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HERR UND HEER: THE GERMAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATS  
AND THE OFFICER CORPS, A REAPPRAISAL

DISSERTATION

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The role of the army in the course of German history has attracted the attention of scholars of every generation. Most accept the notion that the military chiefs of Imperial Germany remained bitterly antagonistic toward the destruction of the Second Reich and the development of the Weimar Republic. These same historians view the German Social Democratic Party as the principle foe of the Reich and its military leaders. Utilizing the debates of the German Reichstag, the proceedings of the SPD, the memoirs of the leading military and Marxist figures and the principal newspapers of the Second Reich and Weimar Republic, this dissertation attempts to show how the army chiefs and the socialist leaders of Germany altered their policies not only to promote their interests but also to protect the state. When the Second Reich collapsed in 1918, both the Social Democrats and the High Command realized that the security of the state transcended class and caste lines. This realization led to an alliance between the army and the Socialists which resulted in the defeat of Leftist and Rightist revolts and the establishment of a parliamentary democracy.

Chapters I and II deal with the positions and policies of the officer corps and the Social Democrats in Germany. As Germany's military and economic power increased throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the size and stature of the corps of officers and cadres of socialists also grew. The officer corps, following the Prussian pattern, remained under the exclusive control of the monarch while the Social Democrats, in theory, retained their Marxist affiliation. Both of these groups were forced to undergo alterations, however, because of social and political pressures. Although both the socialists and the army remained bitterly hostile toward each another, neither possessed enough power to curb the growth or challenge the position of the other.

Chapters III and IV investigate the ideological and political struggle between the army and the socialists. As the Social Democrats entered the Reichstag in increasing numbers their attacks upon the army shifted from the theoretical to the practical battlefield. Since thousands of socialists were forced to enter military service, the practices of the army rather than its position attracted the fire of the SPD delegates. Once the German democratic parties realized that the socialists were willing to defend the state, but not the state of the army, they allied themselves with the SPD. Throughout the pre-World War I period, the army was forced to revise and reform many of its archaic policies.

Chapters V and VI cover the effects of World War I upon the army and the SPD. The nationalism of the socialists was fully exhibited by the party's persistent support for the war. Although many SPD supporters broke with their party, the majority remained determined to work within the national framework in order to achieve democratic reforms. The army chiefs, however, utilized the war to usurp as much authority as possible, and drove the country to the brink of starvation and revolution. By late 1918, neither the SPD nor the army could halt the tide of revolution.

Chapters VII and VIII cover the revolutionary years 1918-1920 and the roles of the army chiefs and socialist leaders in attempting to reconstruct Germany. Although both forces remained opposed to each other in many areas, neither desired the destruction of the state. After the November alliance between the officer corps and the SPD, challenges from the left and right were defeated and a democratic republic emerged.

## PREFACE

The collapse of the Weimar Republic and the catastrophic course of Germany under Hitler continue to command the attention of scholars and students. While investigating the causes of Germany's demise, many historians view the early stages of the Weimar Republic as its most crucial period. As in Russia, military defeat was followed by political revolution. Unlike Russia, however, Germany emerged from the chaos of 1918 with a constitutional democracy. Challenges from the revolutionary and reactionary elements were defeated and Germany appeared on the road to democratic republicanism.

Despite the successful implementation of parliamentary democracy in Germany, few historians view the Weimar Republic's establishment as a revolutionary change from the past. The extinction of democracy by the election of Hitler offers ample proof to these critics of the weakness, in both spirit and structure, of the German republic. The conservatively dominated bureaucracy and army fortify the assumption that Germany never totally accepted the new order. Even during the revolutionary period of 1918-1919, the actions of the officers of the army and the officers of the state are connected with Germany's eventual submission to totalitarianism. When the leaders of the German Social Democratic Party and the High Command agreed to support one another in 1918,

Germany's tragic future was forecast. As the late John Wheeler-Bennett stated,

. . . in a half dozen sentences over a telephone line, a pact was concluded between a defeated army and a tottering semi-revolutionary regime; a pact destined to save both parties from the extreme elements of revolution but, as a result of which, the Weimar Republic was doomed at birth.

Assertions such as Wheeler-Bennett's underlie the problem facing every historian who attempts to reconstruct the past. How is one able to divorce the present from the past? Despite Ranke's belief that documentary immersion would yield historical immortality, few works of history have stood the test of time. In the case of Germany especially, the memories of two World Wars and a collective madness entitled National Socialism hinder even the most objective researcher.

In order to better understand the nature of the pact between the army and the socialists in 1918, it is necessary to view the principles and practices of the military and the Marxists prior to World War I. A sharp delineation is made between principles and practices because both groups sacrificed principles in order to attain their goals. The officer corps, when faced with a shortage of aristocratic recruits, allowed upper and middle class elements into its ranks. The Social Democrats, when threatened with electoral defeat, adopted programs with mass, as well as class, appeal. Throughout the pre-World War I period, both elements pursued policies which were designed to preserve, protect, or promote their

positions. Since the Social Democrats remained isolated from the governing circles of the Reich, and the army rested comfortably under the protection of the sovereign, there were few areas of agreement between the two.

Despite deep ideological and social differences both the army and the Social Democrats realized that the welfare of the state was of prime importance to the well-being of their respective constituents. Although the SPD rejected the autocratic nature of the nation, very few socialists desired the total destruction of the state. The tremendous electoral and economic gains made by the SPD before, during and after the institution of the anti-socialist laws illustrated the ability of the party to operate under the most difficult circumstances. The officer corps responded to the threat of the SPD with words instead of weapons. Although many officers demanded a show of arms against the workers, the interests of the nation superseded those of any caste or class.

Survival of the state became the main concern of the officer corps and the SPD during World War I. When the SPD voted to support the war effort, however, many people assumed the party was accepting the state as it existed in 1914. That this was not the case was soon illustrated by the SPD's criticism of the government's policies and personnel. While many party members severed all ties with their former leaders,

the SPD was able to maintain the loyalty of the majority of the German workers. The prolongation and privations of the war forced the leaders of the state to promise substantial reform to the workers and their political party once the war had ended.

Promises of political reforms to a nation on the brink of starvation and military defeat only heightened the internal pressures for peace. For while the emperor held out the possibility of a more democratic state, Germany moved closer to the reality of a military dictatorship. The SPD, trapped between loyalty to the nation and preservation of party unity, remained within the system. Although this policy alienated many of the SPD's former supporters, it also attracted the attention of many of the party's former enemies. When revolution erupted, the SPD appeared as the one force capable of insuring change without chaos. The officer corps, viewing the SPD's desertion of Marx and the party's demand for a democratic state, sacrificed their war lord and struck an agreement with the socialists.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE PRUSSIAN ARMY: STATE WITHIN A STATE

Until the nineteenth century, leadership of the European armies was limited almost exclusively to the upper classes. The army, tied firmly to the leadership of the country, served as a respectable vocation for the sons of the gentry, and a showcase for the wealth and power of the state. The advent of the French Revolution, with the leveé en masse and the citizen armies of Napoleon, seriously challenged the performance and credibility of the traditional armies. Warfare began to change drastically, pitting large portions of the population and resources of one country against others. The end of the Napoleonic era destroyed the threat of French hegemony to the continent, but in the process of achieving this goal, several powerful countries emerged. The north Germanic state of Prussia was one of the more conspicuous new continental powers.

Prussia had erupted on the European scene in sporadic outbursts of strength in the eighteenth century, sending shock waves through the capitals of Europe. Under Frederick William I the Prussian state was totally reorganized along military lines. The canton strategy foreshadowed the system of universal conscription, adopted in the nineteenth century, while the chain of command in the royal bureaucracy aped that

of the army. The officer corps, dominated by aristocratic Junkers, became the strongest pillar upon which the Prussian state rested. Military bureaucrats occupied positions in both the civil and military administration of the state. Only the threat of another military state jolted the Prussians out of their feudal system of defence.

During the Napoleonic period the Prussian military state collapsed under the weight of the French army. Defeat at Jena in 1806 forced a sharp reorientation of Prussian policy. Under the leadership of Generals Gerhard von Scharnhorst and Neithardt von Gneisenau, both non-Prussians, revolutionary military tactics evolved to challenge French domination. Eight years after the disaster at Jena, Prussian armies marched into Paris and shared the victor's cup at Waterloo. Victory over Napoleon, however, did not guarantee victory for the Prussian reforms.<sup>1</sup>

The collapse of Napoleon's Empire signalled a new epoch in European history. Under the guidance of Prince Klemens Wenzel von Metternich, Europe returned to the path of absolutism.

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1. The reforms of Scharnhorst and Gneisenau are discussed in: Gordon Craig, The Politics of the Prussian Army, 1640-1945 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 37-53; Curt Jany, Geschichte der königlich-preussischen Armee 4 vols. (Berlin: K. Siegismund, 1933) 2:109-136; Max Lehman, "Zur Geschichte der preussischen Heeresreform von 1808," Historische Zeitschrift, 126 (1922) 436-57; William Shanahan, Prussian Military Reforms, 1786-1813 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), pp. 105-226; Walter M. Simon, The Failure of the Prussian Reform Movement, 1807-1819 (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1955).

Although even Metternich realized that the clock could not be turned back to the pre-1789 period, any alteration in the status quo was viewed with suspicion. In the German Confederation reaction reigned supreme. The Carlsbad Decrees of 1819 suppressed any internal radicalism while the Prussian army, in league with Russia and Austria, guarded against external revolutionary threats. The forces of Frederick William IV (1840-61) shared little in common with the Prussian army that had driven the French from the field at Leipzig in 1813. As the reforms of Scharnhorst and Gneisenau disappeared, the officer corps, once again, mirrored the aristocracy of land and not talent.<sup>2</sup>

Metternich's concert system began to break up in 1848 as other forces shook the foundations of the European thrones. This time it was not the physical threat of a foreign enemy that menaced the old order but rather the revolutionary residue of 1789 plus the ideas of nationalism, democracy, and socialism.

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2. Prussia's role in the Holy Alliance and the Concert System is covered in: William Carr, A History of Germany, 1815-1945 (London: Edward Arnold, 1969), pp. 1-36; Marshall Dill, Germany: A Modern History (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1961), pp. 86-117; Ralph Flenley, Modern German History (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1959), pp. 136-61; Golo Mann, The History of Germany since 1789 (London: Chatto & Windus, 1968), pp. 51-75; Koppel Pinson, Modern Germany: Its History and Civilization (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1954), pp. 1-50; Hans Schenk, The Aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars: The Concert of Europe, an Experiment (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), pp. 80-100; A. J. P. Taylor, The Course of German History since 1815 (New York: Coward-McCann, 1946), pp. 46-65.

Although only France went through a major dynastic alteration, the Habsburg and Hohenzollern monarchs were seriously threatened. Utilization of the army in each country was necessary in order to rescue the throne. A situation of intense animosity between the soldiers of the king and the citizens of Rousseau and Marx seemed to stifle any progressive growth toward a strong, unified, Prussian state.<sup>3</sup>

Throughout the post-1848 period the Prussian state reeled from one crisis to another. The humiliation at Olmütz in 1850 illustrated that German unity, under Prussian leadership would not go unchallenged, while the debates in the Landtag over the size and composition of the army illuminated the polarization in Prussian society between the forces of absolutism and constitutionalism. The accession of Otto von Bismarck to the chancellorship in 1862 provided a temporary

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3. The revolutionary events of 1848 are described in: Erik Brandenburg, Die deutsche Revolution, 1848 (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1919); Kurt Kersten, Die deutsche Revolution, 1848-1849 (Frankfurt am Main: Europäischer Verlagsantalt, 1955); Karl Marx, Revolution and Counter Revolution: Germany in 1848 (Chicago: H. Kerr, 1896); Charles E. Maurice, The Revolutionary Movement of 1848-1849 in Italy, Austria-Hungary and Germany (New York: G. P. Putnam's, 1887), pp. 401-17; Hermann Meyer, 1848, Studien zur Geschichte der deutschen Revolution von 1848 (Darmstadt: Verlagshaus Darmstadt, 1949); Lewis Namier, 1848: The Revolt of the Intellectuals (Garden City, New Jersey: Anchor Books, 1964); Raymond Postgate, Story of a Year, 1848 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956); Priscilla Robertson, Revolutions of 1848: A Social History (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1952), pp. 107-185; Rudolf Stadelmann, Soziale und Politische Geschichte der deutschen Revolution von 1848 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1962); Peter Stearns, 1848: The Revolutionary Tide in Europe (New York: Norton Press, 1974), pp. 140-66; Viet Valentin, 1848: Chapters of German History (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1965); Arnold Whitridge, Men in Crisis: The Revolutions of 1848 (New York: Scribner's, 1949), pp. 194-237.

solution to the army's personnel problems but placed the Prussian state on a new course.<sup>4</sup>

Bismarck's Realpolitik provided the catalyst for Prussian expansion. The Iron Chancellor welded together a nationalist-absolutist coalition and began Prussia's drive for dominance in Central Europe. In three crushing wars, Denmark, Austria, and France were defeated and a unified German nation state appeared on the map of Europe. Bismarck's diplomatic intrigues combined with General Helmut von Moltke's military inventiveness to make Prussia appear invincible as the power of Potsdam replaced the spirit of Frankfurt. The victories at Koniggratz and Sedan obliterated the memories of the March Days in Berlin as the gap between the bourgeoisie and the army rapidly closed. Prussia's army, once viewed as a feudal anachronism, became the exaltation of a large part of the nation. The picture of the Prussian lieutenant switched from that of the priggish,

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4. Some of the voluminous works on Bismarck include: Friedrich Darmstaedter, Bismarck and the Creation of the Second Reich (London: Methuen, 1948), pp. 195-384; Erich Eyck, Bismarck: Leben und Werk, 3 vols. (Zurich: E. Rentsch, 1941-1944) 1:421-540; Frederic Hollyday, ed., Bismarck (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1970); William Medlicott, Bismarck and Modern Germany (London: English Universities Press, 1965); Ian Morrow, Bismarck (London: Duckworth, 1943), pp. 23-39; Otto Pflanze, Bismarck and the Development of Germany: The Period of Unification, 1815-1871 (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 171-336; Walter Simon, Germany in the Age of Bismarck (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1968), pp. 13-38; A. J. P. Taylor, Bismarck: The Man and the Statesman (London: H. Hamilton, 1955), pp. 53-69.

privileged, plutocrat to the image of "a consecrated spirit who moved through the world as a young god."<sup>5</sup> Throughout Germany officers left their solitary garrisons and mixed with the adoring population. As the victorious army returned to Berlin, one observer was totally amazed at the sight of the thousands of workingmen who lined the streets. The picture of "butchers basketmakers, smiths, and carpenters, bookbinders and confectioners, barbers and stocking-weavers"<sup>6</sup> celebrating the return of the army seemed to erase the tensions of earlier decades. The spirit of the German people's attitude toward their victorious army was further solidified in the letter of the law as laid down in the constitution of the German Reich.

Imperial Germany's constitution, proclaimed in 1871, reflected Prussian power more than popular sovereignty. Although universal manhood suffrage was granted in the Reichstag elections of the Empire, the individual states of the realm retained many of their feudal trappings. The army, regarded as a priceless national treasure, escaped constitutional controls. The Prussian military system became the German system just as the Prussian king became the German Kaiser. Although some of the states of the Reich were

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5. Friedrich Meinecke, The German Catastrophe: Reflections and Recollections (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), p. 12.

6. "The Triumph at Berlin," Living Age 22 (1871): 747.

granted certain controls over their armies, there was little doubt who exercised final authority. With the exception of religious observances, the armies of the empire were forced to adopt

the entire Prussian system of military legislation . . . without delay throughout the Empire, both the statutes themselves and the regulations, instructions, and ordinances issued for their execution, explanation or completion; especially the military penal code of April 3, 1845; the law of military penal procedure of April 3, 1845; the ordinance concerning the courts of honor, of July 20, 1843; the regulations with respect to recruiting, time of service, matters relating to quarters and subsistence, to the quartering of troops, to compensation for injury done to fields, to mobilization of troops, etc., in times of peace and war.<sup>7</sup>

All soldiers were required to wear the "primary colors and cut of the Prussian uniform"<sup>8</sup> and all officers were required to swear personal oaths of allegiance to their master as well as their country. The emperor, as stated in Article sixty-three, determined "the strength, composition and division of contingents of the Imperial army." Germany's military system, by incorporating Prussian institutions, also inherited Prussian intransigence. Thus the army retained its sacrosanct position in German society as Prussia led the nation into a new era.<sup>9</sup>

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7. The Inquiry Handbooks, 20 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1919), vol. 18, The Constitutions of the German Empire and the German States ed. by Edwin Zeydel, p. 22.

8. Ibid., 18:23.

9. Ibid.

German unification opened the path to economic maturation. Between 1871 and 1914 the pace of industrialization accelerated with geometric swiftness. Production statistics revealed increases in almost every area of industrial and commercial activity as Germany's economy assumed international stature. With the acquisition of Alsace and Lorraine, Germany's textile, potash, and iron industries began to expand. Iron ore production increased from five million tons in the 1871-1875 period to twenty-nine million tons in 1913. Steel production followed suit, and between 1871 and 1910, Germany surpassed every European rival. Coal production likewise rose 300 percent from thirty-five million tons in the 1871-1875 period to 190 million tons in 1913. Along with these older industries arose new enterprises such as the electrical and chemical concerns which further enhanced Germany's economic reputation. In order to compete on the world market, German railway and merchant shipping expanded. Railway mileage increased from 19,000 kilometers in 1870 to 60,000 kilometers by 1912 and the merchant marine grew from 147 vessels in 1871 to over 2,000 in 1913. Foreign exports doubled between 1872 and 1900 and then doubled again between 1900 and 1913 as Germany outdistanced all of her competitors, with the exception of the United States. German firms such as Krupp, I. G. Farben, and

the Allgemeine Elektrizitäts-Gesellschaft rose to international prominence.<sup>10</sup>

The industrial revolution in Germany forced the social fabric of the country to undergo serious alterations. As millions of peasants left the farms of the east and began the trek to the industrial centers of the west, agriculture began to lose its dominant position in German society. Although grain and potato production doubled between 1871 and 1914, the percentage of people engaged in agriculture declined from 65 percent to 35 percent. While the population increased from forty-two million in 1871 to sixty-seven million in 1915 the percentage of people living in urban areas of over 2,000 inhabitants increased from 26 percent to 64 percent. In 1880 only fifteen German cities could be classified as large towns (100,000 inhabitants or over); by 1910 this figure had more than tripled. As industry and the cities grew, emigration began to decline. Of the nearly six million Germans who departed their homeland between 1820 and 1930,

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10. Gustav Stolper, The German Economy: 1870 to the Present (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1967), pp. 23-92; Robert H. Fife, The German Empire Between Two Wars: A Study of the Political and Social Development of the Nation Between 1871 and 1914 (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1918), pp. 139-74; William Dawson, The Evolution of Modern Germany (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1908); William Henderson, The Industrial Revolution in Europe, 1815-1914 (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961), pp. 1-74; Thorstein Veblen, Imperial Germany and The Industrial Revolution (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1918), pp. 145-229; John H. Clapham, The Economic Development of France and Germany, 1815-1914 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), pp. 74-185; Carl Brinkman, "Weltpolitik und Weltwirtschaft im 19 Jahrhundert," Weltwirtschaftliches Archiv 16: (1920-21), 186-211.

four and a half million departed prior to 1890. Instead of shipping out to Chicago or Sao Paulo, many Germans simply joined the exodus to Berlin, Essen, or Chemnitz.<sup>11</sup>

The growth of Germany's economy fostered a renewed political awareness by the middle and lower classes in German society. Although the Reich had been forged by the blood and iron of her armies, Germany's place in the sun was sustained by the sweat and iron of her factories and factory workers. Many Germans viewed with alarm the continued dominance of the landed aristocracy in the bureaucracy and the army. Reformers desired a more democratic form of government that would guarantee the masses a voice proportionate to their size. Political parties such as the Progressive, the Centre, and the Social Democratic pressured the government for franchise reform, social legislation, and a diminution of the aristocracy's influence over the state. Throughout the post-unification period Bismarck attempted to balance one party off against the other in order to maintain a nationalist-absolutist majority. The Kulturkampf and the Anti-Socialist

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11. Stolper, German Economy, pp. 24-25; Fife, German Empire, pp. 270-71; Frederick Martin, Statesman's Year-Book: Statistical and Historical Annual of the States of the Civilized World (London: Macmillan & Co., 1881), pp. 93-188; J. S. Keltie, Statesman's Year-Book: Statistical and Historical Annual of the States of the World for the Year 1910 (London: Macmillan & Co., 1910), pp. 828-29; Wolfgang Kollmann, "The Process of Urbanization in Germany at the Height of the Industrialization Period," Journal of Contemporary History 4: (1969), 59-76; Mack Walker, Germany and the Emigration (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), pp. 134-94.

laws illustrated both the government's fear of as well as the people's persistence for change.<sup>12</sup>

As the forces of democratization battled the entrenched power of the crown, the army withdrew to the sanctuary of the sovereign. Throughout the pre-World War I period, the officer corps steadfastly refused to yield ground on any front. Every attempt by the Reichstag to assert itself in the field of military affairs met with objection and obstruction. In order to protect and preserve the position of the army from civilian interference, there was a continual reassessment and reorganization of the upper echelons of the military bureaucracy, an attempt to screen the candidates for the officer corps, and a constant propaganda barrage by the military administration.

Although many observers viewed the German military as the model of efficiency and effectiveness, the Prussian military organization displayed signs of administrative confusion and departmental rivalry. The emperor, as stated

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12. Thomas Nipperday, Die Organisation deutschen Parteien vor 1918 (Dusseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1961); Beverley Heckart, From Bassermann to Bebel: The Grand Bloc's Quest for Reform in the Kaiserreich, 1900-1914 (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1974); Ludwig Bergstrasser, Geschichte der politischen Parteien in Deutschland (Munich: G. Olzos, 1965); Oskar Stillich, Die politischen Parteien in Deutschland, 2 vols. (Leipzig: W. Klinkhardt, 1908-1911); Walter Kaufmann, Monarchism in the Weimar Republic (New York: Bookman Ass., 1953), pp. 11-26.

in the constitution, controlled almost every facet of army activity. Moving from the top down, however, the chain of command branched out horizontally into three independent and powerful agencies; the General Staff, the Military Cabinet, and the War Ministry. The General Staff, although small in numbers, controlled war planning, mobilization, training of troops, intelligence gathering, and military cartography. As the problems of organization and operation increased, the size and composition of the General Staff followed suit. Between 1888 and 1914 Staff membership rose from 239 officers to 625 members, half of whom emanated from non-noble sections of German society. By 1883 the General Staff had achieved direct access to the emperor, thus diminishing the power of the War Ministry. The Military Cabinet, unlike the General Staff, remained the aristocratic enclave of the army. This organization existed primarily to preserve the bond between the emperor and his officers. Items such as promotions, discharges, appointments, rewards, and legal affairs fell under the jurisdiction of the Military Cabinet. The War Ministry, although very powerful on paper, lost many of its responsibilities to the rival agencies in the bureaucracy. Since the War Minister represented the interests of the army before the cabinet and the Reichstag, many officers wanted its area of authority severely circumscribed. The net result of the endless rivalries and conflicts was to produce a German

military machine, not only further withdrawn from the searching eye of the civilians, but also lacking in unity of command.<sup>13</sup>

Although the officer corps succeeded in avoiding civilian control, it was much less successful in providing suitable aristocratic candidates for commissions. As the German army grew into the millions, the number of noble families diminished. The cadet schools, which traditionally prepared the sons of noble officers for leadership in the army, witnessed fewer and fewer aristocratic candidates as industry, commerce, and the navy offered alternative occupations. Between 1888 and 1913 the number of officers' sons entering War Colleges increased from 252 students to 279 students, while the number of sons of professional men rose from 235 to 459 and the progeny of merchants and factory owners jumped from 79 to 183.<sup>14</sup> These alterations in the

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13. Craig, Politics of Prussian Army, pp. 225-35; Gerh rd Ritter, The Sword and the Scepter: The Problem of Militarism in Germany 4 vols. (Coral Gables, Florida: University of Miami Press, 1965), 2:125-26; Martin Kitchen, The German Officer Corps, 1890-1914 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), pp. 1-21; Alfred Vagts, A History of Militarism: Romance and Realities of a Profession (New York: W. W. Norton, 1937), pp. 177-78; Karl Demeter, The German Officer Corps in State and Society, 1650-1945 (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1965), pp. 92-94; Walter G rlitz, History of the German General Staff (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1953), pp. 67-125; Max Van den Berg, Das deutsche Heer vor dem Weltkriege: eine darstellung und wirdigung (Berlin: Sanssouci Verlag, 1934), pp. 133-56; Rudolf Schmidt-Buckeburg, Das Militarkabinett der preussischen K nige und deutschen Kaiser: seine geschichtliche Entwicklung und staatsrechtliche Stellung, 1787-1918 (Berlin: E. S. Mittler, 1933), pp. 83-87.

14. Demeter, Officer Corps, p. 267; Kitchen, German Officer Corps, pp. 25-26.

composition of the officer corps raised alarm in certain sections of the army. Many officers of the traditional school felt that discipline would collapse if the officer corps lost its aristocratic leadership. Some veterans, such as Generalfeldmarschall Colmar von der Goltz argued that the officer corps must maintain its favored position in society, because "He who is accustomed to regard himself as belonging to a special class will also, in war, consider himself bound to do something special."<sup>15</sup> Since the officers were the only means through which the traditions of the army could be preserved and passed on, Goltz reasoned that any loss of position would produce an army "poor in bold and courageous soldiers."<sup>16</sup> The picture of an officer corps dominated with the ideology of the middle class horrified many. Heinrich von Treitschke, one of Germany's leading historians, praised the army as "a popular school for manly virtue in an age when business and pleasure cause higher things to be forgotten."<sup>17</sup> General Friedrich von Bernhardi, author of Germany and the Next War, utilized the works of Goethe, Shakespeare, Treitschke, Clausewitz, Schiller, and Arndt to attack the middle-class concepts of liberalism and peace. Since war was a biological,

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15. Kolmar von der Goltz, The Nation in Arms (London: H. Rees, 1906), p. 22.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 23-24.

17. George Borrow, ed., Treitschke: His Life and Works (London: Jarrold & Sons, 1914), p. 139.

historical, and national necessity, Bernhardi argued against any diminution of the ideal of Furor Teutonicus, which, if successful, would "poison the soul of the German people."<sup>18</sup>

The reaction to the influx of middle class officers did little to alter the reality of the situation. While the aristocracy continued to hold positions in the army far disproportionate to its size in society, middle class representation continued to increase. As the army incorporated modern technology, especially in the artillery and supply services, experts from the bourgeois elements of society flooded into the officer corps. Between 1860 and 1913 the number of noble senior officers (generals and colonels) declined from 86 percent to 52 percent while only about 25 percent of the junior officers (captains and lieutenants) could claim noble heritage. The percentage of aristocrats in the Prussian officer corps fell from sixty-five in 1860 to thirty in 1914. Since there was little that the aristocratic officers could do to halt the bourgeois inundation of the officer corps, they retreated to certain exclusive units of the army where middle-class officers were forbidden. For while many non-noble officers served on the Prussian General Staff, certain cavalry and guards regiments remained exclusively aristocratic. Regiments stationed in and around the dynastic

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18. Friedrich von Bernhardi, Germany and the Next War (New York: Longman's Green & Co., 1914), p. 14.

capitals of the empire usually reflected an aristocratic preponderance, while the garrison posts on the French and Russian borders exhibited a more balanced social composition. Some officers wanted the size of army limited since there were too few aristocrats to command it. Others requested that qualities such as character and breeding take preference over intellect and education in officer selection. Extremists demanded that noblemen unable to meet the requirements for officer training serve in certain select units as noble enlisted men. All of this resistance proved futile since the bourgeoisie offered the only logical class to fill the needs of the army. The army's fear of embourgeoisement proved illusory since the middle-class officers proved more than willing to abandon their political and ideological preferences for the benefits of the king's colors.<sup>19</sup>

In March, 1890, William II, German Kaiser, Prussian King, and Supreme War Lord issued a proclamation which formally institutionalized middle-class entrance into the officer corps. Since "the aristocracy of birth can no longer . . .

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19. Demeter, Officer Corps, pp. 28-30; Craig, Politics of the Prussian Army, p. 235; Kitchen, German Officer Corps, pp. 23-27; Ritter, Sword and Scepter, 2:101, 286-87; F. C. Endres, "Soziologische Struktur und Ihre Entsprechende Ideologie des deutschen Offizierkorps vor dem Weltkrieg," Archiv für Sozial Wissenschaft und Sozial Politik 58: (1927), 295-96; Alex Hall, "By Other Means: The Legal Struggle Against the SPD in Wilhelmine Germany, 1890-1900," Historical Journal 17: (1974), 366; Vagts, History of Militarism, p. 176; F. Priebatsch, Geschichte des preussischen Offizierkorps (Breslau: Priebatsch, 1919), p. 37.

claim privileges for itself in providing officers for the army," William asked that "the sons of honorable bourgeois houses in which a love for King and Country and a heartfelt devotion to the profession of arms and to Christian culture" enter his army.<sup>20</sup> Although the aristocratic composition of the army continued to decrease after the Kaiser's order, the aristocratic character of the officer corps increased. When the middle class officers entered the army, they were heavily indoctrinated with the elitist ideology of the officer caste. Since the officer corps represented the leading class of the country, military authors stressed the exclusiveness and uniqueness of the officer's station in society. As one writer stated,

The corps of officers must . . . be chosen from the best classes of the people, who exercise even in ordinary life a natural authority over the masses.<sup>21</sup>

The expansion of the reserve officer extended the army's ideology deeper into the middle class and exposed thousands more to the caste-conscious credo of the officer corps. The reserve commission became a confirmation of one's superior place in German society. In order to guarantee that future

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20. Demeter, Officer Corps, p. 25; Kitchen, German Officer Corps, pp. 26-27; Craig, Politics of Prussian Army, p. 235; Kurt Wedel, Zwischen Kaiser und Kanzler (Leipzig: E. S. Mittler, 1943), p. 90; Times (London) 30 March, 1890, p. 8.

21. Goltz, Nation in Arms, p. 22.

generations would accept the exalted position of the army, some members of the military proposed that officers should be utilized as high school instructors. Although not successful in this particular area, the army was able to maintain its position in the state as many of the middle-class officers absorbed the rigid code and conduct of the officer caste.<sup>22</sup>

As the middle classes entered directly into the officer corps, the lower classes, although denied admission to roles of leadership, were allowed to share in the glory of the military. Since the army represented the basis upon which national unity as well as royal privilege rested, most Germans viewed the military establishment in an ambiguous fashion. From an early age, Germans learned of the heroic deeds of their army and how everyone, regardless of class or status, belonged to the "school of the nation." Monuments and memorials abounded throughout the Reich to remind the people of the Wars of Liberation and Unification. Holidays were celebrated with much martial pomp and pomposity. As one defender of the system explained,

Military life takes the place of athletics . . .  
from football to a marathon race . . . not only  
for those who are or have been in the service,  
but also for the public at large.<sup>23</sup>

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22. Ritter, Sword and Scepter, 2:101-02; Goltz, Nation in Arms, pp. 27-28; Kitchen, German Officer Corps, pp. 119-22; Craig, Politics of Prussian Army, p. 237.

23. Karl O. Bertling, "The Military System of Germany," Outlook 86 (1907), 300.

German children were encouraged to participate in the youth organizations such as the Jungdeutschlandbund, which instilled the young with the proper military spirit needed to meet the demands of military service. Conscription forced millions to undergo military training and thinking. The Militär-anwärter system guaranteed long serving veterans positions in the civil service, thus cementing a bond between the civil and military bureaucracy. Veteran's organizations, such as the Kriegerverein, enrolled non-veterans as well as veterans in order to guard against any attacks on the powers of the crown and the high command. Thus as the army grew into the millions, the military spirit of Prussian society spread throughout Germany. In some instances the adoration for the army and its leadership produced almost comic consequences. The famous Kopenick Raid of 1906 illustrated that unquestioning obedience to the uniform of an officer could embarrass as well as enhance the army's reputation.<sup>24</sup>

On October 16, 1906 the mayor of Kopenick, a small suburb of Berlin, was approached by a captain of the First Foot Guards and soldiers of the Guards Fusiliers and Fourth Guards Regiments. Herr Langerhans, the mayor, and Herr von Wiltberg, the municipal treasurer, were placed under arrest and escorted to the military prison in Berlin. Although Herr

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24. Ritter, Sword and Scepter, 2:99-100; Vagts, History of Militarism, pp. 387-90; Kitchen, German Officer Corps, pp. 128-35; H. Westphal, Das deutsche Kriegervereinwesen (Berlin: Deutsche Verlag, 1903).

Langerhans was not informed of the charges against him, he gave the as yet unidentified captain his word of honor as an officer of the reserve that he would not attempt to escape. When the mayor reached the Neue Wache prison neither his escorts nor the commandant of the prison could explain the reason for his arrest. After General von Moltke, the commandant of the city, and Prince Joachim Albrecht, the officer of the day, arrived, it was ascertained that the whole episode had been a cover for a criminal deed. The soldiers escorting Herr Langerhans maintained that they had left their sentry boxes in Berlin because the mysterious captain had commanded them "by order of the Emperor." When the police arrived in Kopenick they discovered that the local gendarmes and the remaining soldiers had maintained security in the streets while the Captain of Kopenick breached the security of the town's strongbox.<sup>25</sup>

Newspaper reaction to the Kopenick Raid poked fun at the Prussian deification of the uniform. The National Zeitung laughed at the army by stating,

The boldest and most biting satirist could not make our vaulting militarism . . . the subject of a satire which could stand comparison with this comic opera transferred from the boards into real life. This

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25. The Kopenick Affair is covered in the: Times (London), 18 October 1906, p. 5; Ibid., 19 October 1906, p. 3; Ibid., 27 October, 1906, p. 7; Ibid., 30 October 1906, p. 5; Ibid., 3 December 1906, p. 5; National Zeitung, 17 October 1906; Berliner Tageblatt, 18 October 1906.

Herr Hauptmann who carries on his false epaulettes the respectable burden of nearly sixty years, who has the looks of a jail bird, whose uniform is in bad condition, who appears without a helmet, and who in time of peace bursts into a house with "his Majesty's command," who by such methods dupes eleven guardsmen, a burgomaster and a reserve officer, a municipal treasurer, and a whole town is surely the embodied mockery of that respect for the uniform which loses its wits and which passes at a bound from common sense to nonsense.<sup>26</sup>

The Berliner Tageblatt took a more serious stand and commented that

it is undoubtedly a fact that in Prussia the uniform rules and governs. Before the uniform everyone falls down a plat ventre-"society," the authorities from the Minister to the watchman, the burghers of the towns, and the masses of the people. . . . The man who wears the uniform triumphs, not because he is better, or cleverer, or more prudent than his neighbors, but because he is in uniform.<sup>27</sup>

After a two-week search, the police arrested Wilhelm Voight, a cobbler by trade, who had spent twenty-seven of his sixty-three years in prison. While in prison Voight hatched the idea of using the army for his own benefit. After his release, Voight moved from one town to another hoping to find work, but soon as the authorities discovered that he was a former convict, Voight was forced to move on. Finally out of desperation and frustration Voight decided to impersonate an officer in order to obtain a work permit for himself. After observing officers for several weeks, Voight bought a uniform of one of the premier units of the German army,

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26. National Zeitung (Berlin), 18 October 1906.

27. Berliner Tageblatt, 18 October 1906.

ordered soldiers at random to accompany him to Kopenick, and carried out his charade. When the municipal treasurer proved so willing to open the strong box, Voight could not refuse him. On December 1, 1906, Voight stood before a packed court room accused of five criminal offenses. Since many in the audience and throughout Germany were sympathetic to Voight's plight, the trial was heavily covered in the press. Following a short trial Voight received a sentence of four years imprisonment. Since Voight had never served in the military, his activities did little damage to the army's reputation. The actions of certain members of the officer corps continued to attract the attention of the public and the press.<sup>28</sup>

The military indoctrination of the middle classes along with the infatuation of the lower classes with the uniform created as many problems as it solved for the army. Although many of the non-noble officers adopted the Prussian view of life, this did not mean that they abandoned their more luxurious way of life. Since many of the new officers emanated from the aristocracy of wealth, the frugal living standards of the officers began to alter. Field Marshall Alfred von Waldersee, Chief of the General Staff in the early years of the reign of William II, noted with alarm that

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28. Newspaper reaction to Voight's sentence is covered in: Times (London), 3 December 1906, p. 5; Vossische Zeitung (Berlin), 2 December 1906; Frankfurter Zeitung 2 December 1906; Berliner Tageblatt, 2 December 1906; Vorwärts (Berlin), 2 December 1906.

"In the cavalry sons of industrialists who have got rich quickly are pushing their way in and are ruining its simple customs."<sup>29</sup> A British subject who served in the German army twice prior to World War I commented on his second tour of duty that life in the garrisons did not seem

as military as it had been years ago. . . . Greater demands were made on the life of officers and, as many of them were sons of very wealthy manufacturers, there did not exist quite that perfect camaraderie which had been the feature of the old Prussian corps of officers.<sup>30</sup>

Even members of the Kaiser's personal household noticed the increasing incidents of excess in the casinos of the army garrisons. While serving as personal adjutant to one of the Kaiser's nephews in 1898, Count Robert Zedlitz-Trutzacher noticed that in the First Regiment of the Dragoon Guards

Any friendly intercourse in the usual sense of the word, any benefit to the younger men from the good example of their seniors was out of the question. . . . Most of the evenings were at most rowdy, much drink, much noise, and after dinner a dance or cards.<sup>31</sup>

Ten years later Zedlitz-Trutzschler, serving as court chamberlain, reported that

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29. Alfred Graf von Waldersee, Denkwurdigkeiten 3 vols. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1923-25), 3:226; Kitchen, German Officer Corps, p. 26.

30. The German Army From Within by a British Officer Who Has Served In It (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1914), pp. 47-48.

31. Count Robert Zedlitz-Trutzschler, Twelve Years at the Imperial German Court (New York: George H. Doran, 1924), p. 11.

Many efforts have been made in the last decades to suppress excessive luxury, especially among officers. In spite of all the speeches of warnings and Cabinet Orders, everything has only become more luxurious still.<sup>32</sup>

Many officers, against the express orders of the Kaiser, adopted civilian dress in order to pursue activities forbidden them due to their social position. Incidents of excessive gambling, drinking, and sexual promiscuity often resulted in duels or suicides which, when reported, embarrassed the army and enraged the public. Controversial books such as Jena oder Sedan and Aus einer kleinen Garnison shattered the illusions of many Germans concerning the quality of their officer corps.<sup>33</sup>

Jena oder Sedan, written in 1903 by Franz Beyerlein, stressed the need for reform in the army, especially in the ranks of the commissioned and noncommissioned officers. The author argued that Germany's course was courting disaster unless the estrangement and isolation between the officers and the men ceased. If Germany's military leaders refused to break down the barriers that separated the officers from their subordinates, the socialist legions would continue to attract followers from the rural as well as the urban sectors of the country. Aus einer kleinen Garnison created a mild furor in

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32. Ibid., p. 221.

33. Zedlich-Trutzschler, Twelve Years, p. 222; Craig, Politics of Prussian Army, p. 238; Ritter, Sword and Scepter 2:101; Demeter, Officer Corps, pp. 49-63; Vagts, History of Militarism, pp. 185-188.

and out of Germany. Written in 1902 by Oswald Bilse, the work described life in a garrison town on the French frontier. Unlike Beyerlein, Bilse attempted to write his book while serving in the army. When this fact was discovered, the book was banned and Bilse was banished from the service. The author's depictions of life in the army, especially the passages concerning officer's debts, the army's continued use of the duel, life in the penal regiments, and the use of transfers as a method of punishment, stirred a public reaction. The Berliner Tageblatt hoped that the book would "be most seriously pondered in high places," while the Vossische Zeitung demanded that confidence in the army must not be destroyed by the actions of its officer corps.<sup>34</sup> Although both of these works attempted to warn the German people of the crisis facing the army, the people could not initiate any meaningful changes without the active participation of

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34. Berliner Tageblatt, 14 November 1903; Vossische Zeitung (Berlin), 14 November 1903.

the emperor. By 1903, however, William II, stood firmly opposed to any civilian interference with the royal army.<sup>35</sup>

The accession of William II to the German throne in 1888 seemed to mark a turning point in German history. The young emperor, hoping to endear himself to his subjects, began impressively. In short order Bismarck was dismissed from office, restrictions against the socialists were deserted, and the reinsurance treaty with czarist Russia was destroyed. The army also felt the winds of change as many older officers were retired and non-noble candidates were officially requested to enter the officer corps. The Kaiser's military household gradually underwent reorganization and reassessment as naval policy began to attract the emperor's attention. Although these alterations in the personnel of the army seemed

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35. English translations of Jena oder Sedan and Aus einer kleinen Garnison are available as: Franz Beyerlein, Jena or Sedan (London: William Heinemann, 1904); Oswald Bilse, Life in a Garrison Town (New York: John Land Co., 1914); Bilse was charged with violating the Emperor's Order of June, 1894, which forbade officers to publish "objectionable matter," Demeter, Officer Corps, p. 168. At his trial, which was held at Metz from November 9 through November 13, 1903, the military authorities found Bilse, "guilty of having libelled his superior officers and others higher in rank than himself, in a manner which has resulted in serious consequences to them. Further he has disobeyed a stringent military order, namely: the Imperial regulation regarding the literary activity of persons in military service. He is therefore condemned to six months imprisonment and to be dismissed from the service. Furthermore the novel, Aus einer kleinen Garnison, which contains said libels, shall be withdrawn from circulation, and the plates and forms shall be destroyed. Bilse, Life in a Garrison Town, p. 300.

impressive, the prerogatives and position of the army changed very little under William II.<sup>36</sup>

The Kaiser's reforms proved more sensational than substantial. As the young emperor consolidated his regime, it became quite apparent that any further reforms in Germany's system of government would meet royal resistance. Since William II ruled as well as reigned, he felt very hostile to the forces of constitutionalism. Five years prior to his ascendancy, General Waldersee commented that Prince William

seems to have a good deal of his grandfather about him. If his parents have aimed at training him to be a Constitutional Monarch ready to bow to the rule of a parliamentary majority they have failed.<sup>37</sup>

Once William realized that his father would not live, he sought out the army and not his future subjects. On June 15, 1888, Crown Prince William addressed the army by stating,

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36. Michael Balfour, The Kaiser and His Times (London: Cresset Press, 1964), pp. 105-86; Virginia Cowles, The Kaiser (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), pp. 50-100; Harold Frederic, The Young Emperor William II of Germany: A Study in Character Development on a Throne (New York: G. P. Putnam's, 1891), pp. 153-68; Joachim von Kurenberg, The Kaiser: A Life of William II, Last Emperor of Germany (London: Cassell, 1954), pp. 62-94; Charles Lowe, The German Emperor: William II (London: Bliss, Sands & Foster, 1895), pp. 81-144; Emil Ludwig, Wilhelm Hohenzollern: The Last of the Kaisers (New York: G. P. Putnam's, 1927), pp. 61-154; Lawrence Wilson, The Incredible Kaiser: A Portrait of William II (New York: A. S. Barnes, 1965), pp. 21-48; Karl F. Nowak, Kaiser and Chancellor: The Opening Years of the Reign of Kaiser William II (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1930); Hans Helfritz, Wilhelm II als Kaiser und König: eine historische Studie (Zürich: Scientia, 1954), pp. 1-162.

