was altogether different.

The Enslavement of German Labour

The Nazis were quite systematic in their attack on the German working class. First they isolated, and then pulverised, the vanguard, the Communist workers. Next came the taming of the reformist movement - a comparatively easy task, since millions of Social Democratic workers shared to varying degrees the constitutional and legalist illusions of their leaders. Reassured that the fight against Hitler would begin as soon as the Nazis dared violate the Weimar Constitution, the SPD workers woke up - too late - to discover that their party had been hamstrung and their rights usurped by this very constitution - namely Article 48. The Nazis had therefore not only exploited the leftism of the Stalinists, their refusal to make common cause with the reformists against Hitler; but with equal skill had played on the constitutional illusions of the reformist leaders and workers. Then came the final death blow, the liquidation of the trade unions. Here the Nazis, working through their 'left' agency, the NSBO, used a combination of the stick and the carrot, tempting the ADGB bureaucracy with the illusion of office in the Third Reich, while at the same time intimidating it with SA raids on union property and arrests of leading officials. The threatened general strike never materialised, the finger never pushed the button, and by the evening of 2 May, the last line of defence of the German proletariat lay in ruins. The first goal of the Nazis - and of course, their capitalist allies, namely the atomisation of the working class - had been achieved. From now on there would be only individual acts of defiance which, however heroic, were doomed not only to failure, but to result in the brutal repression of the workers concerned.

But there was no time or cause for the Nazis to bask in the glory of their victory. *Atomisation* had to be followed by *regimentation*, by the total mobilisation of the working class, through both coercion *and propaganda*, on behalf of German imperialism; in the factory, the mine, the mill and the barrack. A bare eight days after the liquidation of the ADGB trade unions, Ley's German Labour Front was launched at a mass rally in Berlin. The fight for the 'soul' as well as the muscle and brain-power of the German worker had begun. On 23 March 1933, in his speech to the newly-elected Reichstag, Hitler declared that one of the most pressing tasks of his government was 'the winning over to the national state of the German workman', while on 16 July of the same year, he again insisted that 'before us there stands the third phase of our struggle, the phase which is decisive for the future... We are faced with the gigantic task of educating the millions who do not as yet in their hearts belong to us.' Here the Nazis would brook no opposition. At a speech in Erfurt two days later, Hitler stated:

We will educate our youths to that which we wish later to see in them, and if there are people here and there who think that they cannot change their outlook, then we will take their children away from them and train them up into that which is necessary for the German people.

Similar ideas were also expressed by Labour Front chief Ley:

We begin with the child when he is three years old. As soon as he begins to think he gets a little flag put in his hand; then follows the school, the Hitler Youth, the SA, and military training. We

don't let him go; and when adolescence is past, then comes the Labour Front, which takes him again and does not let him go till he dies, whether he likes it or not.

So the Nazi leaders were well aware that it was by no means sufficient to destroy the German worker's organisations and to vilify his ideals. Here they proved themselves once again to be far more effective counter-revolutionaries than the old nationalist Right, which could offer the German proletariat nothing more radical or dynamic than Schleicher's 'social Bonapartism' or Papen's 'social Christianity'. Hitler, Ley and Goebbels understood that with the liquidation of the German labour movement and the outlawing of Marxism, new organisations claiming to represent the German worker had to be created, and a bogus 'socialist' and mass-oriented ideology drilled into his consciousness, to render him a passive object in the hands of the employer and the fascist state. This function fell to Ley's Labour Front. Its founding principles were enunciated by him on 10 June in his article 'Fundamental Ideas on Corporate Organisation and the German Labour Front':

The building up of the corporate state will, as a first thing, restore to the natural leader of an enterprise, to the employer, the complete management and thereby also the responsibility. The factory council consists of workers, employees and employers. Nevertheless, it has only an advisory vote. The decision rests with the employer alone. Many employers have for years had to call for the 'master in the house'. [That is, the workers' representatives of the old Weimar works' councils - RB] Now they are once again to be the 'master in the house'. ^[2]

However even in a totalitarian state it was one thing to proclaim such a principle, and another to implement it. As yet, the Labour Front was still largely a bureaucratic shell, a vast army of officers without any troops to lead. Ley therefore had to lean on the plebeians, the 'radicals' of the NSBO, who had their own 'lumpen-socialist' notions of how to run a Nazi 'trade union'. The NSBO 'lefts' were allotted the role of recruiting sergeants for Ley's Labour Front, since only they had actual contacts in the big plants and other concentrations of workers, even though they could justly claim the support of only a tiny fraction of the proletariat. Partly in order to avoid further and futile persecutions, but also on the orders of the underground KPD, hundreds of thousands of workers swarmed into the NSBO, bringing with them a still smouldering militancy that not even the Nazi terror of the previous four months could quench. There were even instances of NSBO officials being pressurised by their non-Nazi members into sanctioning economic strikes, a development which not only alarmed employers (who had after all backed the Nazis precisely to end such practices) but Ley himself. On 27 June 1933, NSBO chief Muchow issued a circular to all Labour Front units warning of 'hidden Marxist sabotage' inside the NSBO. It reported that anti-Nazi resistance amongst the workers was still so strong that SA men were being killed in the streets of Berlin. Of the most recent assassination Muchow said that 'the murderer was a Marxist trade union member' and that 'a few days ago SA men were fired at by Marxists in two other cities of the Reich'. Muchow then quoted a Gestapo report, which claimed that 'an attempt is being made to bring together all "class-conscious" workers who reject fascism. The aim is to keep trade unions as fighting organisations in spite of National Socialist leadership.' The 'trade unions' in question were of course the NSBO and the Labour Front. ^[3]

Muchow then issued the following directives to combat Marxist activities in the plants and the Nazi labour organisations:

1. Expulsion of the last leading Marxists from all units of the associations of the German Labour Front.
2. Therefore no softness, no false belief that we can 'convert' them, since they hate us from the very bottom of their hearts and because Marxist big-wigs [that is, trade union officials] can never be converted...
4. Close observation and a close check on their private activities, for they carry on propaganda against the state under the cloak of honest citizens.
5. Have close observation in the factories... The following orders are issued:

A: For the German Labour Front:

1. The organisation of the German Labour Front is drawing up a 'list of outlaws' which is valid for the entire Reich and in which the names of all these Marxists big-wigs will be included, who have carried on in the past and are still carrying on the most furious secret struggle against National Socialism... Anyone on the 'list of outlaws' will not be given work in the future. All organisations which have any vital connection with German industry are being sent this printed

list, in order to prevent any of these traitors to the workers from returning to the factories by crooked means and possibly continuing their mutinous activity there.

2. No treasurer (or person holding similar office) in the associations may be a Marxist because these people have the greatest opportunity of forming illegal groups.

3. Public places known to have been frequented by the Social Democrats, Reichsbanner and KPD may no longer be used as meeting places of the local group associations...

C: Instructions for NSBO:

The NSBO is above all the security organ of the entire German Labour Front. It has to protect day and night the great work of our slowly progressing unification of all German workers and prevent any kind of sabotage. This is carried out by... keeping a watch on factories, houses and public places which appear suspicious to us, by means of NSBO patrols drawn from the Gau and district party cell divisions and local group factory wardens.

2. Purge of NSBO. The man who was a Marxist only yesterday and fought openly against us, but today will have nothing more to do with it, must also leave. These are nothing but dangerous disruptive elements who poison morale when it comes to a test of endurance. It would be a definite benefit for the NSBO if quite 100 000 of our most recent members leave our ranks. The Gau factory cell leaders must therefore issue orders to this effect...

4. All positions on factory and employee counsellor councils in Germany must be filled by National Socialists. There must be no longer any factory in which Marxists or 'Christians' [that is, former Catholic trade unionists] hold the leading positions. Orders should therefore be given immediately that Communists and Catholic factory or employees' councils who are still holding office should be dismissed... ^[4]

From its very inception, therefore, the Labour Front was a gigantic apparatus for policing the working class, for spying on former trade union and political activists, who when apprehended were invariably sacked from their jobs and handed over to the tender cares of the Gestapo. ^[5] While seeking the aid of the various external security organs of the Third Reich, the Labour Front also developed its own shock force for emergency use against possible acts of rebellion by the workers. This force was the so-called 'Factory Troop', whose functions and make-up were laid down as follows:

1. The Factory Troop is the National Socialist backbone of the factory. Its task is to permeate the factory with National Socialist philosophy. The Factory Troop is the carrier of the factory community and incarnates community life within the factory... It is in the forefront in carrying through the tasks of the German Labour Front. It is the living incarnation of these tasks.

2. The SA will promote the building up of the Factory Troop with all means...

3. Officers and men of the SA who are working in the factory and are members of the German Labour Front are to be made members of the Factory Troop. ^[6]

The formation of the Factory Troop dates from 1936, when following the fiasco of the 1935 factory council elections in which Nazi candidates received so few votes that the results could not be publicised, the regime decided to create an élite of thoroughly reliable fascists in the plants, trained in quelling any disorders that might arise in the course of a labour dispute (strikes were of course outlawed under the Third Reich). Numbering no more than 40 000 party men drawn from the SA and SS, they were drilled in simulated situations of 'mutiny' by the workforce. One account which leaked out of Germany via the 'underground' told of a mock confrontation in one plant between the factory troop and striking workers who had occupied the entrance to the factory. When asked what he would do in such a crisis, a Factory Trooper replied that he would first attempt to negotiate with the strikers. 'Terrible! Impossible!', screamed the instructor:

One lot of you must stand by to protect the machinery. The rest must advance against the crowd in a body. You must shoot without pity. Don't stop to take care of the dead and wounded; the workers themselves will see to that.

This is what Ley meant when he told a meeting of Factory Leaders (that is, employers) and Trustees (regional Labour Front chiefs) in Cologne on 29 June 1937 that 'the Factory Troop is the élite of the factory. It is a troop which follows any order. The best men of the factory, those belonging to the troop, have to stand firm if everything else wavers.' Élite it may have been, but the Factory Troop was not always equal to its task. On the rare occasions when strikes did break out (the bulk of them in the last two

years of the prewar period, when the rising demand for labour in the industry temporarily strengthened the bargaining position of the workers, notwithstanding their total lack of trade unions), ‘heavily armed police and Nazi detachments forced the workers to return to work’.^[7]

The exiled Social Democrat leader Grzesinski tells of some large firms which had their own private police force and jails, citing the Junkers aircraft works in Dessau which ‘for the period 1933-36 arrested and imprisoned 380 employees’, and the IG Farben Leuna chemical works which ‘maintains a huge prison and its own courts to deal with alleged labour offences’.^[8] A serious strike at the Hermann Goering Steel Works in Brunswick in February 1938 precipitated the intervention of a massive strike-breaking force of SA men and Gestapo officials: ‘The workers were forced to line up in the factory yards to witness the execution of five of their comrades accused of leadership in the alleged conspiracy.’^[9]

It would, however, be quite wrong to depict such acts of heroic defiance of the Nazi regime, and the employers whom it protected and enriched, as frequent occurrences. They were not. The Labour Front did a thorough job in assisting the security organs of the Third Reich in stamping out proletarian resistance, and in subordinating the workers to the will of the profit-hungry German industrialists. Anticipating the success of the Labour Front in this sphere, the heavy industrialists’ organ, the *Deutsche Bergwerks Zeitung* of 17 May 1933, declared:

There is only one way out for Germany: that is by the introduction of a much simpler standard of living on the basis of its own agricultural production. Living conditions must be screwed down. That requires nerves, and the Propaganda Ministry must steel itself.^[10]

Not until another six months had passed, however, was Ley ready to promulgate the code for the Organisation of National Labour, which set out the principles and structure of the Nazi ‘works community’. Even when couched in the pseudo-‘socialist’ phraseology obligatory in all such pronouncement, the class nature of Ley’s labour law, and its basis in private property, is self-evident, as the following excerpts demonstrate:

1. In each establishment the *owner* of the undertaking as the *leader (Führer)* of the establishment and the *salaried* and *wage-earning employees* as his *followers* shall work together for the furtherance of the purposes of the establishment and for the benefit of the nation and the state in general.

2.1 The *leader* of the establishment shall make decisions for his followers *in all matters affecting the establishment in so far as they are governed by this Act*.

2.2 He shall promote the welfare of his workers. *The latter shall be loyal to him as fellow members of the works community...*

5.1 In establishments which as a rule employ at least 20 persons, confidential men shall be *appointed* from among the followers to *advise* the leader. Together with him *and under his presidency* they shall constitute the confidential council of the establishment...

6.1 It shall be the task of the confidential council to consider all measures directed towards the increase of efficiency, the formulation and carrying out of the general conditions of employment (especially establishment rules), the carrying out and practice of industrial safety measures, the strengthening of the ties which bind the various members of the establishment to one another and to the establishment, and the welfare of all members of the community. Further, the said council shall endeavour to settle all disputes within the works community. Its views shall be heard before the penalties are imposed under the establishment rules...

8. A person shall not be appointed as a confidential man unless he has completed his twenty-fifth year, has belonged to the establishment or undertaking for at least one year, and has worked in the same branch or related branches of employment for at least two years. He must be in possession of civic rights, a member of the German Labour Front, characterised by exemplary human qualities, *and guaranteed to devote himself unreservedly at all times to the National State...*

9.1 Every year in March *the leader of the establishment* shall draw up a list of confidential men and their substitutes *in agreement with the chairman of the National Socialist cell organisation*. The followers shall then decide for or against the list by ballot.

14.2 The Labour Trustee may remove a confidential man from office on account of his unsuitability in circumstances or person...

18.1 Labour Trustees shall be appointed for large economic areas... They shall be Reich officials and shall be under the service supervision of the Reich Ministry of Labour...

19.1 The Labour Trustees shall ensure the maintenance of industrial peace. In order to achieve this task, they shall take the following action: 1. They shall supervise the formation and operations of the confidential councils, and give decisions where disputes occur...

20.3 Where the system of spreading the work is adopted, *the owner of the undertaking shall be entitled to make a proportionate reduction in the wages or salary of the employees whose hours of work are reduced.*

22.1 If any person repeatedly and wilfully contravenes general instructions issued by the Labour Trustees in writing in the performance of his duties, the said person shall be liable to a fine; *in particularly serious cases the penalty of imprisonment may be imposed instead of the fine or in addition to it...*

26. In every establishment employing as a rule at least 20 salaried and wage-earning employees, establishment rules shall be issued in writing *by the leader of the establishment for the followers.*

27.1 The following conditions of employment shall be included in the establishment rules:

- i. The beginning and ending of the normal daily hours of work and of the breaks.
- ii. The times for the payment of remuneration and the nature thereof.
- iii. The principles for the calculation of jobbing of bargain work, if work is done on a job or bargain basis in the establishment.
- iv. Regulations for the nature, amount and collection of fines if provision is made for them.
- v. The grounds on which an employment can be terminated without notice, in cases where this does not rest upon statutory grounds.
- vi. The utilisation of remuneration forfeited by the unlawful termination of an employment, in cases where the said forfeiture is prescribed in the establishment rules or contract of employment in pursuance of statutory provisions...

36.1 Gross breaches of the social duties based on the work community shall be dealt with by the honour courts as offences against social honour. Such offences shall be deemed to have been committed in the following cases:

- i. When the owner of an undertaking, the leader of an establishment or any other person in a position of supervision abuses his authority in the establishment by maliciously exploiting the labour of any of his followers or wounding their sense of honour.
- ii. When a follower *endangers industrial peace* in the establishment by maliciously provoking other followers and in particular when a confidential man wittingly interferes unduly in the conduct of the establishment or continually and maliciously *disturbs the community spirit within the works community.*
- iii. When a member of the works community repeatedly makes *frivolous and unjustifiable complaints or applications* to the labour trustees or obstinately disobeys instructions given to him in writing.
- iv. When a member of the confidential council reveals without any authority confidential information *or technical or business secrets* which have become known to him in the performance of his duties and have been specified as confidential matters. ^[11]

On every basic issue - hiring and firing, hours of work, method of payment, wages, regulations of work, labour discipline, company policy - the decision rested in the hands of the employer, the 'Leader'. Workers - 'followers' - had only duties. Even the 'confidential councillors' - trusted Nazis all - were permitted only to advise the Leader. Ley was not exaggerating when he claimed that the Third Reich had restored the natural right of leadership to the employer, that he was once again, invoking the old dictum of Alfred Krupp, 'master in the house'.

Since National Socialism sought and established for itself a total monopoly of political power, its rule generated oppositional tendencies at *every* level of society. Old monarchists and various clerical groupings now found themselves excluded from former positions of privilege and influence. But as these oppositional tendencies were directed only at certain aspects of the *political* superstructure of the Third Reich, and never questioned or challenged its capitalist economic foundations, or its repression of the

independent workers' movement, they caused few problems for the Nazi security apparatus. The vast amount of evidence now available proves beyond all doubt that the main brunt of the Nazi tyranny was borne by the proletariat, and that the various sectors of the repressive machine - SS, SA, Gestapo, SD, etc - were engaged for the most part in hunting down and eliminating *working-class* enemies of the regime. This can be demonstrated in several ways, firstly by the sheer size of the Hitler terror apparatus, and the scope of its activities.

At the place of work, there was the Factory Troop, 40 000 strong, and trained purely for policing and indoctrinating the labour force. The SS, responsible for larger-scale internal security operations, numbered 238 000. On the eve of the 30 June 1934 purge, the SA had four million men under its command. In the early weeks and months of the Hitler terror, storm-troopers, and not the SS or the regular state police, were the main force employed to crush the resistance of the workers' movement and staff the first concentration camps. At this time, the SA numbered around one million active members. Then there was the regular police - *Ordnungspolizei* - who on the eve of the Second World War numbered 150 000. Plain-clothes police accounted for another 25 000, and the Gestapo, the political police charged on 8 March 1933 with 'the suppression of Bolshevism', a similar number. Excluding the SA, which after the purge of Röhm ceased to be a factor in German politics, the security forces of the Third Reich numbered on the eve of the war something in the region of half a million men authorised to bear arms or sanction their use. One SS man, policeman or Gestapo official for every 40 or so workers! Under the Weimar Republic, not noted for gentle handling of left-wing militants, *the combined forces of security numbered only 138 000.*

Yet the Stalinists maintained for a full year after Hitler's victory that the bloody rule of fascism in Germany was hastening the triumph of the proletarian revolution!

If we turn to the other, overtly non-coercive organisations which buttressed Nazi rule, we can see even more clearly how the victory of National Socialism in 1933 made possible the construction of a system of dictatorship which not only repressed the proletariat 'from above' in the classic manner of earlier right-wing regimes, but 'from below' and 'from within' through the agencies of propaganda, 'cultural' and social organisations, all of which were not only firmly bound to the NSDAP, but were penetrated at every level by the state security organs of the SS (the SD) and the Gestapo, as well as the regular police. On 25 March 1934, the NSDAP had a payroll of one million officials in its various social and political organisations. By 1 April 1937, this number had risen to 1 852 000, and was comprised as follows: 700 000 political organisation officials, 767 000 Labour Front, 290 000 Nazi 'welfare' organisations employees, 95 000 NSDAP Women's League officials, 77 000 Nazi war veterans' league officials, 67 000 employees of the NSDAP teachers' league. This was of course only the *full-time* Nazi bureaucracy. Radiating out from these officials was a network of *part-time* Nazi activists who carried the directives of the party and state into the masses, and relayed back to the top of the machine information concerning the mood of the workers, the make-up and activities of oppositional groups, and the attitude adopted by workers to the policies and actions of the Nazi leadership. So the chain of command reached down from the Führer himself at the summit, through the various party and state organisations to the block Führer and his informants at the base; while the flow of information passed in the opposite direction, upwards from the working-class tenements, the factory floor and the ale houses, through the same channels to the very top. The Nazi apparatus was all-pervading, no worker could escape its tentacles, its constant prying that through the Hitler Youth reached even into the worker's own family. In Hitler's Reich one Nazi official (and here we are *excluding* the SS, SA, police, Gestapo, etc) watched over 32 German citizens - men, women and children. In the Labour Front, which at its peace-time peak had a membership of 25 million, one official supervised the exploitation of approximately 30 workers. The German worker had not only been deprived of his means of self-defence against the employer, but was permanently atomised and held in subjugation by a machine which had at its disposal the largest and most ruthless repressive force in the history of capitalism.

In all, 1.5 million Germans either passed through or died in Hitler's concentration camps, while at the outbreak of war, 300 000 Germans - the majority of them either Jews or former activists of the workers' movement - were being held in some form of detention centre. It is all the more necessary to spell out these statistics of repression and resistance in view of the slanders peddled around the workers' movement by Stalinists especially that the German proletariat not only failed to block Hitler's road to power, but acquiesced in his rule and gladly shared in the plunder of the Soviet Union and other countries occupied by the Nazis during the war. ^[12] And this from the tendency which, together with the Social

Democrats, actively assisted in the victory of the Nazis! Himmler knew differently. On the day of his appointment (17 June 1936) as joint chief of SS and Police, he declared:

In the course of the last three years various sources have contributed to set up a structure of which only the corner-stone has been lacking. We are a country situated in the heart of Europe with undefended frontiers on every side and surrounded by a world of increasing Bolshevisation. We must therefore reckon that the struggle against the universally destructive force of Bolshevism will be one of the great struggles of human history. *It will require the mobilisation of the entire people* and just as the Wehrmacht is designed for external defence, *I regard it as my task to build up the police, welded into the SS order, as a force for the internal defence of the people.*
[Emphasis added]

Indeed, not only the SS but the entire system of repression personified by Himmler originated and evolved as a direct response to working-class resistance. In a directive issued on 3 March 1933, Goering instructed the Prussian Police as to how to implement the emergency decree issued by the Hitler cabinet after the Reichstag fire:

It is the aim of this decree that the wider powers which it gives should primarily be used against the Communists, but also against those who work with the Communists and who support or further their criminal objectives, even if indirectly. In order to avoid blunders I must point out that actions taken against members or institutions belonging to parties or organisations other than Communist, anarchist or Social Democrat, can only be upheld under the decree for the Protection of the State of 28 February 1933 if they represent a defence against Communist activity in the widest sense.

Armed with these far-reaching powers, the Prussian police, backed up and often excelled in their anti-Communist zeal by the SA, arrested and jailed some 25 000 labour movement activists and officials in the first two months of the emergency. These figures are all the more remarkable in that they do not include the arrests carried out in Berlin itself, nor the many thousands of unofficial seizures of Socialists and Communists made by the SA, which frequently set up its own improvised jails and torture chambers in disused factory buildings or other empty premises. In Düsseldorf, a stronghold of the KPD, 3818 arrests were reported in March and April 1933, while in the sleepy rural police district of Hildesheim, only 77 arrests were reported over the same period. In the whole of East Prussia, police arrests totalled a mere 421 for the first two weeks of the state of emergency, while, in Berlin, thousands were herded into the SA hell-holes within a matter of hours after the Reichstag fire. Rudolf Diels, then head of the Political Department of the Berlin Police, later recalled that the SA:

... had firm plans for operations in the Communist quarters of the city. In those March days every SA man was 'on the heels of the enemy', each knew what he had to do. The SA cleaned up the districts. They knew not only where their enemies lived, they had long ago discovered their hideouts and meeting places... Not only the Communists but anybody who had ever expressed himself against Hitler's movement was in danger... In those March days the concentration camps around Berlin were set up... Private prisons were set up in various parts of the city. The 'bunkers' in the Hedemann and Vosstrasse became hellish torture chambers. The SS Columbia Prison, the worst of these torture chambers, was established. ^[13]

The systematic hunting and persecution of all working-class opposition to the regime continued without a moment's respite to the very last days of the Third Reich. Despite the appalling carnage in the SA and SS abattoirs, new layers of workers repeatedly came forward to replace their arrested and often murdered comrades in the anti-Nazi resistance. ^[14] In the six months between October 1935 and March 1936, 7266 KPD and SPD activists were arrested by the State Police for suspected anti-Nazi views or deeds. Even at the height of Hitler's military triumphs when, it is generally supposed, working-class opposition was at a minimum, the socialist proletariat remained the main target of the Nazi terror. In October 1941, the largest single group of political arrests were of those suspected of 'Communism and Marxism' - 544 - *while no fewer than 7729 were arrested for 'ceasing work'*. Despised as well as feared by the majority of workers, and actively resisted by an heroic minority, the SS found few points of support in the urban population of the big industrial centres. It was in the countryside, amongst the thoroughly Nazified peasantry, that the security forces sought both recruits and collaborators for their task of policing the proletariat. Nazi ruralism was not merely a pagan cult, a residue from Germany's medieval past. It also refracted ideologically the social bases of the Third Reich. Hence the Himmler - Darré doctrine of 'Blood

and Soil', as enunciated by the SS chief in his treatise *The Security Squadron as an Anti-Bolshevik Battle Organisation*, published in 1936:

Wherever Adolf Hitler's peasants stand they will always have the SS at their side, as their most faithful friend, just as we know that wherever Adolf Hitler's SS stands, it will have at its side the German peasant as its best friend and comrade. That is how it is today, and that is how it will be forever. I know there are some people in Germany who become sick when they see those black coats; we will understand the reason for this and do not expect to be loved by too many... We shall take care that never again in Germany, the heart of Europe, will the Jewish-Bolshevistic revolution of sub-humans be able to be kindled either from within or through emissaries from without. ^[15]

Crushed by the sheer weight of the Nazi terror machine, denied access to all except a tiny and steadily declining trickle of socialist literature, bombarded from all sides, from dawn till dusk, by an all-pervading barrage of Nazi propaganda, the mass of the German proletariat lapsed into a passive attitude towards the Nazi regime. In the Weimar Republic, it had been able, despite the false policies of the reformists, and after 1923 of the KPD, to exert considerable influence on the conduct of government social and economic policy through its powerful organisations, and by virtue of the positions it retained in the aftermath of the November Revolution. Now all this was gone. As a subjective factor in the life of the Third Reich, the German proletariat had been reduced to zero. It was now 'represented' by bodies that were led, and staffed from top to bottom, by Nazis whose main goal was the extirpation of the last vestiges of an independent workers' movement in Germany. While it could be argued that the bourgeoisie had also been compelled to cede its political prerogatives to the Nazi plebeians (and this was true only to a certain extent), the proletariat had also lost its most fundamental weapon of defence - the right to organise on an economic level against the exploiter of its labour power. However, the employers *retained their property*, and more than that, now confronted a working class denied the right collectively to negotiate its wages and conditions of work. Truly we can say therefore that German fascism had reduced the proletariat to a state of servitude unprecedented in the entire history of capitalism.

Big Business Prospers

After initial qualms concerning Hitler's plebeian methods in combating the proletariat, almost the entire German business community rallied with genuine enthusiasm to the economic and social policies of the Third Reich. Here at last, after more than 13 years of Weimar 'Marxism', was a government ready - and able - to restore to property its just rights, and real authority to 'personality' in the direction of the enterprise. On the morrow of Hitler's appointment as Chancellor, the old imperialist-oriented bloc between the armed forces and heavy industry was already in evidence with the drafting by Admiral Raeder of the document *General Directives for Support Given by the German Navy to the German Armament Industry* (31 January 1933):

The effects of the present economic depression have led here and there to the conclusion that there are no prospects of an active participation of the German Armaments Industry abroad, even if the Versailles terms are no longer kept. There is no profit in it and it is therefore not worth promoting. Furthermore the view has been taken that the increasing 'self-sufficiency' would in any case make such participation superfluous. However obvious these opinions may seem, formed because the situation is as it is today, I am nevertheless forced to make the following corrective points:

- a. The economic crisis and its present effects must perforce be overcome sooner or later. Though equality of rights in war-politics is not fully recognised today, *it will, by the assimilation of weapons, be achieved at some period...*
- b. The consequent estimation of the duties of the German Armaments Industry lie mainly in the Military-Political sphere. It is impossible for this industry to satisfy, militarily and economically, the growing demands made of it by limiting the deliveries to our own armed forces. The capacity must therefore be increased by the delivery of supplies to foreign countries over and above our own requirements...
- d) *... It is just when the effort to do away with the restrictions imposed on us has succeeded that the German Navy has an ever-increasing and really vital interest in furthering the German Armaments Industry, and preparing the way for it in every direction in the competitive battle against the rest of the world...*

f) I attach particular importance to guaranteeing the continuous support of the Industry concerned by the Navy, even after the present restrictions have been relaxed. If the purchases are not made, confident that something special is being offered them, the industry will not be able to stand up to the competitive battle and therefore *will not be able to supply the requirements of the German Navy in case of need.* ^[16]

The reader will recall that Gustav Krupp was among the largest contributors to the Nazi election fund at the meeting of industrialists held at Goering's official residence on 20 February. Two days later, Krupp sent a memo to Hitler in which he declared that 'it is also our opinion that only in a politically strong and independent state can economy and business develop and flourish'. ^[17]

Krupp aspired to the same position of leadership over the German economy that Hitler exercised in the political domain. On 24 March, following the passage of the Enabling Act, Krupp again wrote to Hitler, informing him that his firm considered that after years of political crisis and turmoil, Germany now had 'the basis for a stable government. Difficulties which arose in the past from constant political fluctuations and which obstructed economic initiative to a high degree, have been eliminated'. A meeting between Hitler and Krupp followed on 1 April, and three days later the Ruhr tycoon wrote to his Führer:

I wish to express my gratitude to you for the audience you granted me on Saturday... I welcomed this opportunity all the more because I am aware now of new and important problems which, as you will understand, I shall be able to handle in my capacity as chairman of the Federation of German Industries only if I am sure of the confidence of the Reich government, and in particular, of your confidence in me.

Numerous industrialists - among them those who had supported the party before its assumption of power - were eagerly financing various Nazi organisations, among them Rosenberg's Anti-Bolshevik Bureau. Kurt Lüdecke was present at a meeting held in the Kaiserhof towards the end of April to raise funds for Rosenberg's anti-Communist crusade.

There they were - the élite of leading Gentiles in industry, commerce, finance, agriculture, shipping and banking... I saw... the irony of our readiness to mobilise the very force against which the socialist aims of the Nazi revolution were to have been directed... Here we were... trying to make a revolution with the help of our enemies. ^[18]

The assembled business leaders 'listened with close attention' to Rosenberg's speech, which they greeted with 'genuine applause'. Lüdecke, backed up by Schacht and Diehn of the Potash Trust, appealed for cash for Rosenberg's Jew- and Communist-baiting activities, and 'right there over a million marks were underwritten'. ^[19] Schacht was by this time of course safely installed as President of the *Reichsbank*, his predecessor Luther having declined to underwrite the expansionist and potentially inflationary economic policies desired by Hitler and the leaders of heavy industry. Schacht's return gladdened the hearts of big business, as did his address to *Reichsbank* officials on 31 April:

I recognise no National Socialist representatives, I recognise no *Stahlhelm* representatives, I recognise no other varieties of representatives of the officials... When I speak to you as President of the *Reichsbank*, I am neither a SA man nor a *Stahlhelm* man, but a *Reichsbank* man... Having thus got rid of the 'party stuff' I can say all the more frankly that I too, as leader of the *Reichsbank*, avow from the bottom of my heart my devotion to the leader of the German Reich, Adolf Hitler... To any doubt that may exist concerning the devotion of the *Reichsbank* to the new Movement I can give you a crushing answer: That everybody in the Directorate is clear on the point that, if this Movement does not win, then chaos will reign here...

Meanwhile Krupp was busily consolidating his new relationship with the rulers of the Third Reich. Following a second conference with Hitler on 28 April, it was announced on 4 May that Krupp had been appointed *Führer* of German industry. He wasted little time in introducing a Nazi-style regime in the Federation of German Industries, compelling the few remaining Jewish members of its board to resign on 22 May. Krupp also instituted a special political fund for the Nazi Party to which he and fellow industrialists could contribute - the Hitler *Spende*. The *Führer* cult was enforced on Krupp's own work force, who were obliged on pain of dismissal - and worse - to salute their leader in the approved Nazi style whenever Krupp appeared in his plants. Apart from his position as chief of the Federation of German Industries (which, unlike the trade unions, remained 'uncoordinated' after the action of 2 May), Krupp also assumed the leadership of the General Economic Council established on 15 July 1933,

following the conference between Hitler and his new Economics Minister Kurt Schmitt two days previously. ^[20] In the words of Schacht, Krupp had become a 'super-Nazi'.

One of the outcomes of the Schmitt-Hitler meeting of 13 July was that wages policy became the joint prerogative of the Ministry of Economics and the Ministry of Labour. Nazi 'radicals' favouring a more lenient policy were debarred from taking any decisions affecting wage rates, and, in the case of Otto Wagener, interned in a concentration camp for six weeks to cool his 'leftist' ardour. The wages division of the Labour Ministry (the Minister being Franz Seldte, former *Stahlhelm* chief and now a fully-blown Nazi) was headed by Dr Werner Mansfeld, former legal adviser to the Ruhr steel employers' association. This post he held until 1942. Samples of his activities in the early years of Nazi rule include the following wage cuts approved in 1934 by the Labour Trustees responsible for the regions concerned: Frankfurt metal workers: 25 per cent, Leipzig painters: 6.3 per cent, Cologne carpenters: 20 per cent, Karlsruhe builders: 5.6 per cent.

A little earlier, on 1 June, the Hitler regime had launched its drive to revitalise German industry by a programme of public works and aid to private firms willing to expand production. This was the law 'for the reduction of unemployment' which, despite its title, had as its central aim the restoration of the chronically low profit margins of Germany's largest monopolies. It stipulated that the projected one billion RM should be spent 'only on such works... as are economically worthwhile and which the proprietor could not carry out with his own financial resources in the foreseeable future'. Tax exemptions were granted to firms, equal to the cost of newly-installed plant, if the new equipment was 'of domestic production' and purchased between 30 June 1933 and 1 January 1935; that it replaced plant 'hitherto operative'; and that its installation and use did not lead to a reduction of workers employed. Expansion of the economy, aided not only by Hitler's public works and rearmaments programme, but the world-wide upturn in trade and industry, could now take place without the employers having to concern themselves with the problem, ever-present under Weimar, of the trade unions exploiting an increased demand for labour by stepping up their claims for higher wages. The fascist system of 'labour relations' ensured that a far greater proportion of the product of labour would now accrue to capital in the form of dividends and capital accumulation than had been the case in the 13 years of the 'social' German Republic. Hitler aired his own views on economic policy when on 13 July he told a meeting of Gauleiters in Berlin that while the party had been 'bound to conquer political power rapidly and with one blow, in the economic sphere, other principles of development must carry the day'. In other words, political, but not economic revolution:

Here progress must be made step by step, without any radical breaking up of existing conditions which would endanger the foundations of our economic life. The exploitation of the capacities of the individual has made us great, and only by the same means can our great work of reconstruction be successful.

Hitler's remarks were directed against unruly elements in the SA which had so extended the scope of their assault on the enemies of the regime as to include businessmen previously unsympathetic to the Nazi cause. Hitler had no intention of permitting these 'radicals' (who were in most cases inspired by criminal and not 'social' motives when they looted the property of anti-Nazi employers and shopkeepers) to undermine his harmonious relationship with the leaders of big business. They needed him - and he needed them.

Nevertheless it is important to bear in mind that until the liquidation of the Nazi 'lefts' in the purge of 30 June 1934, business circles still harboured fears that for all his innate economic conservatism, Hitler might have to yield - if only for tactical reasons - to the strident demands of his 'radicals' for firm action against the 'profiteers' and 'stock exchange bandits'. Important government pronouncements on social and economic policy were therefore awaited with some trepidation by the leaders of industry and finance, and it was with evident relief that the bourgeois press (which, unlike that of the workers' movement, continued to function - in some cases with little or no changes in editorial policy - under Nazi rule) greeted the statement of Economics Minister Schmitt of 14 August: 'We must see to it that we, through a free market, have an efficient economy capable of competing on the market.' His definition of 'German socialism' held no qualms for the die-hard anti-socialists of the Ruhr and the Berlin Bourse: 'Everyone in his place gives the uttermost to his people and for the community.' Krupp and company knew their place - leaders of the economy - and Hitler had put the workers in theirs - humble followers of their employers. The *Deutsche Bergwerks Zeitung* could barely conceal its joy at Schmitt's definitions of 'German socialism' and Nazi economic policy:

The works must be profitable! A happy word which the National Minister of the Economy spoke... It is a particular pleasure to us that the programme of the Minister corresponds in every way to that which our paper had demanded ever since it existed. What the NSDAP understands by German socialism is nothing else than that everyone in his place gives up his all for his people. In the sign of this German socialism we will conquer. ^[21]

The *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* waxed no less enthusiastic:

The general despondency of the world depression can, in fact, only be overcome when the foundation is once again given to disturbed mankind, one on which it can base a secure calculation. This is the meaning of our new economy, that personal needs are subordinate, but these personal needs have their rights which lie precisely in this subordination. This is the meaning of the economic elbow-room in the Schmitt programme. ^[22]

Further reassurance as to the intentions of the Nazi regime in economic policy came at the Nuremberg Party Congress in September, when no less an authority than Hitler himself declared that the same principles of leadership and 'personality' applied in the factory as they did in the state:

The conception of private property is inseparably connected with the conviction that the capacities of men are different alike in character and in value, and thus, further, that men themselves are different in character and value. But one cannot in one sphere of life accept this difference in value... as giving rise to a moral claim on the result produced by this superiority [that is, wealth] and then go on to deny that difference in another sphere... One cannot in fact proceed to maintain that all alike have the same capacity for politics... while it is denied that everyone in a nation is capable of administering a factory or appointing its administration, yet that they are all capable of administering the state or of appointing its administration is solemnly certified in the name of democracy... ^[23]

Those hardest to convince that National Socialism contained no threat to their interests were the bankers and stock-exchange investors. For had not the original Nazi programme of 1920 promised 'abolition of incomes unearned by work' and 'the abolition of the thralldom of interest'? In fact nothing less than the death penalty awaited those judged guilty of the crimes of usury and profiteering. Understandably therefore, Germany's banking and stock-broking community followed the activities of economic 'radicals' like Feder with more than an academic interest. It must have been heartened by Schmitt's pronouncement of 14 August (from which we have already quoted) in which he said:

Capital is scarce because it does not trust itself anywhere, neither in business undertakings and contracts nor in the capital market itself. Why? Because disquiet prevails on account of the many theoretical discussions on the question of the 'compulsory reduction of interest' and God knows what else. If we could really tranquillise the capital market and really make our people believe that an investment in Germany is not imperilled, then the thrifty man and the man with money will be ready to go into the market, and that will automatically bring down interest rates.

And so the debate continued, with the 'radicals' (representing for the most part those sections of the party closest to the pauperised small traders, artisans and peasants strangled by the banks) demanding the nationalisation of banking, and the spokesmen of high finance insisting on an orthodox capitalist policy. Thus the Nazi *Hamburger Tageblatt* screamed: 'We are going to jump at the throat of international loan capital!', ^[24] while the organ of finance capital, the *Berliner Börsen Zeitung* countered 10 days later:

The owner of capital has only one thing in view - to preserve his capital and to get as high an interest as possible, and this attitude of investors has to be respected by every bank in its credit policy whether it wants to or not. ^[25]

The issue was finally resolved - needless to say, in favour of big banks - by the official inquiry into the state of German banking held in November 1933. Some weeks before it opened, however, Feder, the exponent of Nazi pseudo-radicalism in the economic sphere (it was he who had drafted the clause in the 1920 party programme calling for the abolition of the 'thralldom of interest'), was already in full retreat. On 6 September, he declared in Cologne that a 'strong rank of private bankers has always been the desire of the National Socialists', and that far from the regime seeking the nationalisation of the banks, the party would 'have to investigate the question as to the way in which the banks which are subsidised by the state [that is, after the banking crisis in the summer of 1931 - RB] can be re-transferred into private hands'. And giving evidence at the inquiry itself on 23 November, Feder once again had to eat his words of 1920: 'The National Socialists have never demanded an absolute nationalisation of banking.' The hearings were

completed in five hours, and the policy and rights of the big banks upheld. There was to be no nationalisation of the banks. And of almost equal importance, 'the representatives of the banks will not leave the industrial Boards of Directors... the private economic initiative is not to be limited but rather to be strengthened'. [26]

The verdict of the Berlin bank inquiry enraged the more extreme of the Nazi 'radicals'. One of their number, Adolf Wagner, thundered in a speech at Wasserburg on 19 January:

Many things are going on as if the Nazi revolution had never taken place. Cut-throats are still in control of the banks. Under the cover of the slogan 'No interference with economic life is permitted', the vermin are now venturing to show themselves once again. National Socialism cannot tolerate these things...

To which Schacht replied forcefully a week later, in a speech delivered at the Kiel Institute for World Economy:

It is senseless to adopt an attitude fundamentally against capital... Loan capital is of service and payment of interest necessary if loan capital is to be employed... Formation of new loan capital requires the most careful handling. The most inappropriate method is the constant abuse of loan capital and the threatening of its owners... The imputation that the National Socialist government... has not yet been even able to stop cut-throats and parasites from making themselves felt in German banking seems to me, with all my understanding of demagogues, a bit too thick... All the same, the *Reichsbank* has managed to raise the price level of all stocks at fixed interest on the Berlin stock exchange by 13 per cent in the first 12 months of the National Socialist government.

The petit-bourgeois 'anti-capitalists' fulminated, but to no effect. It was Schacht, and not they, whom Hitler now needed most.

The last word belonged, fittingly, to Schacht. In tones that presaged the 30 June purge of Röhm's 'second revolutionists', the *Reichsbank* President declared on 22 February:

I am in the pleasant position that I can declare clearly that any arbitrary measures are far from the thoughts of the government. In spite of all literary gentlemen, and in spite of all schemers, you may rest assured that this government will make no experiments in the financial sphere.

The Nazi regime proved itself zealous not only in the defence but even the restitution of private property. In its first three years, it resorted, either in part or wholly, to private ownership the state's majority holding in the Flick United Steel Works, the Deutsche Bank and Disconto Gesellschaft (Deli-Bank), the Commerz and Privat Bank, the Silesian iron and steel concern Vereinigte Oberschlesische Huttenwerke, the Hamburg-Sudamerikanische Dampferschiffahrts AG, and the Deutsch Schiffs-und-Maschinenbau AG. Such state enterprises as existed functioned in the non-profit-making spheres of railway transport, water, gas, electricity and postal services. State investments in 1938 accounted for a mere 1.6 per cent of all capital holdings in the mining industry, and 0.41 per cent in metals.

With the consolidation of the Labour Front, the old pre-Nazi organisations of big business and the various regional and industrial bodies set up to administer its affairs were formally wound up. But very quickly they reappeared in the guise of Nazi 'National Economic Chambers' - often without any substantial change in either their functions or leading personnel. Thus to cite one example, the old Machine Tool Manufacturers Association, the VDW, was 'coordinated' in 1934 to become the Fachgruppe Werkzeuge without any change in its leadership. Likewise the Association of Machine Manufacturers underwent the same transformation into another Nazified division of the National Group Industry, the Wirtschaftsegruppe Maschinen, with its chairman Lange becoming the director of the new organisation. Two years later, when Goering launched his 'Four-Year Plan', Lange served as his plenipotentiary for machine production, and later still, under Minister for Arms Production Albert Speer, as chairman of the committee for machine-tool production. 'Coordination' for industrialists such as Lange clearly meant business as usual - under a new name. For trade union leaders such as Leipart and Grassman, it involved the destruction of their organisations and a term inside the jails of the Third Reich.

One of the most pressing tasks the new Nazi regime had to solve was the problem of capital accumulation. This it did by two basic means; firstly, through a programme of public works (road building, land reclamation, etc) and rearmament, and secondly, by the reduction in the real wages of the mass of the workforce, through direct wage-cutting, the erosion of social benefits, pensions, etc, and an increase in various kinds of taxes. Schacht's novel system of deficit spending involved the establishment

of a corporation, at the instigation of the government, by four large industrial undertakings - Siemens, Krupp, Gutehoffnungshutte and Rheinstahl. This concern, the Metal Research Company, had no function other than to serve as a holding company for the state's contracts with private concerns. All suppliers of state orders tendered their bills on the Metall-Forschungs AG, which became known as Mefo-Bills. These bills were as good as cash - better even, since the *Reichsbank* not only undertook to exchange them for ready cash, but the bills themselves earned their holders four per cent interest per annum. The Third Reich's prewar arms programme was financed largely through the Mefo-Bill system, which after four years of operation, had pumped an extra 12 milliard RM into the German economy. The device only became inflationary in 1938 when, with the achievement of full employment, the expansion in industrial production slackened off whilst the volume of paper money in circulation continued to increase at its former rate.

Schacht's financial juggling would have been to little avail if the working class had been permitted, by dint of militant trade union struggle, to share in the increased volume of production through an appreciable rise in its real wages and general living standards. The destruction of the entire workers' movement, and the establishment of the tyranny of the Labour Front, the SS, Gestapo and the death camps were therefore a *precondition* for any serious revival of the German economy. Wage rates, hours and other conditions of work, pensions, accident and sickness insurance, unemployment benefit - all had been removed from the zone of negotiation between organised labour and capital, and subjected to the directives of the Nazi state and the interests of big business. Under Brüning and Papen, it will be remembered, wages had been progressively reduced by Presidential decree, until on the eve of the Nazi seizure of power, they averaged around 70 per cent of their pre-Brüning (that is, 1929) levels. What the Nazis did was to take these abysmally low wage levels as the *starting point* for a new round of wage cutting, rendered all the more easy now that all organised working-class opposition to such a policy had been crushed. ^[27] The following table indicates the main grades of wage payments in the period between 1928 and 1938, the last full peacetime year.

Pfennigs Per Hour				
Year	Male Skilled	Male Unskilled	Female Skilled	Female Unskilled
1928	95.9	75.2	60.3	49.8
1932	81.6	64.4	53.1	43.9
1933	78.5	62.5	51.7	43.4
1934	78.3	62.2	51.6	43.3
1935	78.3	62.2	51.6	43.4
1936	78.3	62.2	51.6	43.4
1938	79.0	62.6	51.5	44.0

The reader might object that after 1934, the wage rates stabilise and then begin to rise slowly. This is of course correct, but it leaves out of account several other vital factors which, together with hourly rates, comprise the *real* wage of the worker. Firstly it is necessary to give the gross weekly earnings of the worker, which vary according to the hours worked. With the upturn in the economy, short-time working fell off, resulting in a steady increase in gross weekly earnings, as the table indicates:

Amount (in RM)	
1932	22.88
1933	21.88
1934	22.83
1935	24.04
1936	25.25
1937	26.50

Now we have to offset against this increase in gross weekly wages the rise in the cost of consumer prices over the same period, the extra deductions from the worker's wage packet imposed by the new regime, and finally the reductions in living standards brought about by the diminution of other sources of income and material welfare through cuts in social services of various kinds. Firstly there are the prices of consumer goods, which rose from an index of 111.7 in 1933 to 135.4 by 1938. Then looking at the wages bill of the German labour force as a whole, we see the following changes taking place in the six years of Nazi rule between 1933 and 1938:

(Milliard RM)	Gross wages	Additions	Deductions	Net
1932	26.0	2.8	3.0	25.8
1938	42.7	0.4	9.8	33.3

Whereas in 1932, deductions (taxes, etc) and additions (various benefits, pensions, etc) nearly balanced one another, by 1938, the difference amounted to 9.4 milliard marks. The balance accrued to the state, which in turn employed the funds thus filched from the pay-packets of the workers to finance the rearmament programme. These were the cold statistics of Goering's slogan 'guns before butter'. It was inevitable, given the rise in the prices of basic foodstuffs and other consumer items, and the sharp increase in the amount deducted from the worker's wages, that *real* wages, as distinct from *money* wages, should fall, declining from a base of 100 in 1932 to 87 by 1937.

Nazi social policy was no less harsh in its systematic neglect of the basic human needs of a worker and his family. And it is scarcely surprising to find that the Third Reich, with its official ideology of the struggle for survival and the elimination of the 'weakest' and 'biologically inferior', had no regard for the sick, the maimed, the aged, the handicapped or the bereaved. As one of the pioneers of National Socialist social 'ethics', the geneticist Friedrich Lenz, expressed it so clearly:

The naive assumption that all men have equal rights, from a moral point of view, belongs to an individualistic doctrine... There could be no greater fallacy than the belief that human nature abhors war - the exact contrary is true... socialist ideas must be made to bear fruit but in the organically socialistic rather than in the individually-socialistic sense... The state is not there to see that the individual gets his rights, but to serve the race.

Drawing on these barbaric prejudices which were made one of the foundation stones of the social policy of the Third Reich, the 1933-34 study syllabus for the SS and State Police forces declared:

It is an untenable position when the relationship between the efficient and the ineffective in a state assumes an unhealthy form. The nation has to spend a great deal of energy and money in dealing with the feeble-minded, the criminal and the anti-social. If these examples of poor heredity were eliminated, *large sums of money would be saved and could be diverted to other, more productive ends*. A responsible state leadership should devote all its attention to plans for maintaining and increasing those of sound stock. In primitive societies, *the community rids itself of its weaklings*. In so-called civilised nations a false attitude of brotherly love... operates in direct opposition to the selective process. [Emphasis added]

Though couched in the language of Himmler's racial mysticism, this was also a philosophy that directly served the interests of a German big business hungry for capital and none too particular as to where it came from, or who suffered or died in the process of its accumulation. All along the line, the Third Reich slashed pensions and other social payments while stepping up workers' contributions to various government and party funds. The following are the sums expended on pensions between 1932 and 1937:

In millions of RM						
Year	Sickness	Old age	Widows	Sick Widows	Orphans	Total
1932	4.2	13.4	141.4	0.5	58.6	218.0
1933	3.6	10.5	130.4	0.4	48.2	193.1
1934	3.4	9.1	135.8	0.4	47.7	196.1
1935	3.3	7.8	141.4	0.3	44.4	197.3

1936	3.1	6.7	146.2	0.3	40.9	197.3
1937	2.9	5.5	151.3	0.3	38.3	198.3

Over the same period, it should be noted, social insurance *payments* increased by over 40 per cent - from 3.3 milliard marks in 1932 to 4.7 milliard in 1937.

Likewise with accident insurance. In the period between 1932 and 1937, industrial accidents per 1000 workers increased from 33.9 to 56.5, the bulk of this rise being due, obviously, to a lowering of safety standards and an intensification of the work tempo. The instances on which compensation was paid to the victims of industrial accidents, however, declined over the same period from 3.6 per 1000 workers in 1932 to 3.0 in 1937, while the percentage of accidents compensated fell from 11.0 per cent in 1932 to 5.0 per cent in 1937. In the first seven years of the Third Reich, accidents and illness at work increased 150 per cent from 929 000 cases to 2 253 000, fatal accidents from 217 to 525 (250 per cent up) and occupational diseases from 7000 to 23 000 (more than 300 per cent up). All these increases must be measured against a rise in the total industrial labour force over the same period of only 50 per cent; from 13.5 to 20.8 million.

The Nazi counter-revolution in social and labour policy paid a handsome dividend to big business. In the first year of Hitler's rule, the wages bill of Krupp AG fell from 69.6 to 67.4 million RM, while the number of workers employed rose by 7762. IG Farben paid out only 1.5 per cent more in wages for a labour force 35 per cent larger. Such savage cuts in real wages reflected the dramatic changes taking place in the distribution of the national product between labour and capital. Investment accounted for a mere nine per cent of national income in 1932, *whereas in 1937, this percentage had risen to 23*. But investment had only risen because the rate of surplus value had been increased by wage-cutting, the lengthening of the working day, speed-up, etc. In 1932, 59.8 per cent of the national income fell to labour, and 19.1 per cent to owners of capital. In 1937, labour's share had fallen to 52.2, while *that of capital had risen to 28.0*. And this was not only the result, but the *intention* of Nazi economic and social policy. ^[28]

For years the Nazis had campaigned as defenders of the 'small man' against the combined attacks of the giants of big business and organised labour (as indeed do today's Liberals, though in a different manner). But once installed in office, Hitler proved himself a far more loyal and understanding ally of big business than any government of the Weimar Republic. Organised labour was indeed crushed, but the monopolies went from strength to strength, buying out and bankrupting their smaller rivals and establishing intimate links with the various state agencies responsible for arms contracts and public works undertakings. This ascendancy of big business can be demonstrated graphically. The number of bankruptcies increased from 19 164 in 1933 to 28 816 four years later. *And this sharp increase occurred during a period of constant and rapid economic expansion*. Then in 1937 the Nazi government introduced a law which further accelerated this trend towards monopoly concentration, stipulating that all corporations had to have a paid-up share capital of at least 500 000 RM, whereas previously the lower limit had been 50 000 RM. Unless the corporations in question met this requirement by 1940, their assets would be seized and sold off - at bargain prices we can be sure - to the monopolies. And so we find the average size of the German corporation rising from 2 256 000 RM in 1933 to 3 069 000 RM in the year of the new law, and then to 5 378 000 RM by 1942.

The one-sided, mainly arms-oriented expansion of the German economy under Hitler meant that capital accumulation, both in the private sector and through various fiscal and monetary measures, favoured heavy industry and transport as against the traditional mass supporters of National Socialism, the small-propertyed petit-bourgeoisie of town and country. The proportion of total investments accruing to traders and artisans in the Weimar slump year of 1932 was greater than in the Nazi boom year of 1938: ^[29]

Investment (million RM)					
Sector/Year	1928	1932	1933	1934	1938
Administration, transport	4590	1705	2180	4050	9800
Agriculture	245	550	600	725	1000
Industry	2615	440	555	1070	3300
Artisan, trade	1680	550	650	850	1000

Total investment	9060	3245	3985	6675	14 300
------------------	------	------	------	------	--------

Nazi wages and social policy not only made possible the rapid accumulation of new capital, but ensured that in the sectors of production most favoured by the Reich and determined by its imperialist goals, profits rose steadily year by year. Dividends of the joint stock companies soared from 379 RM in 1932-33 to 800 RM by 1936-37. Total profits were of course far higher, since dividends were limited by law to six per cent; a measure expressly designed to facilitate capital accumulation in the form of retained profits.

On the other hand, Nazi wages policy inevitably led to a depression in consumer demand, and this had its repercussions in the sales of firms dependent upon it. Food production, for example, increased hardly at all under Nazi rule (while the calorific and nutritional content of the worker's diet actually declined). Sales of the industrial trusts however surged ahead:

Sales (millions of RM)				
Company/Year	1932	1934	1937	1939
Bavarian Motor Works	10.7	20.7	23.2	32.5
Krupp	116.0	192.0	316.6	395.0
IG Farben	470.0	565.0	535.0	786.0
Mannesmann	45.4	64.9	121.3	150.2
United Steel Works	-	105.6	193.0	220.0
AEG	142.1	141.5	226.4	266.5
Siemens	298.2	306.0	525.0	574.0

It was therefore with complete justification that a Nazi economic correspondent wrote in 1937:

Most companies have enjoyed huge profits during the last few years on account of measures taken by the National Socialist government. Profits have been high because wages and salaries have remained stationary. ^[30]

The redistribution of the national income in favour of the largest property owners and employers of labour power, already strongly in evidence in the Weimar Republic and accelerated by the rationalisation movement of 1925-26, continued in the Third Reich unhindered by the radical rhetoric of the Nazi 'lefts'. *Der Reichswart*, edited by the old north German 'National Bolshevik' von Reventlow raged impotently:

How many comrades believe that capitalist slavery and exploitation have been overcome when on their demonstrations they pass the Stock Exchange building, when they read about the dividends paid by different companies, and when they realise through their own miseries how this criminal commercial spirit ruins everything. ^[31]

But this 'criminal commercial spirit', though it may have been the ruin of Reventlow's reactionary anti-capitalist utopia, was the backbone of the Third Reich's economy. Without the giant trusts, there could be neither *Wehrmacht*, *Luftwaffe* nor Navy, and all the Nazi leaders without exception knew it. Colonel Georg Thomas, Chief of the War Ministry's Economic Department, and a close *confidant* of big business, declared in April 1936:

State ownership of armaments might be justified for Italy. It does not suit Germany. We want to mobilise the full strength of the highly-developed German economy. The more that factories producing peacetime goods can be put onto a wartime footing, the more efficient will be the German war economy. We do not want to abolish the private initiative of the German entrepreneur. The national economy must be in the hands of businessmen. I regard it as essential that the supply of foodstuffs, industry, commerce, raw materials, production, foreign trade, the financial system, transport, and the work of the Labour Ministry should be centralised in one hand in case of emergency.

This 'one hand' was not the Nazi Party, least of all its aristocratic *dilettantes* such as Reventlow. Thomas was arguing in favour of the *Reichsbank* performing the task of centralising the economy in its preparations for war.

Sitting with Schacht on the Central Committee of the *Reichsbank* were 15 representatives from the private banks, six from state banks, five agrarians, two representatives of heavy industry, one each from the chemical and electrical industries, two manufacturers, two wholesalers and two state officials, one of whom was a representative of the NSDAP. Since the interests and objectives of finance capital and the Nazis coincided on the main strategic issues of enslaving the working class and preparing for imperialist war, the Hitler government had no motive for intervening, directly and consistently in the running of the German economy. What the Nazi leadership demanded and clung onto was their monopoly of political power. In the words of Hitler himself:

... the new state will not be and does not want to be an entrepreneur. Planned economy must be rejected from the point of view of rearmament. We insist upon free initiative and full responsibility of the entrepreneur in accordance with the general policy of the state.

Even Goebbels' *Der Angriff* did not dare demur:

Germany, in contrast to other states, does not want to nationalise the armaments industries because National Socialist economic policy has other means of guaranteeing the correct management in these politically important concerns. ^[32]

Monopoly concentration relentlessly ground down the small and medium-size firms. The number of corporations fell from 11 690 in 1928 to 5518 in 1938, while those with a share capital of more than five million RM dropped by far less, from 750 to 616. Inevitably, the share of these firms in the total capital owned increased over the same period, from 55.8 per cent in 1928 to 74.6 per cent in 1938. The total number of firms of all types fell by nine per cent in the first five years of Nazi rule, from 362 000 to 320 000. Some sectors of small trade and artisan manufacture were especially hard hit by this trend towards concentration and the Nazi emphasis on heavy industry. The net decrease in the number of handicraft firms in 1936 was 27 875, in 1937, 62 573, and in 1938, 62 942. Only four departments of small trade and handicraft recorded an increase in the number of enterprises as compared with the Weimar Republic. In the period between 1926 and 1939, the number of plumbers per 100 000 of population rose from 16.6 to 16.9, that of electricians from 9.6 to 15.9, house-painters from 30.1 to 33.5 and barbers from 20.7 to 28.4. Elsewhere there were declines: smiths, 20.7 to 16.3, tailors 70.2 to 59.8, shoemakers 35.4 to 26.7, carpenters 16.6 to 13.0, while artisan enterprises between 1933 and 1939 fell in shoemaking by 12.4 per cent, masons by 14.8 per cent, carpenters by 13.8 per cent, paperhangers and upholsterers by 12.8 per cent and house-painters by 11.4 per cent.

The votes - and fists - of these ruined artisans and small traders had helped to place Hitler in power. Now Labour Front chief Robert Ley told them three years later: 'The independent artisan who cannot compete against the modern factory or trust has no right to exist in the Third Reich. He can become an industrial worker.' And they could hardly draw solace from the harsh words of their Führer, who told the Reichstag on 21 May 1935:

We National Socialists see in private property a higher mode of human economic development which regulates the administration of rewards in proportion to the differences in achievement... Bolshevism destroys not only private property but also initiative, a zest for responsibility.

Henceforth, increasing numbers of bankrupted artisans would expend their zest in the factories of Krupp, IG Farben and Mannesmann. Yet they could scarcely claim Hitler had betrayed his programme, for in August 1932 he told an Associated Press correspondent, who had inquired of his intentions in economic policy: 'I would not be so silly as to try to eliminate all large concerns. You cannot build railway engines in a blacksmith's shop nor ocean liners in a rowing boat shed.'

Big business, however, had to pay a price for its economic supremacy in the Third Reich, for its fabulous profits, for the privilege of being able to exploit a working class denied all legal means of resistance and organisation. It had to sacrifice its old political parties and most of its political leaders. Even formerly influential politicians like von Papen went into eclipse under Hitler's rigidly centralised rule, while Hugenberg found himself compelled to resign from the Ministry of Economics shortly after his own party, the DNVP, went into liquidation. Unlike under Weimar, there was no room for a complicated and fluid bourgeois party system. Not only were the Nazis not prepared to risk the limited political freedom and debate that would ensue from the existence of more than one party (even if it were of the most reactionary kind), they were determined to exercise the whole state power themselves, and as far as their other goals would permit, to their own material advantage. The state and party bureaucracy, together with those of affiliated Nazi organisations, was necessarily greatly enlarged in order to facilitate its repressive

functions over the proletariat. But there was also at work a tendency for the Nazi bureaucracy to grow fat and multiply beyond the limits of what was essential for its ascribed functions. The 'plebeians' demanded their reward for years of foot slogging and fighting on the streets, and Hitler could not afford to spurn their claims. Graft and extortion, 'the jobs for the boys' and bureaucratic parasitism inevitably accompanied the necessary work of policing the working mass, repressing all dissent and preparing the entire people for barbarism, deprivation and death in imperialist war. Big business periodically complained of the excesses of Nazi bureaucratisation ^[33] as they ate up a considerable slice of the surplus product of labour that would otherwise have fallen to capital. But it knew in its heart of hearts that a fair bargain had been struck - and kept - by the Nazi plebeians.

Appendix I: Render Unto Hitler...

Although competitors with National Socialism in the sphere of ideology, and fanatically jealous of their centuries-old privileges and organisational independence, the two wings of the Christian faith - with rare exceptions - wasted no time in coming to terms with the Germany of Hitler. In doing so they were carrying to its logical conclusion the hostile attitude the Protestant and Catholic clergy had adopted towards the Weimar Republic from its very inception. Above all, the two hierarchies, fused intimately with the uppermost reaches of the propertied classes and the state bureaucracy, were motivated by their all-pervading fear of proletarian revolution when they opted for the Nazi 'lesser evil' in the spring of 1933.

For deep-seated historical and political reasons the Lutherans were better placed to make this adjustment. The Protestant cause had found its political standard-bearer in the ultra-right, monarchist DNVP, while the Catholics had become one of the main supports of the Weimar system through their Centre Party's participation in the 'Grand Coalition' with the Social Democrats. Certainly the Catholic hierarchy had no love for the 'atheistic' Republic, born in revolutionary sin, but its opposition necessarily had to be more guarded. Otto Dibelius, General Superintendent of the Lutheran clergy, suffered from no such inhibitions. As early as 1926 he had written that 'since the mood of the Church is overwhelmingly hostile to the republic the Church's attitude towards the new state is one of great reserve'. Two years later, Dibelius struck a quite unabashed chauvinist note in his Easter Greeting:

We will all have not only understanding but also full sympathy for the motives which have given rise to the nationalist movement. Despite the ugly sound which has often been attached to the word, I have always regarded myself as an anti-Semite. The fact cannot be concealed that the Jews have played a leading part in all the movements of disintegration in modern civilisations...

The NSDAP stood for what its founding programme termed 'positive Christianity'. With the upsurge of National Socialism after 1929, a significant section of the Protestant clergy began to reinterpret the Lutheran doctrine in terms amenable to the party's militant anti-Semitism, chauvinism, militarism and anti-Marxism. The 'Christian German Movement' of Pastor Werner rapidly won the approval of the Nazis, and it was with their backing that it contested the 1932 Protestant Church elections. Prussian in origin, the Christian Germans aligned themselves in other parts of Germany with the Thuringian 'German Christians' and the equally ultra-right-wing Federation for a German Church. At Hitler's instigation, these three groups fused to form the 'Faith Movement of German Christians' in April 1932, under the new leadership of Pastor Joachim Hossenfelder. The new movement's manifesto, published in June 1932, contained the following declarations of principle:

We stand on the ground of positive Christianity. We profess our affirmative faith in Christ, fitting our race and being in accordance with the German Lutheran mind and heroic piety... We want to bring the reawakened sense of life to bear in our Church and to fill our Church with vitality. In the fateful struggle for German liberty, and the German future, the Church has turned out to be too weak in leadership. Up to now, the Church has not summoned the faithful to a determined fight against ungodly Marxism and against the Centre Party. We want our Church to fight in the front line in the decisive battle of our nation for life or death... We demand a revision of the political clauses of our Church Treaty and a fight against unreligious and unpatriotic Marxism and its Christian-socialist train-bearers of all shades... The way to the kingdom of heaven is through struggles, the cross and sacrifice, and not through a false peace. We see in race, nationality and nation, orders of life given and entrusted to us by God, to care for the preservation of which is for us God's law. For these reasons, racial interbreeding has to be opposed... Faith in Christ does not destroy but heightens and sanctifies the race... Mere compassion is 'charity' and leads to presumption, paired with a bad conscience, and effeminates a nation. We know something about

Christian obligation and charity towards the helpless, but we also demand the protection of the nation from the unfit and the inferior... We see a great danger to our nationality in the Jewish mission. It promises to allow foreign blood into our nation. It has no right to exist side by side with the foreign mission. We object to the Jewish mission in Germany so long as the Jews have citizenship and so long as there is the danger of racial mixture and bastardisation... marriages between Jews and Germans must be prohibited.

Once in power, the Nazis did everything they could to encourage support for their regime amongst the religious sections of the population, especially the petit-bourgeoisie, by stressing their devotion to Christian ideals and their determination to root out the Godless Marxists. On 1 February 1933, Hitler declared:

The National Government will support and defend the foundation on which the strength of our nation is built. It will seek firmly to protect Christianity as the basis of our whole morality, and the family as the nucleus of the life of our people and our community.

Bernard Rust, the new Nazi Prussian Education Minister, assumed a similarly traditionalist pose when he made an appeal for Christian unity against the common Marxist foe:

For 150 years, during the wars of religion, we were, as a people, almost destroyed. Today we find ourselves in a bitter struggle for our existence against Bolshevism. I appeal to Christians, of both denominations, to join us against this enemy in defence of their living faith, their values and their customs.

The fanatical Jew-baiter and pogrom-monger Julius Streicher was not averse to employing biblical terms in his campaign for the anti-Jewish boycott day on 1 April 1933. Addressing a rally of 80 000 Nazi supporters in Berlin on 31 March, he roared:

I prophesy to you that the day is at hand when humanity will at last be freed from the eternal Jew, who for thousands of years has wandered through the continent as mass murderer and murderer of Christ. Golgotha shall be avenged and the Jew himself is on the way to Golgotha.

Streicher also struck an unbecoming Puritanical pose in the same speech, demanding that German women should 'solemnly swear' that they would 'abandon lipstick, rouge, and other Jewish usage and become entirely teutonic, and never frequent dance halls where nigger dances are in vogue'. Such diatribes evidently did nothing to dissuade the ultra-nationalist Lutherans from supporting the new regime.

Quite the contrary. On 3 April, Dibelius issued a Statement (later broadcast to the USA) justifying the anti-Jewish boycott and the regime's brutal repression of its left-wing opponents:

The revolution of 1918 was a violent revolution. Bloodshed and atrocities of all kinds were the order of the day. The new revolution is of quite a different nature. It has been brought about by the lawful decision of the German people. As its first great task the new government has set about saving Germany from Bolshevism... The old governments hoped to be able to bring the German Communists up to national loyalty by restraining their propaganda and their newspapers to the least possible extent. Experience has shown that this method failed. The Bolshevist propaganda prepared a new revolution. With increasing uneasiness we waited for the decisive battle between Western civilisation and Bolshevism, which had to be fought on German soil. Now it has come in a way different from what was thought possible. It was won without street riots and bloodshed [sic!]. By drastic methods the new government eliminated the Communist agitators and their confederates from public life... All Communist leaders have been imprisoned... Not one word in the hair-raising reports on the cruel and bloody treatment of Communists is true. On the basis of such false reports world Jewry has started an agitation against Germany in several countries.

And so, concluded Dibelius, the anti-Jewish boycott was merely a means of self-defence against this campaign of anti-German lies and slander.

Two days later, on 5 April, the German Christians' conference issued a call for the foundation of a new, 'national' evangelical Church. Its creed was to be based on the following four principles:

1. God has made men German, Germanism is the gift of God.
2. God wished I should fight for my Germanism.
3. Towards a state which furthers the powers of darkness the believer has the right to revolution.
4. All Protestants who marry members of an alien race are to be expelled from the Church.

A conference organiser, Pastor Wieneke, told the assembled men of God: 'Were Christ to appear on earth again he would be the leader of a war upon Marxism and internationalism.' In the elections to the governing bodies of the Prussian Protestant Church on 17 April, the Nazi 'German Christian' faction won 40 per cent of the votes. The 'positive Christians' were gaining ground. In May, the Bishop of Mecklenburg, Rendforff, announced his support for the NSDAP:

It is the great popular movement that alone can save our people and country from falling into the abyss, and under the leadership of the Führer Adolf Hitler, sent to us by God, it is achieving in its struggle for Germany's freedom and revival of what has been the goal of our desires and of our own struggle for 20 years.

After a slower start, the Roman Catholics were by this time eagerly making their peace with those they had only a few months previously been denouncing as pagans. In his speech to the Reichstag on 23 March, Hitler had made the pointed remark that 'the national government attaches utmost importance to the cultivation and maintenance of the friendliest relations with the Holy see'. What Hitler had in mind of course was a concordat between Berlin and Rome, in which in return for limited concessions on religious education and other secondary matters, the Vatican would withdraw its support from all Catholic political and trade union organisations, even to the point of ensuring that they went into voluntary liquidation. The delicate negotiations for this deal were entrusted on the Nazi side to von Papen, and for the Vatican, Secretary of State Cardinal Pacelli. Papen later recalled that during the course of these negotiations he met the Pope, Pius XI, who remarked 'how pleased he was that the German government now had at its head a man uncompromisingly opposed to Communism and Russian nihilism in all its forms...' [34] On 23 March, the Catholic Centre Party voted unanimously for Hitler's Enabling Act, and heard Hitler drop his hint about improving relations with the Vatican. At once relations between the hierarchy and the Nazi regime began to thaw. The Fulda Bishops conference, currently in session, was requested by Cardinal Bertram to declare itself in favour of the new government, even if in cautious terms. This change of line was now justified, he argued, by Hitler's declarations that his policies would be based on Christian doctrine. Bans on Catholics belonging to Nazi organisations were quickly lifted, while uniformed Nazis were permitted to attend church services in military formation and battle regalia. By now, with the negotiations for the long-sought-after Concordat well under way, the Catholic leaders were vying with the Lutherans in devotion to the Führer, 'the authority appointed from above' as the general secretary of the Catholic Journeymen's Association described the Nazi leader. On 14 July, von Papen was able to report to the Hitler cabinet that agreement had been reached with the Vatican on the terms of a Concordat, terms so favourable to the Nazis that the minutes of the cabinet meeting recorded that the Hitler - Pius XI deal meant that the Catholic Church in Germany 'withdrew from activity in associations and parties, for example, also abandoned the Christian trade unions. This too the Reich Chancellor would not have considered possible even a few months ago...' With the Concordat, promulgated officially on 22 July, the hierarchy adopted one by one the strategic goals of the Nazi regime - the elimination of Marxism, rearmament, the crusade for 'living space' and even the propagation of the National Socialist 'master race' ideology. Vicar General Steinemann told a meeting of Catholic youth:

What we have all longed and striven for has become reality: we have one Reich and one Führer, and this leader we will follow faithfully and conscientiously... We know that he who stands at the head is given us by God as our leader.

This same Steinemann became a centre of controversy when the *Völkischer Beobachter* published a photograph of the Bishop giving the Nazi salute to a march past of the Catholic youth. Criticism was voiced of his conduct in a New York German-American paper, to which he replied: 'The future will some day gratefully acknowledge that Germany, situated in the heart of Europe, has created a bulwark against Bolshevism and thereby saved the West from the Red Tide.' Not only the Nazi programme, but its turn of speech were adopted by the more fanatically fascist members of the priesthood. 'Jesus is our Führer' and 'Heil Bishop' became customary slogans and forms of greeting. And while the Lutherans had been first in the field with their defence of Germanic 'racial purity', the Catholic Church soon caught up. Archbishop Gröber's handbook on doctrinal questions contained the following entry on 'race':

Every people bears itself the responsibility for its successful existence, and the intake of an entirely foreign blood will always represent a risk for a nationality that has proven its historical worth. Hence, no people may be denied the right to maintain undisturbed their previous racial stock and to enact safeguards for this purpose. The Christian religion merely demands that the means used do not offend against the moral law and natural justice.

The fact that Christ himself was a Jew was dealt with in summary fashion. A Regensburg Canon instructed Catholic teachers to emphasise to their pupils that the Old Testament could not have been the product of the 'Jewish mentality': 'The greatest miracle of the Bible is that the true religion could hold its own and maintain itself against the voice of the Semitic blood.'

Such oppositional activities as were carried out by the two churches in Germany against the Nazi regime were, except in rare cases, a reaction to Nazi encroachments on their own privileges. The destruction of the workers' movement (including the Catholic trade unions), the murder and persecution of Communists and Socialists, the hounding, baiting and eventual mass extermination of the Jews did not elicit a single public protest from either the Catholic or Lutheran Church leaderships. To the very end, the peddlers of the 'opium of the people' functioned as servants of the fascist dictatorship. For as their leaders had instructed them when Hitler took power in 1933, in the struggle against atheistic Bolshevism, Hitler was acting as the chosen instrument of God. In the words of von Papen:

The kind Lord has blessed Germany by giving it in times of deep distress a leader who will lead it, through all crises and moments of danger with the sure instinct of the statesman into a happy future... Here in the heart of an overwhelmingly Catholic province I express the urgent request to my Catholic fellow citizens to reward this generous recognition of the Christian basis of the Third Reich offered by the Führer with the fullest confidence in the future... Let us in this hour say to the Führer of the new Germany that we believe in him and his work. ^[35]

Appendix II: The Fall of the Plebeians

The thirtieth of June 1934 put a brutal end to the hopes of those Nazi 'radicals' who still yearned for the original petit-bourgeois anti-capitalist utopia of the National Socialist pioneers. In one of his wartime conversations Hitler let slip the remark that it was:

... one of National Socialism's merits that it knew how to stop the revolution at the proper moment. It's very nice to see the people arise, but one must be a realist and go no further than phrases... I've not forgotten the difficulties I had to overcome in 1933 and 1934. Revolution opens a sluice-gate, and it's often impossible to curb the masses one has let loose. ^[36]

In fact the struggle against the so-called 'second' revolution began almost from the first days of the Nazi takeover. Repeated warnings were issued to SA commanders and their men to direct their terrorist activities exclusively against the regime's left-wing opponents, though often without much success. The brown-shirted plebeians certainly had no love for the Marxists - and this term covered militants of both workers' parties and the ADGB trade unions - but they had little reason to be kindly disposed towards the bourgeoisie either. There were clashes between SA formations and the monarchist *Stahlhelm*, while storm-troopers on the rampage looted 'gentile' as well as Jewish stores, molested bourgeois politicians and generally made themselves a thorough nuisance to the very class that had called in Hitler to restore law and order to capitalist Germany. Before the owners of big property could breathe easily once more, the Nazi leaders had to accomplish the transition from the plebeian counter-revolution 'from below' to a regime which while still relying for its internal stability on broad support amongst the petit-bourgeois masses, drew closer to the form of government envisaged by the bourgeoisie in the immediate pre-Hitler period: namely the Bonapartism of Papen and Schleicher.

But there is the world of difference between the Bonapartism which precedes the fascist coup and rests upon a temporary equilibrium between a mass fascist movement still to seize power and a proletariat as yet undefeated, and the form of rule consolidated by Hitler in the period following the purge of June 1934. That difference is, of course, primarily the definitive defeat of the proletariat, the crushing of all its organisations, and its being held in a state of permanent subjection by the terror apparatus of the fascist regime. In the words of Trotsky:

Just as Bonapartism begins by combining the parliamentary regime with fascism [that is, the regimes of Papen and Schleicher in Germany - RB], so triumphant fascism finds itself forced not only to enter into a bloc with the Bonapartists [the first Hitler cabinet of 'National Concentration' contained but three Nazis, the remaining Ministers being old monarchists - RB], but what is more, to draw closer internally to the Bonapartist system. The prolonged domination of finance capital by means of reactionary social demagoguery and petit-bourgeois terror is impossible. Having arrived in power, the fascist chiefs are forced to muzzle the masses who follow them by means of the state apparatus. By the same token, they lose the support of the broad masses of the petit-bourgeoisie. A small part of it is assimilated by the bureaucratic apparatus [with what financial

cost to the bourgeoisie we have already seen - RB]. Another sinks into indifference. But while losing its social mass base [it would be more accurate here to say 'contracting' rather than 'losing' - RB], by resting upon the bureaucratic apparatus and oscillating between the classes, fascism is regenerated into Bonapartism. ^[37]

The sequence of events and political crises culminating in the 'Night of the Long Knives' of 30 June 1934 demonstrates concretely the validity of this analysis. Many were the attempts made by the Nazi plebeians to carve out an independent position for themselves under the Third Reich. Nazi small businessmen - artisans, shopkeepers, etc - banded together on 3 May to found the 'National Socialist Fighting League of the Industrial Middle Class'. It pressed the middle-class case for a petit-bourgeois 'guild socialism', a reactionary 'anti-capitalism' involving state protection for small concerns, preferential contracts, etc, and discrimination against the monopolies. Seen by big business as the thin end of a radical Nazi wedge, the Fighting League (headed by Adrian von Renteln) wound itself up in August. Far more serious was the challenge of Röhm, who though not so concerned with social and economic questions, drew his support from that layer in the petit-bourgeois and lumpen-proletarian masses which felt itself cheated by Hitler's alliance with the enemies of the 'second revolution' - namely big business and the banks.

