

The Origin and Growth of Nazism (1943)

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I

The phenomenal growth of the Nazi movement posed new problems. Hitherto the autocratic state had been associated with backward countries, and the establishment of dictatorships in Russia and Italy had not weakened this theory to any serious extent. But Germany, a highly industrialised country, also leading the world in many fields of scientific endeavour and cultural achievement, could not be included in this rather simplified category. Here was a precedent in the world of politics demanding a new approach.

Two main viewpoints emerged as deserving of some consideration. The first, produced by the Communists and since abandoned by its sponsors, held that German Fascism – and Fascism in any other country – represented the last stage of capitalism. The workers, it was claimed, were on the point of storming the citadel of capitalist society and the ruling class had erected this barrier as a means of holding the revolution at bay. (This view, incidentally, suited these leaders of totalitarianism, and supported their claims to be “world saviours from Bolshevism”.)

This idea has led the Communists into strange political twists. Their enmity was concentrated on the Labour Parties, whom they dubbed “Social – Fascists” rather than the Fascists, whom they hoped to succeed in power. Their slogan: “After the Fascists come we!” was based on the mistaken assumption that a Nazi regime would give rise to civil war, from which the Communists would emerge as victors.

The second theory is still extant in some quarters and has been argued at length, though with little basis, by Mr. James Burnham in his book *The Managerial Revolution*. This claims that the Totalitarian State is not capitalism at all, but a new kind of social arrangement in which the power of the capitalist class has been broken and the control of society passed into the hands of “the managerial class,” managers, supervisors, highly paid technicians, etc. This view owes its origin to an American doctrine known as “Technocracy.” It is a superficial generalisation which has avoided specific inquiry into the economic anatomy of the totalitarian states. Franz Neumann, in what is probably the most penetrating analysis of the Nazi State, has conclusively

answered the “managerial school.” (“Behemoth.” Left Book Club edition.)

The fundamental error common to both these schools of thought was to assume that capitalism in every country must have identical features, political and economic, forgetting that in each case exists a different historical background which is bound to give varying trends and twists to each country’s evolution. The development of capitalism in Germany was held back at first owing to her geographical position (e.g. inadequate coastline). When capitalism did appear in the middle of the last century, it limited itself to districts around the Rhine, the river facilitating the transport of coal and iron from the nearby Ruhr. This late beginning put German capitalism at a disadvantage with the already well established manufacturing centre of Britain, which by then had a firm grip on the only market open to Germany, the European continent. This commercial rivalry was to play an important part in shaping the history of the world and has already helped to scourge mankind with two world wars.

The lack of raw materials such as oil, rubber, nitrate, etc., further increased the difficulties of German capitalists and made them more dependant than any of their other competitors on the world market. (It also encouraged the research for substitutes, “Ersatz,” and gave a spur to German chemical industries.) Under the economic laws of world capitalism the import of goods from abroad must be met and balanced by payment in cash (gold) or the export of home – manufactured wares. This is merely an extension of home grown capitalist economy and demonstrates the validity of Marx’s analysis of capitalist economics, yet the capitalist economic rivalry which is the root – cause of modern wars is obscured to many by propaganda about “ideals” of “justice,” “freedom,” etc.

The late national unity of German capitalism (achieved in 1871) also was a factor restricting the growth of the economic and political power of the German capitalist class. This class, therefore, did not feel strong enough to govern Germany and leaned upon another, more ancient, ruling class, the group of Junkers, the Prussian landowners. This social element, strictly belonging to Feudalism, was consequently extending its reign into capitalism. Its main hold upon modern Germany was in the role of organising and officering the German Army, a vital necessity for a capitalist land – power which by its very nature was predestined to play a military aggressive role in world politics.

