

New Germany

By LUDWIG LORE.

Suddenly as the war began it has ended. And the military rulers of Germany, whose insane lust for power thrust a world that was tottering on the brink of war for years into its horrible maelstrom, have fled from the wrath of their own revolutionary proletariat. The immediate causes of the sudden collapse of a seemingly invincible nation are obvious enough. The German people were suffering untold misery. They were starved and freezing. Their men and their boys were dying like flies on the battlefield. Their autocratic rulers, drunk with power, were showing with brutal frankness how utterly they despised the men and women who had given all they had to satisfy the insatiable greed of their capitalist classes. After four years of war Prussia still had its odious election laws, the Kaiser still ruled as the all-powerful lord over the German people. The great enthusiasm of the first period had given place to dumb, helpless apathy. The army at the front was fighting its last desperate battle. They, too, were sick to death of the endless slaughter. And the signs of misery at home, that crept into their letters and seeped through into the ranks at the front in spite of the stern measures adopted by the government broke the spirit of men who had gone without flinching through the bloodiest battles. The Allied forces found an army that had only one wish, to end it all, to be done with this fearful misery. The military power of Germany was broken. A victory of the Allied armies was inevitable. The horrors of warfare on their own soil stared the German people in the face. Their unbounded faith in the war-lords was shattered.

And yet, to-day Germany is not a nation of vanquished people. In spite of hunger and military defeat, the morale of the German people is not broken. Its working class has emerged from this war in spite of the awful price it paid in blood and suffering, the victor. It has suffered complete mili-

tary defeat, but it has gained the mastery over its own destiny.

Defeat was turned into victory, because, for generations, men and women of the working class have been preaching to their brothers and sisters the power of the proletariat. Defeat became victory because, through the days of darkest reaction, a small handful of men and women nursed the weak flame of revolutionary understanding in the hearts and minds of the people, because they sowed the seed of the revolution in the stony soil of a victorious nation, and waited for the fruit to ripen, with boundless faith in the ultimate awakening of the working class. Defeat became victory, because the splendid example of the Russian working class had shown them that nothing can crush a proletariat that believes in itself.

It would be difficult to overestimate the part that the Russian Revolution played in the revolution of the German working class. The appeals of the Russian leaders at Brest-Litovsk, and the shameful role played by the German war party, left an uneasy sense of shame in the hearts of men who had almost forgotten the meaning of internationalism. The soldiers that were sent to hold the conquered Russian provinces in subjection, came back filled with the new spirit of their vanquished captives. Russian aeroplanes dropped appeals and messages down upon the German soldiers. Newspapers in the German language were printed in Russia and smuggled over the border for distribution among the German people. The Russian embassy in Berlin became the hotbed of anti-monarchial and proletarian revolutionary agitation; from the tower of the building that only a few years ago was the horror of every social-democrat because it personified the regime of the bloody Tsar, fluttered the red flag of brotherhood, stirring long forgotten hopes and memories in the breasts of the German workers. Great printing presses turned out tons of literature, in the halls once sacred to the interests of the Russian Black Hundred, leaflets and appeals that were distributed everywhere by the adherents of the radical socialist movement. German Junkers had taken possession of

Russian land and Russian resources. The Russian people had won the very soul of the German nation.

To-day the political fortunes of the German nation lie completely in the hands of the Social Democratic movement. The capitalist system of production in Germany was so absolutely and completely subordinated to the war interests of the nation that the sudden coming of peace has left the bourgeoisie utterly helpless and demoralized. In Germany all industries not directly necessary for military purposes were stopped at the very beginning of the war. The effective blockade of the English fleet wiped out even such private enterprise as flourished in the Allied nations notwithstanding the rigid demands made by the war upon the capitalist resources of these nations. This isolation of German capital was completed by the stringent guarantees demanded by America from the neutrals to prevent the importation of supplies into the Central Empire. Even a victorious Germany would have passed through a terrible crisis before a return of its industries to a peace basis could have been effected. Defeat and the overthrow of the political and military oligarchy that had made Ludendorff the virtual ruler of the nation left the bourgeoisie powerless to resist its working class. After a few half-hearted attempts to safeguard their own political interests, the German liberal bourgeoisie, that was always notorious for its cowardliness and its servile toadying to the monarchical rulers gave up the struggle. The attempt to save the tottering throne by the appointment of the popular liberal Prince Maximilian to the Chancellorship, with the appointment of the three government Socialists to the ministry, and a liberal political program providing for the responsibility of the government to parliament, the right of the Reichstag to dissolve the ministry by a simple vote of disapproval and the reorganization of the monarchy after the pattern of that of Great Britain came too late to save the situation. The release of the political prisoners, chief among them Liebknecht and Dittmann, hastened the revolution that these measures were intended to prevent.