37. Count Alfred von Waldersee, A Field-Marshal's Memoirs: From the Diary, Correspondence and Reminiscences of Alfred Count von Waldersee (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1924), p. 117.

So we are bound together--I and the army--so are we born for one another and so shall we hold together indissolable [sic], whether, as God wills, we are to have peace or storm.<sup>38</sup>

Actions soon followed words as the German people witnessed William's personal brand of statesmanship. In place of Bismarck, the emperor appointed Count Leo von Caprivi, a former professional army officer. General Waldersee, one of the most political oriented officers in the army, assumed control of the General Staff, where he attempted to increase the army's power in all areas of German life while further insulating the military from outside interference. The Kaiser's court was permeated with military sycophants whose influence reached far beyond the bounds of army affairs. Military personnel received top priority in conferences with the emperor, while civilian authorities usually conferred indirectly with the head of state. Good military records became a primary factor in choosing candidates for government posts.<sup>39</sup>

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38. Christian Gauss, ed., The German Emperor: As Shown in His Public Utterances (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1915), p. 28.

39. Karl F. Nowak, Germany's Road to Ruin: The Middle Years of the Reign of William II (New York: Macmillan, 1932); John Nichols, Germany After Bismarck: The Caprivi Era, 1890-1894 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958); John C. Rohl, Germany Without Bismarck: The Crisis of Government in the Second Reich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), pp. 54-89; Craig, Politics of Prussian Army, pp. 240-41; Kitchen, German Officer Corps, pp. 16-17; Schmidt-Buckeburg, Militarkabinett, p. 178; Ritter, Sword and Scepter 2:127; Balfour, Kaiser and His Times, pp. 152-53; Bertling, "Military System of Germany," Outlook, p. 330.

The Kaiser's interest in military affairs reached far beyond matters of strategy and tactics. Since William II considered himself an expert in military administration as well as planning, nothing escaped his princely purview. Reserve officers who did not follow the army line lost their commissions. Military authors were severely restricted as to the types of materials they could publish. Matters pertaining to officer's education, private incomes, leisure activities, uniforms, and political pronouncements were meticulously monitored by the monarch and his court camarilla. Even such an innocent event as the arrival of the Barnum and Bailey Circus in Germany prompted an on-the-spot inspection by the Kaiser's military advisors in order to study loading techniques. Thus, as Germany entered the twentieth century, the army remained a state within the state, pampered and protected by the emperor, idolized by a large section of the middle class, but still isolated from the masses of the German people. Although the army was able to entice and intoxicate large elements of the German people into accepting the officer corps' vaunted position in society, it was not successful in halting the phenomenal growth of the socialist forces. Indeed by 1913 the class-conscious workers appeared

to many of the caste-conscious army as the gravest peril to Imperial Germany's existence.<sup>40</sup>

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40. Vagts, History of Militarism, p. 340; Demeter, Officer Corps, pp. 168-70, 289-89, 348; Zedlich-Trutzschler, Twelve Years, pp. 28-29, 59-62, 220-22; Balfour, Kaiser and His Times, pp. 139-40; Ritter, Sword and Scepter, 2:99-103; Bernhard von Bülow, Memoirs of Prince von Bülow 4 vols. (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1931-32), 2:251; Hugo Freiherr von Reischach, Unter Drei Kaisern (Berlin: Verlag für Kulturpolitik, 1925), pp. 219-65; Barbara Tuchman, The Proud Tower: A Portrait of the World Before the War, 1890-1914 (Toronto, New York & London: Bantam Matrix, 1966), p. 356.

## CHAPTER II

### THE GERMAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY: SOCIETY WITHIN THE STATE

As Germany's economic and military growth assumed international importance in the late nineteenth century, the progress of German socialism likewise achieved international stature. While socialism recorded rapid gains throughout Europe prior to World War I, no working class party could boast of a more prestigious record than the German Social Democratic Party (SPD). Although initially small and divided, German socialism survived the revolutions of 1848 and the repression of 1878-90 to emerge as the strongest political movement in Imperial Germany. Throughout the world of international socialism, the SPD was viewed as the greatest example of working class unity and utility. As one Austrian socialist commented,

Before the First World War none of the socialist movements in Europe could match the stature of the German Social Democratic Party. It commanded the allegiance of hundreds of thousands of members; it cooperated closely with trade unions whose membership was then over one and a half million; a third of the total electorate of the nation was at the back of it; it preached Socialist ideas through scores of dailies and hundreds of other periodicals. It was the most powerful Socialist Party in the world.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Julius Braunthal, In Search of the Millennium (London: V. Gollancz, 1945), p. 89.

The prosperous position occupied by the SPD seemed to result from two basic factors: philosophical and political unity. For while socialist parties throughout Europe devoured each other through internecine, ideological arguments, the SPD, in theory, remained faithful to the basic tenets of its party program. Just as Leopold von Ranke and his followers utilized the historical document to rewrite the past, the apostles of Marx adopted the historical dialectic to forge the future of mankind. Very few socialist writers of the pre-war period could challenge the erudition of an August Bebel or a Karl Kautsky in questions of Marxian ideology. Every SPD party congress was heavily represented with delegations of foreign socialists who attempted to listen and learn from their German comrades. At meetings of the Socialist Internationals, the pronouncements of the German representatives were eagerly and earnestly sought. A female member of the SPD who spent several years working with her French counterparts stated that

In those years before the war, a German Socialist was received everywhere abroad with the highest respect. It was as if the scholarship of the founders of scientific socialism were reflected on all of us.<sup>2</sup>

While the teachings of Marx, as interpreted in the Gotha and Erfurt programs, supplied the philosophical base for the

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2. Toni Sender, Toni Sender: The Autobiography of a German Rebel (New York: Vanguard Press, 1939), p. 34.

SPD, the industrial revolution supplied the soldiers to carry out the policies of the party. As Germany's industrial machine grew, more and more workers were drawn to the SPD. Due to the party's successful growth, however, new problems and pressures forced the SPD to undergo a Marxian metamorphosis. Trade union conservatism, South German reformist policies, revisionist challenges to SPD theory, centralization and bureaucratization of the party machinery: all combined to produce a proletarian movement physically strong but philosophically weak.

Due to the autocratic nature of the German states, the development of workingmen's organizations was viewed with alarm. The revolutions of 1848 convinced many Germans that workingmen, if allowed to organize, would destroy the state. Although there were various organizations for laborers prior to unification, these associations remained geographically and ideologically isolated. As industry began to grow and more and more workers entered the cities of the German states, workingmen began to organize and demand certain political as well as economic reforms. Throughout the late fifties

and early sixties, German workers were presented a number of possibilities for organization.<sup>3</sup>

The foremost spokesman for the workers during the pre-unification period was Ferdinand Lassalle. Born into a trading family, Lassalle quickly established himself as a first-rate mind. His study of philosophy and law led Lassalle to enter politics. Although initially a supporter of the bourgeois liberal Progressive Party, Lassalle broke with this organization because of its distrust of the working class. After consulting men of such diverse backgrounds as Heinrich Heine, Carl Rodbertus, Karl Marx, and Otto von Bismarck, Lassalle finally concluded that the workers of the German states must demand political alterations in conjunction with economic reforms. Universal direct manhood suffrage became the cornerstone of Lassalle's credo. While drawing most of his support in the northern German states, Lassalle's name became well known throughout central

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3. Lothar Baar, "Der Kampf der Berliner Arbeiter während der industriellen Revolution," Jahrbuch für Regionalgeschichte, no. 2 (1967), pp. 28-49; Theodor Brauer, "Zur Entwicklung der Christlichen Gewerkschaften," Zeitschrift für Politik, no. 8 (1915), pp. 532-45; Clapham, Economic Development, pp. 58-63; Theodore Hamerow, The Social Foundations of German Unification, 1858-1871 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972) 1:44-132; Henderson, Industrial Revolution, pp. 35-53; Gerhard Kessler, "Die Geschichtliche Entwicklung der deutschen Arbeitgeberorganisation," Zeitschrift für die Gesamte Staatswissenschaft, no. 63 (1907), p. 223-63; Kollmann, "Process of Urbanization," pp. 59-76; Guenther Roth, The Social Democrats in Imperial Germany: A Study in Working Class Isolation and Integration (Totowa, New Jersey: Bedminster Press, 1963), pp. 28-58

and southern Germany due to his lengthy legal battles with the various states. The establishment of the All German Worker's Association (Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiterverein) in May, 1863, opened the way for political agitation by, for, and from the working classes.<sup>4</sup>

Since Lassalle led the workers by the force of his personality and persuasiveness, his death in 1864 created chaos in the ADA. Succeeding leaders of the movement were never able to appeal to the masses as Lassalle had. Prussia's wars with Denmark and Austria coupled with the creation of the North German Confederation created distrust between the workers of the northern German states and those of the south. Rejecting domination from Prussia, many worker's organizations turned away from their Lassallian leaders and searched for other potential allies.

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4. Bert Andreas, "Zur Agitation und Propaganda des Allgemeinen Deutschen Arbeitervereins, 1863-1864," Archiv für Sozialgeschichte, no. 3 (1963), pp. 297-423; George Berlau, The German Social Democratic Party, 1914-1921 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), pp. 17-27; George Brandes, Ferdinand Lassalle (New York: Bergman Press, 1968); William Dawson, German Socialism and Ferdinand Lassalle: A Biographical History of German Socialist Movements During This Century (Longon: S. Sonnenschein, 1899); David Footman, Ferdinand Lassalle: Romantic Revolutionary (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947); Schlomo Naaman, "Lassalle--Demokratie und Sozialdemokratie," Archiv für Sozialgeschichte, no. 3 (1963), pp. 21-80; Hermann Oncken, Lassalle: eine politische biographie, 4 vols. (Stuttgart & Berlin: Deutsche Verlag-Anstalt, 1943); Arno Schirokauer, Lassalle: The Power of Illusion and the Illusion of Power (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1931); Carlo Schmid, "Ferdinand Lassalle und die politisierung der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung," Archiv für Sozialgeschichte, no. 3 (1963), pp. 5-20; Edmund Wilson, To the Finland Station: A Study in the Writing and Acting of History (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., 1940), pp. 228-59.

Although Prussian military policy opened the door for German unification, South German working-class organizations led the struggle for socialist unification. As the policies of Bismarck and his followers unfolded, many socialist leaders pressed for a stronger policy to oppose a Prussian ruled Germany. Two years after the establishment of the North German Confederation, there arose the Social Democratic Workingmen's Party. Under the leadership of Wilhelm Liebknecht, an old German revolutionary and a friend of Marx, and August Bebel, an intellectual artisan, this party openly opposed the existing structure of the state as well as the prevailing economic system. Supporting the Lassallians on issues such as universal suffrage, the Social Democratic Workingmen's Party further demanded the abolition of standing armies, a true representative parliamentary system, abolition of aristocratic privileges, and social legislation for the workers. As long as Prussia remained the leading force behind unification, Social Democrats favored a policy of agitation toward the state. In the Diet of the North German Confederation Lassallians and Social Democrats sat together but remained apart on questions of tactics. Representatives of the ADA hoped to utilize the Reichstag of the Diet in seeking reforms while the Social Democrats promulgated propaganda. Only the Franco-Prussian War and the subsequent suppression of the Paris

Commune would drive the two parties together and set the stage for socialist unification.<sup>5</sup>

The outbreak of hostilities with France initially placed the labor parties in opposition to one another. For while the Lassallians voted for war loans, the Social Democrats refused. When Louis Napoleon's armies were routed and revolution threatened France, however, both parties joined together to demand a just peace without annexation of French territory. The suppression of the Commune, plus the chauvinistic demands of the war leaders, further enraged the socialists against Prussian policy. While anti-Prussian demonstrations broke out in many cities, August Bebel warned the rulers of Germany that

the entire European proletariat and all that have feeling for freedom and independence in their hearts, have their eyes fixed on Paris. And if Paris is only a small affair of outposts, that the main conflict of Europe is still before us, and ere many decades pass away, the battle cry of the Parisian proletariat,

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5. George Adler, "The Evolution of the Socialist Programme in Germany, 1863-1890," Economic Journal, no. 1 (1891), pp. 688-709; Sinclair Armstrong, "The Social Democrats and the Unification of Germany," Journal of Modern History, no. 12 (1940), pp. 485-509; Bergstrasser, Geschichte der politischen Parteien, pp. 105-25; Hamerow, Social Foundations, 1:255-60; Horst Lademacher, "Zu den Anfängen der deutschen Sozialdemokratie, 1863-1878," International Review of Social History, no. 4 (1959), pp. 239-60, 367-93; Vernon Lidtke, The Outlawed Party: Social Democracy in Germany, 1878-1890 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 1-38; Nipperdey, Die Organisation deutschen Parteien, pp. 294-306; Richard Reichard, Crippled From Birth: German Social Democracy, 1844-1870 (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1969); Roth, Social Democrats, pp. 49-58; Stillech, Die politischen Parteien, 2:97-143.

war to the palace, peace to the cottage, death to want and idleness, will be the battlecry of the entire European proletariat.<sup>6</sup>

The erection of a German state under Prussian tutelage resulted in the unification of the working-class parties under Social Democratic leadership. In May, 1875, at Gotha, the Socialist Labor Party of Germany was established. Although socialist in theory, the party program reflected a compromise between the Lassallian tradition of accommodation and the Social Democratic policy of agitation. Along with the Lassallian dreams of universal suffrage and worker's cooperatives came the Social Democratic demands for a people's militia, a progressive income tax, and a prohibition of child labor. Although criticized by Marx for stressing democracy over socialism, the Gotha program remained the theoretical base of the party until 1891. Committed to work "within the national framework," Social Democratic representatives began a campaign of propaganda throughout the new Reich. Between 1869 and 1878 the number of socialist newspapers and journals rose from six to over fifty publications. Since many of the individual states of the Reich retained their anachronistic electoral policies, Social Democrats tested their voter appeal in the Reichstag elections. The socialist vote rose from 100,000 in 1871 to over 500,000 in 1878, while the number

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6. August Bebel, Speeches (New York: International Publishers, 1928), p. 12.

of Social Democratic representatives increased from two in 1871 to twelve in 1877.<sup>7</sup>

The surprising growth of the SPD after 1876 shocked and alarmed the rulers of Germany. Fearing revanche from without and revolution from within, Bismarck encouraged the adoption of every tactic possible to curb the growth of socialism. Trade unions with Social Democratic leanings were closed for violating the laws of political association. The Social Democratic Party was banned in Prussia in 1876 after the Reichstag refused to enact a nation-wide proscription. Socialist conferences were watched diligently by the various state authorities. Socialist demonstrators marched throughout Germany behind barren flagstuffs because of the law forbidding the use of red flags. Socialist agitators and deputies were constantly hounded by the police. Of the eight Social Democratic Reichstag representatives in 1875, only four were not imprisoned or under legal prosecution. German missionaries were encouraged to focus their attention on Spandau as well

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7. Wilhelm Mommsen, ed., Deutsche Parteiprogramme: Eine Auswahl vom Vormarz bis zur Gegenwart (Munich: Isar Verlag, 1960), pp. 313-14; Felix Salomon, Die deutschen Parteiprogramme, 3 vols. (Leipzig: G. B. Teubner, 1922), 2:25-27; Berlau, German Social Democratic Party, p. 348; Franz Mehring, Geschichte der Sozialdemokratie 4 vols. (Stuttgart: J. H. W. Dietz, 1919), 1:33-58; Times (London), 22 March 1878, p. 3.

as Samoa in an attempt to wean the workers away from atheistic socialism.<sup>8</sup>

Political persecution, while ineffective in dampening the popularity of the SPD, proved very effective in polarizing large segments of the working classes from the state. The patriotism most workers felt during the early stages of unification gradually faded under the policies enacted by Prussian princes. A socialist paper in March, 1878, attacked the concept of patriotism by stating,

Why should we love our country? In what way are we benefited by our country? Are we to be grateful for the military service enjoined upon us--that military system in which an officer when he beats a private gets only a few day's arrest in his room, while the private for laying his hand on his officer is sentenced to life-long imprisonment in a fortress. Or are we to thank our country for permitting us to eat our bread when we have any, and sending us to the work house when we have not? Or are we to fall down on our knees in adoration because there are courts to vindicate the law, provided we can pay the judge? Or is it those neatly printed tax receipts that are to make us love and cherish Fatherland? . . . this modern patriotism is nothing but a means cunningly resorted to by the ruling classes to hound race against race, and bleed the dangerous from time to time. Real patriotism can only find a soil where all are equal and admitted to share and share alike in life's enjoyment.<sup>9</sup>

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8. Prussia, Landtag, Stenographische Berichte über die Verhandlungen des preussischen Hauses der Abgeordneten, February 9 1876, p. 1036; Lidtke, Outlawed Party, pp. 53-69; Mehring, Geschichte Sozialdemokratie 1:76; Times (London), 23 July 1874, p. 5; Ibid., 29 August 1874, p. 5; Ibid., 10 September 1874, p. 5; Ibid., 24 February, 1875, p. 5; Ibid., 15 September 1875, p. 5; Ibid., 22 March 1875, p. 5; Ibid., 20 March, 1878, p. 4.

9. Times (London), 16 March 1878, p. 3.

In the Reichstag, SPD speakers denounced the machinations of the government against their organizations. Socialist papers, such as Vorwärts, Die neue Welt, and Die Zukunft monitored the government's every move. Finally, out of fear and frustration, Bismarck demanded a law which would destroy the young socialist movement. After two attempts on the life of the Kaiser, the Reichstag granted Bismarck his wish.

Although the SPD was in no way connected with the assassination attempts on Wilhelm I, Bismarck was able to use the anti-patriotic, anti-religious and anti-monarchical policies of the SPD to his own advantage. From May until October of 1878 the SPD and the government were locked in a parliamentary battle. Bismarck utilized national heroes such as Field Marshall Helmut von Moltke, whose observations of the Paris Commune qualified him as an expert on socialist society, to frighten the German people. When non-socialist elements in the Reichstag attacked the bill for its repressive nature, the Iron Chancellor maintained that, in France, socialists were executed, while in Germany, they were simply enjoined from starting revolution. The SPD was attacked for its lack of patriotism and its use of revolution. Although many socialists attempted to disprove the denunciations brought against their party, others relied upon revolutionary rhetoric to defend their policies. Neither tactic worked, however, as the Reichstag finally adopted an anti-socialist law. Under the terms of this law, which passed on October 19,

1878, all Social Democratic societies and publications were banned. Police forces of the various states were granted exceptional powers to deal with the socialist menace. Throughout Germany, in varying degrees, the SPD encountered persecution and prohibition. Many trade unions, electioneering societies, choral and dramatic clubs, mutual improvement and mutual aid associations, newspaper clubs, and consumer societies were closed. The writings of Marx, Engels, Bebel, and many other socialist authors were banned. All German socialist papers were seized along with many foreign-based papers. Pictures of the Social Democratic Reichstag deputies were forbidden. Prussian and Saxon police officials expelled known socialists from their provinces. Many leaders of the SPD were imprisoned or forced to flee the country. The future growth of socialism seemed stifled as the heavy hand of Bismarckian repression fell on the SPD.<sup>10</sup>

The ability of the SPD to survive and prosper under the anti-socialist law foreshadowed a new era in socialist activity in Germany. After the first months of persecution, the SPD restructured its organizational base and revitalized its local party machinery. Instead of the 1875 declaration to pursue

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10. The "Law Against the Publicly Dangerous Endeavors of Social Democracy" was introduced in May, 1878 and passed in October. It was renewed in 1880, 1884, 1886 and 1888. For the text of the law see Germany, Reichstag, Stenographische Berichte über die Verhandlungen des deutschen Reichstages (Berlin: Reichsdruckerei, 1871 ff.), October 19, 1878, pp. 132-35; (hereafter cited as Reichstag Debates); Lidtke, Outlawed Party, pp. 339-345.

"all legal means for the Free State and the Socialist society," the word "legal" was deleted from the original Gotha Program. This semantic alteration did not signal the resurrection of violent revolutionary activity, but rather certain conspiratorial devices to keep the party alive. Since Reichstag deputies enjoyed certain legal immunities, the SPD representatives became the executive directors of the party. SPD papers and periodicals reestablished themselves in Switzerland and England. A highly organized underground postal service emerged in order to distribute banned publications. Certain outlawed clubs and publishing operations reorganized under new titles. Local party leaders collected funds for the imprisoned and gathered information on agents provocateurs. Thus by 1882 the party had survived the brunt of Bismarck's anti-socialist campaign and remained a viable alternative for the voters.<sup>11</sup>

Although the government was able to continue the law against the socialists until 1890, each attempt to renew or revise the restrictions met with growing opposition. Not only the socialist elements but also many non-socialist forces felt that the precedent established against the SPD might be turned on other opposition parties. When criticism over the

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11. Lidtke, Outlawed Party, pp. 89-106; Mehring, Geschichte der deutschen Sozialdemokratie, 1:88-93; Carl Schorske, German Social Democracy: The Development of the Great Schism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955), pp. 3-4.

effectiveness of the law mounted in 1882, a parliamentary investigating committee warned its readers that

It cannot be asserted that the Social Democratic movement has hitherto lost its internal strength and importance. The conviction, on the other hand, is irresistibly forced upon the Government that the remedial results already achieved can only be preserved by continuing its repressive measures.<sup>12</sup>

After the voters expressed sympathy and support for the SPD's plight in 1884, the aging Kaiser, William I, scolded his subjects. Demanding a further continuance of the anti-socialist law, the German Emperor proclaimed to the members of the Federal Council:

I am very little satisfied with the debate on the law against Anarchy. The seriousness of the situation is unmistakable; our domestic repose is only apparent. I know how serious is the state of things. I have bled owing to it; and I shall look upon a rejection of the measure for prolonging the Socialist law as directed against my personal security.<sup>13</sup>

While the Kaiser attempted to illustrate the revolutionary tendencies of the SPD, the socialists demonstrated their ability to work under the Iron Chancellor. Throughout the decade of the eighties, SPD activity in the Reichstag and in local councils increased. Although rejecting the state socialist measures of Bismarck, the SPD actively entered the debated on steamship subsidies, army reform, workmen's

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12. Reichstag Debates, 6 December 1882, p. 1036.

13. Germany, Bundesrat, Protokolle und Drucksachen den Verhandlungen des Bundesrats des Deutschen Reichs, 1871-1919 (Berlin: Reichsdruckerei, 1971 ff.), March 22, 1884, p. 198

protection, and the North Sea Canal project. Workers and supporters of the party were warned of the dangers and deficiencies of Bismarck's new concern for the masses. On the local level the German voters responded to the propaganda of the SPD by electing socialist representatives to the municipal councils of Brunswick, Bremen, Esslingen, Glauchau-Meerane, Lambrecht, Mannheim, and even Berlin. After suffering a loss at the Reichstag elections of 1881, the SPD vote increased in 1884 and 1887. SPD supporters were further encouraged to support certain non-socialist candidates in areas where no party member was standing for election. This move convinced many non-socialists that the SPD was committed to the goal of democratization of, rather than destruction of, the state. When state prosecution increased in 1886, the SPD met the challenge with renewed strength and support. A new socialist law, proposed in 1887, included provisions to deprive agitators of their citizenship rights, to deny SPD-elected officials their seats in the Reichstag, to remove suspected socialists from certain areas, and to restrict any German from attending international socialist conferences. This bill not only met defeat in the Reichstag, but the government had to settle for a law weaker than the original legislation of 1878. When the elections of 1890 sent thirty-five Social Democrats to the Reichstag representing a vote of

one and a half million, the failure of Bismarck's measures was fully exposed.<sup>14</sup>

The ability of the SPD to overcome state persecution did not guarantee the party an unclouded future course. Although Bismarck's policies failed to stop the growth of the party, serious ideological differences continued to create problems within the ranks of the party. Party unity, stressed so heavily during the period of repression, began to crumble as the SPD attempted to reestablish itself in Wilhelmian society. Attacks from the left and the right forced the party to adopt measures that would eventually result in ideological division.

The advent of Wilhelm II to the German throne marked the end of Bismarck's legislative repression. Although the young Kaiser expressed little sympathy for the SPD, he attempted to use his persuasive powers instead of parliamentary prohibitions to blunt the appeal of socialism. When the Reichstag refused to renew the anti-socialist law in January of 1890, Wilhelm spoke out in favor of labor legislation. Within a month of the election of 1890, Bismarck, the architect of socialist repression, was dismissed from office and any renewed anti-socialist legislation disappeared with him. Throughout Germany Social Democratic meetings and demonstrations erupted as the socialist

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14. Lidtke, Outlawed Party, 183-84; Mehring, Geschichte deutschen Sozialdemokratie, 4:172; Heckart, Bassermann to Bebel, pp. 69-77; Vernon Lidtke, "German Social Democracy and German State Socialism, 1876-1884," International Review of Social History, no. 9 (1964), pp. 202-25; Roth, Social Democrats, pp. 136-58.

law expired. In October the SPD opened its first party congress in Germany since 1878. Speaking to the assembled delegates and visitors at Halle, August Bebel reflected the optimism of his party by stating,

No sitting of a legislative body, no conference of diplomatists, no assemblage of princes has for centuries attracted so much public attention--the attention of thinkers of all countries--as this simple workingmen's Parliament, a fact which palpably shows that the working classes are the makers of modern politics and that Social Democracy has become the leading force of the present age.<sup>15</sup>

Although the SPD survived Bismarckian repression, there were numerous problems facing the party as it re-emerged. Many party leaders desired an up-to-date party program in order to reorganize the party machinery, recruit new members, and resolve certain tactical controversies. The Erfurt Congress in 1891 produced a new party program but also illustrated division in the party's future course. As formulated by Karl Kautsky, the party theoretician, the program envisioned two courses of action. In the first part of the Erfurt Program the Marxist analysis of capitalism was enunciated. Viewing the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat as the central theme of history, the program predicted a bitter struggle by the "working class alone" to transform "the capitalist private property . . . into social

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15. Sozialdemokratischen Partei, Deutschland, Protokolle über die Verhandlungen des Parteitages der sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands (Berlin: Expedition der buchhandlung Vorwärts, 1890 ff.), Halle, 1890, p. 3 (hereafter cited as Protocol SPD).

ownership." Part two of the program called for certain immediate reforms which the workers could hope to achieve through the ballot box and not the barricades. Demands for universal suffrage for women as well as men, proportional representation, direct elections of all representatives, a people's militia, free speech and association, secularization of the school system, free legal and medical aid, and a progressive, graduated income tax followed the Gotha program. The growing influence of the trade unions was also reflected in the program's call for the eight-hour day, restrictions on child and night labor, a guaranteed rest period, factory inspection, the right to organize, and legal equality for all workers in the industrial, agricultural, and domestic fields.<sup>16</sup>

The Erfurt Program, by combining revolutionary rhetoric with reformist goals, created dissension within the party ranks. To some party members, the Erfurt Program stressed parliamentary progress over revolutionary activities. Fearing that a gradualist approach would result in the embourgeoisement of the party, these critics lashed out at the timidity and irresolution of the party. Incorporating many of the young intellectuals of the SPD, the Jungen, as they were entitled, demanded that the party abandon parliamentary

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16. Protocol SPD, Erfurt, 1891, pp. 3-4; Lidtke, Outlawed Party, pp. 335-38; The Erfurt Programme of the Social-Democratic Party of Germany, Erfurt, October 14-20, 1891, G. A. Kertesz, ed., Documents on the Political History of the European Continent, 1815-1939 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 276. (hereafter cited as D.P.H.E.C.).

tactics in favor of more agitational activities. Although numerically small, this group remained vocally active throughout the pre-war period. In the writings of Rosa Luxemburg, a highly intelligent Polish German, and the speeches of Karl Liebknecht, son of Wilhelm Liebknecht, the Jungen strove to revitalize the revolutionary traditions of the party.<sup>17</sup>

While attacks from the radicals annoyed and sometimes angered the party leadership, the assaults from the reformists posed a more serious problem for the SPD. Throughout the nineties and continuing well into the twentieth century, the party was subject to constant reformist influence and infection. As trade union membership increased with the growing industrialization of Germany, the SPD received valuable allies in their quest for immediate reforms. Since the Erfurt Program stressed democratization of the state in conjunction with economic reforms, most industrial workers could easily identify with the SPD. This alliance with the socialist party, however, did not result in the subjugation of the labor movement to

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17. Schorske, German Social Democracy, pp. 52-58, 69-70; Berlau, German Social Democratic Party, pp. 40-41; Lidtke, Outlawed Party, pp. 307-19; J. P. Nettl, Rosa Luxemburg (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 41-71; Karl Meyer, Karl Liebknecht (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1957), pp. 12-56; Otto Ruckert, "Karl Liebknecht zur Stellung und Rolle der Arbeitklasse," Beitrage zur Geschichte der Deutschen Arbeiterbewegung, no. 14 (1972), pp. 179-92.

socialist principles.<sup>18</sup> Instead the socialist principles altered to fit the needs of labor. As one parliamentary observer remarked,

German socialism began to lose its revolutionary flavor after the turn of the century and when trade unionism united with the SPD, it began to turn more and more evolutionary.<sup>19</sup>

As the unions became more powerful they demanded and received a share of the decision-making power in the party. Under the "two pillar system" the trade unions determined the economic policy of labor while the party directed the political policy. Since most union members favored immediate obtainable reforms, the SPD was forced to adopt a more practical policy toward the state. When one views the party congresses held after the expiration of the anti-socialist law, the influence of the trade unions becomes quite evident. At the Berlin Congress in 1892, debate over the SPD rejection of "state socialist" measures occupied much of the agenda. Many labor and South German party members demanded that the party support such legislation since it would aid the working classes. Wilhelm Liebknecht, who maintained that such government-

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18. Adolf Braun, Die Gewerkschaften, ihre Entwicklung und Kämpfe (Berlin: J. H. W. Dietz, 1925), pp. 107-63; Otto Heilborn, Die Freien Gewerkschaften seit 1890: Ein Überblick über ihre Organisation ihre ziele und ihr Verhalten zur Sozialdemokratischen (Jena: G. Fischer, 1907), pp. 36-53; Berlau, German Social Democratic Party, pp. 30-32; Schorske, German Social Democracy, pp. 8-16; Heckart, Bassermann to Bebel, pp. 20-21.

19. Abbe E. Wetterle, Behind the Scenes in the Reichstag: Sixteen Years of Parliamentary Life in Germany (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1918), p. 183.

sponsored legislation was merely ". . . a system of half measures dictated by fear . . ." he was forced to concede that ". . . such measures Social Democracy has never disdained to promote and to approve. . . ." <sup>20</sup> When the question of whether to declare May 1 a compulsory holiday arose, trade union influence dictated a reasoned rather than a revolutionary policy. Arguing that thousands of workers would lose their positions if they left their jobs, the party eventually accepted a non-compulsory holiday in which each local area could determine the proper activities for May Day. When the 1893 party congress met in Cologne, Carl Legien, the Secretary General of the Association of German Trade Unions, complained that the SPD did not support the unions enough and demanded that all party members should be forced to join a union. Although this motion failed, the SPD threw the full weight of the party behind the union's battle with the Berlin beer breweries the following year. Thus while all party members did not join unions, the unions had securely fastened themselves to the party. <sup>21</sup>

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20. Protocol SPD, Berlin, 1892, p. 36.

21. Protocol SPD, Cologne, 1893, pp. 106-13; The Berlin Beer War erupted in May, 1894 when workers at some of the Berlin breweries were dismissed for not reporting to work on May Day. The SPD placed a boycott on all Berlin produced beer and taverns which served boycotted beer. Despite predictions that the German workmen would sooner abandon Marx than malt, the boycott lasted until December. The party paper, Vorwärts ran the banner "Comrades, Do Not Drink Boycotted Beer" until the breweries and innkeepers finally surrendered and rehired the dismissed employees. South German breweries contributed to the defeat of their northern competitors by supplying the Prussian population with ample amounts of beer.

While trade union pressures tempered the policies of the SPD, reformist advocates attempted to alter many of the basic tenets of the party program. When the Erfurt Program was adopted, many SPD members argued that social democracy's appeal should reach beyond the exclusive purview of the industrial working classes and attempt to draw support from all elements dissatisfied with the Klassenstaat. Led by Georg von Vollmar of the Bavarian SPD, this faction contained many of the Southern party members. Vollmar maintained that peasants and small proprietors as well as proletarians would follow the party line if only the SPD abandoned its revolutionary rhetoric and adopted a program of positive parliamentary aims. Arguing that the social democratic policy of "pure opposition" did not fit in Southern Germany, where class consciousness and cartelization were less rigid, Vollmar favored a policy of collusion with the non-socialist parties. When the SPD representatives to the Bavarian Landtag voted for the state budget in 1894, a split in the party seemed inevitable. At the Frankfurt Congress of 1894, Vollmar and his followers were roundly criticized by the party leadership for their breach of discipline. Reacting to this condemnation, Vollmar argued that the Bavarian SPD could not reject legislation designed for the workers.<sup>22</sup>

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22. Wilhelm Hoegner, "Georg von Vollmar--ein bayerischer Parlamentarier" Politische Studien, no. 15(1964), pp. 53-64; Schorske, German Social Democracy, pp. 7-8; Berlau, German Social Democratic Party, pp. 50-56; Heckart, Bassermann to Bebel, pp. 18-21; Protocol SPD, Frankfurt, 1894, pp. 66-74.

While Vollmar's attempts to make the party accept outright parliamentary collusion failed, the SPD leadership was unable to make the southern reformers conform to party discipline. Although the party rejected the Southern-inspired agrarian program in 1895, a motion to ban party members from supporting state budgets also met with failure. The Southern reformers continued to adopt tactics that appealed to the non-proletarian as well as the proletarian classes.<sup>23</sup> Since neither faction could persuade the party membership to adopt its views, the SPD eventually settled for a compromise. At the party congress in 1901, a resolution was adopted which stated that ". . . consent to the budget may be given only rarely, and for compelling reasons that arise from a particular situation."<sup>24</sup> Thus the party maintained an uneasy truce between the forces favoring direct entrance into the political arena and those who demanded party resistance to piecemeal reforms.

As the proponents and opponents of reformist tactics debated their programs, another serious party polemic erupted within the German socialist movement. Viewing the growing success of the workers to request and receive reforms in both the political and economic fields, some party leaders began to question the basic theoretical tenets of Social Democracy.

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23. Protocol SPD, Breslau, 1895, pp. 108-15.

24. Protocol SPD, Lubeck, 1901, pp. 89-90.

While the SPD support remained strong in the cities of the Reich, there was a noticeable alteration in the appeal of the party. In 1881, 311,965 SPD votes were recorded. Out of this number 161,058, or 51 percent, of the votes emanated from the large cities. In 1898, however, the SPD vote registered 2,120,000, from which only 625,000 or about 30 percent could be classified as city voters. To some party members these figures reflected a new power base for the SPD. If the party hoped to maintain this support, then certain ideological alterations seemed necessary. When Eduard Bernstein, a revered theoretician of the movement, published a series of articles in Die Neue Zeit in 1895-96, criticizing the SPD's anachronistic allegiance to Marxist methodology, doctrinal warfare ensued. Viewing Marx's theories of concentration of capital and pauperization of the masses as unsound and incorrect, Bernstein urged the party to jettison its revolutionary dogma for a more evolutionary doctrine. If the SPD could attract more trade unions, acquire further parliamentary power, and achieve success at the municipal level, large segments of the bourgeoisie would support the party in the construction of a democratic socialist state. As things stood the workers would lose much more than their chains if

they continued to press for revolutionary conflict with the state.<sup>25</sup>

The revisionist challenge, which continued from 1898 to 1903, exposed fully the doctrinal dilemma of the socialist movement. When the party congress of 1898 met in Stuttgart, the battle was joined. Representatives of the reformist-revisionist wings put forth their case urging the party to accept practical pragmatic goals. These pronouncements were challenged by the party leaders Kautsky, Bebel, and Liebknecht in collusion with the Jungen. The following year at Hanover, the party rejected Bernstein's theories but the controversy continued to rage. At Lubeck in 1901, Bebel and Bernstein lashed out at one another, with Bebel appearing to carry the day for the radicals. When the smoke cleared from the battle, the party appeared to have rejected revisionist theory. In practice, however, the SPD continued to display reformist

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25. Times (London), 29 July 1898, p. 5; Berlau, German Social Democratic Party, pp. 55-66; Schorske, German Social Democracy, pp. 16-24; Peter Gay, The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism: Eduard Bernstein's Challenge to Marx (New York: Collier, 1962); Ernst Gunther, "Die revisionistische Bewegung in der deutschen Sozialdemokratie," Schmollers Jahrbuch für Gesetzgebung, Verwaltung und Volkswirtschaft im Deutschland Reich, no. 29 (1905), pp. 1235-82; Ibid., no. 30 (1906), pp. 191-254; Harry J. Marks, "The Sources of Reformism in the Social Democratic Party of Germany, 1890-1914," Journal of Modern History, no. 11 (1939), pp. 191-254; Gunther Radczun, "Zum Kampf Eduard Bernsteins gegen die marxistische Lehre vom Staat und der proletarischen Revolution," Beiträge zu Geschichte der Deutschen Arbeiterbewegung, no. 8 (1966), pp. 446-62; Eduard Bernstein, Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus und die Aufgaben der Sozialdemokratie (Stuttgart: J. H. W. Dietz, 1906); Ibid.; Evolutionary Socialism: A Criticism and Affirmation (New York: Independent Labor Press, 1909).

tendencies.<sup>26</sup> As one champion of revisionism reminded Bernstein, "Eddie, you great ass, one does not say these things, one does them."<sup>27</sup>

The victory of the radicals over the revisionists did not set the SPD on a more revolutionary course. At the Dresden Party Congress of 1903 the most important item for debate was whether the party would accept a vice-presidential seat in the Reichstag. A motion to initiate agitation among army recruits prior to military induction was easily defeated at the 1904 Bremen Congress. When the Jungen, inspired by the revolutionary outbursts in Russia, proposed the utilization of the general strike to achieve political and economic gains, the party leaders warned the members of the dangers of such action. The Mannheim Congress in 1906 further illustrated the dilemma of the party. While granting the party leadership the power to invoke a general strike, the SPD also passed a resolution stating the importance of the trade unions, who were opposed to any revolutionary activity. The 1907 party congress at Essen, held after the SPD suffered a major setback at the polls, stressed parliamentary tactics instead of revolutionary activity. The 1908 party congress at Nuremberg

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26. Protocol SPD, Stuttgart, 1898, pp. 126-63; Protocol SPD, Hanover, 1899, pp. 206-56; Protocol SPD, Lubeck, 1901, pp. 21-30; Heckart, Bassermann to Bebel, pp. 22-24; Berlau, German Social Democratic Party, pp. 55-66; Schorske, German Social Democracy, pp. 16-24.

27. Times (London), 14 October, 1899, p. 8.

saw renewed fighting between the Northern and Southern party members over the question of supporting state budgets. At Leipzig in 1909, the revisionist movement was once again repudiated, but a resolution barring any cooperation with the non-socialist democrats also met defeat. In 1910, Gustav Noske, a rising bureaucrat in the party, maintained that the lack of the necessities of life was "in opposition to the doctrine of the mercy of God." Twenty years prior to this proclamation, the mention of the name "Jesus Christ" had started a riot at an SPD meeting. Although the general strike issue was again introduced at the Magdeburg Congress in 1910, it was quickly pushed aside as no less than twenty-three resolutions were passed condemning the high price of meat. While foreign affairs dominated the proceedings of the party congresses of 1911, 1912, and 1913, the party's determination to work "within the national framework" was still quite evident. The deaths of August Bebel (1913) and Wilhelm Liebknecht (1900) altered the leadership of the party but did not activate any new ideological shifts in the SPD. Indeed the new party leadership, trained through the SPD bureaucracy, displayed little desire for or devotion to revolutionary activity.<sup>28</sup>

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28. Protocol SPD, Dresden, 1903, pp. 392-95, 418-19; Bremen, 1904, p. 179; Ibid., Jena, 1905, pp. 306-08: Although the party adopted a mass strike resolution in 1905, the defensive nature of the resolution was all too apparent; Ibid., Mannheim, 1906, pp. 287-305; Ibid., Essen, 1907, pp. 242-50; Ibid., Nuremberg, 1908, pp. 426-80; Ibid., Magdeburg, 1910, pp. 450-89.

