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Gerhard P. Bassler

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*A Reconsideration of the Impact of the
Russian Revolution on the Revolutionary
Movement in Germany, 1917-1918*

The revolutionary transition from the Wilhelminian Empire to the Weimar Republic is one of the most controversial episodes in modern German history. In November 1918 a wide spectrum of public opinion experienced it as "the greatest of all revolutions,"¹ only in order to commemorate it later scornfully as "merely a collapse producing a vacuum,"² as a state "of anarchy, of negation, of foreign Eastern fantasies,"³ in short as "the most senseless act of German history."⁴ Historians long tended to see its chief redeeming quality in the victory of the forces that gave birth to the Weimar Republic. They interpreted the chaotic events of the winter of 1918-1919 as representing nothing but a struggle between "German democracy or dictatorship of the proletariat according to the Russian model."⁵

More recently, however, a school of German historians have reappraised the situation in the winter of 1918-19 as a genuinely revolutionary and open one. The revolutionary mass movement of the workers' and soldiers' councils, it has been revealed, demanded a far-reaching democratization of every aspect of life, especially the army, the economy and the bureaucracy within the framework of a parliamentary democratic republic. Based on the program of the council movement and with its support, so the argument goes, Ebert's Government of People's Commissars could have averted the conservative republic of Weimar. From the vantage point of this perspective the alleged threat of Bolshevism appeared at best as a deliberate hoax, a specter raised by the forces of the old order and in their interest, at worst as a highly exaggerated alternative which, in view of the apparent weakness and disorganization of the German communist movement and the almost total encirclement of Soviet Russia in these crucial months, should not have been taken as seriously as it was.⁶

Contemporaries left no doubt that the German Revolution of 1918-19 stood not only under "the unlucky star" of the military defeat and the deep disunity within the German labor movement, but also under that of the Russian Revolution.⁷ But just as the earlier interpretations overrated the direct threat of Bolshevism, so the more recent reappraisals have tended to go in the opposite direction. It is true that the extent of the direct personal contacts between Russian and German revolutionaries, the direct effect of Bolshevik propaganda and the reception of the Bolshevik goal of revolution, namely the Leninist type of Soviet state, appeared negligible. Hindsight enlightens us that "objectively"

there was never a real Bolshevik danger and that this was "at the most a fictitious but no real alternative" at the time.⁸ But this kind of proof does not take into account the "subjective" climate of expectations which inspired the behaviour of the revolutionary actors in November and December 1918, and thus the extent to which the successes and failures of the revolutionary movement in Germany were conditioned by the pervasive spell of the Russian Revolution.

A cursory glance at the methods, forms, symbols and issues of the German Revolution will reveal its indebtedness to the Russian Revolution. These attest to the fact that, to the social groups that formed the revolutionary movement in November 1918, revolution was conceivable only according to the pattern of the Russian Revolution. Considering the close psychological and ideological interaction between the Russian Revolution and the German revolutionary movements before November 1918, it would have been surprising indeed had the debates over the course and goals of the German Revolution not been preconditioned by the hopes and fears aroused by the Russian precedent. To what started in October 1918 as a revolution from above and turned in November 1918 into a revolution from below may thus in addition be attributed the character of a revolution from outside.⁹ It is the purpose of this paper to examine in what ways the Russian Revolution had impressed itself upon the revolutionary movement in Germany by the time of the outbreak of the German Revolution in November 1918.

It is difficult to imagine a revolutionary movement in Germany without the stimuli provided by the Russian example. In 1915 the radical liberal Hugo Preuss, author of the Weimar Constitution, considered the German people incapable of a revolutionary self-organization as a result of historical conditioning. The Revolution of 1848 was the only revolutionary experience the Germans ever had had and for that the Germans were heavily indebted to the French model. The 1848 Revolution proved to Preuss that in contrast to the widespread support for the authoritarian order "the revolutionary elements were always and everywhere in the minority" in Germany. Whatever constituted the victory of the 1848 Revolution has been attributed to the voluntary concessions of the monarchical governments granted out of fear of a repetition of the violent Paris precedents.¹⁰

By 1917 the memory and traditions of 1848 had faded among the masses of the German people. Pre-World War I German Social Democracy defined itself as a revolutionary but not revolution-making party. Its leaders preached the inevitability of the proletarian revolution but refused to specify whether it would come about in any other way than through the ballot box.¹¹ They conceived of the revolution as a natural phenomenon that could never be made or prepared by the working class.¹² Karl Kautsky, the chief theorist of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), did anticipate the likelihood of revolutionary repercussions for Germany in the event of a victorious Russian Revolution and an imperialist war, but he interpreted the mass strikes of the Russian Revolution of 1905 as a testimony of Russia's political and economic backwardness.¹³ And

even Rosa Luxemburg, the leading prewar exponent of the SPD left wing and member of the Russian and Polish social democratic parties, failed to recognize the significance of the soviets of 1905 although she identified the mass strikes of that revolution as the harbingers and central features of revolutionary conflicts in industrialized societies.¹⁴ There is no evidence to assume that on the eve of the Russian Revolution of 1917 the bulk of those who formed the German revolutionary movement in 1918 thought that a revolution was possible and likely.¹⁵ Germans could not imagine "what a revolution would look like except barricades." Walter Oehme recalled that "revisionist theories had implanted into our heads the assumption that the notion of the dictatorship of the proletariat was a long outdated and a completely superfluous and devious method of socialization for Germany with her high industrial and capitalist development."¹⁶

Shortly before the outbreak of the Russian Revolution of February 1917, the small group of left radical Spartacists around Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht discovered "everywhere only rot, decay and ruins" and "a new Waterloo of socialism." They hoped impatiently for manifestations of the reason and will of the proletarian masses. "But where are they? What are they waiting for? How much longer will they slumber?" the *Spartacus Letter* of December 1916 cried out. In this atmosphere the news of the revolution in Russia was like "a fresh resuscitating breeze blowing through a window suddenly ripped open into the musty odor of Europe."¹⁷

I

The extent and nature of the impact of the Russian Revolution depended on the availability of information from and about revolutionary Russia. Contrary to the widely held view that, due to military censorship, only scanty and distorted news about the Revolution reached the politically interested public in Germany,¹⁸ it must be stressed that the German public was as well informed about the revolutionary development in Russia as the difficulties of reporting and assessing the rapidly changing and often chaotic events permitted. The diary of seaman Richard Stumpf shows this quite clearly.¹⁹ Official wartime policy with regard to the media and the dissemination of information was characterized by a lack of uniformity and consistency. Hindenburg and Ludendorff insisted that censorship should be limited to news articles originating in Germany about military matters affecting the conduct of the war, not however to expressions of a political nature and content. This led to occasional and arbitrary incidents of censorship, especially when the Russian events were interpreted as a model for Germany. These, on the whole minor, incidents of censored news about revolutionary Russia were, however, more than offset by the fact that, throughout the war, the newspapers of neutral countries were allowed to be sold in Germany. Furthermore, any news item, including military reports, from all the belligerent countries were allowed to be reprinted in the German press without restrictions. On the assumption that the advantages of unlimited coverage of the Russian events by far outweighed its disadvantages, the suggestion of a consistent and

wholesale preventive censorship of Russian news was repeatedly rejected by the military and the Imperial government.²⁰

At the first press conference of 20 March 1917 that dealt with the revolution in Russia, the military authorities informed the media that "we have no reason to denounce the representatives of the new regime . . . It might be stressed that the Russian collapse is a consequence of German victories."²¹ When Crown Prince Wilhelm one week later sent an angry telegram to Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg wondering "how much longer Your Excellency will tolerate the glorification of the Russian Revolution in interminable articles by the *Frankfurter Zeitung* and other loyal papers," the latter replied that it would be a serious political mistake to defend the old tsarist regime against the present Russian government and the Russian socialists. "We ought not to squander the great possibilities which the Russian development is offering us out of nervousness over the domestic situation, especially since there is not cause for such nervousness."²² In June 1917 seaman Richard Stumpf was delighted to read about a mutiny in the Russian Baltic fleet and of sailors "flinging their hated officers overboard." With a "joyfully" beating heart he concluded "that we Germans out to imitate them."²³

According to the press conference of 31 December 1917 the media were not expected to report uniformly about the peace negotiations with Russia,²⁴ although news about the armistice negotiations was censored.²⁵ The Brest-Litovsk negotiations were conducted publicly before the representatives of the media and publicized in great detail.²⁶ After the peace of Brest-Litovsk the German government was eager to improve its official relations with Bolshevik Russia. At the press conference of 24 May 1918 the media were asked "to refrain, if possible, from cynical remarks about the Bolsheviks."²⁷ In the light of this policy the large number of sympathetic reports about the Bolsheviks and their policies that appeared in such leftist newspapers as the Berlin *Vorwärts*, the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* (both of which had a nation-wide circulation), the *Stuttgarter Sozialdemokrat*, the *Volksblatt* of Halle, the *Bergische Arbeiterstimme* of Solingen and the *Arbeiterpolitik* of Bremen, to mention just a few, is not surprising, not to speak of the well informed and more detached articles in such liberal papers as the *Frankfurter Zeitung*.²⁸ The new constitution of the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic of 10 July 1918 was partially reprinted in *Vorwärts* of 20 July 1918 and completely translated in *Die Neue Zeit* of 16 August 1918. No wonder that the Spartacist editor of the *Sozialdemokrat*, Fritz Rück, was astonished that the censor, who used to tamper regularly with the contents of his paper, turned out to be "blind in one respect: he permitted without any questions the publication of detailed articles and series of articles about the revolution in Russia, its problems and the policies of the Bolsheviks."²⁹