Standing behind Röhm was his ever-growing army of Brown Shirts, which in the hectic period of the struggle against the 'Reds' had usurped many of the functions of the regular state security forces. Hitler had no intention of surrendering power either to the old bourgeois and agrarian élites, or to Röhm's rowdy plebeians. No sooner had the workers' movement been crushed than he began - gently at first - to apply the brakes. On 6 July, he told party officials:

... the revolution is not a permanent state of affairs, and it must not be allowed to develop into such a state... We must therefore not dismiss a businessman if he is a good businessman, even if he is not yet a National Socialist... History will not judge us according to whether we have removed and imprisoned the largest number of economists but according to whether we have succeeded in providing work...

On 17 July, Goebbels took up this theme, warning against 'camouflaged Bolshevik elements who talk about a second revolution'. The national revolution had now been 'wound up', he declared ominously. Hitler had 'stopped our revolution at exactly the right moment'. The right moment for the leaders of industry, certainly, but not for Röhm and his power and plunder-hungry *parvenus*.

The main bone of contention between Hitler and Röhm was the latter's attitude towards the *Reichswehr*, which the SA chief-of-staff sought to 'colonise' by subordinating the army to his own Storm Troop command. Röhm cared little for political programmes, and even less for economic ones, but he was not averse to indulging in pseudo-socialist demagogy as a means of exerting extra pressure on Hitler and his bourgeois and *Reichswehr* allies. In November 1933, he told a meeting of 15 000 SA officials that despite 'voices in the bourgeois camp' who were saying that the SA had 'lost any reason for existence', the struggle against 'reactionaries' would continue. Here was an open split in the Nazi High Command, for two months earlier, Hitler had gone out of his way at the Nuremberg Party Congress to praise the old Army leaders, without whose support in the early days of the regime, Hitler declared, National Socialism would never have conquered. Throughout the winter and spring of 1934, the inner-party conflict deepened, with Röhm becoming progressively estranged not only from Hitler, but also Goering and Himmler, whose SS élite were being groomed to replace Röhm's rowdies as the praetorian guard of the Third Reich. The account of the last weeks and days preceding the purge of 30 June has been told so many times it needs no repetition save to stress that more was at stake in the liquidation of the SA 'radicals' than the independence and prestige of the army. Several factions combined to crush Röhm. Lüdecke speaks of two main groups, 'the Hindenburg faction, which included Papen, Neurath and Blomberg, and was based on the landed aristocracy and the *Reichswehr* [thus comprising two subgroups]... and the Goering - Thyssen - Schacht group, guarding the interests of heavy industry and the banks, with the police and the *Stahlhelm* as instruments of power...'. ^[38] Otto Strasser broadly concurs with this analysis: 'The Gregor Strasser and Röhm front was formed in opposition to the Hindenburg, Hugenberg, Papen and Goering front, which was in alliance with the industrialists.' ^[39] Röhm was in effect broken by the same combination of forces that had brought down the final three governments of the Weimar Republic. The army, the agrarians and industry decided in the early summer of 1934 that the time had come to put an end to the SA threat, and with it all talk of the 'second revolution' and the implementation of the 'socialist' planks of the Nazi platform.

On 4 June, Röhm sent four SA men into Krupp's Essen plant, where they held up production while they harangued workers on the need to fight for the 'second revolution'. Gustav Krupp was furious, and told Hitler what he thought of Röhm's rabble-rousing. Hindenburg had already informed Hitler - on 28 May - that an end had to be put to the activities of the SA 'radicals', who to the President must have seemed little better than Bolsheviks. Hitler then paid a visit to his old mentor in Rome, where Mussolini advised him to restrain somewhat the radical actions and speeches of the left wing of the NSDAP. He even went so far as to suggest that Hitler might 'dissolve the SA'. ^[40]

The day following Hitler's return to Munich, von Papen made his well-known speech at Marburg University, voicing more openly than ever before the fears of the monarchist right about the dangers of a 'second revolution'. It was not clear, said Papen:

... where such a second wave is to lead. There is much talk of the coming socialisation. Have we gone through the anti-Marxist revolution in order to carry out a Marxist programme? ... No people can afford to indulge in a permanent revolt from below if it would endure in history. At some time the movement must come to a stop and a solid social structure arise.

In other words, the time had come to put an end to the plebeian chapter of the Nazi counter-revolution. It was now necessary to pass on to '*Thermidor*', to purge the 'brown Jacobins' whose useful functions had long since been exhausted. Others of Papen's class thought so too. On 21 June, Hitler was summoned to Hindenburg at the President's East Prussian Neudeck Estate. The story of what ensued is well told by Otto Strasser, who learned of the Hitler-Hindenburg confrontation through his contacts in the NSDAP:

Hitler was accompanied by Goebbels, by Hoffman the photographer and by Herr Schreck, the leader of the SS. These three represented the radical wing of the party in South Germany. They were received on the steps by two men in general's uniform: Blomberg, the Minister of War, and Goering. Adolf was stupefied. 'Having been informed of events by Vice Chancellor von Papen', General Blomberg said with great dignity, 'President Hindenburg summoned General Goering in his capacity of chief of police and myself to Neudeck. Our instructions are to consult with you on the measures to be taken to ensure internal peace. If a complete relaxation of tension does not immediately take place... martial law will be proclaimed. The President, being ill, deeply regrets being unable to receive you.' Hitler and his companions were dumbfounded. Adolf was the first to speak: 'But it is absolutely essential that I see the President...' Blomberg went away and returned a few minutes later. 'Please follow me', he said to Hitler. 'These gentlemen from Munich [sic!] can wait.' Marshal Hindenburg, in Blomberg's presence, briefly repeated to Adolf what Blomberg had already told him. The audience lasted exactly four minutes... ^[41]

That was Röhm's death sentence, pronounced by the 'reaction' his plebeians despised. On 29 June, Hitler visited Krupp at Essen (using as his pretext the wedding of the local Nazi Gauleiter, Terboven), where, it seems almost certain, they discussed once again the necessity of crushing the SA 'lefts'. Krupp had the support of Goering in pressing this demand:

A momentary armistice was not enough for them. They insisted on finishing with these men of the 'second revolution', and they wanted immediate action. Krupp threatened to withdraw if the 'National Bolsheviks' were not silenced. ^[42]

The 'immediate action' all bourgeois - Junker Germany craved came the next day, when picked SS squads gunned down Röhm and his closest supporters. But the purge was not directed exclusively against the Nazi 'left'. General Schleicher also died, as did two members of von Papen's private staff. Fascism was, as Trotsky pointed out in the aftermath of the purge, compelled to draw close to the old Bonapartism, but was determined not to merge with it, least of all to permit the old leaders to insert themselves into the vacuum created by the annihilation of the 'plebeians'. Himmler's SS, and not the monarchists or even the army leaders, were to be the custodians of the Third Reich.

Nevertheless, the big bourgeoisie had good reason to congratulate itself on the outcome of the 'Night of the Long Knives'. The defence of private property was now at last in trusted hands:

The economy especially welcomed the seizure of power by the Nazis because it needs peace, order and security to carry out its tasks. When Hindenburg made common cause with Hitler... then the economy, for the first time for a long while, felt firm ground underfoot. That would again be in doubt if the former parties of ambitious groups and cliques were permitted to resume their struggles for power. The economy has been saved from this danger by this swift action. It will show its gratitude. ^[43]

Notes

1. 'Whoever undertakes to maintain the organisational structure of another political party [that is, other than the NSDAP] or to form a new political party will be punished with penal servitude of up to three years or with imprisonment of from six months to three years, if the deed is not subject to a greater penalty according to other regulations.'
2. *Völkischer Beobachter*, 10 June 1933. It seems Ley recognised the identity between fascism, National Socialism and corporatism. Each are different expressions for the same thing - a system which excludes all forms of independent workers' organisations, and which therefore requires their *destruction* before such a system can be erected. Thus it was in Italy, Germany and Spain, and, more recently, in Chile. Let *Workers Press* take note: there was no room in Ley's corporate state for Leipart. Nor will there be in a corporatist Britain room for Jack Jones, Hugh Scanlon *et al*, even though should this disaster overwhelm the workers' movement, they will have to bear the main responsibility for it.
3. 'Special Circular on the Securing of the Associations of the German Labour Front Against Hidden Marxist Sabotage', 2336-PS.
4. 'Special Circular on the Securing of the Associations of the German Labour Front Against Hidden Marxist Sabotage', 2336-PS.
5. Persecution of former trade union militants was unrelenting. The following is a Nuremberg police report on the reasons for the arrest on 3 August 1935 of Josef Simon, an SPD City Counsellor between 1908 and 1930, and an active trade unionist in the Weimar Republic: 'In view of the decisive role which Simon played in the international trade unions and in regard to his connection with the international Marxist leaders and central agencies, which he continued after the national recovery, he was placed under protective custody on 3 May 1933, and was kept, until 25 January 1934, in the Dachau concentration camp... Even after this date he played an active part in the illegal continuation of the SPD. He took part in meetings which aimed at the illegal continuation of the SPD and propagation of illegal Marxist printed matter in Germany. Through this radical attitude which is hostile to the state, Simon directly endangers public security and order.' Before Simon's release on 20 December 1935, he was made to sign a declaration: 'I have been informed that I shall be released from protective custody, and that I have to expect to be taken into protective custody again in case that I should behave in a manner inimical to the state, or if I should be active in this sense... I have been informed that I have to report in person at Police Station Ziedelstein, competent for my residence, on every second day of the week at the same hour.' (2331-PS)
6. Agreement between the Labour Front and the SA, October 1936, *NSDAP Year Book for 1938*.
7. A Grzesinski, *Inside Germany* (New York, 1939), p 189.
8. Grzesinski, *Inside Germany*, p 190.
9. Grzesinski, *Inside Germany*, p 190.
10. *Deutsche Bergwerks Zeitung*, 17 May 1933.
11. *German Law for the Organisation of National Labour*, 16 January 1934, emphasis added.
12. Foremost amongst British Stalinists who peddled this chauvinist, anti-working-class filth was Palme Dutt, who in his private journal *Labour Monthly* of March 1945 wrote: 'For the mass of German people, whose typical guilt was slavish "non-political" submission to authority, to share in the loot and become accomplices in crime, evidence from the occupied regions shows how far demoralisation had gone after 12 years of Nazism... Here softness and immunity will not avail... Here the hard path of retribution must teach the lesson... It is also necessary that the German nation shall have to pay the price for fascism, and that price shall be engraven on the memory of the German people... From the fate of Germany every people in the world can learn that the nation which surrenders to fascism touches poison.' Ironically, Dutt employs here some of the very concepts of National Socialism - 'nation',

'softness', and 'retribution' - which Hitler set up against the Marxist conception of historical development. And all in the name of 'anti-fascism'.

13. R Diels, *Lucifer ante Portas* (Stuttgart, 1950), p 222.

14. Evidence that the majority of workers never succumbed to National Socialism can be found in the most varied accounts of life in the Third Reich. A former member of Hitler's 'inner circle', Ernst Hanfstängl, relates how the workers of 'red' Wedding reacted when a Nazi film unit shot a scene depicting a street battle between SA men and Communists for a film about Horst Wessel, the Nazi 'martyr': 'It turned out to be too realistic for words... The trouble was that most of the inhabitants of Wedding were as Communist as ever and when they heard a crowd of supers [extras] bawling their old battle cries, really thought that the counter- [that is, anti-Nazi] revolution had started. They poured out of their houses, beat up our SA film heroes, threw-flower pots from the windows, assaulted the police and generally had a field day... There was blood everywhere, police helmets rolling in the gutter and confusion everywhere...' (E Hanfstängl, *Hitler: The Missing Years* (London, 1937), p 233) The diaries of the aristocratic oppositionist von Hassell, which date from the later years of the Third Reich, speak of a 'murderous hatred against Ley [which] prevailed among the workers at the Bavarian Motor Works'. An official of the firm told Hassell that 'in his business there were hardly any Nazis, no SA men and no SS men' (*The von Hassell Diaries* (London, 1948), p 40). The renegade Social Democrat August Winnig bore out this account, informing Hassell shortly after the outbreak of war that 'according to his observations the overwhelming majority of workers are quite opposed to National Socialism. Again and again he had observed that active party members among the workers were avoided by the others; managers told him they had to arrange for these people to work separately.' (*The von Hassell Diaries*, p 79) With the steady decline in unemployment and a constant demand for skilled and semi-skilled labour, pressure began to build up amongst groups of workers for higher wages. This even took the form of strike actions on several notable occasions. In June 1936, 262 vehicle workers at the Russelheim Opel works struck for more pay. The strike was brutally broken after only 17 minutes by the arrest of seven leaders and the dismissal and blacklisting of 36 more. Nevertheless in April 1937, workers at the Alte Union Plant in Berlin successfully blocked a threatened pay cut by a sharp strike. Early the next year (and with unemployment now down from its 1932 peak of seven million to 0.5 million) fresh industrial unrest erupted in Lower Saxony, where workers digging the canal for the Hermann Goering Steel Works at Salzgitter refused to accept the rate of 52 pfennigs an hour for the job. The Labour Trustee reported that such defiance, unparalleled in the history of the Third Reich, meant that 'the future cannot be faced without measures of violence'. The Gestapo's answer was to weed out industrial militants - mainly former members of the two workers' parties - and send them to build defence installations on the Franco-German frontier. Amazingly some workers continued to fight openly against the regime, even staging strikes during the war - in the Ruhr coal mines and the ports of Hamburg and Dortmund.

15. The same principles operated within the Waffen-SS, established in 1940 to function as a security force in the territories of Nazi-occupied Europe. In accordance with a directive issued on 6 August 1940 by Hitler, army commanders were told that the Waffen-SS would include 'in its ranks only men of the best German blood' and that 'proud of its impeccable purity, such a body will never fraternise with the proletariat and with the underworld world that would like to undermine the Idea inspiring us'.

16. *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, Volume 6, pp 830-31, emphasis added.

17. *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, Volume 6, p 1085.

18. K Lüdecke, *I Knew Hitler* (New York, 1937), p 623.

19. Lüdecke, *I Knew Hitler*, p 623.

20. The announcement of the formation of the General Economic Council ran as follows: 'In order to utilise the experience of practical economy for the tasks of the Reich government, the Reich Chancellor nominates as General Council of Economy members who are to be at the disposal of the Reich government in regard to all economic questions. The General Economic Council meets by special invitation. Reich Chancellor has made the

following appointments to the new *generalrat* for the time being: Herbert Backe, Domain Bailiff, Berlin, Professor Dr Carl Bosch (Heidelberg) [and IG Farben], Eugen Bohringer, Director of the Maximilianheutte, Director General August Diehn, German Potash Combine, Banker August von Finck, Munich, Dr Albert Hackelsberger, Factory Owner, Offlingen-Baden, Burgomaster von Krogmann, Hamburg, Dr Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach, Essen, Prussian State Counsellor Dr Robert Ley, leader of the Labour Front, Dr Carl Luer, President of the Chamber of Commerce and Trustee of Labour, Frankfurt, Prussian Staatsrat, Friedrich Reinhart, Bank Director, Berlin, Dr Hermann Reischle, leader of agricultural trade and agricultural cooperatives, Berlin, Baron Kurt von Schröder, President of the Cologne Chamber of Commerce, Karl Friedrich von Siemens, Berlin, Prussian Staatsrat Dr Fritz Thyssen, Mulheim/Ruhr, General Director Dr Albert Vögler, Dortmund.’ Carl Bosch took his appointment to the Council as a good omen for German capitalism, for he told a representative of the US chemical firm Du Pont on 11 July 1933 that while ‘in the beginning Hitler did not consult industrial leaders, in more recent weeks he has shown his stability by curbing the more extreme elements of the Party and by bringing the industrial leaders into consultation’. He justified his participation in the Nazi regime by declaring that ‘just now it is a question of fascism or Bolshevism, and industry must support the present government to prevent further chaos’.

21. *Deutsche Bergwerks Zeitung*, 15 August 1933.

22. *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, 15 August 1933.

23. We can also see in this speech the core of the contradictory relationship between big business and the Nazis. Hitler upheld - often by terror - the rights of ‘personality’ in economics, *but demanded in return that the bourgeoisie cede to him and his parvenu followers the same untrammelled right to lead the state*. Hitler denied quite explicitly - and this is just the argument one would expect from the leader of a mass movement based on the oppressed petit-bourgeoisie - that great wealth and economic power were in and of themselves any proof of ability to guide the affairs of state. The selection of *political* leaders, he insisted, proceeded on the basis of different principles: ‘Since the new formations of our society had developed out of economic functions, the capacity for leadership could in no way be presumed to be necessarily identifiable with the social position of the individual German, that is to say, that men drawn from lower economic classes might be well-fitted to lead the people just as on the other hand members of the highest social classes, especially represented economic or financial interests, would have to be rejected. The inborn talent necessary for our purpose - that alone must be decisive; our task was to discover these men out of all the different towns, callings and classes. This was in truth a socialistic action... If the word “socialism” is to have any meaning at all, then that meaning can only be that with iron justice... on each man should be placed that share in the maintenance of the people as a whole which corresponds with his inborn talent and his value.’ The property-owner and exploiter, frightened out of his wits by the threat of proletarian revolution and therefore by his own imminent expropriation cedes the *political* power to the armed plebeians and with it *a share in the increased spoils accruing from the intensified exploitation of the working class, that is, the inevitable consequence of fascist rule*. The rise to power of the parvenu was, therefore, not based on any mythical inborn talent, but arose out of sheer necessity on the part of the big bourgeoisie, and a profound dislocation in the political and social equilibrium of the petit-bourgeoisie.

24. *Hamburger Tageblatt*, 12 November 1933.

25. *Berliner Börsen Zeitung*, 22 November 1933.

26. *Deutsche Bergwerks Zeitung*, 1 December 1933.

27. The Nazis wasted little time in scrapping the industrial arbitration machinery established by the Weimar Republic (machinery which the Stalinists had described as thoroughly fascist!) and replacing it with ‘social honour’ courts. These pronounced on disputes between workers and employers in Nazi parlance, followers and leaders. In 1935, a total of 205 employers appeared before them to face various charges of malpractice in relation to the Nazi labour code. Nearly all were small firms, and only in nine cases did the court punish

the employer to the extent of withdrawing his right to employ labour. In contrast, in the year 1929 alone, 400 000 cases of wrongful dismissal came before the labour courts of the Weimar Republic. Third Period Stalinism never tired of telling reformist workers that there was no difference 'in principle' between a fascist and a bourgeois-democratic Germany. Life was now teaching them otherwise.

28. Not all firms or branches of production benefitted equally as a result of Nazi rule. While heavy industry rapidly attained its former output levels, and then far surpassed them, concerns producing for the consumer market were slower to recover, since the economic revival was based largely on large-scale public works and rearmaments. Thus from an index of 35 in 1932, the production of means of production increased to 152 by June 1939, while that of consumer goods, although beginning at the far higher level of 78, only reached 113 by the latter date. Arms expenditure as a percentage of the gross national product rose from 3.4 in the first year of Nazi rule to 18.1 by 1938, while as a percentage of total government expenditure, the increase was from 8.7 per cent to 42.7 per cent.

29. New capital issues, private and government bond and stocks, amounted to a mere 214 million RM in 1932. The first year of Nazi rule saw this sum increase to 1311 million, then to 2901 million in 1934, 2180 million in 1935, and 3217 million in 1936, 3788 million in 1937 and 8605 million in 1938. In France and Britain, Germany's two main imperialist and economic rivals in Europe, capital issues displayed no such upward movement. In France, they declined from 31 510 million francs in 1930 to 16 791 million in 1938, while in Britain, over the same period, they fell erratically from £234.7 million to £130.7 million.

30. *Der Zeitspiegel*, no 37, 1937. Five years of Nazi rule also had a salutary effect on the share prices of the leading companies. The following were the increases in quotations on the stock exchange between 31 January 1933 and 31 January 1938: Reichsbank: 154.75 to 209.95, Deutsche Bank: 72.75 to 127, Dresdner: 61.75 to 114.25, Commerz und Privat: 53.5 to 122, IG Farben: 103 to 161, AEG: 29.1 to 118.25, Schuckert: 85.6 to 179, Siemens: 127 to 212, United Steel: 33.25 to 113.25, Hamburg-America Lines: 17.5 to 82, Norddeutsche Lloyd: 17.8 to 82.1.

31. *Der Reichswart*, February 1935.

32. *Der Angriff*, 1 December 1936.

33. The Reichsbank organ *Deutsche Volkswirt* reported in its issue of 17 May 1935 on the growth of one department of the Nazi bureaucracy since the formation of the Hitler government: 'A central organisation... which came into existence shortly after the seizure of power, and at that time managed to exist on a budget of 380 000 RM, now, with practically the same sphere of work, expends 1.7 million RM. One of its branches in 1932-33, when it had a membership of 20 000 had a payroll of 40 000 RM. In 1934-35, with a membership of 54 000 it had a payroll of 219 000 RM.' This was the price of maintaining - in the manner to which many of them were unaccustomed - Hitler's plebeian army. Only the term 'plebeian' must be qualified when applied to the upper reaches of the Nazi leadership. Daniel Lerner's study, *The Nazi Elite*, based on a sample of one in 10 taken from the 1934 NSDAP *Führerlexikon*, provides a clear statistical picture of the class and occupational background of the Nazis who dominated the Third Reich's political affairs. Of the 159 Nazis sampled, *not one was an industrial worker, or indeed was born of an industrial worker father*. Of Lerner's random sample, 27.7 per cent of Nazi leaders were civil servants by occupation, 27.0 per cent professional, 18.9 per cent business, 7.5 per cent communications, 5.0 per cent farmers and 6.9 per cent NSDAP officials. No less than 60.4 per cent had attended university, while only five per cent ended their education at grade school. Hardly the sample one would expect from a 'socialist workers' party'!

34. F von Papen, *Memoirs* (London, 1952), p 279.

35. F von Papen, Speech in Essen, 2 November 1933.

36. *Hitler's Secret Conversations* (New York, 1953), p 272.

37. LD Trotsky, 'Bonapartism and Fascism' (15 July 1934), *The Struggle Against Fascism In Germany* (New York, 1971), p 44.

- 38.** Lüdecke, *I Knew Hitler*, p 761.
- 39.** O Strasser, *Hitler and I* (London, 1940), p 177.
- 40.** Strasser, *Hitler and I*, p 181.
- 41.** Strasser, *Hitler and I*, p 186.
- 42.** Strasser, *Hitler and I*, p 189.
- 43.** *Deutsche Bergwerks Zeitung*, 8 July 1934.

Appendix I: German Fascism and the Historians

A theme common to almost all non-Marxist accounts of the rise and rule of fascism in Germany is that while owing his success in part at least to the support of big business, Hitler got by far the best of the bargain once in power. Thus we read in *Hitler: A Study In Tyranny* by A Bullock:

What the German Right wanted was to regain its old position in Germany as the ruling class; to destroy the hated republic and restore the monarchy; to put the working classes 'in their places'; to rebuild the military power of Germany; to reverse the decision of 1918 and to restore Germany - their Germany - to a dominant position in Europe. Blinded by interest and prejudice, the Right forsook the role of a true conservatism, abandoned its own traditions and made the gross mistake of supposing that in Hitler they had found a man who would enable them to achieve their ends. ^[1]

William Shirer takes a similar line in his *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*:

The political ineptitude of the magnates of industry and finance was no less than that of the generals and led to the mistaken belief that if they coughed up large enough sums for Hitler he would be beholden to them and, if he ever came to power, do their bidding.

And in a further comment on business subsidies to the Nazis in the pre-1933 period, Shirer writes: 'What good they eventually did these politically childish men of the business world will be seen later in this narrative.' ^[2]

Implicit in both these judgements is that the decisive relationship between the Nazis and the German bourgeoisie was a contractual one - in Shirer this is indeed made almost explicit. Hitler then tricked the 'blinded' and 'prejudiced', 'inept' and 'politically childish' bourgeoisie by taking their cash and support, and proceeding to implement his own policies independently of and even against the interests and wishes of those who had been foolish enough to finance and trust him. A more sophisticated version of this theory, and one which at least has the virtue of attempting to grapple seriously with the problem of the relationship between the big bourgeoisie and the Nazi plebeians, is developed by AJP Taylor in his *The Course of German History*:

The privileged classes of old Germany - the landowners, the generals, the great industrialists - made their peace with demagogy; unable themselves to give 'authority' a popular colour, they hoped to turn to their own purposes the man of the people... In January 1933 the German upper classes imagined that they had taken Hitler prisoner. They were mistaken. They soon found that they were in the position of a factory owner who employs a gang of roughs to break up a strike: he deplores the violence, is sorry for his workpeople who are being beaten up, and intensely dislikes the bad manners of the gangster leader whom he has called in. All the same, he pays the price and discovers, soon enough, that if he does not pay the price (later, even if he does) he will be shot in the back. The gangster chief sits in the managing director's office, smokes his cigars, *finally takes over the concern himself. Such was the experience of the owning classes in Germany after 1933.* ^[3]

Taylor has the plebeians not only usurping the political power formerly wielded by the representatives of the possessing classes, but *also their property*. And this is of course false. Hitler shot no industrialists in the back, and to the author's knowledge, jailed only one - Thyssen. And Thyssen saw the inside of a Nazi concentration camp not for refusing to pay Hitler his protection money, but because he broke openly with the regime after the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Pact (fleeing Germany, Thyssen was picked up a year later by Nazi security forces in France after the collapse of the Third Republic in June 1940). Thyssen's fall from grace has since provided anti-Marxists with what they believe to be a splendid opportunity to disprove the bourgeois foundations of the Third Reich. David Schoenbaum's *Hitler's Social Revolution* is a case in point. After making the fatuous claim that 'the policy of the Third Reich, at any rate as it might have been felt by the average worker, can be scarcely called anti-Labour', he argues on the flimsiest of pretexts that 'a generation of Marxist and neo-Marxist mythology notwithstanding, probably never in peace time has an ostensibly capitalist economy been directed as non- and even anti-capitalistically as the German economy between 1933 and 1939'. Proof? 'The creation and capitalisation of the Reichswerke Hermann Goering - or the flight of Fritz Thyssen - tells at least as much about the status of big business in Nazi Germany' as the success of IG Farben under Nazi rule. ^[4]

Taylor's fellow-Fabian, GDH Cole, also denied the capitalist nature of the fascist regime in Germany:

Fascism, though it wages war upon the working class and uses other classes as its instruments, is not fundamentally a class-movement. Its claim to transcend classes is in a sense quite genuine; for it reaches back, behind the class-distinctions of modern society, towards primitive conditions of tribal solidarity. It is not a class but a horde movement... Far... from controlling Fascism, the great capitalists come to be controlled by it, and are compelled to subordinate their money-making impulses to the requirements of the Fascist state as an organiser of national aggression. ^[5]

In his *The Intelligent Man's Guide to the Postwar World*, Cole throws all economic and class criteria to the winds:

Nazism was not a form of capitalism, or at bottom an economic movement at all. It was a nationalist movement, in a nation possessing a very strong militarist tradition and sweating under a sense of national humiliation. ^[6]

Fascism is thus reduced to a state of mind which acquires supremacy over the social and economic forces of an entire continent.

Tim Mason, who has made a close study of Nazi social and economic policy in several extended articles, certainly cannot be bracketed with the avowed anti-Marxist Schoenbaum, whose concern to depict the Third Reich as an anti- or at least non-capitalist social formation is all too evident. And Mason quite correctly dismisses as non-scientific vulgarisations the attempts made to analyse German fascism within the framework of the definition enunciated by the Stalinist Comintern leader Dimitrov at the Communist International's Seventh Congress in 1935, namely 'the openly terroristic dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialistic elements of finance capital'. ^[7]

Mason, however, errs in conceding the point made by Taylor, that the old ruling classes not only surrendered their political powers and privileges to the Nazi parvenus, but, in the process, failed to retain their *social* dominance as possessing classes:

From an historical point of view, the incapacity of the political representatives of the propertied classes to formulate and implement their own policies, their abdication in favour of National Socialism... represented a great historical defeat. The political leadership of the 'Third Reich' was able, through means unforeseen by anyone, to maintain the independence from the old ruling class which it had gained in the crisis, 1930-33. It did not fulfil its function of becoming obsolete. ^[8]

Thus Mason quite openly asserts that in Nazi Germany, at least after 1936, politics and political leadership became 'increasingly independent of the influence of the economic ruling classes, and even in some aspects ran contrary to their interests'. True, Mason does add: 'This relationship is, however, unique in the history of modern bourgeois society and its governments: it is precisely this that must be explained.' ^[9] But the point is surely that for all their apparent political independence, the Nazi leaders held onto power, and were able to exercise it effectively, only because their *long-term strategic goals coincided with, or approached, those of heavy industry, the army élite and the agrarians*. Moreover, their very formal separation from the propertied classes - an essential ingredient of Nazi 'socialism' - was a *precondition* for the retention of mass support. *Nazi Germany could not have been ruled by a political caste which drew its main cadres from the bourgeoisie*. This certainly led to the ousting or eclipse of former bourgeois politicians, but the big exploiters and owners never seriously challenged this relationship at any time in the 12-year history of the Third Reich. Their business was to make profits, to accumulate capital, to invest it and to make yet more profits. As in the days of Bismarck, they would support any regime, however despotic and contemptuous of the bourgeoisie's claim to political hegemony, which facilitated this essential function. No historian of the Third Reich has yet produced any hard evidence which suggests that the bourgeoisie failed to gain immensely as a direct consequence of Nazi rule, through its destruction of the workers' movement, its repressive labour and social policy, and its orientation towards rearmament and imperialist expansionism.

There is another school which, in sharp contrast to the theory put forward by Cole, argues that the Nazis were *super-modernisers*, who in the words of Grünberger, dragged Germany 'half-heartedly kicking and screaming, into the century of the common man'. ^[10] The most cynical advocate of this theory, however, is undoubtedly Ralf Dahrendorf, a renegade from the Social Democratic Party and now a member of the liberal Free Democratic Party. (Formerly a top-level EEC administrator, he is currently the Director of the London School of Economics.) In his *Society and Democracy in Germany*, Dahrendorf comes very near to writing an apologia for the Third Reich:

The conclusion is hard to avoid that the road to modernity was not taken spontaneously and happily by men anywhere, that force was always required to make people embark on it... However, brutal as it was, the break with tradition and this strong push towards modernity was the substantive feature of the social revolution of National Socialism... ^[11]

Common to these theories of National Socialism is the denial of the class, specifically the bourgeois, nature of the German state under the Nazis. The argument is that because the Third Reich came under the political sway of leaders, policy-makers and executors whose social origins were for the most part non-bourgeois, then the Nazi state cannot be described accurately as bourgeois. The fact that the capitalist mode of production continued unhindered by Nazi political rule is thus overlooked, or outweighed, by Hitler's allegedly politically-oriented policies (that is, racially-inspired imperialism, autarchy, etc). By the same token, and with the same impressionistic method of analysis, one could as easily argue that the USSR, after the mid or later 1920s, had ceased to be a workers' state, since the Soviet state and its ruling party were in the grip of a bureaucratic caste whose petit-bourgeois mode of existence and consciousness separated it off sharply from the proletariat that had made the revolution of 1917.

One school of thought went even further. It argued that if both Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia were ruled by repressive bureaucracies, quasi-plebeian in origin, and since both ruthlessly excluded from the direct exercise of political power the former dominant social class, then it is legitimate to talk of a new class society, neither capitalist nor socialist, in which the bureaucracy becomes, by virtue of its monopoly of political power, the bearer of a new mode of production. This mode of production and form of society Max Shachtman, a renegade from Trotskyism in 1940, described as 'bureaucratic collectivism'. Shachtman was more concerned with the Soviet question than Nazi Germany when the theory was first evolved, since he and his co-thinkers had come out in the American Socialist Workers Party against the defence of the USSR as a degenerated workers' state, the issue being precipitated by the conclusion of the Stalin-Hitler Pact in August 1939. His main co-factionalist, James Burnham, later carried this theory to its logical end, in his book *The Managerial Revolution* (first published in 1942, when the author was in the process of severing his last links with any form of socialism; he is now a spokesman of the American ultra-right). Burnham says this of Hitler's Germany:

As compared with the undoubtedly capitalist nations of France... and England (and the United States too), and relying upon the analogies that may be drawn from comparable historical situations, Germany exhibits the signs not of decadence, but of social revolution, of the transition to a new structure of society. ^[12]

Like the USSR, Burnham argued, Nazi Germany was coming under the rule of the 'managers' who, while holding no title deeds to the property of the big industrial concerns and the banks, were not only Germany's political administrators, but its effective economic rulers as well. Burnham forwards the most tendentious evidence to back up his case, citing the official limit on dividends as proof that capitalism had been superseded by a new type of planned economy that rode roughshod over the private interests of capitalists:

The German capitalists as *capitalists*... because of their loss of control over the instruments of production - a loss which leads progressively to their loss of legal ownership rights and of income - slip from their position as the ruling class in Germany. They become, more and more, simply tolerated pensioners, rapidly approaching social impotence... In short, Germany is today [1941] a managerial state in an early stage. Structurally, it is less advanced along managerial lines than Russia... ^[13]

Again we see the inverse mirror image of vulgar, Stalinised 'Marxism', which mechanically *identifies* the dominant social class with the forms of political power (thus in the USSR, the Kremlin bureaucracy is presented as the direct and undiluted representative of the political will of the proletariat; in Nazi Germany, Hitler was simply the tool of monopoly capital). Burnham divorces economics from politics entirely; or rather he inverts their real relationship, one that while always reciprocal, is grounded on the primacy of economics as the necessary foundation of all human existence and social organisation.

Not only the idealist method, but also the theories of Burnham and Shachtman have continued to appear in different pseudo-Marxist guises within and around the workers' movement. In Britain, they find their clearest expression in the group International Socialism, which, while not holding the USSR to be a bureaucratic collectivist society, denies that it is a workers' state, and declares it to be a form of capitalism, namely 'state capitalism'. ^[14]

The revision of Marxist principles and theory, while being a response to certain reactionary social pressures and forces, also possesses its own inner logic. From revising Marx, Lenin and Trotsky on the nature of the state as their writings pertain to the degenerated workers' state in the USSR, one leading member of the IS, Peter Sedgwick, proceeded to apply essentially the same anti-Marxist criteria to Nazi Germany.

We refer to his review article 'The Problem of Fascism' (*International Socialism*, no 42). As far as the author has been able to ascertain, no disavowal or critique of or protest against this scandalous article has ever appeared in the press of *International Socialism*, a group which now commands a growing following amongst industrial workers and declares that it intends in the future to launch a revolutionary socialist party. The simple fact that what amounts to a denial of the counter-revolutionary role of German fascism can not only appear in the IS press, but remain unanswered for four years, testifies to the utterly debauched political character of its leadership, and is proof that this leadership, whatever it pretends to the contrary, has nothing whatsoever in common with authentic Trotskyism. Let Mr Sedgwick, a representative of the quasi-anarchist wing of the IS, speak for himself:

The economic goals of the fascists were totally dissimilar from almost any private capitalist system before or since, in that they deliberately pulled out of the world trading network and tried to build a closed economy based on a self-sufficient nation... There is no evidence of any specific business pressure in the determination of Nazi conquest policy - though of course the big firms moved in eagerly to clean up the spoils of annexation once the policy was implemented. This abdication from political influence is in stark contrast with the role of the industrialists in the Weimar Republic, or even in Schacht's hey-day in the 1933-36 period... there is so much in Hitler's behaviour (which, owing to the structure of command, was synonymous with the behaviour of Germany) that defies any but a narrowly ideological analysis. Courses of action were chosen not because they made any kind of economic (or even military) sense but because the belief-system of the leadership demanded these measures... the extermination of the Jews... defies reason no less than conscience... German society was never more 'progressive' (in the narrow cynical Marxist sense of the development of the forces of production) than at the height of the war... with output of tanks, for instance, multiplying five-fold between 1942 and 1944... The utility even of a revised Marxist analysis breaks down, however, in the face of the gas chambers. The most dedicated and developed social theory that human civilisation has attained has nothing to contribute towards our understanding of Nazism's politics of race murder... It is little wonder that so many on the Left have resorted to psychological explanation as the first available alternative to the Marxist vacuum... [But] it doesn't need Freud to tell us why people cheer a politician who stops unemployment, or why they fight savagely when their homes are bombed.

[15]

Let us take stock of Sedgwick's case thus far, and refute it with facts. First we should note that despite his air of great knowledgeability - 'there is no evidence of any specific business pressure...' - his judgements appear to be based largely on the findings and conclusions of Tim Mason, whose contribution to the symposium on fascism (*The Nature of Fascism*) Sedgwick is reviewing. Be that as it may, Sedgwick offers us also his own anti-Marxist explanation of the nature and role of fascism in Germany. He states that the Nazis ran counter to capitalist interests by seeking to build a self-sufficient economy in Germany. Not so. The Nazi aim was not a closed-in *national* economy, but a far larger unit embracing the entire *continent* of Europe from - to quote the EEC slogan of De Gaulle - 'the Atlantic to the Urals'. Hitler's views on foreign policy are of course set out in his *Mein Kampf*, and they include proposals for the annexation of the richly endowed Soviet land-mass to Germany's east. Perhaps Sedgwick will claim that Hitler's expansionist programme was politically or even psychologically motivated. Then let us quote from later pronouncements by Nazi leaders which disprove not only Sedgwick's claim that the Nazis desired a self-sufficient German economy, but his contention that National Socialism not only ignored but constantly ran counter to capitalist-imperialist interests.

On 5 November 1937, Hitler addressed a meeting of armed forces leaders on the main aspects and motives of Nazi foreign policy:

Before touching upon the question of solving the need for living space, it must be decided whether a solution of the German position with a good future can be attained, either by way of an autarchy or by way of an increased share in universal commerce and industry.

Autarchy: Execution will be possible only with strict National Socialist state policy, which is the basis: assuming this can be achieved, the results are as follows: a) In the sphere of raw materials, only limited, *but not total* autarchy is feasible. b) In the case of foods, *the question of an autarchy must be answered with a definite 'No'...*

Participation in the World Economy: There are limits to this which we are unable to transgress. The market fluctuations would be an obstacle to a secure foundation of the German position: international commercial agreements do *not* offer a guarantee for practical execution. We live in a period of *economic* empires in which the tendency to colonise again approaches the condition which originally motivated colonisation. In Japan and Italy *economic motives are the basis of their will to expand, the economic need will also drive Germany to it...* The upward tendency, which has been caused in world economy, due to armament competition, can never form a permanent basis for an economic settlement, and this latter is also hampered by the economic disruption caused by Bolshevism... *The only way out... is the securing of greater living space... it is not a case of conquering people, but of conquering agriculturally useful space. It would also be more to the purpose to seek raw materials-producing territory in Europe directly adjoining the Reich and not overseas...* The development of great world-wide national bodies is naturally a slow process and the German people, with its strong racial root, *has for this purpose the most favourable foundations in the heart of the European continent.* The history of all times - Roman Empire, British Empire - has proved that any space expansion can only be effected by breaking resistance and taking risks... *The question for Germany is where the greatest possible conquest could be made at the lowest cost...* The German question can be solved *only by way of force*, and this is never without risk... ^[16]

Early in the war against the USSR, Hitler declared to Otto Abetz, a high official in the German Foreign Ministry, that:

... once the Asiatics had been driven out, Europe would no longer be dependent on any outside power. America too, could 'get lost'... Europe would itself provide all the raw materials it needed and have its own markets in the Russian area, so that we would no longer have any need of other world trade. The new Russia, as far as the Urals, would become 'our India'... ^[17]

Sedgwick is of course a devotee of the counter-revolutionary theory of 'state capitalism'. For him, the USSR is an imperialist power, not one iota more progressive than American or British imperialism. Therefore its defence against imperialism is of no concern to him. The Soviet-German war of 1941-45 was a war of two rival imperialisms, of two equally reactionary systems of bureaucratic repression. The Nazi leadership saw things in a different - and more realistic - light, despite Sedgwick's claim that National Socialism is susceptible only to psychological analysis. Unlike the theoreticians of 'state capitalism', the Nazis understood with remarkable clarity the principled differences between the German and Soviet economies; as the following document, *Economic Policy Directives for War on the USSR* (23 May 1941) demonstrates.

Issued by the Wehrmacht Economic Staff East, Agriculture Group, it stated in part:

... the principles must be pointed out... under the Bolshevik system Russia has... withdrawn from Europe and this upset the European equilibrium based on the division of labour. Our task is to reintegrate Russia with the European division of labour, and it involves, of necessity, the disruption of the existing economic equilibrium within the Soviet Union. Thus, it is not important, under any circumstances, to preserve what has existed, but what matters is a deliberate turning away from the existing situation and introducing Russian food resources into the European framework. This will inevitably result in an extinction of industry as well as of a large part of the people in what so far have been food-deficient areas... ^[18]

Is this programme so very different from the policy outlined by the industrialist von Delbruck to the German Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg in September 1915?

We are no longer fighting for the mastery in the internal market but for mastery in the world market. And it is only a Europe which forms a single customs unit that can meet with sufficient power the over-mighty productive resources of the transatlantic world.

All one can deduce is that the EEC has some very dubious ancestors.

More than two months earlier on 1 March 1941, at a conference held by General Thomas (head of the Economic Department of the Armed Forces), a new organisation was formed to supervise the economic

exploitation of the occupied territories of the Soviet East - namely, 'Economic Staff Oldenburg'. At this first meeting, the point was made that 'the whole organisation was to be subordinated to the Reich Marshal' (that is, Goering, who was the Nazi Minister responsible for the overall direction of the war economy). A memo taken at the conference recorded that:

... the main mission of the organisation will consist of seizing raw materials and taking over all important concerns. For the latter mission reliable persons from German concerns will be interposed suitably from the beginning, since successful operations from the beginning can only be performed by the aid of their experiences (for example, lignite, ore, chemistry, petroleum). ^[19]

So the Nazis *did* need big business, just as much as the heads of the concerns that were to join in the plunder of the USSR required the force of Nazi arms, to accomplish their aim of a Europe dominated economically by the great German trusts.

This joint operation was worked out to the last tiny detail. On 21 March, Working Committee Oldenburg met again under Thomas, and took the following decisions:

In the rear of the army, the Reichs leader of the SS is first of all responsible for the entire control, except for the economic field. The *Wehrmacht* commanders are made responsible for the exploitation of the country's industry. Each army is to be followed [into the USSR] by a security division. For reasons of expediency the industrial armaments commands in the beginning will be attached to these security divisions. As soon as operations have made further progress, the industrial armaments commands will come under *Wehrmacht* commanders. Experts to be appointed to each sphere - oil, agriculture, etc. ^[20]

The *Wehrmacht* conquers, the SS 'secures' - then the 'experts' - the representatives of the trusts - move in for the kill. A vast apparatus to supervise the annexation and exploitation of Soviet resources and installations was created nearly two months before the actual invasion on 22 June 1941. On 29 April, an armed forces conference considered the economic aspects of the impending invasion, setting up, under Major General Schubert, an economic general staff. At its head were five Economic Inspectorates, which were to administer the five main economic regions of European Russia. There were in addition 23 Economic Commands, and 12 sub-offices:

These offices are used in the military rear area: the idea is that in the territory of each army group, an economic inspectorate is to be established at the seat of the commander of the military rear area, and that this inspectorate will supervise the economic exploitation of the territory. ^[21]

Since this unprecedented undertaking required 'a gigantic staff apparatus', the branches of the armed forces involved in the invasion were requested to nominate staff for the key posts in the economic administration, in line with their special skills and needs. They were also circulated with an economic map of the USSR indicating the main targets for seizure and exploitation, and a list 'showing all [German] firms which are important from the point of view of industrial armaments'. ^[22]

On 20 April, Hitler appointed his anti-Bolshevik mentor Rosenberg 'Commissioner for the Central Control of Questions Connected with the East-European Region'. On 8 May, the aspiring Gauleiter of the USSR issued a directive authorising the restoration of all German property nationalised by the revolutionary government after 1917, 'the manner of compensation and restitution of this national property to be subject to different treatment by each Reich commissariat...'. ^[23] As Trotsky had warned 10 years previously, when the Nazis had still to seize power, Hitler was 'the super-Wrangel of the world bourgeoisie'.

Two days before the invasion of the USSR, Hitler held a conference with General Thomas, Keitel and Todt, at which he further developed his ideas on the impracticability of German autarchy:

The course of the war shows that we went too far in our autarchical endeavours. It is impossible to try and manufacture everything we lack by synthetic procedures or other measures... All these... ask for a tremendous amount of manpower, and it is simply impossible to provide it. One has to choose another way. What one does not have, but needs, one must simply conquer... The aim must... be to secure all territories which are of special interest to us for the war economy, by conquering them. ^[24]

When the Nazi invasion began on 22 June, the German armies ripped their way deep into Soviet territory *as the armed spearhead of the capitalist mode of production*. The planned, use-oriented, state-owned economy of the USSR was, wherever the Swastika held sway, broken up forcibly and supplanted by a system of production subordinated directly to the capitalist, profit-g geared economy of Nazi Germany.

Even as the first frontier battles raged, measures were in hand to make permanent the capitalist trusteeship of the plundered Soviet industrial concerns. In his capacity as chief of the Second Four-Year Plan, Goering issued a directive on 27 July 1941, which stated in part:

It will be sufficient for the purpose of safeguarding German interests during the transition period if especially important branches of industry are administered by German firms as individual trustees... It will be borne in mind that the trustee administrator, which is connected with strong state supervision, does not represent the final solution. It must be endeavoured, at an earliest possible date, to lease the enterprises to German... and to local entrepreneurs... In the long run the highest economic performance cannot be expected from Bolshevik collective economy, but only on the proven basis of private economy directed by the state. The system of collective economy shall, therefore, be continued only as long as it is absolutely essential to avoid disruption in the supply of the German army and economy from the Russian territory which might result from a sudden change in the form of economy. ^[25]

This statement greatly pleased the heads of the giant trusts, many of whose experts and managers had been seconded as trustees to run the captured plants. On 3 January 1942, the Political Department of IG Farben sent a letter to its Executive Board on the prospects of plunder in the USSR:

The companies of the East, the practical function of which is at present to regulate the relationship to the German economy, must be considered as mere expediency institutions which later on, at the proper moment after the end of the war, will be superseded in some way or other by private enterprise. In any case, the basic tendency aims at increasing already the responsibilities of the plant leaders who are, at present, still employed as trustees, and at creating the basis for individual enterprise through participation in profits. In this connection it is particularly interesting that the *Führer* emphasised in unmistakable terms to the Reich Marshal that state or Party economy was not to be introduced into the occupied territories, but that private enterprise was to be allowed to go its own way as far as possible. The end of the war is envisaged as the date on which private industrial enterprise is finally to be included in the scheme... ^[26]

Goering never deviated from his declared policy of 27 July. On 2 November 1942, he issued another decree on Nazi economic principles in the occupied Soviet East:

The Bolshevik regime combines its political direction of the economy and the practical management of the plants and commercial enterprises in the hands of the state. This is contrary to the National Socialist conception of economy. The authorities should direct the economic policy, but the economy must look after the practical management... The Reichs groups Industry and Commerce have now offered to take over the selection of businessmen for these branches of the economy according to the principle of private economy and within the framework of a company [this proposal of big business had the support of Rosenberg and Economics Minister Funk - RB]... I agree that the Economic Group East should take over the task of attracting all available German and European economic assets for the branches of industrial economy not yet controlled by the licensed Eastern Corporations, and of supporting firms and enterprises called upon in their practical work... The question of establishing private ownership in the occupied territories cannot be decided at this juncture, out of consideration for those taking part in the war. Industrialists who, in the interest of the war effort, offer their services now for the rebuilding of the eastern economy, may, however, be confident that they will receive preference later, along with the war veterans. ^[27]

Goebbels was another of the Nazi high command who expressed his opinions on the shape of the planned 'new order'. Once again, the aim was a Europe united under Nazi Germany hegemony, and not simply a *Germany* economically self-sufficient. On 13 October 1941, Goebbels said to a conference of his Propaganda Ministry:

Militarily this war has already been decided. All that remains to be done is of a predominantly political character both at home and abroad. The German armies in the East will come to a halt at some point, and we shall draw up a frontier there which will act as a bulwark against the East for Europe and for the European power under German leadership... Certainly this will be a 'Europe behind barbed wire', but this Europe will be entirely self-sufficient economically, industrially and agriculturally, and it will be basically unassailable militarily. ^[28]

Sedgwick, following Mason, talks of the 'demotion' and 'subordination' of the capitalist class by Hitler, whom he depicts as 'the pioneer of the permanent arms economy and corporate planning'.^[29] Once again, it is necessary to insist that the political subordination of big capital to the Nazi leadership was the precondition of its economic survival, and, between 1933 and the first military reverses suffered in the war, of its expansion. While at the political level, the possessing classes were rudely jostled out of all their former commanding positions (with the exception of the army and the civil service), we find, contrary to Sedgwick's assertion that big business found itself increasingly demoted and subordinated, that it exercised an influence on government policy and representation on state economic bodies that it had never enjoyed under the Weimar Republic. On Sedgwick's own admission, arms production comprised an essential and ever increasing segment of German industrial output and investment. Those responsible for the direction of the main arms production committees would, therefore, be wielders of immense economic power. According to Sedgwick's schema of economic and political relations in the Third Reich, we would expect to find leading Nazis in all the key arms production committees. Not so. The Chairman of the main weapons committee, Dr Tix, was also managing director of *Hanomag*, a subsidiary of the Flick Steel Trust, the United Steel Works. The Chairman of the aircraft production committee was another leading capitalist, Frydag, managing director of Messerschmitt. General war equipment production was under the control of another United Steel man, Mauterer, as was the steel rolling mills committee, headed by Rohland, chairman of the executive board of the Flick concern. The Steel Trust also exerted its influence over the iron-pressing committee through the managing director of another of its subsidiary companies, *Deutsche Eisenwerke AG*.

Two-thirds of the top staff of Goering's Four-Year Plan department were drawn from IG Farben, a concern which acquired enormous political as well as economic power in the later years of the Third Reich. When the Nazi empire reached its maximum extent in 1942, IG Farben's workforce (many thousands of them being slaves at Auschwitz and other death camps) approached half a million workers. Its directors not only shared in the looting of the occupied countries, but actively prepared and guided it. A leading IG Farben director declared after the war at Nuremberg:

The general policy of the Nazi government in respect to the conquered countries was to take as much out of those countries as possible... IG played an important role in adapting the industries of those countries to the purposes of the Nazi war-machine... IG acquired new companies, augmented its participation in other companies and made a tremendous amount of new capital investments in the conquered countries.

This was born out by another IG director, Dr Kupper: 'To my knowledge, IG Farben, its directors and officers, fully approved the Nazi aggression against Poland, Czechoslovakia and France. It profited considerably from these conquests.' A week before the Munich deal between German, French, Italian and British imperialism which led to the Nazi annexation of Czechoslovakia, IG Farben appointed two commissars - Directors Wurster and Kugler - to take over and run the giant Czech firm of Aussiger Verein, the fourth largest chemical concern in Europe and a bitter rival of IG Farben. Within hours of Nazi troops crossing the border into the Sudetenland, the IG takeover operation was under way, and a week later, Directors Kugler and Wurster were safely installed in their new offices in Prague. Thereupon, the IG Farben President Hermann Schmitz sent Hitler a congratulatory telegram:

Profoundly impressed by the return of Sudetenland-Germany to the Reich which you, my Führer, have achieved, the IG Farben Industrie AG puts an amount of half a million RM at your disposal for use in the German Sudetenland territory.

IG could certainly afford such a paltry gift, since its profits were to multiply 16-fold in the years between 1932 and 1943, reaching the global amount of 822 million RM.^[30]

The next big target IG Farben had its eyes on was the French chemical concern, Kuhlmann, the second largest in Europe. Here too, the Chemical Trust collaborated closely with the Nazi regime and the armed forces in each stage of the takeover, with Economic Minister Funk even inviting IG Farben to submit its proposals for the economic reorganisation of Europe under German domination. This the concern did on 3 August 1940, less than two months after the French surrender. In its proposals, IG Farben demanded the subordination of the entire French chemical industry to German control and requirements:

In contradiction to the previous forms of Franco-German chemical agreements these syndicates must be placed under a tightly unified leadership, which considering the greater importance of the German chemical industry, must lie in German hands and have its seat in Germany.

Hans Hemmen of the German foreign office informed leaders of the French chemical industry at a meeting in Wiesbaden on 21 November 1940, that the IG proposals 'are in your interest. They are in the interest of the IG, they are above all in the interest of Europe, since essentially, it is a question of reorganising the continent of Europe.' Or to paraphrase a well-known American saying, 'What is good for IG Farben is good for Europe.'

Whilst in the USSR, the Nazi invaders broke up the system of nationalised production and planned economy established by the October Revolution, in the West, the German economy was able to integrate its conquests without any such social overturn. Indeed, much of French ownership and management was left intact, with production now being subordinated to the tactical and strategic requirements of German imperialism. The IG Farben director Schnitzler testified in 1945 that:

... based on the slogan of collaboration, intercourse developed between the German and French industries, which practically included the whole French industry... I may cite the name of M Marcel Boussac, the greatest industrialist in the textile field. His works were occupied to a large extent for direct or indirect orders of the *Wehrmacht*, and he himself was frequently with German representatives at luncheon and dinner parties. The same applies to the iron and steel industry, and the work done by Schneider-Creusot for the *Wehrmacht* is publicly known.

Krupp AG also grew fat on the plunder afforded by Nazi conquest, the concern's assets swelling from 76 million RM in 1933 to 237.3 million RM 10 years later. Quite apart from the vast profits accruing from an ever-increasing flow of state contracts for arms production, Krupp augmented its income through the seizure of the rich iron-fields and installations of the Ukraine. Gustav Krupp's son Alfried, a fanatical Nazi, and SS man to boot, was the dominating personality on the administrative board of the company established to supervise the plunder of the Soviet iron industry - namely the Mining and Foundry Works Company East, Inc. Krupp was also active on the Western front, along with IG Farben and a horde of lesser looters. As the *Wehrmacht* advanced through Holland, a group of company officials sat in an exclusive Düsseldorf club listening to radio reports of the battle. Spread out before them was a map. As a town fell, so the industrialists staked their claim for its factories and mines: 'Here is village - . There is Müller - he is yours. There is Herr Schmidt, or Huber... he has two plants, we will have him arrested...' Krupp made sure that it had its own man on the state board responsible for iron production, Arms Minister Speer appointing Alfried Krupp deputy chairman of the Reich Iron Association in May 1942.

At the peak of its productive activity, the Krupp Empire employed 115 000 workers exclusive of slaves. Its profits in the year 1939-40 amounted to 12 million RM. Sedgwick insists that 'even a revised Marxist analysis breaks down... in the face of the gas-chambers', and that Marxism 'has nothing to contribute towards our understanding of Nazism's politics of race murder.'^[31] Is Sedgwick saying that the materialist conception of history is unable to unearth the historical-economic roots of racialism and chauvinism? That Nazi anti-Semitism was a purely self-sufficient and autonomous ideology that neither had material origins nor a political function in the class struggle? He does not make this clear. He is possibly, therefore, concerned mainly with the holocaust that descended on European Jewry in the death camps of the Third Reich. He says:

If the necessity that stoked the Auschwitz crematories was not economic and was not political (in the sense of pursuing rational policy objectives in the public arena) what else can it have been but psychological?^[32]

Is it true that there were no economic motives for the extermination of the Jews? Auschwitz became the centre where Jews were collected and gassed in vast numbers - some estimates put the total as high as two million. Whose idea was it to establish a camp at Auschwitz, a camp that not only killed Jews with gas supplied by a subsidiary of IG Farben, but selected the fitter 'specimens' for slave labour? On 2 November 1940, a conference was held between representatives of IG Farben and the Ministry of Economics on the question of building a new plant to manufacture synthetic oil, the so-called Buna plant. On 11 November the IG Farben Chemical Committee was in session, where a report was made on the practicability of building a new Buna plant in the occupied East. On 9 January 1941, the Mayor of Auschwitz replied to a letter from IG Farben, dated 23 December 1940, which asked for details of a suitable site for the proposed plant in the regions of the former Polish town. 'There is a good and suitable site', wrote the Mayor, 'of the required size in the immediate neighbourhood, to the east of Auschwitz. It is flat and above flood-level, and also offers favourable rail connections such as are seldom found.' The Mayor listed the ethnic composition of the local inhabitants, reporting there to be 7000 Jews, 'concentrated in the town of Auschwitz', out of a total population of 25 507.

From this point onwards, events moved fast. On 18 January 1941, IG Farben held a joint conference with representatives of the Schlesien-Benzin Co, with whom it was intended to develop the proposed Buna plant. A director of the latter firm, Josenhans, reported on the Auschwitz site:

The inhabitants of Auschwitz consist of 2000 Germans, 4000 Jews and 7000 Poles... The Jews and Poles, *if industry is established there, will be turned out*, so that the town will then be available for the staff of the factory... *A concentration camp will be built in the immediate neighbourhood of Auschwitz for the Jews and Poles.* ^[33]

Right from the beginning, therefore, IG Farben and its partners in crime were not merely privy to the decision to build a slave camp at Auschwitz for Jews and Poles, but were its direct and immediate beneficiaries. By 25 January, we find IG official Faust reporting to the firm's chief engineer Santo that 'south of Auschwitz there is a concentration camp with 20 000 Jews'. By this time, Poles and Jews were being considered as the chief source of labour for the proposed plant. On 10 February, a further report by Santo speaks of an impending 'expansion' of the concentration camp at Auschwitz, and of the 'employment of prisoners for the building project after negotiations with the *Reichsführer SS*' - Himmler. There were, however, doubts about the quality of the labour force. A team of IG Farben officials who visited Auschwitz and its camp found 'the ethnic composition very bad'. This was not permitted to hold up the erection of the new plant, the go-ahead for procuring labour being given by Goering on 18 February 1941. Construction of the Buna plant was soon under way, but still there was a shortage of labour. The invasion of the USSR on 22 June solved this problem. A meeting of the IG supervisory board on 11 July 1941 decided that 'the plants [will] have to make all efforts to get necessary workers. By utilising foreign workers and prisoners of war, the demands could be met.' ^[34] As more and more regions of the USSR fell to the Nazi advance, the supply of slave labour became more plentiful. All the leading firms had their share, with Krupps setting up its own plants near Auschwitz close by those of IG Farben. Even under the conditions of barbarism imposed on the workforce by the alliance of SS and big business, there were instances of open defiance. On one occasion, Polish and Jewish slaves were beaten so unmercifully by their SS guards that the entire work force - *Germans included* - staged a strike. The response of the IG Farben management was immediate. An official of the firm on the Buna site reported:

The exceedingly unpleasant scenes that occur on the construction site because of this are beginning to have a demoralising effect on the free workers (Poles) as well as the Germans. We have therefore asked that they should refrain from carrying out this flogging on the construction site and transfer it to the inside of the concentration camp. ^[35]

Hear no evil...

By 1944, 7.5 million foreign slaves were employed in German firms on Reich territory, and an even larger number in the occupied territories on various private and state undertakings connected with the war effort. According to Oswald Pohl, head of the SS economic department (which had as one of its tasks the procurement of slave labour), 'the large Buna Werke in Auschwitz ... was a giant plant with 40 000 foreign workers and inmates employed there'. He adds that the notorious Höss, the commandant of the Auschwitz death camp directly responsible for the gassing of untold numbers of Jews, 'knew the [IG Farben] managers... they were in frequent contact... there were 800 outside labour camps [at Auschwitz], how many IG Farben had I just don't know.' Pohl, who of course worked closely with the heads of the large concerns employing slave labour supplied to them by the SS, also testifies that 'there were thousands of firms. All the armaments firms that were in Germany came with their requests to us... The names of the main firms... Messerschmitt, Salzgitter, Brabag AG, but there were many, many more...' ^[36] The following were firms who hired SS slave labour from one concentration camp - Flossenbürg: Messerschmitt AG, Mitteldeutsche Stahlwerke AG, Siemens-Schuckert AG, Zeiss Ikon (Dresden), Bernsdorf AG, Universelle Maschinenfabrik AG, Opta-Radi AG, Auto-Union AG.

Sedgwick is not alone in claiming that Nazi racial policy lacked material, specifically economic motives. This is a view shared by most commentators on the history of National Socialism and the Third Reich. Hitler, we are told time and again, was 'not interested' in economic questions. How then to account for his already quoted statements on the economic basis of Nazi imperialist policy? How then to account for the following remarks made during the war on the profitability of the Nazi slave labour programme?

[The]... integration of 20 million foreign workers at cheap rate into the German industrial system represents a saving which, again, is greatly in excess of the debts contracted by the state. A simple calculation... will show the correctness of this contention; the foreign worker earns

approximately a thousand marks a year, in comparison with the average earnings of two thousand marks by German workers. Work out what this comes to *in toto*, and you will see that the final gain is enormous. ^[37]

The bulk of the gain went to the private employers of foreign labour. The lowest rates of pay went, of course, to Soviet POWs. A Soviet worker employed in Germany in a job rated, for a German worker, at between 21 and 24 RM per week would receive the pittance of 2.50 RM. The balance would then be divided between the firm, which pocketed a super-profit, and the prison camp which housed the workers between working hours. The death rate for Soviet workers, even in Germany, where conditions were better than in the slave camps of the East, was appallingly high. This did not worry their employers in the least, however, since for as long as the German army continued to advance, and the SS to round up more workers, there was no danger of demand exceeding supply. German fascism had made possible, over a limited period of time, the intensified exploitation of labour power by denying to it even the basic essentials of its reproduction. This was the barbarous logic of the death-camp system, which Sedgwick attributes to non-economic, psychological factors.

And just as German capitalism enriched itself on slave labour of the doomed Jews and other subject peoples, so it found profit even in their extermination and bodily remains. We find IG Farben well to the fore here also, manufacturing the poison gas crystals - Cyclon B - that slaughtered several millions of Jewish men, women, children and babies in the Auschwitz gas chambers. Cyclon B was pioneered by the firm of Degesh, in which IG Farben had a 42.5 per cent holding. Five of its 11 directors were IG men, four being directors of another firm Degussa, one from a smaller chemical concern Goldschmitt, and one from a subsidiary of Degesh. Even though it was established at the Nuremberg Trials that IG supplied Cyclon B in vast quantities to the SS, the charge of willingly participating in the murder of the Jews by gassing was not upheld by the court. In the words of Judge Morris:

The proof is quite convincing that large quantities of Cyclon B were supplied to the SS by Degesh and that it was used in the mass extermination of inmates of concentration camps, including Auschwitz. But neither the volume of production nor the fact that large shipments were destined to concentration camps would alone be sufficient to lead us to conclude that those who knew of such facts must also have had knowledge of the criminal purposes to which this substance was being put. Any such conclusion is refuted by the well-known need for insecticides wherever large numbers of displaced [sic!] persons, brought in from widely scattered regions, are confined in congested quarters lacking adequate sanitary facilities. ^[38]

Despite the amazing credulity of the Nuremberg judges, it was established that Dr Fritz Meer of the Central Committee of the IG Farben board of directors, conducted experiments with Tabun, a toxic gas intended for military use. The murder of those killed in such experiments he justified with the comment: 'No harm had been done as they would have been killed anyway.' Yes - and by another brand of IG gas. Once gassed with Cyclon B, the mountains of corpses had to be disposed of as quickly as possible, to make way for fresh batches of victims in the chambers. Here too private enterprise was most obliging. Fortunately for the firms concerned with the work, incinerators were in demand not only at Auschwitz, but at most concentration camps throughout the Nazi Empire. The following is a memo dated 10 January 1940 from the SS Construction Management Office re the request from the Buchenwald Camp administration for a crematorium:

As a result of the high mortality rate in the Buchenwald concentration camp, it has become necessary to supply an emergency crematorium with oil burning furnace... The furnace is being supplied and erected by the firm JA Topf and Son, Erfurt...

The same firm of Topf and sons secured the lucrative contract to build the crematoria for the Auschwitz camp, which, when running at full blast, was gassing more than 20 000 Jews daily. A letter from the firm, dated 12 February 1943, to the Central Office of SS and Police at Auschwitz, reads:

Subject: Crematoria 2 and 3 for the camp for prisoners of war. We acknowledge receipt of your wire of 10 February as follows: 'We again acknowledge receipt of your order for five triple furnaces, including two electric lifts for raising the corpses, and one for stoking coal was also ordered and one for the ashes. You are to deliver the complete installation for Crematorium No 3. You are expected to take steps to ensure the immediate dispatch of all the machines complete with parts.'

Topf and Son had their rivals in this murderous business. Tesch and Stabenow of Hamburg wrote to the SS Construction Management on 25 August 1941:

We have still to acknowledge your above letter and thank you very much for the delivery of circulation equipment for two extermination chambers of 10 cubic metres each, 8 transport trucks and 2 spring tele-thermometers as per our offer of 24-7-41... In consideration of the longer delivery dates generally required today, we recommend that you place an order as soon as possible for the equipment needed for operating the chambers, for which make you an offer in our letter of 11 August 1941. At present the delay in deliveries of masks amounts to about 3 months. Heil Hitler! Tesch and Stabenow International Vermin Exterminating Co Ltd.

The high death rate at the SS camp in Belgrade, where captured Communist partisans were interned, also called for similar equipment. The firm of Didier-Werke picked up the contract here:

With reference to your son's visit and his conversation with our expert, Herr Storl, we note that the Belgrade SS unit intends to build a crematorium for a large camp and construct the building in collaboration with local architects... For lifting the bodies into the furnace, we suggest simply a metal fork moving on cylinders. Each furnace will have an oven measuring only 600 millimetres in breadth and 450 mm in height, as coffins will not be used. For transporting the corpses from the storage point to the furnaces we suggest using light carts on wheels and we enclose diagrams of these drawn to scale.

The firm of Kari were in the same trade:

Following our verbal discussion regarding the delivery of a crematorium installation of simple construction, we suggest our perfected coal burning furnaces for crematoria which have hitherto given full satisfaction... Awaiting further news, we will be at your service. Heil Hitler!

Professional pride was not misplaced, since Kari had built similar crematoria for the death camps at Dachau and Lublin.

Private enterprise muscled in on another undertaking of the Nazis - the destruction of the Warsaw ghetto, ordered by Himmler following the crushing of the heroic Jewish uprising in the Jewish quarter of the Polish capital in the spring of 1943. Pohl reported to Himmler on 19 October 1943, that

... the following efficient firms under the leadership of the firm Merckle, Ostrow-Wartheland, have been engaged: Ostdeutsche Tiefbau, Hamburg, Firma Willy Kemer, Warsaw, Berlinische Baugesellschaft, Berlin. These firms have guaranteed to pull down and to remove 4500 cubic metres daily. ^[39]

Still German capitalism had not finished with the Jews. It had worked them to death, profited from their extermination and the demolition of their homes. Now it was time to capitalise on their possessions and human remains. Action Reinhardt, as it was called, involved the looting and monetary evaluation of all the personal effects of the Jews murdered in the death camps. Literally nothing was permitted to go to waste, as Oswald Pohl, the SS officer in charge of the operation, later testified when under interrogation at Nuremberg:

Pohl: Foreign currency, rings and other things came from camps to Berlin, packed in cases, and they were given to the *Reichsbank* by us.

Question: What was the *Reichsbank* to do with these gold teeth?

Pohl: They were to evaluate them, and their equivalent was to be deposited at the *Reichsbank* treasury.

Question: Höss [commandant of Auschwitz] has testified that gold bars had also come from Auschwitz.

Pohl: I have seen gold bars, yes. ...

Question: Where did the gold bars - if they came from Auschwitz - originate?

Pohl: Probably from the Jews who were exterminated... Those gold bars were made from the melting of the various things, among other things, gold fillings.

Pohl described the macabre scene at the *Reichsbank* where after an SS delegation had admired the loot in the vaults of the *Reichsbank*, Pohl and his fellow officers joined *Reichsbank* President Funk and his staff upstairs where 'Funk invited us to have dinner with him.' ^[40] More details of Action Reinhardt appear in

the directive sent to the SS Administration at Auschwitz by the Nazi governor of Poland, Hans Frank. Dated 26 September 1942, it reads:

Cash money in German *Reichsbank* notes had to be paid into the account: Economic and Administration Office 158/1488 with the *Reichsbank* in Berlin-Schönberg. Foreign exchange (coined or uncoined), rare metals, jewellery, precious and semi-precious stones, pearls, gold from teeth and scrap gold have to be delivered to the SS Economic and Administrative main office. The latter is responsible for the immediate delivery to the *Reichsbank*.

The monetary valuation put on the total spoils of Action Reinhardt had attained, by June 1943, the stupendous sum of 178 745 960.59 RM. Funk's staff had calculated the plunder down to the last pfennig! The funds thus realised by this modern version of primitive capitalist accumulation were then loaned out at the low rate of interest of three per cent to German firms.

All that remained now were the bodies. Most were disposed of in crematoria. But towards the end of the war, the Nazis decided to put the corpses of murdered Jews in the service of the Third Reich just as they had enriched it with their slave labour. According to an eye-witness at the Auschwitz camp:

From 1943, the Germans, in order to utilise the bones which were not burned, started to grind them and sell them to the firm Strem for the manufacture of superphosphates. In the camp there were found bills of lading addressed to the firm Strem, for 112 tons and 600 kilograms of bone meal from human corpses. The Germans also used for industrial purposes hair shorn from women who were doomed for extermination.

Fat from human bodies was converted into soap at the Danzig Anatomic Institute under Professor Spanner. The Danzig firm AJRD also made soap from human bones, while human skin was tanned and put to commercial uses, as in the manufacture of lampshades. Is it necessary to cite further such examples to prove that economic, capitalist forces were at work in the enslavement and destruction of European Jewry? Or must we still seek the cause of Auschwitz in a mythical German psyche?

No Marxist would deny the enormous force of Nazi racialism, its mystical religious nature, and the dynamism which its pseudo-populism imparted to German imperialism. In this sense, Nazi anti-Semitism was indeed an historically unique phenomenon which has still to be properly accounted for by Marxists. But Sedgwick is saying something else:

What has to be determined is the function of anti-Semitism... in the belief system of the National Socialist movement as a whole. For, despite the *programmatically timid* and *opportunistic* of all the wings of Nazism, from Hitler to the so-called 'Left Nazis' like the Strassers, the '*Socialism*' of '*National Socialism*' has to be taken very seriously. All the militancy and sacrifice, *all the hatred of privilege and corruption, all the determination to make a better and cleaner world*, which among revolutionary socialists is attached to a class perspective upon society, *was present among the Nazi pioneers; only [sic!] linked to a racial vision*. Demagogy and conscious deception were practised constantly and consciously, *but within the limits of a terrible sincerity*... the worst vices come through the corruption of *the noblest instincts* - and the worst cruelties through the deflection of *class militancy* upon a non-class target. None but the exalted could triumph in the long and bitter path of struggle that led from the tiny, dingy back-rooms to the rostrum of the Nuremberg rallies... history selected Hitler's party, *as it selected Lenin's, because it meant what it said.* ^[41]

Sedgwick no doubt would insist that he is a socialist of some sort. Yet here we find him lending credence to the pseudo-'socialism' of Feder, Drexler, Hitler, Goebbels, Himmler and the Strassers. For we are solemnly advised that their 'socialism' 'has to be taken very seriously'. True, it has defects - it is 'linked to a racial vision'. But on the other hand, it has much in common with proletarian socialism - 'hatred of privilege and corruption, all the determination to make a better and cleaner world'. Ethically, we are all on the same side. The Nazis erred 'only' in that their 'class militancy' was deflected 'upon a non-class target'. Class militancy? But both in its origins and ideology, National Socialism was an avowedly non-proletarian movement, fostered by elements of the bourgeoisie, and from its inception singling out as the main enemy the socialist-led proletariat. Sedgwick would have us believe that German fascism started out pure and innocent, and only later lost its way as increasingly racially-inspired motives predominated over class ones. Most obscene of all however is his likening of the NSDAP, the party that butchered the flower of the German proletariat, to the Russian Bolshevik Party. Each embodied equally the 'unity of theory and practice', and each were equally the executors of the will of history. Not a word does Sedgwick (who

would, presumably, claim to be a revolutionary opponent of both Stalinism and Social Democracy) say about the role of the workers' leaderships in Germany, their active participation in Hitler's victory. One can only assume that for Sedgwick there was no betrayal of the German proletariat by Stalinism and Social Democracy, that history could have taken no other course than it did, and that Hitler's victory was history's reward for the honesty and sincerity of the Nazi Party. Nor is this all. We would, he suggests, be wrong to assume that the Third Reich was a prison for the proletariat:

... no movement without some kind of ideological parallel to Marxism could have hoped to master a society like Germany in which the class contours were so deeply graven... German fascism... in order successfully to assert its cultural dominance... had to avoid cutting across the grain of a class-divided Germany. One consequence was the Nazis' persistent concern to minimise the burden that fell upon the German working class. ^[42]

Once again, the attempt is made to deny the bourgeois, and therefore counter-revolutionary nature and role of German fascism. The facts tell a different story. The close links established between the SS and the pro-Nazi industrialists in 1931-32 were further strengthened after Hitler's assumption of power. Many business leaders became SS officers, and in this joint capacity attended regular sessions of the Himmler Circle, which included in its schedule of activities lectures by leading Nazis and visits to concentration camps. One industrialist member of the Himmler Circle, Lindemann, said at Nuremberg that he remembered 'an invitation to inspect the concentration camp in Dachau... Himmler himself took us to the camp.' ^[43] A typical programme of activities for the Circle's members ran as follows:

10.00-10.30 hours. Lecture by SS Second Lt and Government Counsellor Hasselbacher. Subject: Jewry... 10.45-12.00 hours. Lecture by *Kriminalrat* Heller Subject: Communism. 12.15-13.30 hours. Lunch in the Kasino Gestapa... 16.30: Beginning of inspection of Adolf Hitler's own regiment... 19.30 hours: Dinner in the Kasino of Adolf Hitler's own regiment...

The next day (9 February 1937) the programme continued:

10.30-11.30: Lecture by SS Lt Col Meisinger. Subject: The fight against homosexuality and abortion as a political task... 20.00 hours: Visit of the Economy Leaders to the House of the Flyers. Himmler present. ^[44]

Himmler's appointment as Reich Minister of the Interior in August 1943 produced much satisfaction in the ranks of industry and finance. The Nazi banker Baron Kurt von Schröder wrote to Himmler on behalf of the Circle's members to 'convey his great joy' and 'heartiest congratulations' on his new appointment. He continued:

A strong hand is now necessary in the operation of this department and it is universally welcomed, but especially by your friends, that it was you who were chosen by the *Führer*. Please be assured that we will always do everything in our power at all times to assist you in every possible way. I am pleased to inform you at this opportunity that your Circle of Friends has again placed at your disposal this year a sum slightly in excess of one million RM for your special purposes. ^[45]

These 'special purposes' alluded to by Schröder were the activities of the Ancestral Heritage Institute (*Ahnenerbe*), founded in 1935 by Himmler for the pseudo-scientific study of the 'racial' origins of the Germanic peoples. In 1942, a sub-department of the *Ahnenerbe* was set up, the Institute for Practical Research in Military Science, which began to assemble a collection of skulls specially severed from the bodies of murdered Soviet Jews. These 'skulls of Jewish-Bolshevik Commissars who personify a repulsive yet characteristic sub-humanity' were then inspected for evidence of the political views they once contained, together with their alleged 'racial' characteristics. Himmler's own medical adviser, Professor Gebhart, testified at Nuremberg in the 'Doctors Trial' that the SS chief was 'the centre of the so-called Friends of Himmler circle which he founded. It was a dangerous mixture of eccentric individuals and industrialists:

From that quarter he obtained both the funds and the encouragement to undertake the thousand and one schemes which he put into operation. I have an idea that the extraordinary, newly-founded Institute where all these scientific friends of his met was in fact the Ancestral Heritage Community...