As the SPD grew in membership and wealth, a number of organizational alterations developed. Throughout the period of 1905-1909, the party adopted new bureaucratic devices in order to modernize the party machinery. The party executive, elected by the party congresses, was broadened in 1900 with the creation of a nine-member control commission. In 1905 the party executive was allowed to utilize an unlimited number of paid secretaries, while the number of political members of the executive was limited to four. As these new party functionaires assumed administrative control over the SPD, a tendency toward conservatism prevailed. Basing much of their support on the conservative regional organizations, the party leaders held the more radical city organizations in check. As early as 1894 August Bebel warned dissatisfied elements of the party that journalists within the bureaucracy must be paid more than ordinary workers or they would desert the SPD and write for the bourgeois press. Future party leaders such as Friedrich Ebert and Philip Scheidemann played a large role in developing the party bureaucracy and diminishing the party's revolutionary elan.<sup>29</sup>

Although the SPD stubbornly clung to its internationalist ideology, most political observers realized that the party

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29. Schorske, German Social Democracy, pp. 116-45; Marks, "The Sources of Reformism," pp. 347.

was unequivocally committed to reforms within the framework of the German state as it existed. The influence of the trade unions, the assaults from the reformist-revisionist wings of the party, and the bureaucratic centralization of the party machinery all combined to alter dramatically the position of the party vis-à-vis the state. Bernhard von Bülow, a parliamentary foe of the SPD, grasped the core of the SPD's dilemma when he stated:

Involuntarily and often unconsciously, Social Democracy turned from its socialistic and international aims to social-political problems, the solution of which was a national matter.<sup>30</sup>

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30. Bülow, Memoirs, 3:226.

## CHAPTER III

### THE SPD AND THE ARMY: IDEOLOGICAL OPPONENTS

While the SPD and the officer corps underwent transformation prior to World War I, both forces remained hostile toward each other. Neither the reformist influences of German socialism nor the middle-class influx into the German military could temporize the policies of these two groups vis-à-vis one another. The powerful position of the officer corps illustrated to most supporters of the SPD that princely prerogative still overshadowed parliamentary democracy. If Germany ever hoped to achieve true social democracy, the army had to be brought under the control of democratically appointed representatives and not divinely appointed rulers. Since conscription forced many SPD advocates to enter military service, the party maintained a constant barrage of criticism at the abuses and activities of the officer corps. As socialist voting strength increased and revolutionary rhetoric decreased, many non-socialists allied themselves with the SPD in an attempt to break the anachronistic hold of the army over the state.

SPD attempts to curb the power of the army did not go unchallenged by the officer corps. Since the army occupied the commanding heights of the Hohenzollern hierarchy, the officer corps was able to enlist the aid of the monarch as

well as the apparatus of the state bureaucracy to battle the socialists. The SPD was viewed as a threat not only to the composition of the officer corps but also to the continuation of the crown. Campaigns against the socialists were directed with the same vigor as those aimed at foreign enemies. When the army's position became untenable, the officer corps simply retreated to the sanctuary of the sovereign. On the eve of the First World War the struggle between the class-conscious socialists and the caste-conscious army was still raging.

The battle between the army and the socialists emanated from various levels. Socialism, the gospel of the industrial working class, rejected the autocratic nature of the German state. While the officer corps viewed the monarch as a divinely inspired leader, the socialists looked upon the emperor as the defender of an antiquated feudal aristocracy. Commenting upon the Kaiser's Silver Jubilee in 1913, Vorwärts proclaimed:

Though we reject monarchy in principle, our attitude toward different monarchs can vary. There are rulers whom even a republican can praise for not succumbing to absolutist tendencies and for being exemplary first citizens of their nations. William II belongs to the other category. . . . Twenty-five years ago he proclaimed proudly and confidently, "Social Democracy is a temporary phenomenon; just let me deal with it and I shall soon close it out!" And today, at his jubilee? Four and a quarter million Social Democratic votes, and a hundred and ten Social Democrats in the Reichstag.

. . . Millions, many millions of "temporary phenomena" salute the ruler with their cry: Long live the Republic!<sup>1</sup>

Social Democracy traced its heritage to the French Revolution, the uprisings of 1848, and the Paris Commune, while the army marked the defeat of these cataclysmic events as momentous occasions.<sup>2</sup> As the German nation prepared to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Battle of Sedan in 1895, Vorwärts reminded its readers that,

Patriotic capitalists intend out of sincere and hearty love to the State to celebrate the sacred Sedan Day this year with especial pomp. They wish to drive their workingmen into participation in the murderously patriotic festivity in order to give at any cost a popular character to the anniversary of the great butchery. Where is the man among the German industrial proletariat who does not look at this manifestation of murderous patriotism with contempt and loathing?<sup>3</sup>

While the army promoted patriotism to the monarch and Fatherland, socialists preached international brotherhood. After SPD demonstrations were banned for the Sedan Day festivities of 1895, the German Social Democratic Party dispatched a message to their French counterparts stating,

On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the battle of Sedan we send as a protest against war and chauvinism, greetings and a clasp of the hand to our French comrades. Hurrah for international solidarity!<sup>4</sup>

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1. Vorwärts (Berlin), 16 June 1913; Henry C. Miller, ed., The Long Generation: Germany from Empire to Ruin, 1913-1945 (New York: Walker & Co., 1973), p. 43.

2. For an interesting debate on the significance of the 1848 revolutions see Reichstag Debates, 18 March 1898, pp. 1591-1598. On the fiftieth anniversary of the revolution of 1848 the Municipal Council of Berlin voted to place a wreath in honor of the victims of the March Days. This measure was vetoed by the Prussian Minister of the Interior.

3. Vörwärts (Berlin), 22 August 1895.

4. Times (London), 4 September 1895, p. 5.

The army retorted to SPD assaults with propaganda of equal invectiveness. After William's paternalistic policies failed to wean the workers away from the SPD, the Kaiser demonstrated that he could act as common as any of his subjects. In his speeches to the army and the nation, the emperor railed against the socialists calling them "treasonable bands," "enemies" of the Fatherland" and "rabble."<sup>5</sup> Many military writers, attempting to emulate the All-Highest, reached new lows in jingoistic journalism. General von der Goltz warned not only the SPD but all of the army's critics that if

anyone has ever been so unfortunate as to incur our displeasure, we are on the whole very much inclined to remark on all of his failings, even the most insignificant, which before would not have roused our attention, and to ignore his merits entirely. If once we have taken a dislike to a class, every occasion tending to intensify this feeling must be regarded as a fresh tributary by which the brook swells at last into a raging stream.<sup>6</sup>

The army and the socialists differed not only on the concept of the state but also on the composition of the army. In the Gotha Program of 1875 the SPD called for a people's militia instead of the existing standing army. The Erfurt

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5. Some examples of the Kaiser's speeches concerning the SPD are found in Balfour, Kaiser and His Times, pp. 114-59; Cowles Kaiser, p. 112; Erich Eych, Das persönliche Regiment Wilhelms II (Zürich: E. Rentsch, 1948), pp. 107-09; Kurnberg, The Kaiser, pp. 207-10; Gauss, German Emperor, pp. 24-25; Simon Hammer, ed., William the Second as Seen in Contemporary Documents and Judged on Evidence of His Own Speeches (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1917), pp. 108-10.

6. Goltz, Nation in Arms, p. 25.

Program of 1891 rephrased but did not revise the original policy of the party. In 1898 August Bebel published a small pamphlet entitled Nicht stehendes Heer sondern Volkswehr. This work attempted to illustrate the social, political, and economic disadvantages of the German military system.<sup>7</sup>

Published on the eve of the Reichstag debate over the Naval Bill of 1898, Nicht Stehendes Heer challenged Prussia's military policy. Quoting Moltke more than Marx, Bebel utilized such "establishment" figures as Scharnhorst, Stein, Gneisenau, and Bismarck to construct his case. Sensing the concern created by the ever-increasing demands of the army and navy, Bebel argued that militarism robbed not only the working class but all elements interested in progress and prosperity. The advent of war would cripple the position of the crown, the profits of the capitalists, and the population of the entire nation. Even in periods of peace the preponderance of militarism, as evidenced in the growth of the army, stifled the productive powers of the German people. Since militarism delayed democracy, damaged the country's economic and spiritual growth, Bebel maintained that,

This state of affairs must end. The people of Europe cannot long remain armed to the teeth like robbers, glaring at one another, waiting for the other to show a moment of weakness, hoping to rob and plunder. It is insanity that every year millions of young men in

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7. Mommsen, Deutsche Parteiprogramme, p. 314; Protocol SPD, Erfurt, 1891, p. 6; August Bebel, Nicht stehendes Heer, sondern Volkswehr (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1972).

their finest years, their age of high productivity, are locked up in the barracks and herded out to the drill field and subjected to the spiritually deadening exercise. They should instead be learning to appreciate civilization and culture and devising methods by which they can humanize the government.<sup>8</sup>

Although Bebel attempted to convince his readers of the necessity to destroy Prussian militarism, he never advocated a policy of pacificism. As SPD strength mounted Bebel realized that the workers' stake in society also increased. Since the SPD did not possess the power to curb unilaterally the military, Bebel utilized Hegel's dialectics to defend his position. The development of modern weapons systems in one country led to countermoves by other countries. These policies served to increase tension rather than guarantee peace as the militarists claimed. If Germany adopted a defensive posture, however, the threat of war would subside considerably. A Volkswehr conscripted from and commanded by all classes of the nation would serve to guarantee the security of the country, destroy the position of the militarist caste, and decrease international tension.<sup>9</sup>

Since Bebel believed that "Like the old social order, the old military establishment had outlived itself," he felt compelled to detail the development of the Volkswehr. Jettisoning the two-year conscription system, Bebel argued for one-year

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8. Bebel, Nicht stehendes Heer, p. 43.

9. Ibid., pp. 9-21.

service with a longer ready reserve period. In order to keep the army adequately trained, all boys over the age of ten would have to drill or study military procedures on weekends. The "parade soldier" of the Prussian model would be replaced by the silent warrior who would not wear shiny buttons or helmets. Uniforms would resemble "the simple dress of a forester" and no officer could wear his military attire unless on duty or at drill.<sup>10</sup>

Nicht stehendes Heer exhibited Bebel's, and the party's, attempts to attract non-socialist support for their policies. Although Bebel called for the abolition of the Guards regiments, he did not demand open courts martial, which was a hotly debated issue in 1898. While Bebel opposed the second year of military service because it served only to inculcate the young with unquestioning obedience, he stressed monetary reasons in his defense of the one-year system. To counter claims that a militia system would drive the country into bankruptcy, Bebel quoted highly-respected military and conservative experts. Precise costs of a militia system were computed and compared against the current military budgets in the hopes of attracting support from the non-socialist elements of Germany.<sup>11</sup>

Bebel's vision of a democratic militia did not satisfy all elements of the party. As the revisionist controversy engulfed the SPD, a number of critics questioned the

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10. Ibid., pp. 45-50.

11. Ibid., pp. 34-38, 54-63.

effectiveness and efficiency of a militia system. In 1898, Max Schippel, an ally of Bernstein, published a series of articles challenging the party's position on the military. Schippel maintained that a militia system was an antiquated idea which, if instituted, would strain the financial resources of the workers and subject the entire male population to military indoctrination. The standing army, as Schippel argued, served as an economic relief to the laboring class. By entering the army a worker left the job market and thus helped keep wages high and unemployment low.<sup>12</sup>

Schippel's attacks on the SPD's sacrosanct military policy were quickly challenged. Lashing out at the inherent dangers in such unorthodox views, Rosa Luxemburg warned her socialist colleagues that

Schippel's attack only aims at one point of our political program. But in view of the fundamental significance of militarism for the contemporary state, in practical terms this single point already implies the renunciation of the entire political struggle of Social Democracy. The power and domination of both capitalist state and bourgeois class are crystallized in militarism, and since the Social Democratic Party is the only party which fights against it on principle, the inverse is also true: the principled struggle against militarism belongs to the essence of Social Democracy. To abandon the struggle against the military system leads in practice to the complete renunciation of any struggle against the current social system.<sup>13</sup>

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12. Schippel's original articles appeared as "Did Friedrich Engels Believe in the Militia?" Sozialistische Monatsheften, November, 1898, pp. 136-39 and "Friedrich Engels and the Militia System," Neue Zeit, no. 12 & 13(1898-99), pp. 114-26, 297-306.

13. Rosa Luxemburg, Ausgewählte Reden und Schriften, 2 vols. (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1951), 2:59; Leipziger Volkszeitung 26 February 1899; Nettl, Rosa Luxemburg, pp. 107-11; Dick Howard ed., Selected Political Writings of Rosa Luxemburg (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), pp. 146-47.

Karl Kautsky, representing the party leadership, joined Luxemburg in ridiculing the revisionist writings of Schippel.<sup>14</sup> When the Hanover Party Congress assembled in 1899, Bebel opened the proceedings by emphatically stating,

The party maintains its old ground in combatting militarism on land and sea and on colonial policy. It also stands by its old international policy. There is, accordingly, no reason why the party should change its program, its tactics, or its name, and it strongly repudiates any attempt to veil or alter its attitude toward the existing order of the state of society. . . .<sup>15</sup>

After Schippel produced his arguments at the Hanover Congress, the SPD overwhelmingly upheld its original party platform.<sup>16</sup>

The defeat of the revisionists did not spell the end of criticism of the party's military policy. As the revisionist challenge subsided, many of the Jungen advocated a more aggressive agitational policy to illustrate further the revolutionary character of Social Democracy. Inspired by the writings of Gustave Hervé, a French socialist, infatuated by the growing strength of the syndicalist movements throughout Europe, and impressed by the ability of a few agitators to paralyze the Tsarist military machine, these elements favored a policy of direct action to circumvent the conservative

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14. Kautsky's articles against Schippel include "Friedrich Engels und das Milizsystem," Neue Zeit, no. 12 & 13 (1898-99), pp. 335-42; "Schippel und der Militarismus," *ibid.*, pp. 618-26, 644-54, 686-91; "Siegfried der Harmlose," *ibid.*, pp. 787-91.

15. Protocol SPD, Hanover, 1899, p. 94.

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 255-95.

Reichstag leadership. At the Bremen Party Congress of 1904 Karl Liebknecht proposed the utilization of anti-militarist propaganda among recruits bound for active service. Although the party did pass a resolution condemning the maltreatment of soldiers, Liebknecht's motion was defeated. The agenda of the Jena Congress in 1905 included treatment of army recruits but excluded any discussion of agitational activity.<sup>17</sup>

Although defeated at Bremen and Jena, the Jungen mounted stronger attacks on the party leadership in 1906. Revolutionary outbursts in Russia stimulated Liebknecht and his cohorts to, once again, propose the utilization of propaganda in the army. While Bebel and the party leadership praised the Russian revolutionaries, they promoted a more cautious program for Germany. On the floor of the party congress Bebel struggled to prohibit any new outlets of revolutionary zeal. Utilization of the general strike as well as anti-militarist propaganda both met defeat at the hands of the party leadership. At the Stuttgart International Congress in 1907, Bebel and his supporters stymied a French attempt to incorporate anti-militarist policies for all socialist parties. These actions did little to placate Liebknecht

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17. A good analysis of Hervé's writings is found in Elie Halévy, The Era of Tyrannies (New York: Doubleday, 1965), pp. 216-21; Protocol SPD, Bremen, 1904, pp. 178-79; Protocol SPD, Jena, 1905, pp. 95, 283-85.

and his followers, who still hoped to illustrate that German Social Democracy was not afraid of the German army.<sup>18</sup>

After the defeat of his proposals at the Mannheim Congress in 1907, Liebknecht published a work entitled Militarismus und Antimilitarismus. Since the state and the military employed various methods to defame and denigrate social democracy, Liebknecht hoped to convince his readers that retaliation was not only essential but equitable. Militarism, as Liebknecht viewed it, had spread its tentacles far beyond the barracks and parade grounds of the Reich.

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18. Protocol SPD, Mannheim, 1906, pp. 383-87. Although Bebel had been effective in stopping anti-militarist agitation in 1905, Liebknecht insisted that the party must follow the policies of the French and Belgian socialists in instituting the International's policy of agitation among the youth. Bebel bitterly attacked Liebknecht's position by stating, "It is incomprehensible to me how he can hold up to us the example of Belgium. A country which signifies nothing, and whose army cannot be compared to Prussian military organization. In France it's the same. There anti-militaristic agitation has been carried on only in the last two years . . . in such a one-sided and exaggerated fashion! If it were done in like manner in Germany--no, thank you! I should decline." (Protocol SPD, Mannheim, 1906, pp. 386-87). Bebel also stifled French attempts to institute anti-militarist agitation as a permanent policy of the International. The final Stuttgart Resolution of the Second International stated that if a threat of war existed, "it is the duty of the working classes and their parliamentary representatives in the countries taking part, fortified by the unifying activity of the International Bureau, to do everything to prevent the outbreak of war by whatever means seem to them most effective which naturally differ with the intensification of the class war and of the general political situation." G. D. H. Cole, A History of Socialist Thought: The Second International, 1889-1914, 3 vols. (London: Macmillan & Co., 1956), 3:59-74; W. Z. Foster, History of the Three Internationals (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), pp. 200-07; Milorad M. Drachkovitch, ed., The Revolutionary Internationals, 1864-1943 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966), pp. 108-16; The Second International: Stuttgart Resolution on Militarism and International Conflict, Stuttgart, August, 1907, D.P.H.E.C., p. 226.

Because of the economic, political, and social bond between the military-industrial complex, the eradication of capitalism would first and foremost require the elimination of militarism.<sup>19</sup> Although aiming his appeal at the socialist youth organizations, Liebknecht issued a prophetic warning to his party comrades. Demanding that the party adopt an anti-militarist posture, Liebknecht asked,

Is German Social Democracy, the German Labor movement--the nucleus and the elite troop of the new International, as it likes to be called--because either over prudent or over confident, going to refrain from tackling this problem till, inadequately armed and straining to the utmost all its strength and its methods of fighting, it is faced by the fact of a world war . . . which can to a certain extent be avoided and for which German Social Democracy would also have to bear the responsibility?<sup>20</sup>

The publication of Militarismus und Antimilitarismus pleased neither the socialist party nor the German authorities. Liebknecht was arrested and all copies of the work were confiscated. In October, 1907, Liebknecht faced a Saxon court charged with high treason. After three days of deliberation and thirty minutes of consultation, Liebknecht received an eighteen-month prison sentence. Bebel, who had faced a similar court on the same charges thirty years earlier refused

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19. Karl Liebknecht, Militarism and Anti militarism (Glasgow: Socialist Labour Press, 1917); Horst Syrbe, "Zur nationalen Bedeutung von Karl Liebknechts Schrift 'Militarismus und Antimilitarismus'" Beitrag zur Geschichte der Deutschen Arbeiterbewegung 3 (1961), 573-92; Dieter Ullé, "Der theoretische-philosophische Kampf Karl Liebknecht gegen die militarische Ideologie," Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie 10 (1962), 1371-85.

20. Liebknecht, Militarism, p. 43.

to defend Liebknecht's position. In an interview after the verdict was passed on Liebknecht, Bebel maintained that anti-militarist propaganda "in the sense desired by the accused is a mistake from the practical point of view, and tactically ill advised."<sup>21</sup>

Attacks by the Jungen and the revisionists upon the SPD's military policy exposed the dilemma that faced the party as the conditions in Germany changed. The SPD, an avowed revolutionary, internationalist party had to operate within and under the influence of a nationalist-royalist-dominated state. Although the SPD opposed the political, economic, and military systems of Imperial Germany, few party members favored the dissolution of the state. The unification of Germany had not only rewarded Prussia with a dominant position in the Reich, but also, as Bebel wrote "removed many points of difference that had kept the Labour party divided."<sup>22</sup> The success of German socialism depended to a large extent on the survival and success of Germany. This view was openly espoused even prior to the unification of the socialist parties in Germany. In 1874, one year prior to the Gotha union, a socialist speaker in the Reichstag stated,

We are opponents of the Reich to the degree to which the Reich represents certain institutions under which

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21. Times (London), 14 October 1907, p. 6.

22. August Bebel, My Life (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1913), p. 237.

we suffer. But we are not opponents of the Reich as such, as a national, as a state unit.<sup>23</sup>

Even when the full power of the state descended upon the young socialist movement, the SPD still maintained its determination to defend the Fatherland. Reacting to the anti-socialist law, Bebel wrote in 1880 that while "it may be very hard for the SPD to help defend the infamous domestic system," the party would not "rid itself of these by foreign conquerors."<sup>24</sup> As the SPD recovered from the effects of Bismarck's restrictions and restructured its party program, there was no basic alteration in the party's defense policy. The ideological debates with the Jungen exposed the concern of the party over the survival of the state. In an interview with Jules Hedemann, correspondent for the French paper Le Matin, Bebel condemned the proposals of Liebknecht by stating,

if a member of the German Socialist Party propagates ideas and claims analogous to those that Herve defends one would be justified in asking . . . does this member still belong to that party? The party could not admit a propaganda which goes directly counter to its program, which seriously damages the party, and of which the aims are in existing circumstances unattainable because they are contrary, even to the interests of our country.<sup>25</sup>

The spectacular growth of the SPD in the post-Bismarck period strengthened the attachment of the party to the German state. As the German work force increased, SPD policy began

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23. Reichstag Debates, April 20, 1874, p. 961.

24. Berlau, German Social Democratic Party, p. 46.

25. Le Matin, 30 April 1907.

to reflect a concern for immediate social, political, and economic reforms. Utilizing the Reichstag as a forum to spread their propaganda, the SPD soon attracted the attention of the German workers. In order to achieve positive goals, the party debated ideas such as working with non-socialist parties at elections, developing an effective agrarian program to attract rural voters, enlarging the party bureaucracy, and accepting vice-presidential seats in the Reichstag. Party congresses mirrored the concern for the reality of the times instead of the ideal of the future socialist society. The party congress of 1903 at Dresden, whose agenda included issues such as the eight-hour day, Imperial legislation for mines, regulation of female labor, and reform of the military and civil criminal procedures, resulted in a Reichstag debate in which the Chancellor of the Reich maintained that the SPD was no longer a revolutionary party. After the disastrous electoral campaign of 1907, in which SPD representation dropped significantly, party pronouncements reflected a concern for the ballot box rather than the barricade. At the Essen Party Congress of 1907, Bebel explained to his disheartened colleagues that SPD voting strength would soon increase with the inclusion of middle-class elements, farmers, intellectuals, Liberal-Conservatives, and Christian sections of the working class.<sup>26</sup>

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26. Heckart, Bassermann to Bebel, pp. 74-86, 101-05, 170-76, 183-84, 198-99, 275-76; Reichstag Debates, 10, 14 & 15 December 1903, pp. 1037, 1122, 1178-80; Protocol SPD, Essen, 1907, pp. 249-50.

Although the state's attempt to smash the SPD's parliamentary strength had seriously injured the party, Bebel still maintained,

if we should have to defend our Fatherland some day, we would defend it, because it is our Fatherland, whose language we speak, whose customs we possess, because we wish to make this, our Fatherland, a land unexcelled in this world for perfection and beauty.<sup>27</sup>

As the Reichstag emerged as the field of battle between socialism and the state, ideological weaponry also underwent transformation. While the party had rejected the teachings of Vollmar and Bernstein, the influence of these two men remained strong. Since the SPD had transformed itself from an almost purely negative role in government to that of an active parliamentary party, theory also had to change to meet these new conditions. Party theoreticians walked an ideological tightrope attempting to reconcile their class-conscious, revolutionary theory with an electorate far less oppressed than Marx or any of his followers envisioned. Indeed, the SPD offered much more than political promises to its followers. As the party grew, it evolved into an all-embracing mass movement with something for everyone. Bebel's monumental work, Die Frau und Sozialismus opened the way for a women's movement in the party. SPD stalwarts such as Luxemburg, Sender, and Klara Zetkin emerged as powerful personalities in the proceedings of the party. For the young, the SPD developed youth organization, choral societies and bicycle clubs. SPD periodicals

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27. Protocol SPD, Essen, 1907, p. 251.

and newspapers reached every level of the working class from the Buch der Jugend for the very young to the Neue Zeit, the most prestigious theoretical journal in the world. The party's coffers overflowed as more and more workers joined the ranks of the SPD. Practical politics replaced proletarian platitudes as the party faced the twentieth century.<sup>28</sup>

As the SPD underwent transformation, theory likewise altered. Karl Kautsky, the pope of socialism, attempted to preserve the revolutionary élan of Marxism but channel this force in a new revolutionary direction. In a series of lectures entitled Die Sozial Revolution, Kautsky, in 1903, displayed his abilities to walk the ideological tightrope. Defining the social revolution as "the conquest of the powers of the State by a hitherto oppressed class,"<sup>29</sup> Kautsky castigated the advocates of pure reform but also condemned the supporters of the general strike. The social revolution, utilizing the weapon of democracy, would

assume the character of a struggle of one portion of the nation against the other, and in that but only in that, resemble less the French Revolution and more the Reformation Wars. I might also say, it will be less like a sudden revolt against authority and more like a prolonged civil war, if we do not associate with the latter actual war and slaughter. But we have no reason to assume that armed insurrection, with barricades and similar warlike incidents

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28. James Joll, The Second International, 1889-1914 (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 65; Agnes Harnack "Die sozialdemokratische Jugendliteratur," Preussische Jahrbücher, no. 153 (1913), pp. 60-70.

29. Karl Kautsky, The Social Revolution and on the Morrow of the Social Revolution (London: Twentieth Century Press, 1903), p. 3.

will nowadays play a decisive party. The reasons for that have already been too often set out for me to need to dwell on that point any longer. Militarism can only be overcome through the military themselves proving untrustworthy not through their being defeated by the revolted people.<sup>30</sup>

Kautsky further maintained that the preservation of a revolutionary consciousness was essential for the survival of socialism. If the proletariat repudiated its revolutionary aspirations, the result would be disastrous. Citing England's Labour Party as an example of the prodigal proletarian, Kautsky warned of the dangers of dealing only with practical politics.<sup>31</sup>

The combination of revolutionary idealism and democratic realism served the SPD well. In the Reichstag, SPD delegates utilized both weapons to challenge the state. As William II turned his attention toward colonial projects and the construction of a large navy, SPD opposition mounted. Colonialism and Navalism were attacked not only on the grounds that they aided the capitalists and increased international tension, but also on the tremendous costs of such projects. When the Germans, in collusion with the major powers of the world, led an expedition to destroy the Boxer forces in China, the SPD appealed to the head as well as the heart of its supporters by stating,

World or colonial policy pursued in order to further capitalist exploitation and military glory . . . results from the avarice of the bourgeoisie for new opportunities to invest capital . . . and the need

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30. Ibid., p. 172.

31. Ibid.

for markets. . . . This policy consists in the forceful acquisition of foreign lands and their irresponsible exploitation. . . . It also necessarily leads to the brutalization of the exploiting elements which seek to satisfy their hunger for spoils with the most damnable, even inhuman means. . . . The policy of overseas conquests and pillage leads to jealousies and frictions between rival powers and hence to unbearable armaments on land and sea; it harbors the seeds of dangerous international conflicts.<sup>32</sup>

As the older leaders of the party died or retired from active participation, the ideological invectives of the party also faded into the background. Most of the second generation of SPD leadership had not experienced the brutality of Bismarck and thus tended to stress development of the party rather than destruction of the Klassenstaat. Events such as the Russian Revolution of 1905 did revitalize the revolutionary tendencies of the party, but these energies were channeled into demonstrations for suffrage reform rather than demands for a general strike. Philipp Scheidemann, the first socialist to occupy a vice-presidential chair in the Reichstag, recalled how his maiden speech of 1903 concerning the pollution of "the fine German river Wupper" created a favorable impression on his Reichstag colleagues. Gustav Noske, the first War Minister of the Weimar Republic, maintained that throughout his career, he never used the word Marxism because he was not concerned with theoretical matters.<sup>33</sup>

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32. Berlau, German Social Democratic Party, p. 48.

33. Schorske, German Social Democracy, pp. 28-58; Philipp Scheidemann, The Making of a New Germany: The Memoirs of Philipp Scheidemann, 2 vols. (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1929)1:140; Mann, Germany, p. 272.

While the patriotic pronouncements and moderate policies of the Social Democratic Party reassured many Germans of the SPD's determination to defend the Fatherland and work within the national framework, the army and the socialists remained bitter enemies. For no matter how much progress the SPD made in influencing legislation, the army remained under the protection of the emperor. As the fear of the SPD gradually diminished among certain non-socialist elements in German society, socialist attacks upon the army received the attention, and in some cases admiration of the voters. Utilizing the power of interpellation, SPD deputies maintained a watchful eye over the policies and practices of the army. As more and more workers entered the military, the abuses and activities of the army received more attention. During the ensuing euphoria over the victories in France in 1871, socialists condemned not only the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine but also the amount of French indemnity money paid to staff officers. In the course of the debate over the anti-socialist bill in 1878, Herr Wilhelm Hasslemann, an SPD deputy, again reminded the Reichstag that while staff officers were generously rewarded for their services during the war, the average soldier received nothing ". . . not even a diminution of taxes."<sup>34</sup> As the army made more and more financial demands on the country, the protestations as well as the popularity of the SPD increased.

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34. Reichstag Debates, 15 May 1878, p. 1094.

When Bismarck introduced the seven year army bill in 1880, the SPD voted with the Centre and Ultramontane parties in an unsuccessful attempt to defeat the government. After William II dismissed Bismarck, dropped the anti-socialist law, and demanded social legislation for the workers the SPD refused to compromise on the issue of military appropriations. The strong suspicion that army increases were aimed at internal as well as external enemies seemed well justified when the veteran Count Moltke stated before the Reichstag in May, 1890,

The truth is that the factors that militate against peace are to be found in the people themselves. At home they are the envy and greed of the classes less favored by fortune, and the attempts they make from time to time to secure rapidly, and by violent measures, an improvement which can be brought about only by the workings of organic laws--slowly, indeed, and laboriously.<sup>35</sup>

As the Kaiser's military and political policies unfolded, the SPD reacted vigorously. Although the army bill of 1892 offered a shorter term of service, the SPD, in conjunction with several of the non-socialist parties, condemned the demands for more soldiers. After the defeat of the army bill in May, 1893, and the dissolution of the Reichstag, Wilhelm Liebknecht triumphantly wrote to an English journal:

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35. The Annual Register: A Review of Public Events at Home and Abroad for the Year 1890 (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1891), p. 311.

If the election of 1890 overthrew Bismarck and his majority, the election of 1893 dealt a stunning blow to militarism. The Reichstag of 1890 had been dissolved for refusing to sanction the new military bill. The question before the German electors were, is our immense standing army again to be increased and the people crushed by fresh taxation? Or shall we break altogether the yokes of standing armies, and prepare for a general disarming by an international congress? And the answer was that out of a total of 7,674,000 voters in round numbers 4,350,000 voted against militarism in the home of militarism.<sup>36</sup>

Although the army achieved their increases, SPD critics refused to retreat. As chancellors rose and fell, the SPD continued to call attention to the need for reform within the army. War ministers faced an increasingly hostile Reichstag as Social Democratic voting strength increased. Questions over the maltreatment of soldiers, duelling in the army, and the military penal procedures drew the attention of the nation. The army, and especially its leadership, was forced to explain its activities in the face of public scrutiny. Subjects long considered the private preserve of the emperor and his generals reached the public via the Reichstag floor and the socialist presses. Although the Kaiser maintained complete control over command and personnel matters, the Reichstag retained the purse strings to the treasury. As the demands for more marks and men increased, the denunciations of the SPD grew louder. While unsuccessful in achieving the militia system, the SPD proved

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36. Wilhelm Liebknecht, "The Programme of German Socialism," Forum 18 (1894-95), 657-58.

very adept in exposing the tyranny of the standing army. By the year 1914 many non-socialists were ready to join the SPD in curbing the power and privileges of the army. In that fateful year, however, the army and the nation were reunited in a common struggle.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE ZEITGEIST OF ZABERN

The failure of the SPD to restructure the German military system did not signify a victory for the officer corps. As the size of the army increased, the SPD Reichstag delegation also grew. Fortified by an ever-increasing electorate, the socialists, in collusion with the democratic elements of the nation, began to aim their weapons at the practices as well as the position of the officer corps. Items such as military justice, brutality, suicides, and duelling received as much attention as the traditional attacks upon the feudal character and composition of the officer corps. Although the military remained immune from Reichstag control, it could not escape parliamentary criticism. As the voices of protest grew, the leaders of the army were forced to reform and revise many of their policies. When the Zabern Affair erupted in 1913 the privileged position of the army and its officers came under its harshest attack from the parliament and the public.

The tremendous growth of the SPD stunned and frightened many of the leaders of the army. Following the example prescribed by the Supreme Commander, the officer corps attempted to retain its power and privileges in the face of growing opposition. As middle-class elements increased the size of

the officer corps, however, aristocratic intransigence decreased the stature of the army. Expansion in the number of reserve commissions not only enticed many middle-class elements into the military but also exposed many of the abuses of the officer corps. As criticism mounted, many officers learned that isolation from the mainstream of German life was no longer possible or plausible. Although the Kaiser remained the final authority in military matters, the Reichstag refused to accept certain practices of the army without protest. War Ministers faced an increasingly hostile parliament as the military requested more money and men but refused to alter many of its anachronistic practices.

Nothing illustrated the vaunted position of the officer corps more than the use and abuse of the duel. Duelling, although outlawed for the citizens of the Reich, was regarded by the military as an essential part of the officer's code of honor. While efforts to suppress duelling had begun as early as the seventeenth century, officers retained the right as well as the duty to uphold and defend the honor of their position.<sup>1</sup> In a royal decree of 1874, William I established

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1. Royal efforts to suppress duelling are found in General Karl H. L. von Borstell to King Frederick William III, Königsberg, 18 January 1821, in Demeter, German Officer Corps pp. 302-09; Cabinet Order by Frederick William III, Berlin, 13 June 1828 in Ibid., p. 310; Memorandum by General Zieten, Breslau, 10 February 1829, in Ibid., pp. 311-12; Demeter, German Officer Corps, pp. 116-46; Kitchen, Officer Corps, pp. 49-57; Vagts, History of Militarism, pp. 186-88; Ritter, Sword and Scepter, 2:101-02.

Tribunals of Honor whose primary function was to mediate disputes between officers. While attempting to protect the honor of the individual and preserve the spirit of the entire officer corps, the Kaiser's decree also institutionalized the use of the duel. If the Tribunal of Honor could not achieve a reconciliation between the conflicting parties, then

the council of honor must try to ensure that the terms on which the duel is fought are not inappropriate to the gravity of the case. If a duel is to be fought, the president or some member of the council of honor must be present on the duelling-ground as a witness and ensure that the usages of the Estate are observed in fighting.<sup>2</sup>

In order to guarantee that no outside authorities could attempt prosecution against an officer involved in a duel, William further decreed that

Action on account of a duel shall only be taken against an officer by way of a tribunal of honor if one or other party has offended the honor of the Estate either by the occasion that gave rise to the quarrel or by the manner of its prosecution.<sup>3</sup>

Although the Kaiser attempted to curb the number of duels with the institution of the Tribunals of Honor, duelling continued to plague the army. As the number of reserve officers increased, incidents of duelling shocked the nation. While Conservatives and some National-Liberals defended duelling, the SPD, Progressives, and the Centre parties opposed it. Although these parties held considerable strength

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2. Introductory Order by William I to the Ordinance on Tribunals of Honor, Potsdam, 2 May 1874 in Demeter, German Officer Corps, p. 315.

3. Ibid.

in the Reichstag, they could not interfere in military matters such as duelling. Wilhelm II's accession, while ending the anti-socialist law and the career of Bismarck, did not immediately alter the crown's position on duelling. On May 8, 1891, the Kaiser addressed a corps of students at Bonn. Praising the university duelling clubs as "the best education a young man can get for his future life,"<sup>4</sup> Wilhelm also hoped that

as long as there are German corps students the spirit which is fostered in their corps, and which is steeled by strength and courage, will be preserved and that you will always take delight in handling the duelling blade.<sup>5</sup>

The Kaiser's vision of the virtues of the blade seemed out of place in a modern industrial society. Many Germans viewed duelling as medieval instead of manly and demanded that it be abolished. Deputies proposed that persons who engage in duels be refused positions of authority, that the libel laws be strengthened, that the army cease granting pensions to officers injured while duelling, and that the courts of honor be reformed and reorganized. Motions passed the Reichstag with increasing regularity imploring the state governments to prohibit duelling. After several deaths occurred in 1896 as a consequence of duelling, Chancellor Hohenlohe promised the Reichstag that reform was at hand.

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4. The Annual Register: A Review of Public Events at Home and Abroad for the Year 1891 (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1892), p. 281.

5. Ibid.

The Chancellor's promises of reform were accelerated by another sensational case in April, 1896. A magistrate in Prussia deliberated a case in which three men were accused of assault on a fourth party. After declaring the three defendants guilty of ungentlemanly conduct, the judge, an officer in the reserve, was summoned before a court of honor. One of the defendants also held a reserve commission and had challenged the magistrate for his use of the term "ungentlemanly." When the judge refused to take up the challenge, the honor court rescinded his commission.<sup>6</sup> After the military authorities refused to reinstate the discredited magistrate, the Vossische Zeitung asked its readers,

what is to be the end of it all considering that friction will ever arise in court if a judge who conscientiously discharges his duty must expect to be challenged to a duel with pistols.<sup>7</sup>

Reacting to public condemnation, the Militär-Wochenblatt published an article praising the duel and proclaiming the independence of officers from certain Imperial laws. As the forces opposing the duel increased, however, the Kaiser

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6. Reichstag Debates, April 20, 1896, pp. 1785-94; Ibid., April 21, 1896, pp. 1815-35; For a good summary of the major Reichstag motions over duelling see Reichstags-Drucksachen No. 1, 1st Session of 13th Parliament, 1912-1913; Friedrich Curtis, ed., Memoirs of Prince Chlodwig of Hohenlohe-Schillingfurst, 2 vols. (London: William Heinemann, 1906), 2:467; Kitchen, Officer Corps, pp. 52-53.

7. Vossische Zeitung (Berlin), 4 April 1896.

attempted to placate the army's critics but also preserve the time-honored traditions of the officer corps.<sup>8</sup>

After months of anticipation, the German nation finally received new regulations concerning the duel. On January 1, 1897, the Kaiser's Cabinet Order, supplementing the Order of 1874, was promulgated. Instead of destroying the system of honor courts, the new decree established another military body entitled Councils of Honor. The purpose of this body was to receive all complaints prior to any action by the conflicting parties. Once the quarrel was reviewed, the Council of Honor could

propose a settlement of differences or it may declare that the circumstances preclude the proposal of a settlement and that the matter must be referred to a Court of Honor or it may find that the honor of the parties cannot be considered to have been affected and that consequently there is no reason either for proposing a compromise or for resorting to the action of a Court of Honor.<sup>9</sup>

The Kaiser's order, while diminishing the practice of duelling, did not destroy the principle behind which the duel remained cloaked. Critics of the army pointed out the inadequacies and inconsistencies of the new policy. The Frankfurter Zeitung reminded its readers that duelling remained perfectly legal, while the Vossische Zeitung maintained that an order of 1848 contained stronger measures to prevent duelling than the latest decree.<sup>10</sup>

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8. Militär-Wochenblatt, 26 April 1896.

9. Times (London), 6 January 1897, p. 3.

10. Frankfurter Zeitung, 5 January 1897; Vossische Zeitung (Berlin), 5 January 1897.

For all of its shortcomings, the cabinet order of 1897 did halt the number of duels fought by officers. Although reserve officers continued to duel at a scandalous rate, cases of combat between regular officers declined. Regimental commanders were cautioned to control conflicts among their junior subordinates. The official army catechism, issued to every protestant soldier, labeled duelling as immoral and in violation of the laws of God. Self-restraint replaced satisfaktionsfähig as the mark of an officer and a gentleman. More and more officers involved in alcoholic or adulterous activities met their fate before courts of honor instead of the field of honor.<sup>11</sup> As War Minister von Heeringen reminded the Reichstag in 1913,

all who have been in the army for a certain length of time will bear me out when I say that the views of the corps of officers on the need for duelling have gradually undergone a considerable change since 1897. Many affairs of honor are nowadays settled peacefully; but before 1897 it was unthinkable to settle them except by fighting.<sup>12</sup>

The protests of the Reichstag over the use of the duel did not destroy the system itself, but forced the military on the defensive. When Chancellor Hohenlohe stated in 1906 that an officer who would not duel could not be tolerated in the army, the War Minister quickly retorted that all disputes

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11. Demeter, German Officer Corps, p. 142; Kitchen, Officer Corps, p. 55.

12. Reichstag Debates, 9 April 1913, p. 4606; Demeter, German Officer Corps, p. 142.

between officers could be settled without duelling. In a heated Reichstag debate in April, 1912, War Minister von Herringen was forced to concede that officers who plead religious scruples could not be forced to duel. Although the War Minister, whose nephew had recently died in a duel, defended those who placed God's commandments over the officer's code, he also stated that officers who refused to duel should not be allowed to wear the king's uniform. Statements such as these received royal as well as Reichstag disapproval as the Kaiser and his officers were forced to recognize the power of popular indignation fortified by parliamentary protest.<sup>13</sup>

The SPD's attack upon the officer corps' use of the duel illustrated the growing power of the Reichstag to influence military matters. Working in collusion with non-socialist, democratic parties in the Reichstag, the SPD continued to chip away at the abuses of the military. Maltreatment of soldiers received high priority in both party and Reichstag sessions. While the army retained total control over the individual in uniform, SPD attacks forced the army to reform its penal procedures and review its training programs.

Although the SPD's military policy did not sanction agitational activity prior to army service, the party did attempt to inform recruits of the rights as well as duties of

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13. Reichstag Debates, 15 January 1906, pp. 546-72; Ibid., 30 March 1906, pp. 2438-49; Ibid., 24 April 1912, pp. 1355-89.

soldiers. Party supporters entering the army received literature explaining the procedures for registering complaints against superiors.<sup>14</sup> As the size of the army increased and more and more SPD members were inducted, many party leaders pushed for a more active policy to combat ill-treatment of soldiers. This issue, like duelling, interested many of the non-socialist parties and increased the stature of the SPD as a party concerned with the welfare of all Germans. Since most army recruits originated from rural areas, an aggressive policy against brutality aided the SPD in attracting support from the farm as well as the factory. Attacks upon the treatment of soldiers further illustrated the army's closed system of justice and open contempt for civilian critics.