It was not until September 1918 that the military authorities in charge of censorship became scared of the effects which "the continuous attention that the detailed study of all Russian developments, especially all the measures undertaken by the Soviets in the economic and social field" were having and "against

which for the time being nothing could be undertaken censorship wise." To the censor of the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* it was becoming obvious that the abundance of uncensored news about revolutionary Russia was having "the effect of providing the prospective leaders of the revolutionary movement with a certain intellectual training which is not to be underestimated, and of carrying into the masses of the readers who, for reasons of their own, already lent such matters an attentive and well-disposed ear, the conviction of the natural self-evidence of such ideas and facts."³⁰

All restrictions of the freedom of opinion in speech and writing were removed by War Minister Scheuch in accordance with the constitutional reforms imposed one week before the outbreak of the German Revolution. On 2 November 1918 Germany's official news agency, the W.T.B., could claim that "we are enjoying now a greater political freedom than any of our enemies."³¹

The impression that the officially reported news about Russia made was supplemented and reinforced by the intensive propaganda campaigns of the Bolsheviks, the Allies and the German left radical groups since the end of 1917. Bolshevik and Allied revolutionary propaganda entered Germany chiefly by way of the neutral Scandinavian countries, the Netherlands and Switzerland.³² In Stockholm a Bolshevik contact office was established when, in the spring of 1917, Lenin's party passed through that city on their return from Switzerland to Russia. It was headed by the "German expert" of the Bolsheviks, Karl Radek, who began to engage in an intensive editorial activity, turning out leaflets and newspapers for distribution in Germany, such as *Korrespondenz Pravda* and *Bote der Russischen Revolution*. After the October Revolution Radek became press chief in Trotsky's foreign office and then head of the Central Europe Department with the assignment to accelerate the revolution in Germany. In this capacity he edited such propaganda papers as *Die Fackel*, *Der Völkerfreund* and *Die Weltrevolution*. Radek arranged for the dumping of this and other propaganda material by airplane over the German lines and for the indoctrination of the German prisoners of war in Russia.³³ While most of the Stockholm propaganda material was mailed officially and legally to Germany until November 1917, the material printed in Russia, like the *Weltrevolution*, reached Berlin primarily through the courier service of the Soviet Embassy there whence it passed into the hands of German left radical groups. Illegal Bolshevik and German revolutionary propaganda was also frequently reprinted by the Allies and dropped over the Western front or smuggled into Germany via the neutral countries.³⁴

On 15 November 1917 Ludendorff issued a secret report drawing attention to the large-scale and uniformly conducted efforts of "the enemy's news and sabotage service" since America's entry into the war "which do not confine themselves to an informing activity but attempt to influence our domestic conditions in the direction desired by it."³⁵ The Allied and Bolshevik propaganda effort directed at Germany in 1917 had little effect because its origin and purpose was easily recognizable and the chances for a peace on Germany's terms had im-

proved. Only when the morale began to deteriorate did the revolutionary propaganda campaign at home and at the front appear to take hold.³⁶ This was the case when in the winter of 1917-18 German-Russian peace negotiations raised hopes high for peace in the East and when their frustration by the German military led to nationwide mass strikes. By drafting thousands of striking workers the military authorities helped to spread the revolutionary propaganda to the trenches and facilitated the formation of revolutionary cells among the front troops.³⁷

In January 1918 army leaders verified the distribution of *Die Fackel* at the Eastern front. They reported that on 26 December 1917 German troops had received a leaflet from Russian soldiers addressed "To the German soldiers!" and signed by Lenin and Trotsky. It asked the German "brothers" to assist Russia in her transition to socialism. The same leaflet was found on 17 January 1918 in Berlin with workers of the Borsig plant.³⁸ At the same time young activists of the Independent Social Democratic Party (USPD) and the Group International (Spartacists) were disseminating every kind of illegal antiwar literature on a large scale from the *Spartacus* letters to pacifist writings.³⁹ According to a secret Spartacist account of the January mass strikes of 1918, the Spartacists managed to turn out 25,000 to 100,000 copies each of eight different publications during this strike. The front troops verified the arrival of this material in the trenches.⁴⁰ In the navy Spartacist leaflets which had replaced the prohibited USPD news were avidly devoured, as seaman Stumpf testified in his diary.⁴¹ In February and March 1918 the army and the Prussian War Ministry reported the discovery of a hitherto unprecedented quantity of leaflets in trains, around railway stations and from the front calling for mass strikes, the building of a new Germany and the imitation of the Russian example. Even after the Brest-Litovsk peace treaty officially terminated Bolshevik front propaganda, soldiers returning home on furlough were apparently lugging with them large quantities of propaganda material for distribution on the home front.⁴² In May 1918 the Prussian war minister issued a secret warning that only by keeping away "all Bolshevik propaganda from the German people" could the strike idea be fought effectively.⁴³

In the summer and fall of 1918 the production of illegal German, Allied and Bolshevik propaganda reached its peak, causing "the eruption of a veritable flood of political literature over the front." Instead of ignoring it the soldiers read it, passed it on and took it home with them. When the German forces began their withdrawal from France in August 1918 the increasing instances of mutiny and of violent attacks against officers were attributed to this propaganda campaign.⁴⁴ Most high officers became convinced of its detrimental effect. "Today the enemy is fighting with the pen almost more efficiently than with the sword," wrote Colonel Heye on 2 September 1918.⁴⁵ One month later seaman Stumpf diagnosed the mood of his comrades in the navy as "grave, very grave indeed. Many of our younger men have had their heads turned by Bolshevik ideas. Many of them are seriously discussing how they will soon conduct themselves as (members) of a red guard."⁴⁶

II

The Russian February Revolution demonstrated that a revolutionary collapse of a powerful and centuries-old authoritarian regime was possible during the war. "What a Russian peasant could do ought to be accomplished at least as well by the organized German industrial worker. Such," according to Richard Müller, "was the basic feeling of many workers in their places of work."⁴⁷ In three years what had hitherto in Germany seemed out of reach — the transformation of Germany — was suddenly put on the agenda, noted Arthur Rosenberg.⁴⁸

At first there was a widespread desire "to join the democratic wave which is sweeping the world" and hopes ran high for a new orientation of German political life along the lines of constitutional reform and peace overtures.⁴⁹ At the same time there was a new quality of politization in the manifestations of dissatisfaction in Germany. In November 1916 an army report diagnosed the attitude of the German people to be "clearly recognizable at this hour: it is embittered and annoyed, but it is not revolutionary."⁵⁰ In April 1917 the ill-humor about the food shortage and lack of prospects for a peace made people in Munich urge "without inhibitions the need to stage revolts."⁵¹ The Württemberg war ministry revealed in March 1917 that "the Russian February Revolution had not only brought a revival of the hope for peace, but also . . . news about the role which in Russia the industrial workers have played in the movement" and which is making German workers "believe that they can extend their influence in their own factory shop as well as at the political top considerably."⁵²

A new form of political protest began to appear in April 1917. There was a mass strike of some 300,000 workers in the munitions industries of Berlin, Leipzig, Halle, Braunschweig, Magdeburg and other cities. It was triggered by a threatened reduction of the bread ration. During this strike workers councils were formed among striking workers, first in Leipzig, then in Berlin. The Leipzig workers council planned to coopt workers' delegates from all branches of industry in Germany and insisted to negotiate with the Reichskanzler. Among its demands were an immediate peace without annexations, an end to the state of siege and a parliamentary democratic transformation of all levels of government in Germany.⁵³ This was the first time that such outspokenly political demands had been voiced by such a body during the war. By threatening that "everywhere workers' councils shall be set up" if the government ignored their demands,⁵⁴ the Leipzig workers acknowledged that the Russian Revolution was teaching them "what the proletarians have to want and what they can expect to obtain."⁵⁵

Among the sailors and stokers of the German High Seas Fleet, there were no political discussions or agitations until late spring of 1917, although dissatisfaction with their material conditions and conflicts with the officers had reached a critical stage in the winter of 1916-17. While their ships were lying idle in their home bases the crews had ample time to keep in touch with developments on land and to read the newspapers of their choice. They hailed the Russian

Revolution as a step toward peace. Viewing their starvation, mistreatment and war weariness in a new light, the crews of several ships engaged in various wild-cat strikes and mutinous demonstrations on land between 6 June and 2 August 1917. On 31 July four hundred sailors signed a declaration of solidarity with the peace program of the Russian soviets and the policies of the USPD. On many ships the newly established food complaints committees for the enlisted men rapidly adopted a more radical and political stance, met in secret and were labeled "workers and soldiers" councils jokingly. "Judging from the talk of the men, one might almost believe that the events in Russia are about to be repeated here," wrote seaman Stumpf in his diary on 12 July 1917. However, efforts to transform these committees into real "sailors' councils according to the Russian model" by sailors who knew all about the *Potemkin* and *Kronstadt* mutinies of 1905 and 1917, were unsuccessful. It took the sentencing to death of two more or less innocent sailors to complete the alienation of the sailors and stokers from the authoritarian system of Imperial Germany and to turn them into the revolutionary vanguard of November 1918.⁵⁶

The protests of the workers and sailors in the spring and summer of 1917 were spontaneous. They were not instigated by the propaganda or subversive activity of any political group or party.⁵⁷ Nor can they be attributed solely to intolerable material and social conditions since earlier equally bad or worse conditions — as during the terrible turnip winter of 1916-17 — did not express themselves in such forms of protest. In addition these protests came from among the best paid workers and formations of the armed forces that were not as exposed to the hardships and sufferings of their companions at the front. Indicating "a significant development in the political consciousness of organized labor"⁵⁸ and among the troops, the transition from a strike committee and a food complaints committee to a workers' and soldiers' council must be understood as a deliberate act which would not have occurred automatically without the precedent of the Russian Revolution. The undersecretary of state in the Imperial Chancellery, Arnold Wahnschaffe, agreed with Scheidemann when they discussed the demands of the Leipzig workers that "the psyche of the people had become a different one, especially since the Russian Revolution."⁵⁹ The German workers and sailors began "to talk Russian to the reaction."⁶⁰