Here too we see that German capitalism was a *willing* accomplice to the most monstrous crimes of the Nazis, and that it subscribed - quite literally - to their racialist doctrines. It is scarcely surprising therefore to discover that in common with the mass of the big industrialists and bankers engaged in no

significant oppositional activities against the Nazi regime, remaining its firmest supporters until almost the very end. In the words of Funk, Hitler's Minister of Economics after the resignation of Schacht in 1938:

... there occurred very rare and singular instances of an industrialist assuming an oppositional attitude ... Leading industrialists on the other hand maintained good relations and understanding with the Labour Front. There were amongst others Bosch (Stuttgart), Borbet (Bochumer Verein), Blohm (Blohm und Voss), Messerschmitt, Reuter (Deutsche Maschinen Duisberg), and with the reservations also Rochlin (Saarbrücken) who became one of the main supporters of rearmament.
[46]

All the old political-bureaucratic élites - Junkers, former bourgeois politicians, army leaders, etc - threw up their belated resistance figures, but not the tycoons of the Ruhr, the plunderers of Russia and the despoilers of the Jews. The many and contrasting programmatic documents produced by the various oppositional currents in the Third Reich all have one feature in common - they betray the total absence of any resistance activities by the leaders of the economy. A memorandum submitted in April 1942 to the British government by anti-Nazi circles in Germany lists the following elements as comprising the resistance: '1. Substantial groups of the working class. 2. Influential circles in the army and bureaucracy. 3. The militant groups in the Churches.' This same document speaks of 'these three key groups of action' as having 'formed the strong opposition movement which, in the given situation, would have sufficient power to overthrow the present regime because of their control over large masses having now arms in hand, and, as regards the workers, at their disposal'. The programme of this alliance included the demand for the 'reconstruction of the economic order according to truly socialist lines, instead of self-sufficient autarchy a close cooperation between free nations...'. As for the tormented Jews, whom the big employers were greedily exploiting in the slave camps of the East, the document declared that the new anti-Nazi government would 'announce at once that it would restitute the Jewish part of the population at once to a decent status, give back the stolen property and cooperate with all other nations for a comprehensive solution of the Jewish problem'. [47] What place could there be for Krupps and IG Farben in such a movement which, with all its limitations and contradictory social and political composition, renounced the foul heritage of Nazi racialism? The labour-based wing of the anti-Hitler resistance, even though led in the main by reformists, evolved a programme even more explicitly aimed against the large trusts, the main beneficiaries as well as architects of the Nazi empire. Carlo Mierendorff, the socialist intellectual, was the most prominent and undoubtedly among the most courageous of former workers' leaders to organise underground proletarian opposition to the Nazi regime in its last years. When Social Democratic and Stalinist bureaucrats alike were fleeing Germany in droves, leaving to their fate the workers they had betrayed, the 'social fascist' Mierendorff declared contemptuously: 'What are the workers to make of us if we leave them in the lurch? They can't all go off to the Riviera.' Mierendorff was seized by the Gestapo, and not released from Lichtenburg Concentration Camp until 1938 when he at once resumed his anti-Nazi activities. In June 1943, he drafted the programme of the newly-formed Socialist Action, which brought together various anti-Nazi labour groups. Point five of the Mierendorff programme demanded 'expropriation of the key firms in heavy industry and for the benefit of the German people and as the foundation of the socialist organisation of the economic system, aimed at putting an end for good to the pernicious abuse of political power by high finance'. [48] The sole instance of a prominent industrialist falling out with the rulers of the Third Reich is provided by Thyssen, who following the conclusion of the Nazi-Soviet pact, accused Hitler of selling out to Communism. His arrest in France after the collapse of June 1940, and his detention in a Nazi concentration camp for the duration of the war, were vastly different experiences from those endured by millions of slave workers in Germany and the occupied East. His captors maintained him 'in the manner to which he was accustomed', as Otto Steinbrinck of the Flick combine testified at Nuremberg. The following exchange took place between Steinbrinck, who was feigning ignorance of the Nazi camp system, and the prosecution:

Steinbrinck: The two people whom I knew fairly well and from whom I knew what things were like in concentration camps were [Pastor] Niemoeller and Thyssen.

Question: Do you think it was a general custom for the inmates of concentration camps to get paid as Thyssen did?

Steinbrinck: Certainly not to the extent of 2000 marks per month. That is what Thyssen got. [According to Hitler's quoted calculation, this was the average income of a German worker for a whole year - RB]

Question: Do you think that wine was usually sent into concentration camps?

Steinbrinck: Obviously it is possible that individual inmates were able to buy drinks and luxury goods through official legal channels. ^[49]

Even in the Nazi camps, the class system prevailed. Whilst slaves of the ‘inferior races’ toiled and perished in their millions for the greater glory of the Reich - and the greater profits of Krupp and IG Farben - Thyssen sipped his wine and calmly awaited the day when he could emerge from his luxurious confinement to reclaim his industrial empire.

Let us quote Sedgwick once again, in the light of evidence that has been presented: ‘German fascism... [avoided] cutting across the grain of a class divided society. One consequence was the Nazis’ persistent concern to minimise the burden that fell upon the German working class.’ Thus does Sedgwick evaluate the most terrible tyranny endured by the working class in the history of world capitalism. If fascism is not at its base a movement of the most extreme bourgeois reaction against proletarian socialism, then one can, of course, legitimately argue for a non-proletarian policy to combat it. Which leads one on to the politics of Stalinist Popular Frontism, and to Mr Sedgwick’s real vocation, that of the decent English liberal fighting to preserve a sane, rational capitalism where none can be found.

Notes

1. A Bullock, *Hitler: A Study In Tyranny* (London, 1960), p 231, emphasis added.
2. William Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (London, 1962), pp 141-44.
3. AJP Taylor, *The Course of German History* (London, 1961), pp 245-47, emphasis added.
4. D Schoenbaum, *Hitler’s Social Revolution* (London 1967), pp 79, 120, 157.
5. GDH Cole, *The Meaning of Marxism* (Michigan, 1964), p 147.
6. GDH Cole, *The Intelligent Man’s Guide to the Postwar World* (London, 1947), p 237.
7. Quite apart from its analytical deficiencies, Dimitrov’s formulation helped to lay the theoretical foundations for Stalinist Popular Frontism, which involved a bloc of the workers’ parties with the ‘least reactionary’, ‘least chauvinistic’ and ‘least imperialistic’ elements of finance capital.
8. T Mason, ‘Economics in National Socialist Germany’, in SJ Woolf (ed), *The Nature of Fascism* (London, 1968), pp 172-73.
9. T Mason, ‘Economics in National Socialist Germany’, in SJ Woolf (ed), *The Nature of Fascism*, p 167.
10. D Grünberger, *A Social History of the Third Reich* (London, 1971), p 17.
11. R Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy in Germany* (London, 1967), pp 401-02.
12. J Burnham, *The Managerial Revolution* (London, 1962), p 210.
13. Burnham, *The Managerial Revolution*, pp 215-16.
14. Like the Burnham - Shachtman group, International Socialism first saw the light of day at a time when the principled, unconditional defence of a workers’ state was highly unpopular, to say the least, in petit-bourgeois radical circles. Shachtman found himself unable to defend the USSR only after the conclusion of the Nazi-Soviet Pact. The founders of IS publicly renounced the defence of the USSR on the occasion of the outbreak of the Korean war in 1950.
15. P Sedgwick, ‘The Problem of Fascism’, *International Socialism*, no 42 (February-March 1970), pp 32-33.
16. *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, Volume 3, pp 296-300, emphasis added.
17. Document no 327, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Volume 13.
18. ‘Economic Policy Directives for War on the USSR’, EC 126, emphasis added.
19. 1317-PS.
20. 1316-PS.
21. 1157-PS.

22. 1157-PS.
23. 1030-PS.
24. PS-1456.
25. NI-3777.
26. NI-2996.
27. NI-6732.
28. WA Bolcke (ed), *The Secret Conferences of Dr Goebbels 1939-1943* (London, 1970), p 185.
29. P Sedgwick, 'The Problem of Fascism', *International Socialism*, no 42 (February-March 1970), p 33.
30. The annexation of Czechoslovakia was a splendid dress rehearsal for much larger operations to come in the Soviet Union. The *Völkischer Beobachter* of 10 October 1938 reported: '... Gestapo men working in close cooperation with the advancing troops immediately commenced combing out Marxists, traitors and other enemies of the state from the liberated territory.'
31. P Sedgwick, 'The Problem of Fascism', *International Socialism*, no 42 (February-March 1970), p 33.
32. P Sedgwick, 'The Problem of Fascism', *International Socialism*, no 42 (February-March 1970), p 33.
33. NI-11784, emphasis added.
34. NI-6099.
35. NI-1453.
36. *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, Supplement B, pp 1591-94.
37. *Hitler's Secret Conversations* (New York, 1953), p 372.
38. *Krauch Case*, p 1169.
39. NI-2503.
40. *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, Supplement B, p 1538.
41. P Sedgwick, 'The Problem of Fascism', *International Socialism*, no 42 (February-March 1970), pp 33-34.
42. P Sedgwick, 'The Problem of Fascism', *International Socialism*, no 42 (February-March 1970), pp 33-34.
43. *Flick Trial*, pp 202-04.
44. NI-9983.
45. EC-454.
46. EC-440.
47. Cited in G van Roon, *German Resistance to Hitler* (London, 1971), pp 360-64.
48. Cited in G van Roon, *German Resistance to Hitler*, p 378.
49. *Flick Trial*, p 379.

Appendix II: Social Democracy on the German Catastrophe

The two main tendencies that led the German working class to defeat in 1933 still dominate the international workers' movement today. That is why a serious assessment of German fascism would be incomplete without a critical survey of the impact the German defeat has had on the politics of Stalinism and Social Democracy both in Britain and throughout the world. Especially important in this respect are the alibis which both tendencies have put forward at different times since Hitler's victory to justify the policies which placed the Nazis in power. We begin with the reformists.

First it is necessary to relate briefly the events leading up to the demise of the SPD. After the opposition stand in the Reichstag on 23 March, when the entire party fraction voted against Hitler's Enabling Act, the SPD bureaucracy attempted, like their trade union counterparts, to seek a *modus vivendi* with the Nazi regime. This involved, like the ADGB, severing relations with the International, and the disciplining of rank-and-file militants who still wanted to carry on the struggle against the fascists. The conflict between the bureaucracy and the ranks was particularly bitter in Berlin, where the SPD youth organisation had revolted openly against the capitulationist line of the adult leadership. The first move to repress the more militant youth leaders came early in April. As one of the participants in the struggle against the SPD bureaucracy, Eric Schmidt, later recounted:

... the District Committee of the Berlin Party decided to dismiss the Secretary and Chairman of the Berlin Socialist Young Workers [SAJ]. The grounds were the preparation and organisation of illegal youth groups. Franz Künstler, the party chairman, proposed that the resolution be published in the bourgeois press. The majority rejected his proposal. It seemed monstrous to them to expose their own youth organisation to fascist brutality by the SA and the SS. The attitude of Franz Künstler and his friends was not all that illogical. It corresponded to the whole policy of the party - retain legality at any price. ^[1]

Also early in April, the national SPD youth leader Eric Ollenhauer, who later became the SPD chairman in the postwar Federal Republic, demanded that all SAJ groups that had been banned by the Nazi regime should cease their illegal activities. This too was an attempt to curry favour with the Hitler government. Ollenhauer went even further. He insisted with the Berlin youth leadership that members of banned organisations 'attach themselves to completely legal youth groups'. In other words, the bureaucracy not only held out the false hope of a perspective of continued legality for the movement, but invited the most militant youth cadres to court repressions. The Berlin SAJ chairman retorted that 'fascism will not tolerate any organisation directly influenced by socialism', and that therefore it was not possible to 'build a legal youth organisation that is not 100 per cent fascist'. This elicited the cynical reply from another SPD bureaucrat, Wendt, that 'apprehension and romanticism characterises the statement of the youth comrades'. The SPD, he warned, 'will in no way countenance illegal work by the SAJ. Those who do not conform on this matter will be expelled.' This meeting took place on 3 April. Two days later, Wendt ordered the Berlin organisation to hand over its funds. When the chairman refused, Wendt threatened 'if you do not hand over the funds, we will expel you from the party *and make public the reason for doing so*' (emphasis added). That same day, the youth chairman and secretary were expelled and a time limit fixed for the delivery of the SAJ funds. There then followed over the next week a purge of all youth militants who opposed the official line of working within the ever-narrowing limits established by the Nazi regime. The stage was thus being set for the party's final act of abasement to Hitler, the Reichstag session of 17 May when the SPD voted *en bloc* approval of Hitler's foreign policy speech.

Hitler's main purpose in this speech was to create the impression abroad, where considerable unrest existed over the new regime's militaristic orientation, that National Socialist Germany sought peace with the world, and that the various paramilitary formations - SA, SS, *Stahlhelm* - were for use only against the internal foe:

Their object was and is exclusively the removal of the Communist danger; their development took place without any connection with the army, purely for purposes of propaganda and national enlightenment, psychological mass effect and the breaking down of Communist terror.

There was much truth in this statement. The Nazi combat units were aimed primarily at the Communists, and in saying this Hitler hoped to win the approval and support of all capitalist governments. But in a strategic sense, the SA and SS did clear the road for German imperialism's external expansion, since this

could not be undertaken until proletarian revolution had been removed from the agenda for at least a decade.

The SPD bureaucrats saw the vote on Hitler's speech as a god-sent opportunity to prove themselves men of peace and good patriots at the same time. The shameful scene at the voting was described by the Danish paper *Politiken*:

Every deputy sprang from his seat - the Social Democrats with the others. A sensation! ... a glaring spotlight is turned on them... Balconies and galleries thunder applause in which the honourables on the dais and at the Ministers' table join. Hitler applauds and with him the ex-Crown Prince. The Social Democrats are the recipients of all this vociferous approval.

The official Nazi daily, the *Völkischer Beobachter*, for the first - and last - time waxed enthusiastic on the patriotism of the Social Democrats:

The whole of the deputies rise from their seats. Spontaneously they sing 'Deutschland Uber Alles'. The whole of the SPD fraction also rise from their seats. For the first time in its history, the Reichstag stands firmly and unanimously behind its government. Never since the days of August 1914 had the Reichstag and the world witnessed such a picture of the unity of the German people, as in this historical hour, which concluded with the singing of the immortal 'Horst-Wessel Song'.

But the Social Democrats were not to be elevated to the status of 'racial comrades'. On 22 June, Hitler outlawed their party, the last legal outpost of a movement that had once embraced and organised the most politically advanced and disciplined proletariat in the world. Over the next months and years, the exiled SPD leadership, together with their co-thinkers in the parties of the Second International, tried to assemble a credible explanation of the disaster that had overwhelmed their party. Karl Kautsky, the doyen of German centrism, and after the reunification of the USPD rump with the parent party in 1922, the most sophisticated apologist for the class-collaborationist policies of the SPD leadership, blamed Hitler's victory on the Stalinists - and on the working class. (At the same time, the Stalinists were placing the responsibility on the Social Democrats and the working class!)

How did it happen that 13 million workers permitted themselves to be disenfranchised without offering violent resistance? This attitude of the workers appears all the more strange when one contrasts it with the fighting spirit they displayed in a previous attempt to impose a dictatorship upon the German nation, namely the Kapp Putsch of 1920. ^[2]

Kautsky conveniently neglects to mention that if the workers failed to resist Hitler on a mass scale in 1933, *it was because their leaders instructed them not to do so*. Kautsky finds no grounds on which the SPD can be criticised. Hitler's victory was inevitable (as inevitable as the 'collapse of capitalism' in the hey-day of the pre-1914 International):

The remarkable thing is that this triumph came only after 15 years of struggle... There were but two roads open for the Social Democrats, the road of either the lesser evil, or that of the Communists, which would have led inevitably to the greater evil. The Social Democratic policy at least made possible the averting for a time of the greater evil, the Hitler dictatorship. Had the socialists followed the policy of the Communists, the socialists themselves would have put Hitler in the saddle. ^[3]

The observations of Albert Grzesinski, the former Prussian Police Chief and SPD leader, were no more illuminating. He directed his only criticism of the German reformist leadership at the ADGB bureaucracy, which 'hoped that their organisations could continue to function in the Third Reich. Their childlike faith proved unfounded.' Even here, he finds kind words for those who sought to serve as Hitler's labour lieutenants:

It may be said in their behalf that they were prompted by a deep sense of responsibility towards the membership and a desire to save whatever could be saved. It was with these thoughts in mind that they decided to cooperate with the new regime and to participate in the Nazi May Day celebration. ^[4]

The conduct of the ADGB leaders caused such a scandal in the international trade union movement that a discussion on their capitulation to fascism could not be avoided at the August 1933 IFTU Congress. In the debate on Germany and the struggle against fascism, it was revealed for the first time by the Belgian delegate Schevenels that some leaders of the IFTU had hesitated to transfer the headquarters of the federation to Berlin in the summer of 1930 for fear of the growth of fascism in Germany:

We considered in the Executive whether it would be wise to carry out the Stockholm [IFTU Congress of 1930] decision: but we were then formally assured [by the ADGB Executive] that no danger could possibly threaten the work of the IFTU in Germany... I may say that in July 1932, when the situation became so critical I asked the advice and intentions of the German comrades. But the German comrades, judging the situation from their own specific points of view, did not consider it necessary to take the measures which we discussed with them for the organisation of resistance. In January 1933, Hindenburg yielded to the influence of those around him and placed Hitler in power. From that moment the wave of terrorism and oppression was started which reached its climax on 5 March, in the election. Again we urged the German comrades to act, to risk everything, in the hope that they might yet perhaps change the course of events. They replied that they were taking the necessary steps. Realising the gravity of the situation, we called an Executive meeting in Berlin about three weeks after Hitler's accession to power. During the executive meeting very definite questions were put and were definitely answered... Our German comrades told us that, when the prospects were at all favourable, they would all take responsibility upon themselves... We know all the attempts made to soften the heart of the enemy by concessions, through which certain comrades hoped to save a remnant of trade unionism. But these concessions failed to prevent the seizure by the Nazis of the whole trade union movement.^[5]

Nor did the IFTU Executive come out of the Congress unscathed. Kupers of Holland complained bitterly of the passive attitude of the Executive towards the crisis in Germany and the growing threat to its labour movement:

When the terrorism directed against the German labour movement first set in, then both the IFTU and the LSI [Second International] should have spoken, even if it was against the will of the German comrades... The General Council did not meet till 9 April, at Zurich, but by that time the die was cast and all that the General Council could do was to pass a resolution... As early as February the Dutch labour movement had proposed, but without success, that the IFTU and the LSI should convene a world congress against National Socialism. The General Council meeting held in Zurich could not even bring itself to adopt the boycott of German goods demanded by many delegates...^[6]

This refusal to organise a workers' boycott of Nazi Germany dovetailed with the policy of the Stalinists, who in line with Stalin's pro-German policy, were also opposing it under the guise of calls for 'real class solidarity'.

The record of the British reformists was no better in the period of Hitler's rise to power. The Labour Party and TUC-supported *Daily Herald* time and again dismissed the possibility that the Nazis might take power, completely disorienting the millions of British workers who read the paper and would, in the event of an imminent Nazi takeover in Germany, be called upon to come to the aid of the German workers with all the strength at their disposal. Commenting on the panic that ensued in Germany after the Nazi election success of 14 September 1930, the *Daily Herald* said smugly:

... the panic is, to say the least, a little premature. Wild stories of coming pogroms and the rest of it are being circulated by sensation mongers... They are for the most part just wild stories. Germany is not yet at Hitler's feet... and the fighting power of his 'army', if he were to be mad enough to put it to the test, would probably be negligible... Herr Hitler is much more likely to prove, in the issue, a Boulanger rather than a Mussolini.^[7]

In the run-up to the Presidential elections of 1932, Raymond Postgate said:

Everyone is leaving him [Hitler]. His speeches are more and more violent; but the end is coming nearer and nearer... Hitler was foolish in making a trial of strength against the Field Marshal...^[8]

The paper was jubilant at Hindenburg's victory:

The Social Democrats have been presented with a valuable electoral asset of which they will make full use... If they repeat that achievement in the Prussia elections they will have saved Germany.^[9]

Joy gave way to chagrin, however, when the *Herald's* Field Marshal hero dismissed Brüning, and with Nazi support, installed von Papen: 'Hindenburg Dictator of Germany', bewailed the *Herald*: 'That is bad:

a tragic and wretched ending to the high democratic hopes of a dozen years.’^[10] By 30 June, the *Herald* had recovered its composure:

... the would-be dictators of Germany will find the path of suppression strewn with far greater obstacles than their counterparts have found in certain other countries. Bismarck set himself to smash Social Democracy in Germany and failed. Where he could not succeed, his nickel-plated imitators of today are unlikely to make much headway.^[11]

A note of realism intruded, however, in the wake of the von Papen coup in Prussia. Commenting on the split in the ranks of the working class, the *Herald* said:

It is not too late to repair the breach. A united front against Hitler and his associates by the German workers would thrill the world, and immediately fortify the spirit of support evinced for them by labour in Great Britain and elsewhere.^[12]

The oscillations continued throughout the summer months. On the eve of the 31 July Reichstag elections, the *Herald's* German correspondent, HN Ewer, predicted that:

... unless he [Hitler] takes some decisive action in the next few days, he is done for. He may have a future as a useful mob agitator - as a sort of glorified boy scout leader - ... but the dreams of a ‘Third Reich’ with ‘our Adolf’ as its leader and dictator, of ‘heads rolling in the sand’ are going to vanish rapidly. Not Hitler, but Schleicher, is going to be the leader of the German reaction.^[13]

Which was, of course, also the mistaken view of the Stalinists. Parliamentary cretinism reigned supreme on the morrow of the election, with the headline: ‘Voters Crush Hitler’s Bid for Power’,^[14] and on 7 November, when the decline in the Nazi vote at the second Reichstag election of the year was greeted with the comment ‘Twilight Falls On Nazi Party’.^[15] The nadir in this orgy of reformism was, however, attained by Harold Laski on 19 November, when he wrote, in an article that deserves to be preserved forever as a monument to Social Democratic treachery:

It is a safe probability that the Hitlerite movement has passed its apogee and that it is unlikely to retain much longer the appearance of solidity it had a few months ago... Hitler has no sense of strategy, just as he has no philosophy. He has let himself be out-manoeuvred, first by the President, then by General Schleicher. He hates the constitution, yet does not dare overthrow it. He lives by force and shirks from appealing to it. Because he has no real philosophy of life or action, he dare not risk bringing himself to the test... It looks as though big business and the monarchists think that they have squeezed most of the juice out of this particular orange and are [turning] towards von Schleicher... All that remains of his movement is a threat he dare not fulfil... He reveals himself as a myth without permanent foundation... Accident apart it is not unlikely that Hitler will end his career as an old man in some Bavarian village, who, in the Biergarten in the evening, tells his intimates how he nearly overturned the German Reich. Strange battle cries will struggle to his lips, and he will mention names who trembled at his name. But his neighbours will have heard the tale so often that they will shrug their shoulders and bury their faces in their mugs of Pilsener to hide their smiles. The old man, they think, is entitled to his pipe dreams. It is comforting to live on the memory of an illusion.^[16]

Comforting, too, for Laski, the foremost ‘theoretician’ of British Social Democracy. But not for the German workers, who when Laski penned this infamous article, stood only weeks away from the catastrophe of 30 January 1933.

Meanwhile, Schleicher, who had in the summer been portrayed as the main leader of the German reaction, now figured as the saviour of the German working class. On 6 December, the *Herald* considered the formation of the ‘social general’s’ cabinet four days previously an omen of ‘new hope for Germany’. It was noteworthy, the paper commented that:

... the ministers of the old cabinet directly responsible for the repressive labour and social service regulations do not figure in the new. There is reason to hope that their successors will follow a more enlightened domestic policy.^[17]

The first reaction of the *Herald* to the assumption of power by Hitler on 30 January 1933 was very similar to that of the Stalinists. His tenure of office would be a short one. Gordon Beckles described Hitler as ‘the clown who wants to play statesman’, and following Laski, added: ‘Nothing that I can find in the public career of little Adolf Hitler, highly strung as a girl, and vain as a matinee idol, indicates that he can escape the fate of his immediate predecessors.’^[18] The brutal march of events compelled the

reformists to change their tune. With Social Democratic leaders being hounded by SA terror squads and reports coming in daily of the murder of top-ranking party and trade union officials, the *Herald* carried an editorial on 1 March which, for the first time, took the Nazi threat seriously. But even then, hopes were pinned on the rapid internal decomposition of the Hitler - Papen - Hugenberg bloc:

There is one thing sure. The present welter of madness in authority cannot endure... a country like Germany... cannot be ruled by a mere frenzied outburst of anger and savagery. The German people cannot be fed on revolver shots... ^[19]

Again we note the similarity with the Stalinists, who were saying precisely the same things about the Hitler regime, even to the extent, we should recall, of dubbing its dictator a 'clown'.

Right up to the final destruction of the German labour movement, the British reformists echoed uncritically - with some rare exceptions - the policy of their German opposite numbers. The *Herald* called upon President Hindenburg - 'a gallant soldier', respected universally 'for his service to Germany' - to listen to 'the voice of the civilised world demanding an end to this racial and political persecution'. ^[20] The old pacifist George Lansbury told an anti-fascist rally called by the TUC and Labour Party in the Albert Hall on 12 April that if he could have a heart to heart talk with Hitler, he would tell him:

... there is a power stronger than armies, stronger than guns. That is the power of the terribly meek - the power of those who stand still, knowing that though they are destroyed, cannot lose the spirit for which they stand.

Another point of view was expressed by JG Horrabin at a Wimbledon Labour Party meeting the same evening, even though it was couched in the language of reformism:

It is true that the only answer to fascism was constitutionalism. But it must be a constitutional struggle on a class policy. The SPD leaders have brought the German movement to disaster, not because of their constitutionalism but because of their class collaborationist policy.

William Mellor articulated the growing dissatisfaction with current reformist policies when he declared to a rally on 1 May:

Because of its blind worship of formal democracy, its acceptance of traditions established by its opponents, its policy of class collaboration and its failure to act decisively for socialism when it had the power, the SPD crumbled before Hitler and his gangsters. The story of the trade unions has been ever more bitter, for it would seem that their leaders were willing to become an actively operable part of a fascist state. Is labour in this country really free from these or similar dangers? Is it really the rank-and-file view that a ruthless capitalist dictatorship under Hitler and the Communist control of Russia stand alike to be condemned?

For this was the official view of the TUC and Labour Party alike. Ernest Bevin of the TUC General Council told a meeting in Crewe on 26 March, only three days after the Reichstag had approved Hitler's Enabling Act, that:

... the world is full of talk of dictatorship. We in the Labour Party believe in democracy. I am not going to be tempted by all the blandishments of dictatorship to depart from my faith in the ultimate victory of Social Democracy.

On 31 March, Bevin's close colleague Walter Citrine, who had recently returned from a visit to Germany where he had witnessed at first hand the destructive work of the Nazi terror gangs, wrote in the *Daily Herald*:

It is with the conviction that reaction cannot be fought by the methods of dictatorship that the National Joint Council [of the TUC and Labour Party] has declined to assent to the proposal of the Communist Party and the Independent Labour Party for the formation of a 'United Front' against fascism. ^[21]

The arch-reformists of the TUC and Labour Party were assisted in their refusal of the united front offer by the ultimatum of the Stalinists, who in the words of Citrine, 'insisted on the adoption of their full programme'. A united front for struggle against the common class enemy becomes impossible once the revolutionary, or left-wing, flank of the bloc stipulates in advance that its own programme becomes the programme of the bloc. For what is involved in the united front tactic is not an agreed *programme* between reformists, centrists and Communists (an impossibility, unless one or other of the partners surrenders its principles), but a limited and temporary *agreement* to fight for certain objectives that

defend and strengthen the working-class movement *as a whole* against the attacks of the class enemies. Neither Citrine nor the leaders of the CPGB genuinely sought such an agreement, though the prime responsibility for the political confusion in the working class concerning the defeat in Germany rested with the reformists. Some of their attacks on the Stalinists were scurrilous, no better than the use of the term 'social fascism' to denote the politics of the reformists. Herbert Morrison told a meeting in East Ham on 24 April that there could be no question of a united front with the Communists, 'whose views on political action and government bear material resemblance to those of fascism'. Yet on 2 May, in an Editorial on the Nazi 'May Day' in Berlin, the *Herald* (like Sedgwick 37 years on) detected a genuine socialist content in Hitler's policies. Communists might resemble Nazis, but Nazis could also be socialists:

The celebration of May Day by Hitler and the Nazis is very significant thing. It marks the definite opening of the second phase of the 'National Socialist' revolution; the phase which must lead very rapidly to an open breach between the 'Nazi' and the 'nationalist'. The 'National Socialists'... call themselves 'Socialist' as well as 'Nationalist'. Their 'Socialism' is not the socialism of the Labour Party or that of any recognised socialist party in other countries. *But in many ways it is a creed that is anathema to the big landlords, the big industrialists, and the big financiers, and the Nazi leaders are bound to be forward with the 'socialist' side of their programme.* For it is this which has, largely, won them the support on which their law is based... But that is the last thing that the Hindenburgs and von Papens, landowners of the East, industrialists of the West, desire, the alliance cannot endure once the second phase begins. The victorious allies must fight it out between themselves... The odds are pretty clearly on Hitler. ^[22]

On the very day that this article appeared, Hitler's SA and NSBO 'socialists' occupied the headquarters and branch offices of the German trade union movement, an event which elicited the *Daily Herald's* first editorial criticism of reformist policy in Germany: '... among the trade union leaders there remained many who believed that if they trimmed their sails to the new wind, they could carry on as though nothing much had happened.' ^[23] The next day, the *Herald* returned to the same theme, drawing the correct conclusion that 'fascism cannot be disarmed by concessions, which only make it more brutal and greedy. There can be no compromise with it.' ^[24] Yet what did the same paper say when the SPD voted unanimously in the Reichstag on 17 May in support of Nazi foreign policy?

Herr Hitler's speech yesterday was... a gesture, not of defiance, but of conciliation. It was of such a character that it inevitably received the applause of the whole Reichstag, including the Social Democrats, and it is of such a character that it must provide, if not a basis for immediate agreement, at least a basis for continued and even hopeful discussion at Geneva... All sensible folk - though loathing the brutalities of Nazi policy at home - will feel a sense of relief that there is a possibility of escaping from the deadlock and of achieving that success which is the only alternative to almost certain catastrophe... Hitler should be taken at his word. ^[25]

Thus ended a disgraceful chapter in the history of British Social Democracy, one concluded, like its German counterpart, by the endorsement of Hitler's imperialist foreign policy.

In passing, we should record that the centrist-dominated Independent Labour Party displayed little more perspicacity with the onset of the crisis in Germany. In December 1931 the ILP journal stated:

It is impossible to imagine a Nazi government in power. And it is only the KPD that envisages such a possibility... The Communists not only contemplate, but desire it, and are ready indeed to be midwives to its birth... But I resolutely maintain that so sinister a contingency need not be contemplated. There is not the remotest chance of the emergence of an independent Nazi government. Political necessity - to say nothing of the safety of the Reich - will act as an irresistible stimulus to a coalition between the centre and the right. And the coalition, in its turn, should help to consolidate the divided ranks of the Left. ^[26]

At one of the most fateful moments in the evolution of the German crisis - the SPD's decision to endorse Hindenburg's Presidential candidature - the ILP fell in behind the reformists from whom they were to split later the same year. The historian HN Brailsford declared that the SPD's 'popular front' with the pro-Weimar bourgeoisie under the Hindenburg umbrella 'was a painful necessity'. ^[27] Only after Hitler's victory did the ILP make a turn to the left - and then, in the case of most of its leaders, such as Fenner Brockway, it was towards a rapprochement with the Stalinists, who had been, with the reformists, directly responsible for the German catastrophe.

Only a small minority of the ILP turned in the direction of Trotskyism, and considered seriously the task of constructing a new, Fourth, International, grounded theoretically on the understanding of the forces and policies that had led to the destruction of the Third. After proclaiming, in the *New Leader* of 16 June 1933, ‘the bankruptcy of the Internationals’, the centrist ILP leadership worked with their co-thinkers in Europe (Norwegian Labour Party, the French renegade Communist ‘Pupist’ group, the Italian Socialist Party of Nenni, the right wing of the exiled SAP, etc) to block the formation of the new International that the defeat in Germany, and the Kremlin’s refusal to change its course, now made imperative.

Present-day Social Democracy, especially in Britain, displays little or no interest in the historic defeat inflicted on the German working class in 1933. Perhaps the only serious treatment of the question is to be found in GDH Cole’s *A History of Socialist Thought*, where in the final two volumes he discusses at some length what he considers to be the main political causes of Hitler’s victory. Like the Fabians Bernard Shaw and Sidney Webb, Cole was irresistibly attracted by the apparent strength of the Stalinist bureaucracy, and drew back from any sharp criticisms of its policies, even when, as in Germany, they contributed directly to the victory of the Nazis. He was bemused by Stalin’s insistence that the KPD align itself with the fascists against the Social Democrats, as in the case of the Prussian referendum of 1931. He dismissed the possibility that the Kremlin’s German policy could have been based on the desire to aid a Hitler triumph over the working class. Instead he suggested, with a pathetic credulity in the revolutionary sincerity of Stalin and the bureaucracy he represented, that Stalin:

... appears to have held as a dogma of Marxism that, whenever a revolutionary situation seemed to be approaching, the task of Communists was to accelerate it by every means in their power, regardless of the character of the threatening revolution... It may have helped him towards this illusion that Stalin, like Lenin before him, was above all else a professional revolutionary and instinctively disposed to sympathise with revolution for its own sake. ^[28]

Stalin erred only in an excess of revolutionary zeal! In fact, what Stalin feared and worked might and main to prevent was precisely a proletarian revolution in Germany. And in carrying through the great betrayal of the German working class, he was reflecting, albeit in the guise of an extreme leftist, adventurist policy, the profound social and political conservatism of the burgeoning Soviet bureaucracy, wide layers of which had just ‘arrived’ out of the turmoil of the economic upheavals in the early period of forced collectivisation and industrialisation. Cole, the English empiricist and opponent of Marxism, thus sees in Stalin’s superficial leftism the hallmarks of a genuine revolutionary on the same plane as Lenin, just as in German fascism, he detected elements of a genuine anti-capitalism.

Not all left reformists and centrists reacted as Cole did to the betrayals of Stalinism in Germany. There was also a tendency to exploit the ultra-leftism of the Third Period Comintern to justify, either in whole or in part, the counter-revolutionary role performed by Social Democracy. The most sophisticated of these apologists for reformism even sank so low as to combine eclectically their own opportunism with Trotsky’s Leninist-based critique of the Stalinist course in the Comintern and Germany. How sincere they were in invoking the name and prestige of Trotsky soon became evident when the Stalinists swung over from Third Period adventurism to the Popular Front, a somersault which these same reformists and centrists hailed as a return to ‘realism’. Now there was no question of quoting from Trotsky, since Stalin had finally revealed himself as the guardian of peace and democracy, the leader of ‘all men of good will’. Trotskyism became anathema in reformist and centrist circles, since it stood out against the counter-revolutionary ‘People’s Front’, a class-collaborationist bloc between the parties of the proletariat and those of the liberal (and often not-so-liberal) bourgeoisie. In Spain and France, where People’s Fronts were formed in 1935, Trotskyists were denounced as ‘wreckers’ of anti-fascist unity not only by the Stalinists, but the reformist leaders and the liberal bourgeoisie. What the Trotskyist movement was in fact really opposing was the unity of the workers’ leaders *with their own imperialist bourgeoisie*.

Two instances of this opportunist, unprincipled adaptation to *one side* of Trotsky’s critique of Stalinism are to be found in the writings of the British Labour MP Michael Foot, and the veteran ‘Austro-Marxist’ centrist Julius Braunthal. In his biography of Aneurin Bevan, Foot quite correctly says that neither the Second nor the Third Internationals responded to the danger of fascism in the early 1930s:

... in 1930 a voice from the wilderness, and certainly one that Bevan respected, had given warning to Communists and Socialists alike: ‘Should Fascism come to power in Germany’, it said, ‘it will ride over your skulls and spines like a terrific tank. Your salvation lies in merciless struggle. And only a fighting unity with Social Democratic workers can bring victory. Make haste, you have very little time left.’ But that was Trotsky, not Stalin. ^[29]

Thus far, all seems in order. But then Foot continues:

Only after the damage had been done in Germany did Communist strategy start to change and give birth to a new hope - the hope that, in the face of the common enemy, the ancient savage feud between Communists and Socialists might be ended. ^[30]

Thus Trotsky by implication is accorded the role of an unheeded apostle of peace between the two wings of the workers' movement, between Communism and Social Democracy. Lenin's break from the Second International in August 1914 Foot depicts as an 'ancient savage feud'.

David Caute, the historian and novelist, who has tried to develop a Marxist approach to literature, and is highly critical of Stalinist practices in certain spheres, slips into a similar error. In his *The Fellow Travellers*, Caute treats the KPD's swing from the Third Period to the Popular Front in the following way:

Gone were the days when Johannes Becher and his comrades blasted the social fascists, social pacifists and class collaborators through the columns of *Linkskurve* [a KPD literary journal - RB]. Though the Communist (and Comintern) leadership took their time in recognising the full extent of their error in pursuing sectarian, pseudo-revolutionary tactics, by 1934-35 the KPD was working hard alongside its French and British counterparts to form effective united and popular fronts. ^[31]

Caute makes two fundamental mistakes here. First he regards the KPD's line as an 'error' whereas in fact its ultra-leftist policy was *deliberately* foisted on the party by the Stalinist leadership of the Comintern and the Soviet Communist Party. Secondly, Caute jumbles together the United and Popular Fronts as if they were both Comintern policy after 1934-35. In fact the Comintern, spearheaded by the French party, moved on very rapidly from a united front of the workers' parties (*based on an unprincipled agreement to refrain from mutual criticism - a violation of the Leninist united front*) to the Popular Front with the radical bourgeoisie. At no time did the Stalinists pursue a genuine united front tactic as prescribed and practised by the Comintern between 1921 and 1923. In the case of David Caute, we can be sure that this mistake is made with the best of intentions. In the case of Monty Johnstone, one of the most sophisticated apologists for Stalinism in the CPGB, distortion would be a more fitting word. His lumping together of the United and Popular Front, and his demagogic use of Trotsky's critique of the Third Period, are discussed in the next appendix.

Braunthal is hardly more principled than Foot. In the second of his two-volume study of the international workers' movement, he too cites Trotsky's writings on Germany, even to the extent of using the same quotation selected by Foot. However, Trotsky also bitterly attacked the criminal policies pursued by the German Social Democrats, who happened to belong to the same international as Braunthal. Again therefore we see the one-sidedness of the centrist appraisal of Trotsky, eagerly seizing on his polemics against the leftist errors of the Comintern, but either rejecting or ignoring Trotsky's no less rigorous critique of right opportunism, whether practised by the reformists, the centrists (Austro-Marxists included, as in the February 1934 uprising of the Vienna workers) or the Stalinists, both in the 1925-27 period of blocs with the TUC and the Kuomintang, and the counter-revolutionary strategy of the Popular Front between 1935 and the summer of 1939. Like Foot, Braunthal traces the 'original sin' of Communism back to the split of 1914, and this he uses to excuse the betrayals of Social Democracy in Germany in 1930-33:

The Social Democrats had often made mistakes, even fatal mistakes. But the heaviest responsibility for the tragedy of German Socialism lay with the Communist International, as no unbiased historical analysis can possibly deny. It was its historic error to perpetuate and deepen the split in the German labour movement for which, since the end of the war, and certainly since the end of the revolutionary period, there had been no possible further justification. ^[32]

For reasons that are deeply rooted both in its ideology and the bourgeois class interests that it serves, Social Democracy was and remains incapable of assimilating and assessing the defeats for which it itself has been in part responsible. This is nowhere better demonstrated than in the crushing of the German working class by fascism. It is the task of the vanguard, those Trotskyist forces which in Britain are grouped in and around the Workers Revolutionary Party, to burn the lessons of Germany into the consciousness of the new generations of workers that will inevitably, even though under different circumstances, have to meet and defeat the threat of fascism in Britain.

Notes

1. E Schmidt, *The Berlin Youth Conflict of April 1933*, manuscript.
2. K Kautsky, *Social Democracy Versus Communism* (New York, 1946), pp 109-10.
3. Kautsky, *Social Democracy Versus Communism*, p 105.
4. A Grzesinski, *Inside Germany* (New York, 1939), p 184.
5. *The Activities of the IFTU 1930-1932* (Paris, 1934), pp 356-57.
6. *The Activities of the IFTU 1930-1932*, p 358.
7. *Daily Herald*, 23 September 1930.
8. *Daily Herald*, 7 March 1932.
9. *Daily Herald*, 11 April 1932.
10. *Daily Herald*, 31 May 1932.
11. *Daily Herald*, 30 June 1932.
12. *Daily Herald*, 21 July 1932.
13. *Daily Herald*, 28 July 1932.
14. *Daily Herald*, 1 August 1932.
15. *Daily Herald*, 7 November 1932.
16. *Daily Herald*, 19 November 1932.
17. *Daily Herald*, 6 December 1932.
18. *Daily Herald*, 31 January 1933.
19. *Daily Herald*, 4 March 1933.
20. *Daily Herald*, 27 March 1933.
21. *Daily Herald*, 31 March 1933.
22. *Daily Herald*, 2 May 1933, emphasis added.
23. *Daily Herald*, 3 May 1933.
24. *Daily Herald*, 4 May 1933.
25. *Daily Herald*, 18 May 1933.
26. *New Leader*, 13 December 1931.
27. *New Leader*, 18 March 1932.
28. GDH Cole, *Communism and Social Democracy, 1914-1931*, Part 2 (being Volume 4 of *A History of Socialist Thought*, London, 1961), pp 660-61.
29. M Foot, *Aneurin Bevan*, Volume 1 (London, 1963), p 208.
30. Foot, *Aneurin Bevan*, Volume 1, p 208.
31. D Caute, *The Fellow Travellers* (London, 1973), p 149.
32. J Braunthal, *The History of the International*, Volume 2 (London, 1968), p 389.

Fascism in Germany. Robin Blick 1975

Appendix III: History Falsified

The twentieth-century class struggle has been shaped and dominated by two cataclysmic events - the Russian Revolution of 1917, and the German fascist counter-revolution of 1933. Every worker and intellectual fighting for socialism today will, if his or her efforts are to prove fruitful, have to take their bearings not only from the contours of their national workers' movement and its history, though this is of course essential. Above all, they must be guided by the theoretical understanding extracted by the Communist vanguard from the historical polar opposites, the greatest conquest and the most shattering defeat in the life of the international proletariat.

But certain forces stand in the way of advanced workers, youth, students and intellectuals seizing hold of this priceless theoretical capital, accumulated with such devotion, sacrifice and torment. Some we have already briefly discussed - the various non-Marxist historians of German fascism, ranging from Bullock to Sedgwick, and the Social Democrats and centrists, who of course have a special interest in concealing from class-conscious workers the crimes of reformism in Germany. The most systematic distortions of all, however, are undertaken by the Stalinist bureaucracy.

For what must at all costs be kept from advanced workers, youth and intellectuals moving towards Marxism is the brutal truth concerning the counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism in facilitating the most catastrophic defeat inflicted on the working class in all its history. For would anyone devoted to the struggle for socialism give credence to a tendency they knew to have been responsible for permitting Hitler to come to power and crush the strongest labour movement in the world? Stalinism sustains itself in the working class in part through its ability to present itself - quite falsely - as the legitimate continuation of Lenin's party and the Russian revolution of 1917. Hence the frantic and slanderous attempts of Stalinism over the years to depict Trotskyism as anti-Leninist, as the spearhead of counter-revolution. Not for one instant therefore can the Trotskyist movement neglect the struggle to expose the Stalinist falsifiers of working-class history.

After Hitler - Us

The work of falsification began from the moment Hitler took power. The mighty resources of the Comintern were harnessed not to mobilise the world proletariat in defence of its tormented German comrades, but to spread a vast smokescreen of lies to conceal its own responsibility for the Nazi victory. The first task of the Stalinist scribes was to prove that there had been no serious defeat, let alone a disaster of historic proportions. Right throughout 1933, the same line was sustained - the revolution was in the ascendant, the fascist repression was speeding up the radicalisation of the workers, the reformists were still 'social fascists', the 'chief social support of the bourgeoisie', and that, last but not least, Trotsky's demand for a united front between the two workers' parties remained counter-revolutionary.

On 14 March 1933, the Comintern organ set the political line that was to be pursued relentlessly for the next nine months, sending untold numbers of heroic but utterly confused Communist workers to their deaths: '... the increased provocation of the fascist bourgeoisie is proof of the fact that the historic time has come for the end of capitalist rule.'^[1] Two weeks later, on 1 April, the ECCI Presidium met in Moscow. The number one item on the agenda had to be Germany, however much Stalin and his tame Comintern functionaries would have preferred to spend their time applauding faked Soviet pig iron production statistics. Fritz Heckert of the KPD Central Committee delivered the report on the situation in Germany, from which are selected some of the more important sections:

If before 30 January and on 30 January the ADGB and the SPD had accepted the proposal of the KPD to form a united front against fascism [sic!] and had jointly carried out a mass political strike, the processes of internal crisis of fascism would have taken place at an accelerated speed... In view of the correlation of forces which had arisen, the KPD could not raise the question of the seizure of power by the proletariat... [The aim was for the German working class] not to be drawn to decisive battle under circumstances favourable to the enemy. [Instead, simply wait until he has destroyed all your organisations and murdered your militants - RB]... The present situation in the German bourgeoisie is unstable... *the proletarian revolution is bound to conquer... Who will dare to assert that the economic situation is on the upgrade in Germany?* German fascism cannot be compared to Italian fascism... Italian fascism crept in on the ebb of a revolutionary wave, *whereas German fascism has come to power at a time when the wave of the*

revolution is on the upsurge... The events in Germany represent not 'the stabilisation' of capitalism but its dying convulsions...

Heckert then quotes Stalin's notorious 1924 dictum that fascism and Social Democracy were not antipodes, but twins:

Everything which has happened in Germany has fully confirmed the correctness of comrade Stalin's prognosis. Hitler does not reject the support of Social Democracy. Social Democracy is already proving its readiness to participate in all the bloody crimes of fascism against the working class... German Social Democracy has found one ally - Trotsky. As a political nonentity in the workers' movement, he has nothing to lose. He sticks like dirt to the fascist jackboot in the hope that he can get himself talked about at any price and emerge from political oblivion... Like a pilfering marauder, he haunts every place where workers' blood has been shed, so as to snatch up some trifle with a view to making profit. The German working class is making sacrifices... but the ally of the Welses and the Leiparts, Trotsky, is absolving the Social Democrats of the responsibility for the advent of the fascists coming to power in Germany and laying it at the door of the KPD... the social fascist Trotsky declared that the reason why Hitler had come to power was that the KPD had not formed a united front with the Social Democrats on the only programme acceptable to Social Democracy - 'the defence of parliamentary government and of the mass trade union'. In trying to rig up this rickety platform... Trotsky teaches the revolutionary workers of Germany... that 'it is impossible to imagine Social Democracy without parliamentary government and mass trade union organisations' and that it is precisely these two factors that distinguish Social Democracy from fascism. But the actual meaning of the 'united front' which was devised in order to justify German Social Democracy [in reality, to exploit to the maximum the contradictions that existed between it and fascism - RB] is shown by the very facts and events which were taking place at the very moment when Trotsky was writing his article.

Heckert then refers a little prematurely, in view of the events of 2 May, to the negotiations taking place between the ADGB leaders and the NSBO over the future of the trade unions:

Thus, facts have rudely revealed the real counter-revolutionary idea of the 'platform' of Trotsky, the social Hitlerite, who tried to prove that Social Democracy and fascism are not twins, but antipodes. [A month after Heckert delivered this report, Hitler had his trade union 'twins' safely under lock and key - RB] But what would such a platform of the united front mean, even if Social Democracy were prepared to fight for it in practice? It would mean nothing more nor less than the defence of the government - Brüning, Papen, Schleicher, the defence of the trade union bureaucracy of Leipart. For the KPD it would mean a desertion to the position of the Welses and Leiparts, *a renunciation of Marx and Lenin*. [It would take little more than a year before the entire Comintern would be aligning itself with not only right-wing trade union bureaucrats, but imperialist politicians not one whit less reactionary than those listed by Heckert - RB] It would mean going over to the position of the united counter-revolutionary front with the bourgeoisie, *going over, in the last analysis, to the side of Hitler*. ^[2] Trotsky, *the confederate of Hitler*, is trying under the guise of a platform of the united front, to foist upon the German working class that social fascist tactic of the 'lesser evil', that reactionary united front which brought Hitler to power... It was he, Trotsky, *who carrying out the social orders [sic!] of Hitler*, tried to sling mud at the only party which is struggling against fascism in the most difficult conditions.

Heckert concluded his report with a demagogic flourish that he soon had cause to regret:

The Social Democrats are being beaten up at this moment... But it is the Social Democratic workers and not the Welses, Leiparts and Lobes who are being beaten up. No one has touched them *or will touch them, because these people form the reserve of the fascist 'national revolution'... Fascism needs the trade unions, and it takes the Social Democratic bureaucrats into its service*. ^[3]

Abysmal in its theoretical poverty, banal in its pseudo-revolutionary rhetoric, pernicious in its false, bureaucratic optimism and depraved in its slanders though Heckert's report was, the ECCI Presidium found no fault with it whatsoever. The Presidium voted unanimously for a resolution which concealed from the workers of Germany and the entire world the stark fact that the Comintern and the German working class had suffered the most horrific defeat, the contours of which were fully discernible after two months of Nazi rule. In defiance of this reality, the Presidium voted for the resolution which began with these historic words; historic, because they convinced Trotsky that the Comintern was dead as a

revolutionary force, and that being beyond all hope of reform, had to be supplanted by a new, genuinely Communist International:

Having heard Comrade Heckert's report on the situation in Germany, the presidium of the ECCI states that the political line and the organisational policy followed by the CC of the KPD with Comrade Thälmann at its head, up to the Hitlerite coup, and at the moment when it occurred, was *completely correct*.^[4]

A 'completely correct' policy had led the largest section of the Comintern outside the USSR to capitulation, defeat and destruction! But that could not be admitted. At stake was something far more important than the fate of the German proletariat - the prestige of Stalin and the bureaucratic clique that guided the affairs of the Communist International and the German party. Engaged in a furious, half-hidden factional struggle inside the CPSU against tendencies ranging from the Trotskyist left through the Zinovievist left-centre to the Bukharin - Riutin right, and plunged into the deepest economic crisis as a result of his adventurist agricultural and industrial policies over the previous four years, Stalin batted down the hatches still more firmly in the Comintern, and clung onto his fragile alliance with a Germany now ruled by Hitler. When translated into the language of official Comintern jargon, Stalin's basically conservative, nationalist policy proclaimed that Hitler was, despite his subjective intentions, performing an invaluable service for the revolution by breaking up the Weimar republic and smashing the Social Democrats, the last barrier standing between the KPD and its 'capturing' the majority of the workers. Hitler would quickly be 'exposed' before his plebeian supporters as a reactionary, and then...

A selection from the Comintern press of the period will demonstrate these points far more effectively than any lengthy analysis:

There exists no fascist dictatorship, no terror of fascist bands, that can stop the development of Germany towards proletarian revolution... Reaction which is triumphing today and enraged fascism *is only a short-lived phenomenon*. The fascists are only the temporary masters. Their victory is a short-lived one, *and upon its heels will come the proletarian revolution. The struggle for the proletarian dictatorship is on the order of the day...* The road of the German proletariat to victory has been shown by the ECCI Presidium.^[5]

The very factors which make for the advance of the counter-revolution, at the same time intensify all the inner contradictions of imperialism, *and strengthen the revolution and unification of the working class, destroying the pacifist democratic illusions and the influence of Social Democracy...* The influence of the Second International in the working class begins to break up... *The fascist coup enormously accelerates this process.*^[6]

Since the KPD had failed to forge the unity of the working class, Dutt handed this task over to Hitler, who achieved it by hurling militants of both workers' parties into the same camps, torture chambers, death cells and mass graves.

The calm that has succeeded the triumph of fascism is only a transitory phenomenon. Despite fascist terror, the revolutionary surge in Germany will rise; the revolutionary resistance of the masses to fascism is bound to grow. The establishment of the open fascist dictatorship, which is destroying all democratic illusions among the masses and *liberating* them from Social Democratic influence, is *accelerating* the rate of Germany's advance towards the proletarian revolution.^[7]

This crisis overwhelming Social Democracy reflects the extreme acuteness of the entire international situation. It shows that fascism's victory in Germany is a relative thing, a victory calculated to endure for a very brief space. It *accelerates* the setting up of one of the most important prerequisites for the victory of the proletariat - *the unity of the working class.*^[8]

Only defeatists and open opportunists can talk about the working class being beaten in the struggle against fascism, or its having 'lost a battle' and 'suffered a defeat'... *Right opportunism* constitutes the chief danger in the carrying out of the general line of the party... [The KPD leads]... the national struggle for freedom against the Versailles system, and while rejecting all petit-bourgeois national and National Bolshevik ideology [sic]... *fights for national emancipation* as well as social emancipation... Proletarian dictatorship is the only power which can drive *every foreign imperialist power out of Germany...* The fascist dictatorship is not only incapable of solving the social and national conflicts, *but is also incapable of really consolidating its political rule.*^[9]

The KPD is not only undestroyed, but its influence on the masses is greater than ever. [If this was so, then it should have achieved its goal of 'capturing the majority', since Thälmann had claimed, on the eve of the Nazi take-over, that this task had nearly been accomplished - RB]... The defeat of the German working class in its entirety has not been attained and will never be attained... The three months that have elapsed since Hitler's accession to office have entailed a further pronounced decline in the position of German capitalism... [It is therefore just a matter]... as to how speedily these petit-bourgeois will desert Hitler's cause and as to when and in what degree they may be expected to support the proletarian revolution. ^[10]

Béla Kun developed the reactionary theme in his pamphlet (written in the early summer of 1933) that the working class was (together of course with the 'social fascists') to blame for the German defeat (even though there had been no defeat):

That the German working class was not yet far enough advanced in its development to prevent the temporary victory of fascism is a fact, which permits no concealment. That it let itself be 'split' when unity was more imperative than ever permits of denial just as little... this backwardness in development... was conditioned precisely by the fact that the majority of the proletariat in Germany followed the slogans of the SPD. Herr Wels and the leaders of the Second International have no occasion to reproach the German working class. They may rather take some pride in them. ^[11]

Such outright cynicism could have only been the product of the mind of a profoundly demoralised petit-bourgeois, who rather than face up to his own responsibilities for the problems and defeats of the movement, places the blame upon the working class. But to continue:

... the past few months the Hitler government has already proved in practice that it is incapable of shaking off the Versailles yoke, just as it is incapable of effecting the 'union with Austria'... All the forces of the fascist dictatorship are already trembling in the face of the uninterrupted growth of the forces of Communism... The proletarian revolution against the fascist dictatorship in Germany is on the order of the day. ^[12]

The pressure of the whole German terror machine... not only did not succeed in smashing or breaking the revolutionary German proletariat, but has led to so colossally increased a hatred on the part of the proletariat, to such an enormous accumulation of energy, that revolutionary demonstrations and strikes are growing in Germany at the present moment... A new revolutionary upsurge has already begun and is growing in Germany. ^[13]

In December 1933, the ECCI held its Thirteenth - and last - Plenum. Still the same line persisted, and still the lie was peddled, that the great revolutionary opportunity in Germany lay in the immediate future, hurried on by the Nazi repression of the working class:

In spite of the incredible terror, *it is easier* to work among the German proletariat now, because the Social Democratic workers, and also members of the reformist unions, are in large numbers becoming disillusioned with the policy of Social Democracy... *Thanks to the changed situation in Germany* [and therefore thanks to Hitler - RB] and to the heroic work of the KPD, the Communists no longer meet with the resistance in the working class that was formerly put up by the trade union bureaucrats and the SPD. ^[14]

The Stalintern could scarcely sink lower. Here was an alleged Communist actually 'thanking' Hitler for smashing up the reformist organisations of the German working class and jailing their leaders. Once the social fascists were safely in concentration camps, the KPD could proceed unhindered in its work of 'capturing the majority' of the working class. The 'main enemy' remained the reformists, and not the Nazis, even under the Third Reich:

The present situation in Germany is characterised by the growth of the revolutionary mass movement under the leadership of the KPD... Its influence on the toiling masses is growing rapidly. It is organising mass struggles against Hitler's dictatorship. [All this was pure fantasy. The German proletariat was prostrate before Hitler - RB] A new revolutionary upsurge is growing... The prerequisites for the revolutionary crisis are increasing. Germany is marching towards the proletarian revolution. ^[15]

The present stage in Germany is no longer simply a period of struggle to win over the majority of the working class, but a period of the formation of a revolutionary army for decisive class battles for power. ^[16]

The Seventeenth Congress of the CPSU - dubbed with unconscious irony the 'congress of victors' - convened exactly one year after Hitler's victory in Germany. To Manuilsky, the CPSU delegate to the ECCI Presidium, fell the thankless task of sustaining the official optimism concerning the prospects for proletarian revolution in the Third Reich. After the obligatory reference to the Second International 'going full steam ahead on the way to further fascisation', Manuilsky explained to delegates (the bulk of whom were fated to fall foul of Stalin's great purge) that Hitler was still fulfilling his doubly progressive role of smashing Social Democracy (thereby liberating the workers from its grip) and freeing the proletariat from its last illusions in capitalist democracy:

... there has been a growth of the revolutionary crisis - the war in the Far East and the setting up of fascist dictatorship... the setting up of fascist dictatorship represents an intermediate stage in the further maturing of the revolutionary crisis... The two most reactionary governments in the world - Japan and Germany - are at present acting as objective factors in the destruction of the capitalist system, accelerating by their adventurist counter-revolutionary policy the maturing of the revolutionary crisis... fascist Germany is undermining capitalism at the centre of Europe... is mining the soil for revolutionary explosions... ^[17]

It would not have been so terrible if the ECCI leaders in Moscow had kept their deliriums to themselves. However, the Stalinist course, and the blind discipline which the bureaucracy imposed on party members, demanded that it be implemented in Germany. Heckert presented the few remaining KPD members at liberty or loyal to the party with a programme of activity that was tailor-made for a movement functioning under the conditions of the broadest bourgeois democracy. Who could guess that the following perspective was prescribed for fascist Germany *one year after the Nazi take-over of January 1933*?

One of the most important tasks of the RGO and the red trade unions is - as formerly - the independent organisation and leadership of economic battles, connecting them up with political demands, the organisation of political strikes, and the broadening of these strikes to the dimensions of big mass battles... ^[18]

Such directives, which in practice invited KPD militants to court immediate detection, arrest, jailing and even death for a cause that was hopeless, led to bitter reactions from German Communist workers. One told a party official, throwing a party pamphlet at his feet:

We've been distributing that for months... We've put up with a lot from you people, but this is too much. Who's that supposed to be for?... None of us is going to risk the chopper for *that* tripe. ^[19]

And as heroic party workers risked their necks on Stalin's suicidal policy, the Kremlin continued as before to court their executioners.

On 5 May 1933, the Nazi regime ratified the renewal of the Berlin Treaty of 1926, which had been permitted to lapse since 1931 (when it first came up for renewal) by the Brüning, von Papen and Schleicher governments. Moscow's response was immediate. *Izvestia* intimated on 6 May that the formal renewal of the treaty represented a setback for anti-Soviet forces in Nazi Germany:

Unfortunately in recent years tendencies have increased in Germany itself for a deal with France or England against the Soviet Union. These tendencies, which found expression not only in broad propagandistic activities of a number of groups, among the German bourgeoisie, but also in the actions of certain government figures [that is, von Papen], did not prove successful... Germany is at present more isolated in foreign affairs than she has been at any time since the war. The German policy directed against friendly relations between Germany and the Soviet Union has led merely to the weakening of Germany. An external symptom of this policy was the non-extension of the Berlin Treaty... Public opinion in the Soviet Union will undoubtedly take a positive attitude towards the renewal of the validity of the Berlin Treaty. In spite of their attitude towards Fascism, the popular masses of the USSR wish to live in peace with Germany, and consider that the development of Soviet-German economic relations is in the best interest of both countries... ^[20]

The German Ambassador in Moscow, Dirksen, noted that the Soviet attitude towards the Nazi regime remained friendly even to the point of suppressing open displays of hostility towards it. In a report to Berlin, he said that:

... a strong attack on Communism in Germany itself is entirely compatible with preserving friendly German-Russian relations... Yesterday [May Day] passed off without incident. Voroshilov's speech offered no occasion for special objections; the throngs of demonstrators refrained from calumniations of National Socialism or of leading Germans. The ceremony at the Embassy was extraordinarily well-attended (550 persons): after my speech three or four German [exile] Communists apparently sent to start a row, tried to 'heckle' me, but they were gently ousted. ^[21]

On 16 May, Dirksen was able to report that in an interview with Litvinov, the Soviet Foreign Commissar had declared that 'the basic attitude of the Soviet government toward Germany had remained entirely the same: the Soviet government was convinced that it could have just as friendly relations with a Nazi Germany as with a fascist Italy'. ^[22] On 4 August, Molotov reiterated this policy: 'The Soviet government [is] striving for friendly relation not only with other countries, but also with Germany, regardless of their internal political structure...' ^[23] Which elicited the comment by Dirksen that 'Molotov's statements, as one of the really authoritative men and closest co-workers of Stalin, undoubtedly deserves serious consideration'. ^[24] Molotov went even further the next month, making these sentiments public at the September 1933 session of the All-Union Central Executive Committee:

We of course sympathise with the sufferings of our German comrades, but we Marxists are the last who can be reproached with allowing our feelings to dictate our policy. The whole world knows that we can and do maintain good relations with the capitalist states of any brand, including the fascist.

The haste with which the Kremlin embraced the butchers of the German proletariat exposed the Stalinists to criticism from the reformists. The Dutch Social Democrat Albarda declared that 'the Russian government, according to its own statements, maintains perfectly amicable relations with the German government, a government throwing Communist workers into prison'. Rather lamely, a German Stalinist replied:

The whole working class of the world is indebted beyond repayment to the calm, resolute policy of peace of our Russian comrades. They have refused to fall into the trap of a single provocation, thick and numerous as they have been. ^[25]

Under pressure from the European working class, the reformist trade union and Social Democratic leaders organised a trade boycott of Nazi Germany. This did not accord at all with either the political or economic policies of the Kremlin bureaucracy, which desired above all else to preserve its links with the German bourgeoisie. So the Comintern press unleashed a ferocious slander campaign against the solidarity boycott:

Our attitude to the social fascist boycott campaign... [is that] the revolutionary workers will take part in every mass action which constitutes a blow against German fascism, but they will not allow themselves to be used as tools in the hands of one imperialist country against another... The merchandise boycott proclaimed by the Social Democrats is a swindle.

Instead of the 'swindle' of proletarian internationalism, the Comintern offered a 'real struggle' against Hitler. ^[26]

Stalin was evidently satisfied with the activities of his diplomats, for he had Molotov declare to the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet Union in December 1933:

This has been a year of further consolidation of the international position of the Soviet Union. The facts speak for themselves... It must be said that this year Soviet diplomacy has had some outstanding successes. ^[27]

Right through to the summer of 1934, the Comintern leadership sustained its line of an imminent proletarian revolution in Germany, and that the 'social fascists', and not the Nazis, were the main enemy. The purge of the SA on 30 June 1934, which marked the final consolidation of the regime in Germany, was hailed by the ECCI as fresh evidence of the approaching downfall of Hitler. On 1 July, *Pravda* said: 'The fascist dictatorship now enters a new stage of its existence with its prospects for the future greatly impaired.' On 2 July, the same paper wrote with even more emphasis: 'The fascist regime is approaching its inevitable collapse...' On 3 July, Radek drew a picture of a Nazi regime denuded of mass support as a result of the purge, and ready to fall at a signal from the KPD. The Nazi regime had 'not only failed to get the better of the cadres of the working class, it has also failed to get hold of the backward strata of the

workers... Under the blows of the fascist lash they are maturing the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat.’ [28]

For a brief period, there was revived the ‘National Bolshevik’ line of the 1931 Prussian referendum, in which the KPD addressed appeals to ‘revolutionaries’ in the ranks of the demoted SA to come over to the side of Communism. Knorin told a meeting of the ECCI Presidium on 9 July:

We must say [to the SA men]: ‘You can make amends for the severe crimes which you have committed against the toiling masses by carrying on jointly with all anti-fascists the struggle for the overthrow of the fascist dictatorship. There is still much which separates you from genuine revolutionary fighters. We can join together, however, on the basic thing, in the struggle against Hitler.’ The KPD has now adopted this line, and it seems to us that on the basis of this line considerable masses of storm troops will actually come over into the ranks of the revolutionary fighters...

But there could still be no united front with the Social Democrats, even though this had become official policy for the French Communist Party: ‘... even now it is correct to call Wels a social fascist, it is correct that fascism and Social Democracy, led by Wels, were twins.’ [29]

Scapegoats and Alibis

The Seventh - and as it turned out, last - Congress of the Communist International had been scheduled for 1934, but was then suddenly postponed without explanation. The real reason was of course that a new political line was in the process of crystallisation - the ‘People’s Front’ - and that, at all costs, the question of Germany had to be put on ice for as long as possible. The history of the counter-revolutionary People’s Front necessarily lies outside the scope of this book. Therefore we focus on only one theme that loomed large at the Seventh Congress held in the summer of 1935 - the question of the defeat in Germany. The promised revolution, speeded up by Hitler’s ‘temporary’ victory, had not come. Who then was to blame? Not the ECCI, with the infallible Stalin at its head, clearly. There could only be one answer. The sections, and within them, certain leaders who were secretly opposed to the ‘general line’, failed either through lack of Communist understanding or consciously (as with the Neumann - Remmele group) to apply it correctly.

A harbinger of this new line on Germany appeared in the form of a book by Piatnitsky - *The Fascist Dictatorship in Germany* - which although published in 1935 was written over the previous year, when some of the concepts of the Third Period were still in force (nowhere more so than in the KPD, which finally approached the SPD for a united front against the Nazi regime only at the beginning of 1935 - two full years after Hitler seized power!). References were made by Piatnitsky to the ‘weak spots’ in the work of the KPD. These included neglect of the ADGB trade unions (even though this tactic flowed directly from the line laid down by the Comintern leadership and the RILU), and failing to ‘take sufficient account of the necessity of convincing the Social Democratic workers’. Nevertheless, the overall line of the KPD was upheld as correct, especially in the period prior to and during the fascist seizure of power, when on Moscow’s orders the Stalinist leadership held the party back from any conflict with the Nazis. Piatnitsky used the scholastic argument that since there had been no revolutionary situation in Germany in January 1933, ‘the KPD could not prevent Hitler from coming to power’. [30]

The second proposition does not at all necessarily flow from the first. A united front of the KPD and SPD against Hitler was most certainly a practical possibility had the KPD applied the correct Leninist tactic. And by so doing, the working class would have rapidly passed over from active defence to the revolutionary offensive. Did Lenin argue that since there was no immediate revolutionary situation when Kornilov launched his offensive against Petrograd in September 1917, the counter-revolutionary General was therefore destined to seize power? On the contrary, by proposing and securing a united front with the other Soviet parties - including the party of Kerensky! - the Bolsheviks were able to rout Kornilov, and resume successfully the struggle for the overturn.

Naturally, Piatnitsky heaped the blame for Hitler’s victory on the reformist leaders. But he also reserved some harsh words for the eight million or so workers who followed them right to the end:

... they were bound hand and foot by their leaders, because they blindly believed in these leaders... can we say that the bulk of the SPD workers bear no political responsibility for the actual refusal to participate in the united front of the struggle against fascism? No, we cannot. [31]

But the purpose of the united front tactic is precisely to draw the reformist workers into the struggle against fascism. Why, in conditions of incredible self-exposure for Social Democracy, could not the KPD achieve this goal? Because all 'unity' proposals - with no more than two exceptions - were made 'from below' and specifically excluded the reformist leaders, to whom the reformist workers were 'bound hand and foot'. By the very use of such a phrase, Piatnitsky was admitting that in its first stages at least, the participation of the reformist workers in the united front against fascism *demanded the participation of the reformist leaders*. But naturally, Piatnitsky feared to tread on such dangerous territory, for had not the arch-counter-revolutionary Trotsky been agitating for just this policy ever since the German crisis exploded in 1930?

At the Seventh Congress itself, criticism of the KPD was taken much further. But again, the 'general line' was upheld. Thus, the speaker, Wilhelm Pieck, continued, the 'class against class' slogan issued early in 1928, which heralded the Third Period, was correctly posed, but wrongly interpreted by the sections:

... as meaning that our comrades must not make such [united front] proposals to the local organisations of the Social Democrats and of the reformist trade unions. Owing to this defective application of our tactics of 'class against class', and frequently even to the distorted idea that these tactics supposedly precluded the united front, our sections in this stage of the struggle failed to achieve the success they might have achieved.

The formation of 'Red Unions' in Germany, which had the full approval of the ECCI, and had been resisted by the more sober elements of the KPD leadership, was now presented as a serious error: 'The RGO was transformed into new trade unions, and, as a result, found itself isolated from the greater mass of members of the reformist trade unions.' But not all the blame could be heaped on the mistakes of the KPD. The working class itself came in for severe reprimand. The steady decline in the living standards of the German workers after 1930 'was due to the fact that the workers did not heed the call of the Communists to resist wage cuts and dismissals... and thus made it possible for the capitalists to render the conditions of the toilers still more unfavourable...'. Pieck displayed all the frustrations of a bureaucrat, used to having his instructions obeyed, confronted with a mass movement that refused to do his bidding. The working class could have prevented the victory of Hitler:

... but this would have required that the working class should have established the united front and destroyed the counter-revolutionary united front of the SPD and ADGB leaders with the bourgeoisie; it should not have allowed itself to be beguiled by the Social Democratic theory that the class struggle is impossible in times of crisis. [The very theory that Popular Front Stalinism was to proclaim - and enforce at gun-point - in the Spanish Civil War - RB] ... The working class should not have looked on calmly when the fascists under Hitler's leadership armed themselves... should not have permitted the fascists to develop their demagogy in connection with the yoke of the Versailles Treaty, but should have forced the Weimar Republic to tear up the Versailles Treaty. But this the German working class did not do. Its majority followed the SPD blindly, and paid no heed to the warning voice of the Communists. And so it must endure the horrors of the fascist hell.

With a cynicism that would have unnerved all but the most depraved bureaucrats, Pieck charged the KPD with having neglected the employment of the united front tactic during the period of Hitler's rise to power, a period throughout which the ECCI had consistently charged the party with the task of combating the 'right deviation' - the tendency that favoured forming a bloc of the workers' parties against fascism:

It was only in the autumn of 1932 that the KPD issued to the Communists the slogan of defending the labour organisations and their property... It was with still greater delay - in Germany only even after the advent of Hitler to power - that the Communists issued the clear slogan of defending the free [formerly 'social fascist' - RB] trade unions...

Also jettisoned - in accordance with the requirements of the new line - was the judgement of the KPD and the ECCI that 'the Social Democratic Hermann Müller government was working for fascistisation, that the Brüning government was already a government of fascist dictatorship'. Likewise, the KPD was scolded five years after the event for its having 'underrated the Hitler movement, by the assumption that in a country like Germany, where the working class was so highly organised, the Hitlerites could not possibly seize power...'. But having chided the KPD for its 'sectarianism', for its refusal to propose a united front to the reformist leaders and come to the defence of the mass reformist organisations, Pieck was at the same time prepared to denounce these same reformists for having turned down offers of a united front against fascism that, on his own admission, were not made: '... the SPD was opposed to such

a united front, and rendered it impossible...’ [32] So all was now clear. KPD, SPD, proletariat - all were to blame for the Nazi victory (and this despite the ECCI Presidium resolution of 1 April 1933 which upheld the party’s policy to be ‘correct’ both before and during the Hitler coup!). Only the ‘general line’ and the all-seeing, infallible General Secretary emerged unscathed. For the uncrowned king of the bureaucratic caste of usurpers that dominated the USSR could do no wrong. That was why even at the congress that ushered in officially the ultra-opportunist line of the Popular Front, Stalin’s dictum that Social Democracy and fascism were twins could not be discarded, as Manuilsky explained to a meeting of ‘Active Party Members of the Moscow Organisation of the CPSU’ on 14 September 1935:

Some think that in raising the question of the united front between Communists and Social Democrats for the struggle against fascism... we are abandoning Stalin’s thesis that the fascists and Social Democrats are not opposites, but twins. Is that the case? If Social Democracy in Germany and in Austria were not principal bulwarks of the bourgeoisie but the opposites of fascism, fascism would not have come into power either in Germany or in Austria. But ceasing to be the social bulwark of the bourgeoisie, becoming the opposite of fascism, would have meant fighting it... By its whole policy of class collaboration, which paved the road to fascism, Social Democracy demonstrated the truth of the thesis that it is not the opposite but the twin of fascism.

[33]

Within the arid, idealist schemas of Manuilsky’s Stalinism there existed only polar opposites - either Communism or fascism. Those forces not ranged completely and openly on the side of Communism were therefore grouped under the rubric of fascism. Yet by the same method, one could equally well argue that all forces which were not completely and openly with fascism must be included in the camp of Communism! This simpleton’s Marxism, which reduces all nuances and mediations, all gradations and transitions, to a subjectively satisfying ‘it’s either us or the fascists’ sounds very radical but has nothing to do with Leninist tactics and strategy. Echoes of this thinking can still be found in the workers’ movement, regrettably even amongst tendencies that claim to be Trotskyist. What Manuilsky was unable to explain was how the Comintern now found itself involved in a Popular Front with the ‘twin’ of fascism. But such exalted bureaucrats did not have to justify and explain, convince or reason; simply dictate.

Stalin had every reason to feel satisfied with the work of his ECCI stooges. They had apportioned the blame for the German débâcle on all save those who merited it most. But he was not satisfied. He desired the heads of the many KPD leaders who remained inwardly critical of the architect of Hitler’s victory. Those whom the Nazis were not able to murder were butchered by Stalin’s GPU gangsters in the cellars of the Lubyanka. Stalin and Hitler between them could, by 1937, claim to have massacred the majority of the KPD Central Committee, and untold thousands more of its middle and lower cadres. Indeed, Stalin exceeded Hitler’s tally of top party leaders, as the following murder toll demonstrates.

Politbureau: Killed by Stalin: Hermann Remmele, Heinz Neumann, Fritz Schulte, Hermann Schubert - four.

Politbureau: Killed by Hitler: Ernst Thälmann, John Schehr - two.

Central Committee: Killed by Stalin: Hugo Eberlein (founder of the Comintern), Hans Kippenberger (head of the KPD military apparatus), Leo Flieg (KPD Organisations Secretary), Willy Leow (head of the Red Front Fighters’ League), Willi Koska (head of Red Aid), Heinrich Susskind and Werner Hirsch (chief editors of *Rote Fahne*, the KPD daily), Erich Birkenhauer, Alfred Rebe, Theodor Beutling, Heinrich Kurella (all on the staff of *Rote Fahne*), Kurt Sauerland, August Creutzburg. Total - 11.

Central Committee: Killed by Hitler - nine.

Even excelling Hitler as a butcher of Communists did not sate the blood-lust of the counter-revolutionary Stalinist bureaucracy. Following the conclusion of the Stalin-Hitler pact in August 1939, Stalin dealt one last treacherous blow to those whom he had betrayed in 1933 and persecuted after they fled to the USSR from the Nazi terror in the succeeding years. Former KPD militants still languishing in Stalin’s camps all over the USSR were collected together at one point and handed over to the SS on the newly-established Soviet-German frontier in what Molotov termed ‘the former state of Poland’. The widow of the murdered Heinz Neumann was one of them, and she later described this scene of unbelievable perfidy and degradation in her autobiographical *Under Two Dictators*:

There were 28 men... in our group. Betty [Olberg] and I, an old professor and a prisoner with a wounded leg were taken on in a lorry. The men had to walk. We got out on the Russian side of

the Brest-Litovsk bridge, and waited for them to come up, looking across the bridge into occupied Poland. The men arrived and then a group of GPU men crossed the bridge. We saw them returning after a while, and the group was larger. There were SS officers with them. The SS commandant and the GPU chief saluted each other. The Russian... took out some papers from a bright leather case and began to read out a list of names. The only one I heard was 'Margarete Genrichovna Buber-Neumann'. Some of our group began to protest and to argue with the GPU. One of them was a Jew... another was a young worker from Dresden, who had been mixed up in a clash with the Nazis in 1933 as a result of which a Nazi had been killed... His fate was certain. We went over the bridge. The three who had protested were hustled along with the rest... The GPU officials still stood there in a group watching us go. Behind them was Soviet Russia. Bitterly I recalled the Communist litany: 'Fatherland of the Toilers, Bulwark of Socialism, Haven of the Persecuted.'

Miraculously, Mrs Neumann survived her four-year term in Ravensbrück concentration camp, though not before she had been persecuted once more, not merely by her Nazi jailers, but by her camp inmates still loyal to the Stalinist line that had led them into captivity. Because her husband had been purged in Moscow, women KPD prisoners at Ravensbrück were instructed by their leaders to treat her as a 'counter-revolutionary' and 'enemy of the people'. [34]

Those were of course also the charges hurled against the defendants at the three Moscow Show Trials of 1936, 1937 and 1938. Here too, the question of Germany loomed large.

Even amongst some of the most loyal of Stalin's supporters it was being admitted that their patron had permitted Hitler to come to power in Germany. Stalin's answer was to exploit the Moscow Trials to 'prove' not only to the CPSU leaders and the Soviet working class, but to the entire international workers' movement, that it was not he who had served as an ally of German fascism, but Trotsky and all those Communists in the USSR who had, at various times in the past associated themselves with an oppositional tendency.

Stalin's intentions were revealed at the first trial - that of Zinoviev and Kamenev - when a crude attempt was made to construct an amalgam linking not only the Soviet opposition with Hitler, but also the Trotskyist movement in Germany. One of the accused was Fritz David, a lesser KPD functionary who fled to the USSR after the Nazi seizure of power. He was made to say the following under examination:

When proposing that I go to the USSR to kill Stalin, Trotsky advised me, for the sake of secrecy, not to maintain open connections with the Trotskyists, but outwardly to adhere to the policy of the Central Committee of the KPD. This conversation took place with Trotsky in November 1932 [when Trotsky was in Copenhagen to address a meeting of Social Democratic students on the Russian Revolution - RB].