The defeat of Germany in 1918 drove the figurehead, the Kaiser, into exile, but left the ruling class groups of capitalists and generals still in a dominating position. German Social Democracy (the equivalent, more or less, of the British Labour Party) took on the powers of

government, not with the idea of interfering with the property – rights of the German capitalists, but merely to give Germany the political constitution of a capitalist democratic republic after the style of France or the United States. But for this moderate project they encountered immense difficulties. The economic distress of the workers could not be remedied by capitalist reforms and large masses of workers, guided by the Bolshevik Revolution on the one hand and encouraged by temporary capitalist impotence on the other, threatened the Government's overthrow. Here German Social democracy was faced with a dilemma, a dilemma of its own choosing. Their self – appointed task of saving German capitalism brought them into inevitable conflict with the working class interests which they had promised to safeguard. They solved the dilemma by calling the reactionary junker class of generals and officers to their rescue and so paved the way for the eventual downfall of the German republic.

The South of Germany, especially Bavaria, being still in the main an agricultural area, soon led the swing back to reaction. Already in 1920, barely two years after the armistice, an openly pro-monarchist, anti-democratic regime was established, carrying on anti-republican propaganda. Numerous groups of officers, not legally employed by the German central government but permitted to exist in order to evade the restriction on military forces imposed by the Allied victors, participated in political intrigues. In addition, numberless political parties, open enemies of the democratic republic, existed under various guises. Among these was a small group calling itself "The German Workers' Party," which had been founded in Munich, capital of Bavaria. This party based its policy on ideas derived from the mediaeval guilds with their handicraft labour, a form of labour that still existed in Bavaria. Adolf Hitler, who at that time was living in Munich, a soldier not yet demobilised, joined the "Inner Council" of this organisation.

The most authoritative work on the growth of the Nazi Party is the *History of the National Socialism*, by Konrad Heyden. In it the author alleged that Hitler joined the group as an agent of a number of German officers. It is certain that Hitler owed his rapid domination over this party to his control of funds which he was handed by his officer friends, who included Captain Roehm. (The latter he had murdered in the "Blood Purge" of June, 1934.)

Besides his control of funds, Hitler also quickly showed his ability as a mob-orator as well as certain talents for political intrigue. At his suggestion the party changed its name to the "National Socialist German Workers' Party," a title worthy of a group whose policy was not National but Racist and Imperialist, not Socialist but Capitalist; which did not represent the

workers and whose leader was not even German. The new title was matched by a programme of "Twenty-Five points," most of which consisted of the usual reformist eyewash which the Nazi leaders have long since forgotten.

Two distinct features have of the new Nazi programme deserve to be mentioned. One was opposition to "unearned income." This point was designed to appeal to workers, but its real meaning was quite different. At that time German industry was being financed by capitalists in France, Britain and the United States, who were thus drawing the rake-off from the proceeds from the proceeds of German industry. The German industrialists, like their brothers everywhere, objected to having to part with some of the surplus value they wrung from the workers: they wanted to keep the lot. So the cry "unearned incomes" was a cry from the heart of the German capitalist exploiters.

The other point was the hostility to the Jews. To be understood, anti-semitism must be placed in its proper historical setting. Under Feudalism the Jew was a social outcast. The land as a means of livelihood was closed to him. Trading and the money-transactions it involved formed an infinitesimal part of an economy that largely restricted itself to production for local consumption. Money-lending itself was forbidden by the Church. Thus the Jew found himself willy-nilly burdened with an economic role that stamped him as an outsider to feudal society. And though under capitalism trading and finance have long ceased to be the prerogative of any religious sect, anti-semitism persists as a tradition. It is in fact a hangover from Feudalism, particularly vicious in countries where feudal customs and ideas still exert a strong influence. This tradition is of course continuously nourished by the prejudices, national and religious, which only a classless society can fully eliminate.

The Nazis found a fruitful field for their Jew baiting propaganda in backward Bavaria. But the real significance of their "Racist philosophy" appeared later, when the intention to avenge the defeat of 1918 became obvious. The buffer states of Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland contained strong German-born and German-speaking elements. These countries formed the first stepping stones to the mastery of Europe. The Nazi doctrine proclaiming the "Unity and Purity of the German Race," was nonsense indeed from the scientist's point of view, but as propaganda it prepared the way for conquest.