The impact of the Russian February Revolution on the German socialist movement was equally direct and immediate and threatened to make the old divisive issues obsolete. What had kept the various dissident socialist groups indebted to the tradition of German Social Democracy was their loyalty to the Erfurt program of the SPD and to the resolutions of the Socialist International. To restore and implement these principles had been their common aim, from within the SPD if possible, from without if necessary. What had divided them increasingly was their opposition to the wartime policies of the leaders of the SPD and the Free Trade Unions who had allegedly betrayed these principles. The outcome of this process had been the foundation of the Group International and the Revolutionary Shop Stewards in 1915, the oppositional socialist youth move-

ment in 1916, the USPD in April 1917 and the stillborn International Socialists of Germany (ISD) at various points between 1915 and 1917.⁶¹

Now the USPD and the SPD, whose formal separation coincided with the arrival of the first news about the Russian February Revolution, suddenly found themselves reunited in their jubilation about the light of freedom that was beginning to rise in the East. They were unanimous in their sympathy for the Bolsheviks as the most dedicated advocates of peace and of a parliamentary democratic order to be inaugurated by the prospective Constituent Assembly.⁶² Both parties, furthermore, stressed the difficulty, if not impossibility, of transferring Russian revolutionary methods and techniques to Germany where the economic foundations, the political and social conditions and the national character were fundamentally different. They pledged "not to abandon the fighting arena of the parliament."⁶³ The more radical USPD, ironically, had even less faith in the chances of a similar revolutionary development in Germany during the war than the SPD.⁶⁴

Just as in some respects the split between SPD and USPD appeared premature in the new context created by the Russian events, so did the marriage between the Group International and the USPD, concluded at the founding congress of the latter. The Spartacist leaders embraced the revolutionary news from Russia as "the victory of our own cause"⁶⁵ and the prologue to the era of world revolution. The victory of the Russian proletariat, which the Spartacists anticipated as a consequence of the February Revolution, was in danger of being crushed by either the Entente or the German imperialists. The German workers had an obligation to come to the aid of the Russian Revolution for the sake of peace and the future of socialism. "Either world war until a general bleeding to death or proletarian revolution, imperialism or socialism . . . there is no third way!"⁶⁶ This is the theme that runs through all the Spartacist letters until November 1918. "Fear of the consequences of a German victory . . . marked the beginning of our propaganda in the armed forces," recalled a Spartacist activist.⁶⁷ For their anti-militarist propaganda at home and at the front, the preparation of strikes and the staging of solidarity demonstrations for the Russian Revolution, the Spartacists relied heavily on the oppositional socialist youth movement.⁶⁸ On the whole the Spartacists' incessant calls for revolutionary action, however, appeared to bear few immediate and visible results. They merely irritated their fellow party comrades in the USPD who denounced these tactics as irresponsible "revolutionary gymnastics."⁶⁹ It is noteworthy that until the October Revolution the Spartacist leaders ignored Lenin and the Bolsheviks.

The reputation as Lenin's closest spokesmen in Germany was claimed by the small groups of so-called Left Radicals who throughout 1917 made several attempts to unite under the label of International Socialists of Germany (ISD).⁷⁰ Already before the outbreak of the Russian Revolution they had supported Lenin's Zimmerwald Left platform and opened the columns of their newspapers *Lichtstrahlen*, *Bremer Bürgerzeitung* and *Arbeiterpolitik* to Lenin's associate Radek who through this medium interpreted the Bolshevik program to German

readers.⁷¹ In accordance with Leninist tenets the Left Radicals called for a complete break with all existing socialist and labor organizations, and enthusiastically welcomed the Bolshevik revolution as the model for the German revolution.⁷² However what they understood this model to be was a far cry from Lenin's tactics, his unique type of party and state. While the Bremen group around Johann Knief and Paul Frölich advocated the *Einheitsorganisation* as a new type of workers' organization which would combine the functions of union and party, the Berlin group around Julian Borchardt demanded the "abolition of all leadership in the labor movement" and "pure democracy among the comrades."⁷³ Although they were the first to propose the foundation of a communist party and to call themselves communists in Germany⁷⁴ in line with the new name that the Russian Bolsheviks adopted in March 1918, Radek had to remind Knief as late as the end of December 1918 "that his views had nothing to do with Bolshevism."⁷⁵ In October 1918 the Bolsheviks did not recognize these German communists but the Group International as their German equivalent.⁷⁶

III

The Russian October Revolution had a far more stimulating and at the same time a far more divisive impact on the revolutionary movement in Germany than the February Revolution. In these two contradictory respects it set the stage for some of the successes and failures of the German Revolution of November 1918. This dichotomous impact manifested itself in the controversies over the (theoretical and) practical implications of the Bolshevik revolution within and between the various socialist groups in Germany and in the growth of a widespread revolutionary peace movement at home and at the front between November 1917 and November 1918.

In order to appreciate the tremendous emotional response which the Bolshevik seizure of power evoked in Germany at the time, one must realize that this event, unlike the February Revolution, could not be interpreted as a bourgeois revolution by which backward Russia was merely trying to catch up with the West. The Bolsheviks were the first ones to actually establish a socialist government and to make peace instead of merely talking about it. To many this Russian Revolution "had given the signal for a better future."⁷⁷ Even Western experts agree that its appeal was "like a luminous torch, holding out the assurance that bourgeois class rule was not everlasting, that the liberation of the exploited and suppressed on this earth was possible."⁷⁸ Its success "gave the revolutionaries of all countries an example and a base"⁷⁹ and drove millions of workers in Germany and Austria-Hungary into a veritable revolutionary psychosis just as earlier they had allowed themselves to be driven into a war psychosis.⁸⁰

This was well understood by the SPD Reichstag deputies and the union leaders who, like the German military, welcomed the revolution as long as it destroyed only Russia militarily and economically but who suspected that "the fanatizing effect of the Russian example of the Bolshevik takeover on the masses

might carry these off ultimately to the greatest imprudences.”⁸¹ After some initial wavering over whether it should judge the Bolsheviks by their peace overtures or their dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, the SPD leadership in mid-February 1918 decided “to draw a fat line of demarcation between Social Democracy and Bolshevism.”⁸² In SPD meetings, speeches and articles, the Bolsheviks were criticized for provoking a civil war and for taking recourse to anarchist and putschist tactics. The Bolshevik revolutionary tactics were denounced as a continuation of tsarist police methods in a backward country where the economic and social conditions were not ripe for socialism. In the fall of 1918 the SPD central organ *Vorwärts* fell into the habit of warning its readers of “Bolshevik revolutionary slogans” and of “*Socialismus Asiaticus* which calls itself Bolshevism.”⁸³

Many leading functionaries of the USPD like Hilferding, Bernstein and Ströbel agreed with this assessment. They found their official spokesman in Karl Kautsky whose essay “Democracy and Dictatorship” — enlarged in the summer of 1918 to the brochure *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat* — defined the dictatorship of the proletariat as majority rule and justified the use of force only against minorities who tried to overthrow the majority. By their experiment of minority rule in a country not ripe for socialist production the Bolsheviks had unleashed a civil war and split the labor movement.⁸⁴ Bernstein warned that the Bolshevik peace policy had strengthened imperialism and implied that the Bolsheviks were to blame for the delay of the revolution in the more highly developed capitalist West.⁸⁵ In December 1917 Kurt Eisner saw no prospect that the Bolshevik revolution would ever be imitated by the German proletariat.⁸⁶

While Bolshevism in the form of this uniformly hostile judgment became a new unifying factor for the SPD after its prewar Kautskyist ideology of integration had become invalidated by the events in Russia, it drove a deep wedge into the newly formed USPD. In their official editorials and proclamations the USPD leaders welcomed the new developments in Russia. To the superficial observer they gave the impression that the USPD defended socialist Russia without reservations.⁸⁷ It is true that by calling for nationwide demonstrations in support of the Bolshevik peace effort the USPD made parliament “a school for the education of the populace in non-parliamentary action.”⁸⁸ But it is equally true that if, for the most part, the party appeared revolutionary in its aims, its leaders “proposed to leave the practice of revolution to the workers themselves.”⁸⁹ For among the bulk of the USPD rank and file and especially its youth organization the light from the East shone brightest. Here “the spirit of the revolution was swelling like an ocean overflowing all dams” and the conviction was widespread “that in Germany the preliminary conditions for a social revolution were even much better than in Russia.”⁹⁰

USPD-left leader Georg Ledebour, who in January 1918 felt the urge to instruct the Reichstag that the Independent Social Democrats were in Germany roughly the equivalent of what the Bolsheviks were in Russia⁹¹ regretted that among the eighteen USPD Reichstag deputies he could find only two supporters

for his plan to end the war through a revolutionary rising.⁹² One of them, Alfred Henke, managed to express his opinion openly in September 1918 that "our admonishing criticism will impress the Bolsheviks only when we have demonstrated to them more convincingly than hitherto, that we can do more than criticize their actions." He was sure "that our theory could make much progress and experience corrections as a result of the immense piece of practice whose witnesses we are."⁹³