While the army and its leaders attempted to defend their training policies, they could not ignore the appalling number of suicides among the ranks. When the government published a series of suicide statistics in 1896, the Prussian army rated notoriously high. Although the suicide rate varied from forty-six per 100,000 in Sax-Altenburg to eleven and a half per 100,000 in Alsace-Lorraine, the Prussian army scored a scandalous sixty-five per 100,000. In reaction to this

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14. Liebknecht, Militarism, p. 5; At the Jena party congress in 1905 Liebknecht proposed, as the first phase of his anti-militarist policy, the institution of public meetings for inductees. The purpose of these meetings was to inform recruits of their legal rights. After Bebel deleted the phrase "first phase" from the motion it passed. Protocol SPD, Jena, 1905, pp. 283-85.

data, the Militär-Wochenblatt published a set of figures illustrating the declining suicide rate in the army. Maintaining that the annual number of army suicides had dropped from 216 for the period 1876 to 1890, to 200 from 1890 to 1895, the article stated that suicides were not a major problem anymore. What the military refused to note was that, even though the annual rate had dropped, approximately fourteen times as many soldiers killed themselves as civilians.<sup>15</sup>

Although some officers continued to ignore the attacks of the SPD, many others realized the detrimental effect of such propaganda. On his accession to the throne, Wilhelm II reissued a royal command promulgated in 1848. The Kaiser ordered that

every soldier must be justly, lawfully, and humanely treated, because such treatment forms the basis on which love for and devotion to the military professions are awakened. If in the future cases of systematic ill-treatment occur, commanding officers of regiments must at once report to me the names of those subalterns to whose neglect in superintendence these offences were due. They must also tell me what measures they have taken to punish the offenders.<sup>16</sup>

Evidence to illustrate the failure of the Kaiser's personal intervention appeared in June, 1891, when Prince George of Saxony dispatched a circular to his colonels listing several incidents of brutality. Arguing that maltreatment decreased

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15. Times (London) 22 January 1896, p. 3; Militär Wochenblatt, 29 January 1896; Demeter, German Officer Corps, pp. 183-85; Kitchen, Officer Corps, pp. 181-83.

16. Imperial Decree of February 6, 1890; North German Gazette, 4 February 1892.

loyalty to the throne and Fatherland and increased the appeal of socialism, Prince George demanded that brutality be suppressed.<sup>17</sup> As the SPD continued to expose cases of cruelty, the Kaiser, in 1892, warned his war minister that

Many a case . . . could have been prevented if the officer had stepped in at once. . . . It is the duty of officers of all ranks to contribute to this end, primarily by example and precept. Should these measures not be enough, the guilty must be made to answer for it and left in no doubt that I shall not tolerate any negligence as regards the maltreatment of subordinates.<sup>18</sup>

The Kaiser's concern over the treatment of his soldiers seemed to many a royal ruse designed more to prevent debate than to prohibit future cases of abuse. Critics of the military maintained that as long as the army continued its practice of closed courts martial, the rights of soldiers would be in jeopardy. Resolutions demanding that the Prussian army open its court proceedings to public scrutiny passed the Reichstag in 1870, 1889, and 1892. Although the Bavarian army had instituted this reform, Wilhelm resisted every attempt by the Reichstag to dictate army policy. Royal intransigence was matched by Reichstag insistence. As demands for more men and money reached the Reichstag, deputies insisted upon military penal reform. Chancellor Hohenlohe,

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17. Vorwärts (Berlin), 1 February 1892; Karl Liebknecht, Gesammelte Reden, 3 vols. (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1958), 1:314; Kitchen, Officer Corps, p. 182.

18. Minute by Emperor William II to the Minister of War, Potsdam, 17 September 1892, in Demeter, German Officer Corps, p. 348.

the author of the Bavarian military reforms, faced opposition from the court and the Reichstag in attempting to preserve the crown's authority and placate the parliament. After the uproar over the dismissal of War Minister Bronsart von Schellendorff because of his insistence on an open court system, the Chancellor realized that the Reichstag would wait no longer. Finally in December, 1898, a new military penal code, which included open trials, was approved by the Emperor.<sup>19</sup>

Reform of the army's penal code and procedures was only one area where the army and the Reichstag clashed. Due to the fact that the Kaiser showed little support for reform, the army continued to display intransigence and indifference to civilian criticism. Military courts often attempted to overrule or interfere with the actions of civil courts. In 1883 at Metz, the military authorities expelled a Roman Catholic priest because he allegedly insulted a Prussian noncommissioned officer. The action occurred after a civil court had acquitted the priest. A retired major, who supported a shorter term of military service and rejected Bismarck's military bill, was brought before a military court in 1887. During a political contest, the ex-major had instituted legal proceedings against his opponent for remarks made about his

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19. Craig, Politics of Prussian Army, pp. 246-51; Hohenlohe, Memoirs, 2:468.

military career. Although he won the case, the court ruled that the officer should have challenged his opponent and thus stripped him of his title and decorations. On the accession of Emperor Frederick in 1888 another sensational case illustrated the inability of the army to forget or forgive. A petition was laid before the Kaiser from a seventy-three-year-old veteran who had returned to Germany after more than thirty years in exile. The former officer, Alfred Techow, had been dismissed from the army and sentenced to fifteen years in prison for allowing the Civil Guard to capture the Berlin armory during the insurrections of 1848. After serving part of his sentence, Techow escaped and made his way to Australia. Hoping to be included in the amnesty proclaimed on the death of Wilhelm I, Techow returned to Germany. When the War Minister stated that under no circumstances could the luckless lieutenant be pardoned, the emperor refused to hear Techow's petition. In 1898 a lieutenant-general defiantly refused to recognize a civilian court's judgment against him. Although the officer's dog had attacked and injured a young boy, the general demanded that he could only be tried by his fellow officers.<sup>20</sup>

The army's contempt for the civil authorities further strengthened the SPD's case against the military. The opening

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20. Times (London), 16 January 1883, p. 5; Ibid., 25 June 1887, p. 9; Ibid., 24 May 1888, p. 5; Kitchen, Officer Corps, p. 117; Berliner Volkszeitung, 31 August 1898.

of military courts to outside parties did not grant the army's foes a voice in military matters but did grant them a view of the military system of justice. The number of light sentences assessed to those found guilty of maltreatment, and in some cases murder, spurred the army's critics to protest and publicize their discontent. When an officer, convicted of murdering a colleague during a duel, was released from prison after serving only eight months of his two-year sentence, the conservative paper Reichsbote was moved to state,

What is the use of all the ordinances which are issued to suppress the curse of duelling so long as those who offend against them are treated with this misplaced indulgence, and the penalty of the law, which in itself is very mild, thereby made illusory?<sup>21</sup>

Exposure of the army's system of justice exhibited not only an undue leniency for officers but also an unbelievable amount of incompetence. One of the first major cases reported under the new penal code illustrated the army's lack of concern for the basic tenets of the law. In June, 1901, at the East Prussian garrison of Gumbinnen, a cavalry captain was murdered. The slain officer, Captain von Krosigk, emanated from an old Prussian military family. His death was investigated by civilian and military authorities who discovered that the deceased was a much hated dragoon officer. Three noncommissioned officers were arrested and tried for the crime but all were acquitted. At the trial, the public was ordered to leave

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21. Reichsbote (Berlin), 31 July 1902.

the room when questions concerning the relationship between Krosigk and his soldiers were discussed. This move, although perfectly legal, cast doubts on the reputation of the deceased.<sup>22</sup>

In a letter to the Reichsbote, an "old officer" stated,

The next time that a bad case of maltreatment of soldiers comes up reference will constantly be made to the captain of cavalry who awakened in his men the blackest thoughts of vengeance. The Social Democrats rub their hands with delight. No better means of inciting our soldiers against their officers could have been devised. Who is to prevent the socialists from representing all the captains in the army as officers who maltreat their men.<sup>23</sup>

Vorwärts, realizing the effect of such propaganda on the country, reiterated its ideological opposition to the army. In a tersely worded commentary on the case, the paper replied,

We attack militarism on principle and we do not require a sensational case to convince us that an army based upon a system of class and caste, held together by a discipline inherited from the days of mercenaries must inevitably produce evils which are inconsistent with the higher conception of civilization.<sup>24</sup>

Krosigk's brutality toward his subordinates worried the army far less than finding the person or persons responsible for the captain's murder. After it was discovered that Krosigk had severely mistreated one of the acquitted defendant's relatives, the divisional commander ordered a second trial. Sargeant Werner Marten, although acquitted at the first court

22. Berliner Correspondenz, 18 July 1901.

23. Reichsbote (Berlin), 5 June 1901.

24. Vorwärts (Berlin), 5 June 1901.

martial, was never released from prison because of the divisional commander's belief that he was guilty. In August a second court martial, utilizing the exact evidence of the first, found Marten guilty of murder and sentenced him to death. The prosecutor justified the verdict even though the evidence utilized was almost totally circumstantial. Reaction to the army's verdict was swift and surprising. Conservative papers as well as the liberal press joined with the SPD in demanding a reversal of the trial. Protest meetings erupted throughout the country. Max Schulz, a member of the Prussian Diet, formulated a resolution criticizing Marten's divisional commander and challenging the army's use of the death penalty in peace time. Pressure for revision of the case mounted steadily. Finally, in May, 1902, the military quashed the verdict and acquitted Marten of all charges.<sup>25</sup>

The army's retreat in the face of nation-wide outrage worried many officers. As the SPD continued to expose cases of maltreatment and misconduct, many officers hoped to

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25. National Zeitung (Berlin), 24 June 1901; The conviction of Marten was based upon such harsh evidence as (1) Marten and Krosigk were not on friendly terms. (2) Marten's father, while serving in the regiment, was severely abused by Krosigk. (3) On the day of the murder Marten became infuriated at Krosigk when the captain disciplined the N C O for poor riding. (4) When told of Krosigk's death, Marten displayed indifference. (5) Marten was seen standing by the weapons rack prior to the murder. (6) Marten could not account for a six-minute period during the day of the murder. (7) The prosecution could find no one else who could have killed Krosigk. Cologne Gazette, 22 August 1901; Berlin Neueste Nachrichten, 27 August 1901; Kreuz Zeitung (Berlin), 27 August 1901; Times (London), 29 August 1901, p. 3; Ibid., 1 May 1902, p. 5.

retaliate. In order to counter SPD propaganda, the army adopted various techniques. While some hardliners advocated direct confrontation with the workers, this option seemed fraught with danger. The use of the army in labor disputes had further alienated many Germans from the military. A preemptive strike by the army could possibly lead to a SPD inspired general strike. With thousands of SPD supporters in the military, no one could guarantee the loyalty of the army if civil war erupted. In a work entitled Reform oder Revolution, published in 1895, the author expressed this fear by asking his readers

If the Social Democratic movement continues to concentrate as much as it has done on the youth of our working class, who can guarantee that in ten years time young soldiers will not fraternize with the revolutionaries and hand over their weapons to them?<sup>26</sup>

Since destruction of the SPD seemed impossible as well as impractical, some officers advocated the reimposition of laws against the socialist movement. Forgetting the futility of Bismarck's efforts to suppress the socialist movement, this group believed that an anti-socialist law would destroy the SPD's influence with the trade unions and the electorate. The most obvious fallacy of this rationale was the SPD's position in the Reichstag. From the expiration of the anti-

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26. Curt von Massow, "Reform oder Revolution," Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft 6(1960):1390; Kitchen, Officer Corps, p. 147.

socialist law to the outbreak of World War I, the SPD had lost seats in only one election. Working within the national framework had brought tremendous success for the party and its supporters. As the SPD continued to gain strength in the Reichstag as well as in the railway yards, the chances for legislative repression diminished.<sup>27</sup>

Because physical destruction and legislative proscription seemed unrealistic, the army decided to compete with, rather than confront, the socialist movement. Recruits entering the army were lectured on the duties each owed to God and Kaiser. All SPD material was banned from military posts. Soldiers conscripted from industrial areas were stationed in rural garrisons. Recruits were forbidden to attend political meetings but were forced to undergo patriotic instruction from their officers. Public inns, which catered to Social Democrats, were placed off limits to soldiers.<sup>28</sup>

The army's attempts to educate and indoctrinate recruits met with little success. In their determination to wean the soldiers away from socialism, officers exhibited their inability to face the changing conditions of Germany. During

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27. Kitchen, Officer Corps, pp. 149-50; Hans von Seeckt, who after World War I, commanded the army under a SPD President and Chancellor favored anti-socialist legislation; Friedrich von Rabenau, Seeckt: Aus seinem Leben, 1866-1917 (Leipzig: Hase e Kochler, 1938), p. 166. Also see Cologne Gazette, 4 September 1895; Berlin Neueste Nachrichten, 3 September 1895; Karlsruher Zeitung, 3 September 1895.

28. Kitchen, Officer Corps, pp. 151-67; Numerous examples are available of the army's prosecution of soldiers who received packages from home wrapped in social democratic newspapers. Imperial Gazette, 24 July 1896; Vorwärts (Berlin), 24 July 1896.

the furor over the publication of Bilse and Beyerlein's works an American newspaper interviewed German immigrants who had served in the army. As to their opinion of officers, there was little dissension. One veteran summed up his observations by stating that

Some of them were kind hearted gentlemen; but most of them were cruel brutes. The caste line between officers and men is very distinctly drawn. The officers are all powerful autocrats. Their very word is law. There is really no court of appeal.<sup>29</sup>

A dinner party given by the Kaiser for the commanders of his military districts in 1904 amazed one of the participants. When conversation turned to the infamous works of Bilse and Beyerlein, the commentator was shocked because no one

dared to suggest that the level of education in our people had risen, and that in the natural order of things it would be necessary to adopt a different way of dealing with an entirely different type of soldier. Finally, it was never even mentioned that the officers, by their exclusiveness and their one-sided views of life, have not only failed to keep pace with the moral progress of the nation, but that the risk of complete estrangement is growing day by day.<sup>30</sup>

The failure of the army to compete seriously with the SPD resulted in renewed socialist attacks upon the military and the monarchy. Despite the divisions incurred by the revisionist controversey, the SPD presented a united front when challenging the army. The agenda of the party congresses

29. Ernst Schultz, "A Soldier of the Kaiser," Independent 61 (1906): 433.

30. Zedlitz-Trutaschuler, Twelve Years, p. 57.

of 1903, 1904, and 1905 included maltreatment of soldiers as a major area for deliberation and debate. In 1906 and 1907 the issues of the general strike and anti-military propaganda consumed much of the party's schedule. Reform of the voting system in Prussia, the heartland of German militarism, also moved the SPD to mass demonstrations against the government.<sup>31</sup> As the party fended off attacks from the revisionists and the Jungen, however, the SPD exhibited a new course of action. After the 1912 elections, in which one-third of the electorate supported the SPD, party tactics exhibited a concern for immediate gains. In 1912 the SPD actively entered candidates for positions on the Reichstag praesidium. Philipp Scheidemann was elected interim first vice-president of the Reichstag. Although he refused to present himself to the Kaiser and thus lost his position, Scheidemann's brief tenure illustrated the SPD's determination to work through the system. This policy was well noted by foes as well as friends of the party. Reporters were amazed at the ability exhibited by Scheidemann in directing the

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3. Protocol SPD, Dresden, 1903, pp. 218-56; Ibid., Bremen, 1904, pp. 131-32, 178-85; Ibid., Jena, 1905, pp. 99, 283-85; Ibid., Mannheim, 1906, pp. 383-87; Ibid., Essen, 1907, pp. 230-50.

business of the Reichstag.<sup>32</sup> One deputy expressed surprise at not only the demeanor, but also the dress, of the socialist president. After Scheidemann resigned his position, the deputy wrote,

Never was there a more impeccable frock-coat or a more carefully curled beard seen in the Reichstag than on the days when the "austere" socialist occupied the presidential chair.<sup>33</sup>

The acceptance of a vice-presidential chair was soon followed by other surprises. In 1913 the party supported the government's tax bill. Although much of the money raised was used to strengthen the army, the SPD voted for the bill because it offered direct property taxes instead of the usual indirect taxes which hit the workers the heaviest. These policies reflected the changing status of the party in the government. While party membership stood at less than a million in 1912, over four million voters responded to SPD

32. Scheidemann, Memoirs, 1:173-74; Schorske, German Social Democracy, pp. 170-77; Although many papers expressed horror at the thought of having a socialist serve as vice-president of the Reichstag, the tone of the press soon quietened as Scheidemann proved his skill at directing the business of the parliament. The Berliner Tageblatt stated "that even the Right must admit that the 'Comrade' one hears with interest does his job very well." The Frankfurter Zeitung also acknowledged that "Herr Scheidemann, the Social Democrats first Vice-President, did his work well." The Tagliche Rundschau also maintained "As if he had been born to high office, he takes the place of Count Schwerin."

33. Wetterle, Behind the Scenes, p. 415; Scheidemann's apparel interested more than one observer. The Schleisische Nachrichten commented that "Such an ornamental President of the Reichstag has never been seen in the Chair as Comrade Scheidemann; any stranger would assume that a multi-millionaire sat in the Presidential Chair. Extremely well dressed, a cut-away waist-coat, a faultless tie--in short, a perfect model for the best tailor in Berlin."

appeals. As the power of the party increased, the government had to yield more and more ground. When the Zabern affair erupted in 1913, the position of the army, and indeed, the whole constitutional framework of the Reich came under heavy attack by the SPD and its Reichstag allies.<sup>34</sup>

In October, 1913, at the garrison of Zabern in Alsace, Lieutenant Freiherr von Forstner of the Ninety-Ninth Infantry Regiment informed his company that for every Alsatian wackes they knifed, he would reward them. This insolent remark was reported to the local press which demanded that the regimental commander apologize. The commander of the regiment, Colonel von Reuter, refused to apologize or take any action against Forstner. Claiming that the lieutenant did not intend to insult the entire population but only the rowdies, the general commander of the Alsace area also refused to punish any of the soldiers. Demonstrations soon erupted but subsided once the army took action against Forstner and his first sergeant.<sup>35</sup>

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34. Schorske, German Social Democracy, pp. 265-67; Protocol SPD, Jena, 1913, pp. 169-72.

35. The Zabern incident is covered in : Arnold Heydt, Der Fall Zabern (Strassburg: J. Habel, 1934); Erwin Schenk, Der Fall Zabern (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1927); James W. Ger ard, My Four Years in Germany (New York: George H. Doran, 1917), pp. 75-92; Kitchen, Officer Corps, pp. 187-221; Wacke was a derogatory term used by non-Alsatians to insult the population. Although several papers maintained that Forstner did not know the meaning of the word and did not intentionally insult the population, there was little doubt about the lieutenant's arrogance toward the population. Forstner received six days house arrest for his language while his first sergeant was incarcerated for ten days for forcing recruits to use the term.

Disciplinary action against Forstner served little purpose as the young officer continued to embarrass the army. On November 14 Forstner made some vulgar remarks about the French flag. Although the army quickly denied these statements, seventy-nine recruits witnessed the lieutenant's diatribe and were willing to testify to the meaning of Forstner's statements. Soon the army took action but not against the arrogant officer. Ten soldiers, all Alsatians, were arrested for leaking information to the press.<sup>36</sup>

The actions of the army in Alsace further enraged the citizenry. Although the soldiers arrested for supplying the papers with information were released, the return of von Reuter set off another series of demonstrations. Civilians who jeered or laughed at the military patrols were incarcerated even though the army had not declared martial law and thus had no legal power. Clashes between the army and the civilians became a daily occurrence as the army simply took the law into its own hands.<sup>37</sup>

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36. Kitchen, Officer Corps, pp. 200-01; Schenk, Fall Zabern p. 16; Heydt, Zabern, p. 10; Gerard, Four Years, pp. 81-82.

37. Kitchen, Officer Corps, pp. 200-01; The army simply decided to handle the affair without the slightest concern for the law. Soldiers searched the offices of the Zabern newspaper looking for information that might lead to the capture of the person or persons responsible for leading information to the press. Wholesale arrests began to take place as anyone or anything who laughed or was suspected of laughing at officers was incarcerated. In their haste to exhibit their authority, the army detained officials of the state court, a state prosecutor, a child of five, an elderly woman and various assortments of animals.

By late November the Reichstag became interested, and in some quarters incensed at the army's activities in Zabern. Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg and War Minister Falkenhayn both attempted to skirt the issue but the SPD, Progressive, and Centre representatives pressed on for an explanation of the army's actions. Although the Chancellor maintained that the army had overstepped its authority, he also made it clear that he was not going to interfere. Falkenhayn's denunciation of the Alsatians and defense of the army enraged many of the army's traditional supporters. When news reached the Reichstag that Forstner had wounded a crippled Alsatian cobbler, a general uproar ensued. A vote of confidence for the government failed miserably as 293 representatives voted against, while only fifty-four supported the government.<sup>38</sup>

Although the vote of no confidence did not result in the resignation of the government, the army was forced to retreat. The Ninety-Ninth Infantry Regiment left Zabern, and many soldiers, including Forstner and Reuter, were brought before courts martial. When Forstner received forty-three days imprisonment for his attack upon the aged cobbler, the

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38. Reichstag Debates, 26 November 1913, p. 5974; Ibid., 28 November 1913, pp. 6040-41; Ibid., 3 December 1913, pp. 6139-71; Ibid., 4 December 1913, pp. 6171-96; The Chancellor maintained that he could not guarantee the army's behavior in the future. The War Minister attempted to shift the blame on the press. Prior to the vote of censure, Bethmann-Hollweg proclaimed that the hour was grave not because of the forthcoming vote but "because out of the profound excitement has arisen the peril of cleavage between army and people."

Berlin police chief wrote in the reactionary Kreuz Zeitung,

If our officers and even those who are stationed almost in an enemy's country run the risk of custodia inhonesta because they clear the road for the execution of the King's service, shame is brought upon the most distinguished profession.<sup>39</sup>

Reaction to this viewpoint stressed the shame the officer corps and the police chief had brought upon Germany. Throughout the Reich SPD demonstrations broke out to protest the actions of the government. In the Prussian Diet, both houses discussed the effects of the Zabern incident on the future of the army. Although the government did not fall as a result of the Zabern incident, the united front of the SPD and its political allies illustrated the potential power of the Reichstag to challenge successfully the government and the army.<sup>40</sup>

The Zabern affair illustrated the increasing power of the SPD to influence military policy. Utilizing issues such as duelling, suicides and brutality, the SPD, in collusion with the democratic elements in the Reichstag, forced the army to revise and reform many of its archaic practices. Although the officer corps clung desperately to the royal robes of the Kaiser, they could not expect complete freedom

39. Kreuz Zeitung (Berlin), 22 December 1913.

40. Cologne Gazette, 23 December 1913; Kölnische Volkszeitung, 23 December 1913.

of action in the future. Just as the Dreyfus Affair proved to the French generals that their position was no longer sacrosanct, the Zabern incident illustrated to the German generals that "for a German officer to beat a German cobbler was an outrage against law and order and decency and civilization."<sup>41</sup> The almost universal scorn heaped upon the aristocratic arrogance of the officers in Zabern also spelled a growing concern by many Germans over the rights of citizens rather than the privileges of officers. As each election sent more and more SPD deputies to the Reichstag, the future of the officer corps appeared more precarious. By constantly criticizing the army's policies, the SPD also brought to everyone's attention the position of the army in the state. According to one historian, the Zabern affair illustrated that

an ever-widening number of the bourgeoisie no longer had an interest in supporting the political ambitions of a junker-dominated army. That was the real lesson of Zabern, and the fact that the common fear of the left blinded many could not disguise the fact that power was beginning to slip, however slowly, from the hands of the extreme right.<sup>42</sup>

The attention focused on Zabern in 1914 was shortly overwhelmed by the attraction of another incident of that year. By June, Sarajevo had replaced Zabern as the major topic of

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41. Leonard Woolf, Beginning Again: The Autobiography of Leonard Woolf (New York: Harcourt, Brace and the World, 1963), p. 36.

42. Kitchen, Officer Corps, p. 221.

concern for most Europeans. The SPD also faced new problems and policies as national war replaced class war.

## CHAPTER V

### SURRENDER AT SARAJEVO

The eruption of World War I drastically altered the policies and position of the German army as well as the German socialist movement. As war hysteria infected the masses throughout the Reich, the stature of the army rose to new heights. Memories of Sadowa and Sedan replaced those of Zabern as the army marched off to war. Since the fortunes of the nation would be decided on the battlefield rather than the ballot box, military considerations superseded those of the civilian sector. The implementation of the state of siege throughout the Reich placed military figures in control of German internal affairs as never before. As the war settled into a bloody stalemate, the army demanded and received greater areas of authority.

While the fortunes of Germany rose and fell with the success of the army, the future of German socialism likewise fluctuated. When the SPD opted to support the war effort, no one expected or envisioned a prolonged conflict. Defense of the Fatherland, especially in the face of an immediate attack from Tsarist Russia, was not viewed as a betrayal of socialist principles. Party Reichstag and labor leaders worked in collusion with the military in order to mobilize manpower for the front and factory. As the war continued,

however, certain elements within the SPD viewed the goals of the government and the role of the party as running counter to the ideology and interests of the working class. Party unity and discipline collapsed as the SPD attempted to operate within a system it could not control.

SPD support of the war did not imply total acceptance of German military policy. As more and more SPD advocates entered the army and arms factories of the Reich, the party continued to demand alterations in the political and military system of Germany. The fratricidal war within the party, while seriously weakening the ideological position of the SPD, strengthened the bond between the SPD and the democratic parties of Germany. This union forced the government to make immediate concessions on its labor policy and promise substantive reforms once the war was completed. As the war progressed many military figures also realized that, regardless of the outcome of the war, the SPD's role in the future could not be eliminated.

The events that led to the outbreak of hostilities in 1914 have been examined, re-examined, and revised by scholars of every subsequent generation. What almost every study reveals is that while hardly anyone wanted a general war, no one was willing to back down for fear of diplomatic disgrace. The unexpected pace of events, plus the popular enthusiasm for war, surprised everyone. Although the SPD acted swiftly and sincerely to institute its anti-war

agitation, all efforts failed. While socialist papers demanded peace and SPD supporters demonstrated in the streets, the isolation of the party from the decision making process became evident. Contacts with the International Bureau of the International Socialist Party and the socialist representatives of individual states revealed an equal amount of confusion and helplessness in other countries as events outpaced everyone's expectations. By July 30, war appeared inevitable, so the SPD had to adopt a course of action.<sup>1</sup>

The SPD's decision to support the war effort was based on various pretexts. First, the nature of the conflict placed the party in a perplexing position. As the Russian armies mobilized, the dreaded cry of "Kossack Kommen" horrified every class of the German people. In a pronouncement from the party executive on July 30, this Russophobia appeared time and time again. While assuming that the German soldier would not show undue cruelty, the authors also believed that "we cannot have this trust in the motely hordes of the Czar, and we will not have our women and children sacrificed to the bestiality of Cossacks."<sup>2</sup> In the conclusion of the statement, the party leaders further stated,

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1. Berlau, German Social Democratic Party, pp. 69-72; Edwyn Bevan, German Social Democracy During the War (London: G. A. Allen & Unwin, 1918), pp. 7-8; Scheidemann, Memoirs 1:201-02; Schorske, German Social Democracy, pp. 285-88; Friedrich Ebert, Schriften, Auszeichnungen, Reden 2 vols. (Dresden: C. Reissner, 1926) 1:309.

2. Scheidemann, Memoirs 1:205.

When we recollect the unspeakable atrocities Tsarism has inflicted upon its own people, and further imagine the myrmidons of this barbaric power entering our own country drunk with victory, then the cry comes to our lips--Surely not that!<sup>3</sup>

The refusal of the SPD to defend the country in the face of foreign invasion offered political as well as psychological dangers for the party. The unexpected enthusiasm for war displayed by a large segment of the population completely surprised the party leaders. The SPD-sanctioned peace demonstrations paled in significance when compared to the outbursts of war fever that gripped the nation in early August. As the streets filled with patriots of every class, SPD leaders realized that an anti-war stand might lead to alienation of the party from its very sources of power. Prior to August 1, trade union leaders had already conferred with officials of the Reich Office of the Interior and agreed upon a labor policy in the event of war. Since one-fourth of the SPD Reichstag deputies came from the trade unions, a stand against the war could have disastrous effects upon the relationship between the party and its most important allies. If the SPD called a general strike, there was little assurance

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3. Ibid., 1:207.

that the workers would support it.<sup>4</sup> If, on the other hand, the party supported the war, the bitter division between the state and the socialist movement might be bridged. By aiding the country in its hour of crisis, the party could, as one SPD advocate proclaimed "join with a full heart, a clean conscience and without a sense of treason in the sweeping, stormy song: Deutschland, Deutschland über alles."<sup>5</sup> Once the party had exhibited its determination to defend the state, then the government would have to recognize certain demands of the SPD.

While patriotism and party unity account for some of the rationale behind the SPD's support of the war, another important factor must be considered. If the party did not know positively how its supporters would react to an anti-war position, there was little doubt as to how its enemies would respond. Under the existing regulations, the emperor automatically proclaimed a state of siege when hostilities commenced. This law empowered the commanders of the military

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4. Scheidemann, Memoirs 1:202-07; Schorske, German Social Democracy, pp. 288-89; Paul Umbriet, Die deutschen Gewerkschaften im Weltkrieg 2 vols. (Berlin: Sozialwissenschaftliche Bibliothek, 1917), 1:21; John L. Snell, "Socialist Unions and Socialist Patriotism in Germany, 1914-1918," American Historical Review 59 (1953): 67; Berlau, German Social Democratic Party, pp. 19-25; William Maehl, "The Triumph of Nationalism in the German Socialist Party on the Eve of the First World War," Journal of Modern History 24 (1952): 40.

5. Schorske, German Social Democracy, pp. 288-89; Eugen Prager, Geschichte der U.S.P.D. "Entstehung und Entwicklung der Unabhängigen sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschland" (Berlin: Verlagsgenossenschaft Freiheit, 1922), p. 34.

districts with extraordinary authority to combat internal disorders. Although the military maintained that Social Democratic leaders and presses would not be automatically proscribed in the event of war, there was little doubt as to what would occur if the party opposed the war. When the Lokal Anzeiger printed an article on July 30 erroneously stating that German mobilization was underway, Ebert and Otto Braun, the senior treasurer of the party, departed for Switzerland in order to avoid arrest. With one stroke of a pen the government could thus destroy decades of work and sacrifice.<sup>6</sup>

The fears of Russian invasion, government incarceration and popular indignation were all exhibited as the party caucused on the second and third of August. Although a small minority, led by party chairman Hugo Haase, supported a policy of abstention from the war credits vote, no one proposed outright rejection of the finance measure. Many party representatives maintained that they would break party discipline and vote for the war loans regardless of the party's final position. In the end the SPD approved the war credits and thus moved closer to the ruling circles in Germany.<sup>7</sup>

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6. Schorske, German Social Democracy, pp. 288-89; Berlau, German Social Democratic Party, p. 74; Scheidemann, Memoirs, 1:209-10.

7. Berlau, German Social Democratic Party, pp. 74-75; Reichstag Debates, 24 October 1918, p. 6226; Schorske, German Social Democracy, p. 291; Scheidemann, Memoirs, p:212-17; Karl Liebknecht, Klassenkampf gegen den Krieg (Berlin: A. Hoffman Verlag, 1919), pp. 87-88.

After the unanimous vote for the war loans on August 4. Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg proclaimed to the Reichstag,

It is not the great importance of your decisions which gives this session its significance, but the spirit which prompted you to make them--the spirit of a unified Germany, the spirit of unconditioned and unreserved mutual confidence. . . . Whatever the future may have in store for us, the fourth of August 1914 will be to all eternity one of the greatest days of Germany. . . .<sup>8</sup>

The early stages of the war witnessed mutual co-operation between the government and the SPD. The spirit of the Burgfrieden offered the SPD an opportunity to exhibit its importance and earnestness in working with the state. Since the SPD remained the voice of the working class in and out of uniform, the party's status in the government increased tremendously. The Kaiser's decree of amnesty on August 5 released many SPD advocates who had been jailed on charges of lèse majesté. Social Democratic papers and publications, although under war-time censorship, continued to reach their subscribers. SPD deputies conferred on a regular basis with ministers of state to discuss labor and food problems. Entertained by officers, party Reichstag representatives visited the troops at the front. Trips to the front and talks with government officials, however, did not ameliorate all elements in the party. As the war settled into an

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8. Reichstag Debates, August 4 1914, p. 11; Ralph Lutz, ed., Documents on the German Revolution: Fall of the German Empire, 1914-1918 2 vols. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1932) 1:16 (hereafter cited as D.G.R.).

attritional carnage, opposition to the party's position and the government's policies emerged.<sup>9</sup>

The first signs of discontent in the SPD surfaced almost immediately after the danger of invasion subsided. As the German armies moved into France and Russia, some party supporters became disillusioned with the objectives of the war. The outrageous proposals of the annexationists, coupled with the government's procrastination on questions of social and political reforms, convinced many party members that their goals and those of the state were in conflict. Led by Haase, this group favored a more traditional oppositional role in the Reich. Another smaller section within the party, led by Karl Liebknecht, opposed not only the Burgfrieden, but also the butchery taking place in France and Russia. The war, as Liebknecht viewed it, benefited only the capitalists, and, because of the military's control of the state, would eventually destroy the labor movement. Perpetuation of the class war should be the goal of the party. In December 1914,

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9. Schorske, German Social Democracy, pp. 292-93; Gustav Noske, Erlebtes aus Aufstieg und Niedergang einer Demokratie (Offenbach: Bollwerk Verlag, 1947), pp. 39-58; Scheideman, Memoirs, 1:233-39; The Royal Prussian Decree of Amnesty in D.G.R. 1:16-17; Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung (Berlin), 5 August 1914; The Ban on Social Democratic Literature Removed in D.G.R., 1:20; Vorwärts (Berlin), 2 September 1914.

Liebknecht broke with his party's tradition of unanimous decisions and cast the lone vote against the war credits.<sup>10</sup>

The privations of the war, combined with the policies of the government, further advanced the cause of the dissenting socialists. In a heated Reichstag budget debate in March 1915, Haase demanded that the government lift the state of seige, limit its rigorous censorship policy, and liquidate certain political and economic abuses in the Reich. Arguing that immediate reforms would help rather than hinder the war effort, Haase declared,

The sacrifices which our people are bearing are overwhelming. Our brothers in the field, facing death every moment are doing their duty with an almost superhuman strength--all of them equally; and under such circumstances the Government must no longer evade its task of seeing to it that the amount of political rights should be equal to the amount of duties. It is quite unbearable that all citizens, without difference of class, party, religion, and nationality are not being granted full equality.<sup>11</sup>

When the war credits vote was taken, two SPD representatives declared against the budget, while thirty-one party deputies abstained. In December twenty party members voted nein.<sup>12</sup>

10. Schorske, German Social Democratic Party, pp. 299-302; Ernst Haase, Hugo Haase, sein Leben und Wirken (Berlin: E. Laubsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1929), pp. 112-30; Prager, U.S.P.D., pp. 53-54; Berlau, German Social Democracy, pp. 139-43.

11. Reichstag Debates, 10 March 1915, pp. 45-48; D.G.R. 1:201.

12. Schorske, German Social Democratic Party, pp. 301-07; Prager, U.S.P.D., pp. 53-54; Berlau, German Social Democracy, pp. 143-44.

The split in the SPD created problems for the party of a totally new dimension. Those opposed to the SPD's policies argued that the party was becoming as dictatorial as the regime it collaborated with. Toni Sender, a supporter of the Haase faction, claimed that

Practices within the party convinced us that even in the German labor movement the genuine spirit of democracy was still unknown--it was understood only as the right of the majority to carry through its decision. Minority rights were disregarded. Every party meeting became a more disagreeable experience. As our influence seemed to increase, opportunities for discussion were more and more curtailed.<sup>13</sup>

Since annual party congresses did not take place during the war, the battle between the various sections of the SPD raged in the party presses. As the war continued and the food situation deteriorated, the number of dissidents grew. The SPD leadership resorted to various policies in order to control its constituents. The Liebknecht group, which eventually assumed the name of the Spartacists, was considered dangerous to the party's relationship with the government. In January, 1916, the party leaders expelled Liebknecht from the SPD parliamentary delegation. After the Reichstag session of March, 1916, in which the Haase faction opposed the budget, the dissident socialist were also forced out of the party.<sup>14</sup>

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13. Sender, Autobiography of a Rebel, p. 68

14. Schorske, German Social Democracy, pp. 297-308; Ernst Drahn & Susanne Leonhard, Unterirdische Literatur im revolutionären Deutschland während des Weltkrieges (Berlin: Gesellschaft und Erziehung, 1920), pp. 15-16; Bevan, Social Democracy During the War, pp. 34-35; Berlau, German Social Democratic Party, pp. 145-56; Vorwärts, 25 March 1916; Frankfurter Zeitung, 26 March 1916.

Expulsion of the Haase and Liebknecht factions did not eradicate the SPD's problems. When Liebknecht was arrested in May, 1916, for leading an anti-war demonstration, 55,000 Berlin workers walked off their jobs in protest.<sup>15</sup> Sensing the growing discontent of the workers, the SPD began to pressure the government for immediate reforms. In June, 1916, the Imperial Association Law, which barred those under eighteen from joining unions, was repealed. The Auxiliary Service Law, passed in December, 1916, recognized trade unions as the legitimate organs for the workers.<sup>16</sup> By the end of 1916, however, concessions to labor could not tranquilize the war-weary masses. In a Reichstag session in October, Eduard David, an SPD delegate warned the government:

Gentlemen, the race of trench fighters will return home . . . and it would be bad . . . if one said: Now then, you were gallant; you did your duty; now you can go; the old has proved itself; the old will

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15. Gerald D. Feldman, Army, Industry and Labor in Germany 1914-1918 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 128-29; Arthur Davis, The Kaiser as I Know Him (New York: Harper & Bros., 1918), p. 285; Evelyn Blücher, An English Wife in Berlin: A Private Memoir of Events, Politics, and Daily Life in Germany Throughout the War and the Social Revolution of 1918 (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1920), p. 135; Davis to Lansing, Copenhagen, 29 June 1916, Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Events in Germany, 1910-1929 No. 862.00/33 (hereafter cited as R.D.S.); Richard Muller, Vom Kaiserreich zur Republik 2 vols. (Berlin: Malikverlag, 1924-25) 1:63-64

16. Feldman, Army, Industry and Labor, p. 121, 235-47, 535-41; The Auxiliary Service Law is found in D.G.R. 2:99-103.

remain. That will lead us, I believe, into political catastrophes . . . the likes of which we have never had in Germany.<sup>17</sup>

The year 1917 marked a turning point in the destiny of Germany and the direction of the war. After the accession of Field Marshall Paul von Hindenburg and General Eric Ludendorff to the Supreme Command in 1916, the military's influence in the state increased tremendously. Disdaining all attempts to end the war by negotiations, the army opted for an all-out military solution so Germany could prosper from new acquisitions and preserve its social and political system. Government officials, including chancellors and foreign ministers, who did not support this unrealistic policy found themselves dismissed from office. Interest groups and organizations that promoted the claims of the army received monetary and material aid from the military. On the home front, the generals encroached upon areas long considered outside the military's purview. Ludendorff, the master planner behind the venerated Hindenburg, visualized all sorts of schemes to increase the birth rate, decrease desertions, recruit female and foreign labor, resettle returning veterans, attack venereal disease and subversion, and accelerate the military training of the young. As Ludendorff's policies began to unfold, opposition to the

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17. Reichstag Debates 11 October 1916, p. 1740; Feldman, Army, Industry and Labor, p. 135.

military's usurpation of power grew more vociferous. The harbinger of this opposition was the SPD, but by 1917 the position of the party had also altered dramatically.<sup>18</sup>

While the military assumed more and more control over the affairs of Germany, the SPD lost much of its influence among the working classes. By 1917 the stature as well as the size of the party had greatly diminished. Conscription for the war effort reduced the membership lists of the SPD by 75 percent as the number of party regulars fell from the 1,000,000 mark of 1914 to under 250,000 by 1917. The conflict between the supporters of the Ebert-Scheidemann faction and those of the Haase and Liebknecht groups widened despite all attempts at reconciliation. Although the dissident socialists agreed on very little other than their opposition to the SPD's continued support of the policies of August, 1914, they attempted to sever all ties with their old comrades.<sup>19</sup> In April, 1917, Haase formally announced the establishment of the Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany (USPD). The new party, as Haase stated,

stands in basic opposition to the ruling government system, to the war policy of the Imperial Government and to the policy of the Executive Committee of the

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18. Craig, Politics of the Prussian Army, pp. 308-37; Hans Gatzke, Germany's Drive to the West: A Study of Germany's Western War Aims During the First World War (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1950), pp. 121-53; Gorlitz, General Staff, pp. 181-83.

19. Berlau, German Social Democratic Party, pp. 147-48; Neue Zeit, 18 January 1918.

nominal party which is being conducted in harmony with the Government.<sup>20</sup>

The formation of the USPD created havoc within the SPD. As the two parties attempted to secure the allegiance of the working class, certain patterns emerged. Although the USPD included many former ideological opponents, such as Kautsky and Bernstein, most of the dissidents emanated from the ranks of those who had advocated a policy of ideological idealism over political opportunism. Workers in the large cities, women, and the socialist youth organizations seemed especially susceptible to the propaganda of the USPD, but the large textile and miner's unions remained loyal to the SPD. While the majority of workers still supported the SPD, the policies of the war lords in expanding the conflict, espousing annexationist ideals, and expressing no desire for future internal reforms threatened the very existence of the party and the state. SPD leaders, viewing the slaughter on the battlefields and starvation on the home front, realized that they would have to accelerate their demands for reform and peace. Although still determined to work within the national framework and with the democratic parties of the Reich, the SPD discovered that Reichstag pressure was no match for military power.<sup>21</sup>

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20. Proclamation of Independent Social-Democratic Party, Leipzig, April 20, 1917 D.G.R. 2:45; Leipziger Volkszeitung, 20 April 1917.

21. Berlau, German Social Democratic Party, p. 147; Schorske, German Social Democracy, pp. 311-27; Die Zukunft, 21 April 1917.