II

In January, 1919, the first elections under the new Weimer constitution were held. German Social Democracy polled more than 11 ½ million votes.

Eighteen months later these votes dropped to less than half. As the new republic was synonymous with the German Labour Party – indeed it was their own handiwork – this meant only one thing: sooner or later the democratic republic of Germany would fall and bury the founders beneath its ruins. The question was: Which political force would achieve the assassination of German democracy?

The enemies of the republic were numerous. There were the avowed capitalist parties, representing the German industrialists and big business. These parties called themselves “Nationalist.” They feared the working class backing the Social Democrats; above all, they were afraid that the more extreme section of the workers, organised in the “Spartakus” group (later the Communist Party of Germany) and in the “U.S.D.P.” (Independent socialists), would gain the upper hand over the moderates. There were the numberless right-wing splinter organisations which only a system of proportional representation could call into a precarious existence. The real threat, however, came from the army, or more properly speaking, its “illegal shadow”, the “Free Corps.”

However, all of them lacked the one essential which in the last analysis can alone carry a political party to victory – they lacked mass-support. Political murders, putsches and intrigue were the order of the day in Germany in the early post-war years. Governments came and went at yearly intervals or even less. The inflation in 1922-1923 sent the mark into the pit of depreciation – so bottomless that even the best mathematical minds could not peer into it without toppling. Nevertheless, the ramshackle structure of the newly-born republic held, because none of its enemies had succeeded as yet in building a mass-party. The mass-parties at that time were still on the side of the republic. Apart from the Social Democrats, who believed in the republic to the very last (and, let it be stated, kept a solid core of support among the industrial working class numbering about six million), three main parties, all of them openly capitalist, proclaimed their support for the Weimer constitution and participated in the coalitions which governed Germany for ten years until 1930. There were the Democratic Party (Liberals, never strong, soon to disappear), the Catholic Centre Party (party of the agrarian Catholic South), and the German Peoples’ Party (Conservative, leader Gustav Stresemann). The last two parties ratted on the Republic at the critical moment.

During the first two years of its existence, the Nazi movement had to content itself with the province of Bavaria as its main sphere of influence. In this locality it quickly gained a notoriety quite out of proportion to its numbers. Bavarians are by temperament the least stolid and by political standards the most backward of

the “German” people. The showy effects and fury of language and methods used by Hitler and his colleagues drew their attention even if it did not at first gain their support. It is by no means paradoxical that Bavaria, the first stronghold of the Nazis, had also been the first and only German province to proclaim itself a “Soviet Republic” – as short-lived as its first President, Kurt Eisner, who was assassinated shortly after assuming office. Conditions and people alike provided fertile ground for an “extremism” that was utterly irrational as it was based merely on violent discontent without an inkling as to the real cause of the post-war distress. And the foundations of centuries had been swept away: the Bavarian Monarchy, the semi-feudal hierarchy – in short, dependence on the older order was no longer available and the population as a whole was not ready as yet to work along the lines of the new, democratic constitution which demanded at least a modicum of political self-reliance. Into this political vacuum the Nazis poured their crude mixture of “radical” and patriotic propaganda. Their theme song was simple and catching: “The people of Germany were suffering for their defeat of 1918. But this defeat was not achieved honestly on the field of battle! No, the German army was not beaten by its foes abroad; it was stabbed in the back by the enemies of the people in Germany itself, the ‘Marxists’.” (All supporters of the Weimer constitution were dubbed “Marxists.”)

Granted the premise, the rest was not difficult to swallow. And no political party in Germany denied it. Only a Socialist movement could explain that victory and defeat do not materially affect the economic position of the workers, but a socialist movement did not exist in Germany. The Communist Party, forced through its dependence on Moscow to sacrifice working class interests to the varying needs of Russian foreign policy, bewildered and disgusted by their political somersaults the more militant workers who were looking for an alternative to Social democracy. Able and tested men such as Paul Levi and Daumig left the Communist Party rather than serve as stooges to the Comintern.