However, it appeared not always quite clear what lessons ought to be learned from the Bolshevik model which USPD local organizations held up so highly and which was embraced so enthusiastically among the majority of the delegates at the USPD party conference in September 1918.⁹⁴ In spite of the intimate contact which leftist USPD leaders entertained with the Russian Embassy in Berlin,⁹⁵ the theory of Lenin's new type of party was not comprehended until 1920. In order to make the USPD more resistant to the opportunism of the right one representative of the revolutionary USPD left demanded a "further democratization of the organizational structure." Especially the most active leftists tended to lack sufficient training and political clarity to appreciate the Russian model fully.⁹⁶ For the German "revolutionary" socialist, brainwashed for half a century to fight for the democratization of the party structure, of the suffrage and of the constitution, the Leninist political system was too radical an innovation to absorb in such a short time. Lenin's name was barely known among USPD leftists until 1918.⁹⁷

Beginning in mid-September 1918 USPD functionaries on the local level embarked on a systematic campaign for the formation of workers' and soldiers' councils "according to the Russian pattern" and, as a police report from Elberfeld of 20 September 1918 put it, "to topple the government in similar fashion as in Russia." In Stuttgart the authorities believed that local unrest in mid-October and the appearance of the first workers' council in Stuttgart on 4 November 1918 were but "the prelude to a revolutionary movement of the USPD spreading over the entire Reich and directed from one central point."⁹⁸ On the eve of the German Revolution the Independent Social Democratic Party was, in the opinion of its own left wing, the non-socialist public and the government, the most vociferous and effective propagandist and agent for "Bolshevism" in Germany.⁹⁹

The Group International, known as Spartacists, formed a special club within the USPD, which were hoping to win over the rank and file of the USPD-left to their viewpoint and drive the party forward in their spirit of revolutionary Marxist internationalism. In October 1918 they scored their first success when the entire left-socialist youth movement in Germany constituted itself as the Free Socialist Youth of Germany on the basis of the Spartacist platform. Although largely ignorant of Marxist and Leninist theory, its members pledged "to follow the glorious example" of the Bolsheviks.¹⁰⁰

The Spartacists were divided in their reaction to Lenin's policies. On the one hand they admired the assumption of power of a socialist party and called for

“mass struggle, mass rising, mass strikes” in Germany, for “if Russia, which was tsarist only yesterday, is today a republic ruled by socialist workers, then times are ripe in Germany for different conditions too.”¹⁰¹ Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht and Leo Jogiches on the other hand criticized Lenin’s peace policy as an opportunist move that was bound to strengthen the German imperialists and endanger the nascent world revolution. Rosa Luxemburg had, in addition, serious reservations about Lenin’s land decree, his advocacy of self-determination and independence for the nationalities of the Russian Empire and his dissolution of the Constituent Assembly. These misgivings had their roots in the prewar factional quarrels of Russian Social Democracy and were not entirely shared by other Spartacists who sometimes tended to sympathize with the slogans of the Bremen Left Radicals.¹⁰²

The question of what lessons ought to be learned from the Bolshevik revolution found the Spartacists in a serious dilemma. They considered themselves as Lenin’s equals and believed in the priority of the socialist revolution in a highly developed capitalist country like Germany. The distortions of the Bolshevik revolution, in particular its undemocratic and terrorist features, were attributed to Russia’s peculiar circumstances and ought ultimately to be blamed on the failure of the German proletariat to come to the aid of the Bolsheviks and help them overcome their “mistakes”. “The danger begins only,” warned Rosa Luxemburg in the summer of 1918 “when they make a virtue of necessity and want to freeze into a complete theoretical system all the tactics forced upon them by these fatal circumstances, and want to recommend them to the international proletariat as a model of socialist tactics.”¹⁰³ A glance at the official program of the Spartacist League published on 14 December 1918 and adopted by the founding congress of the Communist Party of Germany two weeks later reveals how seriously Rosa Luxemburg and her associates meant this warning. Decrying the “desperate attempt of a minority to shape the world by force according to its ideals,” this program makes it quite explicit that in their conception of the conquest of power, their rejection of violence and terror, the role assigned to the “masses,” and the structure of the communist party in the revolution, German communism was assigned a role by its leaders which was distinct in many fundamental respects from Leninism — and this after one year of exposure to the successful Bolshevik revolution and its lessons.¹⁰⁴

In this light the confusion within the Spartacist ranks before the outbreak of the German Revolution over the question of what role and how much power should be assigned to the workers’ and soldiers’ councils is understandable. Until the fall of 1918 Spartacist propaganda called for workers’ and soldiers’ councils only as a means to bring about the revolution. A democratic people’s republic based on a constituent assembly was the chief Spartacist goal of the revolution. The Bolshevik slogan “all power to the soviets” appeared for the first time in a Spartacist leaflet in the summer of 1918.¹⁰⁵ However, when in early October 1918 the Spartacists and other Left Radicals got together to make preparations for the expected German revolution “according to the Russian pattern” the notion of a soviet republic was conspicuously absent from the resolutions and proclamations

adopted.¹⁰⁶ On 5 November 1918 Rosa Luxemburg still had to be reminded by Paul Levi that "the question whether soviets or constituent assembly" had to be resolved one way or the other.¹⁰⁷ It was only when councils actually appeared all over Germany that the Spartacists unanimously adopted the slogan "all power to the workers' and soldiers' councils." And even then they assigned to the councils only political functions. The economic transformation was to be effected by a nationalization of the means of production. Only in December 1918 did the Spartacists opt for the new factory councils which were then appearing.¹⁰⁸ Richard Müller, the leader of the revolutionary shop stewards, had good reason to accuse the Spartacist leaders of approaching the German Revolution "without any clarity" as to what should happen after the overthrow of the Imperial government.¹⁰⁹

IV

A revolutionary mass movement in Germany originated with the Bolshevik peace overtures. These commenced with Lenin's decree on peace on 8 November 1917 which contained the proposal for an immediate armistice for a period of three months. On 13 November 1917 *Vorwärts* commented on it very sympathetically, and on 1 December 1917 *Vorwärts* published Lenin's and Trotsky's appeal of 28 November "To the peoples of the belligerent countries". Contemporaries like Richard Müller could read "between each line the invitation to follow the Russian example."¹¹⁰ The morale of the German people was diagnosed by a military observer as "markedly improved" and the food shortages and high level of prices were even more easily tolerated when the German government accepted the armistice.¹¹¹ The Bolshevik revolution had, because of its peace act, "seized the masses as no other event during the war."¹¹²

That became even more obvious after the German government had unexpectedly revealed its annexationist aims on 4 January 1918 and the peace negotiations were in danger of breaking down. "The immense yearning of the German and Austrian workers for peace," as Arthur Rosenberg put it so aptly, "was transferred into a passionate sympathy for the Bolsheviks in their confrontation with German militarism. The workers considered it as nothing less than their duty to support the Russians against General Hoffmann."¹¹³ Richard Müller testified that no revolutionary propaganda was needed to get the workers moving. The detailed reports in the German press about the overthrow of Krensky inspired the movement and demonstrated "what was possible in Germany and what was necessary."¹¹⁴

Following the precedent of mass strikes in Austria-Hungary in mid-January in support of the Bolshevik peace formula, a week-long mass strike broke out in Germany on 28 January 1918. It spread from the Berlin munitions industries to most major industrial centers in Germany eventually involving more than one million workers. The striking workers of Berlin elected a strike committee of 414 workers. They, in turn, elected an action committee of eleven members who

called themselves the workers' council and who attempted, in vain, to negotiate with the government.¹¹⁵ This was the first strike with objectives that were primarily and almost entirely political in nature.¹¹⁶ Directed against the domestic and foreign policies of the military who dominated the government, it was "the first serious revolutionary action in Germany during the war."¹¹⁷

The coordinators of the strike and organizers of the workers' council were the *Revolutionäre Obleute* who had started out in 1915 as a small group of pragmatic and unpolitical union functionaries opposed to the collaboration of the trade unions with the government and the army. Originating from the well paid but traditionally radical Berlin metal workers these fifty or so "revolutionary shop stewards" had gradually extended their network of informal personal contacts to other industries all over Germany. In 1918 they could count on several thousand union stewards in Berlin alone. "Groping their way from action to action" in search of a form which would enable workers to express their protest against the war and the attitude of their official union leadership, these revolutionary shop stewards, like the workers whose interests they represented, seized upon the model of the Russian soviets.¹¹⁸

During the January strikes the model of the Berlin workers council was copied in Danzig, Cologne and Kiel. In many other German cities there were manifestations of solidarity with the Berlin workers' council as "the new instrument of the political class struggle."¹¹⁹ The rapid dissemination of the notion and reality of workers councils during and after the January strikes was an indication of the growing revolutionary sentiment among wide segments of the working population. Even among the middle classes and the government, "workers' council" became synonymous not with strike but with revolutionary action "according to the Russian pattern."¹²⁰

After the breakup of the January strikes, strike propaganda never ceased.¹²¹ Throughout 1918 the political and military authorities were alarmed by rumors and intelligence about impending mass strikes.¹²² Seaman Stumpf noted in February 1918 that the lower classes were "seething with discontent. If there were only someone who could channel that discontent, a great eruption would become virtually inevitable."¹²³ In overcrowded trains people were heard denouncing "all government institutions and policies" without inhibitions and encouraging each other "to do it just like the Russians."¹²⁴ The fact that a crowd of Berliners, who upon the reopening of the Russian Embassy, watched the dismantling of the Imperial Russian insignia with curiosity, then ostentatiously took off their hats when the red flag was hoisted on the embassy building, "was not considered funny anymore" by the Saxon official who recorded the event.¹²⁵