In spite of the honest and sincere efforts of Scheidemann, Gustav Bauer and Dr. David, these first socialist ministers of Germany, the revolution grew and spread. In a last desperate appeal directed by Scheidemann to Dr. Solf, then Secretary of Foreign Affairs, the former "requests" that the Emperor be "requested" to abdicate. And in order to leave no doubt as to the purpose of this appeal the "Vorwärts" at the same time published an article, obviously written by Scheidemann, in which he says: "Minorities must not be permitted to make the whole situation a tool by means of which they may accomplish their purposes, or everything will fall to pieces. . . . The German people must show that it can accomplish the greatest steps toward progress without exposing itself to the nameless terrors of civil war." As late as the 27th of October, hardly two weeks before the outbreak of the revolution, the majority socialist organ "Dresdener Volkszeitung" published the following:

"Out of the ranks of the Independents in these days are sounding exstastic cries for a revolution. It may be that some of these shouters know not what they do. They are calling for a revolution for the sake of a fanatic principle. They want the revolution for the sake of the revolution. They want a revolution according to their conception, with barricades and the blood of citizens without knowing what for. If they could read the history of the past, present and coming weeks in the light of the history of half a century, perhaps they could be made to realize that of which now they seem to have not even a conception, that we are living in the midst of a revolution, as bloodless, but at the same time as effective as any the world has ever seen, a revolution that has swept away hindrances that yesterday seemed insurmountable, that has overthrown, over night, the rule of those powers that yesterday believed themselves invincible."

On the 5th and 6th of November there were revolutionary outbreaks in Berlin, Kiel and other places. On the 7th Workmen's and Soldiers' Councils were being formed all over the

country. On the 9th the Emperor fled from German soil and Prince Maximilian was proclaimed Regent. On Monday, the 11th, Scheidemann and Ebert demanded his resignation in the name of the German people, and Ebert was proclaimed Chancellor of the German Socialist Republic. The Council of Plenipotentiaries (People's Commissariat), composed exclusively of Socialists, was formed in which all groups of the socialist movement were represented, Scheidemann, Ebert and Landsberg of the majority, Haase and Dittmann of the Independents, and Barth of the Spartacus group. This de-facto government of Germany is still in control but its status has already undergone radical changes. On the 25th of November the Government officially announced that an agreement had been reached with the Workmen's and Soldiers' Council with the following provisions:

1. All political power shall rest in the hands of the German Social Republic and the Workmen's and Soldiers' Council.
2. Its aim shall be the defense and development of the achievements of the Revolution, and the suppression of all counter-revolutionary activity.
3. Until the election of an Executive Council of the Soldiers' and Workmen's Council of the German Republic, the Executive Council in Berlin shall carry out the functions of this body.
4. The appointment and dismissal of members of all legislative bodies of the Republic, and of Prussia, until a final constitution has been adopted, shall be in the hands of the Central Executive Council, which shall also have the right to supervise their activity.
5. The Cabinet shall not appoint assistant ministers without previously consulting the Executive Council.
6. A convention of representatives of the Workmen's and Soldiers' Councils shall be called as soon as possible.