The lessons of the Russian and Italian dictatorships were not lost on Hitler and his associates. The method of intimidating opponents by physical violence suited the social riffraff of military adventurers and professional thugs that constituted the active core of the early Nazi party. Already, in 1920, Hitler had been sentenced to a month’s imprisonment for breaking up an opponent’s meeting. During these early years the Nazis were only one of many small nationalist and anti-semitic organisations. Three factors, however, soon gained it more prominence than any of its rivals. (1) Its useful connections with groups in the army; (2) The oratorical powers of Adolf Hitler; (3) That it made serious attempts to influence the

workers, shopkeepers, professional men, etc., by means of a theoretical platform containing all the “radical” ingredients that look so attractive to the strugglers for existence. The Nazi party, like its bitter opponents in later years, the Communists, was never thought of as “Reformist,” although its economic programme simply stunk of the old hash served up by every reformist party throughout the capitalist world. “Provision for the aged,” “Protection for the small trader,” “Education for the talented children of the poor,” and so on, ad nauseum.

Its “revolutionary” content was signified by its title, “National Socialism.” State capitalism, misnamed “State Socialism,” had been a feature of German capitalism since Bismarck. Long before that, Marx had dealt contemptuously with the trickery of certain capitalist elements to palm off their cry for help from the State as “Socialism” (see *Communist Manifesto*, 1848, chapter on “True” or “German” Socialism). The defeat of 1918 had weakened the German capitalist class considerably and many of them were looking to State control as a solution. The Nazis were thus bidding for capitalist support whilst at the same time deluding the workers who had been taught to regard Nationalisation as “Socialism.”

Further, the Nazis posed as “Unconstitutionalists.” In 1923 they were in fact determined to overthrow the existing government of Bavaria in a coup d’état. With the dismal rout of the Nazi street-fighters on November 9, 1923, the Nazis abandoned the idea of a coup and set themselves the task of winning the masses. Hitler, who together with the late General Ludendorff had led the “insurrection,” received a sentence of nine months’ imprisonment. Altogether Hitler had cut a sorry figure during this affair. He – the man who claims to have won an Iron Cross, first class, during the last war – fled at the sound of the first shot. After his release from prison, Hitler reconstituted the party into a legal, parliamentary organisation. Nevertheless, the opposition to “the system” (as the Nazis cleverly called the Weimer republic) plus their vicious abuse of the opponents, as well as their incessant baiting of Jews, maintained for them a reputation of being “revolutionaries.” And let there be no misunderstanding: they were “revolutionaries” in the sense that they aimed at a *political* revolution: the elimination of the democratic constitution which permitted minorities, including the Nazis, to exist. And the army of thugs, the “S.A” and “S.S.” (“stormtroops”), ostensibly maintained to keep “order” at Nazi meetings, provided the sinister substance to Hitler’s demagogic threat: “When our Party comes to power, heads will roll.”

But in those days few took the Nazis seriously. The stabilisation of the German currency and the world-

wide economic recovery after the post-war slump, kept the party small. In the elections of May, 1928, they polled 800,000 votes. Comparing the figure with the vote given to the Social Democrats (9 million) who could have foreseen that in less than five years the Nazis would be the political masters of Germany?

III

Like a thunderbolt, the world slump struck German economy amidsthips towards the end of 1929. The capitalist magnates of New York, London and Paris who had financed Germany’s industrial comeback, hastily called in whatever part of their loans they could lay their hands on. Thus the German crisis assumed even more disastrous proportions than that of other countries. Her industry had rehabilitated itself on foreign credit and when this credit vanished, the bottom fell out from Germany’s reservoir of production.