While the SPD and the army disagreed on a multitude of points, both desired an end to the war. Despite the introduction of unrestricted submarine warfare and the decline of Russia's fighting potential because of the February revolution, the situation continued to deteriorate. Although the military maintained that, as a result of their new naval tactics, England would "sprawl like a fish in reeds and beg for peace,"<sup>22</sup> the "turnip winter" of 1916-17 convinced many Germans of the need for an immediate peace. As food lines grew longer and food supplies shorter, frustration and fear gripped the nation. On a visit to Berlin in 1917, the Crown Prince related,

I received . . . the impression that weariness of the war was already very great. I also saw a great and menacing change in the streets. . . . The characteristic features had gone; the honest, hard-working bourgeoisie, the clerk and his wife and children, slunk through the streets, hallow-eyed, lantern-jawed, pale-faced and clad in threadbare clothing that had become much too wide for their shrunken limbs.<sup>23</sup>

An American dentist living in Berlin throughout most of 1917 further verified that as the German's body contour altered from convex to concave, the "hungry German replaced the honest German." Owners looking for their horses and dogs found only signs stating that their animals had fallen in "defense of

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22. Hans Peter Hanssen, Diary of a Dying Empire (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1955), p. 165.

23. Friederick Hohenzollern, Memoirs of the Crown Prince of Germany (New York: Charles Scribners & Sons, 1922), pp. 243-44.

the Fatherland." Crime in the cities reached unbelievable proportions as the traditionally honest police forces accepted bribes and expropriated booty from their victims. Reports of favorable harvests and the capture of enemy food sources further infuriated the public as the Germans resorted to ersatz substances and eating crow if they could afford it.<sup>24</sup> In the face of these privations appeared the war profiteers, who, as Ludendorff repeatedly maintained,

increased with the length of the war. As people at home lost interest in the war, their natural instincts, which now had nothing to curb them, were given free rein. Illicit trading took more and more disgusting forms, and these and the declining morale interacted on one another with increasingly disastrous results.<sup>25</sup>

The weariness of the German people also infected the field armies. When called to the colors, most soldiers proved more than willing to defend their homeland. The Reichstag's actions in establishing committees to study the revision of the German political system, combined with the Kaiser's Easter pledge of 1917 to eradicate the Prussian franchise, offered hope for a more democratic society once the fighting had ended. The July Peace Resolution of 1917 by the Social Democratic, Progressive, and Centre parties calling for a peace without annexations and indemnities further illustrated the defensive nature of the conflict. All of these measures

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24. Davis, Kaiser as I Know Him, pp. 265-90; R.D.S. 862.00/39; Ibid., 862.00/185.

25. Paul Ludendorff, My War Memories, 1914-1918, 2 vols. (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1919), 1:341-42.

were weakened, however, by the establishment of the Fatherland Party in September, 1917, and the High Command's close association with this extremist organization. As annexationist propaganda reached the trenches, many soldiers realized that their sacrifices would be in vain if the advocates of the "Hindenburg peace" prevailed. If the government adopted an annexationist policy, soldiers might have to remain in the army long after the fighting ended in order to secure Germany's new acquisitions. Utilization of the army to put down strikes and food riots, plus the effects of anti-war propaganda, further lowered the morale of the army. As food and fuel dwindled, the luxurious position of the officers came under renewed criticism. The heavy losses sustained by the officer corps resulted in the elevation of many men to positions of leadership. As in the pre-war army, however, promotions usually reflected the army's concern for proper breeding rather than battlefield performance. The actions of many officers in requesting temporary front line assignment in order to receive decorations further alienated many soldiers from their commanders.<sup>26</sup>

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26. Vorwärts (Berlin), 31 March 1917; The Appointment of a Constitutional Committee in D.G.R., 1:261; Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung (Berlin), 8 April 1917; Easter Decree of the Emperor and King in D.G.R., 2:423-24; R.D.S., 862.00/35; "Manifesto of the German Vaterlands-Partei," Sedan Day, 1917 in D.G.R., 1:368-70; Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung (Berlin), 12 September 1917; Münchener Post, 7 June 1917 in R.D.S., 862.00/91; Vagts, History of Militarism, pp. 283-85; R.D.S., 862.00/152, 862.00/154; Blücher, English Wife in Berlin, pp. 94-95; Ludendorff, War Memories, 1:390-91.

Unrest within the military consumed much of the Reichstag's attention throughout 1917. Arguing that the morale of the fighting man was of prime importance for the success of the army, Reichstag deputies lashed out at the military leadership. Despite the army's attempts to curb the number of complaints, protests from within the army increased as the war continued. The policies of the officers in granting honors and furloughs, garnering the best food supplies, and giving harsh punishment for minor breaches of discipline attracted the ire of the Reichstag. The maintenance of rigorous military routine in the rear areas enraged and exhausted troops pulled from the front for rest. Brutality and discrimination further weakened the position of the officer corps and strengthened the protests of the SPD.<sup>27</sup>

Despite the Reichstag's protestations, little was undertaken to ameliorate conditions in the military. By the end of 1917 the situation had become so acute that incidents of mutiny and insubordination could not be concealed from the public's scrutiny. Soldiers returning from the front on furlough simply went into hiding in order to escape further

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27. Berlau, German Social Democratic Party, pp. 100-03; Oskar von Moser, Das militärische und politische Wichtigste vom Weltkrieg (Stuttgart: Belser Verlag, 1926); pp. 109-26; Heinrich Ritter, Kritik am Weltkrieg (Leipzig: Kochler, 1926), pp. 40-42; Ludwig Maercker, Vom Kaiserheer zur Reichswehr (Leipzig: Koehler, 1921), pp. 43-50; Reichstag Debates, 4 May 1917, pp. 3049-66; Ibid., 16 May 1917, pp. 3453-74; Ibid., 18 May 1917, pp. 3583-3610; Ibid., 19 May 1917, pp. 3611-26.

front line duty. Whole units withdrawn from the front for rest refused to go back to the trenches. One observer, who witnessed the mutiny of a Bavarian Infantry Regiment bound for the front, learned that all of the mutineers had died. When he asked if they had been executed, he was told, "Lord no! Just in the front line, the whole gang of em--that's much quicker."<sup>28</sup> Many front line soldiers shattered the illusions created by the military's propaganda machinery. As Hindenburg readily admitted,

The soldiers who returned home from the front were in a position to exercise an inspiring and stimulating influence on the public. . . . But they could also have a depressing influence, and unfortunately many of them proved it, though they were not the best from our ranks. These men wanted no more war; they had a bad effect on the already poisoned soil, themselves absorbed the worst elements of that soil, and carried the demoralization of the homeland back with them into the field.<sup>29</sup>

While unrest within the army reached dangerous levels in 1917, the navy proved to be the greatest problem for the maintenance of military authority. Since most of the surface fleet remained blockaded within the confines of its home ports, sailors saw first hand the conditions in Germany. The monotonous routines of cleaning equipment and standing inspections focused the fury of the seamen on their ensigns rather than the enemy. The appearance of Bolshevik propaganda

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28. Hubertus zu Lowenstein, Conquest of the Past: An Autobiography (Boston: Houghton Mifflin & Co., 1938), p. 81.

29. Paul von Hindenburg, Out of My Life (London: Cassell & Co., 1920), pp. 313-14.

and the activities of the USPD and the Spartacists further lowered the morale and heightened the anti-war feelings of many sailors. In July, 1917, a peace proclamation was signed by 400 sailors aboard the battleship König Albert. The peace manifesto also declared that "The USPD has up to now been the most determined champion of our interests in Germany and hence alone possesses our confidence as is proved by our entry into its ranks."<sup>30</sup> When food rations were reduced cases of mutiny and insubordination erupted in fifteen units of the fleet. Although the mutinies were quickly isolated and extinguished, the military hoped to associate the USPD with the revolts and thus undermine the position of the minority socialists by labeling Haase and his followers as traitors.<sup>31</sup>

The Reichstag debate over the naval mutinies of 1917 illustrated the SPD's ability to defend the USPD. Although the two groups differed considerably in their policies, both groups realized that the defamation of one section of the socialist camp would injure the credibility of both. When the Secretary of the Navy, Admiral von Capelle, denounced the USPD for "supplying propaganda material for the incitement

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30. Arthur Rosenberg, The Birth of the German Republic (London: Russell & Russell, 1931), p. 185.

31. A good description of the naval mutinies of 1917 is offered in Bülow, Memoirs, 3:300-02.

of the navy,"<sup>32</sup> SPD deputies rose to the Independent's defense. Ebert maintained that the government's denunciations lacked any incriminating evidence since conferences between Reichstag deputies and their constituents were perfectly legal. Even though there were meetings between some of the condemned sailors and their Reichstag deputies, Ebert stated,

That the soldiers discuss their complaints with members of Parliament has been increasingly frequent during the war. . . . Equally invalid is the other charge of Capelle's against the Independent Social Democratic Party, namely, that of propaganda. Gentlemen, it is open to any party of this House to carry on propaganda for its views and purposes. . . . The High Army Command itself has carried politics into the army.<sup>33</sup>

After the Centre and Progressive deputies joined with the SPD, the government's case against the USPD collapsed. Shortly after this parliamentary victory the SPD held its first wartime party congress. Although the Independents abstained from the meeting, SPD speakers warned of the dangers of division. Advocating alteration of the Prussian suffrage system, autonomy for Alsace-Lorraine, and abolition of the state of siege and censorship, the party manifesto proclaimed,

The class conscious proletariat is a unit on all of these questions. If otherwise divided, this can only be regretted in their own interests, since success is only attainable if the fight is carried on in a closed phalanx.<sup>34</sup>

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32. Admiral von Capelle's Statement in The Reichstag D.G.R. 1:674; Reichstag Debates, 9 October 1917, p. 3789.

33. Statements in the Reichstag of Ebert in D.G.R., 1:682; Reichstag Debates, 9 October 1917, p. 3789.

34. Vorwärts (Berlin), 9 August 1917.

Reconciliation with the dissident socialists did not imply that the party was abandoning its role within the government. Throughout 1917 the SPD moved ever closer to positions of power within the state. In July a party Reichstag delegation met for conversations with the Kaiser. The only uniformed person present, other than the emperor and his entourage, was SPD representative Hugo Sudekum, "in a lieutenant's uniform decorated with the Iron Cross, with his Khaki-covered helmet. . . ." <sup>35</sup> In August a party member, August Muller, was appointed assistant secretary to the Imperial Food Department. A Vorwärts editorial in August attempted to ease much of the concern created by the events in Russia. While still determined to replace capitalism, the author maintained that

Social Democracy is working now as always for a democratic form of Government. . . . Naturally Social Democracy represents the interests of the laboring classes which include not only the people who do manual labor, but the masses, who are employed in every kind of labor. . . . It is entirely false to designate Social Democracy as a revolutionary band which is only waiting for an opportunity to overthrow the Government. No people can exist without a stable form of Government. . . . We only wish to develop along the lines of people's rights and the protection of the laboring classes. A revolution which does not have democracy as its object is worse than none at all. <sup>36</sup>

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35. Scheidemann, Memoirs 2:44.

36. Vorwärts (Berlin), 9 August 1917.

Although Ebert called for unity "round the banner of old Social Democracy . . . the party of class conflict"<sup>37</sup> at the Wurzburg Congress in October, other orators adopted a more practical approach. Speaking on the duties of the party in the future, Scheidemann stated,

We must no longer be theoreticians and agitators, which we were mostly, generally speaking, but practical Socialists. We must not forget that Socialism is not a thing in itself, but only a means to an end, a means of fighting poverty and of advancing the material and moral well-being of the people. We shall have to avoid the error of riding principles to death, and shall not only consider every step carefully to see whether it is socialistic, but shall also consider whether it is practical. By applying our principles in the wrong way and in the wrong place, we should only do harm to those principles. We shall only be of use where and when we can show that Socialistic principles offer practical benefits to the masses. . . .<sup>38</sup>

While the SPD attempted to keep its lines of communication and collaboration open with both the democratic elements and the dissident socialists, the Supreme Command continued to advance the policies of annexationism and an all-out military victory. The Bolshevik revolution and the subsequent Treaty of Brest-Litovsk fomented discontent among the workers. Arguing that the military authorities had betrayed the concept of peace without annexations, USPD leaders called for demonstration strikes. In January, 1918, strikes broke out in Berlin, Kiel, Hamburg, Halle, Magdeburg,

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37. Scheidemann, Memoirs 2:86.

38. *Ibid.*, 2:87.

Cologne, and Munich. Putting aside ideological differences, SPD and USPD representatives collaborated on the Workers' Council which was formed to advance the demands of the workers. When the government refused to negotiate with the Workers' Council, the SPD voted to remain on the Council rather than withdraw and leave the Independents in a perilous position. Since the SPD refused to control the strike movement, the government decided to cripple it with military force. The munition factories in Berlin were placed under military control, all meetings of the strikers were banned, strike leaders were arrested, and many strikers were conscripted. These actions broke the strike movement but mended many of the differences between the SPD and the USPD.<sup>39</sup>

The tenuous unity achieved in the socialist camp was ruptured by the reception of the peace terms with Russia. The decision by the SPD to abstain rather than reject the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk illustrated to the dissidents the complete moral bankruptcy of the SPD. Arguing that the government socialists lacked the "will or the desire of

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39. The Treaty of Best-Litovsk is found in: The Treaty of Peace Between Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and Turkey on the One Part and Russia on the Other Party, D.G.R., 1:796-800; John Wheeler-Bennett, Brest-Litovsk: The Forgotten Peace, March 1918 (New York: W. W. Norton, 1938), pp. 403-08; Feldman Army, Industry and Labor, pp. 448-54; Demands of the Strike Directorate, Berlin, 29 January 1918 D.G.R., 2:232-33; Vorwärts, 29 January 1918; Berlau, German Social Democratic Party, pp. 110-12, 161-63; Proclamation of the Commanding General on the Marks, Berlin, 30 January 1918, D.G.R., 2:234; Neue Preussische Zeitung, 31 January 1918; The Establishment of Military Control over Seven Industrial Plants, Berlin, 1 February 1918, D.G.R., 2:236; Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung (Berlin), 2 February 1918; Vorwärts (Berlin), 2 February 1918.

detaching themselves from these bourgeois, annexationist parties,"<sup>40</sup> the minority socialists refused to collaborate or even confer with the SPD on matters of mutual concern. Although the SPD maintained that the treaty was imposed by the sword, party papers stressed the role of self-determination and the rigors of continued conflict for both Germany and Russia if the fighting did not end.<sup>41</sup>

Cessation of hostilities with Russia did not guarantee Germany the victory that the generals had promised. The policies of the military in creating German puppet states in the East met with opposition within and without the Reich. Once the SPD realized that self-determination, in the eye of the Hohenzollerns, did not mean democracy or even independence, the voices of discontent rose to new levels. The stationing of over one million German troops throughout the East nullified much of the advantage gained by the peace treaty. Bolshevik propaganda infected many of these soldiers who saw little reason for their presence in a state at peace with Germany. Many units, evacuated from the Eastern front, carried the

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40. Leipziger Volkszeitung, 13 April 1918.

41. Scheidemann, Memoirs 2:98-139; Wheeler-Bennett, Brest-Litovsk, pp. 305-07; SPD defense of their position is found in Dresdner Volkszeitung, 6 March 1918; Volksstimme (Chemitz), 6 March 1918; Saechisches Volksblatt (Leipzig), 6 March 1918; Hamburger Echo, 6 March 1918; Bremenburger Zeitung, 6 March 1918; Koenigsberger Volkszeitung, 6 March 1918; Maerkische Volksstimme, 6 March 1918; Frankfurter Volksstimme, 6 March 1918 in R.D.S., 862.00/269.

calls of the communists to their comrades in the West.<sup>42</sup>

Desertions reached epidemic proportions despite the imposition of harsh penalties. By the spring of 1918, as Ludendorff confirmed,

The loss by desertion was uncommonly high. The number that got into neutral countries . . . ran into tens of thousands, and a far greater number lived happily at home, tacitly tolerated by their fellow-citizens and completely unmolested by the authorities. They and the shirkers at the front, of whom there were thousands more, reduced the battle strength of the fighting troops, especially of the infantry, to which most of them belonged, to a vital degree.<sup>43</sup>

Troops on the battlefields of France witnessed the increasing strength of the Allied forces, especially with the introduction of American soldiers and supplies in massive numbers. When the generals launched their last major offensive in March, 1918, the future of the Reich still remained in the hands of the military. While the Reichstag debated a new suffrage system, the army decided the future of Germany.<sup>44</sup>

The spring offensive of 1918, although initially successful, eventually came to a standstill. The army's gamble on a knock-out blow against the Entente failed in the face of overwhelming superior manpower and material. When the Entente began to counterattack in July and August, Germany's

42. Bolshevik propaganda in the army is discussed in Francis to Lansing, Petrograd, 8 January 1918, R.D.S., 862.00/239; Wheeler-Bennett, Brest-Litovsk, pp. 351-54.

43. Ludendorff, War Memories, 2:585; Penalties for desertion are found in Ludendorff's General Order on Desertions June 23, 1918 in D.G.R., 1:655.

44. Lindley Fraser, Germany Between Two Wars (Oxford: OUP, 1945), p. 24.

doom was sealed. As tanks tore gaping holes in the German lines and the Reich's allies collapsed under the weight of Entente attacks, the generals were forced to recognize the futility of their position. Desperately seeking a way to avoid total military disaster, the Supreme Command finally turned to the political leaders of the country. The SPD was now faced with the decision to aid the government or to allow events to determine the future.<sup>45</sup>

When the SPD Executive and Parliamentary factions met on September 23, the signs of imminent collapse abounded. The defection of Austria-Hungary, plus Entente drives on all fronts, signalled the end of effective German opposition. Deputies from the Centre and Progressive parties urged the SPD to unite with them in order to form a government that would initiate peace feelers and institute democratic reforms. Although many party leaders argued that joining a sinking ship of state would damage the SPD's credibility, others believed that a refusal to collaborate with the democratic parties would lead to the total destruction of Germany. Ebert, speaking for the advocates of collaboration, warned his colleagues,

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45. Statement by Baron von der Bussche, Representative of the Supreme Army Command, to the Party Leaders of the Reichstag October 2, 1918, D.G.R., 2:462.

If we do not, at this moment, agree to an understanding with the non-socialist parties and with the Government, we shall have to let things rip. These would be the tactics of revolution. . . . We thus would leave the fate of the Party to be decided by the revolution. . . . On the contrary, we must see whether we can get enough influence to press through our demands and, if possible, to combine this action with that of saving the country, and we have to do our damned best to save it.<sup>46</sup>

After further debate the party voted to accept positions in the government. The following weeks witnessed a flurry of activity as the new government attempted to reach an armistice agreement with the Entente, reform the political system of the Reich, and reconcile the divergent elements of the country to the new order. As the Entente armies advanced closer to the borders of the Reich, however, the threat of internal disorder surfaced. The SPD, firmly entrenched in the government, remained determined to work within the national framework.<sup>47</sup>

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46. Erich Matthias & Eberhard Pikart, ed., Die Reichstagsfraktion der deutschen Sozialdemokratie, 1914-1918 (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1966), p. 442; Friedrich Ebert (Bonn-Bad Godesberg: Inter Nationes, 1971), p. 44.

47. Vorwärts (Berlin), 24 September 1918; Social Democrats Enter the Government? Conditions of Entering in D.G.R., 2: 374-76; Armistice negotiations are discussed in Germany, Reichkanzlei, Preliminary History of the Armistice: Official Documents Published by the German National Chancellery by Order of the Ministry of State (New York: Oxford University Press, 1924); The Armistice Negotiations, D.G.R., 2:455-520.

## CHAPTER VI

### COLLISION AND COLLUSION

The accession of the SPD into political office coincided with the collapse of the Imperial government. Despite all attempts to institute parliamentarization, peace initiatives, and Prussian suffrage reform the SPD was faced with the reality of revolution. Although the party had gained a significant share of power and prestige by entering the government, its new position was immediately challenged by the USPD and the Spartacists. When the sailors at Kiel revolted in November, the SPD remained determined to rebuild Germany along democratic lines, with all elements sharing in the decisions of state. Since the military and its usual political allies offered little opposition, the struggle for supremacy in Germany centered around the advocates of democratic parliamentarianism and those who demanded a dictatorship of the proletariat. The SPD, in collusion with the democratic parties, stood firm on its policy of democratization and in doing so retained the leadership of the majority of the working class. When the forces of the far Left realized that their aims could not be realized through the new system, they attempted to overthrow the infant republic. The SPD responded to this challenge by enlisting the support of the army. This alliance saved the government

and strengthened the SPD's position in the state. Once again the party chose pragmatism over dogmatism to meet the conditions of the times.

SPD entrance into the Imperial government in September, 1918 did little to halt the erosion of Germany's internal and external affairs. When Prince Max von Baden assumed the chancellorship in October, Germany's military situation seemed hopeless. SPD ministers Scheidemann and Otto Bauer insisted that because of the military situation, immediate reforms were necessary. Under SPD pressure, Prince Max transformed Germany into a parliamentary democracy with the Reichstag replacing the Bundesrat as the source of authority for the Empire. The chancellor's position in the future would be determined by the Reichstag and not the ruler. Officers for the army and navy were to be appointed by the minister of the war or in some cases the chancellor. The Kaiser thus became a constitutional monarch and his officer corps was placed under the control of parliament.<sup>1</sup>

Germany's deathbed conversion to democracy satisfied neither the Entente nor the USPD. Despite the military's new position, martial law and censorship still prevailed,

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1. R. J. Ryder, The German Revolution of 1918: A Study of German Socialism in War and Revolt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), pp. 123-25; Berlau, German Social Democratic Party, pp. 196-206; Scheidemann, Memoirs, 2:220; Erich Eyck, A History of the Weimar Republic, 2 vols. (New York: Atheneum, 1970), 1:33-41; Reichsgestzblatt (Berlin), 7 November 1918 in R.D.S. 862.00/389.

Prussia remained under an antiquated voting system, and peace seemed as elusive as ever. Although the SPD had not demanded the abdication of the Kaiser as a condition for entering the government, public sentiment against the crown mounted steadily. Entente notes, hinting that a Germany without William would receive better peace terms, stirred up the emotions of the people. As USPD agitators took the lead in organizing demonstrations against the crown and its supporters, SPD leaders realized that unless they adopted a more aggressive attitude on the issues of the abdication and the armistice, their support among the masses would evaporate. The dismissal of Ludendorff on October 26 did little to halt the demands for an immediate armistice agreement and abdication announcement.<sup>2</sup>

While the SPD attempted to restrict revolutionary activity and resurrect a working government, the patience of the German public wore thin. Soldiers at the front, sensing the futility of further sacrifices, refused to heed the commands of their superiors. Reinforcements lacked training and discipline to meet the advancing Entente forces. Soldiers and sailors in the rear areas utilized every means to avoid front line duty since the war seemed lost. The

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2. Berlau, German Social Democratic Party, pp. 183-86; Scheidemann, Memoirs 2:203; Ryder, German Revolution, p. 129; Max von Baden, Memoirs 2 vols. (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1928), 2:192.

SPD sponsored amnesty released agitators such as Liebknecht from prison who immediately resumed their anti-war, anti-government, and anti-SPD activities. The Russian Embassy in Berlin became a propaganda and financial center for Bolshevik sympathizers until the government exposed and expelled the Soviet representatives. All the while particularism grew daily as the South German states faced imminent invasion. All of the above contributed to eruption of armed insurrection in early November which removed the fate of Germany from the seats of the Reichstag to the streets of the Reich.<sup>3</sup>

The spark that ignited the German revolution came from the activities of the Admiralty. On October 28, fleet commanders received orders for immediate action. Many sailors viewed these suicidal orders as a gesture by the officers to destroy the entire fleet in order to satisfy their mildewed concepts of honor and heroism. Others argued that peace negotiations were at hand and an action of this scale might destroy the armistice deliberations. All of the pent-up hatreds against the officers rose to the surface as rumors spread from ship to ship. Mutiny broke out on several battleships as the sailors refused to initiate

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3. Berlau, German Social Democratic Party, pp. 204-05; Max von Baden, Memoirs 2:195-200; Eduard Bernstein, Die Deutsche Revolution (Berlin: Verlag für Gesellschaft und Erziehung, 1921), pp. 22-23; Ryder, German Revolution, p. 130; Scheidemann, Memoirs 2:212-12; Crown Prince, Memoirs, pp. 241-42.

offensive action. Although the original order was rescinded, many of the mutinous sailors were incarcerated in the Kiel shore prison. Soon sailors and workers joined to demand the release of their jailed comrades. Sailors' and Workers' Councils, based upon the model of the Russian Soviets, replaced the moribund authorities of the monarchy. When army troops arrived to restore order, the situation quickly deteriorated. On November 3, an officer's patrol fired upon a mob of sailors attempting to storm the prison. Soon Kiel became an open battleground as many of the government troops defected to the side of the revolution. The military authorities at Kiel soon realized that further resistance would only damage their already perilous position so they requested that the Berlin authorities dispatch representatives to negotiate with the revolutionaries. On November 4, deputies Haussmann of the Progressive Party and Noske of the SPD arrived at Kiel. Thus, while the red flag of revolution flew over Kiel, the SPD still operated under the colors of the crown.<sup>4</sup>

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4. Walter Görlitz, ed., The Kaiser and His Court: The Diaries, Notebooks, and Letters of Admiral Georg Alexander von Müller, Chief of the Naval Cabinet, 1914-1918 (New York: Harcourt Brace & World, 1959), p. 418; Ryder, German Revolution, pp. 140-41; Bernstein, Deutsche Revolution, p. 15; Ernst Volkman, Revolution über Deutschland (Oldenburg: O. G. Stalling, 1930), pp. 18-20; Ibid., Der Marxismus und das deutsche Heer im Weltkrieg (Berlin: R. Hobbins, 1925), pp. 29-36; Richard Watt, The King's Depart: The Tragedy of Germany, Versailles and the German Revolution (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1968), pp. 158-67; Frankfurter Zeitung, 10 December 1918 in R.D.S. 862.00/453; Scheidemann, Memoirs, 2:225-23; Gustav Noske, Von Kiel bis Kapp: zur Geschichte der deutschen Revolution (Berlin: Verlag für Politik und Wirtschaft, 1920), p. 8.

Despite its surprise at the turn of events at Kiel, the SPD was able to lend direction to the mounting revolution. When Noske arrived at Kiel, he had no idea of the mood of the revolutionaries. The warm welcome received by the representatives of the government, plus the moderate tone of the sailor's demands, convinced the SPD that the majority of the sailors supported the party's policies. Although the sailors demanded abdication of the Kaiser, abolition of martial law, and changes in the suffrage laws, their main goals centered on practical issues such as food conditions, officer's authority, and the fate of their comrades in prison. Noske approved most of the practical demands and thus retained the confidence of the sailors. After serving as co-chairman of the Sailors' Council, Noske was elected as governor of Kiel. When Haase of the USPD reached Kiel on November 9, order and authority had been restored. As the news of the successful revolt spread, however, Workers' and Soldiers' Councils began to spring up throughout the Empire, challenging the traditional sources of authority. Both the SPD and the USPD attempted to direct the revolution, but each party envisioned a different path to power.<sup>5</sup>

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5. Noske, Von Kiel bis Kapp, pp. 17-25; Kyder, German Revolution, pp. 141-42; Hans Fried, The Guilt of the German Army (New York: Macmillan, 1942), pp. 50-51; Franz Runkel, Die deutsche Revolution (Leipzig: Koehler, 1919), pp. 86-87; Haase, Hugo Haase, p. 171; Eyck, Weimar Republic, 1:42-46.

While the socialist parties rallied their forces for the coming struggle, the Emperor and his supporters refused to believe that revolution was imminent. Although the authority of officers was collapsing throughout the Reich, the High Command at Spa advised the Emperor to hold on until the field army marched home. While officers were being stripped of their badges of rank by the Soldiers' Councils, the army chiefs were issuing orders banning the formation of the councils. As revolution engulfed the port cities of the North and the Southern states of the Reich, the government was forced to demand the immediate abdication of the Kaiser. After consultation with the High Command, the SPD realized that the Emperor was not going to heed its advice voluntarily. On November 7, the party presented an ultimatum to the chancellor. If the Kaiser did not step down by November 9, the party would withdraw from the government coalition. The SPD thus hoped to retain control of the masses without deserting its ties with the non-socialist parties.<sup>6</sup>

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6. John Wheeler-Bennett, The Nemesis of Power: The German Army in Politics, 1918-1945 (New York: St. Marten's Press, 1954), pp. 16-18; F. L. Carsten, The Reichswehr and Politics, 1918-1933 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), pp. 7-8; Deliberations of the Inner War Cabinet, November 7, 1918, in Charles Burdick and Ralph Lutz, eds., The Political Institutions of the German Revolution, 1918-1919 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966), p. 33 (hereafter cited as P.I.G.R.); Eyck, Weimar Republic, 1:36-38; Scheidemann, Memoirs, 2:234-37.

By November 9, the revolution reached Berlin. After the SPD ministers handed in their resignations, the first major strikes in the capital erupted. As the streets filled with demonstrators, the fate of the monarchy was sealed. When army troops joined with the mobs in the streets, even William II realized that he had procrastinated too long. After General Wilhelm Groener, Ludendorff's successor on the General Staff, convinced the Kaiser that he no longer possessed the confidence of the army, the Emperor fled to Holland.<sup>7</sup> Eric Dombrowski, reporter for the Berliner Tageblatt, poignantly analyzed the reign of the last Hohenzollern by stating,

When he ascended the throne of his father there were eleven Socialists in the Reichstag; in 1912 there were already one hundred and twenty. When he lost his throne there seemed nothing but socialists. All the other dynasties lost their right of existence and with them the Bundesrat and the Reichstag; the whole kingdom threatened to disunite. In thirty years he had governed the German nation to pieces.<sup>8</sup>

The collapse of the Hohenzollerns left the entire nation in limbo. Joining the Prussian princes, the Wittelsbachs of Bavaria, the Grand Dukes of Anhalt, Baden, Heese, Mecklenburg, and Saxony departed their thrones.

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7. Wheeler-Bennett, Nemesis of Power, pp. 18-20; Carsten, Reichswehr and Politics, pp. 8-10; Craig, Politics of Prussian Army, pp. 345-47; Ryder, German Revolution, pp. 149-52; Max von Baden, Memoirs, 2:310-17; Berliner Tageblatt, 9 August 1919; Neue Preussische Zeitung (Berlin), 27 July 1919.

8. Eric Dombrowski, German Leaders of Yesterday and Today (New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1920), pp. 87-88.

Desperately seeking a way to re-establish authority, Prince Max turned to the SPD. On November 9, in the midst of a general strike and general confusion, Friedrich Ebert became the last Imperial Chancellor of the Reich. The new chancellor realized that the revolution would soon outpace his attempts to control it unless he broadened his base of support. Unification of the socialists, therefore, was the first order of business. Since the war was almost over, many SPD advocates assumed that the major differences between the socialist camps could be reconciled.<sup>9</sup>

The termination of the war did not result in an ideological realignment of the various socialist factions. The SPD, under Ebert, supported a policy of immediate democratic reforms in order to allow the German people to decide their destiny. The form of government that would rule Germany, according to the SPD, could best be determined by the convocation of a Constituent Assembly at the earliest possible moment. Many of the USPD adherents and all of the Spartacists rejected this approach. Stressing the importance of immediate socialization, the Spartacists and left Independents demanded that the government be "placed solely in the hands of responsible individuals elected by the whole working population and soldiers."<sup>10</sup> The remaining Independents

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9. Ryder, German Revolution, pp. 150-53; Rosenberg, German Republic, pp. 275-80; Scheidemann, Memoirs, 2:255-60.

10. Scheidemann, Memoirs 2:269.

vacillated between both forces but refused to commit itself to either faction. As agitators of each of these groups attempted to attract the support of the public, the gulf between the SPD and its former comrades widened. When Philipp Scheidemann declared Germany a Republic on November 9, the future of the state was yet to be determined.<sup>11</sup>

Although the SPD and the USPD remained ideologically opposed to one another, neither faction felt it could rule without the other. As soon as Ebert assumed the chancellorship, he opened negotiations with the Independents. Since the USPD felt that a Constituent Assembly would damage its position, they demanded that all administrative, judicial and legislative powers be handed over to the councils, that plans for a National Assembly be dropped, and the non-socialist parties be excluded from the provisional government. If the SPD agreed to these demands, the USPD would consider a three-day coalition with the Majority Socialists. The SPD rejected these conditions but continued negotiations with the Haase faction. Finally, on November 10, a tenuous agreement was reached between the SPD and the USPD with

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11. The German Revolution: Scheidemann Proclaims the Republic, November 9, 1918, D.P.H.E.C., p. 414.

three representatives of each party occupying the major departments of the provisional government.<sup>12</sup>

The formation of a working government did not satisfy the radical wings of the socialist camp. Many Spartacists and left Independents viewed the SPD's attempts to convoke a Constituent Assembly as dangerous to the revolution. Since the new government had to be approved by the Berlin Workers' and Soldiers' Council, the radicals planned to eliminate their SPD opponents at the upcoming Berlin conference. Spartacists agitators and publications heaped abuse upon the SPD and those who collaborated with the new government.<sup>13</sup>

When the first meeting of the Berlin Workers' and Soldiers' Councils met at the Circus Busch on November 10, no one dared predict the mood of the masses. The election of Emil Barth as chairman and Richard Müller as secretary of the congress seemed to give the radicals the upper hand, since both of these men emanated from the radical wing of the trade union movement. The Soldiers' Councils, however,

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12. Ryder, German Revolution, pp. 153-55; Scheidemann, Memoirs, 2:267-68; Bernstein, Deutsche Revolution, p. 45; Haase, Hugo Haase, p. 63; Eyck, Weimar Republic 1:48-49; Berlau, German Social Democratic Party, pp. 222-23; Muller, Kaiserreich zur Republik 2:31; Emil Barth, Aus der Werkstatt der Revolution (Berlin: Hoffmann, 1919), pp. 57-64; The Peoples Commissars included SPD Ebert--Interior and Army, USPD Haase--Foreign Office & Colonial Affairs, SPD Scheidemann--Finance, USPD Dittmann--Demobilization and Health, SPD Landsberg--Press and News, USPD Barth--Social Policy

13. Ryder, German Revolution, pp. 156-57; Berlau, German Social Democratic Party, pp. 224-24; Eyck, Weimar Republic, 1:50-51.

were less interested in ideological warfare and thus more inclined to support the SPD. When Barth called for the election of an Executive Council that would exclude the SPD, the Soldiers' Councils objected. After hours of debate and discussion the provisional government was finally approved. In order to oversee the activities of the government, however, an Executive Committee of the Berlin Workers' and Soldiers' Council was elected. This body was modeled on the Petrograd Soviet and included twenty-eight representatives, half of whom supported the SPD, with the remaining representatives allied to the USPD. Although the Executive Council only represented the workers and soldiers of the greater Berlin area, this body claimed nation-wide authority equal to that of the provisional government. Calls for immediate socialization, renewed diplomatic contacts with Russia, and a reaffirmation of the supreme authority of the councils poured forth from the Executive Council's meetings. The government, now entitled the Council of People's Commissars, began to issue orders with some semblance of legality. On November 11, the armistice went into effect, while on the twelfth the government lifted the state of

siège, censorship restrictions, the ban on public meetings, and granted a general amnesty for political prisoners.<sup>14</sup>

The restoration of peace and a working government did not re-establish complete order throughout Germany. The Spartacists and their allies remained determined to institute a proletarian dictatorship. The various councils tended to overlap one another and compete with the civil authorities of the former regime. Although the SPD retained the sympathy of most of the Soldiers' Councils, reliable troops were difficult to locate, and incidents of pillaging and looting increased as soldiers left their garrisons for home. In Bavaria, Silesia, and the Rhineland particularism grew daily. The victorious Entente also created vast new problems for the beleaguered government. Food shortages continued to plague the country since the tight wartime blockade of Germany remained in force.<sup>15</sup> In an interview with the New York World, Scheidemann appealed to the American people by stating,

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14. Berlau, German Social Democratic Party, pp. 225-26; Ryder, German Revolution, pp. 156-59; Eyck, Weimar Republic, 1:50-51; Bernstein, Deutsche Revolution, pp. 36-50; Barth, Werkstatt der Revolution, pp. 53-55; Scheidemann, Memoirs, 2:271-75; Appeal of the Council of People's Commissars to the German Nation, November 12, 1917 in Walter C. Langsam, ed., Documents and Readings in the History of Europe Since 1918 (Chicago: J. B. Lippincott, 1939), p. 648 (hereafter cited as D.R.H.E.).

15. Bullitt to Lansing, Copenhagen, 25 November 1918, R.D.S. 862.00/363 1/2; Stovall to Lansing, Berne, 21 November 1918 R.D.S. 862.00/347; Stovall to Lansing, Berne, 25 November 1918 R.D.S. 862.00/343; Scheidemann, Memoirs 2:277.

If America wishes to help Germany establish herself firmly on a democratic basis, saving us from the autocracy of an Emperor or the proletariat, you must get food to us without delay. You say the attitude of America toward Germany is "No Constitutional Assembly, no food" I can only reply, "No food and there may be no Constitutional Assembly."<sup>16</sup>

Added to the food situation was the Entente's demand that the three million German soldiers in the West be withdrawn across the Rhine within thirty-one days. In the East, Polish irregulars harassed the border areas and severed the lines of communication with the German forces scattered throughout Russia and the former Habsburg states.<sup>17</sup>

While the government attempted to maintain the basic services of the state, the chiefs of the Imperial army realized that their position had undergone a radical transformation. The abdication of the Kaiser had left the military leaders in a very confused state. In one day the "personal, intellectual and ideological core of its being had suddenly disappeared."<sup>18</sup> The revolution, originating in the navy, had a very anti-militarist tone. In the rear areas, the authority of the officers disappeared as the Soldiers' Councils arose. Officers arriving by train at most of

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16. New York World in R.D.S., 862.00/364 1/2.

17. The Armistice: Terms of the Armistice with the Allied and Associated Powers, 11 November 1918 in D.G.R., 2:215-16; Cabinet Meeting: Council of People's Commissars 24 December 1918, P.I.G.R., pp. 114-15.

18. Demeter, Officer Corps, p. 187.

the large cities were welcomed by representatives of the councils who immediately relieved their former superiors of all weapons, insignias, decorations, and badges of rank. When groups of officers resisted such actions, punishment was swift and severe. The field armies in the West still remained under the control of officers, but in most cases this authority was shared with or supervised by the councils. A few officers, viewing the disintegration of the army and the state, followed the example of their former master and fled. Others accepted the new order with resigned fatalism. Some, however, realized that the divisions within the socialist camp, coupled with the government's lack of military power, might give the officer corps a chance to regain some of its former prestige. If the officer corps agreed to support the government, the socialists would have to guarantee the existence of the officer corps.<sup>19</sup>

Contacts between the army and the socialists were undertaken as early as November 9. Groener, who had worked harmoniously with the trade union leaders during the war, realized that the SPD's program for a democratic state was

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19. Sender, Autobiography of a Rebel, pp. 98-99; Wheeler-Bennett, Nemesis of Power, pp. 16-20; Carsten, Reichswehr and Politics, pp. 8-10; John Gordon, The Reichswehr and the German Republic, 1919-1926 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 8-9; Ryder, German Revolution, pp. 160-64; Berlau, German Social Democratic Party, pp. 226-30; Craig, Politics of Prussian Army, pp. 346-47; Otto-Ernst Schuddekopf, Das Heer und die Republik: Quellen zur Reichswehr führung 1918-1933 (Hannover: O. Goedel, 1955), pp. 24-28.

of vital importance for the preservation of the officer corps. If the radicals succeeded in establishing a council form of government, the middle class elements in Germany would not retain any political power. When the Council of People's Commissars was established and Germany proclaimed a Republic, Groener immediately contacted Ebert to offer the services of the High Command to the government. Although the army was in a weak bargaining position, Groener demanded that, in return for the High Command's assistance, the government should restrict bolshevism at home and restore discipline in the army. Ebert, faced with problem of evacuating the German armies from the West, gladly accepted the aid of the army command. On November 12, Hindenburg officially placed himself and his command at the disposal of the government.<sup>20</sup> Ebert dispatched a set of directives to the High Command for issuance to the field army. These orders stated that

1. The relations between the rank and file are to be built upon mutual confidence. Prerequisites to this are willing submission of the ranks to the officers and comradely treatment by the officers to the ranks.
2. The officers superiority in rank remains. Unqualified obedience in service is of prime importance for the success of the return home to Germany. Military discipline and army order must, therefore, be maintained under all circumstances.

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20. Wheeler-Bennett, Nemesis of Power, pp. 17-21; Carsten, Reichswehr and Politics, pp. 10-12; Craig, Politics of Prussian Army, p. 348; Gordon, Reichswehr and Republic, pp. 5-7; Ryder, German Revolution, pp. 160-62; Schuddekopf, Heer und Republik, pp. 20-23.

3. The Soldiers' Councils have an advisory voice maintaining confidence between officer and rank and file in questions of food, leave, the infliction of disciplinary punishment. Their highest duty is to try to prevent disorder and mutiny.<sup>21</sup>

Although opposed by the Spartacists and left Independents, most people realized that the High Command's services were imperative. The Entente had maintained that all German soldiers not evacuated by the deadline would become prisoners-of-war. In Germany, the divisions between the socialists had prevented the formation of adequate defense forces. When the Executive Committee of the Workers' and Soldiers' Council called for the formation of a Red Guard on November 12, the soldiers in Berlin protested and pressured the Executive Committee into rescinding its order. As Spartacist agitators continued their demands for a dictatorship of the proletariat, the reliability of the government troops declined.<sup>22</sup> When Theodor Wolff, editor of the Berliner Tageblatt, met with Scheidemann on November 11, he was shocked to learn that the SPD lacked any substantial military support. Even though the Soldiers' Councils had supported the SPD's position at the Circus Busch meeting on November 10, Scheidemann related to Wolff that "I have no soldiers. . . . We are in an impossible

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21. "Documentary History of the German Revolution," International Conciliation 137 (1919):16; Schuddekopf, Heer und Republik, p. 20; Craig, Politics of Prussian Army, p. 350.