To understand the events that are taking place in Ger-

many to-day and their significance for the course that the Revolution in Germany will take, one must be familiar with the various socialist divisions existing and the history of their origin. The differences that divide the Social Democratic Party, the Independent Social Democratic Party and the Spartacus Group, are not new. They were not even caused directly by the war, although the war first brought these differences to a crisis that made a split in the forces of the German socialist movement inevitable. The opposition of these three groups to one another has its foundation not in their attitude to the war alone. In fact the position that the members of the different groups took when the war broke out was the direct outcome of their fundamental conception of the aims and purposes of the socialist movement. The act of the party majority in voting for the first war credit on the 4th of August, 1914, though it came as a shock to the socialist movement all over the world, was, in the last analysis, the logical consequence of the attitude into which the working class had been allowed to drift. The Social Democratic Party of Germany was an example, par excellence, of that period in the international movement that saw the growth of the socialist movement as a political party. The fall of the Paris Commune and the death of the first International marked the end of the first stormy period of stress and struggle of a poorly organized and powerless proletariat. The second International was built upon a new conception of the duty of the socialist movement and, under the leadership of the German socialist movement, laid particular emphasis upon the winning of political power on the national field. When the anti-socialist law had fallen and the Party entered once more stronger than ever upon the political field, it grew in leaps and bounds. It organized powerful labor unions which, after a comparatively short period of stormy battling against capital on the industrial field, became so powerful and so well organized that strikes and other forcible measures were the exception rather than the rule. On the political field the party progressed with stupendous rapidity. In a short time every Landtag had its Socialist delegation; large cities elected first

one, then numerous Socialists to their city councils. In the national, state and municipal legislative assemblages they forced the adoption of social legislation, and the German protective factory legislation, German old-age pension laws, unemployment laws and maternity protection laws have been models for Liberals and Socialists all over the world. The socialist movement grew in power and influence, and in growing moved further and further from revolutionary measures. Not that the German movement had become a mere reform party. In no other country were the members, the rank and file, so thoroughly familiar with the theories and revolutionary ideals of Marx and Engels. The German Socialist still believed implicitly in the necessity of overthrowing the capitalist state of society. The revolutionary foundation was there, but the radical spirit, the readiness to act had given way to a feeling that amounted almost to a conviction, that society would gradually develop into the socialist state, that it would be possible to bring about a socialist commonwealth, at least in Germany, peaceably, by a gradual evolution into a system of social ownership.

Long before the war broke out, an opposition group had come into existence in the Social-Democratic Party which, under the spiritual leadership of Karl Liebknecht, Klara Zetkin, Rosa Luxemburg and Franz Mehring opposed the tactics pursued by the great majority of the party. The National Congresses of the party for years had been the scene of stormy contention between the revisionist reform wing and the majority on the one hand, between the radicals and the majority on the other. The recognized leaders spoke of Liebknecht and his radical supporters with ill-concealed contempt, and regarded their demands for more radical and more revolutionary methods as the products of unripe, foolish propagandists.

When the war began this fundamental difference assumed gigantic importance. Where it had formerly been limited largely to theoretical discussion it now assumed a practical significance that determined the stand that was taken

by the members of the Reichstag group and by the membership at large on the question of war and government support. The majority felt that the socialist movement of Germany, in view of its achievements on the national field, was interested in the defense of what they termed "German Culture" against foreign attack. Their whole past made it inevitable that they should feel themselves the protectors, above all, of the German proletariat, and that they should regard the interests of that proletariat as inseparably bound up in the existence and immunity from attack on the German nation. The Liebknecht wing, on the other hand, maintained that the workingman has no country to defend, and that the only real self-defense of the proletariat lies in the revolution against its own capitalist class. In the caucus that preceded the vote in the Reichstag on the first war loan, only 13 out of 110 members protested against a favorable vote. But they were bound by the unit rule that obtains everywhere in the socialist movement, and voted unanimously in favor of the first war loan, while Haase, himself bitterly opposed to the attitude the party had adopted, as chairman of the socialist delegation, delivered the address explaining the vote of his party. When the vote on the second war loan was taken Karl Liebknecht alone voted against it; at a later vote he was joined by Otto Ruehle. On December 15, 1915, twenty socialist deputies voted against the new war loan and at the same time officially severed their connection with the official group, sitting in the Reichstag under the name "Arbeiter-Gemeinschaft." Around this nucleus the Independent Social Democratic Party was soon afterward founded.