Oldberg, another defendant, was made to confess that he was the main liaison agent who worked with Trotsky's son Sedov, who until the Nazis came to power ran the Secretariat of the International Left Opposition from Berlin. Ruth Fischer and Arkadi Maslow, who were at that time (1932) in sympathy, though not total agreement, with the Opposition, were also slanderously linked to this mythical conspiracy. Oldberg, like David, was a former member of the KPD. And he too was presented as a close follower of Trotsky:

He was a member of the German Trotskyist organisation since 1927-28. His contact with Trotsky and Sedov... began in 1930. This contact was arranged by an active member of the German Trotskyist organisation, Anton Grylewicz, the publisher of Trotsky's pamphlets in Germany.

Then the following exchange took place between Oldberg and the Prosecutor, Vyshinsky:

Vyshinsky: What do you know about Freidemann?

Oldberg: Freidemann was a member of the Berlin Trotskyist organisation, who was sent to the Soviet Union.

Vyshinsky: Are you aware of the fact that Freidemann was connected with the German police?

Oldberg: I heard about that [sic].

Vyshinsky: Connection between the German Trotskyites and the German police - was that systematic?

Oldberg: Yes, it was systematic, and it was done with Trotsky's consent... In 1933 there began organised systematic connection between the German Trotskyists and the German fascist

police... Trotsky had sanctioned the agreement between the Berlin Trotskyites and the Gestapo, and the Trotskyites were in fact left free... ^[35]

Which was a vile lie, since like all other tendencies in the workers' movement, the German Trotskyists suffered terribly at the hands of the Nazis, yielding up their full share of martyrs. Much of the impact of these slanders was undermined, however, by the fact that Zinoviev and Kamenev, the main defendants at the first trial, could not be induced to confess to being agents of Hitler. This Stalin achieved with the second trial, held in January 1937. The scripted words put into the mouth of the star defendant, Radek, made Stalin's purpose very clear:

I received three letters from Trotsky: in April 1934, in December 1935 and in January 1936. In the letter of 1934 Trotsky put the question in this way. The accession of fascism to power in Germany had fundamentally changed the whole situation... In this letter Trotsky stated that he had established contacts with a certain far-eastern state [Japan] and a certain central European state [Germany], and that he had openly told semi-official circles of these states that the bloc stood for a bargain with them...

Stalin's pro-German orientation, which endured until well into 1934, and which in fact was never totally abandoned, as the pact of 1939 confirmed, was foisted by Radek *onto Trotsky*, who had in his writings condemned the Kremlin for its appeasement of the Nazi regime:

In the autumn of 1934, at a diplomatic reception, a diplomatic representative of a central European country sat down beside me and started a conversation... 'I feel I want to spew... Every day I get German newspapers and they go for you tooth and nail: and I get Soviet newspapers and you throw mud at Germany. What can you do under these circumstances? ... Our leaders know that Mr Trotsky is striving for a rapprochement with Germany...' I told him that realist politicians in the USSR understood the significance of a German-Soviet rapprochement and are prepared to make the necessary concessions to achieve this... This representative understood that since I was speaking about realist politicians and unrealist politicians in the USSR the unrealist politicians were the Soviet government, while the realist politicians were the Trotsky and Zinoviev bloc...

^[36]

The final trial, that of the former right oppositionists Bukharin, Rykov and others (Tomsy committed suicide to avoid his arrest), placed the date of origin of this mythical conspiracy between Trotsky and German imperialism back to 1921. Trotsky's negotiations on behalf of the Red Army and the Soviet government with the German chief of staff, von Seeckt, were construed in the trial to be treason!

Carefully, though not without some precarious moments, the image was built up in the three trials of Trotsky as an ally of German fascism, both before and after it came to power, and of Stalin as its most determined enemy. This version has been only marginally amended in the postwar period, as we shall now demonstrate.

Walter Ulbricht - Historian

From 1928 until the summer of 1934, the KPD leadership had consistently denounced the SPD as a social fascist party. In 1946, the East German rumps of the two parties were fused in a shotgun wedding staged by Stalin, the author of the theory that fascism and Social Democracy were twins. In order to facilitate the merger, former criticisms of the SPD were toned down, and the main responsibility for the Nazi victory and the invasion of the USSR placed on the German working class. Walter Ulbricht, charged by Stalin with liquidating the independent working-class organisations that sprang up in Germany as the Red Army advanced westwards, made several speeches on this theme in the early postwar period:

It is the tragedy of the German people that *it obeyed a gang of criminals*. This is the most terrible thing. *The perception of this guilt* is the prerequisite for our people finally breaking with their reactionary past and entering resolutely upon a new road. *The joint responsibility* consists in the fact that they *permitted* those forces which were the most rapacious and greedy for conquest in Germany, the Nazi bureaucracy and the big armament industrialists, to take over the full state power... in the fact that they *permitted* the hate propaganda against French, Polish, Russian and English [but not Jewish? - RB] peoples and *allowed* the Hitler clique to break all treaties and even tear up the Soviet-German non-aggression treaty... in the fact that they credulously allowed themselves to be deceived, that the old Prussian spirit of submissiveness and blind obedience [which Ulbricht displayed to the full in his relations with Stalin! - RB] dominated great masses

in that these masses obeyed a gang of war criminals. The joint responsibility consists in the fact that the majority of our people applauded the Hitler government during Hitler's temporary victories [as did Stalin, who sent a message congratulating Hitler on his conquest of Poland, a victory 'sealed in the blood of our two peoples' - RB] and imagined themselves to be superior to other peoples. ^[37]

By talking throughout of the 'German people', Ulbricht lumped together the socialist proletariat, who fought Hitler before he came to power, and continued to resist him afterwards, with the big bourgeoisie who financed the Nazis, placed them in power and grew fat on their plunder. The responsibility of the leadership to the class is dissolved into a 'collective guilt' of the entire 'German people', a guilt from which Ulbricht clearly considered himself absolved:

In 1932 a united struggle of the workers and the entire working people could still have prevented the seizure of power by Hitlerism. It would be harmful to our own nation if we did not have the courage to recognise that the German working class and the working people failed historically, and this failure is the more terrible because it enabled German fascism after 1933 to organise the systematic destruction of the progressive forces in Germany and allowed Nazism to carry through the systematic extermination of the opponents of the German fascist imperialists in gas cars and cremation ovens [still no direct reference to the Jews! - RB]... Only when our people feel deeply ashamed of the crimes of Hitlerism... of having allowed these barbarous crimes, only then will they have the inner courage to enter upon a stage of new democracy... It will be self-deception to believe that Hitler would have been able to carry through his barbaric war policy only by means of the most cruel terror against his own people. He who recalls with what enthusiasm the majority of the German people cheered Hitler when the German armies stood before Moscow will not be able to deny that the imperialist and militarist ideology has deep roots in our people and that even those who were filled with anxiety about the future of Germany did not have the strength to swim against the stream. ^[38]

When the East German Stalinists got down to the formidable task of concocting a history of the German workers' movement and its Communist Party, they found themselves confronted by the delicate question of social fascism. The 'Socialist Unity Party' (SED) was after all the product of a merger between the Stalinists and elements of the Social Democratic bureaucracies in East Germany. Ulbricht now shared the leadership of the new party with those whom 15 years previously he had been denouncing as social fascists (Max Seydewitz, the SAP 'left social fascist' was a case in point). Stalin's theory therefore had to be sustained (since the entire Stalinist leadership had subscribed to it for six full years), but also qualified. In 1953, the SED published the first volume of Ulbricht's speeches and articles, in which the following note was appended by Ulbricht to explain how the theory of social fascism arose within the KPD:

The banning of the May Day demonstration in 1929, the shooting down of workers by order of Zörgiebel... the toleration policy of the SPD towards the Brüning government, the permissiveness toward fascist murder gangs by Severing's police and by Social Democratic police chiefs in various cities and the simultaneous ban on the Red Front by Severing showed that the Social Democratic leadership supported the reactionary and fascist forces. That is why the policy of the Social Democratic leadership amounted to fascism. This assessment of the attitude of the leadership the Social Democrats and ultimately of the SPD was so justified that the Social Democratic workers came to realise it. [!!] In 1932, when the Hitler party was conducting its struggle for power, the KPD's main target was not only the Nazi Party and those preparing for the Hitler dictatorship - Brüning, Papen and Schleicher - but also the Social Democrats as a party, but without sufficiently differentiating between the leadership and the members. ^[39]

By sleight of hand, Ulbricht backdates the period of toleration of the Brüning government by more than a year, from October 1930 to May 1929 when Müller was still in power! But even this does not save him, for the theory of social fascism was rife in the party, and being used in its press, *throughout the latter half of 1928*. In fact the Berlin May Day fighting of 1929 served as a pretext to *justify* the wild leftward lurch of the KPD carried through at the Wedding Congress later that month, just as Ulbricht used it in 1953 to conceal the real historical and political origins of the theory of social fascism - a theory which in substance, if not always its application, he found to be still correct 20 years after Hitler's victory.

In this same volume appears a speech made by Ulbricht on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the illegal meeting of the KPD Central Committee on 7 February 1933. He quoted an excerpt from notes which Thälmann made in prison following his arrest by the Gestapo on 3 March 1933. Ulbricht's purpose

in citing these prison notes is all too obvious - the German Stalinists need their scapegoats, and therefore what could be better than to invoke Thälmann's memory to blacken their reputation still further? '... the Trotskyite Neumann - Remmele group are trying to utilise the deficiencies of the fight against Hitler fascism to attack the CC of the KPD.' Ulbricht interpolated at this point that 'Thälmann called this Trotskyite group a dirty pack of liars and traitors', and then continued to cite from the notes:

They bear a share of the blame and main responsibility for our party not being active and vital enough in certain fields of political life. If we had uncovered their sectarian and opportunist line two years earlier, we should have been more advanced. It is hard to doubt that another course would have been followed, *as the line and the policy of the party was not wrong...* [40]

Ulbricht himself was no sluggard in slandering Trotskyists (though of course he knew as well as Thälmann that this term applied to neither Remmele nor Neumann). In 1939, he alleged that:

The Trotskyite traitors betrayed Ernst Thälmann to the Gestapo. This must serve as a permanent warning to all honourable freedom fighters in Germany ruthlessly to purge their Trotskyite spies from the ranks of the working-class and anti-fascist movement. [41]

The line that 'social fascism' was a correct designation of the SPD and ADGB leaders in the pre-Hitler period remained in vogue until 1963, when a certain shift could be detected in the statements and writings of leading GDR Stalinists. Obviously an important factor in this manoeuvre was the crisis of the Soviet bureaucracy and its refraction through the demagogic 'anti-Stalinism' of Khrushchev and the ferment amongst writers and historians. This movement even penetrated into Ulbricht's domain, forcing the SED chief to undertake a formal (and unacknowledged) revision of certain historical questions, among them being that of social fascism and the causes of Hitler's victory. A hint of what was to come appeared in Ulbricht's 'Report to the Sixth Congress of the SED', held in East Berlin from 15 to 21 January 1963, in the presence of Khrushchev. Ulbricht seized on Khrushchev's idealist theory of the 'cult of Stalin's personality' to exonerate himself and his fellow Stalinist bureaucrats of the KPD from any blame for the defeat of 1933:

Under the most complicated conditions... we worked out the strategy and tactics for the struggle against Hitlerism and gave guidance to operative work in Germany. We were the only German party with a correct strategic and tactical conception... Although the Stalinist cult of the personality caused losses in our party [to be precise, four Politbureau and 11 Central Committee members!]... *our party leadership remained united, firm...* Of course, Stalin's narrow conceptions already had a certain effect on the policy of the KPD from 1930 to 1932, but it was often corrected by the collective representatives of the CPSU and the fraternal parties in the ECCI... We too... suffered under the Stalinist personality cult and his terrorist methods... *our Political Bureau opposed the Stalinist methods.* We were understood and supported in this by Soviet comrades and by the General Secretary of the Communist International, Comrade Georgi Dimitrov... [42]

It is interesting to note here that Ulbricht confines the period of the negative effect of 'Stalin's narrow conceptions' to the years between 1930 and 1932; that is, he excludes both the ultra-left turn accomplished at the Sixth Comintern Congress in 1928, and the emergence of the theory of social fascism, and the years 1933 and 1934, when the KPD leadership continued to uphold this theory and reject the united front with the Social Democrats.

Treading warily on ground strewn with hidden land-mines, Ulbricht took his belated criticism of Stalin a step further when he told a session of the SED Central Committee held in 1963 to approve the draft of the official *Outline History of the German Working-Class Movement*, that the decision of the KPD to support the Nazi referendum in Prussia in 1931 'was not a reflection of the judgement of the KPD, but was "guided by Stalin's dogmatic and schematic ideas on the role of Social Democracy... The expression 'social fascism' was not invented in the Karl Liebknecht House either.'" [43] Yet 10 years earlier, the same Ulbricht had written that the theory of social fascism was not only correct, but had been developed as a result of the specific experiences of the KPD in its struggle against Social Democracy!

Also contributing towards this revision of the theory of social fascism was, of course, the general worldwide drift of Stalinism towards the right, the Kremlin's policy of peaceful coexistence with imperialism requiring as smooth a relationship as possible with international Social Democracy. The theory of social fascism was clearly an impediment to such relations, and Ulbricht undertook the necessary adjustments. The history of the KPD was now presented as having been, throughout the Third Period, one of an honest

quest for unity not only with the reformist workers, *but their leaders*. Frustrating this aim was the ubiquitous Neumann - Remmele group, who, if they had not existed, would have had to have been invented by the East German Stalinist historians. In 1965, the SED Institute of Marxism-Leninism published its history of the KPD in the last year of the Weimar Republic, under the title of *Die Anti-Faschistische Aktion*, this being the name of the allegedly 'non-party' anti-fascist body set up by the KPD and RGO in April 1932. Much of the book consists of carefully selected and expurgated documents from the period, but the introduction gives a clear indication of the new style of history writing that had been ushered in by Ulbricht in 1963:

The decisions of the February [1932] plenary session were an ideological defeat for the sectarian Neumann group. This group had opposed the general line with a left opportunist platform. Neumann underestimated the Nazi danger and believed that the establishment of an open fascist dictatorship would only hasten the proletarian revolution. His views hindered the ideological and political mass struggle against Hitler's fascism and inclined towards individual terror... He criticised the attitude adopted of making limited demands for the immediate needs of the masses and he discounted their importance as mere skirmishes. Neumann disparaged the work of the factory cells and sought to sabotage the activity of Communists in the free trade unions... he opposed the united front policy of the CC with the narrow 'Red Workers' Front'. [44]

In other words, Neumann was to be blamed for all the policy mistakes that had been committed by the entire KPD leadership (and endorsed by the ECCI) not only in the period when Neumann was in the leadership, but even after February 1932, when he was effectively ousted from the party high command. Red Unionism, refusal of the united front with the reformists, ultimatism and the sectarian rejection of struggle around minimal and partial demands - all were laid at the door of the murdered Neumann and his supporters. He was even held responsible for the theory that remained operative until a full year after the Nazi victory, and which was proclaimed in Stalin's presence by Manuilsky at the Seventeenth CPSU Congress in January 1934 - 'After Hitler, us.' Thälmann was now depicted as the apostle of proletarian unity against fascism, and even as an antagonist of Stalin's theory of social fascism:

He criticised the view that frequently branded Hitler fascism and Social Democracy as twin brothers... and thus showed how to overcome the sectarian concept of 'social fascism'... This false concept caused a diversion from the decisive problems and tasks in the struggle for the united front. It impeded the establishment of contacts with members, officials and leaders of the SPD and the trade unions. [45]

The reader will not be surprised to learn that no texts are cited by the authors of this work to validate their claim that Thälmann opposed the theory and practice of 'social fascism'. Quite the contrary. Perhaps through an oversight, they permit the publication of a document written by Thälmann with not only uses the term but, what is more, in its most sectarian fashion, namely 'left social fascism'. In a letter (dated 28 May 1932) to all Central Committee members, he asks:

What proposals have been made to draw in the Social Democratic workers? ... What defensive methods against 'leftist' manoeuvres likely to be made by the 'left' social fascists? [In other words, how can we avoid accepting possible united front offers from the reformists - RB] How can we work positively and concretely against the social fascist-methods of the *Hammerschaft*?

This was the hard-core reformist defence formation set up to protect SPD meetings from Nazi - and Stalinist - thuggery. And for good measure: 'How can we most effectively combat the manoeuvres of the Trotskyists?' [46] So much for the Thälmann legend.

A year later, in 1966, came the publication of the long-awaited fourth volume of the SED Institute for Marxism-Leninism's *History of the German Workers' Movement*, the volume which spanned the years between 1924 and January 1933. It is important to record here that the team of authors responsible for the volume's production worked under the chairmanship of Walter Ulbricht, who more than any other political figure in the GDR had a special interest in ensuring that the historian's zeal for objectivity did not outstrip his respect for the prestige of the Stalinist leadership. All the old themes reoccur in this work - the nefarious activities of the Neumann group, the honest endeavours of the Thälmann - Ulbricht leadership to construct a genuine united front against fascism, the negative effects of Stalin that were strenuously resisted by this same leadership, etc, etc. What was new was the backdating to the Sixth Comintern congress of the emergence of the tactics of the Third Period, though, even here, the fact that Stalin used the KPD clique around Thälmann to force through his new line on the Social Democrats and the united front is discreetly avoided. There is simply a reference to the fact that:

... under the influence of JV Stalin's dogmatic views, the Sixth World Congress emphasised many mechanistic pronouncements which had a negative influence on the policy of the CI since the congress... It was false to draw the definite conclusion that Social Democracy was on the way to becoming fascist... this restricted Leninist united front policy considerably and facilitated subsequent sectarianism in the Communist movement. ^[47]

The May Day events of 1929 were now presented as not having precipitated and justified the theory of social fascism, but as having '*reinforced* the conclusion... that Social Democracy had developed into social fascism and was actively preparing the way for fascist dictatorship'. The Eleventh ECCI Plenum of March-April 1931 undoubtedly played an enormously important part in the defeat of 1933, since it forced on the KPD the policy of regarding Hitler's victory as the 'lesser evil', of regarding fascism as an element in the disintegration of the bourgeoisie. Yet a different picture of the Plenum emerges from the *History*. Thälmann allegedly (though once again without any documentary proof) 're-emphasised the principle that in all discussions with the Social Democratic leaders, the principal task of the KPD must be the struggle against the forces of fascism'. Yet throughout 1931, and in fact from 1929 to 1934, both the ECCI and the KPD leadership denounced as right-opportunism any move on the part of Communist Party members towards forming a united front with the Social Democrats. The reader will find ample evidence of this in the numerous citations from Stalinist publications presented in earlier chapters of this book. The only error of the Plenum (one, however, which flowed from the very essence of the theory of social fascism) was its failure 'to differentiate between the parliamentary and fascist methods of rule by the bourgeoisie'. ^[48] If that were the case, then how come Thälmann's alleged call for an approach to the reformist leaders for a joint fight against fascism, when the ECCI Plenum had enunciated, with Thälmann's approval, that Social Democracy and fascism were undifferentiated forms of bourgeois rule? Why support one fascism against another? The whole of the volume follows this pattern - a formal 'correction' of some of the more blatant consequences of the Third Period, but nowhere a serious explanation of their origins, of their material and theoretical origins in the Soviet bureaucracy and the Stalinist theory of 'socialism in one country'. Nor would we expect to find such an analysis in a volume compiled by a team of GDR historians under the watchful gaze of Ulbricht, one of the minor architects of the 1933 defeat. For example, the Red Referendum episode is laid at the door of Neumann and Stalin, whereas in reality Neumann had opposed the plan to back the Nazi referendum, *and was publicly denounced for so doing nearly two years later in the Comintern press*. The book is in fact a typical product of that notorious pedagogic institution for political mis-education, the Stalinist school of falsification.

However, there are those who would object to this categorisation, among them being Ernest Mandel, the leading theoretician of the revisionist 'United Secretariat of the Fourth International'. We have demonstrated textually that each seeming 'correction' of the crudely Stalinist version that prevailed up to 1953 (and even later) contained within it a political justification for the policies that led to the victory of German fascism in 1933, and that these 'corrections' served as a means of preserving the somewhat tarnished political credentials of the Ulbricht leadership in the SED. Ulbricht was even prepared to sacrifice Stalin's reputation on the altar of his own bureaucratic infallibility. Mandel, in accordance with the Pabloite theory of the self-reform of the Stalinist bureaucracy, depicts this process of opportunist adaptation to historical reality, motivated by the desire of the bureaucracy to conceal its past betrayals and its present parasitism, as being a tacit admission that Trotsky had been correct on the German question. Mandel writes in his 'Introduction' to *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, a collection of writings by Trotsky:

It took 25 years of *guilty conscience* before the 'official' Communist [note, not 'Stalinist', a term which the Pabloites no longer find appropriate - RB] movement could *seriously* undertake a critical discussion of Stalin's theory of fascism. The practical break with this theory happened, of course, very soon - after it was too late. The turn to the People's Front in 1935 implied a *complete revision* of the theory of 'social fascism' and a leap into a parallel rightist error... But because Stalin's writings were sacrosanct until 1956, a cautious revision of the social fascism theory began only after the beginning of so-called de-Stalinisation... the official *History of the German Labour Movement*, published in East Germany, subjected the theory and practice of the KPD in the years 1930 to 1933 to a *cautious but thorough criticism* without, however, avoiding new errors in the determination of the essence and function of fascism.

Mandel adds in a footnote the comment that the above work, specifically its fourth volume from which we have quoted, ‘admits in practically every point that Trotsky was right - without even once mentioning his name’. ^[49] Mandel knows full well that Trotsky’s critique of Third Period tactics and strategy proceeded from, and was a continuation of, *his opposition to the Stalinist theory of ‘socialism in one country’*, the theory that guided the working class to tragic defeats in both Britain (the General Strike) and China (the massacre of the Shanghai proletariat in April 1927). Mandel, however, separates out Trotsky’s critique of the theory of social fascism from his overall analysis of the material and political foundations of Stalinist policy. Mandel’s approach is one of the academic, who on detecting a formal similarity between one set of ideas and another (in this case, the revised GDR version of the history of the KPD, and Trotsky’s critique of its policies), pronounces them to be in some sort of agreement. In so doing, Mandel liquidates the entire theoretical foundation of the Fourth International, which is that the class struggle is international, and that by virtue of the world nature of economy and the international division of labour, there can be no national roads to socialism. ‘Social fascism’ as applied to Germany rested on the assumption that Germany could carry through the proletarian revolution and build socialism independently of and even against the rest of imperialist Europe - hence the strident nationalist slogans against the Versailles Treaty, the programme of ‘national and social liberation’, and the opportunist alliance with the Nazis against the Western-oriented Social Democrats. In this crucial sense, the transition to the Popular Front, while it marked a sharp revision of Stalinist *tactics*, proceeded entirely in accordance with the general theoretical, strategic and programmatic conceptions of ‘socialism in one country’. A liquidator of the party in his practice, Mandel proves himself here a liquidator also - and fundamentally - in the realm of theory and programme.

Let there be no doubts concerning the purpose of this Stalinist history. It is replete with the old slanders that Trotskyism is an agency of counter-revolution and fascism. Thus volume five (which Mandel discreetly passes over in silence, even though it deals in great detail with the vital transition from the Third Period to the Popular Front) contains the following vile accusation:

The fascists used all means at their disposal to ensure that no effective People’s Front Committee was formed outside Germany. Their secret service helped much to magnify existing differences in the committee, much aided by Trotskyist elements.

This same volume also discusses the Stalinist purges in the USSR, and their effect on the KPD leadership, many of whom died at the hands of the GPU:

The imperialist powers organised provocative reports that caused the Soviet state apparatus to take a wrong course. This situation enabled such criminals as Beria and Yezhov and others to carry out mass repression and lawlessness. These hit not only opposition groups of Trotskyists, adherents of Zinoviev, right-wingers and nationalists, *but also honourable and devoted officials, party and non-party alike...* Among them were members and responsible officials of the KPD. ^[50]

The implication is that Beria’s and Yezhov’s murderous activities (of which Stalin was fully cognisant) only became reprehensible when they struck down loyal supporters of the Stalin line. Thus Stalin’s massacre of the KPD exiles merits precisely one line. Let the militants of Mandel’s ‘United Secretariat’, which in France is liquidating itself into a revamped Stalinist-style Popular Front, draw their own conclusions. As so often has been the case with would-be Marxist corrections of Third Period leftism, unless they hold firm to the Leninist principle of the independence of the proletariat and its revolutionary vanguard, and proceed from Marxist internationalism, they will pass over eventually to right-opportunism, even, as in the case of the French Pabloite Ligue Communiste, to the Popular Front.

Georg Lukács: GPU Philosopher

It is not such a far cry as one might imagine from Mandel to Georg Lukács, the Hungarian Stalinist literary critic. For both men hold (in case of the latter, held, since Lukács died in 1971) that the Stalinist movement and bureaucracy is capable of regeneration, though obviously they would have differed as to the extent to which this process could or indeed should go. When we come to the question of Germany, we find that Lukács has evolved what is, in comparison with the efforts of Ulbricht, Dutt and company, a highly sophisticated apologia for the counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism in the struggle against Hitler. Lukács, for all his claims to being a long-standing opponent of Stalinism, was no stranger to the theory of social fascism. In his *Blum Theses* of 1928-29 (ironically, in view of their ultra-leftist appraisal of Social Democracy, condemned by the ECCI as right-opportunist) Lukács writes of the ‘fascisation of the trade

unions, and the integration of Social Democracy and the trade union bureaucracy into the fascist state apparatus'; and of a special Hungarian variant of fascism whose main distinguishing feature was 'the cooperation of the big bourgeoisie and the working-class bureaucracy'. ^[51]

In his 'Preface' to the 1967 edition of *History and Class Consciousness*, Lukács tries to present the 'Blum Theses' as a document written in opposition to the then prevailing leftism of the Communist International and its Hungarian section. More interesting, however, is his distortion of the history of the period between Lenin's death and the onset of the 'Third Period'. Lukács (like the British Stalinist Monty Johnstone) lumps together the Leninist united front and the Stalinist Popular Front and, moreover, updates from 1924 to 1928 Stalin's pronouncement that fascism and Social Democracy were not antipodes but twins. His motives for making this 'error' are readily apparent. He puts the blame for the 1924 Comintern leftism exclusively on Zinoviev, nowhere mentioning Stalin's active support for the adventurist and sectarian line of that year. Stalin's leftism he has beginning in 1928, when Stalin 'described the Social Democrats as the "twin brothers" of the fascists. This put an end to all prospects of the united front.' In the KPD, Lukács singles out as the main culprits for the 1924 leftism Ruth Fischer and Arkadi Maslow, who, although supporters of Zinoviev, were strong-willed enough to clash with their patrons when the ECCI swung the helm over to the right in 1925. As for Thälmann and his clique, who were guilty of truly criminal adventurism and servility towards the Kremlin bureaucracy for nearly a full decade up to the victory of Hitler - not a word of condemnation. So what did Lukács' opposition to the Third Period amount to?

Although I was on Stalin's side on the central issue of Russia [socialism in one country], I was deeply repelled by his attitude here [that is, on 'social fascism']. However, it did nothing to retard my gradual disenchantment with the ultra-left tendencies of my early revolutionary years as most of the left-wing groupings in the European parties were Trotskyite [here Lukács quite falsely equates the 1924 Zinoviev - Stalin leftism with Trotsky's later Leninist critique of the Comintern's opportunist application of the united front tactic - RB] - a position which I always rejected. Of course, if I was against Ruth Fischer and Maslow in their attitude to German problems - and it was these with which I was always most concerned - this did not mean that I was in sympathy with Brandler and Thalheimer [leaders of the KPD right opposition]. To clear my own mind and to achieve a political and theoretical self-understanding I was engaged at the time on a search for a 'genuine' left-wing programme that would provide a third alternative to the opposing factions in Germany. But the idea of such a theoretical and political solution to the contradictions in the period of transition was doomed to remain a dream. I never succeeded in solving it to my own satisfaction *and so I did not publish any theoretical or political contribution on the international level during this period.* ^[52]

It should be added that this search for an alternative line in Germany took Lukács to Prinkipo in 1931 where he met and discussed political questions with Leon Trotsky. His capitulation to counter-revolutionary Stalinism is therefore all the more despicable, despite his near-adulation by those who, on other issues, would claim to be doubly opponents of the Soviet bureaucracy.

After the condemnation of the *Blum Theses* Lukács devoted his writings to mainly literary matters, steering well clear of the awkward political questions involved in the study of the policy of the KPD and Communist International between 1930 and 1933, and instead taking his reader on an erudite excursion through four centuries of German literature. The result of his findings is that the year of 1525, the year of the defeated Peasants Revolt, 'is the turning point where the development of Germany went astray'. ^[53] This is the theory of 'cultural determinism' now in vogue amongst certain sociologists in the USA. While it is true that the defeat of 1525 imparted certain unique characteristics to the nascent German bourgeoisie and the petit-bourgeoisie (servility towards authority, a repressed nationalism, backward-looking romanticism, etc) these can *in no way* be said to have predetermined the outcome of the struggle between the Nazis and the working class four centuries later. They imparted some of their residual *forms* to the fascist reaction as expressed through the NSDAP, but the *content* of German National Socialism was strictly of the twentieth century, of imperialism in crisis and decay; and its victory the direct outcome of the unresolved crisis of proletarian leadership. But this is of course precisely the question that Lukács, the 'inner anti-Stalinist', does not wish to discuss. He develops his argument at greater length in his *Essays on Thomas Mann* (written between 1933 and 1963).

Critical of Stalinism though he later claimed to have always been, Lukács proves in his *In Search of Bourgeois Man* (1945) that he was also always highly sensitive to the requirements of the Stalinist line.

This essay, written on the seventieth birthday of Thomas Mann, is little else but a plea to the entire German bourgeoisie to follow the great writer (and Walter Ulbricht) in helping to build a Germany - a bourgeois Germany - worthy of the great tradition of German letters. For in 1945, and with Stalin still a venerated member of the 'Big Three' of the USSR, the USA and Britain, the perspective in East Germany was nothing so 'sectarian' as the dictatorship of the proletariat and the building of socialism, but a 'new democracy' with the power shared between all the classes. Lukács warmed to this line, which first required that the German bourgeoisie be cleared of the charge of either having desired or actively assisted in the victory of Hitler. He does this by citing an episode from Mann's *Mario*, which, according to Lukács:

... presents a subtle spectrum of all the different kinds of *helplessness* with which the German bourgeois faces the *hypnotic power* of fascism... The *defencelessness* of those German bourgeoisie *who did not want Hitler* but who obeyed him for over a decade without demur has never been better described.

The German bourgeois must do better next time, says Lukács, and take Mann, and not Schopenhauer, as his model:

The further development, the future, the rebirth of Germany depends to a great extent on how far German workers *and bourgeois* will succeed in mobilising the reserves of freedom and progress in their history for their future national life. ^[54]

We repeat: such pseudo-Marxist theorising, seemingly very profound and grounded in a deep understanding of German and European culture, enabled Lukács to blur over the central question, one that every sincere Marxist critic of Stalinism has to confront: the political responsibility for the greatest blow administered to all human culture - the victory and rule of German fascism, with its book-burnings, its hounding and murder of liberal, socialist and Jewish intellectuals, and the devastation and plunder of the architectural and artistic treasures of Europe. Lukács declares quite frankly that he is not concerned with such a mundane political question: 'It is not our task here to show why between 1914 and 1945 popular opposition to reaction in Germany suffered so many defeats.' ^[55] No, that task can be left to the Ulbrichts and the Dutts. Each to his own last. However, it should be pointed out - to Lukács' further discredit - that on one occasion he did venture an opinion on the great controversy between the Stalinist and Trotskyist factions in the USSR:

Trotsky... was the principal theoretical exponent of the thesis that the construction of socialism in a single country is impossible. History has long ago refuted his theory... Here history cannot agree at all to the rehabilitation of Trotsky; on the decisive strategic problems of the time Stalin was absolutely right. ^[56]

Soviet Historians: The Genre of Silence

More than almost any other working class, the Soviet proletariat has good cause to desire the whole truth about the history of German fascism, of how Hitler was not only permitted to come to power, but less than nine years later to launch his barbarous imperialist crusade against the USSR. Successive Soviet political leaders have ensured that they have remained largely in ignorance of these vital political questions. This state of affairs is all the more scandalous when we recall the inventory of Nazi plunder and devastation itemised by General Rudenko, chief Soviet prosecutor at the Nuremberg Trial of Major War Criminals: six million dwellings destroyed; 25 million people made homeless; 1710 towns and cities destroyed; 70 000 hamlets and villages destroyed; 31 850 plants destroyed employing four million workers; 239 000 electric motors stolen; 175 000 metal-cutting machines stolen; 6500 kilometres of railway track; 4100 stations; 36 000 post offices and communication centres; 84 000 schools, colleges, etc; 98 000 collective farms; 1896 state farms; 2890 machine and tractor stations; seven million horses killed or stolen; 17 million horned cattle; 20 million pigs; 27 million sheep and goats; 110 million poultry. Total damage (1941 prices): 679 000 million roubles. But most important of all, and an item curiously omitted by Rudenko, between 20 and 25 million human beings were slaughtered.

One might think that the sheer monumental scale of the disaster that overtook half of European Russia in 1941-42 would have stimulated research into its causes. But no. According to Walter Laqueur, up until 1962, no book had appeared in the USSR on the history of either German fascism or the Third Reich! Neither had there been written a single biography of Hitler or any other prominent Nazi leader. Moreover, in such references as were to be found to German fascism in historical works on related

themes, Nazi racialism was invariably depicted as being directed against the Slavic peoples, *and not the Jews*.^[57]

Only on rare occasions can references be found to the pre-history of the Third Reich in Soviet writings translated into English. Thus Deborin cannot himself be said to be very forthcoming about the circumstances surrounding Hitler's victory:

The German monopolies sensed that resistance of the patriotic [sic!] democratic section of the nation could spike their expansionist plans [which were presumably anti-patriotic - RB] that gravely menaced the Germans themselves... The fascist coup [then] took place early in 1933...^[58]

Ivan Maisky, the white-guard who went over to Stalin to become one of his leading diplomats, ventures a little further in his own work on a similar theme. Naturally, we do not find Stalin's name among those listed. Instead, the reader is presented with the following historical make-believe:

... at the end of 1932 the Weimar Republic was visibly in a state of collapse. The Nazis were rapidly gaining [not so, they were in decline - RB], conquering one position after another. The split in the ranks of the proletariat was profound, and the Social Democrats were stubbornly refusing any cooperation with the Communists against fascism.^[59]

The truth was, of course, exactly the opposite, as well Maisky knows.

Only amongst some of the oppositional tendencies in the USSR has there been any serious examination of the German disaster and the political role played by the KPD and the Stalinist Comintern leadership. One of the most serious studies has been undertaken by Roy Medvedev, whose *Let History Judge* was published in London in 1972. Though differing with Trotsky on many basic questions - most important of all that of socialism in one country - Medvedev defends Trotsky against the slanders of Stalinism: 'Trotsky alone tried to continue the struggle [against Stalinism]... Trotsky remained a supporter of the proletarian revolution and not a fascist counter-revolutionary, as Stalin soon labelled him.' What Medvedev says about the 'Third Period' also shows that he has genuinely attempted to seek a Marxist solution to the problem of the united front and the struggle against fascism, even though he too idealises the role of Dimitrov and the Popular Front line associated with his name:

Stalin... criticised Bukharin's leadership of the Comintern from an 'ultra-left', sectarian, dogmatic standpoint. He insisted that the Comintern mount a sharp attack on leftist tendencies in Social Democracy... In the 1930s Communist parties struggled vigorously against fascism. But Stalin, as the recognised leader of the Comintern, held them rigidly to a point of view that derived from the Russian revolution. [Here Medvedev is quite wrong - RB] Years of conflict with the Mensheviks, culminating in the choice between the Provisional Government and the Soviet regime, had inculcated into Bolshevism a special antagonism against Menshevism. An analogous situation took shape in parts of Western Europe between 1918 and 1923, when the Mensheviks, Social Democratic parties helped to sustain bourgeois regimes and to suppress the revolutionary movement. [The Communist International, from 1921 to 1923, also attempted to *detach* the Social Democratic parties from the bourgeoisie through the tactic of the united front - RB] Thus it was natural for the young Communist parties to oppose Social Democrats, but it was wrong to call them 'social fascists', the 'moderate wing of fascism', the 'the main social support for fascism'. Stalin was not alone in this mistake. Bukharin, Kamenev and Zinoviev made the same charges and they were included in the 1928 programme of the Comintern... Whatever may be said for Comintern policy towards the Social Democratic parties in the early and middle 1920s, it is impossible to approve the policy of 1929-34... This sectarian policy was especially pronounced in Germany, where the fascist threat was greatest. The KPD stuck to its policy of a united front only 'from below'... Likewise their trade union policy; instead of struggling against reformism within the existing unions, the Communists decided to withdraw and organise independent unions. This isolated the KPD from a large section of workers... In August 1935, the Seventh CI Congress corrected many of these mistakes largely on the initiative of Georg Dimitrov.^[60]

The dangers implicit in seeing Stalinism only as series of leftist, sectarian errors (a tendency displayed by Medvedev) are demonstrated by the case of the 'liberal' oppositionist, the atomic scientist Andrei Sakharov. In 1968, he wrote an article for the Soviet 'underground' press in which he touched on the question of Germany. What he says is, within its limits, perfectly sound:

Analysing the reasons for Hitler's rise to power, we have not forgotten the role of German and international monopoly capital; neither have we forgotten the criminally sectarian, dogmatically narrow policies of Stalin and his comrades-in-arms, setting socialists and Communists against one another. ^[61]

But seeing the sectarian, 'dogmatic' facets and phases of Stalin's policy did not later prevent Sakharov from going over to an openly anti-Communist position, arguing for imperialist pressure to be applied to the Soviet government until it 'liberalises' its policies toward the intellectuals and the Jews. Sakharov has also voiced his support for Zionism in its war of repression against the Palestinian and Arab peoples: and when asked by Western newsmen to give his views on the Chilean Junta, declined to do so on the entirely specious ground that he lacked sufficient information to pass judgement on a regime that was boasting of its anti-Communist repressions. Sakharov is now treading the same anti-Soviet, anti-Communist path already travelled by Alexander Solzhenitsyn, even though his starting point differed from the Christian mystic and Slavophile - namely a completely one-sided, and therefore false criticism of the policies of Third Period Stalinism.

The only official work published in the USSR (and available in the English language) which deals in any depth with the question of the policy of the KPD and the Communist International in the period of Hitler's rise to power is the *Outline History of the Communist International* from 1971. Prepared by the Institute of Marxism-Leninism of the Central Committee of the CPSU, the following Stalinist veteran leaders are listed as having assisted in its production: Walter Ulbricht (GDR), Dolores Ibarruri (Spanish Communist Party), Jacques Duclos (France), Tim Buck (Canada), Khaled Bagdache (Syria), Vittorio Codovilla (Argentina), Georges Cogniot, Inkeri Lehtinen, Boris Ponomarev (CPSU), R Palme Dutt (CPGB), Dezső Nemes, Friedl Furnberg, Emilio Sereni, Ruben Avramov, Andrew Rothstein (CPGB). It is possible to list only briefly the main distortions to be found in this lengthy work, and, at that, only as they pertain to the question of Germany. The radical nature of the turn begun at the Sixth Comintern congress is minimised, and only marginal criticisms made of certain of its conclusions. Thus the changed emphasis to a united front only 'from below' is counter-balanced by the fatuous remark that 'the Communists were in duty bound to make a distinction between the Social Democratic workers and the Social Democratic leadership', ^[62] the whole point being that for the majority of Social Democratic workers, *there was no such distinction*. Therefore, they would never enter a 'united front from below' with the Communist Party against the wishes of their own leaders. One of the main objects of the Leninist united front - *from above* as well as from below - is to *make* the reformist workers *aware* of that distinction through the class struggle.

Soviet historians have found the Sixth Comintern Congress rather strong meat in view of its harsh treatment of Social Democracy, especially its left flank. In the 1960 edition of the official CPSU history (the volume that supplanted the notorious *Short Course*), we find the main line being praised unequivocally, while its decisions (which formalised the ultra-leftist turn begun earlier the same year) were said to have 'greatly helped to consolidate the Leninist unity of the Communist Parties, to rally the masses for the fight against capitalism'. ^[63] By 1965, the line of the Sixth Congress is being criticised by German historians for its sectarianism. Finally, in 1970, with yet another history of the CPSU, the problem has been 'solved' in typical Stalinist style by the Sixth Congress being erased altogether from the history of the Bolshevik Party and its parent organisation, the Communist International. ^[64] The Kremlin's tame historians were living up to Pokrovsky's cynical dictum that history was 'politics projected into the past'.

The Eleventh ECCI Plenum proved an even more tricky problem than it had done nearly a decade earlier when the GDR Stalinists first came to grips with its rampant leftism, its total disdain for the defence of democratic rights and the need to struggle for a united workers' front against the Nazis. Intervening between the production of the two histories was a protracted and further rightwards swing of the Kremlin bureaucracy towards imperialism, notably its gradual relaxation of opposition towards the EEC and its search for closer working relations with the Social Democratic government of Brandt in West Germany. 'Social fascism' was more of an embarrassment than ever, and had to be demonstratively rejected as anti-Leninist. But the way in which this was done left its origins as deeply shrouded in mystery as before. All the sins of the Communist International and the KPD in this period are blamed on 'the Communists' or, alternatively 'many Communists'. Nowhere is the reader told just who these leftists were, and how they came to enforce their views on the entire Comintern. And we must also qualify our earlier statement that this book finally ditches the theory of social fascism. It does not, as this extract shows: '... the shooting

down of the May Day demonstration in Berlin in 1929... [was] qualified by the Communists as social fascism. It would be wrong, however, to apply this appellation to Social Democracy and the reformist trade unions *as a whole...*' [65]

Once the book gets over the hurdle of the 1931 Plenum, it rewrites the history of the KPD and the Communist International with gay abandon. By 1932, we learn that the Comintern had so pulled itself together (having purged its ranks of Neumann and company) that it was able to 'rivet the attention of the working people to the fact that fascism appeared upon the world scene as the antipode of socialism, as a force that was most hostile to socialism...'. [66] A truly momentous theoretical and organisational feat!

As in the SED history, the Thälmann - Pieck - Ulbricht leadership is built up as the determined opponent of the 'Neumann - Remmele sectarian opportunist group', whereas, in reality, Neumann had come out for a new, though by no means Leninist, policy for fighting the Nazis which involved winding up the Stalin-imposed line of collaborating with the fascists against the reformists. The Twelfth ECCI Plenum of September 1932, at which the KPD dispute came out into the open for the first time, and where the German delegation stuck firm to its suicidal course of rejecting the united front with the SPD, is completely falsified: 'The decisions of the Twelfth Plenum oriented the Communist parties towards a sharp improvement of their work among the masses with a view to winning them over to their side.' But not even this work, replete with falsifications, could mask entirely the criminally sectarian policies of the Third Period, for having depicted the pre-Hitler period as being one of unremitting struggle by the KPD against fascism, the work then makes the following comment; one which reduces the preceding 100 or so pages to the level of sheer historical make-believe:

The Political Secretariat of the ECCI, *as early as the beginning of 1934*, emphasised that the Communists needed a skilful policy and a *timely* response to the workers' pressing demands in order to win over the broad masses and direct them against fascism as their chief enemy. [67]

Further comment on this worthless book is superfluous.

Strange though it may seem, these criticisms of the theory of social fascism are couched to a certain extent within the framework of Third Period Stalinism. It was only wrong to call the SPD *workers* 'social fascists', thus lumping them together with their leaders, who therefore, by implication, *were* social fascists, just as Stalin said. Dimitrov, Ulbricht and Dutt at various times resorted to this subterfuge in an attempt to preserve intact the myth of Stalin's political infallibility. Ernst Henri, the veteran Soviet writer on German problems follows them in his short work *Can Socialists and Communists Cooperate?*, where he writes, apropos the 'left-sectarian error' of the KPD in 'nicknaming the Social Democrats "social fascists"', that 'no difference was made between the right-wing reformist leaders, who were mainly not anti-fascist, but anti-Communist, and the honest Social Democratic workers, who hated fascism no less than did the Communists'. Henri is really here justifying the theory of social fascism, saying that it was wrongly *applied*, embracing not only the leaders but the reformist workers. Thus his critique, such as it is, is in no sense an attack on the Stalinist 'united front from below'. There should have been unity with the reformist workers, but not with their 'right-wing reformist leaders', who were not anti-fascists, but anti-Communists. And who was to blame for the theory of social fascism? Not Stalin, certainly: 'This position was subsequently condemned by the Seventh Congress of the Comintern.' No, the real culprits were the Social Democrats themselves: '... the very origin and spread of this theory was in no small measure due to the behaviour of Social Democratic leaders, especially in Germany.' [68] This is, of course, a revamped and more 'reasonable' version of the old legend that social fascism only emerged as a theory in the Comintern after the May Day repressions of 1929 by the Berlin Social Democrats. In fact, as we know, the theory was evolved as early as 1924, first by Zinoviev, and then elaborated by Stalin, and after being discarded during the right turn of 1925-27, was revived again in the early months of 1928, a full year before the events of May 1929. Henri, like all the other Stalinist historians and publicists, consciously sows confusion on this question, one that is vital to the understanding of the origins, nature and role of Stalinism. While it is correct to say that Stalinism underwent a qualitative transformation between 1933 and 1936, when it finally crystallised out of a bureaucratic centrism, moving unevenly towards the right, into a hardened counter-revolutionary force upholding the world status quo, both the Third Period (1928-34) and subsequent phases of Stalinism also contain common elements. Thus in the Third Period while united fronts with reformists were ruled out on a *national* scale, especially in Germany, where they were most needed, it was permissible to seek out and build the most opportunist of 'united fronts' on an *international* scale with not only 'social fascists', but bourgeois pacifists, radicals and even German generals! And why? Because just as *Stalinist diplomacy* on the plane of German domestic politics

demanding a rejection of a united front between the KPD and the 'Western-oriented' SPD against the anti-Western forces of German nationalism; so on an international scale it called for an 'anti-war' movement directed towards pressurising the dominant imperialist powers to seek an accord with the Kremlin bureaucracy. Thus there ran concurrently the Stalinist-inspired pacifist Amsterdam 'anti-war' conference in the summer of 1932, to which were invited open as well as masked agents of the ruling class; and in Germany, a ferocious campaign by the KPD against the reformist workers' movement. And to underline the point on the two-sided nature of Third Period Stalinism - its sectarianism *and its opportunism* - both campaigns were to a large degree organised by the same man - Willi Münzenberg, the KPD press baron.

One need only examine British Stalinist policy today to see that even under its banner of the parliamentary road to socialism, the CPGB exhibits certain important *sectarian* features, which while they derive in part from deep-seated historical weaknesses in the British Marxist movement, also betray the influence of Third Period Stalinism. The consistent CPGB policy of running a large slate of candidates against Labour in local and parliamentary elections combines reformist illusions with sectarianism. In the trade unions, Stalinists are perfectly capable of initiating or adapting to adventurist strikes doomed to failure. 'Rank-and-file' movements dominated by the CPGB often betray their Third Period 'red union' imprint, couched in the crude language of syndicalism: 'The leaders will never do anything. It's up to us on the shop floor...', or 'What's the point in asking for official action? The leaders will never support us...', etc, etc. Thus 'rank-and-fileism' serves as a left - in fact ultra-left - cover for the bureaucracy, which is only too glad not to be put on the spot in front of its members, and told to get on with the job it is paid for.

It is because this dualism within Stalinism - sectarianism and opportunism, parliamentary cretinism (which revealed itself within the KPD Prussian Landtag delegation in the summer of 1932) and adventurism (that is, Indonesia, October 1965; Sudan, July 1971; France, 1952, with the anti-NATO demonstration against General Ridgway, etc) - is so often concealed when one side predominates over the other, that a wrong estimation of Stalinism can easily be made. Those who go over from the Stalinist movement to Trotskyism can therefore carry with them just these sectarian conceptions which are masked by and encased within the overall opportunist line of Stalinism, which is of course readily identifiable. The leftist conceptions can therefore become subsumed under a distorted version of Trotskyism, which sees all revisions of Marxism as being right-opportunist in nature; whereas history teaches us that some of the most pernicious attacks on Marxism have come from the ultra-left: Bakunin, Lassalle, Most, Otzovism, the CPGB and KPD lefts, the 'theory of the revolutionary offensive' (the March Action), Zinovievism, which gave birth to 'social fascism', Third Period Stalinism; and within the Trotskyist movement, 'State Capitalism' (Urbahns), 'bureaucratic collectivism' (Shachtman), rejection of 'entry' (Vereecken), early Pabloism, etc, etc. This is why the question of the Third Period, which unified and raised to their apogee all the negative sectarian, adventurist and leftist traits in the workers' movement, and used them as a club to beat down the German proletariat, is of such crucial importance for the future of world Trotskyism. It is the author's contention that the crisis in the British Trotskyist movement is located to a large degree in a failure by its leadership both to break cleanly from Stalinist Third Period conceptions in the first instance, and by a refusal to begin a thorough assessment of its own sectarian deviations in the light of this history.

As proof of this, we cite an article written by Cliff Slaughter in *Workers Press* of 1 October 1974, where he takes to task Portuguese Maoists for reviving the theory of social fascism. Maoists had taken to the streets after the fall of General Spínola with the slogan: 'We've done the fascists, now we'll do the social fascists!' (The 'social fascists' on this occasion being the pro-Moscow Stalinist leaders.) Slaughter deals with this recrudescence of Third Period Stalinism in the following highly revealing way:

There could be no better condemnation of Maoism than this crude and criminal revival of Stalin's disastrous policy towards the rise of Hitler, when he told the Communist Party militants to regard the Social Democrat *workers* as the worst enemy. ^[69]

Like the latter-day Stalinist apologists of the Third Period, Slaughter distorts the theory of social fascism, giving it an extra sectarian twist which is then contrasted to the 'milder version' of the united front from below. At no time was it official KPD or Comintern policy 'to regard the Social Democrat workers as the worst enemy'. It was the reformist, social fascist, or in the parlance of Slaughter's party, corporatist *leaders*, who were given this false designation. Towards the rank-and-file reformist workers, the KPD offered its fatuous 'united front from below'. Why does Slaughter make this error, if error it is? Could it

be because his own party has turned its back on the tactic of the united front, which includes not only calls for unity at the base, but, on specific actions and issues, right to the very top? Could it be because Slaughter himself, only two months before he wrote these lines, had boldly asserted in *Workers Press* of 30 July 1974, that it was precisely reformism, and not fascism, which was the ‘greatest weapon’ of the German ruling class in the period prior to the victory of Hitler? Which of course raises yet another question - *why did the German ruling class destroy their ‘greatest weapon’?* Nor is this the only occasion on which Slaughter betrayed a false appreciation of the essence of the Stalinist ‘united front from below’. Just under a year earlier, on 18 August 1973, he wrote in *Workers Press* that the Third Period involved ‘denunciation of all Social Democratic workers, particularly left Social Democrats, as “social fascists”, [and] rejection of any united front...’. Now Slaughter’s definition of the theory of social fascism (that it denounced Social Democratic *workers* as social fascists) is perfectly compatible both with the revamped editions of it offered up by Ulbricht and other Stalinists, and indeed, the official version as it was promulgated between 1928 and 1934. Nowhere can Slaughter cite a text that *was not at the time condemned by the Comintern leadership of the day* that declared all reformist workers to be social fascists and the main enemy of the working class. (In Britain, this would have involved the CPGB in the absurdity of declaring that practically the entire working class, with the exception of the handful that followed the Stalinists, was the main enemy of the working class!) Of course, the theory of social fascism led to the sectarian repulsion of the reformist workers, through its refusal of the Leninist united front with the reformist organisations to which they belonged, but that is not the same thing, and Slaughter should know this full well. He needs a false definition of social fascism in order to smuggle through his party’s new version of it - the theory of ‘corporatism’ and the turn away from serious work in the traditional organisations of the working class.

No wonder the WRP leadership less and less cares to write or say anything about this most crucial period in the history of the international workers’ movement. And this they share with the Stalinists.

Stalinist reticence on the subject of the Third Period comes out in many ways. Thus in a series of slanderous attacks on Trotskyism published over recent years by the Kremlin, not once is Trotsky’s opposition to the criminal adventurism of the Third Period in Germany mentioned. Much space is given to Trotsky’s clashes with Lenin in the pre-1917 period, and the fight against the Left Opposition between 1923 and 1927. Then there is silence, only broken when the narrative is resumed in 1935, the year of the Seventh Comintern Congress and the official inauguration of the Popular Front. Thus Trotsky is always depicted as an ultra-left, adventurist, sectarian opponent of the official party line, and never (as he was both in 1924 and between 1928 and 1934) as a critic standing, in a formal sense, to the ‘right’ of the Stalinist leadership. It would have been impossible to discuss even in a distorted fashion the criticisms advanced by Trotsky of the Comintern line in the Third Period, without raising the issues involved - united front, social fascism, ultimatism, etc. For these are the very issues that the Kremlin finds so embarrassing today, with its never-ending quest for allies on the reformist flank of the workers’ movement, and, of course, even further to the right in the camp of the bourgeoisie itself. Publications where this approach is in evidence include *The Bolshevik Party’s Struggle Against Trotskyism, Where Are The Trotskyites Leading The Youth?* and *Anarchism, Trotskyism, Maoism*.^[70]

Sometimes the Stalinists prefer to black out the German tragedy, and their role in it, entirely. Thus in the bulky work *Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism*, edited by Kuusinen, one of Stalin’s Comintern executives during the Third Period, not a single reference to the ultra-leftism of the KPD is to be found in the section devoted to the ‘Unity of Action of the Working Class’. Instead the reader is offered the following fairy-tale:

Despite the profound differences dividing the revolutionary and reformist trends, the Communist Parties of the capitalist countries from the very beginning sought to establish unity of action with the Social Democratic organisations. [In fact the united front only emerged as a practical issue in the Comintern in the latter part of 1921, with the temporary decline of the postwar revolutionary wave - RB] ... There are quite a few outstanding examples of such unity in the history of the international working-class movement. Whenever serious danger threatened the interests of the working people, the urge for unity grew strong, and the working-class organisations, as a rule [sic!], acted jointly.

The exception to this ‘rule’ was of course Germany, as the passage that follows tacitly admits:

That was the case in the 1930s, when fascism was trying to obtain power in many European countries. A strong movement for working-class unity arose in France, Spain and Austria at the

time and influenced the leaders of the Socialist Parties who formerly did their best to oppose cooperation with the Communist Parties. ^[71]

So if there was no working-class unity against fascism in Germany, that was the fault of the reformist leaders, and not the KPD.

The tragedy is that these falsifications of the history of Trotskyism and Stalinism are now lent credence by the ultra-leftism in Britain of the WRP, whose leaders also seem determined to draw a veil over the experiences and lessons of the period the Stalinists are so anxious to obscure; and to reproduce, although in a vastly different historical and political setting, some of the tactics that led the German working class to disaster.

With Stalin to the End: The CPGB

There remains the task of establishing the political responsibility of the Stalinist leaders of the British Communist Party for both the course pursued up to the Nazi victory in Germany by the KPD and the ECCI, and the subsequent historical falsifications carried out in order to cover up the greatest betrayal in working-class memory.

Before commencing this survey the reader is invited to contrast the following judgement, made by Palme Dutt in his *The International* of 1964 with the statements and conduct of he and his fellow Stalinist CPGB leaders during the period of Hitler's rise to power:

... the use of this term ['social fascism'] was a political error. It gave an easy handle for the enemies of Communism to spread wilful misunderstandings of the serious analysis intended [sic!] and to imply that it was meant to designate the millions of rank-and-file members of the Social Democratic parties... ^[72]

And they are also requested to ask themselves the question - especially if they are either members or supporters of Dutt's party - how is it possible for a self-proclaimed Marxist to decry in 1964 what he proclaimed daily and almost hourly to be correct Communist policy between 1928 and 1934, *without making either an acknowledgment of this error, or explaining how this error came to be made?*

As Lenin said on more than one occasion, the correction of errors is one of the prime duties of a Communist. Dutt - and with him the entire present leadership of the CPGB - stand condemned in the light of this principle.

Dutt's journal *Labour Monthly* served as the vehicle for the introduction of the 'new line' into the CPGB. In February 1928, he was writing that 'the Labour Party, though it has still got its grip on the reformist trade union machine, is losing its hold on the industrial working class'. ^[73] A year later, we find Dutt crossing swords with Varga for daring to advocate the policy of voting Labour where the CPGB had no candidates standing. 'Such an outlook', declared the outraged Dutt, 'is wholly unacceptable, in view of the real role of the Labour Party in relation to the working class.' ^[74] And what was that 'real role'? Dutt told his expectant readers next month: 'The trinity of employers, state and reformists is now far more closely knit together into a single machine as never before.' ^[75] By the end of the year, with the 'new line' triumphant in the CPGB, Dutt had arrived at a fully-developed conception of social fascism. The deepening economic crisis 'completes the whole character of the role of the Labour government in relation to the situation and the working class, and makes out for it the role, no longer of the old type of reformist but the new type whose essential developing character is described as social fascism.' Britain was therefore now ruled by a government which, although elected by the votes of the working class and in opposition to the bourgeoisie, was fast turning fascist: 'The Labour government has a different path which it must follow... there can be seen the inevitable transition from social reformism to social fascism.' ^[76] This of course proved no obstacle to the development of the class struggle: 'On every side the workers are awakening to the reality of the struggle. All the machinery of Labour governments and Social Democratic governments, of fascism and social fascism can no longer hold them in.' ^[77]

Dutt had therefore tested out Stalin's theory of social fascism on the British political scene, and had clearly found the results satisfying. Surprisingly, however, in view of his close links with the ECCI, he found little space in his 'Notes of the Month' to comment on the rapidly developing crisis in Germany. One comment by a contributor to Dutt's journal - JR Campbell - is however worthy of reproduction. In July 1932 he wrote, with an air of someone who was 'in the know': 'The Papen government is... driving ahead to the open fascist dictatorship which need not, however, be a Hitler regime such as is often envisaged in the British press.' ^[78] Dutt returned to the social fascist vomit in May 1933, at a time when

the Nazis were hounding the reformists into exile and hiding: ‘Once again, as with every question... so with social fascism, the mercilessly accurate diagnosis of the CI is steadily day by day more and more completely confirmed by events...’ [79]

The Communist Review: The official theoretical organ of the CPGB during the Third Period was *The Communist Review*, like Dutt’s private journal, a monthly publication. It too waxed enthusiastic about social fascism, and devoted more space than did Dutt to its activities in Germany. JT Murphy wrote in January 1930, after the December 1929 CPGB Congress that ousted a section of the leadership that was lukewarm towards the new line, that ‘one of the most important “right” mistakes of the majority of the old CC of our party was their complete failure to understand the evolution of the Labour Party into a social fascist party, and the growth of social fascism in the trade unions’. [80] The results of the September 1930 Reichstag elections in Germany were seen as proof that the SPD had undergone the same evolution from reformism to social fascism. More than this, such a transformation was depicted as a tremendous asset to the working class and the KPD, for it now simplified the task of winning the proletariat for Communism:

The German Labour Party is in a dilemma. Shall it go with Hindenburg and the fascists or with the KPD? ... The labour leaders will no doubt go with forces trying to consolidate capitalism, and that means to fascism. But the greater masses of the Social Democratic workers will divide and millions swell the ranks of the revolutionary working class. The disintegration of the SPD has begun, and the masses are moving away from it. The hour of the shattering of the LSI has struck. [81]

Here too we find a more faithful reflection of the Eleventh ECCI Plenum than in the bowdlerised versions of it served up over the last 10 years by Stalinist historians. William Rust, the YCL leader who rallied the youthful forces that helped to oust the ‘old guard’ at the December 1929 Congress, wrote of the Plenum that it clarified comrades on the role of Social Democracy, especially those still naive enough to believe that it was ‘a barrier against fascism’. The KPD had learned that there could be no question of a united front with the ‘social fascists’, only a policy of ‘mobilising the masses on the basis of the united front from below’. [82] Pollitt was no less infected by the wild leftist atmosphere engendered at the Plenum. He told a Central Committee session of the CPGB in May 1931 that ‘fascism and social fascism... cannot be set against each other’. He warned against a ‘tendency to regard fascism as the chief enemy’ which in the British party had led to ‘the position of lending support to the social fascists, and regarding bourgeois democracy as the lesser evil as compared with the open fascist dictatorship’. [83] The German crisis returned to the columns of the *Communist Review* in December 1932, when Ralph Fox presented an article on the November Reichstag elections. It reflected the euphoric state of mind prevalent in the KPD leadership in the wake of the party’s increased vote, and Hitler’s reduced one. Fox also bitterly assailed the ‘Trotskyist renegades’ who ‘wanted the party of the proletariat to make a united front with social fascism against fascism’. [84] The assumption of power by Hitler produced predictable effects in the pages of the journal. In May, it poured scorn on the ‘parties of the Second International, which saw in the coming to power of Hitler the continuation of the offensive against the working class’. [85] The choicest epithets, vilest slander and distortions were, however, reserved by Andrew Rothstein for an attack on Trotsky, who had written a short article for the *Manchester Guardian* (at that time, taking a strong, liberal, anti-Nazi line) on the situation in Germany. What enraged Rothstein (here writing under his pen-name of Andrews) was Trotsky’s sober re-statement of the case for the united front that he had put before the KPD membership and leaders so often in the past:

The policy of the KPD has been thoroughly wrong. Its leaders started from the absurd axiom that the Social Democrats and the Nazis represented ‘two varieties of fascism’... The Social Democracy is unthinkable without parliamentary government and mass organisations of the workers in trade unions. The mission of fascism, however is to destroy both. A defensive union of Communists and the Social Democrats should have been based on this antagonism. But blind leaders refused to take this approach. This position demoralised the proletariat and strengthened the self-confidence of fascism. [86]

Rothstein’s reply was predictable: ‘The KPD could not offer a “defensive union” to such leaders. It would have been mockery of the workers and suicide for a revolutionary party.’ [87] Further and equally vitriolic attacks on Trotsky’s critique of Comintern policy in Germany followed in subsequent issues. ‘Trotsky, carrying on the work of Kautsky in justifying the murder of Karl and Rosa, today justifies the butchery of the best sons of the German workers’, proclaimed the issue of December 1933, though it was

not made clear precisely how. ^[88] The same number also carried an article by JR Campbell, 'Mr Trotsky and the ILP' - which consisted largely of a tortuous defence of the theory of social fascism:

Now let it be clear that when one says that Social Democrats and fascists are twins one is not saying that they are identical. If I say that Tom Smith and Jack Smith are twins, I am not saying that they are the same person. ^[89]

This conveys the theoretical plane of Campbell's polemic. In conclusion, we should note that, contrary to vulgar versions of the Third Period, *the CPGB did not finally abandon the social fascist formula until the later summer of 1934*. In September, there appeared an article 'The Labour Protectors of Fascism' whose author, seemingly oblivious to the great change that had already been implemented across the channel in France, intoned didactically: 'There is still confusion in many quarters on the role of social fascism...' ^[90]

The Daily Worker: Finally there is the CPGB's daily organ, which began publication on 1 January 1930, with the legend, emblazoned across its front page: '*Daily Worker* Your Paper - Will Fight Social Fascist Labour Government...' ^[91] A promising beginning. In the run-up to the Reichstag elections of September 1930, it was reported that the SPD was 'steadily working hand in hand with the other capitalist parties for the establishment of a fascist dictatorship in Germany'. ^[92] Eight days later came the news that 'the fascists and social fascists are plotting a bloody dictatorship and fomenting war against the Soviet Union'. ^[93] By the end of the year, following the lead of the KPD, the paper discovered that Germany had been transformed overnight by a single parliamentary vote into a fascist dictatorship. 'Dictatorship rules in Germany' ... 'Socialists back fascism' was the reaction to the SPD vote in the Reichstag for Brüning's emergency decrees cutting wages and welfare payments. 'Thus fascist dictatorship is secured by parliamentary means.' ^[94] This lunatic line (muffled echoes of which one can hear in the radical rantings of *Workers Press*, with its repeated claims throughout 1973 that corporatism had been established by act of parliament) was sustained right through to the fall of Brüning in May 1932, when he was replaced by the even more 'fascist' von Papen. 'Under the cover of this fascist regime', said the *Worker* on 2 April 1931, 'and with the support of the Social Democrats, new attacks are being made on wages.' ^[95] This, for the editors of the paper constituted the essence of fascism. On 25 July came the announcement of the KPD's *volte face* on the Prussian referendum. 'Brilliant piece of Communist tactics', was the comment of William Rust, who knew all about such things. Rust went on to assert quite boldly what Gollan was, in 1959, to deny most vehemently, namely that the KPD had joined forces with the Nazis to overthrow the Prussian Social Democratic government:

The overthrow of the Prussian Social Democratic coalition which is the backbone in the pure Brüning government... will be a great blow to German capitalism. *Originally the referendum was raked up by the fascists as a demagogic manoeuvre to sidetrack the mass indignation into fascist channels. The action of the KPD, however, will turn this swindle into a mass challenge to the Brüning and Prussian governments and fascism.* ^[96]

Here it will be most illuminating to quote what Gollan had to say about this same question in *Marxism Today* of March 1959: 'The Communists... began their own campaign for dissolution and a new election... At no stage was there cooperation with the Nazis... the Nazis soon dropped their campaign altogether.' ^[97] 'Soon'...? The KPD only adopted its new line on 23 July, leaving the party only two weeks to campaign for the referendum, and even less time for the Nazis to pull out - which they most certainly did not, for they and their capitalist supporters desired the downfall of the Prussian 'social fascists' no less than Stalin.

To return to the sorry record of the *Daily Worker*. On 19 September, an ILP member, deeply concerned by the rise of fascism in Germany and the collapse of the Labour government in Britain, asked:

Surely at least both working-class parties can be united in their demands that there will be: Not a penny from the unemployed, not a man off the register, not an economy at the expense of the working class, and unity in opposition to the National Government?

Back came the reply, one that dashed the reader's naive hope that the CPGB might entertain a united front at least with the 'left social fascists': 'It is essential to understand that united front action can only come from "below", from the rank and file... But it would be fatal to have any illusions about the relationship of the parties.' ^[98] This theme was revisited on 3 October, when another reader declared: 'I believe that a united fighting front of the workers is the only thing that matters. In the two parties efforts must be made to get joint action.' Once again, the reply was negative and bureaucratically ultimatic:

If there are any individual ILP leaders, who sincerely desire to take part in the class struggle, let them openly repudiate the past policy of the ILP and build up workers' united front committees in every area. Therefore, comrades, stick to the policy of the united front from below... ^[99]

Attacks on Trotsky figured prominently in the paper in the new year, with one contribution from Hal Wilde overshadowing all others in its myopic smugness:

Trotsky and his supporters have published a number of pamphlets in which Hitler fascism is depicted as the chief danger which, if it triumphs, will put fascism in the saddle for 20 years in Germany and smash the Communist International. Therefore, says Trotsky, the KPD and the SPD should form a united front against Hitler fascism. The KPD puts forward the Red United Front from below against this betrayal manoeuvre, showing how the SPD, instead of being a wing of the working-class front against fascism, is in reality the chief supporter of capitalist policy inside the working class. ^[100]

On 3 March, the *Worker* reported that at a recent Central Committee meeting of the party, a resolution had been passed which criticised 'particularly dangerous deviations made by the party in the struggle against the ILP, which is an inseparable part of British social fascism'. The ECCI had in fact taken the party leaders to task for sharing a platform with the ILP at a meeting held to protest against rising unemployment. This and other errors showed that the ILP 'was often portrayed by the CP not as the masked agent of the bourgeoisie in the camp of the proletariat, but as a possible ally'. ^[101] Different criteria applied to dealings with the newly-formed Mosley fascists. On 13 June 1931, a *CPGB speaker shared the platform with a New Party fascist in a debate at the Birmingham Bull Ring*. ^[102] Just as in Germany, there were evidently fascists and fascists. An even more blatant concession to fascism was made by the *Daily Worker* on 9 August 1932, when it carried a report of a racist attack by the *Völkischer Beobachter* on the veteran KPD leader, Clara Zetkin. The Nazi paper had called Zetkin 'a Jewish hag', to which the *Worker* replied: 'A photograph has been deliberately retouched in order to forge Jewish facial characteristics into Clara Zetkin's thoroughly German and non-Jewish features.' As if embarrassed by its anti-Semitic undertones, the article continued:

Naturally it does not matter a snap of the fingers whether Clara Zetkin is a Jewess or not, one of the greatest women of our century was really a Jewess. But in fact Clara Zetkin is the daughter of a Saxon school teacher, and has no Jewish admixture of any sort in her veins. ^[103]

Could this conceivably be a Communist journal, allegedly waging a ceaseless war against fascism, that permitted this filth to be published? It was on a par with the claim of the KPD that no Jews sat on its Central Committee. And still the CPGB held firm against voices in the working-class daily demanding more loudly a united front against fascism in Germany. On 13 August (the day of Hitler's interview with Hindenburg) the *Worker* attempted to ward off criticism from workers that it was splitting the unity of the working class against reaction. To the question: 'Can't all workers' organisations (the KPD, the SPD, the trade unions and the co-ops) come together to resist this drive to fascism?', the reply was:

It is undoubtedly necessary to create working-class unity against fascism, but that must be unity between the workers in the factories and the streets, and not 'unity' between the KPD and the SPD, which is not a working-class party. For the KPD to unite with such a party would be to become an accomplice in the drive to fascism. ^[104]

Dutt was thriving in this sectarian atmosphere. In his comment on the Leicester Labour Party Conference, he recorded with a note of jubilation that 'the social fascism of the Labour government of 1929-31 is still the social fascism of today, only at a still further stage of development'. ^[105] And so the paper tamely submitted to the line that, in Germany, was bringing the working class ever more close to disaster. Never an independent thought, never a critical idea or even instinctive reaction of stark horror, such as would have been felt by many a class-conscious worker, at the prospect of a Nazi victory in the main imperialist power of continental Europe. The record of the *Daily Worker*, forerunner of today's *Morning Star*, is a shameful one.

Further Confusion

Despite the official optimism that prevailed in the Comintern following the victory of the Nazis, nearly all the parties experienced moods of gloom and even open criticism of the line that had led to the German defeat. Naturally Trotsky was blamed for such irrational attitudes being adopted towards an event that, far from marking an historic setback for the German working class, would only serve to accelerate the

triumph of Communism. The British Stalinists were especially sensitive to such criticism, even though the Trotskyist movement had barely managed to establish a bridgehead in the country. In 1934 the CPGB published two pamphlets attacking Trotsky on the German question. The first was William Gallacher's *Pensioners of Capitalism*. Its main intellectual achievement was to foist on Trotsky the distinction of pioneering the theory and practice of fascism. Gallacher declared in all seriousness that Trotsky's 1920 plan for the 'militarisation' of the Soviet trade unions under War Communism was proof of his fascist mentality:

The trade unions were to be destroyed, were to become an adjunct of the military state. Here long before Mussolini and Hitler ever thought of it, the basic idea of fascism, the destruction of the working-class movement, was advanced.

Turning to Trotsky's criticism of KPD policy, and his policy of the united front, Gallacher says:

Trotsky puts forward the apparently simple, but totally un-Marxian solution of a united front with Social Democracy on a basis agreeable to Social Democracy, with the main aim of keeping out the fascists. Some readers may say [as well they might]: 'Well, what's wrong with that?' ...

Trotsky's proposal is for the voluntary surrender of the revolutionary struggle in order to maintain bourgeois democracy and actually represents the greatest betrayal of the revolutionary movement.^[106]

What the sectarian and ultra-left always fails to grasp is that there can be no question of a united front unless it is on issues and demands that can be imposed on the reformist leaders. Fighting for minimum demands - such as the joint defence of workers' meetings and premises against fascist attacks - by no means necessarily involves the betrayal of the revolutionary movement, as was demagogically implied by Gallacher. Rather they form an essential part of a genuine revolutionary movement's tactical armoury, since they enable the vanguard to maintain its links with the mass movement, and help to create the conditions whereby the vanguard can increase its influence and prestige amongst the majority of workers who still follow their reformist leaders. The vanguard will only be taken seriously by the mass of workers when it casts aside all prattle about leading 'independent struggles' and sets about the task of sinking its roots into the class through the tactic of the united front. This was the lesson of Germany, and Gallacher was deaf to it.

The second anti-Trotskyist offering came from the pen of Andrew Rothstein ('RF Andrews'). His was in the form of a defence of Comintern policy in Germany. In complete defiance of the facts, Rothstein declared:

It is not true that the KPD split the ranks of the proletariat in struggle against the capitalists. On the contrary, while organising the united front from below... they repeatedly offered to come to an agreement with the Social Democratic leaders as well...

Yet Gallacher had written a pamphlet which explained at some length why the KPD could not, on principle, make such offers to the reformists, as indeed had Rothstein himself a year earlier in his *Communist Review* attack on Trotsky. Neither was it true, asserted the forgetful Rothstein, that the German working class had suffered an historic defeat, as was claimed by Trotsky: 'The temper of the German working class more and more resembles that of a gigantic powder magazine which a mere spark may explode...' ^[107]

The year of 1934 also found Ralph Fox intoning the same theme of Germany being among those countries 'where this struggle for power is nearest', and on the correctness of Stalin's dictum that 'social fascism... is the moderate wing of fascism'. ^[108] When this book finally appeared, the CPGB had already made its initial approaches to the Labour Party 'social fascists' for a united front against fascism and war!

The most important work of 1934, however, was undoubtedly R Palme Dutt's *Fascism and Social Revolution*, the first edition of which appeared in the June of that year. Here was a work unique amongst British Stalinist tracts in that it set out to give a coherent shape and basis to the theory of social fascism. Even though Dutt wrote this book in the twilight of the Third Period, and in fact republished it in revised form in 1935, when the Popular Front was in full flood, it deviates not one iota from the full-blooded Stalinist line that led the German workers to defeat. An entire chapter is devoted to an exposition and defence of the theory of social fascism which, says Dutt, 'has often aroused indignant resentment and much misunderstanding'.

Here intact two years after Hitler's destruction of the German labour movement are the classic propositions of Third Period Stalinism, and of the Eleventh ECCI Plenum:

Fascism never becomes the main basis of the bourgeoisie... because fascism never wins the main body of industrial workers... Hence the role of Social Democracy remains of decisive importance, *even after the establishment of the fascist dictatorship*... it is... true in those countries of fully completed fascist dictatorship - Germany, Italy - where Social Democracy as an organisation is *formally* suppressed and the trade unions *absorbed* into the fascist front... [109]

Dutt, by a clever conjuring trick, manages to maintain the illusion that Social Democracy, and not fascism, serves as the main social support for the bourgeoisie even under fascist rule, by the phrase 'formally suppressed and the trade unions absorbed into the fascist front'. For of course nothing of the kind happened, either in Italy or Germany. The trade unions were *destroyed*, closed down, their buildings occupied, their funds seized, their leaders jailed, many of their officials, in the case of Nazi Germany, killed or brutally manhandled by SA thugs. This Dutt demagogically called 'formal suppression' and 'absorption'. Really you see, behind the scenes, the Leiparts and the ADGB unions continued business as before - only from behind barbed wire. The reader would be justified in assuming that this version of the events of May 1933 died a natural death along with the theory of social fascism that spawned it. Such assumptions would be mistaken, however, as the ghost of *Fascism and Social Revolution*, of the 'absorption' of the trade unions by the fascist state, still haunts the workers' movement, albeit in the pernicious disguise of a vulgar 'Trotskyism'. We refer of course to the theory of 'corporatism' as expounded - in 1973 especially - by the WRP and its daily organ, *Workers Press*. This subject - a vital one for Trotskyists - will be explored in more detail in the appendix that ends this book. Here let us return to the work of the Stalinist who can, in a certain sense, be said to have pioneered this theory in the British workers' movement.

Proof that the Social Democratic trade unions were quite voluntarily (on the part of their 'social fascist' leaders) transforming themselves into organs of the capitalist state, or being peacefully incorporated into the state, Dutt found in the General Council Report to the 1928 TUC Congress:

The third course is for the trade union movement to say boldly that not only is it concerned with the prosperity of industry, but that it is going to have a voice as to the way industry is carried on, so that it can ultimately influence the new developments that are taking place... the unions can use their power to promote and guide the scientific reorganisation of industry as well as to obtain material advantages from the reorganisation. [110]

Dutt concludes from this statement of classic trade union *reformist* class collaboration (a collaboration which presupposed the existence of *bona fide* class trade unions) that 'Social Democracy and the trade unions under its leadership thus become, in Social Democratic theory, constituent parts of modern capitalist organisation and of the capitalist state'. [111] If this were indeed so, then the bourgeoisie would have no need to destroy the trade unions or persecute their leaders, for they would, in so doing, be undermining one of 'the constituent parts of modern capitalist organisation and of the capitalist state'. The destruction (or in Dutt's perverted parlance, 'absorption') of the German trade unions therefore is rendered inexplicable, for here were unions that were, under the law of the land, constituted as one of the pillars of the Weimar bourgeois democracy. In fact, as the present author has attempted to demonstrate, the march towards fascism in Germany was accompanied by the progressive *repulsion* of the SPD and ADGB bureaucracy from its former positions within the central and regional political, social and economic institutions of the republic. Precisely the reverse of the process portrayed by Dutt, and today by Bull and Johns of *Workers Press*.