22. The Executive Committee of the Workers' and Soldiers' Council, Berlin, 12 November 1918, P.I.G.R., p. 48; Ibid., 13 November 1918, p. 48.

situation. Haase is much stronger than we are. If things go on like this we shall have no alternative but to resign."<sup>23</sup> In his memoirs Scheidemann recounted how weak the new government appeared in the face of armed bands of revolutionaries. While the commissars of the young republic strived to keep the government functioning,

Wild gangs of excited workmen and soldiers incessantly invaded the Chancelery. . . . Machine-guns rattled day and night in the Wilhelmstrasse. . . . Deputations holding hand grenades under our noses stated their wants. . . .<sup>24</sup>

Although the desire for order and security constituted the main motive for the agreement between Ebert and the High Command, other reasons also account for the alliance between the SPD and the army. If the army proved effective in the establishment of the new government, then the army and its leaders would be allowed a certain amount of input into the deliberations of the ministers of state. Although the High Command was placed under the scrutiny of the Prussian Ministry of War, which was "subject to the control of the Executive Committee of the Workers' and Soldiers' Council"<sup>25</sup> Groener began to confer with the SPD leaders on many matters of state. When the army joined with the government, the

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23. Theodor Wolff, Through Two Decades (London: W. Heinemann, 1936), p. 119; Meyer, Long Generation, p. 81.

24. Scheidemann, Memoirs, 2:276-77.

25. The Executive Committee of the Workers' and Soldiers' Council, Berlin, 15 November 1918, P.I.G.R., p. 50.

civil bureaucracy also adopted a more conciliatory policy toward the leaders of the new Germany. After the deposed Kaiser released his military and civil officials from their oaths of allegiance on November 29, the officers of the army and the bureaucracy realized that the old order was finished. As the time drew near to decide upon the future of Germany, the army felt that it had gained a better position, while the SPD hoped it had achieved some power in the state.<sup>26</sup>

While the military and the SPD awaited the arrival of the field armies, the situation in Germany steadily deteriorated. The Bavarian republic severed all relations with Berlin on November 26. The mark dropped to one-half its value by the end of November. Strikes and attempts at socialization created chaos and uncertainty and Entente demands for fulfillment of the armistice placed a severe strain on the economy. Friction between returning veterans and the Soldiers' Councils started rumors of counterrevolution

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26. From his new quarters in Holland Wilhlem Hohenzollern issued his last command. The ex-Kaiser declared

"I release all officials of the German Empire and Prussia as well as all officers, non-commissioned officers and men of the navy and Prussian army and the Federal contingents from the oath of allegiance which they have made to me as their Kaiser, King and Commander-in-Chief. I expect of them that they will assist those who are now possessed of actual power until the new institutions of the German Empire are established and protect the German people against the threatened danger of anarchy, famine, and foreign domination." R. D. S., 862.00/365.

by the far Left. Although the Councils of People's Commissars had agreed to summon a Reich Congress of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils in mid-December in order to determine the future form of government, the first week of December witnessed increasing incidents of violence. On December 6, a small detachment of soldiers advanced upon the Prussian parliament building and attempted to arrest the Executive Committee of the Berlin Workers' and Soldiers' Councils. Claiming that they were acting under the orders of the Reich government, these soldiers then proceeded to march on the Chancellery and proclaimed Ebert as the President of the German Republic. Ebert immediately declined their offer and ordered the Berlin Commandant, Otto Wels, to arrest all of those involved in the plot. The coup, financed and planned by certain Foreign Office and War Ministry officials, quickly evaporated but enlivened the radical elements to move into action. When news of the coup reached the Spartacist leaders, demonstrations against the convocation of any constituent assembly were organized. As the demonstrators moved into the center of Berlin, government troops attempted to disperse the mob. Shots ensued and soon dozens of soldiers and Spartacists lay dead or wounded in the streets.<sup>27</sup> The Rote Fahne spewed venom on the government

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27. Current Report on Morale: Germany and Austria-Hungary, R.D.S., 862.00/1031; Carsten, Reichswehr and Politics, pp. 14-15; Volkmann, Revolution über Deutschland, p. 83; Ryder, German Revolution, pp. 165-70; Minutes of the Cabinet: Council of People's Commissars, 29 November 1918, P.I.G.R., pp. 77-78; Scheidemann, Memoirs, 2:281-83.

for its actions by proclaiming,

The bloody crime must be avenged, the Wels-Ebert-Scheidemann conspiracy must be put down with an iron hand, the revolution must be saved. . . .  
The entire power must be given to the workers' and soldiers' councils! Get to work! To the trenches! To the battle!<sup>28</sup>

One week after this incident, Konstantin Fehrenbach, the last President of the Reichstag, declared that he was convoking the defunct Bundesrat and Reichstag because the Entente did not have any faith in the ruling bodies of Germany. This move, although rejected by almost all of the non-socialist as well as the socialist parties, further illustrated the crying need for immediate political stability.<sup>29</sup>

The entry of the Guards units into Berlin on December 10, set the stage for the opening of the Reich Congress. Commissar Ebert welcomed the war-weary troops. Having lost two sons in the war, Ebert praised the performance of the German army and insinuated that their services were still required. In closing Ebert summed up his oration by stating,

You do not find our country as you left it. New things have come about. German freedom has come into being. Upon you, above all rests the hope of German freedom. You are the strongest pillars of the future of Germany.<sup>30</sup>

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28. Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung (Berlin), 7 December 1918; Rote Fahne (Berlin), 7 December 1918 in R.D.S., 862.00/453.

29. Frankfurter Zeitung, 13 December 1918 in R.D.S., 862.00/453.

30. Deutsche Tageszeitung (Berlin), 10 December 1918 in R.D.S., 862.00/453.

Most of the returning troops proved unwilling to be used as the praetorian guard of the revolution or the counterrevolution. In Berlin, as most everywhere, the majority of the front line troops simply disbanded without official demobilization. After front-line service and the fatiguing retreat from the West, most of the soldiers desired discharges rather than further duty. Thus when the Reich Congress convened, the SPD still lacked the services of a strong military.<sup>31</sup>

The role of the Reich Congress of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils was to oversee and approve the establishment of a permanent form of government. This body's purpose was not to elect the new government but to create the electoral process. The raging issue of a democratic republic versus a proletarian dictatorship would be decided by the 489 delegates gathered in Berlin. To the surprise of many, the composition and climate of the Congress gave the SPD a distinct advantage over the other factions. In delegate support, the SPD held a 3 to 1 margin over the combined

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31. Report on a trip into Baden and Wurtemberg by Major Ernest M. Schelling, Military Attache, 23 December 1918 in R.D.S., 862.00/470; Scheidemann recounted that "The commanders of the troops that first arrived took the oath of loyalty and obedience for themselves and their troops. From day to day we reckoned on being able to hold together at least a few detachments and of employing them in the fight against soviet lunacy. Nothing came of it. The soldiers vanished over night completely; they would not stop; they wanted to go home." Memoirs, 2:281; Craig, Politics of Prussian Army, p. 350; Schuddekopf, Heer und Republik, pp. 20-23; Gordon, Reichswehr and Republic, pp. 15-17; Carsten, Reichswehr and Politics, pp. 15-16; Wheeler-Bennett, Nemesis of Power, p. 33.

strength of the Independents and Spartacists.<sup>32</sup> The initial address by Richard Muller, a radical Independent, supporter of Liebknecht, and co-chairman of the Executive Council, stressed the proposals of the far left. Müller opened the Congress declaring,

Here in this hall, here on this site, where formerly the strongest supporters of the guilt-laden, overthrown governing power assembled, the representatives of the workers' and soldiers' councils of Germany assemble today in order to lay the foundation for the German socialist republic: here in this hall, where formerly the most brutal rulers, the Prussian cabbage Junkers and smokestack barons, endeavored and unfortunately also often succeeded to enchain the German people, here on this site of the strongest former reaction you shall make safe the accomplishments of the Revolution, anchor securely for all time the political power seized by workers and soldiers and show the German working people the way to freedom, happiness and prosperity.<sup>33</sup>

Ebert, speaking for the Council of People's Commissars, presented the SPD's program by stating,

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32. The composition and proceedings of the Reich Congress are discussed in: Garrett to Lansing, Hague, 17 December 1918 in R.D.S., 862.00/408; Ibid., 862.00/409; Ibid., 18 December 1918, 862.00/410; Grantsmith to Lansing, Copenhagen, 19 December 1918, R.D.S., 862.00/412; Ibid., 20 December 1918, 862.00/414; Ibid., 862.00/416; Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung (Berlin), 17 December 1918 in R.D.S., 862.00/453; Ibid., 18 December 1918; The First Congress of Workers and Soldiers Councils, Berlin, 16-19 December, P.I.G.R., pp. 211-27; Ryder, German Revolution, pp. 177-83; Haase, Hugo Haase, pp. 66-67; Bernstein, Deutsche Revolution, pp. 78-80; of the 489 delegates attending, 405 represented Workers' Councils and eighty-four Soldiers' Councils. Party strength gave the SPD 288, USPD 80, Democrats 25, Spartacists 10 and United Revolutionaries 11. There were also fifty uncommitted delegates and a special soldiers' faction comprising twenty-five members. Neither Liebknecht nor Luxemburg attended the Congress as elected delegates.

33. Opening Address: The First Congress of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils, 16 December 1918, P.I.G.R., p. 212.

For, honored assembly, in Germany there can permanently be 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 of force in the future, no matter from whom it may come.<sup>34</sup>

Most of the decisions reached at the Reich Congress proved disastrous for the left wing of the Independents and the Spartacists. On December 19, the Ebert faction celebrated the approval of a measure to call elections for a National Assembly on January 19. When elections for a Zentralrat, or Central Committee were called, the Independents refused to participate.<sup>35</sup>

Although the Reich Congress appeared as a clear-cut victory for the SPD and its supporters, the program of demilitarization far surpassed anything the army had envisioned. The Hamburg Points, adopted by all of the socialists, placed council representatives at the head of the armed forces, stripped officers of their badges of

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34. Greetings by the Government: The First Congress of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils, 16 December 1918, P.I.G.R., p. 214.

35. Deliberations: The First Congress of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils, 19 December 1918, P.I.G.R., p. 226; Although Haase favored participation in the Zentralrat, he bowed to the wishes of his party colleagues. Kautsky, who also supported entry into the Central Committee wrote that the USPD "presented a grotesque appearance, as perhaps no other party has done in the history of the world. Its right wing was in the government, and its left wing worked for the downfall of that very government. . . . What kept us together was no longer a common program, a common tactic, but only a common hatred of the majority socialists. . . . Karl Kautsky, Mein Verhältnis zur Unabhängigen sozialdemokratischen Parteien (Berlin: T. Breitscheid, 1922), p. 10; Ryder, German Revolution, p. 183.

rank and service decorations, allowed the election of officers, and called for the eventual replacement of the army by a national militia. The High Command received news of the Congress's decisions with utter dismay. Since the army heads had opted to support the government in November, many military chiefs assumed that they would be granted a free hand in re-establishing the armed forces. As early as December 8, Hindenburg had presented a set of demands to the government requesting the elimination of the Soldiers' Councils and the elevation of officers to their traditional roles of authority. On December 14, Groener reported to Ebert that unless the Soldiers' Councils were eradicated and the "carrying of arms, badges of rank and the duty to salute" reintroduced, the army would disintegrate. When news of the Hamburg Points reached the army chiefs, most wanted to resign immediately. Groener contacted Ebert and informed him that adoption of these directives would certainly lead to anarchy in the army and animosity between the High Command and the government. Ebert, who still wanted the support of the army, urged Groener to travel to Berlin in order to present his case. On December 20, Groener, bedecked in full uniform, arrived in the capital and began a series of discussions with Ebert. The general reminded the leaders of the government of their November agreement and stressed the difficulties that still existed, especially demobilization and the removal of troops from Eastern Europe. Ebert,

hoping to appease the army, agreed that the Hamburg Points were too hastily devised and should be presented to the National Assembly instead of the Council's Congress for final approval. This decision placated the military chiefs but forced Ebert to undergo heavy criticism from his SPD colleagues and the radical Left. By late December, however, the generals were needed much more than the critics.<sup>36</sup>

As the moderate faction of the Independents lost political power, the radical notions of the USPD began to dominate party sessions. The Spartacists redoubled their efforts to delay and destroy the upcoming elections. Massive demonstrations by the radical Left continued unabated. Many of the military units organized to protect the government proved more of a liability than an asset as they fell under the sway of the radical elements. On December 23, contingents of the People's Naval Division sealed off the Chancellery and captured the city commandant. Demanding immediate back pay, the sailors soon came under fire from elements of the Republican Guard. After kidnapping their commander, the sailors retreated to their quarters

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36. Proposals of the Supreme Soldiers' Council for Hamburg-Altona and Vicinity, 19 December 1918, P.I.G.R., pp. 176-77; Schuddenkopf, Heer und Republic, pp. 37-39; Müller, Kaiserreich zur Republik, 2:211-13; Carsten, Reichswehr and Politics, pp. 18-20; Ryder, German Revolution, pp. 186-87; Wheeler-Bennett, Nemesis of Power, pp. 32-33; Volkmann, Revolution über Deutschland, p. 142; Craig, Politics of Prussian Army, pp. 352-53; Cabinet Meeting: The Seven Hamburg Points, 18 December 1918, P.I.G.R., p. 99; Cabinet Meeting in Joint Session with the Zentralrat, 10 December 1918, P.I.G.R., pp. 102-11.

at the royal palace. Ebert, after pleading for the release of Wels, decided to utilize the services of the High Command. Under the command of General Lequis, remnants of the Imperial Horse Guards marched into Berlin and on the morning of December 24, began a bombardment of the sailor's stronghold. At first it appeared as if the soldiers would succeed, since most of the sailors surrendered. During the shelling, however, mobs of people began to gather at the site of the conflict. Soon the troops were surrounded and disarmed, leaving the government no alternative but to compensate the sailors. The High Command had failed to supply the government with a reliable defense force, and by doing so, moved the radical Left to challenge the government's authority.<sup>37</sup>

The actions of the government against the sailors precipitated a crisis within the Council that resulted in the withdrawal of the Independents from the government coalition. The USPD ministers dispatched a questionnaire to the members of the Zentralrat demanding that the SPD support the immediate institution of the Hamburg Points, the

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37. Garrett to Lansing, Hague, 24 December 1918, R.D.S., 862.00/418; Joint Meeting of the Cabinet and Zentralrat in the Reich Chancellery 28 December 1918, P.I.G.R., pp. 119-49; Scheidemann, Memoirs, 2:287-90; Watt, Kings Depart, pp. 232-35; Ryder, German Revolution, pp. 188-90; Craig, Politics of Prussian Army, pp. 354-55; Volkmann, Revolution über Deutschland, pp. 158-60; Wheeler-Bennett, Nemesis of Power, pp. 33-34; Berlau, German Social Democratic Party, pp. 236-41; Carsten, Reichswehr and Politics, pp. 20-21; Gordon, Reichswehr and Republic, pp. 12-14; Barth, Werkstatt der Revolution, pp. 93-114.

establishment of a volunteer militia, and the demobilization of the remaining army forces. When the SPD replied that it would support most of these points if the Independents would aid in guaranteeing the protection of property and the provisional government, the USPD commissars resigned from the Council of People's Commissars. Claiming that the SPD alone was responsible for the bloodshed on December 24, the Independents, by deserting the government, pushed Germany closer to civil war.<sup>38</sup>

The withdrawal of the USPD from the government coalition also precipitated a break between the Independents and the Spartacists. After the debacle of December 24, many radicals realized that the government lacked any military power. When the Spartacists called for a conference to devise methods to eradicate the SPD, many Independents refused to attend. The Spartacists decided to hold a meeting regardless of USPD objections and summoned a congress for December 30. Changing their name to the German Communist Party (KPD), the eighty-three delegates branded the Ebert government as counter-revolutionary and under the control of the

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38. Joint Meeting of the Cabinet and Zentralrat, 28-29 December 1918, P.I.G.R., p. 163; Barth, Werkstatt der Revolution, pp. 108-22; Carsten, Reichswehr and Politics, p. 21; Berlau, German Social Democratic Party, p. 241; Ryder, German Revolution, pp. 190-93; Haase, Hugo Haase, pp. 69-70; Scheidemann, Memoirs, 2:290; Eyck, Weimar Republic, 1:52.

militarists. The Spartacist Manifesto of December 14 was approved as the platform for the new party.<sup>39</sup>

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39. Ryder, German Revolution, pp. 193-99; The Program of the Spartacist League called for

1. Disarming all police forces, officers and non-proletarian soldiers
2. Confiscation of all arms, ammunition and all armament industries by workers' and soldiers' councils.
3. Arming of the entire adult male proletarian population and formation of a Red Guard.
4. Abolition of military justice, right of command by officers and nco's. Institution of voluntary discipline and election of officers.
5. Removal of officers and re-enlisted soldiers from soldiers councils.
6. Replacement of all former political organs and authorities of old regime by representatives of the workers' and soldiers' councils.
7. Establishment of a Revolutionary Tribunal to prosecute the Hohenzollerns, Ludendorff, Hindenburg, Tirpitz and all counterrevolutionaires.

8. Seizure of all food supplies

Political and Social Measures

1. Abolition of separate states and establishment of a single socialist republic.
  2. Abolition of all parliaments and municipals councils and transference of their functions to workers' and soldiers' councils.
  3. Election of workers' and soldiers' councils throughout the land by adult workers of both sexes. Recall at any time guaranteed.
  4. Election of Central Council of Workers' and Soldiers' which elects and Executive Council to which all legislative and executive power will be controlled. Elections every three months with no one being allowed more than one term. Executive Council has right to appoint and dismiss national commissars and central authorities and officials of the Empire.
  5. Abolition of social differences, Complete sexual equality.
  6. Social legislation with a maximum six hour day.
  7. Immediate reforms in housing, hygiene and education.
- Immediate Economic Demands
1. Confiscation of all dynastic fortunes and incomes.
  2. Annulment of all state and public debts.
  3. Expropriation of all large and medium sized agricultural estates.
  4. Expropriation of all banks, Mines, iron-works, large industrial and commercial concerns.
  5. Confiscation of all fortunes.

The erosion of the SPD-USPD coalition and the erection of the KPD left the Ebert faction in almost the exact position it had been in November. Ebert realized that it was simply a matter of time before the government's authority would be challenged and therefore attempted to reorganize his cabinet and constabulary. Noske was recalled from Kiel and appointed Defense Minister. Noske quickly gained the confidence of the generals and set about to organize reliable defense forces for the government. Since the forces at the disposal of the SPD had proven unable and, in some cases, unwilling to defend the representatives of the state, Noske accepted the general's recommendation for a Freikorps.<sup>40</sup>

The Freikorps movement was more a product of the unsettled times than a devious design of the High Command. After the armistice, millions of veterans faced the problem

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6. Nationalization of communication services.
  7. Worker's control of factories.
  8. Central Strike Committee to deal with industry

#### International Tasks

Immediate connections with communist parties abroad to place the socialistic revolution on an international basis and to ensure and shape the peace by means of international fraternization, and the revolutionary uprising of the proletariat of the whole world. Rote Fahne (Berlin), 14 December 1918, R.D.S., 862.00/453.

40. Noske, Von Kiel bis Kapp, p. 68; The vacated positions on the Council of People's Commissars were filled by Rudolf Wissell (SPD)--Economic Affairs, Noske (SPD)--Defense. The Social Policy seat remained vacant after Paul Lobe (SPD) rejected it. The Prussian War Minister, General Heinrich von Scheuch was also replaced by Colonel Walter Reinhardt.

of readjusting to civilian life. For many of the younger men, military service was the only experience they had to offer and the economic picture forecast little hope of finding immediate employment. The political picture also did not reflect much confidence in the new system of government. The demands of the war had created an officer corps that far outnumbered that of the pre-1914 period. At the outbreak of the war, the German army contained 22,112 regular and 29,230 reserve officers. Between 1914 and 1918 the number of officers swelled to 45,923 regular and 226,130 reservists. Although some of these officers were chosen from the ranks, most were commissioned after brief periods of training. With the end of fighting many of the wartime officers were forced to alter or totally abandon a life style to which they had grown aristocratically accustomed. Many of the veterans, both officers and enlisted men, simply could not abandon the way of life developed during four years of fighting. Added to the list of the economically despondent, socially entrapped, and psychologically wounded was the younger generation of men who missed the war due to age or health and who resented the German defeat. All of these groups were easy to recruit in a crusade to save the Fatherland.<sup>41</sup>

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41. Robert Waite, Vanguard of Nazism: The Free Corps Movement in Post War Germany (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), pp. 43-46; Demeter, Officer Corps, p. 47; Watt, Kings Depart, pp. 250-55; Fried, German Army, pp. 162-85; Ryder, German Revolution, pp. 202-03; Carsten, Reichswehr and Politics, pp. 22-23; Schuddekopf, Heer und Republik, pp. 42-48; Craig, Politics of Prussian Army, pp. 354-56; Gordon, Reichswehr and Republic, pp. 15-25.

Organization of the Freikorps was modeled upon the shock troops utilized during the war. Officers were usually young and extremely dedicated to their troops. Discipline was maintained, not through fear, but respect. The units were highly mobile and equipped with weapons suited for fighting at close quarter. By January 4, 1919, the first formations of Freikorps were ready for service. Although the new formations appeared well disciplined, they had yet to face the forces that had undermined the government's security forces and the remnants of the Imperial army.<sup>42</sup>

While the government attempted to rebuild its military forces, Germany moved closer to civil war. The withdrawal of the USPD from the Council of People's Commissars was followed by the resignation of the Independents from the Prussian state government. When the SPD officials dismissed the last USPD official from office on January 3, the stage was set for the initial clash between the SPD and the radicals. Emil Eichorn, the USPD Berlin police chief, refused to leave office because he maintained that only the Berlin Executive Council could force him out of office. On January 5, mass demonstrations occurred in Berlin.<sup>43</sup> Most of the newspapers

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42. Watt, Kings Depart, pp. 248-51; Waite, Free Corps, pp. 45-46; Gordon, Reichswehr and Republic, pp. 22-25.

43. Ryder, German Revolution, p. 200; Berlau, German Social Democratic Party, pp. 242-43; Noske, Von Kiel bis Kapp, pp. 59-60; Emil Eichorn, Eichorn über die Januarereignisse: Meine Tätigkeit im Berliner Polizeipraesidium und mein Anteil an den Januar Ereignissen (Berlin: Freiheit, 1919), p. 67.

of the capital were seized, and on January 6, Liebknecht issued a manifesto to the workers of Berlin stating,

The Ebert-Scheidemann Government has rendered itself impossible. It is hereby declared deposed by the undersigned Revolutionary Committee, the representatives of the revolutionary socialist workers' and soldiers' (Independent Social Democratic Party and Communist Party).<sup>44</sup>

With the workers armed and the capital under seige, however, the revolutionary leaders were seized with inaction. As Scheidemann related,

Outside the empty Alexanderplatz stood the proletarians, their rifles in their hands, with light and heavy machine guns. And inside the leaders were deliberating. At the Police Headquarters cannons were to be seen; sailors stood in every corner of the corridors . . . and inside sat the leaders deliberating.<sup>45</sup>

While the leaders of the revolution deliberated, Noske decided to utilize his Freikorps units. He recalled some of his troops from the Berlin area and ordered the High Command to gather its forces. After negotiations failed to reach an agreement, the Freikorps marched into the capital. For two days the streets of Berlin were a battleground as the Noske forces dislodged the revolutionaries from their strongholds. By the thirteenth the Communists and their allies held only a few isolated points as the Freikorps proved to be an effective fighting force. On January 16, the Silesian railway station, the last rebel stronghold,

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44. The Spartacist Manifesto, Berlin, 6 January 1918, D.R.H.E., p. 649.

45. Scheidemann, Memoirs, 2:292-93.

fell. During the course of the fighting both Liebknecht and Luxemburg were captured and executed. Since the National Assembly elections were scheduled for mid-January, Noske maintained a number of Freikorps in the Berlin area.<sup>46</sup>

The defeat of the Communists and their allies in Berlin restored confidence to the SPD and its military associates. Although the country still remained in chaotic condition, the emergence of the Freikorps signalled the end for the forces of the far Left. The formation of a new government, as a result of the January elections, set the stage for the reconstruction of Germany along the lines of democracy. The alliance between the military and the majority socialists was to face further trials as Germany attempted to grapple with enormous internal and external pressures.<sup>47</sup>

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46. Werner T. Angress, Stillborn Revolution: The Communist Bid for Power in Germany, 1921-23 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 20-36; Rudolf Coper, Failure of a Revolution (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), pp. 190-215; Carsten, Reichswehr and Politics, pp. 20-24; Ryder, German Revolution, pp. 198-206; Waite, Free Corps, pp. 58-66; Eric Waldman, The Spartacist Uprising of 1919 and the Crisis of the German Socialist Movement: A Study of the Relation of Political Theory and Party Practice (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1958); Berlau, German Social Democratic Party, pp. 244-46.

47. Due to the fact that no party received an absolute majority, a coalition was formed between the Social Democrats, the Centre and the Democrats. Ebert was elected President of the Reich and Scheidemann became the Chancellor.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE FREIKORPS IN AND OUT OF GERMANY

The success of the Freikorps in defeating the Spartacists in early 1919 restored confidence to the Supreme Command and credibility to the government. After the elections for the National Assembly, the balance of political power shifted from the left toward the center. As the fear of the red terror subsided, the conservative and, in some cases, reactionary elements in Germany re-emerged. The young republic, still faced with enormous problems, underestimated the growing strength of the Right, especially within the ranks of the Freikorps. As the mercenary armies expanded their activities outside of the Reich's borders, the victorious Entente grew suspicious and forced the Weimar authorities to endure one humiliation after another. The government's surrender to the Entente's demands created tension between the Freikorps and the state authorities and set the stage for renewed conflict within Germany.

After the establishment of a new government at Weimar, the military chiefs attempted to restructure the officers' control over the army. Since the Freikorps had destroyed the immediate threat of a leftist coup, the High Command assumed that it could continue to have a free hand in reorganizing the armed forces of the republic. Of prime

importance to the generals was the total destruction of the Soldiers' Councils. While most of the military chiefs believed that the councils interfered with the orderly execution of the chain of command, others felt that the elimination of the councils would damage the government's prestige with the people and precipitate proletarian unrest. The Prussian Minister of War, Colonel Walther Reinhardt, argued that the councils should be restricted in their areas of authority but, under no circumstances, removed completely from the army. If the officers' powers of command were to be restored, then the army was going to have to compromise on the question of the councils. On January 19, Reinhardt issued a set of decrees outlining the position and powers of the councils. Soldiers' Councils were empowered with the authority to "participate in the promulgation of general and permanent orders relating to the welfare of the troops, to social and economic questions, to leave and disciplinary matters."<sup>1</sup> This decree, although legalizing the councils, also stated that matters of appointments, dismissals, and purely military affairs were to be decided by the civil and military officials of the state. Thus the power of command remained firmly in the hands of the officers, while the

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1. Maercker, Kaiserheer zu Reichswehr, p. 392; Carsten, Reichswehr and Politics, p. 26.

councils, now termed Vertrauensleute, were relegated to a secondary role in the army.<sup>2</sup>

Although the restoration of the officers' authority vis-à-vis the councils appeared as a clear-cut victory for the High Command, there was a general uproar over the War Minister's decree. In an article in the Vossische Zeitung a junior officer of the General Staff maintained that as long as the councils existed anarchy, not authority, would remain.<sup>3</sup> General Groener dispatched a note to Ebert stating that Reinhardt's abolition of badges of rank and acceptance of the councils was

. . . complete nonsense, and in addition a demand that in the long run cannot be reconciled with the honor and dignity of an upright man. Apart from this, the whole army is so enraged against the entire institution of the soldiers' councils that, but for the recognition they have now achieved, they would soon have died an inglorious death.<sup>4</sup>

The SPD and its political partners refused to surrender to the generals. Although Reinhardt's position and policies infuriated a large section of the officer corps, the SPD continued to support the war minister. When the question of army reorganization came before the National Assembly, Georg

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2. Articles 9 and 11 of the directive read 9. The ministry of war is responsible for all appointments . . . , The soldiers' councils are not entitled to remove leaders or to eliminate them, but they can request their dismissal. 11. The soldiers councils are not entitled to interfere with matters pertaining to other military offices. . . . Carsten, Reichswehr and Politics, p. 26.

3. Vossische Zeitung (Berlin), 8 February 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/499.

4. Carsten, Reichswehr and Politics, p. 27.

Gothein, a member of the government coalition from the German Democratic Party, indicated that his party would support the SPD's policy as long as the councils did not interfere with the officers' power of command.<sup>5</sup> On February 14, Chancellor Scheidemann announced the government's intention to create a new army. Included in every unit of the Reichswehr would be

. . . a Committee of Councillors to cooperate in the victualing service, in the granting of furloughs, and in providing of accommodations as well as in the investigation of grievances.<sup>6</sup>

In an interview with a Danish paper on February 15, Ebert maintained that the new German army would include "trust councils for the soldiers and these will exercise a certain influence on sustenance, discipline and punishment."<sup>7</sup> When Reinhardt faced the National Assembly on February 20, he argued that the attacks upon his policies by the officer corps and the Soldiers' Councils proved that he had wisely chosen "the proper middle course."<sup>8</sup> On May 6, the National Assembly approved a law calling for the formation of a

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5. Verhandlungen der Verfassunggebenden Deutschen Nationalversammlung (hereafter cited as National Assembly, Debates,) 14 February 1919, p. 63; Berliner Tageblatt, 12 February 1919, in R.D.S., 862.00/527.

6. National Assembly, Debates, 14 February 1919, pp. 66-79; Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, 14 February 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/527.

7. Tidens Tegn (Copenhagen), 15 February 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/534.

8. National Assembly, Debates, 20 February 1919, p. 242; Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung (Berlin), 20 February 1919, in R.D.S., 862.00/537.

provisional army. The new Reichswehr would comprise both voluntary recruits and Freikorps units with supreme authority vested in the President of the Reich.<sup>9</sup>

While the army chiefs protested the policies of the government, the radical Left planned more aggressive attacks on the republic. With the power of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils fading, the influence of the communist organizations waning, and the revolutionary military units dispersing, the leaders of the radicals decided to move into action. Throughout February strikes and expropriations continued to disrupt the economic life of the country. KPD and USPD papers heaped abuse on the SPD and its bourgeois allies. On March 3, Die Rote Fahne called for a general strike and the formation of a Red Guard.<sup>10</sup> At the USPD convention in Berlin on March 9, the minority socialists demanded that the government begin the

Complete disbandment of the old army. Immediate disbandment of the mercenary army composed of volunteer corps. Formation of a People's Army composed of persons who are at least 24 years old and have at least one year belonged to a political and trade organization. Selection of commissioned and non-commissioned officers by the privates.<sup>11</sup>

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9. Carsten, Reichswehr and Politics, pp. 55-58; Craig, Politics of Prussian Army, pp. 363-64; Maercker, Kaiserheer zu Reichswehr, pp. 395-96; Gordon, Reichswehr and Republic, pp. 54-58.

10. Rote Fahne (Berlin), 3 March 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/541.

11. Freiheit (Berlin), 9 March 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/541. The USPD Congress is covered in Albert S. Lindemann, The Red Years: European Socialism Versus Bolshevism, 1919-1921 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), pp. 69-71; Freiheit (Berlin), 9 March 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/542; Ryder, German Revolution, pp. 220-23.

In Berlin the strike movement soon erupted into violence as radicals raided police stations in order to procure weapons. The notorious Volksmarine Division and elements of the Republican Guard, fearing government dissolution, refused to heed the orders of the Weimar authorities and defected to the side of the strikers.<sup>12</sup>

As the tempo of terror and violence increased and the reliability of the government's defense forces decreased, Noske decided to utilize the Freikorps. After placing Berlin under a state of siege, the Defense Minister issued a proclamation stating that anyone who resisted or refused to surrender their arms would be summarily executed. On March 4, government forces re-entered Berlin and began to clear the streets. Although the radical forces were not as large as those in January, casualties were heavy on both sides. By March 16, the Freikorps had destroyed most of the radical strongholds. Even before order was completely restored, the government moved to dispose of the mutinous military units. On March 14, Noske informed a relieved session of the National Assembly that the infamous Naval Division was deposed and the unreliable Defense Corps drastically reduced.<sup>13</sup>

The defeat of the radicals in Berlin coincided with Freikorps victories throughout central and northern Germany.

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12. Deutsche Allegemeine Zeitung (Berlin), 13 March 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/561; Ryder, German Revolution, pp. 221-22; Waite, Free Corps, pp. 73-75; Gordon, Reichswehr and Republic, pp. 32-34.

13. Noske, Von Kiel bis Kapp, pp. 109-110; Craig, Politics of Prussian Army, pp. 357-58; Gordon, Reichswehr and Republic, p. 33.

After the Spartacist revolt in January, the government had adopted a policy of restoring order to the port cities of the North so food supplies would not be interrupted. In February Bremen and Oldenburg fell to the Freikorps. Hamburg, a SPD stronghold, remained relatively quiet until June when the local government pared down the number of security forces. This action resulted in a revolt by the discharged soldiers and forced the Weimar government to dispatch Freikorps units. During the spring of 1919 Freikorps formations occupied Brunswick, Stettin, Gotha, Meiningen, Eisenach, Erfurt, Dresden, Leipzig, Mannheim, and Karlsruhe. By early summer only Bavaria and the eastern border areas remained outside the government's control.<sup>14</sup>

The shock waves of revolt that had ignited the November revolution reached Bavaria before they were felt in Berlin. Under Kurt Eisner, an USPD advocate and former editor of Vorwärts, Bavaria became a republic on November 7. Since the USPD was supported by only a small minority of the Bavarian populace, Eisner emulated his colleagues in the north and agreed to a coalition with the SPD. Determined to maintain the system of councils in conjunction with a constituent assembly, Eisner soon faced opposition from the non-socialist parties as well as the SPD. When elections for a Bavarian parliament were held in January, Eisner's party received

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14. Gordon, Reichswehr and Republic, pp. 35-42; Noske, Von Kiel bis Kapp, pp. 122-67; Maercker, Kaiserheer zu Reichswehr, pp. 88-255.

less than 3 percent of the vote while the SPD and the middle-class parties polled 97 percent. Eisner stubbornly clung to power until February 21, when he was assassinated by a right-wing fanatic. Hours after the death of Eisner, Munich erupted into violence as left-wing radicals invaded the Bavarian Diet and executed an army officer, the leader of the Bavarian People's Party, and wounded the SPD Minister of the Interior. The Diet dispersed and the Central Workers' and Soldiers' Council of Bavaria appointed Johannes Hoffmann, an SPD supporter, as head of the government.<sup>15</sup>

Hoffmann's attempts to control the situation in Munich failed miserably. On April 6, radicals in Munich overthrew the government and established a Soviet style Republic of Councils. A Red Guard was raised and all democratic institutions were restricted. The composition of the new government reflected the preponderance of revolution over reason. Two of the new ministers had previously been committed to asylums and their actions indicated that their recovery was far from complete. Dr. Franz Lipp, the Foreign Minister, declared war on Wurtemberg and Switzerland when they refused to hand over railway locomotives to the Munich authorities.

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15. Eyck, Weimar Republic, 1:57-59; Ryder, German Revolution, pp. 212-14; Gordon, Reichswehr and Republic, pp. 42-44; Carl Landauer, "The Bavarian Problem in the Weimar Republic, 1918-1923," Journal of Modern History 16 (1944):94-95; Noske, Von Kiel bis Kapp, pp. 135-36; Muller, Kaiserreich zur Republik, 2:61-64.

The deposed Hoffman government, residing in Bamberg, attempted to negotiate with the Munich officials but was unsuccessful.<sup>16</sup>

The establishment of a Soviet government in Munich lasted one week. On April 13, the Munich garrison overthrew its rulers and set up a second Soviet dictatorship which proved more radical than the first. In the course of a few days the workers were armed, the press censored out of existence, the banks seized, and food expropriations began. Troops dispatched by the Hoffmann government to destroy the rebels in Munich joined the radicals. Finally out of desperation, Hoffmann requested the Weimar authorities to intercede.<sup>17</sup>

The arrival of Freikorps units in Bavaria set off a wave of terror in Munich. The communist forces in the city captured a number of hostages and on April 30, executed ten of their prisoners. Among those killed was Countess Westarp, wife of the former conservative leader in the Reichstag, along with several members of the aristocracy. When news of these executions reached the Freikorps troops positioned outside of Munich, the assault on the Bavarian capital ensued. On May 1, the Freikorps marched into Munich and celebrated May Day by indulging in a campaign of counter-terror that far exceeded

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16. Volkman, Revolution uber Deutschland, pp. 222-23; Gordon, Reichswehr and Republic, pp. 44-45; Ryder, German Revolution, pp. 212-13.

17. Ryder, German Revolution, p. 213; Noske, Aufstieg und Niedergang Sozialdemokratie, pp. 93-97; Watt, Kings Depart, pp. 325-36.

the excesses of the radicals. Thus the last stronghold of opposition to the Weimar government was subdued.<sup>18</sup>

The defeat of the Bavarian radicals marked the high point of the coalition between the SPD and the Supreme Command. The military chiefs, after several failures, had restored order and restricted radical activities throughout Germany. The officer corps remained intact while the Soldiers' Councils were relegated to minor matters in army procedure. The dreaded Hamburg Points were completely negated by the policies of the National Assembly. The composition of the German Parliament also allowed the interests of the officer corps full representation and curtailed any radical attempts at alteration of the armed forces. The proposed constitution for the republic gave the officer corps ample authority in the administration and consolidation of the new army. Article 79 of Section 6 stated that,

National Defense is a function of the Reich. The organization of the armed forces of the German people shall be regulated in a uniform manner by a national law with due regard to the special peculiarities of the population.<sup>19</sup>

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18. Waite, Free Corps, pp. 88-93; Watt, Kings Depart, pp. 337-41; Ryder, German Revolution, pp. 213-14; Berlau, German Social Democratic Party, pp. 252-54; Gordon, Reichswehr and Republic, pp. 45-49; Noske, Von Kiel bis Kapp, pp. 138-40; Craig, Politics of Prussian Army, pp. 360-61.

19. Howard Lee McBain & Lindsay Rogers, The New Constitutions of Europe (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1922), pp. 191-92.

This section meant that Germany would finally possess a unified command in peace as well as in war. There was to be no more of the bureaucratic duplication and regional rivalries as in the Imperial armies. Although Article 46 and 47 of Section 3 placed the military under civilian control, Ebert, as President of the Reich and leader of the SPD, had proved more than willing to heed the advice of the officer corps. Article 47 specified that

The President of the Reich shall appoint and remove national officials and military officers of the Reich, except as otherwise provided by law. He may permit other authorities to exercise the powers of appointment and removal.<sup>20</sup>

As early as February, Ebert had pledged that officers would be selected along traditional lines, by which he meant that regimental commanders could choose their officers and the Defense Minister would confirm their appointments.<sup>21</sup>

While the constitution insured the existence of the officer corps, the re-emergence of the conservative parties guaranteed the army political partners. During the early days of the revolution, most of the monarchist, nationalist, and conservative parties disappeared. After the SPD victories over the radicals, however, the conservatives reappeared under new titles. Three weeks prior to the elections for the

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20. Ibid., p. 188.

21. Gordon, Reichswehr and Republic, p. 56; Carsten, Reichswehr and Politics, p. 32.

National Assembly, the German National People's Party (Deutschnationale Volkspartei, DNVP) emerged on the political scene. Encompassing most of the elements from the old German Conservative Party, the DNVP preached the traditional conservative credo of authority over majority. When the National Liberal Party self-destructed in 1918, the conservative faction reorganized under the banner of the German People's Party (Deutsche Volkspartei-DVP). Standing "loyal to the past and uncommitted to the future," the DVP advised its followers to remain "monarchist in spirit but republican in deed." Since both of these parties looked to the past for perfection, they viewed the officer corps' prewar position as sacrosanct and inviolate.<sup>22</sup>

While the SPD attempted to fend off radical assaults, the conservative, nationalist societies rebuilt their organizational power. On January 5, 1919, while Liebknecht paraded through the streets of Berlin denouncing the government, a convention of the German National Juvenile League drowned out democratic speakers with Deutschland Über Alles.<sup>23</sup> The sixtieth birthday of the ex-Kaiser, on January 27, evoked an avalanche of articles praising the marooned monarch. The conservative Deutsche Tageszeitung openly embraced the monarchical banner when it stated,

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22. Kaufmann, Monarchism in Weimar Republic, pp. 53-56.

23. Deutsche Tageszeitung (Berlin), 5 January 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/512.

. . . we will uphold the monarchist idea through the confusion of this terrible time, this time which knows no Kaiser. . . . We will not allow our affection for our ruling house or our belief in the monarchical idea be spoiled for us.<sup>24</sup>

In March a meeting of the Pan-German Union in Bamberg declared that if the government desired to rescue Germany from anarchy, it must

. . . organize an army which guarantees sufficient protection to the Fatherland at home and abroad, in which the officers occupy the position due them.<sup>25</sup>

The elections in February gave the DNVP and the DVP 66 seats in the National Assembly while the USPD received only 22 seats. The officer corps could thus rely upon the conservative deputies to preserve their position, while the SPD, out of necessity, was forced to defend the army's actions. With a unified command, a pacified countryside, and parliamentary protection, the German military leaders began to shift their priorities to the eastern borders where external forces presented new problems.<sup>26</sup>

After the successful return of the German armies from France and Belgium, the High Command was transferred to the Pomeranian town of Kolberg in order to try and untangle the situation in the East. The German military leaders remained puzzled by the Entente's position in Eastern Europe. Article

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24. Deutsche Tageszeitung (Berlin), 27 January 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/508.