From the very beginning, however, this new party displayed no unity of purpose or standpoint. There were two distinct groups, the so-called Moderates, Haase, Kautsky, Ledebour and Bernstein, on the one hand, and the radicals, or "Spartacus Gruppe," Liebknecht, Luxemburg, Zetkin and Mehring, on the other. The latter, from the beginning, insisted upon the complete reorganization of the international movement. It recognized that the socialist movement of the

whole world was headed in the wrong direction, not only in the question of militarism and war, but in its whole fundamental conception of the class struggle. They proclaimed the death of the second International, and, together with radical Socialists of other nations, at the famous Zimmerwald and Kienthal conferences, demanded the organization of the Third International on an international and anti-national basis. The Moderates as firmly believed that the party had only taken a misstep, that it would right itself after the war was over, and tenaciously adhered to the old methods of the Social Democratic Party, concentrating their efforts on the gaining of political power, whenever elections were held. They had joined with the Spartacus group, not so much because of the community of interests between them, but as a protest against the methods that were being used by the majority Socialists, and the complete submission of the latter to the dictates of the government. Nevertheless the Scheidemann, David, Ebert, Suedekum wing, who had signed away the political liberties of the working class, and Legien, the German Gompers, under whose leadership the labor movement became a faultlessly functioning part of the war machine, held the masses behind them. After a few months of sporadic growth the Independent Social Democracy languished, and finally lost their hold in some of the very strongholds of the radical movement.

The differences that divided the groups of the Social-Democracy are reflected clearly in their attitude toward the proletarian revolution in Russia. Kautsky and Bernstein were sharply critical, not to say oppositional in their position, Ledebour and Haase were sympathetic, while the Spartacus group at once enthusiastically supported and defended the measures adopted by the Soviet government. After his liberation, Liebknecht was the honorary chairman of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets held in Moscow on the 15th November, 1918. At this same congress Rosa Luxemburg and Franz Mehring were accorded an enthusiastic ovation. The whole-souled opposition which the majority Socialists evidenced, at all times, to the measures and tactics of the Bolsheviki and the Soviet Government, were only natural in

men who looked forward to a revolution in their own country with misgiving and fear. True to their old faith in the power of the Social Democracy to "evolve" its ideal by a gradual system of development, through the various political and economic stages, they could see in the radical and aggressive measures of the Russian proletariat only ruin and destruction and regarded Lenin and Trotzky as wild-eyed fanatics who were endangering the cause of the Russian working class.

Thus it was logical that these men, when in spite of their honest efforts, the revolution broke out in Germany, should strain every effort to win control of the new government in order to save it from the hands of those radical elements in the labor movement who had been chiefly responsible for its outbreak. Scheidemann, Ebert, David and Suedekum are prepared to establish order in Germany, to reorganize the demoralized industries of the country, while safeguarding the interests of the working class, to call a constitutional assembly and to conclude peace negotiations as early as possible, under the most favorable conditions that may be procured from the Allied governments under existing conditions. They are absolutely satisfied with the establishment of a political democracy under the control of the Social Democracy, and are convinced that the time has not yet come in Germany for the social revolution. The Independent Social Democratic Party, under Haase and Kautsky, pursue, as usual, the middle course. While they are opposed to the extremely opportunistic view of the Ebert group, and are prepared to place the power of the Government, within certain reasonable limits, into the hands of the Workmen's and Soldiers' Councils, while they seem to be opposed to the policy of the Ebert group in retaining in office the entire bureaucracy of the old imperial regime, they, too, fear that radical measures will foment counter-revolutionary activity at home, and that a radical reorganization of the economic system of Germany might influence unfavorably the settlement of peace terms with the Allied nations. For these reasons the Haase-Kautsky group is opposed to radical measures on the industrial field. They have joined the Ebert group in assuring the German people of the absolute safety of their bank

deposits and of their readiness to meet all obligations incurred by the monarchy in the shape of war loans. They believe that the time is ripe for a social revolution in Germany, but desire that it be introduced gradually, without skipping what they believe to be the necessary steps in evolution.