This crisis of “overproduction” is an inevitably recurring feature of capitalism. It is “overproduction” indeed, over-production of the surplus value accumulated by its capitalist owners and which they cannot use or dispose of profitably. But for the workers it means unemployment and reduced standards of living. For the German masses the post-war years had been a continuous ordeal of extraordinary strain. The new republic had never settled down politically because the economic background was seldom stable enough (in the capitalist sense of “stability”) to allow for the mental adjustment necessary. When, therefore, the government of Brüning (Right Wing Catholic) was defeated in the Reichstag in July, 1930, the electorate went to the polling booths on September 14, 1930, in an atmosphere of a world crisis which appeared to them as the consummation of years of distress and bewilderment. From this election the Nazis emerged as a mass party. They secured 6,400,000 votes and 107 seats in the Reichstag – eight times the number polled by them in 1928. The percentage of total voters who actually voted jumped from 50 per cent to 73 per cent: nearly four million new voters had entered the lists. It is estimated that most of these, probably three million, hitherto non-political elements, went to the Nazis. Thus the party of “National Socialism” is revealed as a product of the world crisis – a party of wild despair and wild hopes.

The Nazis owed this unparalleled success to the fact that in the eyes of many their policy and make-up promised a complete break with the past. The fanatical fervour of the “Brownshirts,” their demagoguery and displays, did not appear out-of-place under the circumstances. It reflected the neurosis of the modern troubled world. Compared to them, the parties of the republic, particularly the Social Democrats, were

compromised with the “old order” and completely lacking in “dynamic.” The German Communist Party, under the circumstances prevailing a possible rival to the Nazis, secured 3 ½ million votes. They, too, competed for the votes of those who wanted a break with the “old system” (in fact, large blocks of votes repeatedly fluctuated backwards and forwards between the Nazis and the Communists), but their past inconsistency and support of Social Democracy lowered their standing as a political party. And their ties with Moscow limited their appeal as a Russophile organisation. German industrialists and big business owners now turned in increasing numbers to Hitler’s party as a means of helping them to give Germany what they were pleased to call “political stability.” They themselves, as “Nationalist” and “Conservative” parties, had dismally failed to secure any backing of consequence among the people. In the September elections they had even lost a good deal of their previous support to the Nazis. In the “National Socialist” movement they saw an organisation that could compete for “mass appeal” with the Social Democratic and Communist parties whilst at the same time providing a check to the political and economic threats of the disgruntled workers. The union between the Nazis and a large section of the German capitalist class was publicly sealed by the parliamentary co-operation of Hitler’s party with the “nationalist” bloc led by Huegenberg, the leading business magnate. This does not mean, however, that the two parties had merged or that the capitalists of Germany were willing to commit their fate into the hands of the Nazi leaders. Nor would it be correct to assume that the Nazis from then onwards became the puppets of the German capitalists. There was in fact a great deal of distrust between the two groups. The Nazi movement was at no time comparable to the orthodox political parties which capitalism had hitherto thrown up. They were not a “class” party in the sense that the Conservative Party in Britain is the party of present-day British capitalism. Their membership and supporters held views as varied as the colours of the well known chameleon. The Race-mythology which attempted to concoct a special philosophy of its own, was merely one wing, and not the whole, of the Nazi movement. Its spokesmen is Alfred Rosenberg (this is definitely a Jewish name). The mass-appeal of the Nazis certainly does not rest on the race-myth. The S.A. (Storm-troops) led by Captain Ernst Roehm was largely composed of unemployed as well as those dregs of society which Marx called very descriptively the “Lumpenproletariat.” It was this body that carried the terror against the Jews and other opponents of the Nazis. Numerically the most powerful section of this political hybrid was the “radical” wing led by Gregor Strasser. Strasser later attempted to detach this wing from the party and come to terms with trade union and Social Democratic elements. He, like

Roehm, was later murdered by his former “comrades” in the “blood-purge” of June, 1934.

This political incoherency is the real explanation of the “Leader-cult.” The more backward and confused politically a people are, the stronger is the gravitation toward absolute personal leadership as a unifying force. Conversely, to the extent that the masses become politically enlightened, the need for “leadership” disappears.