25. Tageliche Rundschau (Berlin), 2 March 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/542.

26. Kauffmann, Monarchism in Weimar Republic, pp. 61-62.

12 of the armistice called for the immediate evacuation of all German forces in the old Habsburg states, Turkey, and Rumania, but stipulated that German troops in the territories formerly under Romanov rule should remain "until the Allies shall think the moment suitable. . . ." <sup>27</sup> In all, about 500,000 German soldiers remained in the Ukraine, the Baltic states, Turkey, and Rumania. The High Command urged the formation of Freikorps units to protect the border areas so on February 15, Hindenburg published an appeal to the nation stating,

You volunteers and young comrades, who are determined to stake your lives for the defense of the Eastern Marches, think of the faithful ones of the year 1914. And my old comrades who fought with me at Tannenberg and the Masurian Lakes, hasten to my aid: My appeal to Germany's sons must not die away unheard. <sup>28</sup>

Fear of Bolshevism plus the aggressive actions of Poland and Czechoslovakia moved many to heed Hindenburg's appeal. Many volunteers also viewed the East as an area where Germany might salvage something from its ignoble defeat. The armistice terms appeared to offer Germany an opportunity to operate in the East, if not unilaterally, at least in conjunction with the Western Powers. At a cabinet meeting on January 21, Groener expressed the belief that

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27. The Armistice, D.G.R., 2:511.

28. Magdeburgische Zeitung, 15 February 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/527.

Wilson does not have in mind a decisive alteration of our eastern border. We are certainly able to maintain our present border. I am convinced that it is child's play to preserve our eastern border at the peace conference. The French have childishly naive ideas about conditions in Poland.<sup>29</sup>

Groener's underestimation of the Entente's interest in a Polish state resulted in a series of reverses for the Germans, for the Polish question was to loom as one of the major issues at the Paris Peace Conference. The generals could not deal with Josef Pilsudski's forces as they did with Liebknecht's legions because the Poles possessed the support of the French, the English, and the Americans. Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points specifically provided that

an independent Polish state should be erected which should include the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations, which should be assured a free and secure access to the sea and whose political and economic independence and territorial integrity should be guaranteed by international covenant.<sup>30</sup>

The French, determined to reconstruct an eastern European ally to frustrate German revanche and seal off the Soviet menace from the West, remained adamant on the importance of a strong Polish state. By February, even Groener realized that Poland's existence at Germany's expense could not be challenged.

The state of Poland was resurrected during the chaos of war. In 1916, Ludendorff, hoping to lure Polish volunteers

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29. Cabinet Meeting, 21 January 1919, P.I.G.R., p. 199.

30. New York Times, 9 January 1918, p. 1.

into the German army, declared his support for an independent Polish state. Since the First Quartermaster General envisioned only the area that was formerly controlled by Russia as the new Poland, few succumbed to Ludendorff's scheme. As the war turned against the Germans, the Poles, under Pilsudski, began to challenge the armies of the Kaiser. After the collapse of the German government in November, 1918, Pilsudski decided to accelerate the evacuation of German forces in the territories his forces controlled. He met with the Soldiers' Councils and although in direct violation of the armistice, devised an evacuation program. While most of the German forces agreed to be withdrawn on Polish trains, some units refused to obey the agreement and began to retreat on foot. The policy of surrendering weapons to the Polish Volkswehr also created friction between the Germans and the Poles. Soon retreating German units faced ambushes and harassment by Polish irregulars. Pilsudski then proclaimed that after the remaining German forces were withdrawn, no more Imperial units could pass through Poland. This meant that 400,000 soldiers of the German army would be isolated from their supply centers and escape routes. By December, 1918, the situation had deteriorated to the point of open warfare in the provinces of Posen and Upper Silesia and skirmishes were reported all along the eastern border. The Germans were forced out of Posen, and due to the troubles in Berlin, the Supreme Command could offer little immediate assistance. A Heimatschutz Ost,

or Home Guard East, was established in January, 1919, to cover the withdrawal of the remaining troops in the East, quell leftist uprisings, and check the Poles.<sup>31</sup>

After the return of the troops from the West and the successful recruiting campaign for the East, the High Command began to feel more confident about regaining the territory seized by the Poles. An offensive, planned for mid-February, seemed assured of success since the Poles had become involved in armed conflicts with the Czechs, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, and the Russians. Two days prior to the main advance, however, the Germans had to renew the armistice. Marshal Foch, Commander-in-Chief of the Allied and Associated forces, upon learning of German troop movements in the disputed area, immediately dispatched an ultimatum to the Weimar authorities declaring that "The Germans must immediately desist from all offensive operations against the Poles in the region of Posen and any other region."<sup>32</sup> Even the High Command realized that if the planned offensive was carried out, the French would consider the armistice violated and might resume hostilities in the West. Mathias Erzberger, head of the

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31. Proclamation of the formation of the Kingdom of Poland, 5 November 1916, D.G.R., 1:760; Watt, Kings Depart, pp. 355-56; Gordon, Reichswehr and Republic, pp. 49-52; Carsten, Reichswehr and Politics, p. 16; Ryder, German Revolution, pp. 175-77; Wheeler-Bennett, Nemesis of Power, p. 42.

32. Minutes of a Meeting of the Supreme War Council, Paris, February 17, 1919, Foreign Relations of the United States: The Paris Peace Conference, 1919 13 vols. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1943), 4:25 (hereafter cited as F.R.U.S.).

German Armistice Commission, signed the ultimatum but presented a formal protest from the German chancellor. In the protest, Scheidemann warned that,

The agreement imposes on the Germans, in the form of orders and prohibitions marked by harshness and favoring the rebelling Poles, the necessity of evacuating a number of important places such as Birnbaum and the towns of Bentschen without any delay. These places are in German hands, their population is mostly German, and they are particularly important in regard to the intercourse with Eastern Germany. In addition to this, the Allied and Associated Powers do not even guarantee that the Poles, on their side, will abstain from preparing or undertaking further attacks, or that they will treat the German population with humanity--a population, the protection of which we are forced to give up; or that they will release the German hostages, the retention of whom has now no objects or that they will keep up the supply of food from the west in the same way as has been done up to the present.<sup>33</sup>

The Entente's concern for the welfare of Poland had blocked the High Command's campaign in Posen. As the Red Army began to advance toward the West, however, the Germans, as well as the Entente, faced a formidable new threat. Since the Western allies opposed the existence and extension of Soviet rule in Europe, the High Command looked to the Baltic states as the next major theater of operations.

As the Bolsheviks attempted to consolidate their hold over Russia, civil war erupted. The forces of Lenin and Trotsky faced the opposition of the West, the counterrevolutionary armies, and the separatist nationalities. By 1918,

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33. Ibid., 4:24-25.

the Germans were contributing heavily to the containment of communist power in Russia. In the Ukraine 400,000 former Imperial German soldiers supported the weak Ukranian government, while in the Baltic states, the German Eighth Army blocked Bolshevik expansion and posed a direct threat to Petrograd, citadel of the revolution. In Finland, German troops aided the Finnish forces under Marshal Mannerheim in driving out the Red Army. Although the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk had ended hostilities between Russia and Germany, skirmishes between the two continued as the Red Army moved westward. The Armistice overturned the Brest-Litovsk Treaty so Soviet forces began to fill the power vacuum vacated by the retreating Germans. The Baltic area was a primary target for the Soviets, not only due to the threat to Petrograd, but also because the Baltic offered the easiest access to the Prussian border and the European proletariat.<sup>34</sup>

When news of the German revolution and the subsequent armistice reached the Baltic area, most of the German troops followed the pattern established in the Fatherland. Soldiers' Councils usurped the authority of the officers and most opted for immediate return home. The Entente, hoping to utilize the German forces to prevent bolshevization of the Baltic, complained that the Germans were not only disregarding

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34. A good account of the Soviet-Finnish war is offered in: Richard Lockett, The White Generals: An Account of the White Movement and the Russian Civil War (New York: Viking Press, 1971), pp. 125-53; Carl Mannerheim, The Memoirs of Marshal Mannerheim (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1954), pp. 130-83.

the armistice but also delivering up to the communist forces "arms, munitions and fortified posts."<sup>35</sup> When an English naval squadron arrived in the Baltic on December 24, the remaining German forces were ordered to defend the areas they occupied and recapture all territory lost to the Bolsheviks. Most of the German soldiers ignored these orders and joined the exodus westward. Since the English did not possess the personnel to prevent the German retreat or the Soviet advance, all of Latvia and Estonia fell to the Red Army by early January, 1919. When the anti-communist leaders of the Baltic states realized that immediate aid from the West would not be forthcoming, the Germans were approached for aid.<sup>36</sup>

The German High Command in early January was beset with a multitude of problems. With Liebknecht cruising through Berlin in his machine-gun-decorated vehicle and Polish forces seizing German territory in the East, the generals had to face the possibility of a Soviet threat. If the Red Army advanced unchecked toward the German border,

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35. Representative of the Provisional Government of Latvia (Simson) to the American Ambassador in Great Britain (Davis), London, 20 December 1918, F.R.U.S., 2:480-81.

36. Times (London), 27 February 1919, p. 9; Stanley Page, The Formation of the Baltic States: A Study of the Effects of Great Power Politics Upon the Emergence of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), p. 135-40; Royal Institute of International Affairs, The Baltic States: A Survey of the Political and Economic Structure and the Foreign Relations of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), pp. 35-50; Waite, Free Corps, p. 100

the Reich might erupt into revolution and civil war. A session of the Riga Soviet confirmed the Communists designs for spreading the revolution directly into Germany. Following their successful occupation of Latvia, Soviet orators declared that

Latvia is the gateway through which the Russian Revolution must invade Europe. Our duty now . . . is to reach the Prussian frontier as quickly as we possibly can. . . . An advance of the Red Army into Germany promises to be most successful.<sup>37</sup>

German concern over the situation in the Baltic had preceded the Communist challenge. August Winnig, an SPD trade union official, had gone to the Baltic in October, 1918, under the authority of Prince Max. After the establishment of the Council of People's Commissars, Ebert ordered Winnig to remain as plenipotentiary of the Reich. Winnig maintained cordial relations with the Baltic national leaders and, after the Entente proved unable to stem the Soviet advance, offered the aid of German volunteer troops. Karlis Ulmanis, the exiled Latvian leader, desperately searching for a solution to the Soviet menace "grabbed at this proposition with both hands."<sup>38</sup> Article I of the agreement granted "full Latvian citizenship to all men of a foreign army who shall have served at least four weeks in the ranks of the

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37. Georgii Popov, The City of the Red Plague (New York: Macmillan, 1932), p. 240.

38. Waite, Free Corps, p. 102.

volunteer corps. . . ."39 Article II allowed "German officers and non-commissioned officers as instructors in the ranks of the German Baltic companies of the Landeswehr."40 Entente emissaries in Latvia were approached and informed of the details of the agreement. Thus the Germans had committed themselves, with the full approval of the Entente, to the defense of the Baltic.41

After the alliance between Winnig and Ulmanis, the Germans began an active recruiting campaign. Posters pictured the horror of Germany overrun by the red hordes of Russia and the potential rewards for services in the Baltic. Although no promises of land were guaranteed in the Winnig-Ulmanis pact, recruiters often inflated the benefits a volunteer could expect. The German government, struggling for survival in Berlin, had little interest in the Baltic situation and allowed recruitment to continue unchecked. As Noske later recalled,

Alas, the poor government was expected to have perfect control of everything in Germany, while large parts of the country were like a madhouse. How could we be expected to manage our business affairs in the Baltic properly when machine guns were being fired all around us? While I was absorbed with my work, I could not concern myself with all the little Wallensteins who recruited men and led them to the east.42

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39. Page, Baltic States, p. 123.

40. Ibid.

41. Secretary's Notes of a Meeting of Foreign Ministers, Paris, 9 May 1919, F.R.U.S., 4:691.

42. Noske, Von Kiel Bis Kapp, pp. 177-78.

Command of the German volunteers in the Baltic was maintained by General Rudiger von der Goltz. An experienced combat officer, Goltz had led the German forces in the defeat of the Soviets in Finland. Although his only orders were to resist Russian encroachments in the Baltic, Goltz entertained notions of restoring Germany hegemony in the East. Due to the fact that Russia had been defeated in war and destroyed by revolution, Goltz desired that an

. . . economic and political sphere be created next to Russia? Russia's own intelligentsia was ruined and her land hungered for German technicians, merchants and leaders. Her devastated and depopulated border provinces required German settlers to cultivate the fertile soil. Especially, I had in mind discharged soldiers.<sup>43</sup>

From his headquarters in Libau Goltz reorganized the defense forces of Latvia. Instead of the "technicians, merchants and leaders," however, appeared the Freikorps. Some of the volunteers viewed the Baltic as Germany's first line of defense against the Bolsheviks while others hoped to acquire property and position in the East. Many of the troops, however, desired soldiering over settlement and proved to be marauders instead of merchants and looters instead of leaders. Units, such as the Iron Division, treated the Latvians with utter contempt. Soon Ulmanis and the Entente realized that Goltz's presence was a menace nearly as dangerous as the Bolsheviks.<sup>44</sup>

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43. Rudiger von der Goltz, Meine Sendung in Finnland und im Baltikum (Leipzig: Koehler, 1920), p. 127.

44. Gordon, Reichswehr and Republic, pp. 63-64; Waite, Free Corps, pp. 104-08.

Conflict between the Latvians and Germans reached the point of open warfare in April. As the Bolshevik forces retreated before the Freikorps, Goltz's policies began to unfold. The Baltic Landeswehr, the main military force of Latvia, was brought under German domination. Although technically under the control of Ulmanis, the Landeswehr was commanded by Germans who utilized every opportunity to dismiss Latvian elements and install German volunteers. By February only 20 percent of the Latvian army was Latvian. Goltz also maintained close connections with the German Balts, whom he considered his political allies in the struggle to revive German influence and institutions in the East. Most of the German Balts hated Ulmanis because of the Latvian government's policy of land expropriation and exclusion of the propertied elements from political power. When a Freikorps officer was arrested by the Latvian authorities on April 16, the German volunteers exhibited their respect for the government by capturing the entire staff of the Latvian army and overthrowing the Ulmanis government. Ulmanis and some of his ministers escaped to various Entente military missions and naval vessels stationed in Libau and pleaded for assistance.<sup>45</sup>

The reckless policies of the Freikorps forced the Entente to retaliate. Goltz maintained complete surprise at the events

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45. Senate Documents, 66th Congress, 1st Session vol. 15, "Report of the Mission to Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania" by Robert Hales. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1919), no. 7610, p. 21 (hereafter cited as S.D.), Waite, Free Corps, pp. 111-118; Page, Baltic States, pp. 151-52.

of the sixteenth, although the troops involved in the coup were under his command. In order to establish some form of government, Goltz placed the country under the control of Andreas Needra, a Lutheran minister. Needra appointed Oskar Borkowsky, a German Balt, as acting prime minister. When news of the coup reached Paris, the Entente representatives approved the formation of a Inter-Allied Commission to study the conditions in the Baltic but agreed that the commission should meet in Paris before venturing to the East.<sup>46</sup> A meeting of the Foreign Ministers on April 19 was informed by Herbert Hoover, head of the American Food Relief Program, that

German troops and authorities in Latvia had seized the Government and disarmed the Army, and had set up there a Government of their own, probably controlled by the German Landowners.<sup>47</sup>

While the French opted for immediate cancellation of food to Latvia, the British Foreign Minister, Arthur Balfour, reminded his colleagues that

the Allied Associated Governments had no troops wherewith to replace the Germans. The Allied and Associated Governments were therefore in the "humiliating" position of having to employ Germans to suppress the Bolsheviks while the Germans had stopped the Letts from raising armies of their own.<sup>48</sup>

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46. S.D., 7610, p. 18; Waite, Free Corps, p. 114; Goltz, Meine Sendung, pp. 176-84; Notes of a Meeting held at President Wilson's Residence, Paris, April 28, 1919, F.R.U.S., 5:315-16.

47. Secretary's Notes of a Meeting of Foreign Ministers, Paris, April 19, 1919, F.R.U.S., 4:591.

48. Ibid., 4:591-92.

Since the fear of Bolshevik occupation remained the primary concern of the Entente, Goltz was able to remain in charge of the Baltic situation. American attempts at reconciliation between the Ulmanis-Needra factions failed, so Needra relied upon Goltz for support.<sup>49</sup>

Although Goltz remained the head of the military units in Latvia, he was ordered by the Entente and the German government to refrain from any further offensive operations. To Goltz this policy reflected the total subjugation of German interests to Entente aims in the East. Since the Baltic Landeswehr was a Latvian, not German, army and thus beyond the jurisdiction of the German government, the Entente's designs could be circumvented. On May 22, elements of the Landeswehr, supported by the Freikorps, assaulted Riga and, just as in Munich, indulged in acts of terrorism. The Latvians, infuriated at the Freikorps' actions, began to reorganize their military forces with the aid of Entente material. As the Freikorps moved north, Estonian units joined with the Ulmanis supporters in opposing the Landeswehr and Freikorps formations.<sup>50</sup> By mid-June the Entente also decided that the threat of Soviet dominance in the Baltic had disappeared and

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49. S.D., 7610, p. 21.

50. Although the Entente originally ordered the Freikorps out of Latvia, they quickly changed their policy when it was ascertained that a German retreat would be followed by a Soviet advance. Times (London), 22 April 1919, p. 8; Waite, Free Corps, pp. 116-18; Page, Baltic States, pp. 151-54.

thus the Germans should also be driven out. At a meeting on June 13, representatives of Great Britain, France, Italy, the United States, and Japan requested Marshal Foch to order the Germans to halt all military advances toward Estonia and

evacuate Libau and at once, and to complete the evacuation of all territory which before the war formed part of Russia, with the least possible delay, in accordance with Article 12 of the Armistice terms.<sup>51</sup>

Thus by June, Goltz's plans for a German Baltikum seemed destroyed as Entente pressure and Estonian and Latvian power descended upon the Freikorps.

As Entente material and military representatives arrived in the Baltic, German volunteer units were removed from Riga and restricted to certain areas pending evacuation. The head of the Inter-Allied Mission to Latvia, Sir Herbert Gough, established a political agreement between the Ulmanis-Needra factions and a military armistice between the Landeswehr-Freikorps formations and Latvian-Estonian forces.<sup>52</sup> Both of these moves destroyed any German hopes for continued control in the Baltic. Especially irritating to the Freikorps was the policy of purging German elements from the Landeswehr. Because many volunteers claimed Latvian citizenship, the armistice stated that,

51. Notes of a Meeting Held at President Wilson's House, Paris, June 13, 1919, F.R.U.S., 6:374.

52. Mr. Bosanguet to Earl Curzon, Reval, July 5, 1919, E. L. Woodward and Rohan Butler (eds.), Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939 Series 1 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1949), 3:9-10, (hereafter cited as D.B.F.P.); S.D., 7610, p. 24.

all officers and men of the Landeswehr who, at any time before January 1, 1919, were citizens of the German Empire, shall resign or be discharged from the Landeswehr forthwith.<sup>53</sup>

This clause negated the Ulmanis-Winnig agreement of 1918 and the hopes of many volunteers of ever gaining land in the Baltic. Since the German government and the German military could do nothing to aid the volunteers, Goltz, on July 3, signed an agreement to evacuate his forces from the Baltic.<sup>54</sup>

Goltz's promise to evacuate the Baltic was followed by months of procrastination and political intrigue. While Goltz utilized every possible excuse to delay the departure of his forces, the Entente placed more and more pressure on the German government. The Weimar authorities, under heavy criticism from the Left and Right because of the peace terms, proved powerless to prohibit the activities of Goltz. On the same day that Goltz agreed to evacuate the Baltic, the High Command in Kolberg dissolved. After the Entente threatened economic sanctions against the Germans, Ebert, on August 5, ordered all volunteer formations to begin evacuation of the Baltic. The Freikorps answered the Reich President on August 25. As trains arrived at Mitau, members of the Iron Division refused to stand down and, joined by other

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53. Directions given by the Head of the Allied Military Mission in Accordance with Clause Five and Nine of the Armistice, Riga, 13 July 1919, D.B.F.P., 3:17.

54. Harold Temperley, A History of the Peace Conference of Paris 6 vols. (London: H. Frowder & Hodder & Stoughton, 1924), 6:300; Waite, Free Corps, p. 122.

units, formed the German Legion. Enlisting in the White army of General Prince Pawel Michaelovich Awaloff-Bermond, the German Legion formed the nucleus for the Russian Army of the West.<sup>55</sup>

The desertion of the Freikorps in Mitau exposed the tenuous authority the German government held over the Freikorps. The Entente powers refused to believe that the mercenaries in the Baltic were acting counter to the commands of the Weimar authorities and continued to impose impossible demands on the government. This policy further illustrated the weakness of the young republic and heightened tension throughout Germany. USPD papers smugly criticized the inability of the bourgeois government to control the army while the conservative press castigated the socialist leadership for deserting the defenders of western civilization. Rumors of radical and reactionary plots circulated almost daily as the hapless government attempted to restore its political prestige and military power. The Entente posed the threats of refusing repatriation to remaining German

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55. Waite, Free Corps, pp. 122-26; Notes by Colonel Tallents of a Conference at St. Olai, 20 July 1910, D.B.F.P., 3:34-38; Notes of a Meeting of Heads of Delegations of the Five Great Powers, Paris, 27 September 1919, D.B.F.P., 1:818-18; Notes of a Meeting of the Heads of Delegations of the Five Great Powers, Paris, 7 October 1919, D.B.F.P., 1:872; Berliner Tageblatt, 27 August 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/699; Freiheit (Berlin), 27 August 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/701; Vorwärts (Berlin), 27 August 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/705; Hamburger Echo, 28 August 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/705; Freiheit (Berlin), 28 August 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/705.

prisoners, reinstating the blockade of Germany, and raising the Polish forces to clear the Baltic. German notes of protest to the Allies and orders of evacuation to the Freikorps fell on deaf ears. Finally the government admitted that despite the closing of the frontier, cancellation of all pay and veteran's benefits, recall of Goltz, and restrictions on supplies to the East, the Freikorps still refused to return.<sup>56</sup> A Vorwärts article in September attempted to illustrate the government's dilemma by comparing the situation in the Baltic to that of the Fiume crisis. The Berliner Tageblatt reminded the Entente that, as a result of the Versailles Treaty, Germany did not possess the military power to discipline the Baltic mutineers.<sup>57</sup>

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56. Notes of a Meeting of the Heads of the Five Great Powers, Paris, 17 September 1919, D.B.F.P., 1:714; The Germans answered the Entente threats by stating

"An order was issued, among others, to this, end, under date of September 15, 1919, ordering that the soldiers' pay as well as other advantages accorded to the unit who would refuse to conform with the order of retreat, be withheld, and furthermore, in order to prevent reinforcements joining these troops, the German frontier on the Courland side has been closed. Orders were given to fire on the troops who despite this precaution would attempt to cross the line. The furnishing of munition supplies was formally forbidden. General von der Goltz has been recalled from his post."

D.B.F.P., 1:872; Freiheit (Berlin), 2 September 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/718; Volks Zeitung, 30 September 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/724; Deutsche ALlegemeine Zeitung (Berlin), 30 September 1919, R.D.S., 862.00/724; Vorwärts (Berlin), 30 September 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/724.

57. Vorwärts (Berlin), 30 September 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/724; Berliner Tageblatt, 30 September 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/724.

While the German government suffered Entente humiliation and political degradation, the Freikorps finally met military defeat. Throughout October and November, Latvian military forces, aided by Entente naval firepower and supplies, pushed the Freikorps out of the Baltic. By late November remnants of the 50,000-man German Legion began to cross over into Germany. Disgusted with the policies of the government and disillusioned over their ignoble defeat at the hands of the Latvians, the Baltic free booters now joined with the discontented elements in Germany to pursue their reckless policies. The actions of the Freikorps and its leaders would force the military leaders of the republic to face the problem of how to react to a rightist coup.<sup>58</sup>

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58. Page, Baltic States, p. 165; Waite, Free Corps, pp. 129-39.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE VERSAILLES ARMY AND THE KAPP PUTSCH

As the Baltic volunteers involuntarily retreated to Germany in late 1919, they discovered that their discontent and disillusionment was shared by many of their countrymen. Indeed, throughout every level of German society, fear and frustration existed as the hapless government struggled to reform the past and restructure the present. Added to the colossal problems that faced the infant republic was the Versailles Treaty, which few Germans could approve and fewer could accept. Entente policies after the signing of the peace continued to expose the Weimar authorities to renewed assaults from the Left and Right. The rift in the socialist camp widened as the Independents and their allies demanded immediate political, economic, social, and military alterations. The revolution had failed to produce the expected Marxist Mecca and many workers, fearing proletarian pauperization, deserted their Social Democratic leaders. The conservative political forces likewise experienced a resurgence of strength as the onus of defeat and dishonor descended upon the Social Democrats and their political partners. Government authorized investigations into the causes of the German debacle produced more controversy than conclusions as the myth of the

Dolchstoss overshadowed the mountains of documents. Nationalists political and military figures, who one year earlier had fled Germany discredited and disavowed, returned to the Fatherland as heroes. Political violence steadily mounted as the fanatics of the Right began to emulate the tactics of their cowardly comrades on the Left.

While the government warded off challenges from the Left and Right, the loyalty of the army began to waver. The Versailles Treaty had destroyed the dreams of the Social Democrats and the designs of the officer corps. The denunciations of the reactionaries and the radicals plus the demands of the Entente produced division and disharmony throughout the army. As the government endured one humiliation after another, the agents of monarchism, Marxism and particularism accelerated their attacks upon the leaders and soldiers of the state. In March, 1920, the first rightist Putsch erupted and shortly after, a leftist counter coup ensued. Although adopting totally different tactics in each case, the government withstood both assaults and emerged victorious.

As the Social Democrats attempted to establish order in Germany in early 1919, the Entente deliberated the destiny of Europe. Although Woodrow Wilson appeared as the powerful personality behind the forces of reason and moderation, the Americans soon found themselves at odds with their former allies. The French demands for security and desire for

revanche provoked constant conflict and turmoil among the delegates. As the months passed many Germans began to realize that, despite Wilson's program as enunciated in the Fourteen Points, and regardless of Germany's form of government, the victors were designing a peace with the past, and not the future, in mind.<sup>1</sup>

Since the Germans were denied representation at the Paris Peace Conference there was little the Weimar government could do to influence the course of negotiations. Throughout 1919, the Social Democrats were plagued with problems that demanded immediate attention. The Spartacist uprising in January was followed by renewed strikes and disorders in March. Throughout April the situation continued to deteriorate. Communist victories in the Baltic and Hungary were imitated in Bavaria. When the Second Congress of Workmens' and Soldiers' Councils met in Berlin on April 8, the Social Democrats appeared on the defensive. Although the Majority Socialists held 138 seats compared to 55 for the USPD and the KPD, SPD representatives came under heavy criticism for their tactics. Motions

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1. The Paris Peace Conference is covered in Edward House, ed., What Really Happened at Paris: The Story of the Peace Conference, 1918-1919 (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1921); Robert Lansing, The Peace Negotiations: A Personal Narrative (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1921); David Lloyd George, Memoirs of the Peace Conference 2 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939); Harold Nicolson, Peacemaking, 1919 (London: Constable & Co., 1945); Temperley, History of the Peace Conference; Thomas Bailey, Wilson and the Peacemakers 2 vols. (New York: Macmillan Co., 1947).

to free all prisoners involved in strikes and political disorders passed overwhelmingly. Demands for immediate socialization, diplomatic negotiations with Russia, and destruction of the "Noske army" also received majority approval. When the congress adjourned on April 11, the SPD had maintained its power but was quickly losing its popularity.<sup>2</sup>

Three days after the close of the Second Workers' and Soldiers' Congress, the Entente requested the German government to dispatch delegates to Paris. Headed by Foreign Minister Count Ulrich von Brockdorff-Rantzau the German delegation left Weimar at the end of April. The journey to Versailles intentionally cut across the major battlefields of northern France. When the Germans arrived in Paris they were segregated into a heavily guarded compound. On May 7, Brockdorff-Rantzau was handed a copy of the treaty and ordered to submit all objections in writing within three weeks. The terms of the treaty exceeded the wildest expectations of almost every German. Germany was to surrender parts of her territory to France, Belgium, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, and Lithuania. East Prussia was separated

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2. The Proceedings of the Second Congress of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils are found in: Germania (Berlin, 9 April 1919; Koelnische Zeitung, 9 April 1919; Vossische Zeitung (Berlin) 9 April 1919, Freiheit (Berlin) 10 April 1919; Ibid., 11 April 1919; Ibid., 12 April 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/589.

from the Reich by a corridor and certain key areas, such as the Saar basin and the Rhine bridgeheads were forced to accept foreign administration and occupation. Added to these border adjustments, Germany was stripped of all her colonies. Reparations and occupation costs were to be shouldered by the German government even though the exact amount was yet to be determined. Germany was to assume sole responsibility for the war and was not allowed a seat in the League of Nations. On May 29, the German delegation presented its objections to the treaty. By June 17, the Entente had studied the German counterproposals and returned the treaty in its final form. The German plenipotentiaries then departed for home, where the peace treaty was already the sole topic of debate.<sup>3</sup>

The publication of the terms of the peace treaty in May completely shocked the German nation. Many Germans believed that since Germany had destroyed the dynastic state and accepted the armistice on the basis of the Fourteen Points, the peace would not be severe. Reception of the peace terms was met with almost nation-wide disapproval. Philipp Scheidemann spoke for the country as well as the government

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3. Eyck, Weimar Republic, 1:90-97; Alma Luckau, The German Delegation at the Paris Peace Conference (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941), pp. 115-20; U.S. Department of State, Treaties and Other International Agreements of the United States of America, 1776-1949 7 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1969), Treaty of Peace with Germany, 28 June 1919, 2:59-240.

when he declared, "What hand would not wither that binds itself and us in these fetters?"<sup>4</sup> How could Germany pay reparations, the Chancellor asked, if she was stripped of her resources? Why does the Entente need to occupy German territory if the Reichswehr was to be reduced to 100,000 men? Oskar Cohn of the USPD maintained that as a result of the treaty, irredentism and immorality would surface. Rumors of reactionary and radical coups began to spread throughout the country. The German government declared a state of national mourning and demanded that foreign military officials wear civilian clothes in order to prevent outbursts of violence. The unity expressed by the German people in their opposition to the treaty moved President Ebert to consult with the High Command in order to ascertain Germany's options if hostilities were resumed.<sup>5</sup>

The military clauses of the Versailles Treaty were designed to eliminate any possibility of a formidable German military posture in the future. Article 160 of Part 5

4. Scheidemann, Memoirs, 2:311.

5. Reaction to the terms of the Versailles Treaty are covered in: Grew to Lansing, Berlin, 13 May 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/591; Ibid., 13 June 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/631; Berliner Tageblatt, 1 June 1919; Vossische Zeitung (Berlin), 30 May 1919; Ibid., 5 June 1919; Magdeburgische Zeitung, 1 June 1919; Vorwärts (Berlin), 1 June 1919; Volksstimme (Chemnitz), 27 May 1919; Freiheit 29 May 1919; Kreuz Zeitung (Berlin) 30 May 1919; Deutsche Zeitung (Berlin), 30 May 1919; Schlesische Zeitung, 27 May 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/631; Meeting of Reich Ministry, Berlin, 8 May 1919 in P.I.G.R., pp. 284-87; Ibid., 29 May 1919 in P.I.G.R., pp. 290-91.

ordered the size of the German army reduced to 100,000 officers and men. The officer corps was not to exceed 4,000 men and the General Staff was prohibited. The SPD program of a national militia was destroyed by the Entente's insistence that all non-commissioned officers and enlisted men serve twelve years, while officers were to remain under the colors for twenty-five years. Restrictions on aircraft development, armor, and artillery production also illustrated the Entente's desire to destroy the German military machine. Demilitarization of the Rhine and deployment of an Inter-Allied Commission of Control within Germany further infringed upon the national sovereignty of the Republic.<sup>6</sup>

While Part 5 of the Versailles Treaty attempted to destroy the physical ability of Germany to wage war, Part 7 demanded the moral capitulation of the German people. According to Article 227:

The Allied and Associated Powers publicly arraign William II of Hohenzollern, formerly German Emperor, for a supreme offence against international morality and the sanctity of treaties. A special tribunal will be constituted to try the accused thereby assuring him the guarantees essential to the right of defence. It will be composed of five judges, one appointed by each of the following Powers: namely, the United States of America, Great Britain, France, Italy, and Japan.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to this act, Article 228 stated that certain unnamed high military officials should also be prosecuted

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6. U.S. Department of State, Treaties, 2:115-131.

7. Ibid., 2:136.

for "having committed acts in violation of the laws and customs of war."<sup>8</sup> The picture of the ex-Kaiser and his military chiefs facing a kangaroo court was viewed with utter contempt. Hundreds of wartime officers flocked to Hindenburg's home to assure the hero of Tannenberg of their support. A declaration from the League of German Officers warned the German government as well as the Entente that

We cannot protect our former War Lord with our bodies, but a Parliament and Government calling themselves German ought never to consent to his extradition. We shall know also how to protect all our glorious Army leaders and comrades who are among us. We shall place ourselves resolutely in front of them.<sup>9</sup>

In this atmosphere of defeat and disgust, many officers and civilians called for a resumption of hostilities so Germany could at least salvage her honor.

Although the indignation of the officer corps paralleled that of the German people, few desired the complete destruction of the state. When Ebert approached the High Command for an assessment of Germany's military situation, Groener replied that resistance in the West was hopeless. Hindenburg agreed with this appraisal but still advocated a fight to the finish.

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8. Ibid., 2:138.

9. Times (London), 24 June 1919, p. 14; In a memo to the American Secretary of State a diplomat reported that at Hindenburg's home in Kolmar, "there was a military atmosphere. Every day 80 to 100 officers dine with Hindenburg in order to have their pictures taken with him." Grew to Lansing, Berlin, 24 June 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/636, Memo #4.

Realizing that the Entente could and would overrun the entire country if the government refused to sign the treaty, Ebert threw his support behind ratification. On June 20, three days prior to the expiration of the armistice, however, Scheidemann resigned as Chancellor. Having so eagerly declared the Republic's existence in November, 1918, Scheidemann just as hastily exited when the government faced its harshest hour.<sup>10</sup> The reactionary paper Kreuz Zeitung reminded its readers that, no matter who occupied the chancellorship, "The man who is responsible for the Scheidemann peace without annexations and contributions is responsible for the Scheidemann peace of bondage and humiliation."<sup>11</sup> One day after the resignation of Scheidemann and the desertion of the Democratic Party from the government coalition, the German fleet, interned at Scapa Flow, was scuttled while the British fleet was on maneuvers. This event, along with the mysterious burning of several captured French war flags, enraged the Entente representatives, who refused to extend the armistice or reconsider any further treaty objections. Gustav Bauer, an influential trade union official and Minister of Labor

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10. Gordon Craig, "Reichswehr and National Socialism: The Policy of Wilhelm Groener, 1928-1932," Political Science Quarterly 63 (1948), p. 195; *Ibid.*, Politics of Prussian Army, pp. 368-69; Carsten, Reichswehr and Politics, p. 39; Gordon, Reichswehr and Republic, pp. 94-97; Ryder, German Revolution, pp. 223-24; Berlau, German Social Democratic Party, pp. 296-99; Eyck, Weimar Republic, 1:103-04; Scheidemann, Memoirs, 2:316.

11. Kreuz Zeitung (Berlin), 2 June 1919, in R.D.S., 862.00/631.

under Scheidemann, became Chancellor after the conservative opposition refused to form a ministry. Bauer, with the aid of the Centre Party, was able to convince the National Assembly of the necessity for immediate action. After a tumultuous session, the Weimar authorities accepted the Versailles Treaty. On June 28, Hermann Muller of the SPD and Dr. Hans Bell of the Centre signed the treaty in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles. Twelve days later the German National Assembly, by a vote of 208 to 115, ratified the Diktat of Versailles.<sup>12</sup>

Approval of the Versailles Treaty ended the war but enlivened public opinion against the Entente. From the pages of the German presses rolled one denunciation after another. Initially most of the diatribes were directed against the victorious Entente. Freiheit, the voice of the USPD, looked to the East for salvation when it stated,

We are filled with confidence that the peace by violence will be set aside by an act of the solidarity of the international proletariat. As on the first day of the revolution we demand close relations between the Russian Soviet Republic, with the proletariat of all countries. However much the bourgeoisie may resist, the world revolution is marching on, to socialism belongs the immediate future.<sup>13</sup>

Vorwärts, assured the German people that the government would do everything to revise the Diktat. In a heated article the SPD paper proclaimed that the treaty was

12. Times (London), 23 June 1919, p. 15; Watt, Kings Depart, pp. 186-89; Eyck, Weimar Republic, 1:103; National Assembly, Debates, 22 June 1919, pp. 1113-17; Ibid., 30 June 1919, pp. 1413-20.

13. Freiheit (Berlin), 2 July 1919, in R.D.S., 862.00/654.

valueless from the very beginning. It has a meaning only as long as the Entente can continue to exercise the force is necessary to keep alive this monster of the idea of peace. It is by no means certain that its superiority of power of Germany's defenselessness will continue for a very long time. . . . We will not rest until this document that is an insult to every notion of decency and honor lies on the ground, torn and destroyed.<sup>14</sup>

The Frankfurter Zeitung called for a peaceful reconciliation between Germany and her former enemies but also chastised the victors for the harshness of the peace terms. Deploring the spirit of the Entente's policies, the Frankfurt paper stated that

The brutality with which Germany, lying helpless on the ground was chained, plundered and tortured, may not make us lose faith in the belief that the idea of reconciliation is the correct one. It has now been proven that . . . the victors . . . do not value justice and reconciliation at all. . . . Our internal spiritual aim must be the rebirth of our realm in peaceful development and the liberation from the yoke of Versailles through the means of reason and right.<sup>15</sup>

The Deutsche Tageszeitung lamented the separation of so many Germans from the Fatherland. Quoting from a convention of the German National Peoples Party, the paper proclaimed,

German brothers and sisters in the East and West!  
You will not leave us; we shall not leave you. The language of blood is stronger than the letters of a peace treaty. We belong inseparably together. The enemy may do violence to you--we shall not forget.<sup>16</sup>

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14. Vorwärts (Berlin), 29 June 1919; For other SPD attacks on the Versailles Treaty see National Assembly, Debates, 9 July 1919, pp. 1468-69.

15. Frankfurter Zeitung, 30 June 1919.

16. Deutsche Zeitung (Berlin), 29 June 1919, in R.D.S., 862.00/654.

German unity against the terms of the treaty soon disappeared as the various parties searched for the reasons for Germany's demise and dishonor. On the Left, the gulf between the Majority Socialists and the Independents proved impossible to bridge despite the growing strength of the Right. At the SPD party congress in June, Noske exploded a bombshell when he accused Emil Barth, a radical Independent, of attempting to enlist Freikorps support in order to overthrow the government. Although the USPD maintained that Barth had pursued his course of action without party approval, Noske assailed the USPD by stating, "You grumble because others do what you would like to do yourselves. If you detest the Noske-guard, you dream secretly of an Emil Barth guard."<sup>17</sup> When Eduard Bernstein announced that 90 percent of the Entente's terms were justified, the conference erupted into bedlam. Although Bernstein had broken all ties with the USPD, speaker after speaker attacked the once revered revisionist, labeling him a pervert, a traitor, and a dreamer. The question of unity between the socialist parties received considerable attention, but most SPD leaders remained suspect of the USPD's goals. Herman Muller, Ebert's successor to the party chairmanship, criticized the Independents for not

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17. Vorwärts (Berlin), 12 June 1919; Noske's accusations are discussed in: Protocol SPD, Weimar, 1919, pp. 130-33; Deutsche Zeitung (Berlin), 12 June 1919, in R.D.S., 862.00/638.

aiding the SPD in the elections for the National Assembly. Scheidemann condemned the USPD's demand for disenfranchisement of the non-working class, while Otto Wels, co-chairman of the party, stressed the inability of the Independents to formulate any workable program. Despite the denunciations of the party hierarchy, a motion for talks between the two parties passed easily. The SPD declaration stated that the Majority Socialists were willing to enter negotiations with the USPD on the condition that the Independents accept the principles of democracy and abandon all ties with the communists. Deputations from both parties met in late June and commenced discussions.<sup>18</sup>

Despite all attempts at Socialist reconciliation, both parties remained ideologically opposed to one another. The USPD, after the suppression of the January uprising, had drifted farther to the Left. Although many Independents, led by Kautsky, recognized the need for unification, the radical elements within the party remained bitterly hostile to the SPD. Ernst Daumig, spokesman for the revolutionary shop stewards, considered the SPD traitors to the revolution and tools of the reaction. Diminution of the role of the Workers' Councils and the scope of the Soldiers' Councils further moved the Independents to suspect the SPD's moves

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18. Protocol SPD, Weimar, 1919, pp. 240-81; Ibid., 182-85; Ryder, German Revolution, p. 225.

and motives. At the Berne Conference of the Second International in February, 1919, Hugo Haase concluded that the proletarian dictatorship was necessary in order to curtail conservative counterattacks. Over the objections of Kautsky and his followers, the USPD adopted a party program in March which favored the radical wing of the party.<sup>19</sup>

While Freikorps troops crushed another uprising in the streets of Berlin, the USPD delegates drafted a resolution which stated,

The historical task of the USPD is to be the standard-bearer of the class-conscious proletariat in its revolutionary struggle for liberation. The . . . party takes its stand on the council system. It supports the councils in their struggle for economic and political power. It strives for the dictatorship of the proletariat, the representative of the great majority of the nation, as the essential postulate for the realization of socialism. Only socialism will bring the abolition of all class rule, the elimination of every dictatorship, pure democracy.<sup>20</sup>

The divisions in the socialist camp seriously hindered any fresh initiatives by the Weimar government. Since the SPD had to rely on middle-class support, reforms of the economic system proved difficult to develop. SPD and USPD supporters viewed the question of socialization from totally different perspectives. To the Independents, socialization of the major industries was essential from the very inception of the revolution. The SPD, on the other hand, argued that

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19. Ryder, German Revolution, pp. 218-23; Lindemann, Red Years, pp. 46-49.