Yet more light is thrown on the antecedents of today's super-radicals of the WRP (who, it should be remembered, are in a minority within the movement, and by no means can be taken as representative of the party as a whole) when Dutt turns directly to the question of corporatism. This term, as the reader is probably by now aware, is the one used by *Workers Press* to denote a whole spectrum of political phenomena extending from full-blooded fascism, as in the Third Reich, to talks between trade union leaders and the government over wages and prices policy. It even, on one occasion, extended to union cooperation in a recruiting drive for the GPO (see appendix to Chapter 25). This is what Dutt says about Social Democratic corporatism:

Every development of organisation and strengthening of monopoly capitalism and its dictatorship is... hailed as the advance of 'socialism'. Characteristic of this is the Labour Party's advocacy of the 'public corporation'... as the form of modern socialism - exemplified by the London

Passenger Transport Act, which was introduced by a Labour Government and carried through by a Conservative Government, and hailed by the Labour Party as a triumph of 'Socialism'... It is obvious that the 'public corporation' of the Labour Party and Social Democracy bears close analogies in principle to the fascist 'corporation' as the system of organisation for industry. ^[112]

Again Dutt performs a conjuring trick. Since the form of ownership and control proposed by Labour and enacted - with some amendments - by the Conservatives - did not constitute full-blooded socialist nationalisation (that is, without compensation, and under workers' management as part of a national planned and state-owned economy), it must therefore be its direct opposite - fascism, or corporatism. What Dutt leaves out is the not unimportant question of the position of the trade unions. In the fascist corporation of Mussolini's Italy, the organisation of industry into corporations (never fully implemented) presupposed the *destruction* of the old, class trade unions, and their replacement by fascist-dominated bogus 'labour' organisations, syndicates, which then very effectively tied the working class to the employers and the capitalist state. The LCC ownership and control of public transport was carried out in a country where the trade unions were both in law and in fact independent of the capitalist state and the employers. This simple fact demolishes Dutt's specious arguments about Labour Party schemes for public ownership being a variety of fascist corporatism. But once again, we have to record that this anti-Marxist, and in fact defeatist, theory has resurfaced in the workers' movement, in the editorial offices of the *Workers Press* to be precise. The paper, as will be shown in the final appendix, denounced a proposal by the Labour Party National Executive to take 25 un-named companies into a form of 'public ownership' as an acceptance of 'corporatism'. Had Dutt seen the article in question, he could not have been begrudged a wry smile. For in his *Fascism and Social Revolution* he had written, nearly four decades before Healy disinterred and refurbished this Stalinist theory, that

... the whole trend of postwar Liberalism, Labourism and Social Democracy, in particular, is closely parallel to the Fascist line and propaganda of Corporate state - that is, the general line of combination of state control and private enterprise..., class collaboration and so-called workers' representation...

Dutt also made explicit what *Workers Press* leaves implicit - that there are allegedly two types of 'corporatism', the Social Democratic and the fascist:

Nevertheless there is a 'new' and distinct feature in the Fascist Corporate State. All the Liberal-Labour proposals are based on the incorporation of the existing workers' organisations into the capitalist state [this is what we might call today the Bull - Johns variant - RB]... The Fascist policy of the Corporate State is based on the violent destruction of the workers' independent organisations and the complete abolition of the right to strike. This is the sole [sic!] new feature of the Fascist Corporate State... ^[113]

The convolutions of the 'general line' between 1925 and 1935 present any official historian of the CPGB with a seemingly intractable task if he is at the same time faithfully to record the party's wild oscillations between right-opportunism and ultra-leftism on the question of the united front, and depict the Comintern line as having been consistently correct. An early pioneer of the CPGB, Tom Bell, was allotted this thankless job, the result being his *The British Communist Party: A Short History*. The following excerpt from his book (mercilessly panned by Hutt in *Labour Monthly*) indicates how Bell tried to square the Stalinist circle:

In the zealous endeavour to realise the sharp change of tactics [demanded by the Eleventh ECCI Plenum in February 1928 under the slogan 'class against class' - RB] no differentiation was made between the labour bureaucracy and the Tories. In some cases the fight against the Labour aristocracy was carried to quite absurd degrees. Local branch officials exercising quite minor functions in the trade union organisations were characterised as social fascists, because they defended the line of the labour bureaucracy in words, though their action was often dictated by sounder class sense... In the directives for the operation of our municipal electoral activity the ECCI in 1934 corrected this mistake... If we read the resolution of the Ninth Plenum and draw comparisons from our experiences after the Eleventh [CPGB] Congress up to the present time, we are better able to understand the tactical line being brought forward after the Seventh World Congress... It shows that in substance a new turn has not been made, but simply a more correct interpretation of the line. ^[114]

So according to the Bell school of political mathematics, social fascism = Popular Front! Bureaucratic continuity, if not historical accuracy, had been preserved.

In passing, it should be noted that Bell had proved himself no sluggard as an exponent of ‘social fascism’ during the hey-day of the Third Period. In his pamphlet *Heading For War* he listed the following organisations as representing fascism in Germany: ‘... the unofficial armies, the *Stahlhelm*, the *Wehrwolf*, the German Officers League, the *Jungdo* and the Social Democratic *Reichsbanner*, represent military forms of fascism.’ ^[115] Not one of these organisations can correctly be described as fascist, least of all the *Reichsbanner*, which the fascists attacked and closed down after the Nazi seizure of power. And the real fascist organisations - the SA and the SS - Bell did not consider worthy of mention.

In a more general sense, the Stalinist labour historian Allen Hutt shared Bell’s dilemma of having to present the Third Period as good Communist coin at the high tide of the Popular Front when he wrote his *The Postwar History of the British Working Class*. Thus, like Bell, the ‘general line’ that finally prevailed at the December 1929 Congress of the CPGB had to be upheld, while criticising ‘sectarian’ interpretations of it by certain party leaders and cadres:

It [the ‘new line’]... not unnaturally [sic!], opened the door wide to ‘ultra-left’ tendencies which turned independence into isolation. The main thing was that it represented a necessary break with the past.

Such sectarianism that did arise in the party during the Third Period lay in the ‘application of the “new line”’ and resulted in ‘Communists finding themselves in a weaker position in the trade unions than they had been before’. ^[116] But of course, the ‘general line’ was correct, just as it had been in 1925-27 (the period of the bloc with the TUC lefts) and again after 1934, the period of the Popular Front, when work in the trade unions was more than ever before subordinated to the requirements of Soviet diplomacy.

Harry Pollitt’s essay in autobiography, the infelicitously titled *Serving My Time* is even less informative than Hutt’s work about the Third Period, the narrative breaking off just at the point when the CPGB, under Pollitt’s leadership, fully embraced the theory of social fascism. He tantalises his readers by writing in his ‘Conclusion’ that ‘the 10 years from 1929 to 1939 constitute a period which requires fuller, more detailed and more fundamental treatment than is necessary [sic!] in a book of the present character’. ^[117]

Running ahead a little, we find in the case of the CPGB miners’ leader, Arthur Horner, incomprehension instead of, as in the instances of Hutt and Pollitt, duplicity. For Horner, the ‘Third Period’ never existed as a phase of world Stalinist policy with historical and tragic implications for the international working class, rather as something that interfered with his own style of opportunist trade union work in the NUM. It was only on this level that he both confronted and opposed it. In his quite detailed account of his clash with the CPGB, Comintern and RILU leaderships over his opposition to ‘red unionism’, no reference is made to the then prevailing leftist line of all three organisations, even though this line was threatening to dislodge the party from its last remaining footholds in the official trade union movement. ^[118]

Another work attempting to force the theory of ‘social fascism’ into a Popular Front mould is TA Jackson’s *Dialectics*. This viciously anti-Trotskyist Stalinist primer, quite apart from its vulgarising nearly every aspect of Marxist theory, devotes lengthy passages to the vain task of proving that, in all essentials, fascism and Social Democracy perform the same historical role. Correctly insisting that the betrayals of Social Democracy after the end of the war *prepared* the ground for the rise of fascist movements, Jackson then makes the leap - false both in theory and in history - of claiming that ‘fascism thereupon emerged with a doctrine which unified itself with the implications of the deeds of Social Democracy and carried these implications to their logical counter-revolutionary conclusions’. The only difference conceded by Jackson was that in the realm of ideology the reformists paid lip-service to various revisionist brands of ‘Marxism’, while fascism openly espoused anti-Marxism as its main political platform. ^[119] And it should be borne in mind that Jackson’s work was published, and almost certainly written, *after* the Seventh Comintern Congress.

Because he was never a card-holding member of the CPGB, John Strachey enjoyed a little more latitude in coping with such problems (even though his books were closely scrutinised by Palme Dutt, for whom Strachey had a great respect). Nevertheless, we find the classic Third Period formulation in his *The Coming Struggle For Power* that ‘the machinery of the trade unions and Labour Parties has become an apparatus used, not by the workers to oppose the capitalists, but by the capitalists to control the workers...’, and a little further on, the even more emphatic assertion that ‘while passing its furious resolutions against “the menace of fascism”... [Social Democracy] is all the while itself laying down the working-class organisation necessary to a fascist system’. Then the future Labour Minister of War, the butcher of the Malayan freedom fighters, the ally of the Dayak head-hunters, concluded: ‘Social

democracy becomes in fact “Social Fascism”.’ ^[120] Strachey’s next important book, *The Nature of Capitalist Crisis*, was written, like Dutt’s *Fascism and Social Revolution*, in the twilight of the Third Period, and was first published in March 1935, when the Popular Front line was fast gathering momentum. Although we find Strachey edging away from the cruder manifestations of ‘social fascism’, we at the same time discover him embroidering Dutt’s own special variant on this theory, namely that the British Social Democrats, left as well as right, were seeking to introduce the corporate state by peaceful, parliamentary means:

He [GDH Cole] and the other leaders of the left wing of British Labour, such as Sir Stafford Cripps, Mr Pritt [soon to become a Stalinist ‘fellow-traveller’ and in this capacity, an apologist for the Moscow Trials! - RB], Mr Mellor and other leaders of the Socialist League, are able to prevent a large number of British socialists from taking the revolutionary path. Mr Cole has now defined the objective of this whole school of thought. It is, to put it shortly, a corporate state, controlled, not by the fascists but by Parliamentary socialists... ^[121]

Wherein does this theory differ from that of the WRP, with its claim, made in *Workers Press* of 5 March 1973, that ‘secretly they [the reformists] welcome the corporate state in order to deal with any revolutionary mass movement that the crisis engenders’? As a final comment on the absurdity of this theory, it should be pointed out that at the precise moment when Strachey was charging Cripps’ Socialist League with desiring the corporate state, the Socialist League was accusing the Labour Party leaders of the very same crime! (This radical infatuation with ‘corporatism’ is discussed at further length in Appendix IV.)

Four years after his *The Coming Struggle for Power*, with the People’s Front now in full swing, and still writing under the inspiration of his mentor Dutt, Strachey waxed enthusiastic about the prospects of a fusion of the CPGB and the ‘social fascist’ Labour Party:

This swirling stream of world events is now beginning to have its effect in Great Britain. In less than a year it has set up a remarkably strong current of opinion in favour of the accomplishment of the unity of the British working-class movement by the acceptance of the British Communist Party’s application for affiliation to the Labour Party. ^[122]

Strachey’s extraordinary evolution, from student Tory, then Labour MP, through a brief flirtation with Mosley’s proto-fascist New Party, then over directly to Third Period Stalinism, to finally ending up as an arch-right-wing Labour Minister, might well tell us as much about the appeal of ultra-leftism for adventurers of the Strachey type, and their attitude to the workers’ movement, as about Strachey’s own highly contradictory and unstable personal make-up. There are times when leftism and sectarianism attract the bourgeois or petit-bourgeois radical adventurer as iron filings gravitate towards a magnet. And it must be said that the Trotskyist movement has proved no exception to this rule.

Some Postwar Versions

In 1934, Gallacher had devoted an entire pamphlet to an explanation of why Trotsky had been wrong to call for a united front of the workers’ parties against the Nazis. Thirteen years later he wrote a book in which he took an opposite line:

Had these two forces [the KPD and SPD workers] united, the history of Germany would have been entirely different. But it was impossible to achieve such unity. Blame for this is often laid at the door of the KPD... What party doesn’t make mistakes... In Germany, the party advocated the united front from below, they were earnest in their desire to achieve it. But, it is said... they made its realisation hopeless by the nature of their attacks on the SPD leaders. That may be so. But take note. *They were pursuing a correct policy* [sic!], in the course of which they made a mistake that could easily have been corrected. The SPD leaders *could have assisted this correction* had they come out openly for the working class... ^[123]

If only the ‘social fascists’ had helped us Communists to do our job, wails Gallacher. One should also note the by now familiar theme that the line was correct, only its application mistaken.

The next excursion into ‘Third Period’ territory - an uncharted land for most CPGB members in the postwar era - came in 1957, when the History Group of the party published its *Labour-Communist Relations 1920-1939*. That this pamphlet saw the light of day at all can only be explained by the profound crisis in British and world Stalinism precipitated by the Khrushchev Secret Speech of March 1956, and

the Hungarian Revolution and the 'Polish October' the following autumn. However, the treatment of the 'new line' is very cautious:

How far did the 'new line' correctly apply to conditions in Britain; how far was it formulated by delegates to the Communist International with insufficient knowledge of British conditions? The reader of this pamphlet is advised not to come to hasty conclusions without referring to the contemporary evidence indicated by the references in this section.

Significantly, none of these references related to the internal policy of the Stalin leadership in the USSR - that is, its economic policy of forced collectivisation and industrialisation dating from 1928, the year of the inauguration of the 'new line' in the Communist International. The question of social fascism is treated even more discreetly. Stalin's 'twins' are nowhere to be seen or heard, and the following note is appended to explain that by fascism was meant something different from Nazism. Thus 'social fascism' was rendered a less objectionable term:

It is important to note that the word 'fascism' at this date [1929] implied the corporate state of Mussolini's Italy, plus the violent repression of working-class movements as in Italy and the Balkans. Before 1933 it had not yet come to mean universal terrorisation, concentration camps and the drive to world war. In 1929 it was necessary to warn the working class against the policy of class-collaboration which was eating away the independence of the Labour movement. ^[124]

And this was done by equating fascism - or corporatism - with Social Democracy and class-collaboration! A fine warning! Needless to say, this worthless substitute for a genuine, critical history of the CPGB's orientation to the mass workers' movement ends up in a paean of praise for the Popular Front, just as it had passed over in silence the opportunist errors of the 1925-27 period of the alliance with the TUC General Council lefts.

Gollan's wretched apologia for the 'Third Period' we have already discussed. The next item of importance appeared in 1966, when the CPGB historians returned to the fray with their *Problems of the German Anti-Fascist Resistance 1933-1945*. An important and even inspiring theme, one would have to agree. But even more pressing, in view of the paucity of material on the subject, was a Marxist treatment of the reasons how and why Hitler came to power in the first place. Once again, the CPGB's tame historians shied away from a serious discussion of the Third Period and the Stalinist theory of social fascism. It was dynamite, and they knew it:

The situation in these years [that is, from 1933 to 1945, wrote the pamphlet's authors in a footnote - RB] cannot be properly understood without an analysis, in class terms, of the process of transition to fascism, from 1930 to 1933 and, especially, of the reasons why the German working class did not more effectively resist the establishment of the Nazi dictatorship. This analysis has unfortunately had to be omitted here for lack of space.

Unfortunately? Lack of space? One wonders. Had such an analysis been undertaken, we have a sample of what it might have produced in the following comment on the failure of the KPD leadership to respond in February 1934 to a call from the exiled SPD leadership for a revolutionary overthrow of the Nazi regime in Germany: 'The way seemed open for formal, central collaboration between Communists and Socialists. But the chance was missed, for reasons not yet fully clear.' ^[125] And they never will be, if their investigation is left to the CPGB historians' group.

Early next year there came a much bolder and, in view of its method and purpose, far more pernicious critique of the Third Period. It was undertaken by Monty Johnstone, who, as has already been stated, was a former member of the British Trotskyist movement (the Revolutionary Communist Party) in the early postwar period, having joined it from the Stalinist Young Communist League. Johnstone is a 'liberal' Stalinist (not a contradiction in terms, for a Stalinist is one who subscribes to Stalin's anti-Leninist theory of 'socialism in one country'), and favours a policy in Britain of intimate collaboration with the left flank of Social Democracy on the programme of the peaceful, constitutional, parliamentary road to socialism. Anything that can be used to bolster up this counter-revolutionary line, and sweeten relations with the reformists, is pressed into service - even carefully selected and distorted facets of the Trotskyism that Johnstone learnt whilst a member (on what basis has still not been clarified by him) of the RCP.

The article in question is Johnstone's review of LJ Macfarlane's *The British Communist Party: Its Origin and Development until 1929* (London, 1966) which he wrote for *New Left Review*. Johnstone's method is to pick out and denigrate all the leftist errors of the Comintern and the CPGB, even using Trotsky's criticisms of the 'Third Period' to emphasise his rejection of leftism, and to defend the rightist errors of

the Communist International and the CPGB *against* the criticisms of Trotsky. Thus of the party's opportunist line before and during the general strike summed up in the slogan 'All Power To the General Council', Johnstone comments: 'The attitude of the British party to the forthcoming general strike was much more realistic than that of Trotsky, who considered that it heralded the coming revolution...' When it came to the Third Period and social fascism, and the winding up of the tactic of opportunist blocs with the leaders of the reformist bureaucracy, it was a different question. Now Trotsky could be praised for his 'several years of cogent argument against the concept of "social fascism" and for a united front policy by the Communist parties...'. Johnstone's purpose becomes even more patent when we note his equal praise for JR Campbell's 'solid common sense' - hardly a Marxist attribute. And Johnstone's choice of words is not accidental, for like Trotsky, Campbell opposed the Third Period when the ECCI, together with party leaders such as Dutt and Rust (YCL), first imposed the theory of 'social fascism' and the 'united front from below' on the CPGB. But he did so on the non-Leninist basis of continuing the opportunist line that prevailed from 1925 to 1927, one that had facilitated the betrayal of the General Strike by the TUC General Council - including the lefts. Trotsky's opposition to the Third Period flowed from a general understanding and critique of Stalinism in both its 'left' *and* right phases, as the tendency he denoted - until 1934 - as bureaucratic centrism. Johnstone's real political sympathies are revealed when he moves on to discuss the post-1933 line of the Comintern:

... after Hitler's seizure of power in Germany *the Comintern went over to a realistic united front policy* that led the British party to revise its ultra-left attitude to the Labour Party, and to find itself in the 1935 General Election returning to the old line of working for a Labour victory. *In the following years the CPGB was to play an important and valuable role in uniting hundreds of thousands against fascism and unemployment.* ^[126]

United front! But by 1935, this had been replaced by the *Popular Front*, as Johnstone is well aware. Sleight of hand masquerades as history, and counter-revolutionary Stalinist policy as Leninism. Johnstone looks at the history of Stalinism with one eye closed - his right - and sees only its leftist phases and errors. And we have to say in all seriousness that these distortions - and therefore justifications - of the past betrayals of Stalinism will be both complemented, and therefore facilitated, by a like one-sidedness that tends to see only the *rightist* episodes of Stalinism. Two one-eyed men cannot lead a revolution any more than can one, for perspective comes from the use of both eyes.

Nor is Betty Reid, veteran British Stalinist, any exception to this rule. In her *Ultra-Leftism in Britain* she, like Johnstone, is prepared only to acknowledge leftist errors on the part of the Comintern, and never right-opportunist ones:

Most Communists would agree that there were far-reaching sectarian errors in Communist Party policy during that [that is, the 'Third'] period, in the context of the first sustained right-wing rejection of the united front and the long record of betrayal of the right-wing leadership... The characterisation of Social Democracy as 'social fascism'... fostered deeply sectarian attitudes within individual Communist Parties.

But of the Popular Front, of the period when Stalinists aligned themselves not only with these same right-wing leaders, but with liberals, bourgeois chauvinists and clergymen: Reid declares that this was a time when 'earlier sectarian errors were corrected'. ^[127]

Another Stalinist 'liberal' - Eric Hobsbawm - touches gingerly on the Third Period in his review of Hermann Weber's *Die Wandlung des deutschen Kommunismus* (Frankfurt, 1970). His explanation for the KPD's ultra-left line is quite sophisticated: domestic traditions of leftism in the proletariat nourished and sustained the Comintern's own tactical errors. There are of course elements of truth in this argument, but in Hobsbawm's case it results in the special, and principal, role of the Soviet leadership in the formation of the policies of the Third Period being obscured from view. The KPD, wrote Hobsbawm, 'had no policy for any situation other than one of revolution'. ^[128] But the chief responsibility for the party's having no tactical answer to the menace of fascist counter-revolution resided with the Stalinist leadership of the ECCI, which insisted - against internal resistance from the KPD - that the party renounce the Leninist united front. Leftist currents there undoubtedly were in the KPD, but they were not the authors of the theory of social fascism. Hobsbawm knows who was, but does not consider it worth mentioning.

We should record in passing that even historians honestly attempting to come to grips with the past betrayals of Stalinism slip into the error of concentrating on the leftist 'excesses' of the Third Period and to present what both preceded and followed as good Leninist coin. Thus the former CPGB labour

historian John Saville remarked in his introduction to *The Communist Party and the Labour Left 1925-1929* by Joseph Redman (1957) that:

... following the victory of Hitler in 1933 there were gropings towards a more realistic policy but it was only the sharp turn towards *political common sense* that the Communist International initiated in 1935 that allowed the British Communist Party to begin to exert any real influence within the broad Labour movement. ^[129]

This 'common sense' led just as certainly to defeat in Spain and France as had the ultra-leftist line in Germany. Redman too is guilty of idealising the Popular Front, for he says that 'a fairly clean break with the outlook of 1929 had to wait... until the Seventh World Congress, in 1935, with Dimitrov's speech on the *United Front* against Fascism'. Dimitrov's appearance as the new leader of the Communist International of course gave the official stamp of approval, not to the workers' united front, but the counter-revolutionary '*People's Front*'. ^[130]

Stalin's Fig Leaf

Stalinists throughout the world have, for more than 40 years now, been labouring under the handicap of not being able to cite any speech or article by their hero and mentor directed against German fascism. Only with the Nazi invasion of the USSR in June 1941 did Stalin break his silence on the Hitler regime, and then it was to condemn it in purely nationalist terms. And so today we find the cult of Dimitrov being substituted for - or rather interwoven with - the cult of Stalin. Even the foundations of this cult are open to question. Krebs contends that whilst working as an agent for the underground KPD in the Gestapo, he came across a secret report with details of a deal fixed between the Soviet and German governments for Dimitrov's release after the Leipzig trial, in exchange for Nazi agents arrested in the Soviet Union. When Dimitrov defied Goering in open court, says Krebs, winning the applause of anti-fascists all over the world and greatly enhancing the tarnished prestige of the Comintern, he already knew that his acquittal and release were certain.

The validity of Dimitrov's anti-fascist credentials is, however, a secondary question. More important is the use to which they were - and are still being - put. Dimitrov's name is quite correctly linked to the Stalinist Popular Front, the policy of tying the workers' movement to a class-collaborationist alliance with one or more parties of the bourgeoisie. Dimitrov presided over the Seventh Comintern Congress in the summer of 1935 at which this counter-revolutionary strategy, which led the Spanish workers to defeat in the civil war against Franco, and broke the back of the equally powerful proletarian upsurge in France of May-June 1936, was made mandatory for every section of the Communist International. Even more so today than in 1935, the Stalinist Popular Front, the alliance of all 'men of good will' against fascism and war, is an essential ingredient of the Soviet bureaucracy's strategic orientation towards collaboration with the main imperialist powers and groupings - the USA, Japan, the EEC. Peaceful coexistence with American imperialism necessarily means for the Kremlin the sabotage of revolutions in Nixon's Latin American preserve, even if, as in Chile, this strangling of the proletariat by the Popular Front opens the door for the military and the fascists to stage a bloody counter-revolution (the same considerations determined Stalinist policy in Bolivia prior to the Banzer coup of August 1971, and more recently Uruguay, where the military have also established their rule).

As part of this concerted build-up for the Popular Front (not only in Latin America, but the advanced imperialist states where the prospect of proletarian revolution is even more daunting for the Kremlin), world Stalinism seized on the ninetieth anniversary of Dimitrov's birth, which fell in June 1972. A flood of books on his life, political work and ideas, not to speak of his selected and collected works and biographies, poured out from Sofia and Moscow. Nor were the British Stalinists remiss in lauding this architect of counter-revolution to the skies. James Klugmann took time off from grappling with the horrendous task of writing his third volume of the history of the CPGB (the volume that will, if it ever sees the light of day, deal with the 'Third Period') to wallow in the happy memories of a time when the Stalinists had emerged from their ice age of self-imposed isolation and were rubbing shoulders with clergymen, 'social fascist' labour bureaucrats, liberals, patriotic Tories, boy scouts and Duchesses. But it is important to note that the Third Period was not simply ignored by Klugmann in his offering to the Dimitrov festival, but used to contrast its sectarianism and adventurism with the 'realism' and the allegedly militant anti-fascism of the Popular Front:

At the end of the 1920s and in the first years of the 1930s there were within the International, despite all its many achievements [the most noteworthy being the victory of German fascism -

RB], some deep sectarian mistakes, particularly in regard to the estimation of Social Democracy and the Social Democratic parties, approaches to the reformist-led trade unions, and on questions of the united front. It would be wrong to present Dimitrov as some miraculous Communist totally free of the mistakes of his time... But throughout these years he was one of the leading Communists within the International who most strongly resisted sectarianism, who most continuously strove for the unity of the working class.

But this then raised the problem of Dimitrov's own role during the period when 'social fascism' was in vogue, for he was head of the West European Bureau of the ECCI, based in Berlin, and, according to the article cited, had 'the closest contact, perhaps, ... with the KPD'. Did he preside over the criminal betrayal carried through on Stalin's orders by the KPD leadership? To concede this would at once demolish Dimitrov's anti-fascist image, so carefully built up over four decades. So we are informed that:

... already, at the end of the 1920s and in the first years of the 1930s when there were many sectarian approaches to the question of the united front, Dimitrov was one of the foremost of those in the leadership of the Communist International who were searching for ways to overcome this sectarianism and develop the real unity of the working class to bar the road to fascism.

The only evidence presented of Dimitrov's attitude is an 'important letter' which he sent to the ECCI in which Dimitrov is said to have 'criticised aspects [sic!] of the united front policy of the KPD, and emphasised that in his opinion, which was shared by Thälmann [of course], the situation of the fascist offensive demanded from the German working class the unity of its forces'. But this was also the official line of the ECCI and the KPD - the unity of all proletarian forces on the basis of the 'united front from below'. Did Dimitrov challenge this false tactic, which rendered impossible the achievement of proletarian unity against fascism? That is the real question, not this or that nuance *within* the framework of the prevailing Stalinist line. The meagre evidence cited suggests that Dimitrov did not:

He criticised the practice of the putting forward by Communists of the leading role of the KPD as a precondition 'of the general struggle of Communists, Social Democrats and other working people, instead of in fact and in practice developing and winning leadership in practical joint general struggle and action'. ^[1331]

In other words, a variant on the 'united front from below', and not a Leninist united front in which the two workers' *parties* form a temporary bloc to fight the common fascist enemy.

This same number of *Marxism Today* contains two other important texts on Dimitrov, namely an article by Klugmann on the Seventh Comintern Congress, and a selection of documents written by Dimitrov in the course of the preparations for the Congress. Once again, we see the hand of the falsifiers of history at work. The already cited article claimed that Dimitrov had opposed Third Period sectarianism from the very beginning, and had sought to change KPD tactics some months before Hitler came to power. But in the documents for the Seventh Congress, drafted on 1 July 1934, we read the following: 'Is the *indiscriminate* qualification of Social Democracy as social fascism correct? With this position we often blocked the road to Social Democratic workers.' ^[1332] So we have Dimitrov, 18 months after Hitler's victory, still hesitating as to whether to jettison - and then not entirely (for he used the word 'indiscriminate') - the theory of social fascism. Moreover, the issue is seen as one of expediency - it 'blocked the road to the workers'. Sometimes - as in the early months and years of the First World War - theoretically correct principles lead to the temporary or even protracted isolation of the Marxist movement from the broad mass of the workers. Junking principles may seem the quickest road to the mass movement, but it is also the surest road to the betrayal and defeat of the workers.

In Klugmann's own article on the Seventh Congress, he paraphrases this note by Dimitrov in such a way as to present it as a direct challenge to the entire theory of social fascism, which it was not: 'Is it correct to define Social Democracy as social fascism?' ^[1333] Nor was Dimitrov so bold and resolute in pioneering the 'new line' as Klugmann and other Dimitrov cultists would have us believe. The groundwork for the Popular Front had already been laid some months before 1 July 1934 by the PCF leaders, who, with Stalin's approval (and in line with his diplomacy, which now sought insurances against a resurgent German imperialism by an alliance with the once-condemned Versailles powers), opened up talks with the Socialist Party for a united front against the rising fascist movement in France. These negotiations began after Thorez had been summoned to Moscow in April, and the new line approved by the party conference at Ivry on 23 June. On 1 July, there appeared in the PCF theoretical organ *Cahiers du Bolshevisme* an article by Thorez in which he tore up not only the policy of his party over the previous six years, but also the Leninist united front: 'We, the Communist Party, we are ready to renounce all

criticism of the Socialist Party during our joint action... We want action at any price.' Four months before this article was written, the PCF had joined with fascist gangs in the famous demonstration of 6 February outside the French National Assembly against the government of the Radical Daladier. In another four months, he would be embraced by Thorez as a comrade-in-arms of the People's Front.

The pact between the PCF and the SFIO was finally concluded on 27 July. But the line had been established more than a month previously. So even here, Dimitrov's role was not all that Klugmann claims it to be. Both in the Leipzig dock, and in the Comintern offices in Moscow, Dimitrov acted out a part that others far more powerful than he had prepared for him. The Dimitrov cult is phoney to the core, and must be rejected, along with the policies which are linked to his name. Nor must it be permitted to obscure the fact that the greatest betrayal in the history of the working-class movement was carried through by a Stalinist leadership of which he was a part. Neither, finally, should the belated critics of the Third Period be allowed to exploit the crimes of 1933 to prepare new defeats under the banner of the no less counter-revolutionary Popular Front, which from Britain and France to Italy and Chile, is the official strategy of the world Stalinist movement. One of the main purposes in writing this book is to help ensure that this does not happen.

Social Fascism Revived - An Afterword

Although never returning *in toto* to the line or policies of the Third Period, Stalinism has employed some of the concepts evolved in the period between 1928 and 1934 at later dates. Following the conclusion of the Stalin-Hitler Pact in August 1939, the Comintern commanded a sharp left turn in all the sections operating in the sphere of the Western Allies; whilst in Nazi Germany, a heavily masked defencist line was forced on the shattered remnants of the KPD. This new turn involved a repudiation of the former Popular Front policy, and a reversion to some of the tactics of the Third Period. Referring to the Second International leaders who supported the Allied powers against Stalin's pact partners, an ECCI Manifesto declared in November 1939 that there could be 'neither a united workers' front, nor a people's front with them... Now working-class unity, and the united people's front, must be established from below...' This new line found an echo in the CPGB, which, in the case of Michael MacAlpin's *Mr Churchill's Socialists*, even stimulated the revival of the theory of 'social fascism':

The Labour leaders, who have converted the Labour Party into the second capitalist party of the state, and are changing the trade unions into an *Arbeitsfront* [Labour Front], give us war and the hope of an empty 'victory'. Socialism is forgotten for National Socialism... ^[134]

When Hitler turned his guns eastwards on the USSR, the British Stalinists not only made their peace with 'Mr Churchill's Socialists', but outstripped them in patriotic zeal - and strike-breaking.

Notes

1. W Knorin, *Communist International*, Volume 11, nos 3-4, 14 March 1933.
2. This the exiled KPD leadership under Walter Ulbricht accomplished in the summer of 1939, when in the aftermath of the Stalin-Hitler pact, the requirements of Kremlin diplomacy demanded that the KPD adopt a defencist position in the imperialist war against Poland and the Western Allies. For details of this 'united counter-revolutionary front' between Stalin and Hitler, see the author's *Stalinism in Britain* (London, 1970).
3. F Heckert, 'Why Hitler in Germany?' (report to ECCI Presidium, 1 April 1933), *Communist International*, Volume 11, no 10, 1 June 1933, pp 329-35, emphasis added.
4. *Communist International*, Volume 11, no 8, 1 May 1933, emphasis added.
5. 'German Fascism and the German Proletariat', *Communist International*, Volume 11, no 9, 15 May 1933, pp 283-88, emphasis added.
6. R Palme Dutt, 'The World Situation and Working-Class Unity', *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 13, no 20, 5 May 1933, p 439, emphasis added.
7. *Resolution of the ECCI Presidium on the Situation in Germany*, 1 April 1933, emphasis added.
8. *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 13, no 19, 19 May 1933, p 488, emphasis added.

9. 'Resolution of the CC of the KPD on the Situation and the Immediate Tasks', *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 13, no 24, 2 June 1933, pp 525-29, emphasis added.
10. E Varga, 'Results and Prospects of the German Fascism Now in Power', *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 13, no 27, 21 June 1933, p 585.
11. B Kun, *The Second International in Dissolution* (London, 1933), p 75.
12. 'Resolution of the KPD Politburo', 10 October 1933, *Communist International*, Volume 11, no 22, 15 November 1933, pp 775-78.
13. *Communist International*, Volume 11, no 24, 15 December 1933, p 880.
14. O Piatnitsky, 'The Communist Parties in the Fight for the Masses', *Thirteenth Plenum Reports* (London, 1934), p 78, emphasis added.
15. W Pieck, 'We Are Fighting for a Soviet Germany', *Thirteenth Plenum Reports*, pp 9-10.
16. V Knorin, 'Fascism, Social Democracy and the Communists', *Thirteenth Plenum Reports*, p 36.
17. D Manuilsky, 'The Revolutionary Crisis is Maturing', *Socialism Victorious* (Moscow, 1934), pp 298-324.
18. F Heckert, 'Contemporary Situation in Germany', *Communist International*, Volume 12, no 1, 1 January 1934, p 15.
19. G Regler, *Das Ohr des Malchus* (Cologne, 1958), p 231.
20. *Izvestia*, 6 May 1933.
21. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Volume 1, p 373.
22. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Volume 1, p 450.
23. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Volume 1, p 717.
24. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C, Volume 1, p 717.
25. F Brand, 'Combat the Campaign of Lies Against the Soviet Union', *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 13, no 28, 23 June 1933, p 610.
26. *Communist International*, Volume 11, no 20, 15 October 1933, p 698.
27. *International Press Correspondence*, Volume 14, no 2, 12 January 1934, p 35.
28. *Pravda*, 3 July 1934.
29. *Communist International*, Volume 12, no 16, pp 537-39.
30. O Piatnitsky, *The Fascist Dictatorship in Germany* (1935), pp 21-25, 42.
31. Piatnitsky, *The Fascist Dictatorship in Germany*, p 46.
32. W Pieck, *Report on the Activities of ECCI* (26 July 1935) (London, 1935), pp 10, 13, 23-24, 27, 32.
33. D Manuilsky, *The Work of the Seventh CI Congress* (London, 1935), pp 11-12.
34. M Buber-Neumann, *Under Two Dictators* (London, 1949), pp 166, 195.
35. *Report of Court Proceedings* (Moscow, 1936), pp 86-90.
36. *Report of Court Proceedings in the Case of the Anti-Soviet Trotskyite Centre* (Moscow, 1937), pp 106, 109.
37. W Ulbricht, 'Speech at the First Conference of Officials of the KPD of Greater Berlin' (25 June 1945), *On Questions of Socialist Construction in the GDR* (Dresden, 1968), pp 13-14, emphasis added.
38. Ulbricht, 'Speech at the First Conference of Officials of the KPD of Greater Berlin' (25 June 1945), *On Questions of Socialist Construction in the GDR*, pp 14-16.
39. W Ulbricht, *On the History of the German Labour Movement* (Berlin, 1953), p 455.
40. Ulbricht, *On the History of the German Labour Movement*, p 653, emphasis added.

41. W Ulbricht, 'Ernst Thälmann and the Freedom Fight of the German People', *Communist International*, no 3, 1939.
42. W Ulbricht, 'Report to the Sixth Congress of the SED', *The Age of Socialism Has Begun* (Berlin, 1963), p 104, emphasis added.
43. Cited in R Palme Dutt, *The International* (London, 1964), p 212.
44. *Anti-Faschistische Aktion* (Berlin, 1965), pp 10-11.
45. *Anti-Faschistische Aktion*, pp 15-16.
46. *Anti-Faschistische Aktion*, pp 48-49.
47. *Geschichte Der Deutschen Arbeiter Bewegung*, Volume 4 (Berlin, 1966), p 170.
48. *Geschichte Der Deutschen Arbeiter Bewegung*, Volume 4, pp 206, 288, 289, emphasis added.
49. E Mandel, 'Introduction', LD Trotsky, *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany* (New York, 1971), pp 24-25, 43, emphasis added.
50. *Geschichte Der Deutschen Arbeiter Bewegung*, Volume 5 (Berlin, 1966), p 203, emphasis added.
51. G Lukács, 'Theses Concerning the Political and Economic Situation in Hungary and the Tasks of the Hungarian Communist Party', *Political Writings, 1919-1929* (London, 1972), pp 245-46.
52. G Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness* (London, 1971), pp xxvii-xxix, emphasis added.
53. G Lukács, 'Preface' (1947), *Goethe and His Age* (London, 1968), p 8.
54. G Lukács, *In Search of Bourgeois Man* (London, 1964), pp 37, 44, emphasis added.
55. Lukács, *In Search of Bourgeois Man*, pp 93-94.
56. G Lukács, from a letter to the PCI journal *Nuovi Argomenti* in 1962, translated in *Survey*, no 47, April 1963, p 106.
57. Walter Laqueur, *Russia and Germany* (London, 1965).
58. G Deborin, *Secrets of the Second World War* (Moscow, 1971), p 13.
59. I Maisky, *Who Helped Hitler?* (London, 1964), p 15.
60. R Medvedev, *Let History Judge* (London, 1972), pp 67, 429-30.
61. A Sakharov, *Progress, Coexistence and Intellectual Freedom* (London, 1968), pp 51-52.
62. *Outline History of the Communist International* (Moscow, 1971), pp 272-75.
63. *History of the CPSU* (Moscow, 1960), p 429.
64. *A Short History of the CPSU* (Moscow, 1970).
65. *Outline History of the Communist International*, p 312, emphasis added.
66. *Outline History of the Communist International*, p 319.
67. *Outline History of the Communist International*, pp 323, 326-27, 351.
68. E Henri, *Can Socialists and Communists Cooperate?* (Moscow, 1972), pp 18-19.
69. *Workers Press*, 1 October 1974, p 12, emphasis added.
70. *The Bolshevik Party's Struggle Against Trotskyism* (Moscow, 1969); *Where Are The Trotskyites Leading The Youth?* (Moscow, 1973); *Anarchism, Trotskyism, Maoism* (Moscow, nd).
71. O Kuusinen (ed), *Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism* (London, 1961), pp 441-42.
72. Dutt, *The International*, p 212.
73. *Labour Monthly*, Volume 10, no 2, February 1928, p 70.
74. *Labour Monthly*, Volume 11, no 2, February 1929, p 79.

75. *Labour Monthly*, Volume 11, no 3, March 1929, pp 134-35.
76. *Labour Monthly*, Volume 11, no 12, December 1929, p 707.
77. *Labour Monthly*, Volume 11, no 3, March 1929, p 132.
78. *Labour Monthly*, Volume 14, no 7, July 1932, p 434.
79. *Labour Monthly*, Volume 15, no 5, May 1933, p 287.
80. *Communist Review*, Volume 2, no 1, January 1930, p 19.
81. *Communist Review*, Volume 2, no 10, October 1930, pp 409-10.
82. *Communist Review*, Volume 3, no 6, June 1931, p 219.
83. *Communist Review*, Volume 3, no 7, July 1931, pp 268-69.
84. *Communist Review*, Volume 4, no 12, December 1932, p 608.
85. *Communist Review*, Volume 5, no 5, May 1933, p 217.
86. LD Trotsky, 'Hitler's Victory', *Manchester Guardian*, 10 March 1933, republished in *Writings of Leon Trotsky 1932-33* (New York, 1972), p 134.
87. *Communist Review*, Volume 5, no 5, May 1933, p 227.
88. *Communist Review*, Volume 5, no 12, December 1933, p 414.
89. *Communist Review*, Volume 5, no 12, December 1933, p 435.
90. *Communist Review*, Volume 6, no 9, September 1934, p 154.
91. *Daily Worker*, 1 January 1930.
92. *Daily Worker*, 2 September 1930.
93. *Daily Worker*, 10 September 1930.
94. *Daily Worker*, 8 December 1930.
95. *Daily Worker*, 2 April 1931.
96. *Daily Worker*, 25 July 1931, emphasis added.
97. *Marxism Today*, March 1959, p 68.
98. *Daily Worker*, 19 September 1931.
99. *Daily Worker*, 3 October 1931.
100. *Daily Worker*, 2 March 1932.
101. *Daily Worker*, 3 March 1932.
102. *Daily Worker*, 15 June 1931.
103. *Daily Worker*, 9 August 1932, emphasis added.
104. *Daily Worker*, 13 August 1932.
105. *Daily Worker*, 1 October 1932.
106. W Gallacher, *Pensioners of Capitalism* (London, 1934), pp 5, 15.
107. RF Andrews, *The Truth About Trotsky* (London, 1934), pp 58, 63.
108. R Fox, *Communism* (London, 1935), pp 123, 139.
109. R Palme Dutt, *Fascism and Social Revolution* (London, 1935), pp 150, 155, emphasis added.
110. Cited in Palme Dutt, *Fascism and Social Revolution*, p 159.
111. Palme Dutt, *Fascism and Social Revolution*, p 159.
112. Palme Dutt, *Fascism and Social Revolution*, pp 159-60.
113. Palme Dutt, *Fascism and Social Revolution*, p 203.
114. T Bell, *The British Communist Party: A Short History* (London, 1937), p 127.
115. T Bell, *Heading For War* (March 1929), p 42.

- 116.** A Hutt, *The Postwar History of the British Working Class* (London, 1937), pp 193, 242.
- 117.** H Pollitt, *Serving My Time* (London, 1940), p 284.
- 118.** A Horner, *Incorrigible Rebel* (London, 1960), pp 109-12.
- 119.** TA Jackson, *Dialectics* (London, 1936), p 464.
- 120.** J Strachey, *The Coming Struggle For Power* (London, 1932), pp 293, 338.
- 121.** J Strachey, *The Nature of Capitalist Crisis* (London, 1935), p 341.
- 122.** J Strachey, *The Theory and Practice of Socialism* (London, 1939), p 448.
- 123.** W Gallacher, *The Rolling of the Thunder* (London, 1947), p 138, emphasis added.
- 124.** CPGB History Group, *Labour - Communist Relations 1920-1939* (London, 1957), pp 21, 28.
- 125.** CPGB History Group, *Problems of the German Anti-Fascist Resistance 1933-1945* (London, 1966), pp 9, 11.
- 126.** *New Left Review*, no 41, January-February 1967, pp 54-55, 60-61, emphasis added.
- 127.** B Reid, *Ultra-Leftism in Britain* (London, 1969), p 9.
- 128.** EJ Hobsbawm, 'Confronting Defeat: the KPD', *Revolutionaries* (London, 1973), p 51.
- 129.** J Saville, 'Introduction', J Redman, *The Communist Party and the Labour Left 1925-1929* (London, 1957), p 6, emphasis added.
- 130.** J Redman, *The Communist Party and the Labour Left 1925-1929*, p 21, emphasis added. [Redman was one of Brian Pearce's pen-names - MIA]
- 131.** *Marxism Today*, July 1972, p 196.
- 132.** *Marxism Today*, July 1972, p 209, emphasis added.
- 133.** *Marxism Today*, July 1972, p 215.
- 134.** M MacAlpin, *Mr Churchill's Socialists* (London, 1941), p xi.

Appendix IV: Germany and the Fourth International

On 15 July 1933, Leon Trotsky made public his resolve to terminate the 10-year-old policy of fighting as a faction within the Communist International to reorient its parties, and, as far as possible, its leading cadres, back towards Leninism. The defeat in Germany, the collapse of the German Communist Party (KPD), and finally - and most decisively - the refusal of the leading bodies of the Comintern either to acknowledge defeat in Germany or to undertake any serious assessment of the policies that had made it possible, convinced Trotsky that the Comintern was dead as an instrument of proletarian revolution, that in future it could only prepare and execute similar defeats. The decision to proclaim, and then to build, the Fourth International flowed from Trotsky's decision in the summer of 1933 that the fate of the world proletariat and of all humanity could no longer be entrusted to a leadership and a movement incapable of digesting the lessons of the German catastrophe. To wait for a more 'favourable' conjuncture, for a new upturn in the class struggle, before separating definitively from the Comintern (as many centrists, and fellow-travellers of Trotskyism such as Isaac Deutscher, advised at the time) would have been to adopt the position of Kautsky in 1914. Lenin's break from the Second International did not proceed from considerations of tactical expediency, but from principles. He could, no more than Trotsky, permit the opportunist leadership of the International to retain unchallenged its bureaucratic stranglehold on the European working class. Though officially launched in March 1919, the Communist International was conceived and born in the weeks and months of isolation that followed the monumental betrayal of 4 August 1914, when to a man the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) voted for imperialist war in the German Reichstag. The unanimous vote of the Presidium of the Comintern's Executive Committee (ECCI) of 1 April 1933, on the German question ranks equally with the vote of 4 August as the greatest act of perfidy in the entire history of the international workers' movement. Such treachery could in each case have but one answer - the proclamation of a new International.

But involved in these two historic splits was more than an organisational separation, important though that was. Lenin insisted from the very beginning that the new international would have to demarcate itself, and relentlessly oppose, all those tendencies in the old International that had led to its demise in 1914. Nationalism, parliamentarism, Marxist phrases and reformist deeds, adaptation to militarism, indifference and even hostility towards the national aspirations and struggles of the oppressed colonial peoples, narrow trade unionism, bureaucracy and the subordination of the overall strategic requirements of the working class to the short-term interests of the most privileged layers of the labour aristocracy - all these tendencies and features of the Second International, Lenin declared, must be rooted out of the revolutionary vanguard and its International. So it was with the Fourth International, which, from the day of its proclamation, confronted not one but two mortally hostile world movements, those of Stalinism and Social Democracy. What, above all else, did Trotsky defend in separating definitively from the Stalinised Comintern? Precisely that which not only the Kremlin bureaucracy but the leaders of the Second International had trampled in the mud - proletarian internationalism. Both Internationals had foundered on the rocks of nationalism, had nailed to their masts the banner of 'socialism in one country'. This was the theory that in 1914 provided the justification and political impetus for the war credits vote of 4 August - 'we must defend the Germany of the Kaiser and Krupp to defend our organisations, and our socialist Germany of the future' - and it was that theory which once again sacrificed the German proletariat on the altar of expediency when the Kremlin bureaucracy sabotaged the revolution in Germany in the name of building 'socialism' in the USSR.

In the course of its development, the world Trotskyist movement has attracted into its ranks or as sympathisers tendencies and individuals whose separation from Stalinism proved to be incomplete on certain fundamental questions. Subsequent sharp turns in the political situation and the line of the Stalinist apparatus in the USSR revealed that their alignment with Trotsky, while not merely episodic, had been in the nature of a bloc on certain important issues. And of this Trotsky was well aware. To cite some instances. During the period of the Stalin - Bukharin bloc in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Communist International (1925-27), the Left Opposition had come out against the party policy of appeasing the Kulak and the Nepman, to the detriment of the development of planned and industrialised economy. But when, in early 1928, Stalin swung over sharply to the left - the ultra-left in fact - and launched his programme of crash industrialisation (much of it stolen from the programme of the Left Opposition), a small group of Left Oppositionists - Radek, Pyatakov, Smilga and

Preobrazhensky - defected to Stalin on the grounds that he was now, belatedly if bureaucratically, carrying out the economic policies of the Opposition.

Stalin's false, nationalist perspective of building 'socialism in one country' was relegated by the 'capitulators' to a difference of secondary importance, whereas for Trotsky and those who remained loyal to the Left Opposition, it was paramount. (Nor did their capitulation, and renunciation and denunciation of Trotsky earn them a permanent niche in the bureaucracy. Stalin had all four killed, but not before he had squeezed them dry of their political and administrative talents.) The capitulators turned their backs on Europe, on the rise of fascism in Germany, on the ruinous policies of the KPD and the Communist International (except for Radek, whose journalistic skills Stalin employed to justify them), and with genuine but misplaced devotion to the revolution, plunged themselves into the work of 'socialist construction'. *They had been disoriented by Stalin's left turn.* Their defection coincided with the rise of a new oppositional tendency in the Communist International, and especially the KPD - the group of Brandler. Essentially a rightwards-moving centrist tendency, it had endorsed socialism in one country, and Stalin's opportunist policies in Britain and China, as sound Leninism. Only with the inauguration of the Third Period did the Brandlerites fall out with the Comintern and the Thälmann leadership in the KPD. As a centrist tendency attracted organically towards a permanent bloc with left Social Democracy (a tendency which had been all too apparent in the summer and autumn of 1923), they were highly sensitive to any change of policy that might have undermined this relationship with the left wing of the SPD. Consequently the Third Period, and the theory of social fascism, drove the Brandler group into sharper opposition, and very quickly out of the KPD and the Communist International. Many of the things it wrote and said about Stalinist policies and tactics during the Third Period were correct - such as on the united front, and the absurdities of 'social fascism'. But they did not constitute a Leninist alternative and challenge to the Stalinist faction, since they were directed only at one facet and phase of Stalinism - its ultra-leftism of the Third Period - and failed to go to the core of the problem, the theory of socialism in one country. The Brandlerites turned the united front from a tactic into a fetish and a strategy, just as Brandler himself had done as leader of the KPD in the months prior to the 'German October'. Therefore for Trotsky there could be no question of a bloc, let alone a fusion, with the Brandlerites simply because of a formal agreement over one aspect of Stalinist policy. Moreover, when it came to the question of the USSR itself, the Brandlerites refused to criticise in the slightest degree Stalin's adventurist economic policies or the bureaucratic regime in the party. Their opposition was of an opportunist nature, forced on them by the immediate threat the Stalinist line posed to their relations with Social Democracy in Germany. Elsewhere, there was general agreement. And, therefore, no agreement with the Left Opposition.

The secondary nature of Brandler's differences with the Stalinist leadership in the USSR and the Communist International became evident when, with the winding up of the Third Period in 1934, the right oppositionists and their co-thinkers in the exiled SAP heralded the openly opportunist rapprochement with Social Democracy as a return to 'realism' on the part of the Kremlin. Once again, a sharp turn - this time to the right - in the Stalinist line found its former opponents sucked back into the embrace of the bureaucracy.

So we can see that each turn in the Stalinist line threw up - and throws up to this day - oppositional groups based on a rejection of the prevailing Stalinist tactic. Such opposition can of course be deepened into a rounded-out conception of Stalinism, depending not only on the character of the tendency involved, but on the intervention of the Trotskyist movement itself. But it can also be opportunist, remaining on the level of a tactical difference, and become reabsorbed into the main Stalinist current when the bureaucracy undertakes a new turn - either to the left or the right. Here of course we must distinguish between the Stalinist tendency as it existed between 1924 and 1934, the period during which Trotsky characterised it as *bureaucratic centrism*, a centrist current based on a bureaucracy that rules a degenerated workers' state; and Stalinism from 1934 onwards, when it had clearly become a *counter-revolutionary force* defending the world *status quo*. Thus such left turns as the bureaucracy has made in the post-1934 period (as in the period of the Stalin - Hitler pact, when the Communist International took a left line in the imperialist states at war with Hitler) are of a fundamentally different nature from those of 1924 and 1928-34, when they embodied a left zigzag within a centrist tendency whose overall direction was to the right, towards the position firmly established by 1935 and the era of the Popular Front.

Today's zigzags take place within a Stalinism that is *counter-revolutionary through and through*, and such left turns that are made are *part and parcel of its counter-revolutionary strategy*, even though they

may be forced on the bureaucracy by a powerful left swing in the working class (as at the time of the French General Strike of May-June 1968, when the PCF and the CGT adapted to the movement only in order to win its leadership and then betray it). But even though these oscillations in the Stalinist line possess a different character to those of 1924-34, they have still served to disorient a section of the world Trotskyist movement, the movement that Trotsky founded on his theoretical grasp of the role of Stalinism, and the movement that proclaimed its resolve to cleanse the working class of this 'syphilis of the labour movement'. The break-up of the wartime alliance between the USSR and the imperialist Allies, and the far-reaching economic changes carried through in the Eastern European states under Red Army occupation, resulting in the creation of a series of deformed workers' states, together with the victory of the Chinese revolution in 1949 and then, the following year, the outbreak of the Korean war, began to lead a section of the Fourth International leadership towards the revisionist theory that in the event of a third world war (which it believed imminent) the Soviet bureaucracy would seek to defend itself against imperialist attack by unleashing mass movements in the imperialist states. The Stalinists would in the countries where they dominated the workers' movement (France, Italy) then 'project a revolutionary orientation' and, even though it was against all their instincts and better judgement, go on to take the power. New deformed workers' states would then be created, which could retain their bureaucratic characteristics for 'centuries'. This was essentially the perspective evolved by Pablo, the head of the Secretariat of the Fourth International, and it found immediate echoes in nearly all sections of the International.

Here is not the place to write the history of the Fourth International - though this must be done, and soon. The lesson of Pabloism, whose essence was the liquidation of the Trotskyist vanguard into the Stalinist movement (and, as the theory began to evolve still further in an opportunist direction, into the reformist movement and in the semi-colonial countries, into petit-bourgeois nationalist movements such as the FLN in Algeria) is that its point of origin was an empirical adaptation to a left turn in the Stalinist apparatus as it came under increasing pressure from world imperialism. The split of 1933 from a Comintern that had just led the German working class to defeat with an ultra-left policy therefore by no means inoculated the Trotskyist movement for all time against adaptations to Stalinism in a future period of leftism.

And we must go a step further. Having resolved on its orientation towards - and 'deep entry' into - the Stalinist movement while it was still in a 'left' phase, the Pabloites clung to their strategy in the period *when the Soviet bureaucracy undertook a steady turn to the right*, under the leadership first of Malenkov and then Khrushchev, towards *détente* with imperialism, on the basis of the policy of 'peaceful coexistence'. New progressive tendencies were promptly discovered inside the bureaucracy - possibly to compensate for its loss of militancy on the international scene. 'Self-reform' of the bureaucracy, 'liberalisation' of the repressive regime in the arts and history, were trends which the Pabloites associated with the Khrushchev leadership, especially after his 'Secret Speech' of March 1956. In other words, adaptation to the bureaucracy had now become a way of life, a whole political method, for the Pabloites. *But it had begun when the Stalinists were in a left turn*. This then made possible the retreat from Trotskyist principles and theory not only of a handful of leaders in the secretariat, *but the disruption and near-destruction of entire sections of the Fourth International*.

The Workers Revolutionary Party

The WRP (until November 1973 the Socialist Labour League) initially supported Pablo's bureaucratic expulsion of the majority of the French section from the Fourth International after it had opposed Pablo's revisionist theories. It then, together with the American Socialist Workers Party, changed course and opposed Pablo. Thus was born in 1953 the International Committee for the Fourth International. Then the SWP began to drift slowly back towards the European Pabloites, organised in their International Secretariat in Paris, and reunited with them in 1963, refusing to discuss their reasons for doing so with their former comrades of the International Committee. In reality, the SWP leadership had capitulated to the very forces and theories which they had begun to attack in their Open Letter of 1953, but subsequently treated as a question settled by the split. Then in 1971 there followed another split in the forces of Trotskyism, the prime responsibility for which, in the author's judgement, rests with the leaders of the SLL, who used their differences with the French section over Bolivia as a pretext for severing all links with the OCI. The SLL has since 'transformed' itself into a revolutionary party, the WRP, and it is certain aspects of this party's tactics, strategy, programme and theory that must be examined most critically, to shed possible light not only on the split of 1971, but the history of the Trotskyist movement

in Britain and internationally. Specifically, the attempt will be made to estimate to what extent the WRP leadership has assimilated the lessons of Germany, and integrated them into the theory and activity of the movement.

It is the author's contention - and one that he will attempt to substantiate by detailed textual references from the publications of the WRP - that within the leadership of the Trotskyist movement in Britain there exists a virulent residue of Third Period Stalinism. There must be no misunderstandings on this question. *The WRP leadership is not in any sense a Stalinist leadership.* But for a whole constellation of historical and political reasons, the break from Stalinism made by the Trotskyist movement in Britain was neither as sharp nor so deeply grounded in Marxist theory as it had been in France, to cite a case in point. The pioneering cadres of the British Trotskyist movement, divided between several tendencies in their early years, in the main separated from Stalinism in the period of the Popular Front, when the Kremlin was organising the defeat of the French and Spanish proletariats under the banner of the alliance of all 'men of good will' against fascism and war. It was a period of the massacre of the Bolshevik old guard in the Moscow show trials, while in Britain Stalinists grovelled on all fours before the 'social fascists' of yesterday, anti-German blimps and clergy of all denominations. To break from this morass of opportunism, and the vilification and murder of Lenin's closest comrades, was the elementary duty of a Communist, the first step towards constructing a movement that could carry through the revolution betrayed by Stalinism. But Stalinism did not begin in 1935 with the Popular Front, nor in 1936 with the Moscow Trials. It has a history dating back to 1924, to Stalin's first pronouncement on socialism in one country, through the period of right-opportunist adaptation to Social Democracy of 1925-27, and then of ultra-leftism from 1928 to 1934. *Each of these phases go to comprise the history of Stalinism.* Stalinists such as Johnstone and Klugmann have eyes only for the leftist errors, and present the opportunist phases of the Comintern as being periods when a Leninist policy was pursued. Yet if we look at the various important stages in the degeneration of the Comintern between 1923 (the defeat of the German revolution) and the proclamation of the Fourth International (also following an even more serious defeat in Germany), we see that of those 10 years, *six years were dominated by a leftist orientation on the part of the Stalinist bureaucracy.* First came the period of 'Zinovievist' leftism of 1924, which spawned the theory of social fascism, and saw the perversion of the united front into a bureaucratic manoeuvre designed not to unite the whole class against the bourgeoisie (which was how Lenin conceived of it) but simply as a device to 'expose' the reformists. There then followed the three years dominated in the Communist International by the alliance of Bukharin and Stalin, of unprincipled blocs 'at the top' with the reformists, and not also 'from below' with the reformist-led masses. Then beginning in 1928, and enduring in fact until mid-1934, came the line of 'social fascism', of fully-blown bureaucratic adventurism. So Trotsky began his fight against the degeneration of the Communist International when it was in an *ultra-leftist* phase (against mainly Zinoviev on the question of Germany, but also Stalin), and abandoned the struggle to reform it 10 years later when it was at the very peak of another and far more disastrous period of ultra-leftism.

Let us repeat if only for those who so distort the history of Stalinism as to encourage the illusion that it has been nothing but a succession of betrayals brought about by a right-opportunist line (an illusion found in the writings of Royston Bull, to cite one example): Stalinism first took root in the Comintern masked as a *left, super-Bolshevising* tendency, and Trotsky's opposition to it was demagogically characterised as a deviation towards Social Democracy. And the same slanderous arguments were used, of course with much else besides, to discredit and distort the basis of Trotsky's opposition to Stalinism in the Third Period. He was accused of serving as a 'left cover' for Social Democracy, of being a pseudo-Marxist apologist for the reformist bureaucracy, etc, etc.

This brings us now to the question of the WRP and its relationship to the mass workers' movement in Britain. Dominated as it is by Social Democracy, the British workers' movement has spawned essentially two varieties of adaptations to this deeply-rooted bureaucracy. One is of the open opportunist type, that identifies the bureaucracy with the class, and submerges itself into the lower and middle echelons of the bureaucracy in order, at some propitious moment, either to force it to the left, or to take over from where the bureaucracy leaves off. The clearest expression of this pseudo-Marxist adaptation to Social Democracy is the *Militant* group of Ted Grant, a renegade from the Fourth International. For the *Militant*, the Labour Party is the party that will carry through the socialist revolution.

But the domination of the bureaucracy also produces the mirror opposite of the *Militant*. Correctly rejecting the 'deep entry' strategy of the *Militant*, the conclusion has been drawn by the WRP leadership

that the reformist machine can be by-passed, that a prolonged period of entry work is no longer necessary, that the working class will come direct to the 'mass revolutionary party' after one final 'exposure' of the reformists, and that this 'exposure' will be rendered all the more swift and conclusive by the fact that the reformists are no longer Social Democrats, but 'corporatists' completely tied to the bourgeoisie and its state, and indistinguishable from the open representatives of capital in all essentials.

Yet despite important differences between these two tendencies, they share the strategy of demanding that the reformist leaders carry out the expropriation of the bourgeoisie! This demand has no precedent either in the history of Bolshevism, the Leninist phase of the Comintern, or of the early years of the Fourth International. In the *Militant* of 22 March 1974, however, we find the call advanced for a *minority* Labour government to enact 'an enabling bill for the immediate nationalisation of the 250 monopolies, the banks, the insurance companies and building societies'. Presumably this was to be done with the support of the Liberals or Ulster Unionists! And the WRP is no less explicit. An All Trade Union Alliance Miners' Section Statement (11 January 1972) declared that:

... the miners' strike can be won and the political conditions created for the holding of a general election and the return of a Labour government. Such a government could be forced to implement the miners' demands *and carry out socialist policies*.^[1]

Which is, of course, undiluted Pabloism. Social Democracy, however strong the mass pressure of the workers, cannot 'carry out socialist policies'. If this were so, what need is there for the Fourth International? (And in fact, Pablo drew this very conclusion from his initial false premise declaring the Fourth International to be redundant and taking a post in the bourgeois-nationalist government of Ben Bella in Algeria.) This opportunist approach to bureaucracy has its parallel in the statement's paternalist attitude towards workers' control, where it says: 'Bring in a Labour government which will *legislate* workers' control...' ^[2] Now Trotsky says explicitly that workers' control is established at *plant level by the workers themselves*, fighting to establish control, the right of inspection and supervision, over the employer. Thus it is reactionary to conceive of workers' control as being 'legislated' by a bourgeois parliament (as also do the left reformists like Benn and Jones). Nor does this exhaust the errors contained in this single slogan. In the *Transitional Programme* it states that industries owned by the state ('public works') should come under workers' *management* and not workers' control, which pertains to privately-owned concerns. Finally, it should be pointed out to the leaders of the WRP (and the *Militant* tendency, their mirror image inside the Labour Party) that in the estimation of Trotsky - who had considerable first-hand experience in such matters! - 'only a *general revolutionary upsurge of the proletariat* can place the complete expropriation of the bourgeoisie on the order of the day'. For the *Workers Press*, this is a slogan which 'answers' every single problem of the working class irrespective of the level of consciousness of the workers or the depth of the capitalist crisis.

It was this sectarian conception that among others led to the decision to form the WRP and which has increasingly dominated its activities and press since its launching in November 1973.

The Reformists Are Being Exposed

This was the official position of the SLL from very early on in the life of the Wilson government of 1964-70. The June 1965 conference of the SLL endorsed a resolution which stated that 'the reformists are being revealed [to the working class, that is] in their true colours... The working class *now* has the opportunity to break from reformism, *to enter into a struggle for power*.' This was *June 1965!* The same resolution added that 'the very sharpness of the crisis... *strips the reformists of any pretence at being able to carry out policies in the interests of the working class*...' ^[3]

From the *general* truth that reformism has betrayed and will betray the working class at decisive moments in its struggle against capitalism, was deduced the false specific conclusion that the Labour government elected in 1964 would not only inevitably betray the working class at the first opportunity, but 'as compared with the Macdonald government of 1929-1931... [would] betray more openly and quickly'. ^[4] Four years later, the SLL General Secretary Gerry Healy would write, following the withdrawal of the labour government's anti-trade union bill 'In Place of Strife', that 'the working class is in so different a position from 1931 that Wilson *cannot carry out his betrayals as easily as did Macdonald*...'. So in 1965, the SLL leadership - Healy included - had left the small matter of the working class out of their calculations in their defeatist speculations about the coming betrayals of the Wilson government. There had been no betrayal for, according to this document, 'nothing substantial whatsoever had been handed to the next Tory government by the Wilson administration...'. Yet, as we

shall see, the perspective right up to this point had been one of the reformists grinding down and impoverishing the working class on behalf of the monopolies, integrating their trade unions into the state, and even going 'beyond the doorway into fascism' to serve their capitalist masters. This collapse of the SLL's perspectives elicited the smug comment from Healy: 'The perspectives of every group and party except ours are in ruins.' [5]

This perspective of 1965, that Wilson was to betray and be exposed before the entire working class, continued right through 1966, when in April, the stripped-bare reformists were returned with a majority of nearly 100 seats over the Tories. And it became even more accentuated in its false optimism in 1967, a period of stagnation in the class struggle following the defeat of the seamen's strike of the previous summer. At the SLL annual conference in May 1967, the *British Perspectives* resolution was adopted unanimously (the author voting for it also). It declared quite unambiguously in its opening sentence that the working class in Britain was 'preparing to break with Social Democracy' and that the Labour leadership in crisis was 'coming into head-on collision with the workers'. [6] If the second statement were true, which it patently was not - then of course the first would be plausible, but by no means certain. That would depend to a large degree on the interventions of the vanguard. However, mistakes in the estimation of the tempo of the development of consciousness in the working class can be made very easily, since they depend on so many variables that are not susceptible to accurate analysis. Marxism is not an exact science. But all the more reason to acknowledge such errors, to correct them, and to prepare the movement better for struggles in the future. This is not the method of the WRP leadership, nor was it that of its forerunner, the SLL. For in 1968, again at its annual conference, we find the same error being committed on a yet grander scale. The resolution *Economic Perspectives* spoke with great assurance of 'the existence of a pre-revolutionary situation', and then went on to make the following absurd statement:

Here is the importance of our insistence that reformism *was* dead: its role *now* is to do precisely the opposite of what it first claimed to do; it occupies office in order to facilitate the smashing down and impoverishment of the working class, and to enrich the monopolists. [7]

One moment reformism is 'dead' - and had been for some time, one is led to imagine - and the next moment, it is alive and well, smashing down and impoverishing the working class. Hardly a job for a corpse, or even an invalid. The SLL could 'insist' for all it was worth, but reformism simply refused to lie down and die, as the February 1974 General Election result testified yet again. *There is no short cut around British Social Democracy*. The resolution then laid out a perspective for the breaking of the working class from a reformism that was already 'dead':

The very conditions of life - big cuts in real wages, the threat of unemployment, brutal attacks on living standards and trade union organisation by the Labour government - will break *millions* of workers from *any* attachment to reformism [which, remember, is 'dead'] *in the immediate future*. [8]

How simple. The only trouble was, this schema bore little if any relationship to reality, either to the state of the British economy, or to the role of reformism, which is much more complex than depicted here. Above all, what the resolution left out, or rather underestimated, was the ability and power of the working class not only to defend itself against attacks by capital, but actually to improve its wages and conditions, *under its existing leaders*. And this had been ruled out completely. Hence the perspective of a break from reformism 'by millions' in the 'immediate future'. Thus the proposal was made and voted on to 'stand candidates in the next parliamentary elections' to 'expose *and defeat* the existing "parliamentary" leaderships of the working class'. A task rendered all the more easy by the fact that 'Social Democracy is now preparing its greatest-ever betrayal of the British working class'. [9] After the betrayal - us! The bigger the betrayal, the better for the vanguard. So said the Stalinists of the Third Period, and so said - and still says - the leadership of the WRP. The number one lesson of history is that bureaucracy *feeds on defeats*, even defeats that it has itself engineered. The task of the vanguard is not to be a witness to these betrayals, but to fight to prevent them, *to force the reformists back from the path of betrayal* and to make possible their exposure under conditions where *the vanguard*, and not the bourgeoisie, will be the beneficiary of Social Democratic treachery. The 1968 resolution spoke of this 'betrayal' *as an accomplished fact*, against whose consequences the movement then had to rally the working class. Left in words, this perspective was *capitulationist* in content.

This same conference hedged its bets on the future of Social Democracy, however, for in an addendum to the *Political Perspectives* (on racialism), it conceded that 'Social Democracy *may* find *some* form of life

after the fall of the present government' (emphasis added). No question of a Labour victory, or, heaven forbid, of the SLL working for it. Labour was going to fall, and, one suspects, a good job too. But would that not mean the return of the Tories? Not necessarily. For 'the next stage of relations between the classes cannot be contained within the Tory-Labour parliamentary framework'. And, remember, the SLL would be running its own candidates.

The year of 1969 saw this line taken beyond the limits of ordinary credence. The Tories were preparing to take office on the most reactionary conservative programme since the war, and to oust as too dependent on the working class a government the SLL had characterised in terms more appropriate to a fascist regime. In March, the London Area Committee of the SLL passed a resolution which spoke of 'the revolutionary situation now evolving' and of 'the masses who are now rejecting Social Democracy'. A note of realism crept into this same resolution, however, when it complained of the 'deplorably low theoretical level of the League' - a state of affairs for which the present author holds himself in part responsible, by uncritically endorsing such travesties of Trotskyist theory and programme.

The zenith - or rather nadir - of this ultra-leftist phase was reached at the Whitsun annual SLL conference of 1969. Statements such as 'the rejection of the reformist Labour leadership in Britain' were mere commonplaces. The resolution insisted against all the evidence to the contrary - on a perspective that would 'carry us in the immediate future into the struggle for power.' And if reformism were finished - 'dead' in fact - and if the working class were rejecting it for the revolutionary alternative, and the ruling class had no other solution open to it but violent repression of the working class, the perspective *would* have been one of the immediate struggle for power. But it was not, despite the claim that the situation was 'rapidly becoming pre-revolutionary'.^[10] No evidence of the concrete political manifestations of a pre-revolutionary situation - elements of dual power, dislocation of the economy, the growth of mass centrist, leftward-moving currents in the working class, splits in the bourgeoisie, etc - was brought forward to back up this perspective, since none existed. Subjective idealism reigned supreme, in a leadership that vaunted itself as exponents of dialectical materialism and 'philosophy'.

How did the SLL conference see the political level of the British working class in the summer of 1969, one year before it gave 12 million votes to the 'dead' reformists, and one year after the emergence of a pre-revolutionary situation which posed the struggle for power in 'the immediate future'?

The *desertion* of the reformist [that is, Labour] party has been *almost complete*. Large sections of workers are now openly hostile to the Labour Party [this at least was true; some several millions have voted consistently Tory since the war - RB] and in large measure to all politics [hardly an indicator of revolutionary consciousness - RB]. The fall in the Labour vote at by-elections has been dramatic proof of this. There is very little life left in the party itself [scarcely surprising, in view of the fact that it had been pronounced 'dead' two years previously - RB], and the left wing is demoralised by the *impending electoral massacre*. Whatever temporary swings there may be in electoral votes, the disarray of the Labour Party marks the *end* of an epoch in British politics, an epoch based upon *reformism and class compromise*... By the time the present Parliament reaches its end... *the role of the Labour leadership will also have been finished. No section of the working class will ever again look to the labour party for leadership.*^[11]

Given that the reformists were not only 'dead', but now deserted for ever by the working class, all that remained to be done by the SLL was to bury the stinking corpse. The demand of the hour was 'to fight now for socialist policies against the Labour government, *to bring it down*...'.^[12] This statement must be denounced as demagogic and irresponsible. To 'bring down' a Labour government with an election pending must mean a refusal to vote Labour, for one can hardly struggle to overturn a regime and at the same time vote to keep it in office! But this resolution tried to have it both ways, for it also issued the slogan 'Keep the Tories out' - by bringing Labour down! While the absurdities of this line were never acknowledged (let alone corrected or the roots of the error of perspective explained), as the expected and inevitable election confrontation between Labour and the 'Selsdon' Tories approached, the SLL leadership silently and discreetly tail-ended the working class by coming out for a Labour vote to keep the Tories out and therefore, whether they like it or not, to keep Wilson and the rest of the rejected, exposed, discredited, doomed - and 'dead' - reformists in.

Remarkable as it may seem for those who see in Pabloism only a right-opportunist adaptation to bureaucracy, it took a similar line, arguing like the SLL that reformism was 'dead' and that the working class was in the process of shedding its last illusions in the Labour Party. Thus, in 1968, the same year that the SLL pronounced the Labour Party 'dead', Tariq Ali of the International Marxist Group wrote:

‘Today Social Democracy stands exposed and isolated, its credibility for the working class virtually destroyed.’ ^[13]

Elsewhere in the same article, Ali offers a simplistic definition of the role of Social Democracy that differs not one whit from that of the SLL, with its talk of reformism ‘smashing down’ and ‘impoverishing’ the working class and ‘enriching the monopolists’:

British Social Democracy is simply trying to fulfil its historic role - that of holding back the traditional organisations of the workers [Ali overlooks the fact that the Labour Party is one of the traditional organisations of the workers, and is based on another - the trade union movement! - RB] while cuts are made in workers’ living standards in order to solve the economic problems facing British capitalism. ^[14]

Which, if it were true, leads on to the inescapable conclusion that the British working class is hopelessly backward for it votes for this party with a regularity and consistency that must be very frustrating for radicals like Ali. Finally it must be said: from the false premise (based on a superficial analysis of the role of students in the May-June 1968 movement in France) that the traditional organisations of the working class (reformist and Stalinist parties, trade unions, etc) were either dead or dying, was deduced the Pabloite theory of the ‘new vanguard’. Student power, black power - these were to become the new vehicles of the socialist revolution, and their supporters, substitutes for the proletarian vanguard party. In the SLL, there was a formal and highly vocal opposition to such conceptions. But the notion of a ‘new vanguard’ also penetrated here, with an idealisation of the role of ‘the youth’, which in the period under discussion, developed to quite formidable proportions step by step with the retreat from work in and towards the Labour Party, and the emergence of the false theory that reformism was exposed in the eyes of millions of workers. The fruits of this leftism (itself proof that the role and nature of Pabloism had never been fully understood in the SLL leadership) we see today in the WRP’s theory of ‘corporatism’ and the revival of tactical conceptions that originated in the Third Period.

At this point we should pause to comment on a remarkable fact. Revisionism in the Bolshevik Party and the Comintern began under a leftist guise, that of the ‘Bolshevisation’ campaign waged by Zinoviev on behalf of the Troika against Trotsky and his supporters. When the false, leftist perspectives and ultimatic methods of 1924 failed to yield the revolutionary rewards predicted by their initiators, the Stalin clique swung over to right opportunism, to socialism in one country, and allotted to the TUC lefts in Britain, and the Kuomintang bourgeois nationalists in China, the role of chief auxiliary to the Comintern in its new task of serving as the ‘frontier guard’ of the USSR. Thus leftism prepared the way for opportunism, for adaptation to Social Democracy, and in the last analysis, to the pressure of imperialism. So it was with Pabloism. The immediate postwar perspective of the Secretariat of the Fourth International was of a mass revolutionary upsurge rapidly going beyond and even outside of the traditional organisations of the working class. In Britain, the Revolutionary Communist Party was set up in 1944 precisely to take the leadership of this mass movement. When this perspective failed to materialise, Pablo and others swung over to the right, seeing in the nationalisations carried through in East Europe by the Soviet bureaucracy and its national agents proof that Stalinism still had a progressive role to play. The Kremlin (and later Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese Stalinists) now assumed the functions ascribed in an earlier epoch to the TUC lefts and the Kuomintang. And while we must insist on the all-important distinction between Stalinism, which is the outgrowth of a degenerated workers’ revolution, and Pabloism, which does not draw directly on the strength of a ruling state bureaucracy, there are nevertheless similarities between the evolution of Stalinism within the Comintern and Pabloism in the Fourth International that must not be minimised. Starting in 1968, and basing themselves on the upsurge in student militancy throughout the world, the Pabloites pronounced radicalised layers of the petit-bourgeoisie to be the ‘new vanguard’ (this was the theory of Mandel). In countries such as Britain, reformism was declared to be dead, and the workers allegedly breaking from it, ripe for ‘capture’ by the ‘new vanguard’, which would draw the workers to its side by heroic ‘confrontations’ with the police. International Socialism also flirted with this reactionary theory for a time, which was put to the test and found wanting in the LSE occupation in the winter of 1968-69. Thus Pabloism too has known its ‘Third Period’, and its Zinovievist birth pangs. It zigzags from left to right and back again to the ultra-left, thrust hither and thither not only by the impressionist theories of its leaders, but, more important, by the essentially petit-bourgeois basis and composition of the tendency itself. He who sees only *right* opportunism, *open* adaptation to bureaucracy, in Pabloism, is no better equipped to fight it than were those of Trotsky’s supporters in the later 1920s able to fight Stalinism, which they saw as a rightwards-

moving tendency unable to make sharp and indeed adventurist turns to the left. From the foregoing we can see how important it is for a party constantly to *check over its perspectives*, assessing and revising them in the light of experience. For if this is not done openly and honestly *in front of the whole membership*, sudden turns in the political situation, or a serious error in tempo by the party leadership, will expose the party and the advanced workers around it to the dangers of pressure from hostile class forces. There is always present the tendency to react to the collapse of a false perspective by shooting off at a tangent in quest of new forces and policies that will 'bring results'. So it was in 1925, so it was again with Pablo in 1950-53. Honest correction of perspectives is therefore a prerequisite for the struggle against revisionism and liquidationism, the adaptation of the party to hostile class forces.