Among the troops a similar mood prevailed. In the spring of 1918 soldiers were overheard threatening openly that "they would stage a revolution at the end of the war in order to revenge themselves for the injustices allegedly suffered at the hands of their superiors." Ludendorff confirmed in mid-March 1918 that the inevitability of the German revolution was among the preferred topics of soldiers

on leave.¹²⁶ The latter appeared to have played a role in almost all the public disturbances during the summer of 1918.¹²⁷ Reports indicated that as early as the beginning of July 1918 military "discipline had completely gone to the dogs." The men preferred to desert or surrender rather than make another offensive move.¹²⁸ In August General Hoffmann described the situation in the East as "utterly untenable . . . The spirit of Bolshevism had infected the troops, discipline was loose, bribery and corruption widespread."¹²⁹ The first "war and revolutionary council of the German Eastern army" was formed on 10 October 1918. It issued a call to fight for the German soviet republic.¹³⁰ "The spirit of the Russian Revolution has crossed the borders of Russia," USPD Reichstag deputy Vogtherr told a public mass rally in Stuttgart on 30 October 1918, "it has revolutionized the masses of the world. After the Austro-Hungarian republic which was already on the march the German republic must follow."¹³¹

The revolutionary shop stewards (who have been characterized as "in essence nothing else than the organization of the masses of the workers themselves"¹³²) made up their minds after the January mass strikes to "end the democratic state plunder and establish a council republic according to the Russian pattern."¹³³ On 17 October 1918 *Vorwärts* revealed that in some Berlin factories rumor was rife about a Haase-Ledebour government in the making in the form of a Russian-type dictatorship of the proletariat based on workers' councils. Considering the experience of the January strike as a dress rehearsal for the German revolution the revolutionary shop stewards constituted themselves as an underground workers' council in order that they might surface as a "provisional workers' and soldiers' council" or as its "executive committee" when the time had come.¹³⁴ Although the German Revolution broke out spontaneously at a time and place not chosen by the shop stewards, their extensive preparations and anticipations reinforced the momentum and ensured the uniform character of the revolutionary movement of 11 November 1918.¹³⁵

The spontaneous self evidence with which sailors, workers, soldiers, peasants, unemployed, deserters and even "intellectual workers" and *Bürger* suddenly formed councils in the first half of November 1918 has only struck later observers as "very remarkable."¹³⁶ Walter Oehme recalled that the troops without much information about the workers' councils at home followed almost unconsciously the Russian example "without first considering the objectives of the councils and their role in the political system . . . This was simply the next best way to take the power out of the hands of the officers."¹³⁷ A politically detached and intelligent contemporary observer who pondered this phenomenal imitation of the Russian Revolution was sure conspiratorial "organizations stood behind all this" in which "the Russians and the Independents played a major role."¹³⁸

V

The outbreak of the German Revolution was primarily a consequence of "the self-dissolution of the old system" in the wake of military defeat.¹³⁹ What,

however, gave the events of November 1918 the character of a revolution rather than merely that of a collapse, namely the methods, symbols and issues of the revolutionary council movement, must be credited to the inspiration of the Russian Revolution. Even if the German Revolution "was nothing but a bad imitation,"¹⁴⁰ and the soldiers and sailors merely "played a little Bolshevism," embracing the red flag and socialist terminology without really meaning it,¹⁴¹ the fear of "Russian conditions" and "Bolshevik chaos" was real and widespread at the time of the German Revolution.¹⁴² In view of the enormous prestige of the councils in the first days of the revolution and their unchallenged claim to control a government with the "borrowed title" of *Rat der Volksbeauftragten*,¹⁴³ this fear was not entirely unfounded. The councils were known to be unstable institutions, incapable of exercising authority and thus inviting their exploitation by and subjection to undemocratic groups. Russia's present would inevitably become Germany's future, Scheidemann argued at the first council congress in mid-December 1918.¹⁴⁴ To those who feared a German analogy the councils had to appear as a prelude of doom and to those who wanted an analogy, or at least a socialist republic, as a welcome vehicle of their desires.¹⁴⁵ The suggestive power of the Russian example, which had shown that a revolution could be pushed further, as far as Bolshevik communism, befogged even the judgment of such intelligent observers as Friedrich Meinecke and Ernst Troeltsch. In November 1918 Meinecke saw the Bolshevik "ideology of destruction and chaos knock at the gates of Germany"¹⁴⁶ while Troeltsch still anticipated the ultimate showdown with the "soviet system of German Bolshevism" in late March 1919 in connection with the new elections to the central executive committee of the German workers' and soldiers' councils.¹⁴⁷

The attitude of the Social Democrats in particular has baffled many observers and analysts. As leaders of the revolutionary government they insisted they were "sitting on a powder keg,"¹⁴⁸ and had to collaborate with the army "to prevent the spread of terrorist Bolshevism in Germany."¹⁴⁹ They considered the councils "as only a disease imported from Bolshevik Russia."¹⁵⁰ At the same time the SPD leaders knew that the German Spartacists were numerically and organizationally too weak and ideologically too confused to constitute a Bolshevik threat,¹⁵¹ and the German workers' and soldiers' councils were dominated by their own party members.¹⁵² One can only do justice to this seemingly contradictory attitude if one realizes that the Social Democrats' obsession with the specter of Bolshevism had been derived not from the realities of the German Revolution but from their reaction to the Bolshevik seizure of power before the Revolution. To this strange psychological phenomenon the revolution of 1848 provides a striking precedent. There, the German bourgeoisie frightened by the barricade struggles of the Paris proletariat transposed their scare of "communism" to the German scene where that danger did not exist.¹⁵³ In each case reaction was the main beneficiary.

While the anti-bolshevism of the Social Democrats had rapidly assumed the function of a new ideology of integration for the liberal democratic socialists of the SPD and for their collaboration with the German middle classes and the

Allies,¹⁵⁴ it had become detached from reality. The political vanguard of the revolutionary movement: the USPD left, the Spartacists and Left Radicals, who wanted to preserve the accomplishments of the revolution or push it even further, were unable to counteract the paralyzing effect of the anti-bolshevik psychosis. They had inherited in large part, from their own preoccupation with the Russian Revolution, not only its hopes but also an organizational and ideological confusion. This manifested itself in the arguments over the goal of the revolution and the organizational form and content of a revolutionary party. The Bolshevik revolution had acted as a catalyst to split the USPD into a right wing which made common cause with the SPD for early elections to a national assembly, and into a left wing which like the Spartacist right wing aimed at a council republic with a parliament if necessary. The Spartacist left wing finally joined with the Left Radicals in the rejection of all parliamentarianism.

Whether a reorganization of the revolutionary parties along these lines in December 1918 might have saved the German Revolution, as Rosenberg and others after him have conjectured, is a moot point.¹⁵⁵ It would not have resolved the polarization between the anti-bolshevik half of the German labor movement and the rapid bolshevization of the other half which it provoked as its counterpart. Speculations whether the revolution might have succeeded if the revolutionaries had perceived and acted upon the objective situation reconstructed from hindsight tend to play down the constraining psychological milieu of the revolutionary situation. Under the prevailing conception of the limits and possibilities of a revolution in Germany in 1918, the promotion or prevention of further revolutionary economic and social changes seemed tantamount to a repudiation or imitation of the Russian example. Any attempt to unravel the ambiguous character of the German Revolution must start with the realization that among wide segments of German society the fate of the Russian Revolution was experienced not merely as a far-away spectacle but "as if their own fortunes were being decided by it as well."¹⁵⁶

NOTES

¹(All English translations of German sources are my own.) This euphoric characterization emanated from such different quarters as *Berliner Tageblatt und Handelszeitung* of 10 November 1918; union head Carl Legien addressing a conference of trade union delegates on 14 November 1918, as quoted in: Fritz Opel, *Der deutsche Metallarbeiterverband während des ersten Weltkrieges und der Revolution* (Hannover and Frankfurt/Main, 1962), p. 76; SPD deputy Wilhelm Keil addressing the first *Landesversammlung* of the Württemberg soldiers' councils on 17 November 1918: Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart (HStAS), E 135, Bu 20.

²E. Schiffer, *Das erste Jahr nach der Revolution* (published together with Koch, "Die Angaben des Reichsamts des Innern," as one brochure, Berlin, 1919), p. 5.

³Address of Chancellor Wirth (1921) in: *10 Jahre Weimarer Verfassung: Die Verfassungsreden bei den Verfassungsfeiern der Reichsregierung* (Berlin, 1929), p. 13.

⁴Oswald Spengler, *Preussentum und Sozialismus*, as quoted in *Schwäbische Tageszeitung* (Stuttgart) of 10 November 1923.

⁵Erich Eyck, *Geschichte der Weimarer Republik*, vol. I (Erlenbach-Zürich and Stuttgart, 1956), p. 72; Theodor Eschenburg, *Die improvisierte Demokratie: Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Weimarer Republik* (München, 1963), pp. 45, 72.

⁶See especially W. Tormin, *Zwischen Räte-diktatur und sozialer Demokratie: Die Geschichte der Rätebewegung in der Deutschen Revolution 1918/19* (Düsseldorf, 1954); E. Kolb, *Die Arbeiterräte in der deutschen Innenpolitik 1918-19* (Düsseldorf, 1962); P. von Oertzen, *Betriebsträte in der Novemberrevolution* (Düsseldorf, 1963); R. Rürup, *Probleme der Revolution in Deutschland* (Wiesbaden, 1968); E. Matthias, *Zwischen Räten und Geheimräten* (Düsseldorf, 1970); U. Kluge, *Soldatenräte und Revolution* (Göttingen, 1975).

⁷H. Ströbel, *Die Bilanz der Revolution: Ein Rückblick und Ausblick* (Berlin, 1919), p. 8.

