

# A 'SEVERE WINTER' IN GERMANY

By JOHN PEPPER.

**A** NOTICEABLE sharpening of the situation can now be seen in Germany. Everything had begun to look so pleasant, so quiet, so comfortable. The capitalists had already begun to believe that their mastery was assured for ever more. The social democrats already announced that the period of everlasting class peace was at hand—and all at once there is again a "severe winter." Hindenburg, the monarchist president of the German republic, used these words, when he tried, by referring to the approach of a "severe winter," to convince the still recalcitrant portions of the German bourgeoisie of the necessity of drawing the social-democrats into the "big coalition."

We believe that the analysis of the old militarist is correct. A "severe winter" has broken in Germany. The economic crisis grows at an appalling rate. One and a quarter million unemployed, several millions working part time, thousands of bankruptcies, thousands of factories shut down, and this is only the beginning, the credit and production crises stride forward mercilessly over the existence and life of the masses.

**T**HIS economic crisis coincides with a parallel development of concentration of capital unprecedented in Germany, the trusts mount to the heavens like sky-scrapers in America. But a whole series of political crises also runs partially parallel with the economic crisis and crystallized themselves to some extent as direct results of the economic crash. At present we have in Germany the Locarno crisis, the crisis over the indemnification of royalty, as well as the general governmental crisis.

There exists no political party which is not undergoing an internal crisis, which is not menaced by the danger of a split. The sharpening of the situation becomes the cause of a rapid and deep-going differentiation within all of the important parties.

**W**E see the differentiation and factional struggles in the centre party. The tower of the centre, as this unchanged party has been proudly called for decades, is beginning to totter. The left wing, under the leadership of ex-chancellor Wirth is waging a systematically organized campaign against the right wing which is under the leadership of Fehrenbach. It must not be forgotten that the masses of the centre, the catholic workers, petty-bourgeoisie and peasantry, support the left wing. These petty-bourgeois masses are utterly dissatisfied with the capitalistic taxation and customs policy of the official leadership of the centre party.

Locarno became the starting point of a sharp differentiation within the

ranks of the German national party. The right wing of this party, which is backed by the big landowners and a part of the basic industrialists, was for Locarno, but the petty-bourgeois voting masses of the German nationalists, which are composed largely of the urban-petty-bourgeois masses and the exceptionally broad German strata of the intelligentsia, have forced the resignation of the German national ministers and have compelled the official German nationalist membership to vote against the pact.

**W**HAT of the social-democracy which in the last year prided itself on its indestructibility, and boasted that it was enlisting ever broader masses, that it was the only, as well as the united, party of the German proletariat? The social democracy is also going thru a crisis. The question of the "big coalition," the question of the class collaboration with the bourgeoisie throws, with ever stronger force, the opposition of the left wing against the official party leadership.

The Communist Party, thru its fight against Locarno, has drawn to itself the sympathies of ever greater masses. For large portions of the social-democratic workers are also against Locarno. The Communists' campaign on the question of the indemnification of royalty is becoming ever broader and has its effect not only among the social-democratic workers but even in the republicanly inclined petty-bourgeoisie. The recent elections show that the masses are beginning to desert the social democracy and that they are streaming towards the Communists.

**H**INDENBURG is right, a "severe winter" has now set in in Germany. Ex-chancellor Wirth is also right when he frankly puts the problem of how Germany can support its working masses during this winter. The bitterness grows, unemployed demonstrations take place everywhere and the conference of generals of the Reichswehr answered the question put by ex-Chancellor Wirth: "We shall feed the workers this winter with blue beans, with martial law." The democratic leader, Erkelenz, writes in the *Borsen-Kurier*: "It is possible that in the course of this winter, there will prevail such hard times under which our administration may be subject to new serious disorders. Pessimists even fear that we shall have to resort to shootings."

Economic crisis, governmental crisis, crisis within the parties, hunger riots, martial law, warnings of the rifles of the *Soldateska*—this is the picture of Germany in the winter of 1925-6