20. Ryder, German Revolution, p. 222.

because of the strain on the German economy imposed by the war, socialization would have to proceed slowly and selectively. Only through increased production could the proletariat reap the fruits of socialism. In accordance with this view, the SPD condemned the use of economic strikes while the USPD considered the strike as the most powerful weapon in the proletarian arsenal. During the March uprisings in Berlin, SPD deputies pleaded with the workers to recognize the disastrous course they were pursuing. At the SPD party congress in June, party spokesmen argued that socialization could only be achieved through massive taxation. This course would weaken the economy and impede recovery. Others maintained that the workers, after years of hardship and misery, lacked the required ethical outlook to establish a socialist economy. Still others argued that the Entente's harsh demands made immediate socialism impossible. A few theoreticians further maintained that one socialist country surrounded by a sea of capitalism would be doomed from the very beginning. When the Scheidemann cabinet resigned in June and the Democratic Party left the government coalition, deputations from the Centre Party agreed to join the Bauer Ministry only under the condition that any further socialization be suspended. Thus when Rudolf Wissell, the SPD

Minister of Economics, presented his plan for a mixed economy in July, the SPD leadership rejected his proposals.<sup>21</sup>

Instead of instituting massive socialization, the SPD opted to restructure the position of the workers vis-à-vis their employers. As early as November, 1918, the Free Trade Unions in conjunction with the three major non-socialist unions had reached an agreement with the major industrial associations. Under the terms of this pact the unions were deemed as the agents of the employees, all company unions were dissolved, and restrictions on unionization were destroyed. The eight-hour day was instituted along with workers' committees in all firms engaging more than fifty employees. Union delegates shared in the administration of employment offices, arbitration boards, and aided in the development of policy decisions. In order to expand the council system, the SPD introduced a Factory Council Law in August, 1919.<sup>22</sup>

The Betriebsratgesetz signalled the first attempt by the government to institute a new economic policy in accordance

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21. National Assembly, Debates, 14 February 1919, pp. 72-85; Ibid., 12 March 1919, pp. 718-21; Ibid., 9 August 1919, pp. 2273-75; Ibid., 3 March 1919, pp. 458-66; Protocol SPD, Weimar, 1919, pp. 233-47; Berlau, German Social Democratic Party, pp. 265-74; Ryder, German Revolution, pp. 225-26; Rejection of Wissel's policies forced the Economics Minister to resign; Grew to Lansing, Paris 25 July 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/661.

22. Eyck, Weimar Republic, 1:133-34; Berlau, German Social Democratic Party, pp. 278-79.

with the economic promises of the constitution. According to Article 165 of Section Five,

Workers and employees shall be called upon to cooperate in common with employers, and on an equal footing, in the regulation of salaries and working conditions, as well as in the entire field of the economic development of the forces of production. . . . Workers and employees shall, for the purpose of looking after their economic and social interests, be given legal representation in Factory Councils. . . .<sup>23</sup>

Under the terms of the Factory Council Law all commercial, agricultural, and industrial firms employing twenty or more workers were required to establish councils. All matters of personnel, policy, and production were subject to council approval. Although opposed violently by the Independents and vociferously by the conservatives, the Betriebrätegesetz became law in January, 1920.<sup>24</sup>

The SPD's attempts to revitalize the economic policy of the state and restructure the position of the workers met with opposition on two fronts. The USPD and the KPD considered the SPD's rejection of immediate socialism as a return to capitalism, while the conservatives viewed the Factory Councils as the first step on the road to communism. While neither extreme held sufficient power or popularity to alter the government's policies, both utilized every opportunity to attack the credibility of the Weimar representatives.

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23. McBain & Rogers, Constitutions, p. 208.

24. Eyck, Weimar Republic, 1:134; Vorwärts (Berlin), 10 August 1919.

Strikes in 1919 surpassed the five thousand mark. Reactionary papers and prophets blamed the government for Germany's position in the world and promised retribution to the November criminals. As war-time participants began to publish their memoirs, the Dolchstoss theory emerged. In their desperate search for an explanation of Germany's defeat, many writers claimed that internal revolution sapped the strength of the people and superseded military collapse. Even prior to the ratification of the peace treaty, certain military and civilian figures were preparing publications which attempted to absolve the army from any part in Germany's demise. Colonel Max Bauer, a former General Staff officer and friend of Ludendorff, produced an article in June, 1919, claiming that the army command never forced the government to request an armistice. Ludendorff's memoirs strengthened this fantasy and fabricated more fables.<sup>25</sup> Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz's account of the war and defeat closed by stating:

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25. For strikes in July alone see: Berliner Volkszeitung, 4 July 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/632; Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung (Berlin), 4 July 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/633; Germania (Berlin), 17 July 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/648; Vorwärts (Berlin), 16 July 1919; Ibid., 1 July 1919; Ibid., 2 July 1919; Freiheit (Berlin), 2 July 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/654; Kreuz Zeitung (Berlin), 2 July 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/654; Die Welt am Montag (Berlin), 3 July 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/664; Bauer's article is found in Frankfurter Zeitung, 14 June 1919; Ludendorff's memoirs are discussed in Freiheit (Berlin), 25 August 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/711; Frankfurter Zeitung, 22 August 1919; Ibid., 23 August 1919; Vorwärts (Berlin), 20 August 1919; Koelnische Zeitung, 20 August 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/712; Hamburger Fremdenblatt, 1 September 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/718.

The revolution throwing overboard everything that had made us great, was the greatest crime ever committed against our people. Germany will at least attain a new life with honor when she shakes off this depravity and lack of discipline which are now holding her.<sup>26</sup>

The controversy aroused by the Dolchstoß designers provided fuel to the reactionary fire. Throughout 1919, conservative circles continued to castigate the government. Organizations such as Der Alldeutsche Verband, Der Bund der Aufrechten, Die Deutsche Adelsbund, Die Deutsche Nationaler Jungbund, and Der Deutscher Offizierbund heaped abuse on the activities of the government. The change of the national colors to red, black, and gold in June infuriated large sections of the conservatives. When a jockey named Kaiser, riding a horse bedecked in the Imperial colors of red, black, and white, won the German Derby in July, praise for the ancien régime reached new heights in the conservative press.<sup>27</sup>

In order to counter the charges of the reactionaries and challenge the verdict of the Entente, the National Assembly, on August 20, established a Parliamentary Committee of Investigation. The twenty-eight members of the committee included representatives of all political parties in the National Assembly and investigated four major areas. The first subcommittee dealt with the outbreak of the war and

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26. Alfred von Tirpitz, Erinnerungen von Alfred von Tirpitz (Leipzig: K. F. Koehler, 1920), p. 505.

27. Dresel to Lansing, Berlin, 1 April 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/907; Grew to Lansing, Paris, 25 July 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/661.

proceeded smoothly and efficiently. The second subcommittee, which investigated the possibilities of peace during the war, soon became exposed to the passions and prejudices of the hour. When Dr. Karl Helfferich, former Imperial Finance Minister, took the stand, he refused to answer any questions asked by Dr. Oscar Cohn, the USPD committee representative.<sup>28</sup> After the committee overruled his objections, Helfferich proclaimed to the audience that,

This committee . . . is . . . engaged in the task of getting at the reasons which led to the terrible collapse of our country. In my opinion, Delegate Dr. Cohn took a very direct part in this collapse. According to a telegram from Mr. Joffre . . . the Berlin representative of the Russian soviet government . . . Dr. Cohn had Mr. Joffre put money belonging to the Russian soviet government at his disposal for the purpose of bringing about a revolution in Germany when our country was making its hardest fight against overwhelming numbers of its enemies.<sup>29</sup>

Cohn's rebuttal that the money in question was procured for the care of Russian prisoners and not the creation of a revolutionary proletariat satisfied very few people.<sup>30</sup>

After Helfferich's opening barrage against Cohn, nationalist agitators and communist activists carried their cases into the streets. Hugo Haase died in early November of wounds resulting from an assassination attempt

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28. Eyck, Weimar Republic, 1:134; Germany, Nationalversammlung, Official German Documents Relating to the World War 2 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1923), 2:752-54 (hereafter cited as Nationalversammlung Inquiry).

29. Nationalversammlung Inquiry, 2:755.

30. Ibid., 2:756.

in October. On the first anniversary of the November revolution, the government had to suspend all rail traffic for fear of revolutionary outbursts in Berlin. In late November the USPD held a congress in Leipzig. Although the Independents had lost thousands of supporters in fights with the Freikorps, membership had risen from 300,000 in January to more than 750,000. Spurred on by Lenin's success in Russia, the USPD voted to abandon the Second International. While a few delegates urged unification with the SPD, most Independents felt that Majority Socialists would soon be in the minority. A party program demanding the dictatorship of the proletariat, regardless of the desires of the people, was approved.<sup>31</sup>

Despite the disgust and disillusionment shared by many people over the policies of the Weimar government, neither the extreme Left nor Right felt strong enough to challenge openly the state. The reason for this was the army. Throughout the early months of 1919, the bayonets of the Freikorps maintained government authority. While the Entente deliberated Germany's fate, the Weimar authorities decided to begin reconstruction of the army. In March, 1919, a law calling for the formation of a provisional Reichswehr was

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31. Dyar to Lansing, Berlin, 9 October 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/730; Grew to Lansing, Paris, 16 October 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/746; Ryder, German Revolution, pp. 231-33; American Mission to Lansing, Berlin, 6 November 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/759; Prager, USPD, pp. 208-10; Wallace to Lansing, Paris, 31 December 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/775.

approved. Having previously secured authority over the Soldiers' Councils, the High Command set out to reorganize the military forces of the country. Ebert's assurance that officers below the rank of general would be selected by the military authorities with the concurrence of the Defense Minister was also approved in March. The provisional army would be formed from Freikorps units, individual voluntary enlistments, and incorporation of elements of the Imperial army. Officers in the Freikorps and certain enlisted personnel could receive commissions in the Reichswehr upon approval from the military authorities. The new army would thus be a unified, standardized fighting force. When the terms of the Versailles Treaty were received, however, unity within the army disappeared.<sup>32</sup>

The debate over whether to accept or reject the peace treaty highlighted deep divisions within the army. General Groener argued for acceptance on the grounds that German unity was of primary importance, regardless of the costs. Although Groener despised the Diktat, he maintained that the calls for "defeat with honor" would result in the permanent destruction of Germany. General Reinhardt, on the other hand, maintained that acceptance of the peace treaty would result

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32. Carsten, Reichswehr and Politics, pp. 32-33; Wheeler-Bennett, Nemesis of Power, p. 60; Gordon, Reichswehr and Republic, pp. 55-57; Craig, Politics of Prussian Army, pp. 362-64.

in revolts by the army. Although Western Germany would suffer occupation if the treaty was rejected, Reinhardt and his supporters envisioned the erection of a new German nation with Prussia as the nucleus. On June 19, the major military figures of the army met at Weimar and pleaded their cases. The commanding generals in the Eastern provinces generally supported Reinhardt while those in the West and South followed Groener. Both sides predicted popular revolts no matter which course was adopted, and some generals urged a military dictatorship in order to weather the expected storm. General Otto von Below, military head of the districts due to become a part of Poland, lost his command after his plans for a military coup were uncovered. General Max Hoffmann, army architect of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, was also relieved when he stated publicly that no territory under his jurisdiction would be surrendered. Several generals dispatched notes to the government demanding revision of the treaty and protection of all German military personnel. All of these measures failed, however, because the government realized that the army could not possibly withstand an Allied attack.<sup>33</sup>

The approval of the Versailles Treaty in July and the acceptance of the Weimar constitution in August established

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33. Carsten, Reichswehr and Politics, pp. 37-43; Wilhelm Groener, Lebenserinnerung (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1957), pp. 493-510; Craig, Politics of Prussian Army, pp. 368-73; Berliner Tageblatt, 29 June 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/646; Grew to Lansing, Paris, 9 July 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/647.

the new political and military order in Germany. Since the General Staff was prohibited by the treaty, Hindenburg resigned. Ebert dispatched a note to the revered Field-Marshal stating,

In the name of the Government, I send to you Mr. Field-Marshal General, once more our irrevocable thanks for all your services for the best of the Fatherland. In the days of distress you conclude your tasks. We who under compulsion of duty must remain at our posts shall always look upon the manner in which you placed your personal feelings and views as a great model for us.<sup>34</sup>

By September, Groener had also left the army, thus ending the High Command's existence.<sup>35</sup>

The dissolution of the High Command, plus the destruction of the war ministries of the individual German states, placed the army under the control of the Minister of Defense. Noske retained the services of Reinhardt, who served as Chief of the Army Command (Chef der Heeresleitung). Directly under Reinhardt stood General Hans von Seeckt, who occupied the position of Chief of the Troop Offices (Chef der Truppenamtes). Von Seeckt characterized the world's vision of the Prussian officer. Tall and thin, with a monocle always on his person, von Seeckt descended from a long line of military officers. Although assigned to the General Staff at the age of 33, von Seeckt had participated on almost every battle front

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34. Frankfurter Zeitung, 6 July 1919.

35. Carsten, Reichswehr and Politics, p. 58; Groener warned Ebert about the necessity of eliminating politics from the army in his last official directive to the President.

during World War I. After serving as the German military representative at the Paris Peace Conference, von Seeckt returned to Germany to aid in the development of the new Reichswehr.<sup>36</sup>

Personnel selection for the new army proved the most serious problem for the military chiefs. Von Seeckt desired to create the core of a potentially powerful, well-disciplined army. Although the army was to encompass only 100,000 men, von Seeckt believed that "The real effective military force of a country lies in the size of its population and in its wealth and these forces are not susceptible to limitation."<sup>37</sup> In order to maintain a strong army, the new chief wanted an officer corps that would incorporate the pride of the old army and the scientific progress of modern military technology. To achieve both of these goals staff officers were given preference over all others, especially Freikorps leaders, whom von Seeckt considered ill-disciplined. Utilization of the army to quell internal disturbances was viewed by von Seeckt with disgust because of the friction produced between the military and the public.<sup>38</sup>

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36. Gordon, Reichswehr and Republic, pp. 75-78; Hans von Seeckt, Thoughts of a Soldier (London: Ernst Been Ltd., 1930), i-ix.

37. von Seeckt, Thoughts, p. 49.

38. Ibid., pp. 66-67; Hans von Seeckt, The Future of the German Empire (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1930), p. 134.

In its relation to the government, von Seeckt insisted that the army serve as the "first servant of the state."<sup>39</sup> This did not mean, however, that the state's obligations to the army remained non-existent. The state should guarantee the army its "appropriate place in public affairs" and protect the army from criticism. Training of officers should also be the army's concern.<sup>40</sup> As far as politics in the army were concerned, von Seeckt emphatically stated that,

The army should be "political" in the sense in which I understand the word, i.e., it should grasp the conception of the state; but it certainly must not be political in the party sense. Hands off the army is my cry to all parties.<sup>41</sup>

With this set of principles, the Chief of the Troop Offices set out to reorganize and rebuild the Reichswehr. In order to acquire the best qualified men and still appease the demands of the new political order, von Seeckt devised an eclectic method of personnel selection. Officers were chosen from:

1. Senior and medium-senior command officers from the ranks of regimental-commander upward.
2. Younger regular officers serving on the General Staff and in staff appointments.
3. A not very large number of regular war-time lieutenants, who though sometimes very young, had commanded companies and batteries for two years and more or who, at the end of the war, were holding junior adjutants' appointments in the field.
4. Noske-Lieutenants numbering about 1,000 middle aged, long-service, non-commissioned officers.<sup>42</sup>

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39. von Seeckt, Thoughts, p. 78.

40. Ibid., p. 79.                      41. Ibid., pp. 79-80.

42. Demeter, Officer Corps, pp. 49-50.

Selection of the enlisted ranks was based upon educational as well as physical abilities, since any future growth of the army would necessitate the need for highly trained non-commissioned officers.<sup>43</sup>

The reorganization of the army brought little peace to the government or the generals. Thousands of rejected officers viewed their dismissals as the product of republican prejudices or personal revenge. In the Freikorps, especially, hatred for the Reichswehr and the government it supported grew daily.<sup>44</sup> From the pages of the Deutsche Zeitung, Ludendorff condemned the army chiefs and the government for catering to the republican recruits. The dissolution of the Freikorps, which Ludendorff claimed represented "the spirit of the old army," was viewed with considerable contempt by the conservatives.<sup>45</sup> On the Left, the government was accused of allowing the army to run the state. Scheidemann's articles in Vorwärts and accusations on the floor of the National Assembly drew much praise from the USPD and the KPD. Noske's replies that few socialists could be persuaded to enter

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43. Gordon, Reichswehr and Republic, pp. 206-07.

44. Ibid., pp. 79-80; Waite, Free Corps, pp. 142-49; Carsten, Reichswehr and Politics, pp. 71-78.

45. Deutsche Zeitung (Berlin), 12 October 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/763; Vorwärts (Berlin), 7 October 1919; Ryder, German Revolution, p. 227; Carsten, Reichswehr and Politics, pp. 73-74.

military service only convinced the government's critics that Noske had "fallen prey to the militaristic spirit."<sup>46</sup>

External criticism of the army was matched by internal concern over the future of the Reichswehr. Throughout the army the fear of dismissal created much tension and the bankruptcy of the government was evidenced in army barracks as the material and monetary position of the soldiers declined. Abolition of the officer's rank insignia and alteration of the national colors infuriated many veterans.<sup>47</sup> As the Kreuz Zeitung reminded its readers,

Black, white, red were the colors for which fathers, brothers, and sons of all parties died in the most glorious of all wars. Black, white, red fluttered on the citadels of Antwerp and of Lille, over Vilna, Bucharest, Warsaw, Narva and Odessa. . . .<sup>48</sup>

Unchallenged attacks on the army by the SPD, USPD, and KPD papers and politicians also alienated many soldiers from the government, while resentment over the government's policy of promotions and transfers added to discontent within the army.<sup>49</sup>

Also complicating the problems of army reorganization was the anti-republican attitudes of the former war chiefs of the Reich. The publications of Bauer, Ludendorff, and Tirpitz were given renewed credibility when Hindenburg appeared

46. Berliner Volkszeitung, 30 September 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/743.

47. Gordon, Reichswehr and Republic, pp. 81-83.

48. Kreuz Zeitung (Berlin), 11 June 1919.

49. Gordon, Reichswehr and Republic, pp. 82-83.

before the Parliamentary Investigation Committee on November 18. When news of Hindenburg's arrival in Berlin was announced, nationalist street demonstrations erupted as officers joined the thousands of demonstrators who paraded past the Field-Marshal's hotel.<sup>50</sup> The fourteenth session of the second subcommittee opened with Hindenburg and Ludendorff saying that the war could have ended favorably for Germany if "determined and unanimous cooperation on the part of those in the armies and those at home had been the case."<sup>51</sup> Ludendorff accused the Social Democrats of working against an absolute victory because of the SPD's "apprehension of the so-called reaction and much-maligned militarism."<sup>52</sup> Hindenburg added credibility to the dolchstoss legend when he stated that,

An English general has said with justice: "The German Army was stabbed in the back." No blame is to be attached to the sound core of the Army. Its performances call, like that of the officers' corps, for our equal admiration. It is perfectly plain on whom the blame lies. If any further proof were necessary to show it, it is to be found in the statement made by the British general and in the utter amazement of our enemies at their victory.<sup>53</sup>

While Hindenberg and Ludendorff insinuated that the Social Democrats had aided the enemy, the Entente continued

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50. Dyar to Lansing, Berlin, 15 November 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/767.

51. Nationalversammlung Inquiry, 2:853.

52. Ibid., 2:859.

53. Ibid., 2:855.

to act as if the SPD were leading another war effort. The refusal of the French to repatriate German prisoners of war until September, 1919, resulted in numerous demonstrations and attacks upon the Weimar authorities.<sup>54</sup> The Entente's demands that the Baltic Freikorps be ordered out of Latvia illustrated the tenuous hold the government held over its own troops. Separatist movements in the occupied areas of Western Germany exposed the discontent of many Germans with their rulers and the designs of the French.<sup>55</sup> Entente orders outlawing the formation of paramilitary police forces destroyed the SPD's plans for the formation of a republican constabulary.<sup>56</sup> Utilization of colonial conscripts by the French for occupation duty in Germany infuriated the German people.<sup>57</sup> Although the Dutch refused to extradite William II, the Entente remained adamant over the necessity of prosecute

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54. Frankfurter Zeitung, 21 August 1919; Ibid., 27 August 1919; Hamburger Fremdenblatt, 27 August 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/711; Germania (Berlin), 17 August 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/712; Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung (Berlin), 16 August 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/712; Berliner Volkszeitung, 17 August 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/712; Meeting of Reich Ministry, Berlin, 15 March 1919 in P.I.G.R., pp. 260-62; Vorwärts (Berlin), 3 September 1919.

55. Koelnische Zeitung, 28 May 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/631; Frankfurter Zeitung, 30 May 1919; Freiheit (Berlin), 4 June 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/631; Hamburger Fremdenblatt, 2 June 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/631; Leipziger Tageblatt, 31 May 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/631; National Zeitung (Berlin), 3 July 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/633; Frankfurter Zeitung, 16 July 1919; Germania (Berlin), 15 August 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/700; Ibid., 13 September 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/736.

56. Vorwärts (Berlin), 8 December 1919.

57. Berlau, German Social Democratic Party, pp. 305-07.

German war criminals. Baron von Lesner, German Foreign Office representative, pleaded with the Entente to establish neutral courts or allow the German courts to deal with the accused. Noske, in a conversation with the British ambassador in Germany, admitted that even if "he could induce the police to arrest the accused, they would be killed in the attempt and his own life would not be worth a moment's purchase."<sup>58</sup>

Entente pressure, combined with radical and reactionary plots, placed the government in a precarious position during the early months of 1920. While the National Assembly debated the Factory Council Law in January, the USPD and KPD ordered their supporters to demonstrate in front of the Reichstag. When some agitators were denied admission to the legislative chamber, the crowd grew angry and someone fired on the Reichstag guard. Reichswehr soldiers turned their weapons on the crowd and chaos erupted. USPD delegates condemned the government for being more repressive than the former regime. Nationalists also continued to criticize the government's policies and personnel. Karl Helfferich assumed the spotlight again in January when he accused Finance Minister Matthias Erzberger of corruption. Erzberger was a target of special hatred to the nationalist because of his role in the Peace Resolution of 1917, his leadership of the German

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58. Lord Kilmarnock to Earl Curzon, Berlin, 26 January 1920, D.B.F.P., 9:618.

Armistice Commission, and his taxation policies. The Minister of Finance sued Helfferich and was quickly consumed in a lengthy court battle. On January 26, one week after the trial commenced, Erzberger was shot by an officer as he left the court. The trial, which lasted until March 12, resulted in a victory for Helfferich, the political death of Erzberger, and a severe blow to the prestige of the republic.<sup>59</sup>

The government, badly shaken by the Erzberger-Helfferich controversy, was immediately faced with the threat of a reactionary coup. On March 13, Freikorps troops, wearing helmets decorated with swastikas, entered Berlin and overthrew the government. Declaring the National Assembly dissolved, power was placed in the hands of Wolfgang Kapp, a nationalist agitator and founder of the annexationist Fatherland Party. Among Kapp's cohorts were several military figures, both retired and active. The most prominent army supporter of the coup was Lieutenant-General Walther Freiherr von Luttwitz, former chief of staff to the Crown Prince and commander of the Tenth Army Corps at Verdun. Joining Luttwitz was Lieutenant-Commander Hermann Erhardt, leader of the most fanatical Freikorps unit in Germany. Erhardt's naval brigades were reinforced with elements of the Baltic

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59. Ryder, German Revolution, pp. 238-40; A good summary of the Erzberger-Helfferich Affair is offered in Dresel to Lansing, Berlin, 28 February 1920 in R.D.S., 862.00/825 & R.D.S., 862.00/886; Eyck, Weimar Republic, 1:144-45.

Freikorps. Other retired military figures involved in the Putsch included General von der Goltz, Colonel Bauer, and Major Waldemar Pabst, a former officer of the foot cavalry who had previously attempted to incite a revolt against the government.<sup>60</sup>

Although the Kapp Putsch appeared as a complete surprise to most Germans, signs of the impending insurrection were noticeable prior to March 13. As early as July, 1919, von Seeckt had warned Noske of the danger of a reactionary coup with possible army involvement. After learning of Luttwitz's contacts with certain reactionary elements, von Seeckt reported his suspicions and ordered all those on his staff to avoid

stepping into the political limelight. I have recently learned . . . that various parties have been attempting to influence General Staff officers in definite political directions, and even to persuade them to participate in definite political movements. I am obliged to warn forcibly against acceptance of such overtures, not merely in the interest of the Officer Corps itself, but, far more, in that of the Fatherland. We need peace, order, and work at home, and, in order to achieve these, the greatest possible unity of all who pursue this goal. Everything that now breeds dissension and unrest among the people must be avoided. This is truly not the time for carrying differences of opinion into the open marketplace as it is also wrong to seek scapegoats for the disaster of former days.<sup>61</sup>

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60. Dresel to Lansing, Berlin, 5 April 1920 in R.D.S., 862.00/904; Gordon, Reichswehr and Republic, pp. 92-98.

61. Alma Luckau, "Kapp Putsch-Success or Failure?" Journal of Central European Affairs 8 (1948); 398; Gordon, Reichswehr and Republic, pp. 102.

This order, drafted on October 10, coincided with Noske's warnings in the National Assembly and the press concerning anti-republican agitation in the army.<sup>62</sup>

The fear of a revolt, either from the Left or the Right, was nothing new to Noske. Involvement of the army, however, did cause concern. As the Entente deadline for further troop reduction approached, von Seeckt and Noske decided to destroy the base of Luttwitz's military support. On February 29, Noske issued an order disbanding the Erhardt naval brigades. The Freikorps fanatics responded to this decree on March 1 by breaking up a meeting of the pacifist society, Neues Vaterland League, and beating up Helmuth von Gerlach, editor of Die Welt am Montag and president of the League. Luttwitz, realizing that his troops would soon be dissolved or dispersed to other units, met with Ebert and Noske on March 10 and demanded the cancellation of any further troop reductions. Noske firmly informed the general that his demands would not be met and that the Erhardt brigades were already allocated to other commands. Although the President and Reichswehr Minister expected Luttwitz to resign on the spot, the general balked. Noske then issued an order placing Luttwitz on leave and relieving him of command.<sup>63</sup>

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62. National Assembly, Debates, 29 October 1919, p. 3352; Berliner Volkszeitung, 8 October 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/826.

63. Noske, Von Kiel bis Kapp, pp. 202-03; Friedrich von Rabenau, Seeckt: Aus seinem Leben, 1918-1936 (Leipzig: v. Hase & Koehler, 1940), pp. 218-19; Dresel to Lansing, Berlin, 5 March 1919 in R.D.S., 862.00/826.

Luttwitz's inability to cajole Noske into accepting his demands convinced him that a coup was the only solution to the army's and the nation's salvation. Although Noske had issued orders for the arrest of the major ringleaders of the plot, the police procrastinated, allowing most of the plotters to escape. Convinced of the popularity of their program and the power of their troops, the Kappists moved into action. Since the government only had 3,000 soldiers stationed in Berlin and the 9,000 man police force was politically unreliable and militarily ineffectual, the march on the capital was a complete success.<sup>64</sup>

As the insurgents marched toward Berlin, Noske called his military chiefs together. While Reinhardt urged armed resistance against the rebels, von Seeckt argued that the army would be the principal victim of the plot if soldiers were ordered to fire on their former comrades. Since the police forces of the capital had already sided with the Kappists, even Reinhardt admitted that resistance would be hopeless. Reports from the outlying army districts confirmed von Seeckt's belief that military involvement would only add to the confusion created by Kapp. After the cabinet voted to move to Dresden to direct the destruction of the plotters, von Seeckt ordered the army to remain in the barracks and then

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64. Gordon, Reichswehr and Republic, pp. 108-12.

resigned his position. The general's belief that the insurrection lacked both the political and military power to be successful was soon evidenced as the Kappists attempted to establish the new order.<sup>65</sup>

The entrance of the Erhardt brigades into Berlin was followed by the eruption of a general strike throughout Germany. Upon leaving Berlin, Ebert issued a statement declaring,

By means of a mad coup de main the government buildings of Berlin have fallen into the hands of insurgents. No political party, no man of special brains stands behind these happenings. Everybody deprecates them. When the troops quartered at Doberitz who were about to be discharged, especially the Baltic troops, backed up this act of folly, the Government left Berlin, in order to avoid bloodshed and to spare the lives of the regular troops in Berlin, who were inferior in numbers; enough blood has flowed since 1914, and this adventure will collapse in a few days owing to its innate preposterousness.<sup>66</sup>

Ebert's assurances soon rang true as the bureaucracy, the army, and the banks refused to recognize the new government. The general strike, ordered by the German Trade Unions and the Association of Free Trade Unions on March 14 completely crippled the country.<sup>67</sup> One observer of the events in the

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65. Noske, Von Kiel bis Kapp, pp. 208-09; Rabenau, Seeckt, pp. 221-23; Gordon, Reichswehr and Republic, pp. 113-15; Ryder, German Revolution, pp. 241-42; Carsten, Reichswehr and Politics, pp. 78-80.

66. Dresel to Lansing, Berlin, 26 March 1920 in R.D.S., 862.00/892.

67. Gunther to Lansing, Hague, 15 March 1920 in R.D.S., 862.00/821; Dresel to Lansing, Berlin, 26 March 1920 in R.D.S., 862.00/892; Ryder, German Revolution, pp. 241-42.

capital stated,

The trade unions had now struck and struck heavily. They had proclaimed a General Strike with the gloves off. No essential services had been exempted. Water, light, power, communications, the very arteries of life, were completely cut off.<sup>68</sup>

Entente representatives, viewing the Kappists lack of popular support, spurned any diplomatic negotiation with the new regime.

Despite the almost total isolation of the insurgents, a few of the more reckless rebels advocated a hard line. When the Ebert government spurned all offers of mediation with the rebels, Kapp recognized the utter futility of his position. On March 17, Kapp turned over the government to Luttwitz and fled the country. Luttwitz toyed with the idea of forcing the workers to resume services, but this plan collapsed when the Berlin garrison announced their unconditional support for the Ebert government. Even Luttwitz and Erhardt realized that they could not oppose both the army and the workers. By March 17, the Freikorps, after maintaining Kapp in power for four days, was retreating out of Berlin.<sup>69</sup>

Although the general strike had proved very effective in destroying the Kapp regime, the SPD soon realized that the forces unleashed by the strike were difficult to contain

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68. John H. Morgan, Assize of Arms: The Disarmament of Germany and Her Rearmament (London: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 84.

69. Ryder, German Revolution, p. 242; Lord Kilmarnock to Earl Curzon, Berlin, 17 March 1920, D.B.F.P., 9:167.

as left wing radicals refused to call off the strike. In the Ruhr area a Red army of 20,000 workers emerged to challenge the authority of the government. After forcing the army out of the Ruhr, the strikers demanded certain concessions before they would disarm. Even after the government agreed to the worker's demands, the extremists refused to stand down. This move forced the government to order the army to reenter the Ruhr and restore order.<sup>70</sup>

Victory over the reactionaries and radicals in March, 1920, was not followed by a realignment of the political order in Germany. Although Bauer and Noske resigned, under heavy attack from their own party, the radical Independents chose to follow their own path to power. The SPD once again enlisted the aid of the Centre and Democratic parties to erect a new government coalition. The army emerged from the Kapp Putsch intact but altered. When Reinhardt resigned, out of sympathy with Noske, von Seeckt was given the top position in the army. Civilian commissions, established to investigate the conduct of the army during the Putsch,

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70. Gordon, Reichswehr and Republic, pp. 141-42; Waite, Free Corps, pp. 168-82; Ryder, German Revolution, pp. 244-45; Dresel to Lansing, Berlin, 21 March 1920 in R.D.S., 862.00/858; The workers in the Ruhr demanded (1) disarmament and punishment for all Kappists. (2) demobilization of army and formation of a workers' army. (3) dismissal of all important officials of a reactionary character. (4) socialization of mines and industries in Ruhr and nationalization of all coal and potash monopolies. Dresel to Lansing, Berlin, 19 March 1920 in R.D.S., 862.00/849.

ordered the dismissal of 180 officers, including 12 generals. While some politicians, such as Scheidemann, accused the army of sympathy, if not support for the rebels, most observers praised the military for their role during the coup. Von Seeckt's concern over the unity of the army seemed more than justified when one views the role of the radical Left in the wake of the revolt. If the army had been ordered to face the Kappists and the Ruhr revolutionaries, civil war might very well have erupted. The French occupation of Frankfurt, Darmstadt, Homburg, and Hanau during the Ruhr fighting further illustrated the fact that unless Germany attained internal order, she would always remain prey to the designs of her more powerful neighbors.<sup>71</sup>

The defeat of the Kapp Putsch and the Ruhr insurrection closed the first chapter in the history of the Weimar Republic. The government had weathered attacks from the Right and the Left and survived. By choosing pragmatic policies over dogmatic dialectics, the SPD had managed to keep the ship of state afloat and on the course of democratic parliamentarianism. The army command likewise exhibited flexibility in the face of the changing conditions of Germany. By working together the SPD and the army illustrated that national survival superceded any notions of class or caste consciousness.

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71. Gordon, Reichswehr and Republic, p. 128; Eyck, Weimar Republic, 1:156; Dresel to Lansing, Berlin 21 March 1920 in R.D.S., 862.00/858.

## CHAPTER IX

### CONCLUSION

When viewing the relationship between the German officer corps and the German Social Democratic Party, one finds few areas of mutual understanding. The residual hatred built up by many years of dogmatic dialectics on one side and anachronistic attitudes on the other, appears to open an inseparable gap between the two forces. Ideologically the internationalism of Marx contrasted visibly with the nationalism of the officer corps. Realistically, the potential strength of the SPD represented a direct threat to the position held by the officer corps.

To view the bridge between the army and the socialists as impassable, one forgets the realities of nineteenth century Europe. The conscription laws forced millions of workers to enter the Imperial armies. In the world of barracks routine and parade-ground discipline, the young recruits were instilled with the patriotic heritage of their Fatherland. Even the SPD instructed its supporters to serve with honor. Although the position of the officer corps remained a prime area of agitation for the SPD, very few party leaders desired the destruction of the nation as a requisite for the people's state.

The SPD's shift to a policy of reform further illustrated the ability of the party to operate within the confines of a monarchist state. The unhampered growth of the SPD after the eradication of the anti-socialist laws only added more credibility to the party's policies. Although the German state lacked much of the machinery of democracy, it provided the SPD with a platform to operate from and a proletariat to organize. As the industries of the Reich grew and prospered, the organizations of the workers likewise multiplied. SPD deputies found support for their policies outside of the working class as they came into contact with the non-socialist democratic elements of the country. The workers also demanded that the party agitate for pragmatic policies that would benefit their present position. The caucus room, the Reichstag floor, and the ballot box replaced the barricades as the battleground for the class struggle. When faced with criticism of its policies and practices, the SPD leadership simply pointed to its swelling ranks in the trade unions, its seats in the Reichstag and its powerful party organizations.

While the SPD achieved considerable success and strength prior to World War I, the party achieved only limited gains in the area of military reform. Although the SPD remained determined to defend the country, the party also had to defend its constituents who faced military service. As the army grew into millions, protests over the practices and position of the

officer corps also increased. The Emperor's insistence that all military matters were the sole prerogative of the crown appeared anachronistic in a world of mass armies and class consciousness. Throughout the pre-war period the SPD, in collusion with the democratic elements in Germany, continued to assault the privileges of the crown and the position of the officer corps.

The officer corps responded to the socialist protests with acrimony and asperity. Viewing any criticism of its policies as a direct challenge to the crown, the military elite remained determined to protect its position from civilian interference. To the idealists, attacks upon the officer corps were viewed as infringements upon the God-given rights of the Kaiser. The realists, on the other hand, believed that if the monarch lost his control over the army, the privileges and powers of the officer corps would be reduced. The clashes between the officer corps and the SPD, as evidenced in the Zabern Affair, illustrated the growing power of the anti-military forces among the people and in the parliament. What neither force foresaw was the advent of a world war so horrendous in scope and size that all established social and political institutions would face extermination.

World War I altered the size and stature of both the SPD and the officer corps. During the early days of the war, the status of both the party and the army skyrocketed. The

Burgfrieden, declared by all parties in the Reichstag, closed the gap between the SPD and the state. The dreaded socialist rabble proved to be loyal patriots as Germany faced invasion. Admiration and adulation were heaped on the officers of the army as the Tsarist menace was checked and the French armies retreated. When the war shifted from an offensive onslaught to a defensive stalemate, the fortunes of the SPD and the officer corps also changed. The demands of the annexationists, coupled with the military's machinations in the political and economic arena, resulted in a realignment of the SPD and a reassessment of the military's position during war. Dissidents within the party maintained that the SPD leadership had betrayed the basic tenets of social democracy in order to obtain the blessing of the Kaiser. As the Entente noose tightened around Germany's economic life and the military's policies choked off parliamentary power, more and more SPD supporters deserted the party. The SPD stood trapped in a system they had not created and could not change. The formation of the USPD in 1917 was the culmination of this discontent as many workers grew leery of the SPD's promises and weary of the war. Theodore Plivier's work, The Kaiser Goes; The Generals Remain, depicts the dilemma that faced many SPD advocates during the war. In the book a young worker attempts to convince an older socialist of the necessity to join the USPD. The SPD supporter states "The old party is what it has always been, a powerful advocate of our interests. The

SPD has always worked for us. . . ." The young USPD follower replies: "Traitors, that's what they are!" The old man angrily answers his young comrade: "Traitors, eh? Which are more traitors--those who voted for three loans or the others who voted for five?"

While the SPD emerged from the war bloodied and broken, the officer corps also appeared in a new light. The High Command's assumption of political as well as military leadership mirrored the position of the individual officer during the war. At the front, officers determined the life and death of thousands. The old Prussian concept of blind obedience, which worked well in the barracks, proved difficult to maintain or explain on the battlefield. Soldiers judged their superiors by their prudence instead of their pomposity. In Eric Remarque's epic work All Quiet on the Western Front, the author described how men, frightened and shell-shocked, advanced when they heard the voice of their trusted lieutenant. These same men showed nothing but hatred for the rear-echelon officers who continued to maintain the pre-war attitudes toward their men. In one scene a front-line veteran on leave forgets to salute an officer. He is reprimanded and warned that "You think you can bring your front-line manners here what? Well, we don't stand for that sort of thing. Thank God, we have discipline here!" As the country experienced the effects of a prolonged blockade, the extravagance of officers came under harsh criticism from

civilian and military quarters alike. Incidents of insubordination, especially in the rear areas, mounted as the prestige of the officer corps declined. In their quest for an all-out military victory, the military chiefs of the Reich lost not only the war but also the confidence of the people.

After the failure of the spring offensives of 1918, German troops reeled back toward the Fatherland. The Kiel uprisings in November not only hastened the collapse of the Second Reich but also opened the door to internal revolution. The Social Democrats attempted to patch up their differences with the USPD and provide direction for the re-establishment of order. Despite all efforts at cooperation, the SPD-USPD coalition proved unable to control the tide of revolution. Lacking political unity and military power, the SPD accepted support from the officer corps.

Modern historians such as John Wheeler-Bennett and Francis Carsten view Ebert's decision to work with the officer corps as the beginning of the end of the Weimar Republic. What these historians do not offer, however, are viable alternatives that the Social Democrats could have adopted. Utilization of revolutionary troops had proved disastrous. The Entente offered no support. The followers of the SPD were willing to work for the government but shunned military service. As the radical elements surfaced, Ebert had to find some type of military support because, as the Soviet example indicated, a strong, determined minority could easily assume power in times of confusion and chaos.

The infamous deal struck between Ebert and the High Command seems now not to have been earth-shaking. All the army desired was the maintenance of discipline in the armed forces and the rejection of Bolshevism. In return for this the government expected the officers to bring the army home from the front and respect the authority of the Soldiers' Councils. How this agreement between a government without an army and an army without a government could lead to the destruction of a regime not yet established has still to be answered. Ebert had acquired the trust of many military figures due to his services to the state during the war. By not crying wolf, as Kerensky did to Kornilov, Ebert was able to pursue the goal of establishing a truly democratic state rather than submit to the demands for a proletarian dictatorship.

The failure of the High Command to utilize the Imperial Army cannot be blamed on the military chiefs. Surely Goerner and his associates would have preferred war-proven units, but the troops refused to cooperate. The decision to recruit Freikorps was made out of necessity and not of choice. Both the army and the government were faced with the choice of shaping the events of the time or submitting to them. As the actions of von Seeckt illustrate, most army officers did not envision the Freikorps as the army of the future.

The future of the German army was decided by the Entente. The Versailles Treaty upset the plans of the SPD as well as

the officer corps. The SPD policy of a national militia was scrapped by the Entente's prohibitions. As bad as the economic picture appeared in 1919, few SPD supporters would enlist in an army requiring many years of active service. Restrictions on the size of the officer corps also created problems for the army chiefs. Despite the severity of the treaty, however, the leading figures in the army warned that resistance would mean destruction. Continued frustration and bitterness over the treaty plus the clouded economic and political situation soon forced the army to face renewed challenges from the Left and the Right.

The Kapp revolt in 1920 was the first major Right-wing attack on the government. During the period of 1918-1919 most revolts were leftist inspired and led. Critics of the army and its leadership claim that it was out of desire rather than duty that moved the army to destroy the insurgents. When viewing the actions of the army during the Kapp Putsch, these same critics maintained that the military pursued an opportunistic policy. The collaboration of some Reichswehr units with the rebels illustrates von Seeckt's realistic appraisal of the situation instead of reactionary attitudes. Since army organization was barely underway and some army officers were implicated in the Putsch, von Seeckt adopted a course of action that would protect the army from civil war and preserve the allegiance of the army to the legitimate government. In view of the action precipitated

by the far Left in the wake of the Kapp insurrection, von Seeckt's policies appear realistic and rational. Just as the Kappists could not face both the revolutionaries and the army, the Reichswehr would have had difficulty in defeating the Freikorps and the revolutionaries. Although the Ebert government had to leave Berlin for a few days, this seemed a small sacrifice when one considers the possibility of civil war.

In conclusion, one must reiterate that without the active aid and support of the officer corps, the establishment of the Weimar Republic would have been extremely difficult, if not impossible. The existence of the Republic during the period 1918-1920 was a result of the tireless efforts of the army command and the tenacity of the SPD leaders. Although the officer corps and the Socialists emanated from vastly different ideological, social, and political backgrounds, they both viewed the stability and security of the state as a necessity of the first order.

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