⁸Kolb in: *Vom Kaiserreich zur Weimarer Republik*, ed. E. Kolb (Köln, 1972), p. 25, and von Oertzen as quoted by H. Grebing in *ibid.*, p. 390. See also Erich Matthias, "Die Rückwirkungen der russischen Oktoberrevolution auf die deutsche Arbeiterbewegung," in: *Deutschland und die russische Revolution*, ed. H. Neubauer (Stuttgart, 1968), pp. 91f.

⁹Georg Franz in: *Weltwende 1917: Monarchie, Weltrevolution, Demokratie*, ed. H. Rössler (Göttingen, 1965), p. 124, saw Germany's particular development in the "fateful year of 1918" characterized by the fact "that the German people, due to the loss of its self-confidence on account of the lost war, sought to reorient itself in accordance with foreign models." The introduction of Western-style parliamentary democracy from above in October 1918 followed the reversal according to the Eastern model. Rudolf Stadelmann, *Soziale und politische Geschichte der Revolution von 1848* (München, 1948), p. 186f raised a similar question about the borrowed character of the German Revolution of 1848. The concept of a revolution from outside was originally introduced with regard to the Russian Revolutions by Theodore H. von Laue, "Die Revolution von aussen als erste Phase der russischen Revolution 1917", *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, N.F., IV (1956), pp. 138-158.

¹⁰Hugo Preuss, *Das deutsche Volk und die Politik* (Jena, 1915), pp. 59, 129ff.

¹¹Gerhard A. Ritter, *Die Arbeiterbewegung im Wilhelminischen Reich* (Berlin, 1963), p. 203.

¹²A. Grunenberg, ed., *Die Massenstreikdebatte* (Frankfurt/Main, 1970), p. 30.

¹³Karl Kautsky, "Eine neue Strategie," (1910), in: *ibid.*, pp. 188-210; Kautsky, *Die soziale Revolution* (Berlin, 1907), pp. 55-62, and *Der Weg zur Macht* (Berlin, 1909), pp. 17-22.

¹⁴Rosa Luxemburg, *Massenstreik, Partei und Gewerkschaften* (Hamburg, 1906).

¹⁵In contrast to the German General Staff who as early as 1916 made preparations for just such an eventuality: Erich Kuttner, *Die deutsche Revolution: Des Volkes Sieg und Zukunft* (Berlin, 1918), p. 3.

¹⁶Walter Oehme, *Damals in der Reichskanzlei: Erinnerungen aus den Jahren 1918/19* (Berlin, 1958), pp. 6, 10.

¹⁷*Spartakusbriefe*, ed. Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der SED (Berlin, 1958), pp. 279f, 295-299, 322f.

¹⁸E.O. Volkmann, *Der Marxismus und das deutsche Heer im Weltkrieg* (Berlin, 1925), pp. 286f; Daniel Horn, *The German Naval Mutinies of World War I* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1969), p. 281; Tormin, p. 28.

¹⁹D. Horn, ed., *War, Mutiny and Revolution in the German Navy: The World War I Diary of Seaman Richard Stumpf* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1967), henceforth cited as "Stumpf."

²⁰Kurt Koszyk, *Deutsche Pressepolitik im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Düsseldorf, 1968), pp. 13, 29, 31, 212, 216, 235; Kurt Mühsam, *Wie wir belogen wurden: Die amtliche Irreführung*

des deutschen Volkes (München, 1918), pp. 50ff; Karl-Ludwig Ay, "Volksstimmung und Volksmeinung als Voraussetzung der Münchener Revolution von 1918," in *Bayern im Umbruch: Die Revolution von 1918, ihre Voraussetzungen, ihr Verlauf und ihre Folgen*, ed. K. Bosl (München, 1969), p. 352.

²¹Koszyk, p. 212; Mühsam, p. 93; Leo Stern, ed., *Die Auswirkungen der grossen sozialistischen Oktoberrevolution auf Deutschland*, 3 vols. (Berlin, 1959), vol. 4/II, pp. 407ff. These secret press conferences were instituted in 1914 to inform various branches of government and representatives of the press about Germany's "true" political and military situation and to instruct them about the army leaders' attitude toward certain events: Mühsam, p. 63f; Koszyk, p. 186ff.

²²Koszyk, pp. 33f.

²³Stumpf, p. 338. In the navy leftist newspapers had been prohibited since October 1917, however not in the army. See Stern, vol. 4/II, pp. 859f, 899f. Richard Müller, *Vom Kaiserreich zur Republik: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der revolutionären Arbeiterbewegung während des Weltkrieges* (Wien, 1924), p. 114. The newspaper delivery to the armed forces functioned even during the German Revolution "with mathematical precision" and on 10 November 1918 the Imperial German postal service supplied every reader of the Berlin *Lokal Anzeiger* with its replacement, *Die Rote Fahne*: Oehme, p. 12.

²⁴Koszyk, p. 216.

²⁵Stern, vol. 4/II, pp. 769f, 790f, 848f, 899f.

²⁶Richard von Kühlmann, *Erinnerungen* (Heidelberg, 1948), p. 523.

²⁷Mühsam, p. 112.

²⁸For the *Volksblatt* and the *Bergische Arbeiterstimme* see: Wilhelm Koenen, *Meine Begegnungen mit Lenin* (Berlin, 1957), p. 11f; H. Stoecker, *Walter Stoecker: Die Frühzeit eines deutschen Arbeiterführers 1891-1920* (Berlin, 1970), p. 140. The *Frankfurter Zeitung* had since 1916 in Alfons Paquet its own, highly talented, foreign correspondent, first in Stockholm, and since June 1918 in Moscow. Between 28 June and 10 September he wrote 23 articles about the revolutionary developments in Russia of which only two appeared slightly censored: W. Baumgart, ed., *Von Brest-Litovsk zur deutschen Novemberrevolution: Aus den Aufzeichnungen von Alfons Paquet, Wilhelm Groener, Albert Hopman* (Göttingen, 1971), pp. 123, 169, 173.

²⁹Fritz Rück, *November 1918: Die Revolution in Württemberg* (Stuttgart, 1958), p. 14: He was therefore able to avail himself freely of information contained in the Bolshevik correspondence issued by Radek in Stockholm.

³⁰HStAS, E 150, Bu 2051, Nr. 769; reprinted in Stern, vol. 4/IV, pp. 1537ff.

³¹Koszyk, p. 57; Stern, vol. 4/IV, pp. 1727f.

³²See e.g. HStAS, E 150, Bu 2051, Nrs. 521, 537, 628, 636, 680, 736; and Stern, vol. 4/II, p. 515.

³³Marie-Luise Goldbach, *Karl Radek und die deutsch-sowjetischen Beziehungen 1918-1923* (Bonn-Bad Godesberg, 1973), pp. 16ff; Gustav Mayer, *Erinnerungen: Vom Journalisten zum Historiker der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung* (Zürich/Wien, 1949), pp. 276f; Ernst Drahn und Susanne Leonhard, *Unterirdische Literatur im revolutionären Deutschland* (Berlin, 1920), pp. 124-200.

³⁴Drahn und Leonhard, p. 132, 137; E. Meyer, ed., *Spartakus im Kriege: Die illegalen Blätter des Spartakusbundes im Kriege* (Berlin, 1927), pp. 18ff; Hans Thimme, *Weltkrieg ohne Waffen: Die Propaganda der Westmächte gegen Deutschland, ihre Wirkung und ihre Abwehr* (Stuttgart and Berlin, 1932), pp. 141f; Peter Lösche, *Der Bolschewismus im Urteil der deutschen Sozialdemokratie* (Berlin, 1967), p. 211; Wolfgang Baumgart, *Deutsche Ostpolitik im Sommer 1918: Zwischen Brest-Litowsk und Compiegne* (Wien und München, 1966), pp. 338-367.

³⁵HStAS, E 150, Bu 2051, Nr. 631.

³⁶Thimme, p. 164.

³⁷R. Müller, p. 115; Paul Frölich, *10 Jahre Krieg und Bürgerkrieg: I. Der Krieg* (Berlin 1924), p. 191.

³⁸HStAS, E 150, Bu 2051, Nrs. 640, 660; Stern, vol. 4/II, p. 814, and vol. 4/III, pp. 936ff.

³⁹Stoecker, pp. 142f; Karl Retzlaw, *Spartakus: Aufstieg und Niedergang: Erinnerungen eines Parteiarbeiters* (Frankfurt/Main, 1971), pp. 79f.

⁴⁰HStAS, Bu 1051, Nrs. 693ff, 670; Stern, vol. 4/III, pp. 1131-1135.

⁴¹Stumpf, pp. 382f; Horn, pp. 192f.

⁴²HStAS, Bu 2051, Nrs. 660, 682, 741, 744.

⁴³HStAS, Bu 2051, Nr. 711.

⁴⁴HStAS, Bu 2051, Nrs. 402, 723, 736, 749; Thimme, pp. 121, 174; R. Müller, p. 117. The situation was so serious that on 2 September 1918 Hindenburg issued a proclamation about "the struggle of the enemies against the German spirit" in which he published the following statistics of leaflets dropped on the Western front: in May 84,000, in June 120,000 in July 300,000: *Gränz-Bote, Tuttlinger Tagblatt* of September 1918.

⁴⁵Thimme, p. 178.

⁴⁶Stumpf, p. 140.

⁴⁷R. Müller, p. 96.

⁴⁸Arthur Rosenberg, *Entstehung und Geschichte der Weimarer Republik* (Frankfurt/Main, 1955), p. 143f.

⁴⁹Stumpf, pp. 317, 320, 322.

⁵⁰Thimme, p. 166.

⁵¹Lujo Brentano, *Mein Leben im Kampf um die soziale Entwicklung Deutschlands* (Jena, 1931), p. 332.

⁵²As quoted by Jürgen Kocka, *Klassengesellschaft im Krieg: Deutsche Sozialgeschichte 1914-1918* (Göttingen, 1973), pp. 47f.