These differences, as well as the appetites for power of individual Nazi politicians, caused serious conflicts within the movement. But the momentum of the crisis, plus the powerful financial backing from the capitalists, boosted the Nazi Party from strength to strength. In July, 1932, the Nazis polled nearly fourteen million votes, and thus became the strongest single party in the country. To illustrate the unscrupulous lengths to which these political adventurers relied on the credulity of the German electorate (or a large part of it), the following items from their “Immediate Economic Programme,” published at this election, can be quoted:

“Four hundred thousand houses for single families to be built within a year!”

“To increase the annual yield from German agriculture by two milliard marks,” a fantastic notion.

And, of course, these “revolutionary economists” proposed to abolish the gold standard!

What was the reaction of the so-called “working class” parties to this mortal challenge to all the principles and traditions which the workers since the time of Marx and Engels have built up by their historic struggles? Now, after the event, accusation and counter-accusation are hurled at each other by the parties involved. The worker who has no knowledge of the recorded events is confused. The facts, however, condemn both the Communist Party of Germany and the Social Democrats as equally guilty. The Communists who still claim that they proposed a “United Front” would have defeated the Nazis are, as usual, lying. They had no intention of combining forces with the Social Democrats against Hitler. On the contrary, their avowed purpose was to destroy the German equivalent of the Labour Party by every means, fair or foul. So intense was their hostility that they supported the plebiscite on August 9, 1931 organised by Huegenberg’s reactionary “Stahlhelm” and the Nazi Party, to turn out of office the Social Democratic Government of Prussia. As late as May, 1934, after more than a year of Nazi tyranny, Palme Dutt, the well-known *Fascism and Social Revolution*:

“It would be more correct to say of Social Democracy and Fascism: their aims are the same (the saving of

capitalism from the working class revolution); they differ only in their methods.” (Page 155.)

It was a year later, in 1935, when the Russian Government had reason to fear the threat of war from Nazi Germany, that the Communists obediently turned themselves inside out again and clamoured for “Unity against Fascism.”

And yet no argument can be shown to prove that a combination of Social Democracy and “Communism” would have stayed the Nazi onslaught against the Weimer Republic. This Republic had virtually ceased to exist when Bruening became Chancellor in the spring of 1930. Bruening governed the country by emergency decrees which were authorised by Hindenburg (President of the Republic since 1925). Hindenburg, the Monarchist General, who had not a good word for the republic, but who nevertheless had taken the oath of loyalty to the Weimer Constitution. Bruening’s emergency decrees violated the constitution, but the only party in the Reichstag, who genuinely upheld the principles of Weimer, the Social Democrats, shrank from challenging Bruening and the popular figure of the President who was behind him. They feared that the defeat of Bruening would mean the triumph of Hitler. It was the age-old reformist illusion of compromise; the suicidal tactic of the “lesser evil.” In pursuit of this self-destructive policy the Social Democratic Party of Germany first linked itself with the Junker Generals, then with the catholic Centrists, and lastly again with the militarist Junker, Hindenberg. These alignments sapped the German Labour movement of most of its strength, destroyed the hopes and enthusiasm of its working class supporters, and finally handed the sorry remains to the Nazis for the death blow. How many more tragic lessons must the workers learn before they abandon once and for all the folly of the lesser evil?

By the end of 1932, the world crisis was at its climax. The markets of the world, glutted by the fertility of modern wage labour, became additionally restricted from the high tariff walls erected by the frightened governments. The Ottawa Agreement barred the way to the raw materials of the British Empire. The capitalist class of Germany were confronted with problems involving their very existence. One half of their industry was at a standstill (the unemployed numbered six and seven millions). Their attempts to impose a semi-military rule on the country through Hindenberg, Von Papen, and general Schleicher, had broken down owing to the hostility of the Reichstag. Germany, although its peculiar development and abnormal condition had, for the time being, brought the democratic forces to failure and disaster, was yet too highly developed to be governed by a regime which did not grow out of a mass political organisation in the