Finally, it should not be passed over in silence that opposition to Pablo's methods and perspectives, in the case of Healy, only dated from 1953, *when Pablo and his supporters had gone over to a right-opportunist position*. Just as Healy lived through the Third Period as an uncritical member of the Communist Party, so now did he only rebel against Pabloite revisionism when it revealed its right-wing face. Indeed, as late as 1952, Healy was numbered among Pablo's most loyal executors, seconding the resolution which expelled the French Majority from the Fourth International! These are not dead episodes in the history of the Communist movement. They live today in the ultra-leftist course of the Healy leadership, a leadership which is proving daily that it learned little or nothing from either Trotsky's break with the Stalinised Comintern in 1933, or the split from Pablo in 1953.

In the case of the SLL, the source of the original error in perspective lay in a schematic and highly subjective method of analysis. Tendencies and trends that certainly existed and became more accentuated in the period under discussion were elevated into accomplished facts, into a finished process of development. Not that the *possibilities* exist for a *weakening* of reformism, and, through the correct tactics, the consequent winning of key groups of workers to the revolutionary party. Instead reformism is 'dead', the working class has broken from it *en masse* and forever, the reformists are about to carry out their 'greatest-ever betrayal', are preparing to grind down the working class to pauperism, etc, etc. The concrete is dissolved into the abstract, the particular into the general, the relative into the absolute, the present into the future, and, as we now see with the building of the '*mass revolutionary leadership*',^[15] the liquidation of the Communist vanguard into the mass.

What had gone wrong? The problem which confronted the SLL in 1969 was that the class struggle had not developed at the tempo or with the sharpness anticipated after the election of the Labour government in 1964. The incomes policy, the seamen's strike, the world monetary crisis, the introduction of the proposed anti-trade-union legislation of 1969 - and then its withdrawal - were all seen as harbingers of an 'immediate' struggle for power, of a 'pre-revolutionary' situation, as events which would rapidly expose the reformists in the eyes of the entire working class. It did not happen, and that was no fault of the SLL leadership. But it should have been openly recognised that the perspectives had been grossly over-optimistic as to the tempo of the class struggle, and corrected. Instead, a subjectivist method came to the fore, paraded as 'Marxist philosophy', which not only denied reality, but increasingly created an alternative and much more comforting world of the imagination, one in which the movement's internal problems were increasingly seen by the top leadership as the *source* and not *result* of the relative stagnation in the class struggle. From this period dates the inner soul-searching in the SLL, the political self-flagellation, and the rise to positions of high authority of the 'activists', who were counterposed in an idealistic way to those who could not 'relate theory to practice'.

The root of these internal problems in the SLL, some of which imposed severe strains on relations between different sections and members of the movement, as it fought to implement wrong policies based on a false perspective, was located in the class struggle itself, and in the continued grip of the reformist bureaucracy on the working class. The more the dominance of this bureaucracy was ignored and denied by the SLL, *the more difficult it became to train cadres to fight reformism in the workers' movement*. But there were also other aspects to this problem that have, in the last year, come to the fore in a particularly sharp way.

Reformism, Fascism and Corporatism

The earliest instance of the anti-Trotskyist theory of 'corporatism' that the present author has been able to unearth in the publications of the SLL is in an article by Cliff Slaughter in *Labour Review* in 1959. Discussing the degeneration of international Social Democracy in the early imperialist era, Slaughter makes the following remarkable, to say the least, observation:

What was a correct strategy for many years, work through Parliament, an open party and the creation of strong trade unions, proved eventually to have its own dangers when it persisted into the monopoly phase of capitalist development - a phase *when the parliamentary and trade union machines gradually became incorporated into the bourgeois state.* ^[16]

Nearly everything is wrong here, and monumentally so. Parliament has *always*, in the capitalist era, been a component part of the capitalist state. It did not become 'incorporated' into the state only during the period of monopoly capitalism. This conception has affinities with the right-opportunist Stalinist theory that the task of Marxists is to fight to free Parliament from the grip of big business, and restore it to its old independence from the capitalist state. Then Slaughter commits his second blunder. He links together Parliament, a completely bourgeois institution, with the trade unions, working-class organisations both in content and by origin, led by a reformist bureaucracy. This is at the same time a leftist and rightist error. Finally we arrive at Slaughter's claim that at some time during the onset of the rise to dominance of monopoly capitalism, roughly in the final quarter of the last century, the trade unions were 'gradually... incorporated into the bourgeois state'. If Slaughter is correct on this point, then Britain (which in a footnote is cited as a 'good example' of this development) has for at least 75 years been without independent trade unions! Yet this was precisely the era in which, despite setbacks, the *trade unions achieved total immunity from the law.* Slaughter thus, after the manner of the academic, dissolves the real struggle of the working class to establish, defend and extend its organised strength against the capitalist state, into an abstract, supra-historical 'tendency' which, if carried to its logical conclusion, means that the working class can be and in fact has been robbed of its rights and independent organisations 'gradually', without any workers being aware that this defeat is being inflicted, and therefore without any section of the working class resisting it. Corporatism can be installed 'behind the backs' of the working class.

As far back as the SLL conference of 1963, we find the following perspective being put forward for future relations between the reformist organisations and the capitalist state:

The struggles of our epoch raise immediately the problem of power, and so the integration of the trade unions into the state, and of the parliamentary leaders more closely into the bureaucratic and militarised state, are necessary instruments. Both must prepare in the security preparations of the capitalist state. ^[17]

This theme was revived at the 1966 conference, when the *Trade Union Resolution* spoke of the 'concentration of capitalist state power, and its need in every country to incorporate the trade unions into the state in different ways...'. The same resolution also declared that 'the alternatives are either integration of the unions into the state or the transformation of the trade unions into revolutionary organs of the class, under the leadership of the Marxist party'. ^[18] This formulation is not an invention of the SLL leadership. It can be found in the last article written by Trotsky, or rather the 'rough notes for an article' that was 'obviously by no means complete'. ^[19] But what Trotsky says in this article has often, in the author's judgement, been misconstrued. Moreover, Trotsky himself employs certain formulations which are open to question (unless one sees Marxism as holy writ) and in fact mutually contradictory. One must first place the article in its political-historical setting. Independent trade unionism had been crushed across the length and breadth of Europe, the homeland of the mass trade unions of modern capitalism. From Franco Spain to Nazi Germany the trade unions had been replaced by fascist 'labour' organisations, whose sole function was to regiment and discipline the workforce to the requirements of capitalist production. Trotsky's article begins: 'There is one common feature in the... degeneration of modern trade union organisations in the entire world: it is their drawing closely to and growing together with the state power.' Then Trotsky goes on a little further to say:

The labour bureaucrats do their level best in words and deeds to demonstrate to the 'democratic' state how reliable and indispensable they are in peacetime and especially in time of war. By *transforming the trade unions into organs of the state*, fascism invents nothing new; it merely draws to their ultimate conclusion the tendencies inherent in imperialism.

Neither in Italy, Germany nor Spain did fascism *transform* the trade unions into organs of the state. On the contrary, it smashed them, in the case of Italy over a period of several years, in Germany, in three months, and in Spain, instantly as soon as Franco's armies occupied the territory in which they operated. *These are historical facts, and are not open to question.* We must assume therefore that Trotsky meant something different when he used the word 'transforming'.

And we would be quite right so to assume. Two pages on, Trotsky writes:

We cannot renounce the struggle for influence over workers in [Nazi] Germany merely because the totalitarian regime makes such work extremely difficult there. We cannot, in precisely the same way, renounce the struggle within the *compulsory labour organisations created by fascism*.

Here Trotsky uses a very different formulation, one that accorded entirely with the realities of the fascist regimes of Europe. And not only Europe. Discussing the trade union question in the economically backward countries, Trotsky writes:

... the governments of those backward countries which consider it inescapable or more profitable for themselves to march shoulder to shoulder with foreign capital, *destroy* the labour organisations and *institute a more or less totalitarian regime*. [20]

Perhaps the advocates of the theory of ‘corporatism’ would argue that Trotsky underwent a belated conversion to the conceptions of ‘social fascism’ in the last weeks of his life. But then they would therefore have to explain how this same Trotsky, in the course of drafting the main texts for the emergency conference of the Fourth International held in May 1940, wrote the following, under the heading ‘The Trade Unions and the War’:

In wartime the trade union bureaucracy definitively becomes the military police of the army’s General Staff in the working class. *But no zeal will save it. War brings death and destruction to the present reformist trade unions... There will be no room for reformist unions. Capitalist reaction will destroy them ruthlessly*. [21]

But to return to the article in question - ‘Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay’ - which has been so perverted by the WRP leadership.

The author is not alone in preferring Trotsky’s latter formulation, which speaks of the *destruction* of the trade unions by fascism, one which accords with his many writings against the Stalinist theory of ‘social fascism’. The introduction to the pamphlet in question quite correctly warns that unless the problem of state power is posed in the fight to defend the trade unions from attacks by the state, they will be ‘*destroyed as they have in the past* by fascist dictatorship acting on behalf of the big monopolies’. [22] The publishers of this pamphlet? The SLL! Four years later, however, with the SLL fast slipping into an ultra-left line on the trade union leaders that resulted in their being called ‘corporatists’, the introduction was rewritten to give an opposite definition of fascism to the one contained in the 1968 edition: ‘... the integration of the trade unions into the machinery of the state... would be done either by the prostration before the capitalists of the trade union bureaucracy or by the direct *transformation* of the trade unions into *state organs in a fascist dictatorship*’. [23] From ‘destruction’ to ‘transformation’ - and without a word of explanation as to why.

Finally, as if to resolve any doubts that might have lingered on this question of the relations of reformist trade unions to fascism and the fascist state, Trotsky concludes:

Monopoly capitalism is less and less willing to reconcile itself to the independence of trade unions. It *demand*s of the reformist bureaucracy and the labour aristocracy who pick up the crumbs from the banquet table that they become transformed into its political police before the eyes of the working class. If that is not achieved, the labour bureaucracy is *driven away* and *replaced* by the fascists... all the efforts of the labour aristocracy in the service of imperialism *cannot in the long run save them from destruction*. [24]

In Weimar Germany, the bourgeoisie did demand of the ADGB bureaucracy that it serve as the ‘political police’ of the employers and the state. But the bureaucracy was unable to perform this function, due to the constraints imposed on it as a bureaucracy rooted in the organisations of the working class. Fascism had to pulverise these organisations, and ‘drive away’ (or rather lock up) the reformist trade union leaders, and sometimes even murder them, to meet the economic and political requirements of German imperialism. The same applied to Italy and Spain. Class collaboration was in each case supplanted by the *savage destruction* of the workers’ organisations and *the repression of the trade union bureaucracy*. This is the meaning of Trotsky’s statement that even the most servile trade union bureaucrat cannot hope, in the long run, to escape the destruction of the organisations on which he is based, and therefore the termination of his own career - and possibly even his life. This leads directly on to the WRP’s perversion of Marxism on the trade union question, and also of Trotsky’s analysis of the relationship between the reformist bureaucracy and fascism. And as in the case of perspectives and the tempo of the exposure of reformism, the revision is, in formal terms, to the ultra-left.

As we have noted, the seeds of the line and theory that bloomed luxuriantly in 1973 were certainly sown as early as 1963-64, when the SLL leadership was preparing abruptly to terminate its entry work in the Labour Party and move towards an 'open' organisation that would hopefully attract the masses of workers whom the SLL anticipated would be breaking from reformism in the immediate future, as a consequence of the expected monumental betrayals of the Labour and trade union leaders. Thus in his report to the SLL Conference of November 1964, Cliff Slaughter put forward the following perspective for the newly-elected Wilson government, a perspective that included its possible evolution towards fascism:

Ex-union leader Frank Cousins was a natural Minister of Labour, but he was made Minister of Technology. This implies that the government needed a rapid change in technology through the discipline of labour by the unions, or through the threat of a *totalitarian* government or *fascist* state. [25]

And 'the government' Slaughter was talking about was a Labour government! Cousins, the chosen spearhead of this 'totalitarian' or 'fascist' development, resigned from the Wilson cabinet less than two years later over government wages policy and its attempts to limit the independence of the trade unions! Slaughter's formulation must, however, be seen as an extreme example of SLL thinking on the trade unions at this time, for it did not reappear again until 1969.

It was not by accident that the same 1969 SLL *Conference Resolution* that confidently - almost arrogantly - predicted that 'no section of the working class will ever again look to the Labour Party for leadership' and a 'struggle for power' in the 'immediate future' should also have contained the formulation that, of all the pre-1972 statements on the trade unions and the state, approaches most closely to the theory of 'social fascism':

... the capitalist class faces the prospect of a highly dangerous transition phase to another form of class rule: either it effects this through the imposition of a *Bonapartist* dictatorship, or else the workers are led by the revolutionary party to the proletarian dictatorship. While they prepare for the *bloodiest of direct repressions* [this was in May 1969] by the *army* and the state, the bourgeoisie relies *directly* [emphasis in original] on the *trade union bureaucracy* to effect this transition in their favour. Now that the Labour Government is *discredited* [a year later, it received 12 million votes, including those of the SLL - RB], *everything* depends, for the ruling class, on the betrayals of the trade union leaders... The bureaucracy is flesh of one flesh with Wilson and the Labour Cabinet. Its fate is tied up with them, *like them* it will act in accordance with the needs of capitalism, *even beyond the doorway into fascism*, if it is not challenged and defeated. [26]

The reader might well rub his eyes in disbelief. For here we have a formulation that, quite apart from its incredibly muddled thinking on the question of Bonapartism (which, by its very nature, *excludes the direct rule of fascism*), actually states that British Social Democracy, in both its trade union and Labour Party varieties, will continue to function, 'to act in accordance with the needs of capitalism', under a fascist dictatorship, 'even *beyond the doorway into fascism*'.

Now this is, of course, the theory that dominated the Comintern and especially its German section between 1929 and 1934; namely that Social Democracy (the Stalinists of course used the term 'social fascism') would continue to serve capitalism under a fascist regime, in their words, would continue to act as the 'main social support of the bourgeoisie'. This reactionary theory was only finally officially discarded with the onset of the Popular Front in the summer of 1934. The veteran British Stalinist Palme Dutt used very similar formulations to the SLL's 1969 resolution in his book *Fascism and Social Revolution* in a section entitled 'The Adaptation of Social Democracy to Fascism':

As capitalism develops to more and more fascist forms, Social Democracy, which is the *shadow* of capitalism, *necessarily* goes through a corresponding process of adaptation... With the complete victory of the fascist dictatorship, this process of adaptation does *not* come to an end, but on the contrary reaches even more extreme forms. [27]

Those comrades who believe that the theoretical degeneration of the movement began only with the launching of the WRP should look closely at the cited section of the 1969 SLL *Conference Resolution*, and ask themselves in what way it differs in its essentials from Dutt's. And they should also turn once again to the writings of Leon Trotsky on the question of fascism and Social Democracy, in which he consistently attacks the notion put forward by Dutt - and the 1969 resolution - that Social Democracy will serve the bourgeoisie 'even beyond the doorway into fascism'. Trotsky, first against Zinoviev and

Stalin in 1924, and then again against the entire Comintern leadership from 1928 to 1934, insisted on the contradiction between fascism and Social Democracy, that they were two distinct, mutually exclusive and therefore antagonistic forms of political rule. The rise of fascism heralds, and its assumption of power accomplishes, the destruction of the organisations of Social Democracy, both trade union and political. This was the experience in Italy and in Germany. Reflecting in 1928 on the first dispute of 1924 over the relationship between Social Democracy and fascism, Trotsky returned to Stalin's famous formulation that fascism and Social Democracy were not antipodes, but twins:

One might say that the Social Democracy is the left wing of bourgeois society and this definition would be quite correct if one does not construe it so as to over-simplify it and thereby forget that the Social Democracy still leads millions of workers behind it and within certain limits is constrained to reckon not only with the will of its bourgeois master, but also with the interests of its deluded proletarian constituency. But it is absolutely senseless to characterise the Social Democracy as the 'moderate wing of fascism'. What becomes of bourgeois society itself in that case? In order to orient oneself in the most elementary manner in politics, one must not throw everything into a single heap but instead distinguish between the Social Democracy and fascism which represent two poles of the bourgeois front - united at the moment of danger - but two poles, nevertheless. ^[28]

And when Trotsky spoke of the possibility of fascism and Social Democracy being 'united at the moment of danger', he envisaged this as taking place in a civil war in which the proletariat was on the offensive. The SLL scenario, by contrast, had the reformists serving a fascist regime after a defeat had been imposed on the working class, that is, after 'the bloodiest of direct repression by the army and the state'. The alternative line of development envisaged by the SLL in 1969 was the revolutionary party leading the working class to 'challenge and defeat' the plans of the ruling class and the bureaucracy - in other words, a struggle for state power in which the reformists would perform the role ascribed to them by Trotsky as the spearheads of counter-revolution. The SLL therefore had its perspectives entirely the wrong way round. It had the army, fascists and the labour and trade union leaders 'all thrown into a heap' in the very situation that would have thrown them into mortal conflict - namely the attempted seizure of power by fascism!

When faced with the threat of imminent proletarian revolution in the winter of 1918-19, the Social Democrats allied themselves with the Free Corps, among whom were many who later emerged as cadres of Nazism. But in 1933, these same Social Democrats were hounded out of office and into exile by their allies of 1919. If one cannot appreciate the difference between revolution and counter-revolution (a difference which accounts for the alliance in 1919 and the antagonism in 1933 between the reformists and the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie) then things have indeed come to a sorry pass.

Trotsky on Social Fascism

The reader who does not feel involved in this absolutely vital, indeed decisive, theoretical polemic with the WRP leadership must be patient. For it was the perversion of Marxism on this question that directly led to the victory of fascism in Germany, and the most monstrous period of barbarism endured by mankind in the history of this planet. That is why it is necessary to confront not only the WRP leadership, but the entire movement, with the record of what Trotsky himself wrote on the question of social fascism:

No matter how true it is that the Social Democracy prepared the blossoming of fascism by its whole policy, it is no less true that fascism comes forward as a *deadly threat primarily* to that same Social Democracy, all of whose magnificence is *inextricably* bound up with parliamentary-democratic-pacifist forms and methods of government... ^[29]

Yet the SLL insisted that reformism could survive and, moreover, assist in the 'imposition of a Bonapartist dictatorship' and 'the bloodiest of direct repressions by the army and state'. Would these then leave both parliament and the trade unions intact? One must assume so. In which case, Stalin, and not Trotsky, was right on social fascism:

The thousands upon thousands of Noskes, Welses and Hilferdings prefer, in the last analysis, fascism to Communism. But for that they must once and for all tear themselves loose from the workers. Today this is not yet the case. Today the Social Democracy as a whole, with all its internal antagonisms, is forced into sharp conflict with the fascists. It is our task to take advantage of this conflict and not to unite the antagonists against us. ^[30]

The SLL resolution of 1969 denied that such a conflict existed, thereby excluding the possibility and use of tactics which flowed from Trotsky's analysis. Instead, there was advanced the slogan 'Bring down the Labour government' - a government whose leaders were about to serve under fascism. We might recall that the KPD Stalinists, acting on Stalin's orders, campaigned and voted with the Nazis to bring down the Prussian Social Democrats, who were also depicted as willing agents of fascist dictatorship. In the case of the SLL, however, the old Trotskyist traditions and principles won out, and the SLL campaigned for a Labour vote in the June 1970 general elections. In retrospect, however, one must concede that the attacks conducted by the SLL on Robin Blackburn of the *Red Mole* for advocating abstention on the grounds that both Labour and Tory were capitalist parties, while correct, also served to conceal the abstentionist position the SLL had toyed with in 1969:

Social democracy has prepared all the conditions necessary for the triumph of fascism. But by this fact it has also prepared the stage for its own political liquidation [not 'incorporation into the state'! - RB]... German Communism in its struggle against the Social Democracy must lean on two separate facts: 1) the political responsibility of the Social Democracy for the strength of fascism; 2) the *absolute irreconcilability* between fascism and those workers' organisations on which Social Democracy itself depends. ^[31]

Again, if this statement is correct (and it was proved to be so - tragically - in little more than a year) then the 1969 SLL resolution is just nonsense. For if Wilson, Feather, Scanlon, Jones, etc, had been permitted to serve a fascist regime in Britain, in what capacity would they have done so, given that the organisations on which they rested, and from which they derived their earlier usefulness to the bourgeoisie, had been totally destroyed? Fascism seeks its mass support not in isolated collaborators from the old and destroyed workers' organisations, but the *petit-bourgeoisie*. To elevate Wilson to a position of any prominence in a fascist regime would, moreover, be a direct provocation to the fascist *petit-bourgeoisie*, who made the counter-revolution precisely in order to put the labour bureaucrats, the 'reds', out of business once and for all. But such questions did not interest the SLL leadership, any more than they did the KPD. Reformism, fascism, Bonapartism, the army - all were lumped together in Lassalle's 'one reactionary mass' and counterposed to a working class breaking for ever with reformism and moving towards the direct struggle for state power under the 'independent' leadership of the 'revolutionary party' - which at the SLL conference in question numbered no more than a few hundred, most of them youth not active in trade unions. The gap between reality and perspectives was and remains staggering, and could have only led, as it did, to the systematic demoralisation of precious cadres, and the consequent strengthening of not only hostile revisionist tendencies, but *Social Democracy itself*. Such is the logic of ultra-leftism. Trotsky attacked the Third Period policies of Stalinism for this reason, that they *protected* the reformists from the pressure of their own workers. The Stalinists refused to acknowledge the contradiction between the Social Democrats and the Nazis, even though on its exploitation depended the fate of the entire German proletariat. Trotsky posed this question in philosophic terms, and in a way that throws penetrating light on the scholastic forms of thought that masquerade as 'Marxist philosophy' and 'dialectical materialism' in the top leadership of the WRP today.

Of Third Period Stalinism's refusal to distinguish a principled difference between fascism and bourgeois democracy, Trotsky wrote:

The gist of this philosophy is quite plain: from the Marxist denial of the *absolute* contradiction [that is, of a contradiction between the capitalist economic bases of fascist and bourgeois-democratic regimes - RB] it deduces the *general* negation of the contradiction, even of the *relative* contradiction. This error is typical of vulgar radicalism.[NB] For if there is no contradiction whatsoever between democracy and fascism - even in the sphere of the form of the rule of the bourgeoisie - then these two regimes obviously enough must be equivalent. Whence the conclusion: Social Democracy equals fascism. ^[32]

This is the method of the WRP leadership. It does not say, like the Third Period Stalinists, that there is no principled difference between fascism and bourgeois democracy. But it has said, and it still does, that Social Democracy, whose entire functions are bound up with a parliamentary regime and mass workers' organisations, can serve under a fascist - or, in the current parlance, corporatist - regime. In other words, the SLL started from the point at which the Stalinists arrived. In both instances, relative contradictions within polar opposites are dissolved away into the *general* contradiction between the two poles. Fascism and Social Democracy are polar opposites to Communism - an absolute contradiction since the two poles rest on a mutually exclusive system of property relations, to which all other

contradictions are subordinate. But within the capitalist pole there are also relative opposites of a *political* nature, each again being mutually exclusive - fascist dictatorship and parliamentary democracy, *of which Social Democracy is an organic part*. Stalinist scholasticism against Marxist dialectics - this was one of the forms the struggle between the Comintern bureaucracy and the International Left Opposition assumed in Germany in the period of Hitler's rise to power. Has this experience, like the related questions of tactics and strategy, been lost on today's Trotskyist vanguard? The dangers are that it might be soon, unless a fight begins in the movement to drive out these political and methodological residues from an utterly alien tendency.

That such residues exist was at one time freely admitted by the SLL leadership. Peter Fryer (the founding editor of the *Newsletter*, forerunner of *Workers Press*) wrote in his book *The Battle for Socialism* that the pioneers of the British Trotskyist movement:

... inherited some of the less happy features of Comintern line and language during the so-called 'Third Period' of Left sectarianism. The Marxist groups could not but bear the stamp of the Communist Party from which they sprang: could not but share its virtual isolation from the mass movement, its tendency to adventurism and the harshness of its language towards political opponents, particularly those who were relatively close to its own point of view. ^[33]

These were not just Fryer's views. In a short note, the author thanked 'the comrades who have helped me in writing this book: either by reading all or part of it and suggesting improvements, as Michael Banda, Brian Behan, Gerry Healy, William Hunter... and Brian Pearce have done'. ^[34] Fryer's remarks on the question of Third Period residues within the British Trotskyist movement now acquire a new significance in view of the WRP's sharp lurch to the ultra-left in designating reformist and Stalinist leaders as 'corporatists', and in taking up some of the tactical devices employed by the KPD during the Third Period - the united front from below, refusal to defend reformists from attacks by the bourgeoisie, vacillations on the question of fighting for a Labour government, flirtation with 'red unionism' (the All Trade Union Alliance) monotonous predictions of imminent military coups and civil war in Britain and other advanced capitalist states, the substitution of the ultimatic maximum programme of the WRP for the *Transitional Programme* of the Fourth International, etc, etc. All these are indications, not that the WRP is in any sense a Stalinist or pro-Stalinist tendency, but that its failure to consummate the final break with the negative traditions referred to by Fryer now becomes a powerful factor in pulling the movement away from the working class towards self-imposed sectarian isolation. It is an isolation that the top leadership is now seeking to overcome by liquidating the party into the radical petit-bourgeoisie and largely non-political layers of unorganised youth that predominate in the WRP's youth section, the Young Socialists. Sectarianism therefore begets opportunism, as so often in the history of the Marxist movement.

To return to Trotsky on social fascism:

Let us assume [as did the SLL's resolution of 1969 in a British context - RB] that the Social Democracy would, without fearing its own workers, want to sell its toleration to Hitler. But Hitler does not need this commodity: he needs not the toleration but the abolition of the Social Democracy. ^[35]

So it was not and is not a question of the subjective intentions of the reformist bureaucracy, as Leipart found out to his cost. Social Democracy is an objectively existing current in the working class, based on material and historical foundations. When it comes to power, fascism must tear up by their roots all the independent organisations of the proletariat, not only those of the revolutionary movement, but those of Social Democracy. Cannot the WRP leaders see this and understand the tactical considerations flowing from it? But Trotsky goes yet further, in a direction that, were the lines that follow written by anyone else, would result in their author being denounced by *Workers Press* as an apologist for bureaucracy:

The Social Democracy supports the bourgeois regime, *not for the profits of the coal, steel and other magnates*, but for the sake of those gains which it itself can obtain *as a party*, in the shape of its numerically great and powerful apparatus. ^[36]

This was not at all how the SLL saw things in 1968, when its conference resolution declared that the British Social Democrats occupied office 'in order to facilitate the *smashing down and impoverishment of the working class, and to enrich the monopolists*' [emphasis added].

Moralism and psychology were substituted for an historical and theoretical analysis of Social Democracy, which is not one whit less counter-revolutionary for being concerned with its own social base in the mass

organisations of the proletariat. For therein lies precisely its unique role! Trotsky was scathing of the Third Period Stalinists who sought to characterise the reformists in subjectivist and moralistic terms:

‘Can we actually assume that these inveterate traitors would separate themselves from the bourgeoisie and oppose it?’ [Ask Stalinists rhetorically - RB] Such an idealistic method has very little in common with Marxism, which proceeds not from what people think about themselves or what they desire but from the conditions in which they are placed and from the changes which these conditions will undergo. ^[37]

In other words, today’s - and yesterday’s - traitors, when spurned by the hand that formerly fed and rewarded them for their treachery, may be forced to display other qualities, which, if not heroic, may contain sufficient oppositional character to provide splendid tactical opportunities for the revolutionary party to make a road to the workers who still follow the reformists. This was the essence of Trotsky’s united front policy for Germany. Once again, by depicting Social Democracy as nothing else but the ‘worst enemy of the working class’, ^[38] the SLL liquidates all differences between the various forms of bourgeois rule, ranging from a Labour government under parliamentary democracy to fascism - for are not the Tories the ‘worst enemies of the working class’ and would not fascism become so if it assumed mass proportions in Britain? Again, how can there be any question of a united front with the worst enemies of the working class? And against whom could it be directed, if not less worse enemies? From idealistic theory flow false perspectives, a wrong analysis of Social Democracy and finally, on the plane of practical politics, wrong tactics for work in and around the mass reformist organisations. The SLL became walled off from the very source of its potential strength, and its cadres denied the only field of work where they could have come to grips with the real problems of a working class dominated by the oldest reformist bureaucracy in the world.

Instead of using the methods of petit-bourgeois moralism, Trotsky insisted that reformism should be seen ‘as an historic reality, with its interests and its contradictions, with all its oscillations to the right *and left...*’. ^[39] Idealisation of Social Democracy perhaps? Or a dialectical materialist, instead of subjective idealist, approach to reformism? For the SLL and now its successor, the WRP, Social Democracy was and is always moving to the right at breakneck speed, leaving one to imagine either that at some time in the distant past the Labour Party was a revolutionary party, or that at some time in the near future it will become a fully-fledged fascist party. And indeed it must, if no other movement except yet further to the right is projected for it. While this obviates the need for either prolonged entry work in the Labour Party or a united front tactic (since few workers will be found supporting such a party as it gallops rightwards over the horizon beyond the doorway into fascism), it brings the vanguard not one inch nearer solving the task that has faced Marxists in Britain since the time of Engels and Marx: how to cut a road to the mass workers’ movement as it really exists, and not as we would like it to be.

One final quotation from Trotsky before moving on to discuss the new phase of ultra-leftism that erupted in the SLL towards the end of 1972, and is still with us at the time of writing (March 1974):

The leaders of the Communist International failed to understand that capitalism in decay is no longer able to come to terms with the *most moderate and most servile* Social Democracy, either as a party in power, or as a party *in opposition*. It is the mission of fascism to take its place not ‘side by side’ with the Social Democracy but on its bones. Precisely from this there flows the possibility, the need and the urgency of the united front... ^[40]

Enter Corporatism

For those in the WRP who stopped to think about it, the repeated use of the term ‘corporatism’ in the *Workers Press* caused great confusion. Some members thought it meant simply reformist class-collaboration, others the ‘incorporation of the trade unions into the state’, and others yet again, fascism. One can sympathise with their bewilderment, since all three versions are to be found in the press of the WRP, even, on occasions, being interwoven with one another and also with other state forms such as Bonapartism, police-military dictatorship and Presidential rule, to name only three. If we look more closely at this question of corporatism, we can see that the word fulfils its different functions mostly (though not always) according to the subject matter. For Marxists who treat the terminology of their science seriously, as epistemological tools for approximating as closely as possible to an ever-changing reality, and not as terms of abuse, corporatism is the state form created by fascism, in which trade unions are dissolved and new, fascist ‘labour’ organisations established whose leaders function as slave-drivers of the workers on behalf of the monopolies. Such was Robert Ley’s Labour Front which in fact took the

name of a corporation, plagiarising the corporations of fascist Italy. Now there is evidence to suggest that this is the meaning given to corporatism by the WRP leaders, and here they are acting as orthodox Trotskyists. To cite some examples. 'The MSI [the Italian neo-fascists] wants to smash all resistance by *destroying* free trade unions and constructing a *corporate state on the Hitler-Mussolini model.*' [41] No doubts here. Not the 'incorporation of the trade unions into the state' nor their 'tying to the state', but their *destruction*. And this is just what Hitler and Mussolini did, and Franco after them. The MSI's politics were given an identical characterisation in a *Workers Press* editorial in November 1972. It spoke of 'influential industrialists... backing the fascist MSI in the hope that it can bring back Mussolini's corporate state and discipline the working class'. [42] Later we shall see that, according to the *Workers Press*, those harbouring the same designs in Britain included the entire leadership of the TUC!

In March 1971, little more than a year before the 'new line' on corporatism emerged, an SLL Political Committee Manifesto asked workers: 'Will you see your trade unions destroyed, will you walk the road of the *corporate state*, the path of *Mussolini* and *Hitler*...?' [43] Quite unambiguously, the corporate state is presented as the work of Hitler and Mussolini, a regime that destroys trade unions.

Gerry Healy, General Secretary of the WRP, also knows what corporatism really is, and, moreover (in view of Bull's theory that it is *operated* by trade union leaders) that it inevitably leads to the elimination and persecution of even the most craven reformist bureaucrats:

This is the era of the *corporate state* and *fascism*, and the *destruction* of the entire trade union movement, as well as the democratic rights of all workers. Just as in Germany under Hitler, *the loyal trade union servants of the ruling class may yet rub shoulders with revolutionary Marxists in the concentration camps of the future. This grim reminder should never be forgotten.* [44]

Good advice - unfortunately not heeded by Healy's own editorial staff, who would in two years' time be telling *Workers Press* readers of the 'advantages' that 'the corporate state and fascism' bring to the reformist leaders of the workers' movement.

Five days later, *Workers Press* returned to this theme of the threat posed to the reformist bureaucracy by the growth of ultra-reactionary tendencies in the ruling class, and quite correctly warned: 'The Weimar bell tolls for you too Messrs Scanlon, Jones and Heffer!' [45] How far the SLL departed from this Trotskyist position can be traced in the analysis of the SLL-WRP line from the autumn of 1972 onwards that the author presents in the later part of this appendix. No longer being future victims of corporatism, the Scanlons and Joneses were numbered among its disciples, executants and benefactors.

An equally precise definition of corporatism, equating it with fascism, was made in a statement adopted unanimously by the Fifth Annual Conference of the ATUA on 22 October 1972. Under the heading 'Moves To Corporatism', the section in question declared:

This is the real meaning of their [that is, the Tories'] proposed laws to restrict wage increases, and of the Industrial Relations Act... These measures facilitate the plans of the big monopolies to put an end to Parliamentary government and *install a corporatist dictatorship*. While such a programme cannot be carried out without the *defeat* and *destruction* of the trade unions and parties of the working class, nevertheless every capitulation to the state control of wages and trade union rights is a step in the direction of the corporate state *which is the essence of fascism.* [46]

Within a matter of days, this analysis was to be thrown to the winds as the SLL impressionistically reacted to the TUC - CBI - Tory talks over voluntary wage restraint by accusing the trade union leaders of actually desiring a corporate state, 'the essence of fascism'. So the TUC leaders were thus transformed from class-collaborationist reformist bureaucrats into fascists spearheading the drive towards the corporate state. But of this ultra-left turn by the SLL, more later.

The Chilean regime established by the coup of September 1973 was also described by *Workers Press* as a corporate state. And why?

The Chilean military Junta is fulfilling its brutal pledge to leave not one stone upon another in the struggle to *smash* workers' organisations and democratic rights. A fully-fledged *corporate state* has now been proclaimed in which the Popular Unity parties and left-wing organisations have been banned and the working class placed under the rigid control of *corporate institutions*... [47]

On 27 October, the same paper said of the Junta that it was 'turning the country into a *corporate state* on Portuguese lines' and that 'to *replace* the trade unions the junta intends to set up bodies like the Italian fascist "syndicates"... The inspiration for this scheme comes from Mussolini's Italy, Salazar's Portugal,

and Franco's Spain.' [48] Jack Gale gave an excellent definition of fascism in an article on Franco Spain: 'Its unique character consists in its *destruction of every* independent working class organisation.' [49]

The nature of Spanish corporatism was examined in great detail by Juan Garcia in a series of articles in *Workers Press* in April 1973 entitled 'Corporatism in Spain'. For Garcia, corporatism is fascism, is the destruction of trade unions and their replacement by fascist 'labour' organisations:

Spanish employers have no fears about the activity of the *Organizacion Sindical*, the vertical trade union of the *fascist corporate state*... It was only built after the physical destruction of the independent organisations of the Spanish working class in the 1936-39 Civil War...

But here we must run ahead a little. While he writes on Spain, Garcia is very clear on the nature of corporatism. It is fascism, the smashing of independent trade unions. But when he transfers his attentions to Britain, the SLL's ultra-leftist, quasi-Third Period estimation of reformism takes over, and he slips into formulations that could have quite easily come from the pen of Royston Bull or Stephen Johns. First he says that the Franco 'corporate union... epitomises everything that the Tories want in this country [that is, Britain] to *replace* the trade unions of the working class.' [50] Even though this statement can be taken to mean that the Tories are fascists (which they are not), no Marxist would differ with his definition of corporatism as applied to Britain - the destruction of the trade unions, and their *replacement* by some other body. But at this point, because he has to toe the SLL line on the TUC 'corporatists', Garcia has to deny or pervert everything that he wrote about Spanish corporatism. In a subsequent article in the same series he writes of 'men who are leading the British trade unions into the corporate state trap...', these men including Vic Feather, the then Secretary of the TUC. [51] Finally, Garcia lapses into the methodology of the theory of 'social fascism' in accusing Labour Party leaders involved in protests *against* Franco's anti-labour repressions of '*complete collaboration with Tory corporatism*'. [52] And corporatism is, by Garcia's own definition, both in Spain and in Britain, fascism, *the destruction of trade unions*. If the two main workers' organisations - the TUC and the Labour Party - are led by corporatists and if they had, as far back as April 1973, entered into 'complete collaboration' with an already existing Tory corporate state, then in what sense did corporatist Britain differ from corporatist Spain? Is (or was) Britain a fascist state? Let us go another step further. If the TUC unions have become an annexe of the corporate state, and their leaders the willing tools (or 'devoted disciples') of such a regime, *should workers remain within such organisations?* Or should they build new 'red' trade unions untainted with the stain of corporatism? In Spain, Garcia has already given his answer to this problem - and it is the correct one. Attacking the line of the Spanish Stalinists on the fascist syndicates, which is to depict them as organisations in the process of becoming genuine trade unions, Garcia writes:

The Stalinist policy of 'taking over' the official unions is now carried to its logical conclusion after the turn to promoting Spain's entry into the EEC as the centre of party policy... In propagating the lie that the vertical unions have been taken over by the real representatives of the working class, the CP builds up the 'liberal' image of the now Euro-centred Franco regime. [53]

Garcia - and the WRP - must be consistent. Either join with the Spanish Stalinists in 'reforming' Franco's corporatist 'unions', the same policy that the WRP applies to the 'corporatist' led unions in Britain, or pursue in Britain the correct policy advocated by Garcia for Spain - the development of the underground workers' commissions. Implicit in the WRP's theory of 'corporatism' is the notion of creating 'red' unions - and here we are confronted once again with the same problem of the residues of Third Period Stalinism. This is no exaggeration. On the front page of the issue which carried the first article of Garcia's series on Spanish corporatism was the headline 'Corporate State Is Law'. The article in question stated that the implementation of the Tory government's Counter Inflation Act meant 'the end of the basic trade union right of free wage negotiation' (which was not strictly accurate, even within the terms of the law) and that 'from today it is illegal for workers to strike to improve their wages above the level set by Premier Edward Heath' (also not correct, as subsequent strikes, notably by the miners, demonstrated). But more than inaccurate was the statement that followed. Hugh Scanlon of the AUEW was charged with offering the 'Tory corporatists' a 'deal... which amounts to a total acceptance of the corporate state and *all its dictates*.' [54] What Scanlon had in fact done - and of course should have been denounced for, *in the correct terms* - was to offer TUC *voluntary* support for holding back wage claims, and propose amendments to the Industrial Relations Act. This is not corporatism, it is classic Social Democracy, pursuing its traditional role of class collaboration. In Spain, Franco's regime did not appoint the Scanlons as the chiefs of his corporatist syndicates. He had them shot in their hundreds and thousands. Not total acceptance, *but total rejection*.

This then brings us to the second main use of the term ‘corporatist’ as it appears in the press of the SLL and WRP: its application to leaders of the workers’ movement. Here the Third Period residue is at its strongest - and most dangerous.

A harbinger of the line that was to emerge triumphant in 1973 was a short article by Ian Yeats on Northern Ireland towards the end of 1971 when he claimed that the Tory government planned to ‘establish a form of direct rule but through local agents - a *semi-fascist* formula in which the trade union and labour bureaucracies are transformed into a *direct arm of the capitalist state*’. ^[55] This was one occasion when it would prove to be a case of ‘Ulster today, Britain tomorrow’.

As we have tried to show, for several years prior to 1972, while the SLL vacillated somewhat in its estimation of the relationship between reformist trade unionism and fascism, the orthodox Trotskyist position predominated; namely that reformism and fascism are *antagonistic* and *mutually exclusive* systems of bourgeois domination of the working class, and that the establishment of a fascist regime necessarily involves not only the destruction of the reformist trade unions and the parties of Social Democracy but also, in the words of Trotsky, the ‘chasing away’ of the labour bureaucrats. In 1972, the SLL leadership began to revise this Trotskyist position. The initial impetus was the Tory government’s decision, taken in the summer of that year, to implement some form of incomes policy. Not only was this move presented as proof of Tory resolve to establish the corporate state, (which, as we have demonstrated, is equated by the WRP with fascism), but the TUC and Labour Party leaders (and later those of the CPGB) *were depicted as eager supporters of the institution of such a state as well*. In other words, the Tories were fascists (‘corporatists’) and the reformists and Stalinists social fascists (Jack Jones - ‘a devoted disciple of corporatism’). But let the *Workers Press* speak for itself.

On 7 September 1972, John Spencer wrote from the TUC in Brighton that the vote giving sanction to member unions to appear before the Industrial Relations Court ‘proclaimed an openly corporatist position on class collaboration’. ^[56] In the already-quoted SLL statements on corporatism, it was equated with fascism. Now the term took on a new - and non-Marxist - connotation, implying *class collaboration* between the reformist bureaucracy and the capitalist state, leading not to the *destruction* of trade unions (as in earlier definitions) but their subordination, with the full agreement of their leaders, to a system of state control over wages. This revision of the Trotskyist position on the relationship between the labour bureaucracy and fascism gathered pace rapidly over the next weeks and months. On 8 September, Stephen Johns, the most enthusiastic advocate of this new line, wrote that ‘a whole section of the trade union *movement* has virtually declared itself for the corporate state’ - in other words, *for fascism*. With a certainty that was to be belied by the events of the next 18 months, Johns asserted that ‘cooperation with the anti-union laws *is firmly enshrined as the ethic of the trade union movement*’. Note that Johns twice says ‘movement’ and not just leadership. This is not a slip of the pen, but a worked-out sectarian theory of the hopelessness of reorienting the official workers’ movement. Left in words, it leaves out entirely the ability of the working class to impose its will - *to a certain degree and in certain situations* - on its own bureaucratic leaders. Thus Johns could write of the imminent formation of ‘the new corporate state TUC’, *as if the working class would have no say in the policies and actions of its own organisations*. Johns’ article concludes with a radical journalistic flourish that is entirely capitulationist in political content: ‘Brighton 1972 was not the year of the left but the year of the new corporate state TUC when union leader after union leader went over to the camp of reaction.’ ^[57] *But it was also the year when the TUC went on record for the expulsion of all trade unions that registered under the Industrial Relations Act, a decision which was scrupulously honoured and implemented by those who ‘went over to the camp of reaction’*. For Johns, presumably, this stand, forced on the bureaucracy by the pressure of the working class, nevertheless constituted proof that ‘cooperation with the anti-union laws is firmly enshrined as the ethic of the trade union movement’. But let us examine this thesis a little more closely. Johns declared in this article that electricians’ union leader Frank Chapple, an extreme right-winger, was spearheading this drive towards corporatism. Yet a year later, a stubborn strike of electricians in the Chrysler combine compelled this budding corporatist not only to give official backing to the strikers, but challenge the Tory government’s ‘corporatist’ wages policy. *A stand which won him the ‘conditional support’ of... the SLL!* Under a banner headline ‘Corporate State or Free Negotiations’, *Workers Press* on 27 September 1973 declared that Chapple ‘must be given conditional support in electricians fight for basic rights’. So now Chapple was leading the fight *against* the corporatism he a year previously was said to be introducing! Chapple and his fellow right-wingers, *Workers Press* asserted, were now ‘in the *front line* of the fight *against* the government’. ^[58] A week later, *Workers Press*’ enthusiasm for Chapple, the former lynchpin of the ‘corporate state TUC’, was still mounting, he being praised, together with his union executive, for

his call for the nationalisation of Chrysler: ‘The EETPU has taken the *utterly principled* step of demanding the nationalisation of Chryslers.’ Chapple, along with his members, had ‘*stood rock solid* in the teeth of the Chrysler Corporation’s attacks’. ^[59] This sordid episode indicates with what little thought or sincerity the WRP leaders began their tactic of dubbing trade union and Labour Party bureaucrats ‘corporatists’, for at the slightest sign of a fight on the part of these same leaders, the designation is discarded and yesterday’s - and tomorrow’s - ‘corporatists’ praised to the skies as *utterly principled* fighters, standing rock solid against ruling-class attempts to destroy trade unionism and introduce the corporate state. But to return to the genesis of this theory of corporatism, which appeared in its finished form at the 1972 Trade Union Congress. It soon became evident that Johns was not speaking for himself alone when he chose the term ‘corporatist’ to characterise the TUC leadership, for on 9 September, in an introduction to an ATUA National Committee statement, *Workers Press* asserted that the TUC leaders had declared their ‘virtual acceptance of the ‘corporate state’’. ^[60] Some confusion still existed as to what this acceptance implied for the working class however, for, on 28 September, Alex Mitchell, after claiming that the TUC had ‘entered still deeper into Heath’s plans for constructing the corporate state’ (implying thereby that Heath was no different from those who in the past had taken the same road - Mussolini, Hitler, Franco) gave his own definition of the regime Heath intended - with the full collaboration of the TUC - to construct: ‘The corporate state is no more [sic!] than a *slave state*.’ ^[61] The TUC bureaucracy had now been won over to a restoration of a slave economy, with Feather and company presumably functioning as its privileged slave-drivers and overseers. Confusion is the only word to describe the state of mind of the *Workers Press* staff at this juncture, for on 29 September, an article referred to a ‘blueprint for corporate state wage bargaining’ that had been published by the Commission on Industrial Relations. ^[62] Since when did slaves ‘bargain’ with their masters? And on a more realistic level, does not the introduction of corporatism (fascism) demolish all the institutions and practices of wage-bargaining? Such a formulation reveals dangerous illusions in the nature of fascism, which as Trotsky repeatedly insisted against the Third Period Stalinists, demolishes the last vestiges of bourgeois democracy and an independent workers’ movement - the latter being one of the two parties to all collective bargaining agreements and practices.

Yet right in the middle of this ultra-leftist turn, the SLL proved itself perfectly capable of a correct analysis of corporatism - *outside the frontiers of Britain*. On 3 October, an article on Portugal said of President Salazar that he ‘destroyed the trade unions... and set up a corporate state *modelled on the ideals of Mussolini...*’. ^[63] An International Committee of the Fourth International Statement, published on 29 December, on British entry into the EEC, declared that the Common Market had ‘nothing to offer the workers of Europe except unemployment, wage cuts, the *destruction* of their organisations and the drive towards the *corporate state*. If left unchallenged the plans of the European monopolies will result in the creation of *fascist states...*’ ^[64] Contrast this orthodox position on corporatism, fascism and reformist-led organisations of the working class with the leftist analysis made of the developing relations between the TUC and the Tory government following the Brighton TUC conference of September 1972. Here the problem was posed concretely as a task to be solved by the practice of the party, and not in newspaper articles and propaganda manifestos.

On 17 October 1972:

... the government will be preparing for a regime of *economic dictatorship* [sic - not political] where the law courts, the prisons as well as mass unemployment will be used against workers who fight for wages and basic rights. The threat of such a *corporate state structure* is now discussed quite openly in the Tory press as the *alternative* to the so-called *voluntary restraint* on wage rises and strikes... The reformist leaders *are striving* for a pact with the government and *will continue* their collaboration. ^[65]

Here the corporate state is not the destruction of unions, nor even their ‘incorporation into the state’, but law courts, prisons and mass unemployment. But naturally, the reformist leaders are ‘striving’ to implement this plan. Another article - by Alex Mitchell - in the same issue stated that the TUC ‘was negotiating behind closed doors with Heath... for state control over wages’. In other words, the TUC leaders, like the Tory corporatists, preferred state control of wages to voluntary restraint, *even though this would mean their own demise*.

Stephen Johns on 18 October:

[The]... growing mass movement is in direct conflict with the TUC leaders. They are now preparing to discuss the *details* [that is, general agreement having already been reached - RB]

with the Tories and employers over a *corporate-state machinery* to control wages over the next 12 months... many trade union leaders have *swallowed whole* the principle of *corporate state control* over wages... The TUC is cooperating *completely* with this strategy... [66]

But there was confusion in the *Workers Press* as to what this strategy was, for two days later Alex Mitchell predicted that 'a voluntary package will be agreed between the three parties [TUC, Tories and CBI] at next Thursday's meeting...' [67]

From this point onwards, the SLL line began to oscillate wildly, being the mirror image of the behaviour - imagined as well as real - of the reformist bureaucracy. Each time the reformists lurched towards a capitulationist position - or seemed to the SLL to do so - the *Workers Press* veered off to the ultra-left, *supplementing the right-opportunism of the bureaucracy*. On 30 October, Jack Gale wrote:

No agreement is likely to be reached on wages and price control - and even if it were, it would be another matter to enforce it. The TUC leaders - despite their anxiety to collaborate with the government - *have been unable to deliver the working class like sacrificial lambs to the Tory slaughter*. [68]

The same article correctly pointed out that 'everywhere relations between the ruling class and the reformist trade union leaders are being broken up'. Could the SLL exploit this rupture between the Tories and the reformists to further its policies and influence in the working class? Hardly, for two days later an hysterical Stephen Johns wrote: '... union leaders are *on the brink* of accepting Tory state control of wages... that the TUC should even discuss... a *blueprint for the corporate state* demonstrates its contempt for Congress decisions'. But then we learn that the TUC has gone *over* the brink, that 'obviously, men like Victor Feather... are fully persuaded that corporate state control of the economy, where unions will lose their independent role, is a good thing'. [69] Here we arrive at the Stalinist theory of social fascism. The same Johns wrote a little later in *Fourth International* that the corporate state is a regime based 'on the Hitler-Mussolini model', a state in which the 'free trade unions', are 'destroyed'. [70] Johns therefore charged Feather with actually *wanting* to establish such a regime in Britain, a regime that would necessarily (unless like Johns one accepts the Stalinists' theory of social fascism) involve not only the political, but even the possible physical liquidation of the TUC General Secretary. How could there be a serious tactic in relation to the trade unions and their leaders if the SLL line was that these leaders *consciously* desired the fascist corporate state? Even Johns had his doubts about this, for, on 3 November, following another deadlock between the TUC and the Tories (over the government's proposals for voluntary wage restraint, it should be made clear, and not, as *Workers Press* tried to make out, *state* control of wages), he wrote that 'not even the most servile TUC bureaucrat has the power or independence to deliver the ready goods'. [71] Strange, when one recalls that they headed the 'corporate state TUC', the British version of the Nazi Labour Front!

The *volte face* continued the next day, when the TUC - Tory - CBI talks were described as a 'long farce', whereas previously they had taken the TUC to the brink of accepting the corporate state! This was implicitly admitted to be untrue, as the paper reported Feather as saying after the collapse of the talks 'We were prepared, *provided the rest of the package was right* [that is, *state* control of *prices, rents, profits*] to agree that these controls [over wages] should be *purely voluntary*.' Yet even this statement was taken as proof of 'how far the union leaders went to accepting a *state-regulated* plan'. [72] On the contrary, they show that the TUC could only go so far as to suggest - on terms that were totally unacceptable to either the Tories or the CBI - a policy of *voluntary* wage restraint exercised by the trade union bureaucracy itself.

It was only *after* the breakdown of the talks for voluntary wage restraint that Heath moved over to a policy of state control of wages - as the *Workers Press* itself reported: 'The state pay plan to be legal.' But still the SLL wanted to have its corporatist cake and eat it. 'From today', wrote Stephen Johns, 'wage control will be added to the anti-union laws as the second plank of the *corporate state*.' So Britain was already a corporate state! As for the TUC leaders, they were accused of wanting to 'snatch this government from the fire once more'. [73] But the government was a corporatist government, and so even though the TUC had *rejected* Heath's 'corporatist' plans (for the *voluntary* control of wages by the TUC, and not the state) they nevertheless wanted to defend the corporate state from the working class. Social fascism again!

By 16 December, with the AUEW having been fined for defying the Industrial Relations Court (a stand which if the union's leaders were corporatists, was either incomprehensible - or a 'left cover'), *Workers*

Press again tail-ended the bureaucracy by talking of ‘a showdown between the unions and government’^[74] - the same unions whose leaders had two months previously already ‘swallowed whole’ the corporate state! On 21 December, the TUC corporatists were reported as telling all unions ‘to ignore Heath’s bid to stop all pay talks - embarking on what could become a major clash with the Tories in a matter of weeks’.^[75] From ‘swallowing whole’ the corporate state to a ‘*major clash*’ with the Tory corporatists... also in a matter of weeks. It was on the latter perspective - correct in so far as it based itself on the likelihood of the TUC and Labour Party leaders being unable to collaborate actively in the implementation of Tory wages policy - that the SLL entered 1973. But 1973 was to prove the year when League leadership undertook its most serious revision of Trotskyist principles on the trade union question.

Corporatism Enshrined

As early as 11 January, the prospects of a ‘major clash’ had melted away simply because the TUC had resumed its talks with the Tories: ‘With... corporatist-style legislation only weeks away from the statute books, it is the most monumental treachery for the TUC to be seen grovelling at the doorway of No 10.’^[76] The TUC was now ‘grovelling’ before corporatism again. The inner meaning of this ultra-leftist ranting became clearer two days later, when Stephen Johns declared that:

... the talks between the TUC leaders and the Tory cabinet have settled only [sic!] one thing - free negotiations on wages *are at an end*. Next week the government will publish its plans. These will tell workers what wages they can and cannot have. *Disobedience will mean fines or jails...* This policy is nothing less than a Tory conspiracy *to which the TUC chiefs are willing partners...* Those who resist will face a barrage of *corporatist* legislation passed by the Tories... The TUC chiefs are right at the centre of this plot.^[77]

Johns was back on the social fascist trail. But what rendered this defeatism even more reactionary was Johns’ squalid attempt to invoke the authority of Trotsky for an analysis that was essentially Third Period Stalinist in its method. He quoted from Trotsky’s *What Next?* in an attempt to draw a parallel between the German Social Democrats of 1930-32 and the British reformists of 1973: ‘There is no historical spectacle more tragic and at the same time more repulsive than the fetid disintegration of reformism amid the wreckage of all its conquests and hopes.’ By so quoting Trotsky, Johns obviously hoped to lend a much-needed Marxist veneer to his petit-bourgeois radicalism. His choice of quote was however a little injudicious, for had Johns just read on one page more, he would have found Trotsky explaining just why it was false for the Third Period Stalinists to describe reformism as ‘social fascism’ - or as ‘corporatism’. Even more horrifying for Johns would have been the discovery that *Trotsky was advocating the formation of a united front with this same ‘fetid’ and ‘disintegrating’ Social Democracy*. Not for the last time, one found the *Workers Press* invoking the name and writings of Trotsky to pervert Trotskyism.

The false theory that the corporate state does not involve the destruction of the trade unions or the repression of their leaders reappeared at this time, in an editorial on 16 January stating that with ‘the acquiescence of the leaders of the Labour Opposition and the TUC’ the Tories had ‘taken definite strides towards the establishment of a *corporate state* in which all basic rights would be taken away from the working class and their trade unions *transformed into instruments of control over them on behalf of capitalism*’.^[78]

This confusion over corporatism was further compounded on 19 January by the inane jumbling together of corporatism with Bonapartism. One article spoke of ‘Heath’s corporatist-style wage-control legislation’ (which the Labour leaders, it was predicted, would ‘assist him to get it through parliament and then support the Tories against workers who fight it’), and another, of the same Tories having ‘embarked on the road to a Bonapartist dictatorship in the style established by General de Gaulle in 1958’. The same article says, correctly, ‘that Bonapartism in Britain would lean to the left’ on the bankrupt leaders of the Labour Party and the TUC, and rightwards, on the army and the big monopolies.^[79] Yet if Heath’s goal was *corporatism*, the *destruction* of the trade unions, then how could he balance between the trade union bureaucracy and the army, since the former had ceased to exist? Like the theory of social fascism, which excluded the possibility of a Bonapartist regime in Germany because Social Democracy had become fused with both the capitalist state and fascism, the SLL’s theory of corporatism undermined any serious attempt to evolve a Marxist analysis of the highly complex political forms of rule

developing in Britain under the Heath government. And, moreover, without such an analysis there could be no correct perspectives.

By 20 February, after some vacillations, the SLL had sorted out its line on the trade union leaders and Heath's corporate state. *Workers Press* declared that the 'Tory pay board is corporatism' - in other words that corporatism did not involve the destruction of trade unions, but the state regulation of pay. Indeed, the trade unions had been allotted a key role in Heath's corporatism, which would 'be introduced into Britain by reformist leaders giving the pay board acceptance and credence...'.^[80] Two days later, the paper said that 'the Labour leadership, far from fighting such *corporatist* measures, is seeking to *speed them up* by enabling the Tories to by-pass parliament.'^[81] The next day, *Workers Press* gave an international dimension to their theory by claiming that in approving the EEC plan for worker-directors on company boards, the TUC had agreed 'to cooperate in the setting up of *corporatist institutions* in Britain'.^[82] Yet this scheme, utterly class-collaborationist in aim, did not involve the *destruction* of the trade unions nor even their 'tying to the state'. Such reactionary schemes in West Germany have failed to undermine the power of the reformist trade unions. For that, something far more substantial than 'worker-directors' (and, moreover a solution that would terminate such experiments in reformism forthwith) would be required, as the history of Weimar Germany proves.

Increasingly, state control of wages became identified by *Workers Press* with the establishment of the corporate state. The issue for 27 February proclaimed in its headline: 'Pay Code Law Is Corporate State.'^[83] If that were the case, then the corporate state was due to be established by *parliament, quite peacefully*, in 'cold' fashion in accordance with a theory prevalent in the Third Period. Once again therefore, the leftism masked defeatism, disorienting those workers who took their political line from the SLL.

The first theoretical exposition of the SLL's revisionist theory of corporatism appeared in *Workers Press* on 1 March, written by Royston Bull, a new recruit to the paper from *The Scotsman*. Here we can detect the first outlines of a trend that today has become dominant in the WRP - the fusion of a thoroughly non-Marxist, petit-bourgeois radicalism with the Third Period, leftist residues that had lingered on within the SLL from the earlier Trotskyist movement. Just listen to Bull, the man who believes that the KPD led the German working class to defeat by *collaborating* with the Social Democrats:

The ruling class and the labour movement bureaucracy are now proceeding at *headlong speed* towards corporatism in Britain. Plans for tying the trade union movement permanently to the big capitalist corporations are already in a *highly advanced state*. These plans... are being discussed *daily* and *in detail* by right-wing and Stalinist trade union leaders at various levels and in various localities...^[84]

The scale of Bull's confusion on what constitutes reformism and corporatism (fascism) is stupendous. Like the Third Period Stalinists, he equates the two, seeing them not as antipodes, but twins. 'Class collaboration' becomes 'corporatist thinking', while, after the manner of Dutt's Stalinist scholastics, from the subjective hostility of the bureaucracy towards revolution is deduced the fact that it must 'willy-nilly throw in its lot with extreme reaction'. *But 'extreme reaction' is nothing less than fascism*. Is Bull then saying that the Third Period Stalinists were correct - against Trotsky - when they argued that since the 'social fascists' opposed proletarian revolution, they would be compelled to join with the Nazis in a fascist counter-revolution? Bereft of a tactic that will weaken the links between the bureaucracy and the bourgeoisie (thereby throwing both into crisis), Bull contents himself with hurling literary bolts at the reformist leaders. There can be no question of a united front with the TUC, since 'Feather and company are not just getting in the way. *They must be seen as part of the enemy*.'^[85]

But the point is: how is this general truth made apparent and concrete to the millions of workers who still see the reformist leaders as their allies to one degree or another? Bull has no answer to this question. Feather, Wilson, Jones and Scanlon are thrown together in the same reactionary heap as the Tories and the employers, and the workers summoned to join the ranks of the 'revolutionary party' and its various skeletal front organisations. And understandably, the working class shows not the least interest either in Bull's noisy denunciations of their leaders, or the WRP's maximalist programme which, strange as it may seem, these same reformist leaders are asked to implement. Like his stablemate Johns and his political mentors in the top leadership of the WRP, Bull proceeds from the *subjective* hostility of the labour bureaucracy to working-class militancy and revolutionary politics, not from the *objective* movement and struggle of the *classes*, and the place and role of the bureaucracy in this struggle. Trotsky knew better than anyone how the German reformists loathed revolution, that they would seek by all possible means to

betray the struggle of the workers for socialism. But did he proceed from this one-sided estimation of the role of the bureaucracy? If he had done, he would have ended up in the same position as that developed by the KPD leaders in the Third Period, namely that there could be no question of even the most limited united front actions with parties and leaders who had betrayed the working class in the past and would do so again in the future. Trotsky began also from the *objective contradiction* between the existence of the reformist workers' movement - *and its bureaucracy* - and a fascist regime. It was this *relative, political* contradiction that Trotsky sought to exploit through the tactic of the united front between the KPD and the SPD; first to block and then crush the fascists, and in the course of this struggle begin to break the German workers from their reformist leaders. The WRP has another method of approach. Jones and company, you see, are 'dedicated disciples of corporatism' - which is of course rubbish - and since they actually *desire* the destruction of the organisations they lead (for in their saner moments, this is what the *Workers Press* journalists declare corporatism to be - viz Chile, Spain, Portugal), there can be no question of their actually leading struggles whose objective content is directed against the capitalist attack on the independence of the trade unions from the state.

Bull's method is that of the petit-bourgeois radical voyeur who believes that the class struggle is invisibly directed by a handful of wicked capitalists, ruthless military men and corrupt bureaucrats at the top. The reformist leaders are depicted as nothing more than stooges of the employers, whose working-class members can do little or nothing to prevent the bureaucracy selling them out. Thus Bull writes that for the TUC bureaucracy, the reformist or corporatist solution makes no difference (even though one involves their continued flourishing, the other their doom). For the TUC leaders, 'one form of selling out the class struggle is as good as another'.^[86] House of Lords or concentration camp - one 'is as good as another'. And so argued the Stalinists, who led the German working class to defeat by refusing to exploit the contradictions that existed between fascism and the reformist bureaucracy, the contradiction between a well-heeled and fed bureaucrat at liberty and one living on bread and water in prison garb. Bull's schematic conception of reformism simply has no room for such an eventuality. On the contrary, Bull sees corporatism as an attractive proposition for trade union leaders: '*corporatism would make Jones' life easier* by automatically ironing out many of the clashes and conflicts that he now has to deal with'.^[87] And it could also make his life shorter, a fate that befell not only his German and Spanish counterparts, but, later that year, many leaders of the Chilean trade unions. Others still languishing in the camps of the Junta following the 'ironing out' of the Chilean workers' movement may have their own comments to make on Bull's picture of life for a trade union bureaucrat under corporatism (a term that along with fascism has been used to denote the type of regime in Chile). The fact that these same Stalinist, centrist and reformist leaders were themselves responsible for their own fate (not to speak of that of the entire Chilean working class) does not diminish by one iota the validity of Trotsky's insistence that when faced with a choice between bourgeois democracy and fascism, the reformist bureaucracy has more to gain by choosing and fighting for the former, and that it is the duty of Communists to exploit this situation by offering the reformists a united front against fascism. The petit-bourgeois radical does not think in this revolutionary dialectical way. All he can see is the 'advantages' fascism brings to the bureaucracy by smashing the working class. Thus on 5 March, Bull elaborated on his theme of the corporate state being a kind of paradise for reformists when he wrote that 'secretly they welcome the corporate state in order to deal with any revolutionary mass movement that the crisis engenders'.^[88]

That Bull can be permitted to write such anti-Trotskyist trash in *Workers Press* proves that right at the heart of the WRP leadership a deep going process of degeneration is under way. *For these imbecilic lines are a direct, open challenge to everything Trotsky wrote on fascism.* This is how Trotsky assessed the claim, made by the Stalinists, that the ADGB bureaucrats would find 'life easier' under Hitler. Shortly after the dissolution of the trade unions and the arrest of their leaders on 2 May 1933, Trotsky wrote:

That the reformists, after the defeat, would be happy if Hitler were to permit them to vegetate legally until better times return, cannot be doubted. But unfortunately for them, Hitler - the experience of Italy has not been in vain for him [see Chapter XII] - realises that the labour organisations, *even if their leaders accept a muzzle, would inevitably become a threatening danger at the first political crisis.* Dr Ley, the corporal of the present 'Labour Front' has determined, with much more logic than the presidium of the Communist International, [and, it must be said, Healy and company - RB] the relationship between the so-called twins... Essentially, the theory of 'social fascism' [and of 'corporatism' - RB] could have been refuted even if the fascists had not done such a thorough job of forcing themselves into the trade unions. Even if Hitler had found it necessary, as a result of the relationship of forces, to leave Leipart

temporarily and nominally at the head of the trade unions, *the agreement would not have eliminated the incompatibility of the fundamental interests*. Even though tolerated by fascism, the reformists would remember the fleshpots of the Weimar democracy and *that alone would make them concealed enemies*. How can one fail to see that the interests of the Social Democracy and of fascism are incompatible when even the independent existence of the Stahlhelm is impossible in the Third Reich? ^[89]

Nevertheless, 36 years later, an SLL conference resolution insists... 'beyond the doorway into fascism...?'

The shrill radicalism of the Bull - Johns variety is a menace to the working class. It denies to the vanguard the tactical weapons it needs to defend the entire class from the attacks of 'extreme reaction', namely the tactic of the united front, which, if employed skilfully and not simply as a manoeuvre to 'expose the reformists', *will create the conditions for breaking the workers from the grip of reformism*. Radical rhetoric replaces revolutionary tactics and strategy. Of course, this tendency is to be found thriving in organisations that, unlike the WRP, have broken entirely from Trotskyist principles and programme. Bull's thesis that fascism will not strike at the reformist leaders was echoed by Michael Fenn of International Socialism. Writing in *Socialist Worker* in April 1974, he predicted that:

... if there was a military regime in Britain... I very much doubt if Mr Mason [Labour Minister of Defence] would even be required to leave the country. But the *real* leaders of the working class in Britain, the shop stewards, some trade union officials... would probably finish up either dead or in concentration camps like our brothers in Chile. ^[90]

Like Bull and company of *Workers Press*, Fenn seems incapable of learning from the experiences of either prewar fascism or the Chile coup. In each case, the victims of counter-revolution included not only the lower cadres of the workers' movement, but hardened trade union bureaucrats, cabinet ministers and even Police Presidents.

This problem of petit-bourgeois radicalism is not new in the revolutionary movement. Trotsky encountered it in the formative years of the French Communist Party, when a petit-bourgeois grouping in the party opposed the united front tactic on the grounds that it involved compromises with Social Democracy. This tendency, particularly strong in journalist circles, Trotsky countered in the following way:

It is possible to see in this policy [of a united front with the reformist organisations and leaders - RB] a rapprochement with the reformists only from the standpoint of a journalist who believes that he rids himself of reformism by *ritualistically criticising it* without ever leaving his editorial office but who is *fearful of clashing with the reformists before the eyes of the working masses* and giving the latter an opportunity to appraise the Communist and the reformist on the equal plane of the mass struggle. Behind this seemingly revolutionary fear of 'rapprochement' there really lurks a *political passivity* which seeks to perpetuate an order of things wherein the Communists and reformists each retain their own rigidly demarcated spheres of influence, their own audiences at meetings, their own press; *and all this together creates an illusion of serious political struggle*. ^[91]

And such has increasingly been the trend within the SLL (and now WRP) since the period of entry work inside the Labour Party was abruptly terminated in 1964. Far from halting this trend, the launching of the daily paper (*Workers Press*) in 1969, and the WRP, the open 'mass revolutionary party', four years later, has accentuated it; for by creating the outward forms of a revolutionary party fighting for 'independent leadership of the working class', the unspectacular but fruitful infighting of 1950-64 has been replaced by the noisy and strenuous shadow-boxing of the last decade. An apparatus and a long payroll are no substitutes for tactics, strategy and policy, as the KPD discovered to its cost in 1933, when, for lack of the latter, it lost the former. We repeat: *reformism cannot be defeated by abuse*, a lesson the WRP leaders should surely have gleaned from the tragic experience of Germany. Trotsky, who cannot be accused of any leniency towards Social Democracy, wrote on this question that when the Stalinist bureaucracy:

... declares that reformist leaders and fascism are twins, it not only criticises the reformist leaders incorrectly but also provokes the rightful indignation of the reformist workers... The reformists must be criticised as *conservative democrats and not as fascists*, but the struggle with them must be no less irreconcilable because of it... ^[92]

Exactly. Verbal or literary ‘intransigence’ towards reformism, of the type offered up by *Workers Press*, does not undermine, but strengthens, the support given to reformist leaders by the working class. Workers can see that these leaders are not ‘corporatists’, and this slander diverts attention away from their real criminal role in the movement as reformist agents of the bourgeoisie. On this single issue, the reformist leaders are placed in the right against their Marxist opponents. Right opportunism is thus strengthened by its mirror opposite, left sectarianism. Summing up the false policies of the KPD that led to the victory of Hitler, Trotsky wrote that:

The strategic conception of the Communist International was false from beginning to end. The point of departure for the KPD was that there is nothing but a mere *division of labour* between Social Democracy and fascism [Jack Jones is a ‘devoted disciple of corporatism’ - RB]; that their interests are similar [‘corporatism will make Jones’ life easier...’ - RB], if not identical. Instead of helping to *aggravate the discord* between Communism’s principal adversary [Social Democracy] and its [that is, reformism’s] mortal foe [fascism] - *for which it would have been sufficient to proclaim the truth aloud instead of violating it* [‘the corporate state TUC’ - RB] - the Communist International convinced the reformists and the fascists that they were twins; *it predicted their conciliation* [‘beyond the doorway into fascism’ - RB], embittered and repulsed the Social Democratic workers and consolidated their reformist leaders... No policy of the KPD could, of course, have transformed the SPD into a party of revolution. [Unlike the WRP, with its incessant and fatuous calls on the corporatist Labour leaders to ‘nationalise without compensation and under workers’ control’ the entire holdings of the big bourgeoisie - and through parliamentary legislation at that! - RB] But neither was that the aim. It was necessary to exploit to the limit *the contradiction between reformism and fascism* - in order to weaken fascism, *at the same time weakening reformism by exposing to the workers the incapacity of the SPD leadership. These two tasks fused naturally into one.* ^[93]

How far the WRP leadership has departed from Communist tactics and strategy will be demonstrated when we deal with the reactions of the party to the military coup which it mistakenly believed was pending in the winter of 1973-74. Far from exploiting the contradictions between the reformists and the would-be military dictators (not to speak of Heath, who, the WRP insisted, was in the process of installing a corporate state, and who Healy likened at that time to Hitler in his attacks on the trade unions), the WRP proceeded to lump the Labour and trade union leaders in the same sack as the Tories and their army allies. This even went so far as to accuse NUM leader Joe Gormley of actually being an accomplice in the coup plans of the Tories, even while Gormley, under pressure from militant miners, stuck fast to his union’s wage claim! *All these monumental blunders flowed from the WRP’s theory that the trade union leaders are corporatists.*

The SLL’s theory of corporatism was not, however, confined to the trade union wing of the reformist bureaucracy. Following the adoption - against right-wing opposition - of a programme of reformist-type nationalisations by the Labour Party National Executive, *Workers Press* commented on 11 June that the proposals were ‘not socialist nationalisation but its opposite - corporatism’. ^[94] In other words, the SLL made the same ultra-leftist error as did Palme Dutt when he saw in the Labour Party’s plans for the municipalisation of London Transport corporatism and ‘social fascism’. In both schemas no room was left for intermediary positions between revolutionary expropriation of the bourgeoisie and fascist state regulation of a capitalist economy. Thus the *Workers Press* said that the Labour Party NEC’s plan was ‘not socialist nationalisation but its opposite - corporatism’. If this were indeed the case, then the nationalisations carried through by the Labour government of 1945-51 were also corporatist, in that they excluded workers from the management of the nationalised enterprises, and paid handsome compensation to the old owners. Yet the author can find no instances where the Trotskyist movement of the time used this designation ‘corporatist’ to denote the class nature of the postwar Labour nationalisations. Indeed, the Trotskyist movement has, while always pointing out the capitalist nature of reformist nationalisation, defended the state sector of the economy against all attempts by the bourgeoisie and their Tory representatives to undermine the nationalised industries by ‘hiving off’ their most profitable sectors back into private ownership or to use the state sector as a means of subsidising private industry.

The question that now arises, however, is quite important. Will the WRP defend against denationalisation sectors of the economy brought under state ownership under the terms of the proposed Labour plan? For if such industries are run on a corporatist (that is, fascist) basis, then a revolutionary has no business defending them, or calling on the working class to do.

And there will be even less possibility of the WRP using the Labour plan as a means of opening up a discussion inside the workers' movement on nationalisation, and exploiting the verbal radicalism of the Labour Party lefts to turn their talk of a planned economy into a real struggle for socialist nationalisation. Thus on 13 June, *Workers Press* insisted that 'the "socialism" of Anthony Wedgwood Benn and Renee Short, with their pleas for more participation and control by the "people" in the economy is, in fact, *a most dangerous move towards the corporate state...*'.^[95] Repeatedly counterposed against the 'corporatism' (in reality, left reformism) of the Benns is the maximum programme of the socialist revolution - 'nationalisation of all basic industries, land, banks and finance houses without compensation and under workers' control'.^[96] Quite apart from the fact that the transitional demand of *workers' control* (which, as Trotsky repeatedly insisted, is a *step preparatory to the expropriation of the bourgeoisie*) is substituted for workers' management, this propagandistic counterposing of the maximum programme of the revolutionary party to the reformist programme of Social Democracy prevents the vanguard making a serious approach to the millions of reformist workers who seriously desire to struggle for their demands and in defence of their gains, but in and through the reformist-led organisations. This problem is not a new one. Trotsky encountered similar sectarianism in 1933-35, when members of the Belgian section of the International Communist League described as 'fascist' the 'Labour Plan' of the Belgian reformist leader Henri de Man. Trotsky's reaction to the utopian de Man plan was entirely different to that of the WRP's sterile verbal battles with Labour Party 'corporatism':

The plan of de Man, bombastically called the 'Labour Plan' (it would be more correct to call it 'the plan to deceive the toilers') certainly cannot make us abandon the central political slogan of the period [the slogan 'Power to the Social Democracy' - RB]. The 'Labour Plan' will be a new or renovated instrument of bourgeois democratic (or even semi-democratic) conservatism. But the whole point of the matter lies in the fact that the extreme intensity of the situation, the imminence of dangers, threatening the very existence of the Social Democracy itself, *forces it against its will to seize the double-edged weapon*, very unsafe though it is from the point of view of democratic conservatism... None of us can have any doubts that the plan of de Man and the agitations of the Social Democracy connected with it will sow illusions and prove a disappointment. But the Social Democracy, *with its influence on the proletariat and its plan... are objective facts*: we can neither remove them, nor skip over them. Our task is two-fold: first to explain to the advanced workers the political meaning of the 'plan', that is, decipher the manoeuvres of the Social Democracy at all stages; secondly, to show in practice to possibly wider circles of workers that insofar as the bourgeoisie tries to put obstacles to the realisation of the plan *we fight hand in hand with the workers to help them make this experiment. We share the difficulties of the struggle but not the illusions*. Our criticism of the illusions must, however, not increase the *passivity* of the workers [such as would be the effect of WRP attacks on reformism if they reached a significant layer of the workers - RB] and give it a *pseudo-theoretic justification* but, on the contrary, push the workers forward. Under these conditions, the inevitable disappointment with the 'Labour Plan' will not spell the deepening of passivity but, on the contrary, *the going-over of the workers to the revolutionary road*.^[97]

Trotsky then deals with those ultra-lefts who abstained from the fight for the de Man Plan on the grounds that it was fascist:

I consider it incorrect to liken the plan to the economic policy of fascism. Insofar as fascism advances (before the conquest of power) the slogan of nationalisation as a means of struggle with 'super-capitalism' it simply steals the phraseology of the socialist programme. In de Man's Plan we have - under the bourgeois character of Social Democracy - a programme of state capitalism that the Social Democracy itself passes off, however, for the beginning of socialism and *that may actually become the beginning of socialism in spite of and against the opposition of the Social Democracy*.^[98]

It is clear that Trotsky not only saw the opposites of fascism and proletarian revolution, but the stages, processes and forms of *transition* between them. Instead of the WRP's radical-sounding but arid schemas he evolves a perspective of *intervention*, one that can seize hold of the content of the reformist programme - *the pressure of the masses* - and direct it against the reactionary form that the bureaucracy seeks to impose on it. That is why Trotsky did not attack the Belgian Benns as corporatists, but criticised them *for failing to struggle seriously for their own plan*:

... de Man and Co must be branded not merely because they do not develop the revolutionary extra-parliamentary struggle [which as avowed reformists they would not be expected by workers to do anyway - RB] but also because their parliamentary activity does not at all serve to prepare and bring nearer and realise *their own 'Labour Plan'*. Contradictions and hypocrisy *in this sphere* will be clearly understood *even by the average Social Democratic worker who has not yet grown to the understanding of the methods of proletarian revolution.* ^[99]

Thus the reformists were to be exposed, said Trotsky, by mobilising the workers to make the reformists carry out their own miserable, utopian plan. They would not be exposed by demands that they lead the extra-parliamentary revolutionary struggle and implement the full programme of the socialist revolution. This is, however, the method of the WRP. It runs contrary to the Trotskyist tradition. In fact, Trotsky condemned it as far back as 1922, when, in a letter to the Marseilles Congress of the PCF, he attacked the ultimatic attitude of a section of the party's leadership (ironically its petit-bourgeois *right wing*) towards joint actions with the reformist segment of the French workers' movement:

To put forward the programme of the social revolution [the WRP equivalent would be its call for 'nationalisation of industry, the banks and the land under the workers' control without compensation' - RB] and oppose it 'intransigently' to the Dissidents [the rump of the former French Socialist Party - SFIO - that voted to adhere to the Communist International at its 1920 congress at Tours - RB] and the syndico-reformists, while refusing to enter into any negotiations with them *until they recognise our programme* - this is a very simple policy [so simple that even Bull and Mitchell have mastered it - RB] which requires neither resourcefulness nor energy, neither flexibility nor initiative. *It is not a Communist policy.* We Communists seek for methods and avenues of bringing politically and in action the still unconscious masses to the point *where they begin posing the revolutionary issue themselves.* ^[100]

The struggle waged by Lenin and Trotsky against sectarianism did not prevent later generations of Communists falling victim to this debilitating disease, as the experience of the Belgian Trotskyists demonstrated.