One of the interesting figures of this group is Kurt Eisner, the leader of the Independent Social Democrats of Bavaria. The extraordinary conditions that confront Bavaria and South Germany as a whole have made this strong and energetic personality the storm center in the revived fight between the North and the South. As is well known, Germany became a federation of States in 1870. The South—Bavaria, Wuerttemberg, Hessen, Baden and a number of other smaller states—had more democratic forms in its social and political life than Prussia. The caste system had not become as marked there because the class interests had not been able to divide the people of the South as they had the more industrially developed North. Soon after the federalization of Germany, therefore, a strongly particularist movement grew up in the South, against everything that was Prussian. The Prussian was more hated in the South, and especially in Bavaria, up to the late 90's than any foreigner. Then it died out to reappear again in the latter part of the war. During the first years of the war, the South was as belligerent and just as imperialistic as the North. In fact, the King of Bavaria sent a special envoy to the Peace Conference at Brest Litovsk because it was feared that Prussia would deal too leniently with free Russia. For this he was loudly acclaimed by the Bavarian capitalist press. But the misery and starvation of the last twenty months has made the Bavarians forget their own part in the war, and Prussia became the butt of their fury.

When Kurt Eisner, in October of this year, became the candidate of the Independent Social Democrats in the by-election made necessary by the severe illness of the majority Social Democrat, von Vollmar, he strongly fought this tendency, which had found some degree of support in the official Social-Democratic movement and its candidate, Auer. But the queer logic of events

has made him—at least to the uninformed outsider—the expression of the separatist, particularist movement. He belongs to that wing of the Independents which insistently demands that all remnants of the old regime must be thrown into the discard, and with commendable directness he applies this not only to the Erzbergers and the Solfs but also to the Suedekums and the Davids who have been just as thoroughly discredited by their imperialist activities. He demands that a government of Socialists be established for Germany that is free from the domination of any one state. As this demand is naturally directed against the leading personages in Prussia he has been supported by the particularist element in his own state who fail to understand the real motives that prompt his demands.

Reports that have come from Germany in the last weeks have been so clouded, and show such incredible ignorance of persons and conditions, that we here must judge rather by what we know of the most recent past of Eisner from German socialist papers than from the badly garbled reports that appear in the capitalist press by correspondents who attribute to him statements and opinions expressed by his supporters among the particularists. Thus, for instance, we take the following from a campaign speech made on October 23, after his release from prison where he had been held for ten months on account of his activity in favor of a political mass strike against the war:

“When I took up the fight against the pan-Germans at the beginning of the war, I was ridiculed. Scheidemann and Auer took up the fight against the pan-Germans only when they became their competitors for political office. To-day, under the new (Maximilian) government we are still living in a sea of lies. To call upon the people to-day to defend their fatherland, as has been done in the last appeal issued by the National Executive Committee of the Social Democratic Party, is to mislead them. We are facing to-day not the destruction of Germany, but the destruction of those who bear the responsibility for the war. When the majority Socialists demand to-day the abolition of the monarchy they are only putting up a big front to cover

up the defeat of their entire policy during the war. The new era under Maximilian, based as it is upon fraud, is not a new era.... Germany, that has permitted its rulers to commit the big crime of war in its name, must be prepared to pay the price. We will have to be ready to give up Alsace-Lorraine as well as Prussian Poland and Polish territory. Danzig must become the new harbor of the Polish Republic. The damage done in Belgium and in Northern France must be at least partially repaired."

This extract shows that his whole line of thinking is in sympathy with the Haase-Ledebour rather than with the more conservative Kautsky and Bernstein, with a strong leaning toward the position of the Spartacus Group. This explains the phenomenon that the Independent Social Democracy as well as the radical wing seem to be with him in his fight, even in the contradictory reports of the American correspondents.

In open opposition to the attitude of the two main groups is the Spartacus group, that, under the leadership of Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, is conducting a feverish agitation all over the country in favor of a government under the exclusive and absolute control of the proletariat. They are opposed to the calling of a constituent assembly and demand the political supremacy of the Soldiers' and Workmen's Councils. They favor immediate social ownership of the means of production and the repudiation of the debts incurred by the old regime for the conduct of the war. They are bitterly caustic concerning the peace-at-any-price position of men who, during the entire course of the war, belonged to the most consistent supporters of the war machine, and are the only element in Germany that openly opposes the terms of the armistice.