country. The Nazis, although they suffered a set-back at the election following their triumph in July, 1932 (they only polled 11,730,000, and thus lost two million votes within a few months, i.e. on November 6, 1932), were the only hope of consolidating German capitalism. Consequently, an agreement was reached between Von Papen (the confidant of Hindenburg) and Hitler, and by it Hitler was installed as Chancellor by Hindenburg in January, 1933. Immediate preparations were made for a further election in order to present the new government to the country as a “national” government so as to strengthen the popular support. The elections, held March 5, 1933, gave the Chancellor, with the backing of the President, attracted millions of additional Nazi votes. Seventeen million votes were cast for them at this election. The seats in the Reichstag were divided as follows:-

Nazis.....	288
Social democrats.....	120
Communists.....	81
Centre.....	73
Huegenberg’s Nationalists	52
All others.....	14
 Total	 647

88 per cent of the total electorate voted.

Thus the Nazis together with the nationalists, with whom they were in coalition, held a clear majority. The question arises: To what extent were these figures representative of national opinion freely expressed?

The Reichstag Fire (February 25, 1933) had been blamed on the Communists, and this party was certainly at a grave disadvantage. Nevertheless, the party lost only 19 seats compared with the previous election (November 6, 1932) and a mere eight seats compared with the elections previous to that (July 31, 1932). The Social Democrats lost only one seat.

This proves not only that the votes cast were, in the main, representing popular opinion (although it must be remembered the facilities for propaganda were almost wholly monopolised by the Nazis and their Nationalist allies), but more important still, despite the fact that Hitler was chancellor and his Brownshirt thugs roamed the streets at will, a considerable section of the German people, mostly the industrial working class, were yet determined enough to declare their opposition to the new regime, and the new rulers were not able to prevent them from doing so. Only later, when the government had managed to pass a special measure through the Reichstag, did they abolish the old constitution and establish the dictatorship of the “Third Reich.”

It is admittedly an impossible task to assess here comprehensively the import of events to which tomes have already been dedicated, and of which some aspects remain obscure. The main conclusions from the foregoing analysis are stated herewith:

Political democracy was born in Germany under most unpromising circumstances and against an unfavourable historical background. Its birth was not the result of a struggle by the workers nor the desire or need of the German capitalist class. It was thrown to the nation by the defeat of 1918 and the temporary impotence of ruling class elements.

Nevertheless, the power of the constitution was such that only a mass movement could break it. The Nazi Party was able to rally those sections of the masses who were most backward politically and who had not yet shed their dependence on absolutism. Their success was contributed to by the weak and compromising character of German Social Democracy which attempted to combine the role of working class reformist party with the guardianship of capitalist interests. The Communists drew a large section of the working class into opposition to the democratic method and so the elements whose co-operation was essential to ensure a popular basis for the Republic, were split from the beginning.

The militarist class or junkers who had been the real power behind the absolutist throne up till November, 1918, were seriously weakened by the army's defeat. The re-arming of Germany placed them once again into a key position in German politics. This time, however, they were dependent on mass-parties for their link-up with the people; this was provided in the first period by Social Democracy and other Republican parties. The world crisis in 1930-33 barred the world market and access to raw materials to the capitalist class of Germany (most of whom are industrialists). This determined the capitalist and militarist elements to embark on a policy of territorial annexation involving war. The Nazi Party then appeared as a means of ending the violent political fluctuations and preparing the country materially and psychologically for the coming conflict. The Nazis, therefore, could never have formed a stable regime of any permanency. Their rule was bound to involve a series of climacterics leading to war. They were in the last analysis a party of crisis and war.

Finally, the Nazis owed their triumph directly to the world economic crisis. Thus the periodical crises of capitalism now emerge as a powerful force for the shaping of political mass opinion. In this particular instance the circumstances combined to give the spoils to a party of reaction. But the future may well atone for this setback. With the fuller experience of workers

everywhere, the crises to come - "planners" notwithstanding - should provide an immense stimulus to the world movement for Socialism.