The de Man Plan dispute continued to plague the Belgian section, and Trotsky returned to it 14 months later in a critique of the position of the left-centrist George Vereecken. His argument was the classic one of the abstentionist who hides his passivity and fears of a clash with the reformist apparatus behind demagogic attacks on the reactionary nature of Social Democracy, and claims that to fight in any way for demands raised by the reformists involves necessarily a capitulation to reformism. Trotsky replied that:

... if we had to present a plan to the Belgian proletariat, this plan would have had an altogether different aspect. Unfortunately the Belgian proletariat gave this mandate not to us but *to the Belgian Labour Party* and the plan reflects two facts: the pressure of the proletariat on the POB and the conservative character of the party... The revolutionary task consists in demanding that the POB take power *in order to put its own plan into effect.* Vereecken replies to this: No! ... *I will propose a better plan.* Is this serious? No. It is ridiculous. Vereecken set himself outside of reality... ^[101]

So we can see that the WRP's sectarian response to the Labour Party's plans for state control of sectors of the economy has precedents that reach back to the formative years of the Fourth International. Labour Party 'corporatism' as it pertained to the NEC proposals, however, was destined to suffer a rapid demise as the plan came under attack not only from the *Workers Press* but the bourgeois press and the Labour Party right wing. This attack was at times passed off by *Workers Press* as a subtle attempt to 'build up' the left and its bogus nationalisation proposals, but nevertheless the truth dawned that there was at stake a real question of principle from which revolutionaries could not abstain. Tail-ending advanced workers who saw in Benn's call for state ownership and workers' control a policy to fight the employers and the Tories, *Workers Press* began to attack Wilson and his supporters for seeking to ditch a programme the paper had only a matter of days previously been denouncing as 'corporatism'. On 22 June, *Workers Press* correctly attacked Michael Foot for 'attempting to silence Benn', the same Benn whom on 13 June had been described as 'moving towards the corporate state'. If Benn was so moving, why was Foot 'witch-hunting' him, unless it was to provide Benn with a 'left cover'? Yet *Workers Press* on this occasion said that Foot's bid to curb Benn was an attempt 'to silence altogether the demand for socialist policies within the Labour Party'. ^[102] What a miserable *volte face*. Even more ignominious was the feature article of 27 June, which if anything idealised Benn as a spokesman for socialist policies in the Labour Party. It took to task *Morning Star* editor George Matthews for playing down Foot's attempts to silence Benn on the

nationalisation question, and asked why this Stalinist did not 'rebuke Foot for his outrageous attack on Benn, which opens the door for sabotage of a *socialist platform* in the next election'. ^[103] Benn had now accomplished the metamorphosis from corporatist to the spokesman for a 'socialist platform' in a matter of two weeks! And without the least acknowledgement of a change of line on the part of the SLL.

This adjustment to reality proved to be only fleeting. By the time of the Labour Party Conference in October, *Workers Press* had reverted to its former sectarianism. Thus an important speech by Anthony Benn was not only largely deleted from the paper's report, being dismissed as mere 'fireworks', but actually distorted in a manner that could only strengthen the reformist opponents of Trotskyism. According to the report published in the *Guardian*, Benn said:

We reject, as a party and a movement, the idea that one worker on the board is industrial democracy. We reject co-ownership. We reject the phoney works councils not rooted in the strength and structure and traditions of the trade union movement. All these are window dressing, designed to divert the demand for democratic control into utterly harmless channels. [Like the WRP, the reformist Benn settles for workers' *control*, and not *management*, in state-owned industry.] We are talking about the transfer of power within industry and we will not accept the existing pattern of nationalisation as a form for the future. We have had enough experience to know that nationalisation plus Lord Robens does *not* add up to socialism. ^[104]

The pre-natal leftism of the SLL prevented it from seizing on this speech of Benn's as a means of opening up a genuine discussion in the Labour Party and trade unions on workers' control and socialist nationalisation (as Trotsky recommended in his articles on the de Man plan). Another routine exposé of the perfidious nature of Social Democracy sufficed.

Royston Bull (who else?) wrote:

Benn produced some very dramatic left-wing phrases to try to warm up the cold mess of compromise which it was his job to present to the conference... But apart from these verbal fireworks, Benn was firmly on the side of the reformist leadership. ^[105]

Surprise, surprise. *Was Bull expecting him to be anywhere else?* The only section of Benn's speech to be quoted by Bull was the remark about Lord Robens, which whether by printer's or proof-reader's error, or some other means, acquired an opposite meaning. Bull reported Benn as saying: '... nationalisation plus Lord Robens *does* add up to socialism.' [Emphasis added] A leadership that cannot exploit and develop the verbal (and sometimes real) left turns of the reformists will never expose and defeat reformism. That was the lesson of pre-Hitler Germany. Is the WRP to follow in the footsteps of the KPD, whose leaders Trotsky scoured for their failing to take 'reformism as a historic reality, with its interests and its contradictions, with *all* its oscillations to the right *and left*...?' Instead, the Stalinists 'operated with mechanical models...' of a bureaucracy always ready, willing and able to betray the working class, even in collaboration with the fascists, who sought their elimination. ^[106] This disease is not confined to the WRP. Ultra-leftism finds its most finished - and degenerate - expression in that tendency which refuses to recognise and defend the greatest conquest of the international working class - namely the nationalised property relations established by the Russian Revolution of 1917. As Trotsky says in the *Transitional Programme*, such sectarians are capable of recognising only two colours - Red and Black. So when the reformists of the Labour Party come under attack from the ruling class and its various agencies for proposing a modest programme of nationalisations, the *Socialist Worker* can see in this conflict between the reformists and the bourgeoisie only a 'sham battle' whose purpose *on both sides* is to divert the working class from the 'real issues'. In June 1974, the paper declared, following the statement by a Tory leader that Labour's programme was 'Marxism on the march', and CBI attacks on Benn as a revolutionary hell-bent on expropriating the monopolies, that:

... what differences there are between the two parties *are differences about how best to persuade working people* to accept cuts in living standards in order to boost profits. Both are thoroughly committed to capitalism... *A stunt is needed*. So we have this *carefully orchestrated* propaganda campaign by the Tory Party, the CBI and the Aims of Industry. They want to con people into believing that the Labour government is about to introduce what the CBI president calls 'Communist-state state control'. *It is a sham battle. There is precious little difference the between the Tory practice on state intervention and that of Labour...* The Labour Party's actual nationalisation proposals [which incidentally, in the party's 1974 election manifesto, included proposals to nationalise the drug industry, shipbuilding, aircraft, North Sea oil and the docks! - RB] *are as different from socialist nationalisation as chalk is from cheese.* ^[107]

Or as the *Workers Press* put it, a year earlier, ‘not socialist nationalisation, but its opposite, corporatism’. Neither Healy nor Cliff (leader of IS) appears capable of detecting within the oscillations of the reformist leadership not only its ever-present readiness to compromise with capitalism, but also the pressure of the workers, who at certain stages in their radicalisation seek to impose their own demands for action against the employers and the state *on their existing leaders*, especially when those reformist leaders *have been placed in the government by the votes of the workers*. Neither can the reformist leaders afford to ignore this pressure from below. As Trotsky said in relation to the British reformist leaders, when an important section of the proletariat becomes radicalised:

... what happens is that the labour fakers *swing left in order to retain control*. If the ILP is not there at the critical moment with a revolutionary leadership the workers will need to find their leadership elsewhere... It is this treacherous ‘heading in order to behead’ which the ILP must prevent in Britain. ^[108]

Trotsky even went so far as to predict that the TUC chief Citrine might ‘shout for Soviets’ rather than lose his grip on the class. To turn one’s back on such ‘Soviets’, simply because they have been created on the initiative of a ‘labour faker’, would be no less criminal than to abstain on the fight for the demands the working class succeeds in forcing on its own reformist leaders, such as the Labour Party’s proposals for nationalisation. In each case, *the reformists are left with a clear field to carry through their betrayal*. Leftist rhetoric, whether uttered by Healy or Cliff, *becomes a screen for capitulation to reformism*.

In vain does the sectarian await the emergence of a mass movement untainted by the imprint of reformism. As if the working class could fight outside of the organisations it has created with such devotion and suffering over the last century and a half! Healy and Cliff mistake the form for the content of the class struggle, and therefore are unable to develop the latter when it comes into conflict with the former. Thus IS seeks to create a ‘pure’ mass movement independent of the reformists by means of ‘rank and file-ism’, while the WRP summons workers to ‘join the ATUA’ under whose leadership alone can any advance be made in the class struggle. We repeat, both recipes leave the bureaucracy in undisputed control of the basic organisations of the working class, just as Stalinist ultimatism, with its ‘united front from below’, protected the reformist leaders in Germany in their hour of mortal crisis.

There are of course many instructive instances where Trotsky sought to exploit the hesitant left turns and radical phrase-mongering of the reformist leaders, transforming them into weapons in the struggle *against* this same reformist bureaucracy. He saw (unlike the radicals of the *Workers Press*) that it is not a question of a verbal debate with the bureaucracy about whether reformism can bring socialism, but of using the elements of the reformist programme *that reflect the pressure of the workers* to bring these workers into struggles that pose concretely the utter inability of reformism to implement *even its own meagre demands*. This was Trotsky’s method when he approached the dispute in the Belgian section over the de Man plan: ‘We must learn to strike the enemy with his own weapons.’ ^[109] Elsewhere Trotsky pointed out to the sectarians who insisted on abstaining from the fight for the de Man plan on the grounds that it was ‘fascist’ (Vereecken), that the Bolsheviks went much further, actually taking over and implementing against Kerensky the land programme of Kerensky’s party, the Socialist Revolutionaries. Had Healy been around at that time, no doubt he would have accused Lenin and Trotsky of capitulation to populism and the peasant petit-bourgeoisie. And such indeed was the charge levelled against the Bolsheviks by all manner of critics. Likewise Vereecken was horrified by Trotsky’s proposal to launch a campaign ‘in favour of the [Belgian] Socialist Party taking power to carry out its own plan’. ^[110] The sectarians and abstentionists should note that Trotsky called for a Socialist Party government on its own programme. Not for him the fatuous call for the reformists to take power on the programme of the revolutionary party which, when they failed to implement it, allegedly rendered them ‘exposed’ in the eyes of millions of *reformist* workers. No. As Trotsky insisted against the Third Period Stalinists, who dismissed every conflict and left turn in the reformist leadership as either a ‘division of labour’ or a ‘manoeuvre’ pure and simple, ‘it is necessary to catch the squirming reformists at *their own* words and to impel the reformist masses to the road of action - *beat the enemy with his own weapons*’. ^[111]

Trotsky also applied this method to Spain, where in the early period of the revolution, the reformists were compelled to take up the slogan of workers’ control under the pressure of the radicalised workers:

... to renounce workers’ control merely because the reformists are for it - in words - would be an enormous stupidity. On the contrary, *it is precisely for this reason* that we should seize upon this slogan all the more eagerly and compel the reformist workers to put it into practice by means of a united front with us, and on the basis of this experience to push them into opposition to

Caballero and other fakers. [Just as a revolutionary ought to have seized on Benn's plan to push the workers that supported it towards a break with this same Benn - RB]... Caballero himself, under the pressure of the masses, [is] forced to seize upon the slogan of workers' control and thereby opening wide the doors for the united front policy... We must grab this with both hands. ^[112]

'Grab with both hands...' or denounce as 'corporatism'? Then there is the case of Germany. Faced by the Nazi threat, the SPD leaders in the summer of 1932 put forward a more left programme than any they had entertained since the formation of the Weimar Republic. Trotsky naturally did not take their promises seriously. But millions of workers, including those repelled by the adventurist tactics of Third Period Stalinism, did. So this is how Trotsky approached the problem of the united front with the reformist workers:

The 'left' turn of the Social Democratic leaders startles one with its stupidity and deceitfulness. This by no means signifies, however, that the manoeuvre is condemned in advance to failure. This party, laden with crimes, still stands at the head of millions. It will not fall of its own accord. *One must know how to overthrow it.* The KPD will declare that the Wels - Tarnow course towards socialism is a new form of mass deception, and that will be correct. It will relate the history of the SPD's 'socialisations' of the last 14 years. That will be useful. But it is insufficient: history, even the most recent, cannot take the place of active politics... Nothing is easier than to ridicule the Social Democratic bureaucracy, beginning with Wels, who has struck up a Song of Solomon to socialism. Yet, it must not be forgotten that the reformist workers have a thoroughly serious attitude to the question of socialism. *One must have a serious attitude to the reformist workers.* Here the problem of the united front rises up once again in its full scope. If the Social Democracy sets itself the task (in words, we know that!), not to save capitalism but to build socialism, then it must seek an agreement not with the Centre [Party] but with the Communists. Will the CP reject such an agreement? By no means. *On the contrary,* it will itself propose such an agreement, demand before the masses *a redemption of the just-signed Socialist promissory note...* Between their words [that is, of the reformists] and their deeds lies an abyss; we know that very well - *but we must understand how to pin them down to their word.* ^[113]

What then should the *Workers Press* have said when the Labour Party, led by Benn, came out with its plan to nationalise 25 major companies? Was it correct to follow in the ultimatic footsteps of Thälmann and Vereecken, and denounce the whole undertaking as 'corporatism'? Or should it have taken the road of Trotsky, and declared:

This plan reflects in a distorted fashion the demands and needs of the most advanced layers of the working class. We do not share the reformist illusion that by itself this plan will bring socialism. But we will be in the very forefront of the struggle, together with those workers who do share these illusions, and who want to implement this plan, to make Benn and company carry it out, once elected. More than this. We ask of Benn: what companies do you propose to nationalise? Name them now, so that the workers of these industries can begin, now, to introduce, on a democratic basis, workers' inspection of the accounts of these concerns. We will fight in every plant where we have members to rally workers of all political tendencies of the left to introduce workers' control in the companies you name while for our part not necessarily confining ourselves to this list. We will fight for local and national assemblies of workers' representatives - Trade Union, Labour Party, Coop, etc - which will begin to draw up, in concert, with economists and technicians sympathetic to the working class and socialism, rudimentary, provisional plans for the running of these industries when nationalised. In this way, we can prepare to make the transition from workers' control over the capitalist owners to workers' management of state-owned industry. On each and every occasion that the employers and their political agents attempt to block the implementation of this plan, we pledge ourselves to fight, against such sabotage, using the workers' control organs established in the plants. Likewise, we expect that you and your fellow Labour leaders will not retreat before attacks on the Tories in Parliament. We share the struggle, *but not the illusions.*

Had the *Workers Press* reacted in this way to the left turn of the Labour Party leaders in the summer of 1973, then they would have been far better placed than proved to be the case to denounce and expose these same leaders *for retreating from their own programme* when the time came, less than a year later, to implement it. As Trotsky said, we must learn to fight the reformist enemy with his own words, his own

weapons. Otherwise, they will perform the function for which they were originally devised. Abstention from the fight to hold Labour to its nationalisation plans *thus becomes a left cover for the reformists' retreat from them*. It is worse than useless continually to call upon reformists to implement, in a non-revolutionary situation, the full programme of the socialist revolution. As the *Transitional Programme* states:

... only a general revolutionary upsurge of the proletariat can place the complete expropriation of the bourgeoisie [that is, the WRP's 'nationalisation without compensation under workers' control' - RB] on the order of the day. The task of transitional demands is to prepare the proletariat to solve this problem.

For Healy, this problem, the central one of our epoch, *has already been resolved*. Therefore there is no crisis of leadership. There is no 'contradiction between the maturity of the objective revolutionary conditions and the immaturity of the proletariat and its vanguard', and therefore no need for the *Transitional Programme*, whose purpose is precisely 'to find the bridge between the present demands and the socialist programme of the revolution'. Instead, the WRP advances the *full* programme as if the workers had, by their own efforts, already overcome the contradiction. Yet strangely, we find these revolutionary demands being addressed to the *reformist leaders* to carry out, even though, by this time, the workers should have broken from them! Thus the WRP's revision (more correctly, abandonment) of the *Transitional Programme* involves deviations both to the sectarian left *and the opportunist right*. It denies the crisis of leadership, and at the same time, calls upon the reformists (the 'corporatists') to carry out the socialist revolution! Its last line of defence is that if the reformists do not carry out the mandate given to them by the WRP (and by them alone, since few workers vote Labour for the socialist revolution) then the reformists stand 'exposed'. This schema leaves out of account entirely the consciousness of the class, whose immaturity the *Transitional Programme* is designed to overcome:

This bridge should include a system of transitional demands, stemming from *today's* conditions and from *today's* consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably *leading* to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat. [Emphasis added]

The WRP not only denies the need for such a bridge in its practice, but also in theory. In his 'Foreword' to the 1963 (and 1968) edition of the *Transitional Programme* published by the SLL, Cliff Slaughter wrote, oblivious to the actual contents of the work he was introducing: 'The *Transitional Programme* is nothing to do with the minimum programme or reform programme of the Social Democrats or the Stalinists.'^[114] 'Nothing to do with'? Whence then its *transitional* character? The *Programme* itself is quite specific on this point:

Classical Social Democracy, functioning in an epoch of progressive capitalism, divided its programme into two parts independent of each other: the minimum programme which limited itself to reforms within the framework of bourgeois society, and the maximum programme which promised substitution of socialism for capitalism in the indefinite future. *Between* the minimum and maximum programme *no bridge existed*... The strategic task of the Fourth International lies not in the reforming of capitalism but its overthrow... However, the achievement of this strategic task is unthinkable without the most considered attention to all, even *small and partial* questions of tactics... The Fourth International *does not discard* the programme of the old 'minimal' demands to the degree to which these have preserved at least part of their vital forcefulness... Insofar as the old, partial, 'minimal' demands of the masses clash with the destructive and degrading tendencies of decadent capitalism - *and this occurs at each step* - the Fourth International advances a system of transitional demands, the essence of which is contained in the fact that ever more openly and decisively they will be directed against the very bases of the bourgeois regime. The old 'minimal programme' is superseded by the transitional programme, the task of which lies in systematic mobilisation of the masses for the proletarian revolution.^[115]

Trotsky says 'does not discard', Slaughter says 'nothing to do with'. And the WRP claims to base itself on this programme!

This retreat from the programme of Trotskyism and work in the basic organisations of the class has progressed parallel with, and to a large degree has produced, the growing obsession of a section of the WRP leadership with what is termed 'Marxist philosophy'. The most recent stage in the evolution of the WRP has demonstrated the class content and function of this quest, one that Marx declared to be obsolete a full 130 years ago. The weapon of criticism (in the WRP's case, the 'criticism of reformist leaders') must be replaced by the *criticism of weapons*. The task of the proletariat is not to resurrect philosophy in

a new 'Marxist' guise, but to abolish all ideologies, the cult practised by Healy included. Contemplative thought, masked as a stern command to party members to 'make changes', to 'break from idealism', to 'take up the struggle for Marxist philosophy', has become the ideology of a leadership that has turned its back on both the programme and practice of Trotskyism, and above all on the real struggles and problems of the working class. 'Theory' in their hands has turned, not into a guide to action, but a screen that walls off the party, and principally its apparatus (which has swollen out of all proportion to the objective needs of the party and its level of activity and influence in the working class), from the real world. 'Marxist philosophy' is, in the case of the WRP, the ideology of *abstentionism* and *sectarianism*. A new 'theology' has usurped the strategy and tactics of Bolshevism. Small wonder that serious WRP worker and intellectual cadres find themselves increasingly in a blind alley, unable to capitalise on the rich opportunities that the unfolding political situation offers for building a genuine Communist party in Britain. Trotskyists must never forget the last of Karl Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach*: 'The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways: the point, however, is to change it.' The WRP thinks differently. Its leaders claim that philosophical questions are the most important, and those of programme, of tactics and strategy, of intervention in the living workers' movement, secondary. Thus the pamphlet *In Defence of Trotskyism* (1973) speaks of the 'philosophical foundation' of Marxism, as if Marxism were a philosophy standing above all other forms of knowledge of the real world, and the practice of the revolutionary party. Yet this is what Marx and Engels said of such system building, in the work that settled accounts with their idealist past:

Where speculation ends in real life - there real, positive science begins: the representation of the practical activity, of the practical process of development of men. Empty talk about consciousness ceases [except, that is, within the confines of the Healy leadership - RB] and real knowledge has to take its place. When reality is depicted, philosophy as an independent branch of knowledge loses its medium of existence. At the best its place can only be taken by a summing-up of the most general results, abstractions which arise from the observation of the historical development of men... But they by no means afford a recipe or schema, as does philosophy, for neatly trimming the epochs of history. ^[116]

Four decades later, Engels is still defending this position:

As soon as we have once realised - and in the long run no one has helped us to realise it more than Hegel himself - that the task of philosophy thus stated means nothing but the task that a single philosopher should accomplish that which can only be accomplished by the entire human race in its progressive development - as soon as we realise that, there is an end to all philosophy in the hitherto accepted sense of the word. One leaves alone 'absolute truth'... instead one pursues attainable relative truths along the path of the positive sciences, and the summation of their results by dialectical thinking... *with Hegel philosophy comes to an end*... ^[117]

It is difficult indeed to reconcile what Engels writes here with the official declarations of the Healyite International Committee on philosophy, exemplified by its publication *In Defence of Trotskyism*, where we find a simply astounding formulation referring to the 'revolutionary character of Marxism in philosophy', ^[118] when it is abundantly clear that the revolutionary character of Marxism resided in, amongst other things, its *negation* of philosophy! As Engels himself explains:

... this [Marxist] conception... puts an end to philosophy in the realm of history, just as the dialectical conception of nature makes all natural philosophy both unnecessary and impossible. It is no longer a question anywhere of inventing interconnections [or as Healy would say, 'opposites' - RB] from out of our brains, but of discovering them in the facts [what the WRP philosophers call 'empiricism' - RB]. For philosophy which has been expelled from nature and history, there remains only the realm of pure thought, so far as it is left: the theory of the laws of the thought process itself, logic and dialectics. ^[119]

Engels wrote in similar vein in his polemic against a not unrelated idealistic school in the SPD - that of Dühring:

... modern materialism is essentially dialectic, *and no longer needs any philosophy standing above the other sciences*... That which still survives, independently, of all earlier philosophy is the science of thought and its laws - formal logic and dialectics. Everything else is subsumed in the positive science of nature and history. If we deduce world schematism not from our minds, but only through our minds from the real world, if we deduce principles of being from what is, *we need no philosophy for this purpose*, but positive knowledge of the real world and of what

happens in it; and what this yields is also not philosophy, but positive science... Further, if no philosophy [not even 'Marxist philosophy' - RB] as such is any longer required, then there is no more need of any system, not even of any natural system of philosophy. ^[120]

Now Dühring, like Healy and Slaughter, did consider philosophy to be the determining factor in human thought. Engels summarised his idealist conceptions as the view that:

... philosophy... is the development of the highest form of consciousness of the world and of life, and in a wider sense embraces the principles of all knowledge and volition... Philosophical principles consequently provide the final supplement required by the sciences in order to become a uniform system by which nature and human life can be explained... So far Herr Dühring, and almost entirely word for word. ^[121]

And so Slaughter and Healy, almost word for word! We repeat, 'philosophy' has become the avenue for retreat from the struggle to apply and enrich the *Transitional Programme* in the basic, traditional organisations of the proletariat. Boycott of working-class anti-fascist demonstrations has gone hand in hand with greater and greater concentration by the WRP leadership on the very 'philosophical' questions which, it is claimed, alone can bring the party into the leadership of the working class. Unfortunately, advanced workers by no means sceptical about the importance of Marxism will judge the WRP by its abstention from the struggle against fascism, and not only by its obsession with an obscurantist perversion of dialectical materialism. Thus we see that there is a very real connection between the (subjective) idealist conceptions of the WRP leadership and the party's sectarian political line.

How is it, one might well ask, that a movement that arose out of the debacle brought about in Germany by criminal adventurism and ultra-leftism is so susceptible to the disease of sectarianism? We have to answer that, in a sense, the problem did not even begin with the Third Period, but with the preceding phase of leftism launched in the Comintern under the auspices of its then President, Zinoviev. Trotsky's lengthy and closely-argued critique of Zinovievism, contained in the volume *The Third International After Lenin*, has, in the opinion of the present writer, never been properly assimilated by the British Trotskyist movement. This can be demonstrated both by the WRP's practice and theory. One of the salient features of the WRP's political method is its inability to grasp things and processes as they really are, preferring instead a picture of the world in which the working class is ever on the point of breaking with its reformist leaders on the one hand, and the ruling class preparing to unleash repressive measures of horrific dimensions on the other. Both in their turn are the mechanical reflex of an 'economic crisis' which stands outside of politics and social relations, and is uniform in its severity and political repercussions throughout every corner of the globe. Given this world-schematicism, this mechanistic, vulgar model of the dialectical relationship between 'politics' and 'economics', it is a simple task to arrive at the 'correct' political line, which can be imposed on every section of the International just as readily as the apparatus sends its directives to the party organisations within a single country.

This was of course also the method of Pablo in the early postwar period, when in company with many others who later swung over to Pablo's right-opportunist course of liquidating the Fourth International into the Stalinist and reformist bureaucracies, Healy (and Cannon, the founder of American Trotskyism) endorsed uncritically the leftist, ultimatist and in, many senses, Zinovievist methods and line of 1944-48. What does Trotsky say of Zinovievism?

Each party, to a lesser or greater degree, fell a victim of the false points of departure [foisted on them at the Fifth Comintern Congress of 1924]. Each chased after phantoms, ignored the real processes, transformed revolutionary slogans into noisy phrases, compromised itself in the eyes of the masses and lost all the ground under its feet...

There also flourished, not only under Zinoviev's but also Stalin's prodding, a:

... purely mechanical 'Left' conception during the initial period of the struggle against 'Trotskyism'. For this conception there existed always and unalterably only the Social Democracy that was 'disintegrating', workers who were becoming 'radicalised', Communist parties that were 'growing' and the revolution that was 'approaching'. And anybody who looked around and tried to distinguish things was and is a 'liquidator'. ^[122]

Familiar words.

In this work, Trotsky is at enormous pains to lay bare the inner connections between left and right opportunism; how the *rightist* error in Germany of 1923 prepared the soil for the Zinoviev *leftism* of 1924, and how the collapse of the latter false orientation in its turn made possible the swing back to right-

opportunism over the next three years, the alliance with the TUC and Chiang Kai-shek. Yet if we read the foreword to the 1974 WRP edition of *The Third International After Lenin*, this aspect of Trotsky's analysis of Stalinism is entirely overlooked. The year 1924 has, in the higher echelons of the WRP at any rate, *been erased from history*. And yet 1924 was the year of 'Bolshevisation', of the international campaign against Trotsky and his co-thinkers, of criminal adventures in Estonia and Bulgaria, of the emergence of the opportunist theory, which ripened in subsequent years, of manoeuvres over the heads of the masses with trade union chiefs and bourgeois nationalists. It was not for nothing that Trotsky insisted that 'the key year of the sharp turn in the situation was the year 1924'.^[123] Inability to grasp the interpenetration of left and right opportunism, as outlined by Trotsky in this work, must leave the vanguard exposed to just such dangers as laid low the Comintern after 1923, and the Pablo leadership in the immediate postwar period. In Britain, it has for many years produced a false orientation to the workers' movement, sometimes sectarian, on other occasions (such as in the period of the Bevanite movement, and, in the early 1960s, with the Labour lefts and the anti-H-bomb movement) opportunist. Now we have coming to the fore a new threat to Trotskyism, which also in part derives from false conceptions inherited from the early years of the post-Lenin Comintern. It is the 'apparatus' conception of the revolutionary party.

How deeply this reactionary, nationalistic concept has penetrated into the thinking and practice of British Trotskyism is demonstrated by the following passage from Gerry Healy's *Problems of the Fourth International*, a sizeable pamphlet which is remarkable in that it manages to omit entirely any discussion of the Revolutionary Communist Party, and dates the origins of Pabloism from 1951, when it had begun to exhibit openly its opportunist nature, and had swung away to the right from the leftist positions of 1944-48 (which had been endorsed by Healy in the RCP):

A period of unparalleled revolutionary conflict lies ahead. The Socialist Labour League now shoulders an enormous responsibility - that of constructing the mass revolutionary party [this as written in 1966! - RB] which will lead the working class to power. *By so doing it will inspire revolutionists in all countries to build similar parties, to do the same.*^[124]

This is nothing less than 'Trotskyism in one country'. 'Constructing the mass revolutionary party', therefore, as early as 1966, had become a substitute for *rebuilding the Fourth International*. First build the 'British' party, next the 'British' revolution and then - *and only then* - the building of other national parties of a 'similar' type, and finally, national revolutions in the other countries. Here we have not a Trotskyist, but a Stalinist schema of world revolution, in which each country makes 'its own' way to socialism, and where internationalism does not flow from the world nature of economy and the class struggle, but consists of workers being 'inspired' by, in this instance, the British example to make the revolution in their own countries. The ultimate stage in this revision of Leninist internationalism is to argue that since it is given to Britain to build the first mass party and make the first revolution in the advanced countries, then what is good for the SLL (now WRP) is good for the international working class and those groups and parties which adhere to the International Committee. Thus the world class struggle becomes a mere adjunct of the impending revolutionary battle in Britain, with vital developments such as those in France, Chile, Greece, Portugal, etc, serving merely as 'lessons' for British workers that illuminate their national road to socialism.

And sure enough, the Healy leadership finally did arrive at this national-messianic conception of the role of the British working class in the struggle for the world revolution. In a discussion early in 1971 between delegates of the SLL and its then International Committee partners, the OCI, belittling the importance of the volcanic eruption of the Polish workers against the Gomułka regime, Healy declared:

The development of the situation in this country [Britain] has entered a new phase. What we are proposing [sic!] is power. It is we who are leading the struggle against the Tory government, the centrists and the Stalinists. What we are preparing here can be summed up as follows: the discrediting of Pabloism [the same Pabloism to which Healy had, less than a year earlier, made proposals for unity on the basis of the Pabloites being part of the same Trotskyist 'movement' - RB], reformism and Stalinism. The international movement is on the threshold of a leap forward. *It must* [NB] *adopt a position on the question of where this leap will take place.* It is in *England* that the situation is explosive, *and by starting from that, the Fourth International will be able to overcome its crisis.* [emphasis added]

So by a series of complex mutations and progressions, none of which in itself constituted a direct and open challenge to Marxism and the programme of the Fourth International, the WRP apparatus has, in the

minds of Healy and his closest supporters, become identified with the world revolution and rebuilding the Fourth International; whereas in reality, they are utterly incompatible.

In August 1914, the SPD leadership went over to national defence in the name of protecting the party machine. In 1924, Stalin's theory of 'socialism in one country' was the ideological refraction of the conservatism of the party apparatus, which placed the preservation of its own newly-won privileges above the cause of the world revolution. In both cases, the apparatus became the medium for nationalist pressures on the working class and its vanguard. This was how Trotsky assessed the relationship between the party apparatus and Stalin's own rise to total power in the USSR:

... it is no accident that Stalin looked upon the organisational lever as basic; whatever deals with programmes and policies was for him always essentially an ornament of the organisational foundation... what Stalin had assimilated was merely the Leninist conception of a centralised party machine. The moment he got hold of that, he lost sight of its roots in theoretical considerations, its programmatic base became essentially unimportant... the centralised political machine... to him was the essence of Bolshevism... after the conquest of power in October 1917, all tasks, all problems, all perspectives were subordinated to the needs of that apparatus of apparatuses, the state. ^[125]

In place of the independent movement of the class acting in its own right under the leadership of a truly democratic centralist Communist party, the WRP leaders have substituted a new force: it is the *apparatus*, issuing its commands to the class, and firing off propaganda salvos at the reformists and Stalinists, that makes the revolution. We repeat: the form taken by this revision of Marxism can often be extremely left. *But its content is opportunist*. All workers' parties that have had as their main goal the preservation of the apparatus have degenerated into instruments of reaction within the workers' movement. Unless a fight is waged against this tendency and theory, the WRP will prove no exception to this inexorable law. And to fight against the domination of the apparatus means to fight for a return to the *Transitional Programme*, to the strategy and tactics of Bolshevism, for an unequivocal orientation back towards the workers' organisations, including not only the trade unions but the Labour Party. It is on these questions, all of which centre on the task of rebuilding the Fourth International, and not that of the 'regime' as such, that the WRP will be returned to the road of Trotskyism, and the Healy-inspired petit-bourgeois radicals and adventurers defeated in their bid to liquidate Trotskyism in Britain.

At the core of the WRP's mistaken approach to the reformist-led organisations of the working class is its failure to understand that at certain stages in the evolution of the bourgeoisie towards the fascist solution of its crises, its dominant circles are compelled to break from their former policy of collaboration with the leaders of Social Democracy. Instead, the WRP sees this stage of the crisis, one that demands the *destruction* of both bourgeois democracy and independent workers' organisations, as ushering in a new phase in the *development* of reformism - corporatism. The Social Democratic 'corporatists' carry out their allotted role of 'smashing down' and 'impoverishing' the proletariat irrespective of the fact that these same leaders only hold the positions they do in the workers' movement because they rest, to one degree or another, on the support of important layers of workers. In its essentials, therefore, this theory is the same as that of Third Period Stalinism's 'social fascism', which Trotsky scourged repeatedly in his writings between 1930 and 1934:

Not by a single word do they [the Stalinists] recall that the Social Democracy can neither live nor breathe - that is, it can neither exploit democracy nor betray the workers - *without leaning upon the political and trade union organisations of the working class*. Thus it is precisely along this line that the irreconcilable contradiction between Social Democracy and fascism; precisely along this line does there open up the *necessary and unbridgeable stage of the policies of the united front with the Social Democracy... The Social Democracy was driven from all its positions, entirely overwhelmed and trampled underfoot precisely because it had ceased to be of service as a support for the bourgeoisie...* Had the Comintern placed, from 1929, or even from 1930 or 1931, at the foundation of its policies *the objective irreconcilability between Social Democracy and fascism...* if upon this, it built a systematic and persistent policy of the united front, Germany, within a few months, would have been covered with a network of mighty committees of proletarian defence, that is, potential workers' soviets. ^[126]

And still the *Workers Press* rants on about corporatism as if Trotsky had never written a word on social fascism. Flowing from the WRP's reactionary theory of corporatism is the rejection in practice of the

united front, since how can one unite with corporatists? And thus reasoned the Third Period Stalinists, with their dictum of ‘no blocs with the social fascists’.^[127]

One is also struck by other similarities between the method of the WRP leadership and Third Period Stalinism, which in the former case leads to the conclusion that Social Democracy is corporatism, and, in the latter, that it is fascism. This is how Trotsky posed the question:

The Stalinist theory of fascism indubitably represents one of the most tragic examples of the injurious consequences that can follow from the substitution of the dialectical analysis of reality, in its every concrete phase, in all its transitional stages, that is, in its gradual changes as well as in its revolutionary (or counter-revolutionary) leaps, by abstract categories formulated upon the basis of a partial and insufficient historical experience (or narrow and insufficient view of the whole). The Stalinists adopted the idea that in the contemporary period, finance capital cannot accommodate itself to parliamentary democracy and is obliged to resort to fascism. From this idea, absolutely correct within certain limits, they draw in a purely deductive, formally logical manner the same conclusions for all countries and for all stages of development... To them, Primo de Rivera, Mussolini, Chiang Kai-shek, Masaryk, Brüning, Dollfuss, Piłsudski, the Serbian King Alexander, Severing, MacDonald, etc. were the representatives of fascism...^[128]

In a different historical period, we find the WRP speculating on the prospect of imminent military coups in ‘every major country’ and in Britain, subsuming every political party and trade union, and every form of capitalist rule, under the rubric ‘corporatism’. Formal thought, the hallmark of the petit-bourgeois radical, is substituted for the dialectical materialist method, which as Trotsky points out, takes into account not only the polar opposites of revolution (Communism) and counter-revolution (corporatism) *but the shadings and transitions between them*. This is not an academic question, as the tragic lesson of Germany should have taught the leaders of the WRP: ‘Each one of these transitional forms, if we want to go forward, and not be flung to the rear, demands a correct theoretical appraisal and a corresponding policy of the proletariat.’^[129]

Opponents of this analysis could argue that, whereas with the Stalinist bureaucracy its main foundation was and remains the Soviet state and the nationalised property relations established by the October Revolution, the WRP functions in a capitalist state, and receives not one iota of support from the Stalinist state bureaucracies. Absolutely true. But here we are examining not only the current social and political setting of the problems of the British Trotskyist movement, but its entire history. And that history is an international one in every sense of the word. Trotskyism came to Britain relatively late in comparison with France, the USA, Germany, Greece and several other countries. It emerged as a fraction within the workers’ movement only *after* the collapse of the Third Period, when the Stalinists had swung over from adventurism to Popular Frontism, and when, therefore, the main task of Trotskyists was to fight against opportunism and class collaboration carried out under the spurious slogan of ‘unity’. By contrast, in France and Germany especially, the Left Opposition groups had already behind them some years of struggle against Stalinism when it had been pursuing an ultra-leftist course, and therefore had more opportunity to assimilate Trotsky’s profound critique of Third Period Stalinism. In so doing, they could inoculate themselves, to a greater extent than in Britain, against similar contagions. Some of the forms taken by what Trotsky termed Stalinist ‘bureaucratic adventurism’ were pernicious in the extreme, and could easily have become the common coin of those seeking to break away to the revolutionary left from Stalinism in its rightist phase after 1934. Whence comes, for example, the frantic activism imposed on the WRP cadre by its impatient leadership? Healy would argue that it is a healthy legacy of the Puritan tradition and the Cromwellian Revolution, when men were moved to deeds by forces they could not understand. Here is not the place to clash swords with Healy over the English Revolution, save to point out that, contrary to the legend perpetuated in the WRP, the ideological precursors and executants of the revolution were by no means laggardly in questions of theory. Activism in the civil war, and before, there was in plenty, but it was to be found in the camp of the King, whose followers were supremely contemptuous of all ideas save as crude justifications for their own rule.

The WRP’s activism is, in the author’s opinion, in part a residue of Stalinism, which, as early as 1924, substituted for an honest and realistic relationship with the working class, a regime and method of command, of forced marches, of zigzags and panic improvisations. Just as Stalin sought to rescue the Soviet economy from the impasse into which his earlier policies had led it by launching in 1928 his panic plan of industrialisation and forced collectivisation, so on the international plane the Comintern attempted to order - with far less response and no success - the workers under its leadership into adventurist

campaigns and actions (Berlin, May Day 1929). Both were aspects of the same tendency - *bureaucratic adventurism*. The Stalinist clique, walled off from the real problems and processes in the masses, aimed to *command* the class, substituting its own subjective illusions and narrow caste needs for the objective movement of the class struggle, the laws of political economy and the requirements of the international working class.

At the level of the national parties of the Comintern, this attempt artificially to accelerate the tempo of the class struggle expressed itself in commands to work yet harder, to intensify the polemics against every other tendency in the workers' movement, to replace argument and conviction by orders and even worse methods of securing compliance. Bureaucratic adventurism became translated into the language of unthinking activism and blind obedience, which when they led to yet further isolation of the vanguard from the broad mass of the workers, were supplemented by hysteria and the repression of even the most timid critics. Those whose break from Stalinism to Trotskyism began with a struggle against these methods and the regime that imposed them could see blind activism as a direct consequence of bureaucratic adventurism, and that it had not an atom of Bolshevism in it. But what of those whose break came later, when Stalinism was frantically discarding its 'inflexible' image in a bid to curry the favour of its intended reformist and bourgeois Popular Front allies? Could not precisely those superficial 'Bolshevik' features be mistaken for the genuine article, especially now that Stalin was hastily discarding them in order to cement his alliance with the 'democratic' imperialists? There have in the history of the Trotskyist movement been not a few petty despots who, with varying degrees of success and opposition, attempted to transplant the apparatus methods of 'left' Stalinism and their Zinovievist precursors in the soil of the Fourth International. Combating such methods and tendencies, which, more often than not, assume a leftist-sectarian political form, is an essential part of the overall struggle to reorient the Trotskyist movement in Britain and internationally. It poses, however, an intimidating task for relative newcomers to the movement, since all too easily they can be induced to suppress their criticisms of the 'regime' and violations of democratic centralism on the demagogic grounds that these are the protests of the middle-class liberal against Bolshevik discipline.

Here indeed, the questions of regime and method, tactics, strategy and programme, theory and practice, become fused, each pointing inescapably to the same conclusion: that in Britain more than possibly any other country, Trotskyism has laboured under the enormous and in fact insurmountable handicap of not having fully assimilated Trotsky's profound analysis of Zinovievism and Third Period Stalinism in all their many-sided aspects.

Trotsky was only too aware of these dangers, as experience had taught him that sectarians quite mistakenly looked upon the enforced isolated position of the Fourth International as a confirmation of their own abstentionist views, and therefore its ranks as a haven from the class struggle. A whole section of the founding programme of the Fourth International was therefore devoted to this most pernicious tendency:

Under the influence of the betrayal by the historical organisations of the proletariat, certain sectarian moods and groupings of various kinds arise or are regenerated at the periphery of the Fourth International. At their base lies a refusal to struggle for partial and transitional demands, that is, for the elementary interests and needs of the working masses, as they are today. Preparing for the revolution means to the sectarians, convincing themselves of the superiority of socialism. They propose turning their backs on the 'old' trade unions, that is, to tens of millions of organised workers - as if the masses could somehow live outside of the conditions of the actual class struggle! They remain indifferent to the inner struggle within reformist organisations [the WRP and Third Period theory of it being merely a 'division of labour' between the right and 'left' - RB] - as if one could win the masses without intervening in their daily strife! They refuse to draw a distinction between bourgeois democracy and fascism ['social fascism', 'corporatism' - RB] - as if the masses could help but feel the difference on every hand! ... These sterile politicians generally have no need of a bridge in the form of transitional demands because they do not intend to cross over to the other shore. They simply dawdle in one place, satisfying themselves with a repetition of the selfsame meagre abstractions... ^[130]

In the case of the WRP leaders, we could more accurately say that they have no need of transitional demands since they live under the illusion that the workers have already crossed over the bridge to the side of the maximum programme of the seizure of power! The result, however, is the same - sterile sectarianism, a noisy, shallow polemic with the traditional leaderships, and an abstention from serious

work in the mass organisations of the class. The tragedy is that all this buffoonery goes under the name of Trotskyism.

This returns us to the question of method. The radical lives on impressions and acts on hunches. Thus because fascists talk of the community of class interests, which are harmonised through the corporate state, and because reformists, even left ones, talk of workers' control as a means of ensuring that workers 'have their say' in the running of the capitalist firm, *Workers Press* constructs a slanderous amalgam between corporatism and reformists advocating class collaboration under the slogan of 'workers' control':

Jones... has long been an advocate of such corporatist-style involvement with the state and the employers... Wilson, Jones, the Institute for Workers' Control, the Common Market law-drafters and the Conservative Central Office all talk of 'worker participation' precisely to hold the working class back and place it under the power of a corporate state. By 'workers' control' they really mean corporatist control over the workers. ^[131]

Once again the ghost of Lassalle's 'one reactionary mass'. It is not enough for *Workers Press* to warn of the reformist illusions disseminated amongst workers by advocates of bogus workers' control. They must be lumped together in quite arbitrary fashion with Tories and the EEC, even though *Workers Press* knows full well that should a real corporate state be established in Britain, the Institute for Workers' Control would, no less than the WRP and other socialist organisations, be repressed as subversive of the new regime. It would then become apparent - only too late - that there was a difference between Jack Jones' 'workers' control' and the 'class harmony' of the fascist corporate state. And here too we should note a parallel with Germany, where the Stalinists denounced as fascist the reformist utopia of 'economic democracy' - at the same time as the fascists were denouncing it as pure Marxism. Ironically, the target of the WRP's abuse has also been guilty of labelling reformist opponents of genuine workers' control as 'corporatists'. The Institute's directors, Ken Coates and Tony Topham, wrote of a Labour Party Executive Committee document on Industrial Democracy that it proved 'there are numerous conscious and *dedicated corporatists* among our leaders'. ^[132] 'Dedicated corporatist' was also the term employed by Stephen Johns to denote the views of Jack Jones, who has collaborated with the Institute along with several other prominent trade union leaders. Thus we have a situation where the WRP attacks Coates and Jones as corporatists, and Coates attacks the Labour Party and TUC right wing as corporatists! Confusion upon confusion, flowing from an utter inability in both cases to comprehend the antagonistic relationship between reformist bureaucracy and the structures established by the corporate state.

Throughout the spring and summer of 1973, the theme that Britain had actually become a corporate state by virtue of the passing by parliament of the Counter-Inflation Act predominated over any other, more realistic approach to the class struggle in Britain. It was reminiscent of the KPD's claim that Weimar Germany had turned fascist following Brüning's decision to cut wages by Presidential decree in the autumn of 1930. The corporate or fascist state is not a set of laws passed by parliament, *but a regime of mass terror imposed on a proletariat that has either been betrayed or defeated in battle*. Even the fantasy-mongers of the SLL did not try to present this picture to the readers of *Workers Press*, but there were nonetheless frequent claims that Britain had become a corporate state; and, moreover, with the full approval of the entire leadership of the official labour movement. *Workers Press* of 30 March spoke of 'the Tory corporate state', and on 2 April, announced 'the corporate state is law'. But what sort of corporate state was it? One that among other things, *permitted the continued publication* of *Workers Press*. If this was corporatism, then could it be so bad after all? So reasoned many German workers who took seriously Stalinist claims that the regime of Brüning represented fascism. They were to receive a terrible - and in many cases fatal - shock when real fascism came to power in January 1933. Here too Royston Bull is one of the chief culprits. He actually talks of the TUC accepting a '*voluntary corporatism*' - sheer gibberish that the *Workers Press* editorial board should be ashamed to print, let alone the SLL Central Committee and its General Secretary Gerry Healy. Voluntary fascism? Healy must be politically unhinged to permit such dangerous word-juggling to confuse the advanced workers who read the paper, expecting it to provide them with a clear analysis of the political situation, and a perspective and policy to fight on.

Instead they are dished up with second-rate radical journalese thinly disguised with a smattering of half-assimilated Marxist phrases. The reformists are to be exposed and demolished by daily salvos of abuse. Jack Jones' position as leader of the 1.5 million-strong Transport Workers Union has not been disturbed in the least by the verbal lashings of Bull and Johns. On the contrary, their effect can only be to alienate

workers who might otherwise be persuaded to listen to a serious Marxist criticism of the role of their leaders. Jones has at various times been accused of wanting to 'build a better corporatist Britain' and of being, like other members of the Institute for Workers Control, a 'corporatist [who] poses as [an] advocate of workers' control'. ^[133]

Problems of tempo began to trouble *Workers Press* towards the middle of 1973. Britain had become a 'Tory corporate state' and yet there were as yet few visible signs of the features traditionally associated with such a regime. So on 26 April, the paper spoke cautiously of 'the first steps towards a corporate state in Britain'. ^[134] Things speeded up more than somewhat on 9 May, when the same Bull revealed to his readers that 'TUC chief Victor Feather opened a campaign in favour of the corporate state at a conference yesterday'. The form this 'campaign' took was subtle in the extreme, and only an expert in corporatism like Bull could have unmasked him. For Feather had disguised his real intentions by *attacking* corporatism:

When people talk of the corporate state they often think of Mussolini. But I don't need to remind anybody that Mussolini banned trade unions as one of the first things he did. That is exactly the opposite of a genuine negotiation between a democratic trade union movement and democratic, government.

Bull knew much better. Mussolini did not ban trade unions, he 'absorbed' them, thus creating the 'fully-fledged corporate state', which here Bull equated with Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. For good measure, Bull accused Feather, a dyed-in-the-wool reformist who, in happier days when corporatism was not in vogue, had given interviews to *Workers Press*, of 'enunciating the principles of the German Labour Front under fascism' - call him a Nazi! That will teach Feather not to 'campaign in favour of the corporate state' under the guise of attacking it. ^[135]

Meanwhile, 'the attempt to disarm the working class is *complete*. The bandwagon towards the corporate state *moves on*.' ^[136] By 1 June, it had slowed down a little, for *Workers Press* spoke of the 'beginnings of a corporate state' and of an 'historic capitulation which will leave the unions 'stripped of all their rights.' ^[137] The possibility that the TUC could actually come into conflict with the corporatist bandwagon never occurred to *Workers Press*, since it depicted Feather and company as not merely its passengers, but as sharing the driving seat! Back in April, the corporate state was 'law'. Now the warning was given that a proposed deal between the TUC and the Tories over wages 'would make the corporate state an established fact.' ^[138]

Despite the continued inability of the TUC and the Tories to clinch such a deal (and it eluded them right up to the fall of the Heath government in the election of 28 February 1974), the reformists' pilgrimage towards corporatism continued to command the attention of *Workers Press*. On 5 June, they 'took another step along the road to the corporate state when they presented their case for a phase three pay rise for hospital workers to the pay board', ^[139] while two days later, the TUC was said to be joining in talks with the government that aimed to 'make the corporate state a reality'. ^[140] On 14 June, however, it was discovered that 'the trade union bureaucrats are finding it more difficult to sell out the interests of the working class by signing a corporatist phase three deal', ^[141] a statement that was cancelled out on 19 June by the assertion that the 'TUC bureaucrats' were surrendering to 'Heath's demands for permanent corporatist controls over trade unions...'. ^[142] On 30 June, there was permitted to slip into *Workers Press* a Marxist definition of the corporate state that exposed as nonsense all previous claims that the reformists not only desired it, but would be placed in charge of it. D Maude wrote of 'the *smashing* of the labour movement and the imposition of the corporate state'. ^[143]

Even amidst the welter of leftist rhetoric, the SLL was not averse to tail-ending the reformists, not excluding their most right-wing representatives. On 5 July, Bull noted that the corporatists of the 'right-wing General and Municipal Workers Union are to put down a motion for the September TUC Congress rejecting the government's economic policy as "unfair and unworkable"'. ^[144] Did Bull ever stop to ask himself how yesterday's corporatists had become today's opponents of corporatism? Apparently not, for *Workers Press* was by 16 July accusing trade union leaders of taking 'another stride in their plans to introduce corporatism into industry'. ^[145]

But other forces than the TUC were striving to establish a corporate state in Britain. Perhaps the most hair-brained of all the notions on this theme to find its way into *Workers Press* was the unearthing of a fascist purpose behind the Tory government's rent and children's allowances scheme introduced in July 1973. These, together with the cut-price butter coupons for recipients of social security benefits, were

described by *Workers Press* as deliberately designed ‘to create a division between such poor people and the workers in trade unions. In this way, the forces are being assembled among those who depend on the state for a right-wing ultimately *fascist*, movement.’ Thus the aged, infirm, disabled and mothers of large families would be blackmailed and drilled into a ‘shock-force against the organised workers’. ^[146] Once again, Marxism is debased by this burlesque on a deadly serious theme. To be sure, Trotsky referred to the bulk of the Nazi voters as ‘human dust’, but he used altogether different terms for the murderous SA and SS. Does *Workers Press* seriously believe that the mass plebeian forces of fascism will come from the recipients of welfare state aid, when fascist movements have without exception selected their main combat cadres from the youth? The notion that the Tories will themselves assemble and set in motion this mass fascist movement also presupposes that the Conservative Party can transform itself into a fascist party, whereas past experience again teaches us (and recent political developments in Britain confirm it) that the ‘revolt of the plebeians’ cannot be led by the leaders and parties of the ‘old system’. This is the appeal of the ‘anti-establishment’ Liberals, and of Enoch Powell, not to speak of the pseudo-populist racialism of the National Front. Has Germany taught us nothing? Did not the KPD insist until almost the very end that the real fascist threat came from the Brünings, Papens and Schleichers? There is evidence that the lessons of the German catastrophe have not been assimilated as they should have been by the WRP. False analogies with Germany, equating Heath with Hitler, abound in *Workers Press*. Then there are the loose uses of the term fascism, as in the case of Stephen Johns, who wrote of a Tory government ‘half-way to dictatorship and hell-bent for the new fascism’. ^[147] The new fascism? Nothing in his article gives the reader a clue as to what Johns means by this. The result is further political confusion arising from a dilettante-ist, flippant attitude towards Marxist theory. No less disturbing are the outright distortions of history perpetrated by the leaders of the movement. Gerry Healy, possibly influenced by the rampant leftism he had unleashed in the SLL, wrote on 30 July 1973:

The old reformist and Stalinist leaderships are utterly incapable of leading the working class to power. Through the policies of *class collaboration* they [the reformists and Stalinists] prepare instead the victory of dictatorship, *as they did in Germany in 1933*. ^[148]

Was that how the KPD Stalinists prepared the defeat of the German working class - through class collaboration? According to Royston Bull, yes. But according to Trotsky, no.

More sophisticated is the revision undertaken by Cliff Slaughter, who studiously avoids using the term corporatist when writing about reformists. He knows it is wrong, and not so far removed from Stalinist ‘social fascism’. However, he too has bent to the party line on this question, though in another way. On 16 November 1973, he performed the considerable feat of writing an article on the Third Period in Germany without once applying the lessons of the consequences of KPD ultra-leftism to the present-day problems and struggles of the working class. And this was an article entitled ‘Political Foundations of the Revolutionary Party’! He contents himself with a long quote from an article by Trotsky on the policy of the KPD, every word of which is an indictment of WRP policy towards the Labour Party and the mass movement generally. But Slaughter manages to give it another direction. He deduces from Trotsky’s extensive criticism of the KPD policy of renouncing the united front with Social Democracy in the name of ‘independent leadership’ that ‘only a party independent of the Stalinist bureaucracy and its interests can open up a revolutionary path for the working class’. ^[149] But such a lesson could have just as easily - more easily in fact - been drawn from the role of Stalinism in the Popular Front. The important lesson from Germany was not just the general one that revolutionaries must be independent of Stalinism, but, rather, under what precise conditions, and with what false policies and tactics, did the KPD lead the German working class to defeat? Once again the particular, the specific, the concrete, the real, is liquidated into the general and the abstract. The lesson is, says Slaughter, that we must be independent of Stalinism. True. But there are times when the revolutionary party must propose and fight to form a united front with the Stalinists, not to speak of the reformists. Slaughter has nothing to say about this question as it applies to today. Instead, he leaps from the Third Period to... Chile, a classic instance of *right*, and not *left*, opportunist policy. And because Slaughter adopts this generalised approach to the Third Period, he falls into the error of identifying Stalinist leftism of 1929-33 with its later left turns, which have a qualitatively different character. ‘This same left talk without any serious preparation for power has characterised the Stalinists ever since, even during their “right” turns.’ ^[150] This is not so. From 1935 onwards, Trotsky considered Stalinism a *counter-revolutionary force*, whereas up to that year, he had regarded it as *bureaucratic centrism* moving to the right away from Bolshevism. Anxious to get away from a concrete discussion of the Third Period, Slaughter glosses over this fundamental change in the

nature of Stalinism, and reduces its tactics to a matter of 'left' or not so 'left' talk. In other words, the rich lessons of the Third Period, the subject of scores of articles by Trotsky, are being obscured by the present ultra-leftism of the WRP, which of necessity has a blind spot when it comes to looking at leftism in the past. The many attacks on the Popular Front - all completely justified - therefore serve to accentuate this one-sided presentation of the history of the Comintern. And we should remember that the Stalinists put the Third Period to an opposite and complementary use, employing its *sectarianism* to boost support for the *Popular Front*. In both cases, the Leninist alternative to the Third Period and the Popular Front is neglected, or, in the case of the Stalinists, deliberately erased from history. Every attack on the Popular Front must be enriched by an exposition of the *Leninist united front*, but this is rarely if ever done, much to the detriment of the political training of younger comrades. If the time comes when the WRP is driven by force of circumstance to revert to this tactic, then its leaders may find either that the majority of their members are openly hostile to it and see it as opportunism, or will simply have no comprehension of what it is and how to apply it. This is the price one pays for neglecting and even distorting history. But perhaps the worst distortion of all was undertaken by Slaughter in a three-part series he wrote for *Workers Press*, 'The WRP and the Transitional Programme'. In the second of these articles, he boldly asserted that, together with the reformists, the German Stalinists, in the period of Hitler's rise to power, constituted the 'greatest weapon' of the bourgeoisie in its attack on the workers' movement. ^[151] Quite apart from the obviously Third Period overtones of Slaughter's contention, it leads on to other questions even more vital for the Trotskyist movement. For if the KPD, already by 1930, had become, alongside the SPD, the 'greatest weapon' of the German ruling class, then Slaughter is obliged to explain how it was that at this time, and for another three years, Trotsky was seeking to reform this 'greatest weapon' of the German bourgeoisie, a weapon that the Nazis tore to shreds with incredible fanaticism and barbarism? How come that Trotsky had not detected what Slaughter now informs us of, that by 1930 the cause was already lost, and that Trotsky was wasting his time struggling to reform the Communist International and its German party? And was this not the line of the ultra-lefts of the day, who spurned the necessary theoretical and practical task of going through to the bitter end with the struggle to save what could be saved of the Communist International? And if it is true that from the very beginning - 1924 - Stalinism shared the counter-revolutionary nature and role of Social Democracy, then one is obliged to put not only a question mark against, but a line right through, all the subsequent work of the Left Opposition, for it flowed from a false, opportunist perspective that remained uncorrected right up to and beyond the foundation of the Fourth International. Uncorrected that is, until the advent of Slaughter and his discovery that already by the early 1930s (and in complete contradiction to Trotsky's estimation) Stalinism had become an openly counter-revolutionary force, that it could therefore not be, as Trotsky had said, bureaucratic centrism.

By putting an equals sign between the SPD and the KPD in the pre-Hitler period - they were both the 'greatest weapon' of the bourgeoisie - Slaughter makes himself a sitting target for the onslaught Trotsky initially directed against the German ultra-lefts of the day:

It would be a criminal act on the part of the Opposition Communists to take, like Urbahns and Co, to the road of creating a new Communist Party, before making some serious efforts to change the course of the old party... To raise now the question of a third party [as Slaughter was doing, with his statement that even before 1933, the KPD leadership were the 'greatest weapon' of the German ruling class - RB] is to counterpose oneself on the eve of a great historic decision to the millions of Communist workers who are dissatisfied with the leadership but who, from a feeling of self-preservation, hold on to the party... We must mercilessly expose ultra-radical capitulators; and demand from the 'leaders' clear answers to the question what to do, and we must offer our answer, for the entire country, for every region, every city, every district, every factory... Left Oppositionists are not intermediaries between the KPD and SPD. They are the soldiers of Communism, its agitators, its propagandists and organisers. *All eyes on the Communist Party! We must explain to it, we must convince it!* ^[152]

Poor Trotsky! Lacking the inspired guidance of Slaughter, here he was, futilely training his eyes on, and seeking to convince, the... 'greatest weapon' of the capitalist class. This is where the WRP's ultra-leftism is taking its membership - not only away from the organised workers' movement today, but towards a completely false history of the Fourth International and the world labour movement. This is the price of Healy's domination of British Trotskyism. ^[153]

Quite apart from a frequent tendency to falsify the role of the Stalinists in the German defeat, one often finds an erroneous presentation of the economic conditions prevailing in the period of Hitler's rise to

power. The inflation of 1922-23 is brought forward to the late 1920s and early 1930s, years which in fact saw the pursuance of a rigorously deflationary policy by the governments of the day, with cuts in spending on welfare, and reductions in both wages and prices. Complete confusion on this question reigned in the resolution on trade union work passed at the SLL special conference of 2-3 March 1968, which stated:

In the middle and later 1920s there was an enormous growth of inflation and unemployment. This paved the way for monopoly takeovers on a vast scale. They in turn almost immediately began to finance the Hitler movement. ^[154]

Almost everything is wrong here. Firstly, there was no inflation in the middle and later 1920s. The hyper-inflation of 1923 was halted by early 1924, and thereafter the mark retained its world parity, even during the banking crisis of the summer of 1931. The growth of unemployment dates from 1928 and the onset of the decline in the domestic German boom. The 1926 jobless figure of two million was, in the main, the result of the rationalisation movement and the concentration of monopolies (discussed in Chapter XIV) and had nothing to do with a (non-existent) inflation. Finally, this incredibly ignorant statement places the mergers of 1925-26 (IG Farben, the Steel Trust, etc) at the end of the decade and the beginning of the 1930s, when the crisis brought this tendency towards concentration to a temporary halt.

In reality, the 'enormous' growth in unemployment followed the mergers, and did not precede them. Whence do these historical distortions flow? Primarily, from a desire to draw facile, glib parallels between late Weimar Germany and the prevailing political and economic situation in Britain, parallels that help to sustain for the more gullible and shallow-minded the sectarian policies and false perspectives of the WRP leadership. Thus Healy declared at a public meeting that Heath would fight inflation 'just as Hitler fought it' - the only trouble being that Hitler's arrival in power *brought to an end* four years of rigidly deflationary government economic policy and ushered in a period of state-backed economic expansionism, and policies that contained highly inflationary elements. Once again historical truth, one of the most precious possessions of the Marxist vanguard, was sacrificed to a cheap political sensationalism that, far from preparing the working class for the coming fight against the real (and not imaginary) fascists, disarmed it.

The WRP itself was in fact launched on a programmatic document which distorted the history of the Comintern and especially of Stalinism. It stated that 'Stalin and the bureaucracy in 1923-24 imposed the programme of "socialism in one country"' on the Communist International. ^[155] But as all those familiar with the writings of Trotsky on this question should know, Stalin only propounded his theory of 'socialism in one country' in the *autumn of 1924*, when he revised the text of his *Problems of Leninism*, which in *April 1924* had contained the statement that socialism could not be built in a single country. The drafters of this document projected the Stalinist policy of socialism in one country back into a phase of the Comintern when the issue was by no means decided, before the turning points of the defeat of the German revolution (November 1923) and the death of Lenin (January 1924). Similar schematism vitiates the section dealing with later Comintern episodes. Quite correctly the resolution refers to the 'role of the British Communist Party in covering up for the betrayal by the TUC General Council of the 1926 General Strike and the surrender to Chiang Kai-shek resulting in the defeat of the Chinese Revolution'. ^[156] In other words, these defeats and betrayals flowed from a *right-opportunist* course. But the precise nature of the policies by which the Kremlin bureaucracy betrayed the German workers to Hitler is not only left obscure, *but lumped together with the Popular Frontism of the Spanish Stalinists*: 'It was the same Stalinist bureaucracy which led the German working class into the defeat by Hitler in 1933 *and the Spanish workers to defeat by Franco*.' ^[157] The same bureaucracy - yes, up to a point. *But not the same policy and tactics*. The document had no reservations about describing the right-opportunist errors of 1926-27, but was silent about the left-opportunism of 1933. Again, the blind spot, again the vulgar telescoping of qualitatively different stages in the decomposition of the Comintern under Stalin's leadership. And that is why it is not enough to say that the bureaucracy was the 'same' in 1926, 1933 and 1936-39. Trotsky up to 1934 characterised the politics of the Stalinist bureaucracy at bureaucratic centrism. In the USSR, he stood for the reform of the apparatus, not to overthrow it by a violent political revolution. The year of 1934 saw Trotsky changing his position on both these crucial questions, yet they are totally ignored in the resolution, the document which today provides the programmatic foundation for the WRP.

Even more alarming is the characterisation of counter-revolutionary Stalinism as centrism in the 1972 SLL conference resolution: 'Trade union militants recruited to the Stalinist parties are diverted through

conscious use of centrist policies... to produce defeats for the working class.’ ^[158] Is Stalinism therefore a tendency which, as in the period between 1924 and 1934, oscillates between a reformist and revolutionary line? Such slapdash thinking and use of terminology can disarm party comrades in the struggle against Stalinism, which is nothing else than a *counter-revolutionary force*. It is as if nothing has changed since 1933, the year when Trotsky began to revise his estimation of Stalinism as a centrist tendency, *the year in which he issued his call for the building of the Fourth International*.

This highly dangerous characterisation of Stalinism as a *centrist tendency* is not a recent aberration. As long ago as 1966, the SLL November Conference document, *British Perspectives*, said that the:

British Stalinists are making a great bid for what they call ‘leadership of the left’. In reality this is, of course, *nothing more than an attempt to reproduce a new type of centrist leadership*... The Stalinists aim to be the leaders of the new betrayal... ^[159]

What is this ‘new type of centrist leadership’ which Stalinism is allegedly capable of organising and heading? Does its appearance mean that after more than three decades of openly counter-revolutionary activity, it is now prepared and able to swing to the left, towards (though not of course, into) the camp of revolutionary Communism? For that is what centrism is, a tendency which vacillates between revolutionary Marxism and open reformism. It can be travelling in either direction. Stalinism, despite its periods of leftist adventurism, evolved progressively over the years towards support for the imperialist *status quo*. This is why Trotsky characterised it, up until 1934, as *bureaucratic centrism*. But all that changed with Stalin’s entry into the League of Nations, his support for French foreign policy, the Popular Front and the strangling of revolutions in France and then Spain. Can it be that now, Stalinism is turning back to the left again? This is the only conclusion one can draw from the 1966 SLL document in question. Nor does the confusion on the nature of centrism end here. In this very same document, we also find Simon-pure Fabians being characterised as centrists, only in this instance they are said to be moving to the *right* away from previously more left positions:

Two years of Labour government have witnessed an important polarisation to the right of all the centrist forces, that is the old-type centrists, such as Michael Foot, Silverman and Co and the newer ones who were elected in 1964-66, such as Heffer, Newens, Bidwell and others.

Reading on further, we learn however that these same ‘centrists’ (a term which for Marxists denotes an individual or group moving either *away from* or *towards* Communism) ‘are *so thoroughly imbued with reformism* and opportunism that at this stage they absolutely refuse to make the slightest break from Wilson’. ^[160] If this last characterisation is correct - and we think that it is - then none of the Labour MPs named could have at the same time been centrist, for a centrist, we repeat, is one who is *in transition between the two poles of Social Democracy and revolutionary Marxism*. What these gentlemen do represent is of course *left Social Democracy*, a tendency the SLL-WRP usually dissolves away by the use of quotation marks around left. Sometimes the same reformist leader is honoured with two or even more designations. Thus former TGWU chief Frank Cousins was in 1963 correctly characterised, along with Wilson, as a ‘left reformist’, ^[161] while by the Special Conference in March 1968 he had moved *left* to become a ‘centrist leader’. ^[162] Even more confusing for the League’s members was the designation of Cousins *at the same conference*, on another resolution as ‘a “left” trade union leader’ ^[163] - in other words, not even a genuine left reformist!

By the autumn of the same year, on the eve of the aborted national engineers’ strike that the SLL leadership believed would usher in the first chapter of the British revolution, the SLL Political Committee referred to ‘centrists in the Labour movement... who cling to the policy of a middle or “left” reformist road’. ^[164] Then winding up this exercise in confusion-mongering, the London Area SLL conference resolution of February 1969 had Foot featuring as a ‘centrist’. ^[165] Which all goes to prove that you cannot play around with the vocabulary and terminology of Marxism and at the same time hope to train a cadre to fight reformism, centrism and Stalinism in the workers’ movement. These terms have a precise meaning for Trotskyists, a meaning that has been etched in blood in Germany, Spain, China and Chile. Light-mindedness about the use of the Marxist vocabulary in the middle and later 1960s, when the term ‘centrist’ became simply a word of abuse, led in the 1970s to a similar employment of ‘corporatism’. Indeed, it was the very same leaders who had been ‘centrists’ between 1966 and 1969 who now became, in 1972 and 1973, the apostles of this latter ideology. Those who had been, by implication, idealised in one period as being more left than they really were, in the succeeding period equally wrongly presented as conscious and willing accomplices in the destruction of the trade unions and the institution of the corporate (fascist) state. Such political instability, such methodological impressionism, simply cannot

make any serious inroads into the broad layers of workers still under the influence of one or other wings of the bureaucracy. To fight and defeat reformism, you must know what it is you are fighting, otherwise, all the sacrifice and devotion in the world will result in this same reformism not only emerging unscathed from the conflict, but even strengthened. Here too there is much that still has to be learned from the experience of Third Period Stalinism.

This question of the nature and history of Stalinism goes right to the core of the problems of the Trotskyist movement in Britain, and finds a section of the leadership headed by Gerry Healy and supported - and even outflanked - by a team of journalists from the bourgeois press not only obscuring but actually distorting the content of Stalinism and Trotsky's analysis of it. One direct consequence of this has been the SLL's readiness to endorse uncritically the actions and policies of the Vietnamese and Chinese Stalinists, even though the leaders of these movements were responsible for the murder of hundreds of Trotskyists in the early postwar period. All this was brushed aside as the Vietnamese Stalinists were forced to adopt a left line under the direct military attacks of imperialism. As in the case of Pablo, a left turn by a section of the bureaucracy threw some Trotskyists off balance, and found them liquidating the Fourth International into the left flank of counter-revolutionary world Stalinism. So we can see that the question of Germany and the Third Period is right at the heart of the struggle to rebuild the Fourth International today against all tendencies which liquidate the vanguard into either the mass or into alien political movements, however 'left' they may appear to be at any one given time. Sooner or later, this liquidationist current must challenge the very foundations of the Fourth International, and it is for this fight that serious comrades in the WRP must prepare. Sometimes the 'old' and the 'new' Trotskyism confront each other across the pages of the same *Workers Press*. On 3 August 1973, an obituary to Walter Ulbricht referred to 'Stalin's policy of denouncing the Social Democrats as "social fascists" - the policy which prevented a united struggle of the German working class against the fascists'. On the very next page, the reader discovers that Ulbricht still lives, for there he can read that the TUC leaders 'in answer to the demand that a Labour government is returned to power by revolutionary working-class action... hold out the sop that unions would be allowed to nominate their own men to help organise the counter-revolution... they suggest politely that officials of the new, corporatist unions could sit in the boardrooms of the corporate state too'. ^[166] The contrast between this mindless babbling and the sober appraisal of social fascism on the facing page must be excruciating for all members of the WRP who take Trotskyism - and their revolutionary responsibilities - at all seriously.

But it is hard to take the offerings of Bull and Johns at all seriously. On 16 August, Bull suddenly discovered that everything he had written about the trade union leaders being corporatists was rubbish. On that day, he reported that 'the great Tory campaign to get trade unions to desert the fundamental principle of independence from the state and instead turn themselves into corporatist appendages of Tory anti-working class legislation has met an appropriate end'. Who had been responsible for administering the *coup de grâce*? Surely not Feather, whom Bull had likened to Robert Ley of the Nazi Labour Front? Yet Bull had to admit that the TUC's policy of expelling trade unions failing to de-register from the register set up by the Industrial Relations Act had led to Tory anti-union policy suffering 'a complete fiasco'. Those unions expelled for registering that subsequently de-registered were described by Bull as having 'abandoned their flirtation with corporatism' - which meant that the TUC trade unions never did 'flirt' with it. Moreover, Bull declared that 'only 25 [unions] remain in corporatist collaboration with the government by staying on the register and outside the TUC'. ^[167] Did Bull - or anyone else for that matter - ask himself what the TUC 'corporatists' were doing expelling the registering 'corporatists'? But by 27 October, with the foundation of the WRP only a matter of days away, the old line was back with a vengeance. Not only were Tories out 'to smash unions' but were receiving the full support of the trade union leaders in doing so. Stephen Johns wrote that the Tories had 'a trade union leadership in the palm of their hand, a leadership which in struggle after struggle, *has proved it prefers the corporate state* [by Johns' definition a state 'on the Hitler-Mussolini model' - RB] to a political battle by the working class to force the Tory government to resign'. ^[168] The events leading up to the resignation and electoral defeat of the Tories, precipitated by an *official* decision of the NUM 'corporatists' to recommend to their members a 'yes' vote to their request for strike action on the union's claim, would soon prove how little Johns understood the British workers' movement and its leaders. The WRP itself was launched on the basis of this one-sided estimation of the relationship between the trade unions and the state. The resolution adopted unanimously at the founding conference on 4 November 1973 declared that 'the reformist Labour leaders, *tied to the state and the monopolies*, actually become the instruments for this attack, on the unions and the destruction of basic working-class rights'. ^[169] Did it not occur to the

drafters of this resolution that the trade union leaders could also become a target of a Tory attack on the trade unions? But that would mean the reformists actually being driven into leading some form of opposition to the Tories, and, in turn, to unheard-of complications for the new party, involving even the use of the united front tactic. And by this time, the traditional call for the TUC to organise and lead action against the Tory government had been dropped in favour of a united front 'from below' on the basis of workers joining the All Trades Union Alliance. So instead of the united front tactic, there was held up the comforting prospect that 'the treachery of the Labour, trade union and Stalinist leadership is being *daily ever more openly demonstrated, and one section after another is forced to take up the question of revolutionary leadership*'.^[170] This was the theme of Johns, who wrote on 8 November:

The Tories have already prepared for a confrontation with the active collaboration of all union leaders under phases one and two. Now they are counting on the leadership for further collaboration in order to take one section on at a time - and smash them. Workers must reject the union chiefs' suicidal policy and fight to build a new leadership in their unions.^[171]

Just like that. Even though towards the end of 1973, corporatism became overshadowed somewhat in *Workers Press* by panic-mongering on the non-existent prospects of an impending military coup and civil war, the theme was not totally neglected. On 26 November, the TUC was charged with 'willingness to sit in the jaws of the corporate state', and of simultaneously 'taking the road of the corporate state' and 'embracing the spirit of corporatism' - all because it advocated the state registration of workers and employers in the building industry.^[172]

The Acid Test

The fuel crisis and NUM overtime ban of the winter of 1973-74 put the WRP's theory of corporatism to the acid test. If there was even a particle of truth in it, then not only the trade union, but also the Labour Party leaders would side openly with the Tories in Heath's alleged plot to stage a military coup, which by January 1974, when the army began its security operations at Heathrow airport after an alert concerning a possible Arab rocket attack, had become the main preoccupation of *Workers Press*. On 19 December, Alex Mitchell ventured the prophecy that the two lines of action open were either 'Bonapartist dictatorship... or... the taking of power by the working class'. In other words, Britain was back in the revolutionary situation that had been predicted by the SLL as far back as 1968. As for the entire official leadership of the trade unions and Labour Party, there was no doubt where they would be in such an impending clash - 'right with the Tories and the vicious onslaught on every working-class family'.^[173] The prospect was a Tory-Labour coalition unleashing civil war on the working class, a fantasy that existed only inside the disoriented brain of its inventor. The trouble was, this fantasy now became the line of the WRP for the next three months, and a means for systematically confusing and demoralising many members of the new party seriously struggling to give leadership to the working class. Once again, the WRP's false perspectives prevented them from doing so. Sectarianism now ran riot. The WRP's 'Policy for the Crisis' is a classic instance of how ultra-leftism in practice protects the reformist enemy it is trying to weaken:

In the election the working class must fight to compel Labour candidates to carry out a programme of socialist demands, *in practice they will not do this*. In this way the role of the reformists *can be exposed explicitly in front of the working class*.^[174]

So the reformist leaders were to be exposed after they had failed to carry out the maximum programme of the WRP! This presupposes a mass revolutionary consciousness in the working class that will reject Social Democracy for not carrying out the socialist revolution. And in such a situation, one hopes the WRP will not be calling on the working class to vote Labour, but standing at the head of a mass movement millions strong and on the verge of taking power itself.

It should be self-evident that reformists can best be 'exposed' around their own programme, that workers will begin to break from their reformist leaders when they see these leaders retreating from the demands on which they have been returned to office by the mass votes and struggle of the working class. Even more absurd is the WRP's statement that the socialist demands are put on reformist leaders only to expose them. Isn't the WRP serious about fighting the class enemy? Is the united front only a manoeuvre to 'expose' the reformists, or is it primarily a bloc with reformist workers and leaders against the class enemy? How many workers will rally to a call that is explicitly declared to be purely for the purpose of exposure? The WRP found out in the election of 28 February 1974, when its nine parliamentary candidates were correctly spurned by the working class in its healthy desire to defeat the Tory class

enemy. They had no time for a party which made as the main aim of its intervention the fight to 'expose' Labour when that same party was daily ranting about the dangers of a Tory military putsch. What would the WRP leaders have said about the following extract from an article by someone whom today they might well charge with being a 'left cover' for reformism?