These last two questions, the question of peace and that of the payment of war debts are of no mean significance for the future development of the German Republic. In Russia, the Mil-yukoff and the Kerensky governments were overthrown because they were not prepared to carry out the peace demands of the people, while the Soviet Government owes its strength and its

hold upon the people of Russia to the fact that it stands ready, at all times, to carry out their demands. In Germany it is possible that the same conditions may bring about exactly the opposite effect. The soldiers and the working class, according to all indications at the present time, will probably support the Moderates of the Independent Social Democratic Party against the radical wing because they fear, and as the experience of Russia has shown, not without cause, that they may hope for but little mercy at the hands of the Allies should Germany establish a dictatorship of the proletariat. The fact that even the poorest classes of the country were made partners to the war by the clever policy of the monarchial regime of practically forcing all classes of society to buy war bonds—and the socialist press gave its columns freely for this purpose—may also prejudice a considerable portion of the population against a wholesale repudiation of the war debt of the nation.

While this struggle for supremacy among the three socialist groups is occupying the minds and thoughts of the world, the capitalist class of Germany is rallying its disorganized forces. Already the call has gone forth to unite the liberal bourgeois elements, and all non-socialist elements in Germany to-day belong to the "liberal" bourgeoisie, into one great organization, whose aim is the re-establishment of "order" in Germany and the fight against anarchism and Bolshevism. Already the leaders of this movement have appealed to Washington for aid, and in spite of the open sympathy that is shown in these quarters for Ebert and Scheidemann at the present time, the time will come, and it is probably not far distant, when the Russian Bakmetieff will be joined by some equally representative ambassador of the German Republic, to safeguard the interests of the German "people." In Germany the capitalist class is by no means the negligible factor that it was in the Russian revolution. It is a powerful body, that will be as brutal and unscrupulous in its methods and its warfare upon its own people as it was in its treatment of the unfortunate peoples that stood in the way of its determination for world power. The capitalist class of Germany, with its enormous wealth and its manifold international business relations that the

war may have disturbed but has not broken, is a formidable enemy, an enemy that will fight without mercy and without quarter, once it feels that it has again gained a foothold in the country.

The demands of this capitalist class cannot be met with compromises and concessions on the part of a socialist government. No capitalist class can or will consent to exist under the rule of a working-class party, no matter how moderate. The class war that has produced the Social Democracy will go on until classes have ceased to exist, until the proletariat has assumed control over the economic as well as the political forces of the nation.

The revolutionary uprising of the proletariat of Germany and Russia has not put an end to class war. But the class struggle in Europe has entered upon the last and the most bitter stage of its existence. It has grown beyond the national boundaries within which it has hitherto fought its battles. To the struggle between the classes within the nation has come the struggle between nations, between the nations controlled by the capitalist, and those controlled by the working class. Instead of wars for national aims there will come the great class wars, waged on an international basis. Whenever the working class of one country has succeeded in overthrowing its bourgeoisie, this counter-revolutionary class will appeal to its brother capitalists in other nations, and in self-defense these will have to come to their assistance. There can be no harmony between the opposing classes of one country. There can be no peace and understanding between capitalist and socialist nations. The war now being waged against Russia, directly or indirectly, by the Allied as well as by the Neutral nations, is an outstanding confirmation of this new phase of the world-wide class struggle.

Upon this rock the ship of opportunism will founder. The theory that the Russian and the German Revolutions can be saved only by supporting the moderates against their radical opponents is based upon a misunderstanding of the fundamental class character of society. The capitalist class, nationally as well as internationally, will compromise with the workers only so long as it

feels itself at the mercy of the proletariat, just as the class-conscious Socialist will submit to the rule of a capitalist government only so long as he is powerless to overthrow it.

The international class war has reached its critical stage. And whether we live in Germany or Great Britain, in Russia or in America, we will have to take sides. Their war is our war, their problems are ours. And we will have to pay just as dearly as they themselves for the mistakes they make. We have profited by the glorious achievements of the Soviets; our comrades everywhere will gain from our revolutionary understanding.