⁵³Opel, pp. 57-62; Retzlaw, pp. 55-60. The demands of the Leipzig and Berlin workers' councils are reprinted in: *Dokumente und Materialien zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung*, ed. Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der SED, series II, vol. I (Berlin, 1958), pp. 612f; and Philipp Scheidemann, *Der Zusammenbruch* (Berlin, 1921), p. 65.

⁵⁴Tormin, p. 45.

⁵⁵As quoted from a Spartacist (?) leaflet circulating at the time: Drahn und Leonhard, p. 80.

⁵⁶Stumpf, pp. 310-346, 382f; Horn, pp. 68-197; Rosenberg, pp. 167-174; A. Schreiner, *Zur Geschichte der deutschen Aussenpolitik 1871-1945*, vol. I (Berlin, 1955), p. 400.

⁵⁷Spartacists adopted the demand for workers' councils only after the first council had appeared in Leipzig: Tormin, p. 37. Even the *Revolutionäre Obleute* in Berlin seemed too preoccupied with the immediate problems of the food shortage and the preparations for the strike to study and deliberately apply the new lessons from Russia: Retzlaw, pp. 56-60.

⁵⁸Robert F. Wheeler, "The Independent Social Democratic Party and the Internationals: An Examination of Socialist Internationalism in Germany 1915 to 1923" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Pittsburgh, 1970), p. 47.

⁵⁹Scheidemann, p. 64.

⁶⁰As quoted in a Spartacus leaflet: *Spartakus im Kriege*, p. 194.

⁶¹For an introduction to this development see Carl E. Schorske: *German Social Democracy 1905-1917: The Development of the Great Schism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1955); and Walter Bartel, *Die Linken in der deutschen Sozialdemokratie im Kampf gegen Militarismus und Krieg* (Berlin, 1958). See also Retzlaw, p. 114.

⁶²*Protokoll über die Verhandlungen des Gründungsparteitags der USPD vom 6. bis 8. April 1917 in Gotha* (Berlin, 1921), pp. 8, 31; *Leipziger Volkszeitung* of 21 May 1917.

Scheidemann, pp. 149-153; see also the series of *Vorwärts* articles May 1917 to January 1918 about the preparations for the elections to the Russian Constituent Assembly.

⁶³*Vorwärts* of 3 April 1917; *Mitteilungsblatt des Verbandes der sozialdemokratischen Wahlvereine Berlins und Umgebung* of 8 April 1917, as quoted in Frölich, p. 191; Franz Schade, *Kurt Eisner und die bayrische Sozialdemokratie* (Hannover, 1961), p. 42.

⁶⁴Hermann Müller, *Die November-Revolution: Erinnerungen* (Berlin, 1931), p. 8; Kolb, *Arbeiterräte*, pp. 43f; Abraham Ascher, "Russian Marxism and the German Revolution, 1917-1920," in: *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, VI/VII (1966), p. 394.

⁶⁵Rosa Luxemburg, *Briefe an Freunde* (Hamburg, 1951), p. 157.

⁶⁶*Spartakusbriege*, pp. 328f, 415.

⁶⁷Retzlaw, pp. 63f.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, p. 67; Stoecker, pp 150f, 153; HStAS, E 150, Bu 2048, Nr. 26, and Bu 2051, Nrs. 587, 591.

⁶⁹R. Müller, p. 129; and Ledebour vor den Geschworenen. Seine Verteidigungsrede — eine Anklage gegen die Regierung Ebert-Scheidemann. Die Rede des Genossen Ledebour vor dem Schwurgericht des Landgerichts I in Berlin am 20. Mai 1919 (Berlin, 1919), p. 9.

⁷⁰Hans Manfred Bock, *Syndikalismus und Linkskommunismus von 1918-1923* (Meisenheim am Glan, 1969), pp 66-86; Heinz Wohlgemuth, *Die Entstehung der KPD 1914-1918: Überblick* (Berlin, 1968), pp. 218f; HStAS, E 150, Bu 2051, Nrs. 601, 625, 632.

⁷¹Radek's articles in these papers are collected in Karl Radek, *In den Reihen der deutschen Revolution 1909-1919* (München, 1921); Goldbach, p. 15.

⁷²See Knief's article "Eine dringende Notwendigkeit" in *Arbeiterpolitik*, 15 December 1917 and "Der Sieg der Bolschewiki" in *Arbeiterpolitik*, 17 November 1917, reprinted in *Dokumente und Materialien*, series II, vol. 2, pp. 15-18, 43-47; Frölich, pp. 154ff.

⁷³"An unsere Gesinnungsgenossen," *Arbeiterpolitik*, 10 March 1917. See also the debates among East German experts in: *Die Gründung der Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands: Protokoll der wissenschaftlichen Tagung des Instituts für Gesellschaftswissenschaften, der Parteihochschule "Karl Marx" und des Instituts für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der SED am 22. und 23. Januar 1959 in Berlin* (Berlin, 1959)

⁷⁴The first call for the foundation of a Communist Party of Germany was issued on 13 September 1918, probably by Borchardt: *Stern*, vol. IV/4, pp. 1559ff. In November the Bremen Left Radicals introduced the label International Communists of Germany (IKD) which was formally adopted in mid-December as the party name for Left Radicals from various parts of Germany: *Dokumente und Materialien*, series II, vol. 2, pp. 450ff, 613.

⁷⁵Goldbach, p. 27.

⁷⁶Lenin's letter to the October Conference of the Spartacists, reprinted in: *Illustrierte Geschichte der deutschen Revolution* (Berlin, 1929), p. 179; and survey of left radical groups in *Welt-Revolution*, Nr. 52 of 20 October 1918.

⁷⁷F. Mehring in *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, 27 December 1917.

⁷⁸Dietrich Geyer, "Lenin und der deutsche Sozialismus," in: *Deutsch-Russische Beziehungen von Bismarck bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. W. Markert (Stuttgart, 1964), p 94.

⁷⁹Marc Ferro, *The Great War 1914-1918*, p. 225.

⁸⁰Ströbel, *Die Bilanz*, p. 21.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, p. 10; HStAS, E 150, Bu 2051, Nr. 659.

⁸²Otto Braun in *Vorwärts*, 15 February 1918.

⁸³*Ibid.*, 17, 18, 21 October and 6 November 1918; Lösche, pp. 138-143.

⁸⁴Lösche, pp. 144ff; Karl Kautsky, *Mein Verhältnis zur Unabhängigen Sozialdemokratischen Partei: Ein Rückblick* (Berlin, 1922), p. 9; Kautsky, *Die Diktatur des Proletariats* (Wien, 1918).

⁸⁵*Leipziger Volkszeitung*, 27 December 1917.

⁸⁶*Die Neue Zeit*. 2. Folge (München, 1919), pp. 48f.

⁸⁷*Leipziger Volkszeitung*, 12 November 1917; R. Müller, p. 102; Hartfried Krause, *USPD: Zur Geschichte der Unabhängigen Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands* (Frankfurt/Main, 1975), pp. 107f, 109f. For the prewar SPD ideology of integration, see Erich Matthias, "Kautsky und der Kautskyanismus: Die Funktion der Ideologie in der deutschen Sozialdemokratie vor dem ersten Weltkriege," *Marxismusstudien* II (1957), pp. 151-197.

⁸⁸Wheeler, p. 73.

⁸⁹David Morgan as quoted by Krause, p. 112.

⁹⁰Kautsky, *Mein Verhältnis*, p. 9; Alfred Henke as quoted by Erhard Lucas, *Die Sozialdemokratie in Bremen während des ersten Weltkrieges* (Bremen, 1969), p. 98.

⁹¹See *Internationale Korrespondenz*, 18 January 1918.

⁹²Ledebour as quoted by Lucas, p. 102.

⁹³Henke as quoted by Lucas, pp. 100f.

⁹⁴H. Ströbel, *Die deutsche Revolution: Ihr Unglück und ihre Rettung* (Berlin, 1920), p. 188; HStAS, E 150, Bu 2051, Nr. 743.

⁹⁵Lösche, p. 209f; Baumgart, *Deutsche Ostpolitik*, pp. 338ff, 365ff: According to Soviet Foreign Commissar Chicherin his Berlin ambassador Joffe spent 22 million Rubel to promote the German revolution. Of this money USPD Reichstag deputy Oskar Cohn allegedly received 10.5 million Rubel.

⁹⁶*Bergische Arbeiterstimme*, 22 April 1918 as quoted in Stoecker, pp. 152, 159f.

⁹⁷Retzlaw, pp. 49, 98f; Stoecker, p. 136; Koenen, p. 5; Erich Wiesner, *Man nannte mich Ernst* (Berlin, 1956), p. 47.

⁹⁸HStAS, E 150, Bu 2051, Nrs. 762f, 765, 766, 784, 798; Stern, vol. 4/IV, p. 1603.

⁹⁹See editorial "Der Bolschewismus in Berlin und im Reich," in *Deutsche Zeitung*, 30 October 1918. The label "Bolshevism" at that time was attached to anything that smacked of Russian revolutionary tactics and conditions, especially from anti-socialist quarters: see Kluge, pp. 37, 73. On 7 November 1918 local authorities in Württemberg feared that USPD mass demonstrations aimed at "the introduction of Bolshevism." HStAS, E 150, Bu 2051, Nr. 799.

¹⁰⁰Retzlaw, p. 49; Stoecker, p. 143; *Dokumente und Materialien aus der Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterjugendbewegung 1904-1945*, ed. Institut für Marxistische Studien und Forschungen (Frankfurt/Main, 1975), p. 61; Ottokar Luban, "Die Auswirkungen der Jenaer Jugendkonferenz 1916 und die Beziehungen der Zentrale der revolutionären Arbeiterjugend zur Führung der Spartakusgruppe," in: *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, XI (1971), pp. 185-240.