We cannot force our programme upon the masses mechanically... As long as we have not convinced you [the reformist workers] and attracted you to our side, we are ready to follow this [democratic] road to the end... make your party open up a real struggle for a strong democratic government... let it arouse millions of workers: let it conquer power through the drive of the masses. This, at any rate, would be a serious attempt of struggle against fascism and war. We Bolsheviks would retain the right to explain to the workers the insufficiency of democratic slogans: we could not take upon ourselves the political responsibility for the Social Democratic government; *but we would honestly help you in the struggle for such a government; together with you we would repel all attacks of bourgeois reaction. More than that: we would bind ourselves before you not to go beyond the limits of democracy (real democracy) so long as the majority of the workers has not consciously placed itself on the side of the revolutionary dictatorship.* ^[175]

Nothing about a 'socialist programme', or about exposure. Only a sincere fight alongside but politically independent of the reformist workers and their leaders to secure the election of a Social Democratic government, a government which, when formed, would be defended by Communist and reformist workers alike against the attacks of reaction. Nothing either about 'bringing down' this reformist government, before such time as the majority of workers have consciously gone over to Communism - a situation which certainly never prevailed in 1969, when the SLL made this slogan its official policy.

The WRP had no need of such a tactic. Everything was made beautifully simple by the fact that:

Britain is being plunged irrevocably into a revolutionary crisis without parallel. It dwarfs the May-June struggles in France of 1968. It is not comparable at all [sic!] to the 1926 General Strike, but is a negation of the Chartist uprising of 1848. ^[176]

Which might have been comforting to the national pride of the WRP philosophers, but, as so often in the past, offered no serious perspective for either the working class or the WRP to fight on. What was to be done about the Labour Party and TUC in this 'revolutionary conflict'? No answer was forthcoming. The recipe offered was 'build councils of action on a local, regional and national basis' - councils that did not exist, and will not until the mass of workers - members of the Labour Party and the TUC trade unions - decides to build them. Such bodies will not arise on the instructions of a party, least of all when it commands the support of a mere handful of workers. Stephen Johns had already explained why no united front call went out to the leaders of the real, as opposed to imaginary, mass organisations of the working class. They were all led by corporatists:

They are all part of the same bureaucracy, committed to the preservation of capitalism... These men *started* as reformists, devoted to the belief that capitalism can be changed or improved peacefully... *In the epoch of capitalist decay... these men move more and more towards corporatism - the total merging of the trade unions and the bureaucracy with the institutions of capitalist rule.* Feather is a *dedicated corporatist*, but the 'lefts' are travelling in the same direction only two steps behind. ^[177]

Johns finally arrived at a worked-out theory of social fascism. Feather was an orthodox 'social corporatist', but in hot pursuit behind him were the 'left social corporatists' - men like Scanlon and Jones. And since they, along with their Labour Party counterparts, were hell-bent on integrating the unions into the state, how could there be any question of a united front with them? And thus reasoned the Stalinists of the KPD in the Third Period. Johns therefore demands the 'defeat' of 'the reformist trade union bureaucracy and replacing it with a revolutionary Marxist leadership. This fight means building the WRP to lead the working class.' ^[178] But neither Johns, Bull, Healy nor anyone else in the WRP leadership has the faintest notion of how this is to be done. It is pure demagoguery to talk of 'defeating the reformist trade union bureaucracy' unless at the same time you are prepared to put the demand on that bureaucracy that it break with the bourgeoisie and the capitalist state and begin the struggle for a Labour government, and, moreover, unless you pledge yourself to *defend* the organisations and leaders of the workers' movement if and when they come under attack from the class enemy. Johns cannot envisage this happening - they are 'right with the Tories', 'dedicated corporatists' and the like - so therefore he cannot find a road to the workers who still prefer the leadership of Feather to the WRP. Barely one month after Johns wrote these lines he was sharing the platform with, amongst others, a Tory and a Scottish

Nationalist as a WRP parliamentary candidate at the general election. The main purpose of his standing, he told the meeting, was to expose the Labour and Communist Parties. This was the WRP's 'united front' in action, and in Johns' case, received the punishment it deserved. John's won 52 votes, the second lowest vote in the entire election's 630 seats.

Other Third Period residues surfaced in this period. The appearance of tanks at Heathrow was described gleefully by Alex Mitchell, *Workers Press* editor, as 'driving another nail into the coffin of reformism'.^[179] Much the same thing was said by the KPD leaders about Hitler's assumption of power in Germany - only many of them ended up in coffins along with the reformists. Mitchell's cynical remark, which displays not the least class feeling or sense of solidarity with other sections of the workers' movement, is in fact a confession of bankruptcy. The WRP cannot finish off reformism, so let the tanks do it instead. Then after the tanks... us. Mitchell possibly did not in fact believe what he wrote, for the next day he had the dead and nearly buried reformists being 'kicked into line' by the Tories. In other words, the Tories still had a use for them, and were not going to stage a putsch - unless the reformists had been allotted posts in the post-coup Junta. And if that were the perspective, then it did not accord with the frequent analogies being made with Chile, where reformists and Stalinists had been murdered by the military junta. The simple truth was that neither Mitchell nor Healy knew what was going on, since both were completely hooked on two false perspectives that now collided, the first being the reformists instituting the corporate state - 'the corporate state TUC' of Stephen Johns - and then helping to run it; and the second, a variation on the Bonapartist theme elaborated at the SLL's 1972 annual conference of an imminent military coup which would 'crush the working class' and presumably even its (corporatist) organisations and leaders.

This conjuncture led to the most monstrous theoretical absurdities. On 19 February, the Heath government was said to have 'centred' its 'general election policy on police-military dictatorship', while Heath himself had allegedly 'spoken out openly about his plans to introduce the corporate state in Britain', overlooking entirely the paper's statement of *10 months previously* that the 'corporate state is law'. So the Tories were seeking a *parliamentary mandate* for both the establishment of a corporate state (that already existed, sanctioned by the TUC and the Labour Party leaders), and for a military-police coup. For as *Workers Press* explained, 'as the crisis deepens, this corporatist state can only be maintained by police-military dictatorship'.^[180] This is akin to saying that Hitler needed to stage a 'military-police' coup to supplement his already established fascist regime! But if corporatism means the *destruction* of the workers' organisations, *against whom or what will the 'police-military' coup be directed?* Again we must conclude that these confusions flow from a serious *underestimation* of the counter-revolutionary role and nature of fascism (corporatism), which, as past history has proved beyond all doubt, renders subsequent military coups superfluous. Indeed, the only two army actions under fascism of any note have been directed *against* the existing regime, namely the abortive July 1944 putsch in Germany and the General Spínola coup in Portugal of April 1974.

The attempt to sustain these two mutually exclusive (and false) perspectives also led to the most tortuous journalistic gyrations. Speculating on the possibility of a sharp break in the previously cordial relations between the reformist bureaucracy and the ruling class (a development that *Workers Press* increasingly disregarded), the right-wing publicist Peregrine Worsthorpe wrote in the *Sunday Telegraph* on 30 December 1973 that 'militant trade unionists... may well find themselves less often in Downing Street and more often in other less comfortable Crown properties'. In other words, the *TUC leaders* could be heading for the same fate that befell their German counterparts in 1933. But Alex Mitchell, writing strictly on the WRP's leftist line, saw things differently. Apparently this experienced Fleet Street journalist labours under the delusion that *shop stewards* are in the habit of calling at 10 Downing Street, for he commented on Worsthorpe's article that 'this is the language of class war set in a context of "red plots", provocations and the jailing of *trade union militants*'.^[181] Thus the implications of Worsthorpe's remarks - that the bourgeoisie could be considering spurning the TUC's proffered hand of class-collaboration (of the 'militant trade unionists') are lost, and the banal conclusion drawn that the main - indeed only - thrust will be directed at the rank and file. Again the same leftism, again the same inability to understand the contradictory development of the relations between the bourgeoisie and the organised workers' movement.

The WRP's embarrassment was all too obvious. On 12 January, there crept back into the pages of *Workers Press* - rather shamefacedly - the long-discarded call for the TUC to organise a General Strike. References to corporatism vanished as if by magic. Even Bull and Johns gave the word a well-

earned rest. A special TUC conference of union executives, called for 16 January to discuss the economic crisis, was mercilessly attacked, as were the Stalinists for supporting it. They were charged with 'attempting to divert attention [to the conference]... the most extreme and clear example of counter-revolution... a conference of trade union leaders who have *already proved* they are incapable of fighting the Tory government is not the answer'. If the working class could not turn to its own leaders and mass organisations, what then was the answer? 'The question posed... is one of building the WRP...' [182] But if the workers don't yet feel ready to join...? The WRP gave its own answer when on 12 January, *Workers Press* came out with a call in the name of the ATUA to 'lobby the TUC'. *The WRP had joined the 'counter-revolution'*. Perspectives and policies were being revised and discarded almost by the hour, and without any acknowledgement that such changes had taken place. Similar confusion reigned about the role of Powell. On 18 January it was stated that Powellism had become 'the adopted policy of the Tory party'. Yet at the same time, Powell's aim was said to be 'to get rid of the "soft" Tories and lead the party in a Bonapartist administration which will rule by emergency decrees, all backed by the armed forces and armed police'. Now this was the same policy that the existing Heath leadership were already said by *Workers Press* to be carrying out. And the plot thickened when the same article declared that 'Powell's opposition to a general election... does not mean he is opposed to Tory policy'. [183] How could he be, when Tory policies were, according to the *Workers Press*, Powell's policies too? Was there a split within the Tory party, and if so, what was it about? Its crude conception of dictatorship prevented the WRP from seeing that Powell was moving off in search of the plebeian forces out of which fascist movements are made. Far from being an advocate of 'Bonapartism' and rule by decree and armed forces, Powell seeks to broaden the base of capitalist rule through demagoguery, by verbal defence of trade unions, and by populist-flavoured nationalism. This was the meaning of his demonstrative decision to vote Labour. The WRP entirely misconstrued Powell as a reactionary Tory who wants to smash the working class down with the army and police. That was not how Hitler did it in Germany (though the author is not suggesting that Powell is a fascist). By the next day, Heath had stolen Powell's Bonapartist thunder. Moreover, he was going to fuse his planned Bonapartism with an already existing corporatism, as John Spencer explained - though not without some embarrassment: 'As the crisis deepens, this corporatist state can only be maintained by police-military dictatorship...' Heath had spoken of the need for a 'new form of partnership between management and labour in industry', and Spencer took this to imply a plan that was 'thoroughly corporatist, and though it is *not* a fascist scheme, it has many *similarities* with the *Labour Front* set up by Hitler's infamous lieutenant Dr Ley'. [184]

Determined to prove that the Tories were performing the role played by the Nazis in Germany, the emergence of Powell as an open enemy of the Heath leadership had *Workers Press* floundering. In the issue of 16 February, the front page headline proclaimed that the Tories were 'out to *smash* unions' (thereby establishing a fascist state), while on the back page, the paper informed its bewildered readers that 'when Powell attacks the Tory Party leadership it is because it *pulls back* from an all-out confrontation with the working class involving the destruction of living standards'. [185] So the Tories were ready to 'smash the trade unions', but not prepared to cut wages. Curiouser and curiouser...

No more illuminating were Gerry Healy's comments on Powell at a meeting on 27 February 1974. From neglecting the danger of Powellism in the pre-election campaign, and seeing the fascist threat as coming from the Tories (Heath will 'cure inflation' like Hitler did in Germany) and, by implication, the TUC 'corporatists', the WRP swung over to the other extreme and embraced a perspective that totally obliterated the two main political parties of the working and ruling class. 'The two-party system is breaking up', predicted Healy. 'The conflict will be between the WRP and the [as yet non-existent - RB] Powellite movement.' Once again, the possibility of a united front tactic being employed with the mass workers' organisations was ruled out. After all, they are 'breaking up'. Healy offered instead the seemingly revolutionary, but in practice extremely reactionary slogan 'it's us against the fascists'. [186] As for the working class, and how to win it for a principled struggle against reaction and racialism - not a word, unless it is assumed they will crush Powellism by casting their votes for the WRP's projected 500 candidates at the next general election.

Theoretical decomposition had by now set in even among the paper's more talented and politically advanced writers. Spencer was at pains to distinguish between fascism and corporatism, and yet had drawn similarities between corporatism and the Nazi Labour Front. Who would have believed that this gibberish could have been written by the same man who in an article on Portugal in May 1973 called its regime the 'Portuguese version of the corporate state' and a 'hated fascist regime', thereby equating the

two terms as several WRP journalists had done before him. ^[187] That the *Workers Press* could, when it so chose, give a perfectly sound Marxist description of the corporate state was demonstrated on 22 February, when an article on Powell said that he intended to ‘smash the trade unions and set up an exclusively white Britain on corporatist lines’. ^[188] Then, on the very eve of the election, Michael Banda detected in the Labour Party manifesto an ‘insidious corporatism’ whose contours were wisely left unexplored. ^[189]

But we must explore this anti-Trotskyist theory to the end, to the point where workers pick it up and give it reactionary interpretations that even experts like Johns and Bull have so far been unable to devise. A miner told a *Workers Press* reporter shortly after the 28 February 1974 general election: ‘What was said on the front page of *Workers Press* is true - the *Labour Party* is a Tory Trojan Horse sent into the working class.’ ^[190] Now *Workers Press* had called the *Labour Government* a Tory Trojan Horse - implying that within the Labour Cabinet was a Tory government functioning and making Wilson do its bidding. This worker had taken the ultra-left line a stage further and had the Tories actually setting up the Labour Party and then ‘sending it into the working class’ - in 1906 to be precise. Marxists have always regarded the formation of the Labour Party as a tremendous conquest of the British working class, and one to be defended. The logic of this worker’s statement - printed without comment - is that being a Tory creation, the Labour Party should not be defended by the working class, and that the sooner it is broken up, and its hidden occupants revealed, the better. But the same applies to the trade unions, of which the Labour Party was the creation and the political expression. *Are they Tory Trojan Horses too?*

And so we arrive at the same position as is adopted by the International Socialists on the Soviet Union, that it is not a workers’ state, since it is ruled by a corrupt bureaucracy, and that no worker should defend it from imperialism. It is in fact an imperialist Trojan Horse. Here is the theoretical point of contact not only with Third Period Stalinism, which also looked with contempt on the past gains of the working class, but with that petit-bourgeois, anti-Communist tendency of ‘state capitalism’ which dominates the International Socialism group. Should we find it surprising therefore that a leading member of IS - Nigel Harris - has evolved a theory of corporatism remarkably similar to that peddled in the pages of *Workers Press* by petit-bourgeois radicals Johns and Bull? As varieties of corporatism Harris (who incidentally upholds the theory that the USSR is an imperialist state) specifies two distinct types, ‘Right and Left’. He speaks in the same breath of a Social Democratic corporatism based on the “self-socialising” of private capital’ and of ‘corporatist elements in Fascism and Nazism’. As a leading exponent of the former variety he names Anthony Crosland, the Labour leader, while corporatism is also detected, much after the manner of Banda (though two years before him) in a Labour Party statement of 1957, *Industry and Society*, which declared that ‘under increasingly professional managements, large firms are as a whole serving the nation well’. ^[191] One can imagine how Bull or Johns would have seized on this tasty morsel as proof of Labour Party ‘corporatism’. Unfortunately, the state capitalist Harris has beaten them to it. The theory of ‘corporatism’ is by no means confined, however, to the ‘state capitalist’ wing of IS. Roger Protz, one-time editor of the SLL youth paper *Keep Left*, and until the summer of 1974 editor of *Socialist Worker*, elaborated for the radical weekly *Time Out* a version of the theory which places him very close to the Healy - Bull - Johns school of leftism:

There is a simple, if stark, choice facing the new Labour government: socialism or corporatism. Harold Wilson’s ministerial broadcast last week showed that he is ready to continue down the rocky road towards corporatism...’

Protz also seems to share the WRP’s illusion that pressure from below can force the corporatist Labour Party along the path to socialism, for he concludes his article thus:

If the movement that stopped *In Place of Strife* can be rebuilt and broadened into a campaign based on nationalising the commanding heights of the economy under workers’ control [Protz, like the WRP, rejects workers’ management - RB], then Labour could be forced to change track and move back up the corporate path towards the signpost that says ‘socialism’. ^[192]

Or as the *Workers Press* says: ‘Make Labour carry out socialist policies.’

Nigel Harris is not the only revisionist to have embraced an anti-Marxist conception of corporatism. Tariq Ali of the Pabloite International Marxist Group also sees in reformist class collaboration (or what he terms ‘consensus government’) the essence of corporatism and the corporate state:

The trend in Western Europe today is a trend towards consensus government, towards a corporate state... We have the Grand Coalition in Bonn [the CDU - SPD coalition broken up by the

formation of the SPD - Liberal coalition after the West German elections of September 1969 - RB]; the tacit coalition in France; a consensus government in Britain. ^[193]

Note that like Harris - and also Bull and Hammond of the WRP - for Ali *corporatism is a variant on the theme of class collaboration between reformist bureaucracy and the bourgeoisie*. Once again therefore we see the historical lineage of this false theory, which comprises a mixture of petit-bourgeois radicalism and Third Period Stalinism. ^[194]

Let us look a little more closely at some of the political conclusions drawn by the Pabloite and other revisionists from the impressionistic theory that the organisations of the working class (trade union and political) are becoming incorporated into the capitalist status quo (what Ali calls 'consensus' politics or 'corporatism'). Ernest Mandel says the following:

The development of this [revolutionary] consciousness occurred first of all among the students, for a very simple reason: because the traditional organisations of the workers' movement are profoundly bureaucratised and *long since coopted into bourgeois society*. When the workers' movement does not erect multiple barriers against the penetration of bourgeois ideology into the working class, most of the workers succumb... However, when among students who are a larger minority, they can free themselves by individual thought from the constant manipulation and mental conditioning of the great public-opinion-moulding instruments in the service of bourgeois society. ^[195]

From this false analysis of the contradictory nature of the traditional workers' organisations - Mandel sees only their incorporation into capitalism, and excludes the ability of the working class to use them as imperfect weapons of struggle against capitalism - Mandel then deduces his theory of the 'new vanguard':

In its twofold revolt against the bourgeois university and the imperialist war, the student vanguard has become conscious of the necessity of rising up against bourgeois society in its entirety...

They can and they must play a powerful role as detonator. By playing this role within the working class, and above all through the intermediary of the young workers, they can free in the working class itself enormous forces for challenging capitalist society and the bourgeois state. ^[196]

Thus the development of revolutionary consciousness and the formation of the revolutionary vanguard takes place outside and *even against* the traditional organisations of the working class. If workers are to take part in the formation of this 'new vanguard' at all, then it will be independently of their own political parties and trade unions. Mandel is quite explicit on this question:

Yes, the workers' movement must win back the student movement... But this cannot be accomplished by way of the ossified and bureaucratised structures of the traditional workers' organisations. *It is within the working class, rising up in spontaneous struggle against the capitalist system, creating its own leadership, its own committees, that this will take place... It will not take place in the traditional organisations*, because of the spirit which today inspires this new, young revolutionary vanguard. ^[197]

Thus it becomes the mission of middle-class students to 'liberate' the proletariat from its oppressive organisations, which are simply machines for incorporating the workers into 'the system'. One can see how it became possible for certain ultra-leftist elements active in the May-June events in France to find their way over to essentially fascist positions in subsequent years. It was also the contention of the Nazi 'lefts' that the German workers' movement, dominated by... a corrupt bureaucracy, was oppressing the German proletariat, and that it was the mission of petit-bourgeois *déclassés* like Goebbels and the Strasser brothers to emancipate it. Naturally, Mandel is not in any way arguing for such a position. But he toys around with the leftist notions that, in a certain political setting, can provide the yeast for such mutations.

Moving even further away from authentic Trotskyism, we come to yet another advocate of the 'incorporation' theory - namely Herbert Marcuse. He too (like Mandel, Ali, and, from a slightly different standpoint, Johns, Bull and company) sees the traditional workers' organisations as pillars of the status quo. And like Mandel, he draws the conclusion that agencies for social change must come from outside these organisations, and therefore - and here he differs with Mandel to a certain extent - *outside the proletariat altogether*:

This containment of social change is perhaps the most singular achievement of advanced industrial society; the general acceptance of the National Purpose, bipartisan policy, the decline of

pluralism, *the collusion of Business and Labour within the strong state* testify to the integration of opposites which is the result as well as the prerequisite of this achievement. [198]

Marcuse, since he has placed the industrial proletariat in the position of one of the chief supports of the capitalist system, seeks his 'new vanguard' elsewhere:

... underneath the conservative popular base is the substratum of the outcasts and outsiders, the exploited and persecuted of other races and other colours, the unemployed and the unemployable... Their opposition hits the system from without and is therefore not deflected by the system. [199]

Even the May-June explosion, heralding a new upsurge of proletarian militancy and radicalisation in the advanced imperialist states, did not persuade Marcuse to modify substantially his pessimistic theories. By 1969, he was even beginning to flirt with the notion of 'corporatism':

The character of the opposition in the centre of *corporate capitalism* [that is, a capitalism where the working class and its organisations have been incorporated into the capitalist state and society - RB] is concentrated in the two opposite poles of the society: in the ghetto population... and in the middle-class intellectuals, especially among the students... This 'unorthodox' character of the opposition is itself expressive of the structure of corporate capitalism (the 'integration' of the majority of the underlying population). Neither of the two oppositional groups constitutes the 'human basis' of the social process of production - for Marx a decisive condition for the historical agent of the revolution. [200]

True, Marcuse does hold out a slender hope that his 'opposition' might link up with the workers. But, like Mandel, this union can take place only outside the traditional organisations of the proletariat - and therefore *on the terms of the petit-bourgeoisie, of the 'new vanguard' in its various guises*:

By itself, this opposition cannot be regarded as agent of radical change; it can become such an agent only if it is sustained by a working class which is no longer the prisoner of its own integration and of a bureaucratic trade union and party apparatus supporting this integration. If this alliance between the new opposition and the working class does not materialise, *the latter may well become, in part at least, the mass basis of a neo-fascist regime*. [201]

'Corporatism' also found its adherents among the American 'New Left' in the early and mid-1960s. Impatient and theoretically semi-illiterate middle-class and bourgeois radicals latched on to the 'incorporation' theory as an explanation of their failure to evoke sympathy for their views amongst organised labour. Like Marcuse (who enjoyed a large following in 'the Movement') they saw the trade unions (and not just the bureaucracy) as pillars of the Kennedy-Johnson 'establishment'. Thus the June 1963 convention of the Students for a Democratic Society. (SDS) adopted a policy document *America and the New Era* which declared that domestically, Kennedy was:

... moving towards the image of the 'corporate state', following such countries as France and West Germany, in which government and business recognise that national planning by central bodies and strong programmes of social welfare are necessary if social conflict which threatens the corporation economy flows from this conception.

Perhaps the reader might think we have strayed a long way from the WRP and its problems. In a sense this is true. But our excursion into the more bizarre variants on the 'incorporation' theory does have a purpose. It is to warn of the direction in which the present WRP leadership is taking the party. For in each and every case, advancing this theory leads on to a rejection of the revolutionary role of the proletariat in overthrowing capitalism, to the acceptance of anti-Leninist conceptions of revolutionary leadership, to the abandonment of the workers' organisations, especially the trade unions, to the total domination of the bureaucratic apparatus. Revisionism thus finds a meeting-place with bourgeois sociology, which for decades now has been vainly trying to prove that the 'traditional' proletariat of Marx and Lenin has been replaced by an 'affluent' and 'bourgeoisified' working class, 'upwardly mobile' instead of revolutionary and, through its bureaucratised organisations, easily bought out to accept and even defend the capitalist status quo.

Revisionism is the penetration into the Marxist movement of bourgeois ideology, dressed up as 'advances' or 'developments' of Marxist theory, or attempts to bring it into line with a supposed 'new reality'. Quite often, revisions of Marxism are preceded and influenced by new trends in bourgeois thought, as in the case of Bernstein, whose reformist conceptions converged on the liberalism of Max Weber and his circle. But sometimes, it is the revisionists who give an impetus to new departures in

bourgeois social theory, and here we can call to mind the case of the Burnham - Shachtman opposition in the US Socialist Workers Party. Burnham's theory of the 'managerial revolution' and the 'convergence' of societies founded on different systems of production and property relations has now become an established tenet of modern sociology, and is widely accepted amongst leading Sovietologists and 'Kremlinologists'.

Now it would seem that the Healy leadership in the WRP, in revising Trotsky on Social Democracy and fascism, has succeeded in performing a similar service with the theory of 'corporatism'. Two well known sociologists, RE Pahl and JT Winkler, have - quite possibly entirely independently of Healy - arrived at the political conclusions drawn by the WRP leadership: namely that the Labour Party, supported by the trade union leaders, is preparing to - and is quite capable of - establishing a corporate state in Britain. Moreover, like the WRP, Pahl and Winkler liken corporatism to fascism. Corporatism, they argue, is 'fascism with a human face'. [202] The article in question deserves close attention by WRP members and supporters, since in it they will find - couched partly in the language of bourgeois sociology it is true, and depicted graphically with the inevitable diagrams - the reactionary, pessimistic, defeatist theory that has infested the pages of *Workers Press* since the autumn of 1972.

The authors insist that the Labour Party (along with the Tories and Liberals) is 'putting forward now an acceptable face of fascism; indeed a masked version of it...'. The variant of fascism embraced by all three political parties in Britain is, we are told, 'corporatism', even though 'Labour boasts that it is really "building socialism" this time'. Behind the socialist phrases of Labour politicians 'reluctant to proclaim corporatism openly', the leaders of the workers' movement are marching forward to a fully-blown corporate state. And what is more (and here too, there is agreement with the WRP), this regime is to be ushered in with the aid of the trade union apparatus. Working-class opposition to Labour corporatism would be met 'within a year or so' by 'corporatist intervention and state regulation of labour markets and some attempt to control strikes, probably not initially by legal prohibitions, *but perhaps through union discipline* or, ultimately, coercion'. And remember, Pahl and Winkler regard it as equally likely that a Labour regime will carry through this 'coercion' as a Tory corporatist regime. [203] This too has become the position of the WRP.

Almost inevitably, the authors single out as the leading exponent of Labour corporatism, not Wilson, nor even the far right of Jenkins and Williams, but... Benn. His reformist conceptions of state control and ownership are construed by Pahl and Winkler as certain to lead, not to a 'transfer... from capitalism to socialism, but to corporatism'. [204] It is almost as if the authors had culled not only their ideas, but even their turn of phrase, from sermons in *Workers Press* on the iniquities of Benn's brand of left reformism. Both Healy and our two worthy bourgeois sociologists discern in *left Social Democracy* the clear outlines of 'corporatism', 'fascism with a human face'. Or as Third Period Stalinism put it, 'left social fascism'.

Pahl and Winkler even allow for another WRP variant - 'voluntary corporatism':

For workers, corporatism has a certain short-term appeal. It offers a softer option for the cure of inflation than the 'short, sharp burst of unemployment' prescribed by neo-classical economics. A corporatist government would certainly guarantee full employment... The price of this guarantee would, of course, be wage control [what the *Workers Press* once called 'corporatist wage bargaining' - RB] and restraints on the freedom of industrial action. The recent TUC conference suggests that much of union officialdom would be willing to make such a deal. [205]

Here we have the WRP scenario right down to TUC collaboration in the implementation of corporatist wage policy and the erection of the corporate state. And what is also common to both Pahl and Winkler and the Healy revisionists (not to speak of those of the IS and the Pabloites who peddle the same reactionary, leftist wares) is that they leave out of account the *strength of the working class*, and its ability to fight through its 'official' organisations to make them serve, not as instruments of oppression, *but as imperfect weapons in the class struggle*. Pahl and Winkler say quite specifically: 'If resistance is to emerge, and our prediction to prove inaccurate, it will be within the working class, [but] probably *not* the official union movement.' As if to underline the hopelessness of the situation, the authors conclude with a thought that, once again, could so easily have been culled from a *Workers Press* editorial or lead article on the futility of voting Labour: '... for the immediate future, no matter whom you vote for today [this article appeared on the day of the 10 October 1974 general election] the result will be the same.' [206] And that result will be, as the WRP has so often told us (when it is not predicting with equal confidence a military coup) - corporatism.

Thus we have a peculiar, and for the purposes of our inquiry, highly illuminating ‘convergence’ of various stands of bourgeois radical and revisionist thinking on this question. From Healy and Cliff to Mandel and Ali, from the American ‘New Left’ to Herbert Marcuse, and now finally joined by modern bourgeois sociology, there is broad agreement on ‘corporatism’ and the role performed within it by the reformist bureaucracy. And should it not be food for thought - and indeed action - that each of these tendencies and schools of thought is travelling a path signposted by the most terrible defeat in the history of the world proletarian movement? Pahl and Winkler insist that Labour is preparing to introduce a corporatist regime - ‘fascism with a human face’. Healy says that Labour will continue to serve the bourgeoisie ‘even beyond the doorway into fascism’, and that the trade union and Labour leaders are all corporatists. Tariq Ali says that when reformist parties go into a coalition with a bourgeois party, they are helping to form a corporatist regime. Marcuse sees corporatism being introduced in the advanced capitalist countries, not only with the support of the reformist leaders, but even their working-class supporters. All variants on this theory reflect to one degree or another a profound pessimism, and conceal beneath their leftist bombast a retreat from the central task of constructing a world revolutionary leadership in the heart of the organised proletariat. For if it is true that the workers’ organisations can so readily be converted into instruments for the crushing of the proletariat, then one must indeed conclude that the working class is, as the sceptics say, hopelessly backward, corrupted and lost for the cause of revolution. And the day may well be close at hand when many of today’s exponents of the theory of ‘corporatism’ will draw just that conclusion from their original false premise.

Let all those who still value the WRP’s Trotskyist traditions and see them now threatened with the Trojan Horse of petit-bourgeois radicalism, personified by Johns and Bull (and actively encouraged by Healy as the natural culture for his own brand of pseudo-proletarian leftism), draw the lessons from the ‘corporatist’ episode in the SLL and the WRP before it is too late. *After the Third Period came the Popular Front*. Ultra-leftism masks a basic opportunist orientation *to the right*, as Healy himself demonstrated when he addressed a press conference announcing the WRP’s decision to run nine candidates in the election of 28 February. As has since been verified, Healy, when asked how the WRP would prevent the military coup he had stated to be impending, declared:

In this election, we are fielding only a handful of candidates. But capitalism is finished, gone for good, and soon millions of workers will turn to our policies. In a *year or two*, at the next election, the WRP will be fielding *500 candidates*. Then we will *introduce legislation* which will be *supported* by the working and middle class, *and we will nip any military conspiracy in the bud*.

The peaceful road to socialism, as advocated not only by Social Democracy, but Stalinism. In Chile, as the *Workers Press* never tired of pointing out, it led to bloody defeat. And it will do so here. But mark Healy’s words well - ‘nip in the bud’. They have something of a history in the revisionist movement. Robin Blackburn, a leading member of the Pabloite IMG, wrote in the *New Statesman*, in an article that appeared on the day of the coup in Chile, that ‘a concerted socialist intervention drawing upon all the experiences and ideas of recent years could *nip in the bud* the most menacing developments and set the scene for an assault on capital’ (emphasis added). Outraged by Blackburn’s parliamentary cretinism, Alex Mitchell asked rhetorically in *Workers Press*:

How do you ‘nip in the bud’ incipient dictatorship? How do you ‘nip in the bud’ the Tory government which is preparing with repressive legislation and behind the scenes with the police and military to destroy the basic rights of the working class... How can you ‘nip the bud’ of your executioner? ^[207]

Mitchell did not have long to await the answer. It came from his own General Secretary. Run 500 candidates for parliament one or two years from now (even though the Tories have already ‘cleared the jails’ to make way for working-class militants) and when you have formed the government (a Trotskyist government that the military and the police will make no attempt to subvert until you are safely ensconced in your ministerial chairs) then with the support (but not active participation of) the working and middle class, you will, to quote Blackburn, the ‘cowardly capitulator to Stalinism’, ‘nip [it] in the bud’. Was it not with this perspective that not only the Chilean workers went down to defeat, but also the workers and peasants of Republican Spain, whose leaders told them to trust in the ability of ‘their’ parliament to ‘nip in the bud’ the plottings of the fascist officers? And the WRP would warn us of the dangers of the Popular Front? Let Healy recall his remark at a meeting held on Chile on 10 October 1973, to the effect that ‘you can’t compromise with the state, that is the lesson of Chile’. ^[208]

Healy's pathetic delusion that the armed forces of British imperialism can be thwarted in their counter-revolutionary designs by parliamentary legislation has a long tradition in the reformist wing of the British labour movement. Its basis is the slow, drawn-out development of the class struggle, and the parliamentary and constitutional prejudices that have arisen on the foundations of the privileged position of the working class, whose class enemies have been able to concede reforms at home by virtue of brutal repression in the colonies. Trotsky had to answer the advocates of the constitutional road to socialism, not so much for the benefit of those Labour trade union leaders who embraced this conception, *but because it had deep roots in the working class itself*. He cites a classic exposition of the theory by an unnamed British Labour leader:

In the event of armed resistance on the part of the fascists they will be declared outlaws and the overwhelming majority of the British people [or as Healy put it, 'the working and middle class' - RB] will back the Labour Party in defence of the legal government.

Trotsky spared nothing in his reply:

These people have decided in advance to come to power in no other way than through the donkey's gate over which stands the enemy, armed to the teeth and standing guard, has shown them to. If they, the lefts, take power (through the indicated gate) and if the bourgeoisie rise up against this legal power then the good British people will not tolerate this... the brave spirits and wise men have firmly decided to conquer the bourgeoisie whatever the political combinations and at the same time maintaining the best relations with parliament, the law, the courts and the police. *The only trouble is that the bourgeoisie does not intend to surrender the privilege of the legal expropriation of power to the lefts.* ^[209]

We might add that the same conception attacked here by Trotsky (and advanced by Healy in his election press conference) became official Stalinist policy in Britain, with the adoption, in 1951, of the CPGB's programme, *The British Road to Socialism*, which has as its anti-Leninist cornerstone the notion that parliament is above the state power, and can be used both to expropriate the bourgeoisie peacefully and to convert the rest of the state machine into an instrument of workers' rule:

... by political action using our democratic rights to transform traditional institutions, parliament can be made into the effective instrument of the people's will to carry through legislation to challenge capitalist power and replace capitalism by socialism. ^[210]

Extended elaboration of this counter-revolutionary theory, Fabian in origin, is to be found in the CPGB publication *Communism and the World Today*, which boldly asserts *à la Healy*:

... opposition to socialist measures legalised in Parliament means that those who engage in it come up against one of the most deeply held traditions in British political life - that Acts of Parliament are law, and that those who seek to overthrow them by extra-parliamentary means are guilty of treason. ^[211]

Let the last word against the constitutionalists of the Labour Party, the CPGB, and WRP, be said by Trotsky: 'The workers' majority in parliament can be destroyed if armed force is in the hands of the bourgeoisie. *Whoever does not understand this is not a socialist but a numbskull.*' ^[212] Finally, a question to Healy. Does he intend that his bill outlawing military coups, passed by his WRP parliamentary majority, receive the royal assent? Has he overlooked the not insignificant fact that the monarch is not only head of Church and state, but the armed forces?

Mitchell passed judgement on Healy's as well as Blackburn's plan to defeat military dictatorship when he wrote that talk of 'nipping in the bud' such threats was 'part of the gradual road to socialism... part of the Stalinists' peaceful road... a spineless counter-revolutionary treatise...'. ^[213] Healy's anti-Leninist conceptions are threatening to undermine the theoretical foundations of the Trotskyist movement in Britain. The man also really believed that Heath was a fascist, and that the Tory party was a fascist party. On 22 February 1974, *Workers Press* reported a speech by Healy in which he declared: 'Heath says he will cure inflation, he can do this. He can do it *just like Hitler did* - by *smashing* the organisations of the working class.' ^[214] And how did Healy propose to fight Heath's fascism, his smashing of the organisations of the working class (which Jack Gale says is the unique feature of fascism)? *By electing a WRP government to nip Heath's fascism in the bud*. This was the SPD's road to disaster in Weimar Germany - fight Hitler with ballot papers.

First there was unfurled the WRP's theory of the peaceful, parliamentary road to corporatism. Now we have its logical complement, the parliamentary repression of the bourgeois state. In the first case, there is

present an underestimation of the powers of resistance of the working class to attacks on its organisations, in the second, an equally serious underestimation of the ruthlessness of the bourgeoisie.

This episode, one that deserves to go down in the annals of British Labour history as 'Healy's 500', demonstrates yet again how easily ultra-leftism can pass over to open opportunism. As Trotsky once said, the sectarian is really a frightened opportunist. The political training received by members of the WRP is such that it can only leave them defenceless in the face of sudden changes in the political situation demanding independence of thought, the ability to think problems through without direction from above, and above all, a firm line on left and right deviations from Communist tactics and strategy.

The consequences of leftism when it is implemented in the youth are of course doubly disastrous, for there is already a strong tendency amongst young workers to reject not only the conservatism of the bureaucratic apparatus of the labour movement, but, along with it, the need to fight as militants for positions of leadership within the basic organisations of the class. Here too the WRP leadership has been remiss in living up to its political responsibilities. All the radicalism of the adult movement finds its reflection in the activities and publications of the WRP's youth section, the Young Socialists. We cite but a few of the most glaring instances. *Keep Left* (the YS weekly) stated in April 1973 that the 'so-called leaders of the working class are preparing to collaborate with a corporate state that rules by decree through its state machinery' ^[215] - a definition of corporatism that was similar to the notion of the KPD that Brüning's system of rule by decree comprised fascism. The theme of a TUC-supported corporate state was pursued in *Keep Left* in August 1973, which accused the TUC leaders of 'plotting with them [the Tories] to introduce a corporate state in Britain where trade unions will be little more than departments of a dictatorial government to smash the working class'. ^[216] Not only is this statement utterly false, it could easily encourage young workers to desert or not to join the trade unions on the grounds that they are about to be used as instruments to 'smash' them. Also false was the definition of fascism given in *Keep Left* in July 1973, which spoke of 'the state control of wages' as being the 'basis of the fascist regimes of Hitler and Mussolini...'. ^[217] Trotsky insisted against the Third Period Stalinists (who argued that Brüning's state control over wages constituted fascism) that fascism involved, and was based upon, the *physical destruction* of all workers' organisations - including those led by the Wilsons and Feathers of the day. Fascism certainly does control wages by state decrees, but is only able to do so (unlike Papen, whose decrees were defied by a working-class offensive) because the fascist terror has already destroyed the trade unions. On the basis of the thesis advanced by *Keep Left*, Britain under the Tories had become a fascist state, and indeed this was implied by YS National Secretary M Bambrick at the 1973 YS Conference when she declared that the Tories 'had assumed virtual dictatorship over wages and conditions' and that at the centre of Tory policy had been 'the destruction of the democratic rights of the working class, the absorption of trade unions into the corporate state...'. ^[218] And the corporate state, as we have so often been told by *Workers Press*, is nothing else than the fascist state. The YS version of the WRP line on corporatism had its lighter moments however. In May 1973, *Keep Left* proclaimed that 'the trade union leaders have officially accepted the trap of the Tory corporate state'. ^[219] How does one 'officially' accept a trap when the purpose of traps is to deceive? And why set a trap for those who are already in full agreement with you?

Neither was *Keep Left* immune from the distortions of the Leninist tactic of the united front so often to be found in the press of the adult party. In June 1973, the youth paper correctly stated that in Germany the 'established working class leaderships - divided as they were by the policies of Stalinism - were unable to form a united front against fascism'. But the article erred when it went on to say that the Third Period policy of Stalinism 'designated the thousands of German Social Democratic *workers* and *trade unionists* as "social fascists"...'. ^[220] This epithet was applied primarily to the reformist and trade union leaders, while futile attempts were made to win the rank-and-file workers of these organisations to the 'united front from below'. But since the WRP has now opted for this policy itself, one can hardly expect it to be attacked in *Keep Left* as a Stalinist tactic. WRP National Secretary Gerry Healy hardly helped to clear up this confusion on the nature of social fascism and the Stalinist tactic of the united front from below when he addressed the April 1973 YS conference. He told delegates that 'in the 1930s in Germany they [the Stalinists] expounded their social fascist line and argued that the coming to power of fascism in Germany was not a defeat for the working class'. ^[221] Was this the essence of 'social fascism'? Surely its core was the *ultimatistic rejection of the united front* with the reformist-led organisations of the working class, as Healy, a British Communist Party militant at the time, should be well aware. Where will such a leftist line lead the youth? Unless it is checked, away from the basic organisations of the working class, towards

individual, anarchistic resistance to capitalist oppression, and after the inevitable defeat and disillusionment, possibly towards even more reactionary ideologies. Thus we find YS National Secretary Bambrick telling a YS meeting that 'trade unions... have been deprived of the right to be trade unions... they have ceased to be unions'. ^[222] Bambrick stopped at the very point where it becomes interesting. If trade unions are no longer trade unions, what then are they, and should young workers join or stay in them? The theoretical premise for quitting the unions had been established, even though the conclusions of Bambrick's statement have not yet been fully drawn and acted upon.

Underlying this ultra-leftism of the WRP and YS is a lack of confidence in the strength of the working class, in its ability, *even without revolutionary leadership*, to force the reformist and Stalinist leaderships to take limited actions against the attacks of the employers and the state. That the bureaucracy will at a certain stage seek to behead the movement of the workers is not in doubt. But before the great betrayal of the May-June 1968 general strike in France could be carried through by the Stalinists, the CGT and PCF had to place themselves at the head of the mass movement, thereby initially even giving it a certain impetus *and drawing into the strike layers of workers who would move only under the leadership of the Stalinists*. The task of revolutionary leadership is not to proclaim daily that on no account will the bureaucracy act against the bourgeoisie - prophecies that when inevitably proved wrong, will only lead to the further isolation and even discrediting of the vanguard - but to develop an orientation that enables the vanguard to *exploit* the vacillations of the bureaucracy, its partial dependence on the workers, its partial conflicts of interest with the bourgeoisie and the capitalist state.

The WRP's leftist-abstentionist position on the TUC leaders prevents it from following such a course. Thus on 5 May 1974, an ATUA statement on the sequestration of the assets of the AUEW by the Industrial Relations Court asserted that the union's 'Stalinist, fake "left" [they were not even genuine fakes - RB] and right-wing reformist' leaders were 'utterly paralysed' and predicted: 'Scanlon, the Stalinists and their ilk won't fight.' To hammer home the point, the statement ended by declaring that the AUEW leadership had 'shown themselves *totally* incapable and unwilling to fight to defend trade unionism'. ^[223] In fact the WRP had shown itself totally incapable and unwilling either to learn from its past underestimations of the strength of the working class, or to apply seriously Communist tactics in the trade unions. For the very next day, the 'paralysed' Scanlon, dubbed by *Workers Press* on a previous occasion as a 'corporatist', used his casting vote on the AUEW executive to secure the approval of a resolution instructing all the union's members immediately to begin an indefinite strike against the sequestration order of the Industrial Relations Court. Once again, the perspectives of the Healy leadership had been 'richly confirmed' - in plainer English, reduced to rubble.

The WRP leaders seem to live in constant dread of being accused by their political opponents on the left of being 'soft' on reformism. They should remember that this was also the charge levelled at Trotsky by the Stalinists during the Third Period. From the historical truth that reformism betrays was deduced the conclusion that no united action was possible with reformist leaders, since this could mean acting as accomplices in new betrayals. Not so, said Trotsky:

The possibility of betrayal is always contained in reformism. But this does not mean to say that reformism and betrayal are one and the same thing at every moment. Not quite. Temporary agreements may be made with the reformists whenever they take a step forward. But to maintain a bloc with them when, frightened by the development of a movement, they commit treason, is equivalent to criminal toleration of traitors and a veiling of betrayal. ^[224]

Yet in November 1973, when the WRP leaders considered that Britain was on 'the verge of dictatorship' - an imagined threat that the WRP countered by calling for a... general election! - a WRP Political Committee statement dated 14 November not only omitted any call for a united front of workers' organisations to block the dictatorship moves of the ruling class, *but failed even to issue a clear call for a Labour government!* One might ask, what was the purpose in demanding a general election if not to place in the government the reformist leaders of the working class? Ultimatism was also well to the fore at this time, with the WRP Central Committee issuing a statement on 1 December 1973, which proposed 'to unite the working class' on 'the founding programme of the WRP'. Clearly such a proposal ruled out united front action with all other tendencies in the workers' movement, since without exception, *these parties and groups have chosen to embrace other programmes*. In demanding unity on its own full founding programme, the WRP presented an ultimatum not only to the leaders of all other workers' parties, groups and trade unions, but to the working class itself, *since only a tiny minority, a few thousand at most, have declared themselves for the programme of the WRP*. And when we see that this programme

includes not only minimum demands such as the repeal of Tory legislation, but the expropriation of the bourgeoisie - 'nationalisation of the basic industries and of all large companies, banks, building and insurance societies...' - then it becomes clear that this call for working-class unity is nothing less than that old Stalinist manoeuvre, the 'united front from below'. As if to confirm its political and historical pedigree, this same statement proclaims:

For the carrying out of such policies the WRP fights for the setting up of Councils of Action... These Councils unite [even though they do not yet exist - RB] trade unionists, tenants, unemployed, *all political parties and tendencies of the working class* (Labour Party, Communist Party, WRP, IS, IMG, etc) to fight against the main enemy, the Tory government. [Emphasis added]

Yet each and every one of these 'political parties and tendencies of the working class' rejects to one degree or another the programme of the WRP! And it is upon *this* programme that the Councils of Action were to be based, as subsequent attempts to launch them (in each case, ending in fiasco, with the WRP in splendid isolation, in full control of its 'Councils' but without any workers) demonstrated. Once again, ultimatism, the bane of serious revolutionary work in the mass movement, protected reformism and Stalinism.

These are warning signals that cannot be ignored. A section of the WRP leadership comprised both of veteran party members, former youth leaders and petit-bourgeois recruits from the journalistic world and the acting and allied professions is decomposing rapidly, threatening to drag down with it the proletarian movement that thousands have loyally struggled to build and sacrificed years of their lives to defend against the Social Democratic and Stalinist enemies of Trotskyism. It is part of an international movement that has a long record of principled opposition to both opportunism and sectarianism within the working class.

Just now, it is a sectarian line which predominates, (though this is by no means certain to prevail for a protracted period of time). Sectarianism flows from a false, one-sided relationship with the class, and an arrogant disregard for its organisations and past conquests. Trotsky long ago characterised the type of leader now in the ascendant in the WRP, personified by its National Secretary, Gerry Healy:

Each sectarian wants to have his own labour movement. By the repetition of magic formulas he thinks to force an entire class to group itself around him. But instead of bewitching the proletariat, he always ends up by demoralising and dispersing his own little sect... The sectarian no longer recognises his world. All reality stands marshalled against him and since the facts flout him, he turns his back on them and nurses himself with rumours, suspicions and fantasies. He thus becomes a source of slanders without being, by nature, a slanderer. He is not dishonest. He is simply in irreconcilable conflict with reality. ^[225]

Such negative traits come to the fore especially when the class and its vanguard moves and fights through its traditional organisations in a militant fashion, as we have seen in the case of the reaction of *Workers Press* to the nationalisation proposals of the Labour Party NEC. The WRP held these plans to be 'corporatism', to which was counterposed, mechanically and from the outside, the full programme of the socialist revolution (and not the *Transitional Programme* of the Fourth International). Trotsky says of this subjectivist method that:

... it is not enough to create a correct programme. [Though we should remember that the WRP's programme - a maximum one - is not even 'correct' in a formal sense - RB] It is necessary that the working class accept it. But the sectarian, in the nature of things, comes to a stop upon the first half of the task. Active intervention into the actual struggle of the workers' masses is supplanted for him by an abstract propaganda of Marxist programme. The sectarian looks upon the life of society as a great school, with himself as a teacher there. In his opinion the working class should put aside its less important matters, and assemble in solid rank around his rostrum: then the task would be solved. ^[226]

Thus the WRP repeatedly calls on 'all workers' to join its ranks, while characterising the movement which commands the support of the overwhelming majority of workers as being led by 'corporatists'. No progress is possible along the road to socialism, or even the defence of the most minimal gains, without such a mass defection from the reformists, says the WRP. This is of course sectarian ultimatism at its worst and most criminal:

A sectarian does not understand the dialectical action and reaction between a finished programme and a living, that is to say, imperfect and unfinished mass movement. The sectarian's method of thinking is that of a rationalist, a formalist, and an enlightener... The sectarian sees an enemy in everyone who attempts to explain to him that an active participation in the workers' movement demands a constant study of objective conditions, and not haughtily bulldozing from the sectarian rostrum. For an analysis of reality the sectarian substitutes intrigue, gossip and hysteria. ^[227]

That is really well said - and directed.

It is important to make clear what is meant by the ultra-leftism of the WRP. There have been many different varieties of leftism in the workers' movement. The adventurism of the 1921 'March Action' arose on the basis of a genuine radical current in a section of the German working class that was entirely healthy in its content. Then there followed the leftism of 1924 in the Comintern, when Zinoviev was at the helm backed by his *Troika* allies Stalin and Kamenev. Here the radicalism derived in part *from the apparatus*, which sought to impose its false perspectives on a class that was in retreat and disarray after the defeat of October-November 1923. But even so, Zinoviev's leftism, and the *Troika's* campaign against Trotsky under the guise of 'Bolshevizing' the Comintern, found support in the KPD left, which in turn rested on extremely radical layers in the party and the class as a whole. The third phase of KPD leftism marked a further shift along the spectrum from proletarian to bureaucratic adventurism, *with the Kremlin's domestic and foreign policy requirements now becoming the dominant factor*, though even here the old traditions of Spartacist boycottism and the March Action, coupled with a profound hatred of Social Democracy, enabled the Third Period line to draw in behind it literally millions of workers.

While the WRP's leftism possesses many of the forms of the latter two varieties, namely Zinovievism and Third Period Stalinism, and feeds to certain degree on working-class frustration with reformism, it is increasingly acquiring a different content, namely that of petit-bourgeois radicalism. This is filling out the pseudo-Bolshevik forms developed in earlier phases of the movement's history, and accentuated by the dominance within the leadership of ex-members of the British Communist Party, who have brought with them from the Stalinists their sectarian attitude towards the Labour Party. All these elements now fuse to give us a bloc which is dragging the party away from the mass workers' movement towards the radical middle class and declassed elements, and away from the Fourth International towards an exclusively national orientation - *Trotskyism in one country*. Sectarianism towards the mass movement is paralleled by indifference towards the central task of rebuilding the Fourth International. That is why the question of 'corporatism' is so crucial for the fate of the WRP. Trotsky called sectarianism a cancer within the Fourth International. It is time to wield the surgeon's knife.

Antipodes - Or Twins?

The [Labour Government's] proposals aim to establish a state capitalist structure, in industry virtually the same as the giant state capitalist corporations in Italy which have their origins in the corporate state of Benito Mussolini - the fascist dictator and the butcher of the Italian working class. (*Workers Press*, 26 April 1975)

They [the Labour Party and TUC leaders] propose the organisation of industry under a series of public corporations, with the participation of the trade union bureaucracy, in a fashion redolent of the Corporations of Fascist Italy; they aim at assisting monopoly capitalism to develop to its logical end in state capitalism. (A Hutt [CPGB], *The Condition of the Working Class in Britain* (London, 1933), p 251)

Notes

1. *Workers Press*, 12 January 1972, emphasis added.
2. *Workers Press*, 12 January 1972, emphasis added.
3. SLL, *Conference Resolution*, June 1965, pp 3, 9, emphasis added.
4. SLL, *Conference Resolution*, June 1965, p 10, emphasis added.
5. *International Bulletin*, no 1, July 1969, pp 1-2, 4, emphasis added.
6. SLL, *British Perspectives*, 1967, p 10.
7. SLL, *Economic Perspectives*, 1968, pp 16-17.
8. SLL, *Economic Perspectives*, 1968, p 18, emphasis added.

9. SLL, *Economic Perspectives*, 1968, p 27.
10. SLL, *Conference Resolution*, 1969, pp 1-3.
11. SLL, *Conference Resolution*, 1969, pp 4-5, emphasis added.
12. SLL, *Conference Resolution*, 1969, p 16, emphasis added.
13. Tariq Ali, 'The Extra-Parliamentary Opposition', in *New Revolutionaries* (London, 1969), p 77.
14. Ali, 'The Extra-Parliamentary Opposition', in *New Revolutionaries*, p 68.
15. *Workers Press*, 25 February 1974, emphasis added.
16. Cliff Slaughter, 'Revolution and Class Consciousness', *Labour Review*, Volume 4, no 1, April-May 1959, p 11, emphasis added.
17. SLL, *Perspectives*, 1963, p 5.
18. SLL, *Trade Union Resolution*, 1966, pp 1, 3.
19. Note to LD Trotsky, 'Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay', *Marxism and the Trade Unions* (London, 1968), p 5.
20. LD Trotsky, 'Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay', *Marxism and the Trade Unions*, pp 5, 6, 8, 10, emphasis added.
21. 'Imperialist War and the World Proletarian Revolution', *Documents of the Fourth International* (New York, 1973), p 341, emphasis added.
22. 'Introduction', Trotsky, 'Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay', *Marxism and the Trade Unions*, p 4, emphasis added.
23. 'Introduction', LD Trotsky, 'Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay', *Marxism and the Trade Unions* (London, 1972), p 3, emphasis added.
24. Trotsky, 'Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay', *Marxism and the Trade Unions*, p 11, emphasis added.
25. *Newsletter*, 5 December 1964, emphasis added.
26. SLL, *Conference Resolution*, 1969, p 7, emphasis added.
27. R Palme Dutt, *Fascism and Social Revolution* (London, 1935), p 170, emphasis added.
28. LD Trotsky, 'Strategy and Tactics in the Imperialist Epoch', *The Third International After Lenin* (New York, 1957), p 114.
29. LD Trotsky, 'The Turn in the Communist International' (26 September 1930), *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany* (New York, 1971), p 70, emphasis added.
30. LD Trotsky, 'For a United Workers' Front Against Fascism' (8 December 1931), *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, p 137.
31. LD Trotsky, 'What Next?' (27 January 1932), *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, pp 144-45, emphasis added.
32. Trotsky, 'What Next?', *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, p 154.
33. P Fryer, *The Battle for Socialism* (London, 1959), p 145.
34. Fryer, *The Battle for Socialism*, p v.
35. LD Trotsky, 'The Only Road' (14 September 1932), *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, p 287.
36. Trotsky, 'The Only Road', *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, p 287, emphasis added.
37. Trotsky, 'The Only Road', *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, p 287.
38. SLL, *Resolution*, 1969, p 4.
39. LD Trotsky, 'The German Catastrophe' (28 May 1933), *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, p 397, emphasis added.

40. LD Trotsky, *Whither France* (Ceylon, 1961), p 68, emphasis added.
41. S Johns, 'Italy's New Fascists', *Fourth International*, Volume 8, no 2, Spring 1973, p 83, emphasis added.
42. *Workers Press*, 17 November 1972, emphasis added.
43. *Workers Press*, 22 March 1971, emphasis added.
44. *Workers Press*, 26 March 1971, p 1, emphasis added.
45. *Workers Press*, 31 March 1971, p 1.
46. ATUA, *The Way Forward For All Trade Unionists*, 22 October 1972, emphasis added.
47. *Workers Press*, 25 September 1973, p 2, emphasis added.
48. *Workers Press*, 27 October 1973, p 5.
49. *Workers Press*, 23 October 1973, p 8, emphasis added.
50. *Workers Press*, 2 April 1973, p 5, emphasis added.
51. *Workers Press*, 6 April 1973, p 5.
52. *Workers Press*, 7 April 1973, p 5, emphasis added.
53. *Workers Press*, 5 April 1973, p 5.
54. *Workers Press*, 2 April 1973, p 1, emphasis added.
55. *Workers Press*, 20 December 1971, p 4, emphasis added.
56. *Workers Press*, 7 September 1972.
57. *Workers Press*, 8 September 1972, emphasis added.
58. *Workers Press*, 27 September 1973, p 12, emphasis added.
59. *Workers Press*, 4 October 1973, p 1, emphasis added.
60. *Workers Press*, 9 September 1972.
61. *Workers Press*, 28 September 1972, emphasis added.
62. *Workers Press*, 29 September 1972, p 3, emphasis added.
63. *Workers Press*, 3 October 1972, p 5, emphasis added.
64. *Workers Press*, 29 December 1972, p 7, emphasis added.
65. *Workers Press*, 17 October 1972, emphasis added.
66. *Workers Press*, 18 October 1972, p 1, emphasis added.
67. *Workers Press*, 20 October 1972, p 1, emphasis added.
68. *Workers Press*, 30 October 1972, p 1, emphasis added.
69. *Workers Press*, 1 November 1972, p 1, emphasis added.
70. *Fourth International*, Volume 8, no 2, p 38.
71. *Workers Press*, 3 November 1972, p 1.
72. *Workers Press*, 4 November 1972, emphasis added.
73. *Workers Press*, 6 November 1972, p 1.
74. *Workers Press*, 16 December 1972, p 1.
75. *Workers Press*, 21 December 1972, p 1.
76. *Workers Press*, 11 January 1973, p 1.
77. *Workers Press*, 13 January 1973, emphasis added.
78. *Workers Press*, 16 January 1973, emphasis added.
79. *Workers Press*, 19 January 1973.
80. *Workers Press*, 20 February 1973, p 1
81. *Workers Press*, 22 February 1973, p 2, emphasis added.

- 82.** *Workers Press*, 23 February 1973, emphasis added.
- 83.** *Workers Press*, 27 February 1973.
- 84.** *Workers Press*, 1 March 1973, emphasis added.
- 85.** *Workers Press*, 1 March 1973, emphasis added.
- 86.** *Workers Press*, 2 March 1973, p 8.
- 87.** *Workers Press*, 3 March 1973, p 8.
- 88.** *Workers Press*, 5 March 1973, p 1.
- 89.** Trotsky, ‘The German Catastrophe’, *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, pp 397-98, emphasis added.
- 90.** *Socialist Worker*, 27 April 1974, emphasis added.
- 91.** LD Trotsky, ‘On the United Front’ (2 March 1922), *First Five Years of the Communist International*, Volume 2 (London, 1974), p 96, emphasis added.
- 92.** LD Trotsky, ‘Whither the ILP?’ (28 August 1933), *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1933-34* (New York, 1973), p 55, emphasis added.
- 93.** Trotsky, ‘The German Catastrophe’, *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, pp 394-95, emphasis added.
- 94.** *Workers Press*, 11 June 1973, p 2.
- 95.** *Workers Press*, 13 June 1973, p 2.
- 96.** *Workers Press*, 11 June 1973, p 2.
- 97.** LD Trotsky, ‘Revisionism and Planning’ (9 January 1934), *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1933-34*, pp 192-94, emphasis added.
- 98.** Trotsky, ‘Revisionism and Planning’, *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1933-34*, p 194, emphasis added.
- 99.** Trotsky, ‘Revisionism and Planning’, *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1933-34*, p 196, emphasis added.
- 100.** LD Trotsky, ‘A Letter to the Convention of the French Communist Party’ (13 September 1922), *The First Five Years of the Communist International*, Volume 2, p 174, emphasis added.
- 101.** LD Trotsky, ‘The Belgian Dispute and the de Man Plan’ (2 March 1935), *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1934-35* (New York, 1973), pp 213-14, emphasis added.
- 102.** *Workers Press*, 22 June 1973.
- 103.** *Workers Press*, 27 June 1973, emphasis added.
- 104.** *Guardian*, 3 October 1973, emphasis added.
- 105.** *Workers Press*, 3 October 1973, p 12.
- 106.** Trotsky, ‘The German Catastrophe’, *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, pp 396-97, emphasis added.
- 107.** *Socialist Worker*, 22 June 1974, p 3, emphasis added.
- 108.** LD Trotsky, ‘Once Again the ILP’ (November 1935), *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1935-36* (New York, 1973), p 71, emphasis added.
- 109.** Trotsky, ‘Revisionism and Planning’, *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1933-34*, p 197.
- 110.** Trotsky, ‘The Belgian Dispute and the de Man Plan’, *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1934-35*, p 215, emphasis added.
- 111.** LD Trotsky, ‘Are There No Limits to the Fall?’ (18 January 1934), *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1933-34*, p 220, emphasis added.
- 112.** LD Trotsky, ‘More On Soviets and the “Balkanisation” Argument’ (1 September 1931), *The Spanish Revolution 1931-1939* (New York, 1973), pp 162-63, emphasis added.

- 113.** Trotsky, 'The Only Road', *The Struggle Against Fascism In Germany*, pp 319-21, emphasis added.
- 114.** C Slaughter, 'Foreword', LD Trotsky, *The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International* [that is, the *Transitional Programme*] (London, 1962 and 1968), p 4, emphasis added.
- 115.** Trotsky, *The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International*, pp 11-12, emphasis added.
- 116.** K Marx and F Engels, *The German Ideology* (Moscow, 1964), p 38.
- 117.** F Engels, 'Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy' (1888), *Marx-Engels Selected Works*, Volume 2 (Moscow, 1962), p 365, emphasis added.
- 118.** International Committee of the Fourth International, *In Defence of Trotskyism* (London, 1973), p 23, emphasis added.
- 119.** Engels, 'Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy', *Marx-Engels Selected Works*, Volume 2, pp 400-01.
- 120.** F Engels, *Anti-Dühring* (Moscow, 1959), pp 39-56, emphasis added.
- 121.** Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, pp 53-54.
- 122.** Trotsky, *The Third International After Lenin*, pp 90-96.
- 123.** Trotsky, *The Third International After Lenin*, p 89.
- 124.** G Healy, *Problems of the Fourth International* (London, 1967), p 4, emphasis added.
- 125.** LD Trotsky, *Stalin* (London, 1947), pp 352-58.
- 126.** Trotsky, 'Are There No Limits to the Fall?', *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1933-34*, pp 211-15, emphasis added.
- 127.** While we are discussing the theoretical antecedents of the WRP's notion of Labour Party and TUC 'corporatism', we would do well to recognise that there is another strand quite apart from Third Period Stalinism, and that is English middle-class radicalism, which in the form of the prewar Socialist League of Sir Stafford Cripps, came up with a remarkably similar evaluation of the 1934 Labour Party programme *For Socialism and Peace* to that arrived at 40 years or so later by the WRP, with its unbelievably stupid denunciation of Benn's nationalisation plans as 'corporatism'. Of the 1934 programme, the Socialist League said it was 'not a plan for socialism' - which was correct - but 'a form of organisation leading to the corporate state' (cited in A Hutt, *British Trade Unionism* (London, 1942), p 131). And this was basically the same programme that Labour fought on and won the general election of 1945. If the Socialist League was correct, then the working class had not only voted for corporatism. Cripps himself had in the interim become a corporatist, because he entered the Labour government elected in 1945 as a Minister, becoming His Majesty's Chancellor of the Exchequer! At least in the case of Cripps, his somersault was a protracted one. In the case of the WRP, such gyrations are accomplished in a matter of weeks or even days, as the example of its treatment of Benn himself demonstrates.
- 128.** LD Trotsky, 'Bonapartism and Fascism' (15 July 1934), *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1934-35*, pp 51-52.
- 129.** Trotsky, 'Bonapartism and Fascism', *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1934-35*, p 52.
- 130.** Trotsky, *The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International* (London, 1963), pp 50-51.
- 131.** *Workers Press*, 23 March 1973, p 2, emphasis added.
- 132.** K Coates (ed), *Can the Workers Run Industry?* (London, 1968), p 234, emphasis added.
- 133.** *Workers Press*, 24 April 1973, p 4. The feud with Jones had an ironic sequel. When Alan Thornett, a leading WRP militant at the British-Leyland motor plant at Oxford, had his steward's credentials withdrawn by the management, Thornett's TGWU branch committee issued a circular - presumably with WRP approval - which reported that 'application has

been made for the dispute to be made *official* and for the personal intervention of *Brother Jack Jones*' (*Workers Press*, 23 April 1974, emphasis added). So it appears that even 'dedicated disciples of corporatism' have their uses when it comes to fighting for the reinstatement of a victimised WRP steward. And quite correct too!

134. *Workers Press*, 26 April 1973.
135. *Workers Press*, 9 May 1973, p 12.
136. *Workers Press*, 9 May 1973, p 12.
137. *Workers Press* 1 June 1973, p 12.
138. *Workers Press*, 2 June 1973, p 1, emphasis added.
139. *Workers Press*, 5 June 1973, p 1.
140. *Workers Press*, 7 June 1973, p 1.
141. *Workers Press*, 14 June 1973.
142. *Workers Press*, 19 June 1973, p 12.
143. *Workers Press*, 30 June 1973, p 12, emphasis added.
144. *Workers Press*, 5 July 1973.
145. *Workers Press*, 16 July 1973, p 12.
146. *Workers Press*, 20 July 1973.
147. *Workers Press*, 13 August 1973, p 12.
148. *Workers Press*, 30 July 1973, p 2.
149. *Workers Press*, 16 November 1973, p 7.
150. *Workers Press*, 16 November 1973, p 7.
151. *Workers Press*, 31 July 1974.
152. LD Trotsky, 'What Next?' (27 January 1932), *Germany 1931-1932* (London, 1970), pp 206-08, emphasis added.
153. In March 1971, in an article on the TUC's report on the Tory Industrial Relations Bill, Slaughter indeed spoke of a readiness on the part of the trade union bureaucracy to 'coexist and function jointly with the state-run union' (*Workers Press*, 18 March 1971, p 3), but eschewed the use of the term 'corporatist' to denote the policies of the TUC leaders. The fact that Slaughter *knows* that the use of this term is utterly anti-Trotskyist therefore renders his embellishments of the WRP's ultra-leftist line all the more reprehensible. Bull can at least claim in his defence that he knows not what he does.
154. SLL, *On Trade Union Work*, March 1968, p 3.
155. SLL Central Committee, *Draft Resolution: Perspectives for the Transformation of the SLL into a Revolutionary Party* (1 February 1973), p 10, emphasis added.
156. SLL Central Committee, *Draft Resolution: Perspectives for the Transformation of the SLL into a Revolutionary Party* (1 February 1973), p 10.
157. SLL Central Committee, *Draft Resolution: Perspectives for the Transformation of the SLL into a Revolutionary Party* (1 February 1973), p 10, emphasis added.
158. SLL, *Conference Resolution*, 1972, p 8, emphasis added.
159. SLL, *British Perspectives*, 1966, p 5, emphasis added.
160. SLL, *British Perspectives*, 1966, p 5, emphasis added.
161. SLL, *British Perspectives*, 1963, p 6.
162. SLL, *Perspectives*, March 1968, p 6.
163. SLL, *On Trade Union Work*, March 1968, p 4.
164. SLL Political Committee, Letter to All Members, 7 October 1968, p 1.
165. SLL London Area, *Resolution*, February 1969, p 2.

166. *Workers Press*, 3 August 1973, pp 2-3.
167. *Workers Press*, 16 August 1973, p 11.
168. *Workers Press*, 27 October 1973, p 3.
169. *Workers Press*, 6 November 1973, p 3.
170. *Workers Press*, 6 November 1973, p 3, emphasis added.
171. *Workers Press*, 8 November 1973, p 1, emphasis added.
172. *Workers Press*, 26 November 1973, p 4.
173. *Workers Press*, 19 December 1973, p 1.
174. *Workers Press*, 1 January 1974, p 1, emphasis added.
175. LD Trotsky, 'Our Present Tasks' (7 November 1933), *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1933-34*, pp 138-39, emphasis added.
176. *Workers Press*, 5 January 1974, p 1.
177. *Workers Press*, 2 January 1974, emphasis added.
178. *Workers Press*, 2 January 1974.
179. *Workers Press*, 8 January 1974, p 1.
180. *Workers Press*, 19 February 1974.
181. *Workers Press*, 31 December 1973, p 8, emphasis added.
182. *Workers Press*, 8 January 1974, p 8, emphasis added.
183. *Workers Press*, 18 January 1974, p 8.
184. *Workers Press*, 19 February 1973, p 1, emphasis added.
185. *Workers Press*, 16 February 1973, emphasis added.
186. *Workers Press*, 1 March 1974, p 12.
187. *Workers Press*, 15 May 1973.
188. *Workers Press*, 22 February 1974, p 12, emphasis added.
189. *Workers Press*, 27 February 1974, p 10.
190. *Workers Press*, 11 March 1974, emphasis added.
191. N Harris, *Competition and the Corporate Society* (London, 1972), pp 68, 71.
192. *Time Out*, 25-31 October 1974, p 9.
193. Ali, 'The Extra-Parliamentary Opposition', in *New Revolutionaries*, p 68.
194. *Workers Press* also on at least one occasion linked coalition government (that is, a reformist - Tory coalition government) with the corporate state, which not merely denies to Social Democracy any share in the government, but physically destroys its mass organisations. An editorial on 20 April 1971 said of an article in *The Times* by Labour MP Brian Walden that it showed 'just how close to coalition and the corporate state many sections of the Labour bureaucracy are'.
195. E Mandel, 'The New Vanguard', in *New Revolutionaries*, p 50, emphasis added.
196. Mandel, 'The New Vanguard', in *New Revolutionaries*, pp 50-52.
197. Mandel, 'The New Vanguard', in *New Revolutionaries*, pp 51-52, emphasis added.
198. H Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man* (London, 1964), p xii, emphasis added.
199. Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, pp 256-57.
200. H Marcuse, 'Re-Examination of the Concept of Revolution', *New Left Review*, no 56, July-August 1969, p 30, emphasis added.
201. H Marcuse, 'Re-Examination of the Concept of Revolution', *New Left Review*, no 56, July-August 1969, pp 30-31, emphasis added.

- 202.** RE Pahl and JT Winkler, 'The Coming Corporatism', *New Society*, 10 October 1974, p 73.
- 203.** RE Pahl and JT Winkler, 'The Coming Corporatism', *New Society*, 10 October 1974, pp 72-73, emphasis added.
- 204.** RE Pahl and JT Winkler, 'The Coming Corporatism', *New Society*, 10 October 1974, p 74.
- 205.** RE Pahl and JT Winkler, 'The Coming Corporatism', *New Society*, 10 October 1974, p 76.
- 206.** RE Pahl and JT Winkler, 'The Coming Corporatism', *New Society*, 10 October 1974, p 76, emphasis in original.
- 207.** *Workers Press*, 17 September 1973.
- 208.** *Workers Press*, 12 October 1973, p 3.
- 209.** LD Trotsky, *Problems of the British Revolution* (London, 1972), pp 15-16, emphasis added.
- 210.** CPGB, *The British Road to Socialism*, 1968 edition, p 49.
- 211.** CPGB, *Communism and the World Today* (London, 1963), p 43.
- 212.** Trotsky, *Problems of the British Revolution*, p 17, emphasis added.
- 213.** *Workers Press*, 17 September 1973.
- 214.** *Workers Press*, 22 February 1974, emphasis added.
- 215.** *Keep Left*, 7 April 1973.
- 216.** *Keep Left*, 25 August 1973
- 217.** *Keep Left*, 7 July 1973.
- 218.** *Keep Left*, 14 April 1973.
- 219.** *Keep Left*, 12 May 1973.
- 220.** *Keep Left*, 16 June 1973, emphasis added.
- 221.** *Keep Left*, 21 April 1973.
- 222.** *Keep Left*, 14 April 1973.
- 223.** *Workers Press*, 6 May 1974, emphasis added.
- 224.** Trotsky, 'Strategy and Tactics in the Imperialist Epoch', *The Third International After Lenin*, p 129.
- 225.** LD Trotsky, 'A Cancer in the Workers Party' (12 August 1935), *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1935-36*, p 25, emphasis added.
- 226.** LD Trotsky, 'Sectarianism, Centrism and the Fourth International' (22 October 1935), *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1935-36*, p 26.
- 227.** Trotsky, 'Sectarianism, Centrism and the Fourth International', *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1935-36*, p 26.

Fascism in Germany. Robin Blick 1975

Author's Postscript

After the completion of the foregoing Appendix, the author came into the possession of the *Draft Political Perspectives* of the WRP's Special Conference, 13-14 July 1974. The general line and method of this document encapsulates the enclosed world of the sectarian. First there is intoned the ritualistic chant of perspectives being 'proved a thousand times correct' (p 4). But far more important is the total lack of a policy and demands to draw the mass of the workers into struggles that pose a challenge to the reformists. Despite the document's speaking of the 'maturing of a situation where Bonapartist forms of rule appeal to growing sections of the bourgeoisie' (p 4), the bourgeoisie discarding 'traditional democratic institutions' as it 'turns to the state machine itself to impose order', and 'devoting more and more resources to the mobilisation of the fascist bands' (p 4), *there is nowhere a single call for a united workers' front to fight these sinister developments*. Every other tendency in the workers' movement is denounced for its complicity in the drive to reaction, *but not confronted with a principled challenge to unite their forces on the basic issue of the defence of workers' democratic rights*, which the document so rightly says are threatened by the bourgeoisie and its various agencies. True, the document does have a plan to defeat reaction, but it leaves out those millions of workers still organised in the reformist-led organisations: 'The real preparation to defeat reaction in all its forms including the emergence of fascist movements, is the turn more and more deeply into the working class by the revolutionary party.' (p 5) *What is this if not the 'united front from below'?* The 'turn' is to the working class in the abstract, *as individuals susceptible to the propaganda of the WRP*, and not to the class as it is, organised in the Labour Party and the trade unions, *and ready to move into action against 'reaction' only in and through their traditional organisations*. To fight fascism, the WRP must address itself to the organisations to which these workers belong, as Trotsky insisted in his many polemics against the Third Period Stalinists. Perhaps a clue as to why the WRP feels unable to apply this Leninist tactic is to be found in the same document, where we read that the 'Social Democrats and the trade union bureaucrats, supported by the Stalinists, *play their classical role of corporatist class collaboration*' (p 6, emphasis added). So Social Democracy (and Stalinism) = corporatism! Like the Third Period Stalinists, the WRP now attempts, with its reference to the 'classical role' of the 'corporatist' reformists, to project back *far into the past* the allegedly corporatist (fascist) nature of Social Democracy. But most disturbing of all, and again in the treacherous traditions of Third Period Stalinism, is the blatant attempt made in the document to minimise, if not to deny, the danger of fascism becoming a mass movement in Britain. The role allotted to the National Front (and, presumably, to similar movements in Ulster) is that of providing the *ideological 'basis for a supplementary force through which the police carries out its operations'* (p 5, emphasis added). Thus the fascists will not function as a plebeian battering ram against the organised working class (which, in order to carry through its counter-revolutionary task, acts to a large degree independently of the traditional state agencies), but as an *'ideological base for a provocation squad'* (p 5, emphasis added).

What we have expressed here is the British version of national exceptionalism. The German Social Democrats - and Stalinists - argued that fascism was a strictly Italian phenomenon, attributable to the retarded socio-economic development of that nation. It could never become a mass movement in so advanced and civilised a country as Germany. This essentially chauvinist argument in the case of the Stalinists fed the theory that it would be the Social Democrats, and not the Nazis (as late as 1928, capable of winning a mere 800 000 votes), who would carry through the 'fascisation' of Germany. As this book has attempted to show, this theory was still advanced at a time when the Nazis were already well on the way to becoming the mass movement of counter-revolution, not merely supplanting, but threatening with destruction, the mass reformist organisations. The crisis in the middle class, the 'Liberal revival', Powell's challenge to the Tory leadership and his flirtation with the Ulster ultra-right, and, last but not least, the emergence of the National Front as a movement openly bidding for mass support amongst backward workers, youth and disoriented petit-bourgeois, all point towards the danger of the sudden rise of a truly mass fascist movement in the not too distant future. Certainly, the gathering economic crisis, together with the continuing retreats of the reformist leaders before the capitalist offensive, is creating the preconditions for such a development. Yet the WRP conference resolution, far from highlighting these dangers, and evolving a strategy, tactics and policies to combat them, declares: 'The National Front... does not have *any* mass basis.' (p 5, emphasis added) *Any?* Instead of summoning the workers' movement to beat down incipient fascism before it gains a secure footing in the backward masses, the WRP deems the 'fight against fascism' to be a 'diversion' away 'from the role of the bourgeois state

itself' (p 5). This sophistry is reminiscent of the KPD leaders, who opposed calls for a united front against fascism by demagogically insisting that the 'real fight' was against 'capitalist dictatorship in general'. Anti-fascism, argued Thälmann and company, was really a cover for support of the reformists and the status quo. Of course, it can be - *it is the task of the revolutionary party to see that it does not perform this reactionary role*. This the party does, not by abstaining from the struggle against fascism behind a screen of radical phrases, or refusing to enter into united front agreements with other sections of the workers' movement, but by being *at the very forefront* of the struggle to mobilise the class against the fascists and their allies *now*. This means, for example, launching a campaign inside the trade unions, Labour clubs and other workers' organisations for an official policy of *immediate expulsion* of all known members of the National Front and other such organisations. Even the ADGB bureaucracy, for all its cringing to the bourgeoisie, adopted this policy towards the Nazis right up to the end of 1932. Surely the WRP feels it both necessary and possible to present a similar demand to the leaders of the British trade unions? If it is accepted and implemented, *the workers' movement will be immeasurably strengthened*. If not, *then the advanced workers will have had a classic lesson in the cowardly nature and role of reformism*. But as yet, the WRP has not raised this elementary slogan - *Drive the racists and fascists out of the trade unions*. It prefers instead to brand their leaders as 'devoted disciples' of fascist ideology. Once again, we must put this question to the WRP: *Has it learned nothing from the tragedy of Germany?*

Robert
3 July 1974

Black