¹⁰¹Leaflet "Die Stunde der Entscheidung", December 1917, reprinted in *Spartacus spricht: Kampfdokumente der Spartakusgruppe aus der Zeit des ersten Weltkrieges* (Berlin, 1961), pp. 83-88.

¹⁰²Retzlaw, pp. 73f, 77f; Karl Liebknecht, *Politische Aufzeichnungen aus seinem Nachlass* (Berlin, 1921), pp. 50-53, 79-92; *Spartakusbriefe*, pp. 453-460; Rück, p. 14 was critical of Leo Jogiches' and Rosa Luxemburg's reservations against the Bolsheviks. At the same time he recommended the political-unionist *Einheitsorganisation* to the Stuttgart USPD local: *Schwäbische Tagwacht*, 20 February 1918.

¹⁰³Rosa Luxemburg, *Die russische Revolution*, ed. O.K. Flechtheim (Frankfurt, Main, 1963), p. 79.

¹⁰⁴See G.P. Bassler, "The Communist Movement in the German Revolution, 1918-1919: A Problem of Historical Typology?" *Central European History*, VI, 3 (1973), pp. 233-277.

¹⁰⁵Tormin, p. 39. Only in October did this demand appear more frequently: *Spartacus spricht*, pp. 123ff; Stern, vol. 4/IV, pp. 1583-1586, 1681f. For the differences between the three basic types of soviets — as form of government, as temporary revolutionary committee and as representation of the socio-economic interests of the proletariat, see

Oskar Anweiler, *Die Rätebewegung in Russland 1905-1921* (Leiden, 1958), p. 6.

¹⁰⁶Drahn und Leonhard, pp. 113-118; *Illustrierte Geschichte*, pp. 177f; *Spartakusbriege*, pp. 469-471.

¹⁰⁷Ottokar Luban, "Zwei Schreiben der Spartakuszentrale an Rosa Luxemburg (Juni 1971; 5. November 1918)," *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, XI (1971), pp. 236-240.

¹⁰⁸Von Oertzen, p. 85.

¹⁰⁹R. Müller, p. 139.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 97.

¹¹¹Stern, vol. 4/II, p. 873.

¹¹²Lösche, p. 116.

¹¹³Rosenberg, p. 189.

¹¹⁴R. Müller, pp. 96, 98, 102f.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 102-110; Opel, pp. 70ff.

¹¹⁶Retzlaw, employed by the cable works Cassirer in Berlin, and elected *Obmann* by his fellow workers, was a member of the wider circle of the revolutionary shop stewards in January 1918. In his factory he gave the signal for the strike with the slogan: "Wir streiken nicht aus Kohlrübengründen, wir streiken um den Krieg zu beenden . . . wir wollen Verbrüderung mit der russischen Revolution . . ." (pp. 82f). Stumpf, pp. 383f confirms that this time "an empty, grumbling stomach was lacking." The political objectives of the strike did not go far beyond those of the strike of April 1917: R. Müller, p. 204.

¹¹⁷Tormin, p. 47.

¹¹⁸R. Müller, *passim*; Emil Barth, *Aus der Werkstatt der deutschen Revolution* (Berlin, 1919), pp. 11-23; Opel, p. 55; Ströbel, *Die deutsche Revolution*, pp. 43ff; von Oertzen, pp. 71-75. Oertzen argues that the German workers "had arrived at the same forms of organization and action as the Russian workers on the basis of similar social and economic conditions without knowledge of the Russian revolutionary movement." (pp. 76, 327f). In April 1917 and January 1918, however, the impulse of the Russian Revolution is indisputable, quite apart from the fact that similar economic and social conditions do not *eo ipso* have to manifest themselves in the same forms of revolutionary organization and action.

¹¹⁹Tormin, p. 47; Kolb, *Arbeiterräte*, p. 59.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 60; HStAS, E 150, Bu 2051, Nr. 643.

¹²¹Retzlaw, p. 121.

¹²²HStAS, E 150, Bu 2051, Nrs. 667, 678, 680, 703, 721, 724, 725, 727, 736, 742, 755, 757, 759, 769.

¹²³Stumpf, p. 381. Almost identical observations were made by the Düsseldorf police on 27 June 1918; HStAS, E 150, Bu 2051, Nr. 721.

¹²⁴Quoted by Ay in *Bayern im Umbruch*, p. 357.

¹²⁵Quoted in Baumgart, *Deutsche Ostpolitik*, p. 339.

¹²⁶HStAS, E 150, Bu 2051, Nrs. 684, 702, 714a.

¹²⁷Ay, in: *Bayern im Umbruch*, p. 348.

¹²⁸Thimme, pp. 167, 170.

¹²⁹M. Erzberger, *Erlebnisse im Weltkrieg* (Stuttgart und Berlin, 1920), pp. 248f.

¹³⁰Tormin, p. 28.

¹³¹HStAS, E 150, Bu 2051, Nr. 784.

¹³²Von Oertzen, p. 73.

¹³³R. Müller, p. 139.

¹³⁴Barth, p. 53; *Illustrierte Geschichte*, pp. 203f; Kolb, *Arbeiterräte*, pp. 116ff.

¹³⁵Lucas, p. 103.

¹³⁶Tormin, pp. 56f; for councils of deserters and unemployed, see Scheidemann, p. 230; for councils of intellectual workers, see Franz Schoenberger, *Confessions of a Euro-*

pean Intellectual (New York, 1965), pp. 111-117. In Stuttgart there was a very active *Bürgerrat* (loosely translated as middle class citizen's council): HStAS, E 130a, Bu 204.

¹³⁷Oehme, p. 10.

¹³⁸Ernst Troeltsch, *Spektator-Briefe: Aufsätze über die deutsche Revolution und die Weltpolitik 1918/22* (Tübingen, 1927), p. 26.

¹³⁹Ströbel, *Die deutsche Revolution*, pp. 41, 45.

¹⁴⁰Schoenberger, pp. 98f.

¹⁴¹Rosenberg, pp. 279f, 286f.

¹⁴²See e.g. Mayer, p. 301; Koeth in: *Die Regierung der Volksbeauftragten 1918/19*, ed. S. Miller (Düsseldorf, 1969), vol. 1, p. 205.

¹⁴³Scheidemann, p. 211. When this name was chosen at the first cabinet meeting, the members of the new government could apparently only think of the Russian title of Council of People's Commissars or its German translation: *Die Regierung der Volksbeauftragten*, vol. 1, p. 34.

¹⁴⁴*Allgemeiner Kongress der Arbeiter- und Soldatenräte Deutschlands vom 16. bis 21. Dezember 1918 im Abgeordnetenhaus zu Berlin: Stenografische Berichte*, ed. Zentralrat der Sozialistischen Republik Deutschlands (Berlin, 1919), p. 135. *Vorwärts* editor Erich Kuttner (p. 11) was also convinced that a system of government founded on workers' and soldiers' councils would inevitably "transform democracy into dictatorship, as Russian Bolshevism had shown."

¹⁴⁵Helmut Heiber, *Die Republik von Weimar* (München, 1966), p. 16.

¹⁴⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸Scheidemann, p. 228.

¹⁴⁹*Illustrierte Geschichte*, pp. 232f; Golo Mann, *The History of Germany since 1789* (Harmondsworth, 1974), p. 549.

¹⁵⁰Cohen at the SPD party congress of 1919, as quoted by Lösche, p. 221.

¹⁵¹See remarks of Ströbel in: *Die Regierung der Volksbeauftragten*, p. 183, and SPD deputy Giebel in: *Denkschrift dem Vertretertag der Soldatenräte des Feldheeres am 1. Dezember 1918 in Bad Ems überreicht vom Soldatenrat bei der Obersten Heeresleitung* (Wilhelmshöhe b. Cassel, 28. 11. 1918), p. 15.

¹⁵²The dilemma of these councils was characterized by their insistence on the forms and symbols of the Russian soviets while rejecting the soviets' Bolshevik aims and methods. Thus the *Garnisonsrat* of Ludwigsburg, who had decorated public buildings with red flags in honor of the returning troops, protested the "tearing down" of these flags with the following explanation: "The red flag is not the symbol of Bolshevism, but merely an indication of the radical transformation of the political system, of the victory of the revolution . . . we will not allow our authority to be undermined by certain circles because we want no Germany which is ravaged by the same inner struggles which have been shattering Russia for one year." HStAS, E 135, Bu 50. The refusal of the Allies to recognize the German workers' and soldiers' councils prompted the following protest of the *Garnisonsrat* of Ulm to the Berlin government: "The workers' and soldiers' councils were adopted not for the same purpose as in Russia, but merely as a backing for the provisional government. The overwhelming majority of the German workers' and soldiers' councils reject any dictatorship, even that of the proletariat. They prepare the national assembly while keeping on guard against militarism and preserving order with the confidence of the masses backing them. They have in common with the Russian soviets merely the similarity of their form. In reality they are to the world the guarantors of a free, democratic Germany . . . It would be completely absurd if the Allied governments would support their old hated opponent, German militarism, against his enemies at home." HStAS, E 135, Bu 43.

¹⁵³Mann, pp. 201f; *Illustrierte Geschichte*, pp. 19f; Stadelmann, pp. 73ff; Preuss, p. 131.

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¹⁵⁴Lösche, pp. 242ff, 257.

¹⁵⁵Rosenberg, p. 388.

¹⁵⁶Dietrich Geyer, "Sowjetrussland und die deutsche Arbeiterbewegung 1918-1932," *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, XXIV, 1 (1976), p. 3.