

It was dispersed as chaff before the wind by the bayonets of the Luttwitz troops; the Reichstag, where the Assembly met, now as imposingly empty and impotent as democracy itself, was guarded by three soldiers, while children played upon its steps — an appropriate memorial to Karl Kautsky...

The National Assembly dispersed, issued its defiance to the military coup, spoke of democracy and right, of law and the constitution, decided to convene in Stuttgart — and exercised scarcely any influence upon the march of events. The National Assembly, which approvingly observed the butchery of the workers on January 13, now, on March 13, was incapable of mustering either the moral or physical energy to resist counter-revolution.

The representatives of petty bourgeois democracy fulminated threats against the military coup, but the democracy itself was apathetic. Even where hostile, democracy had no means of its own for action against the counter-revolution. Moreover, for this democracy to act decisively against the counter-revolutionary troops meant precipitating a struggle within the military forces of the nation, to disrupt the power which maintained the ascendancy of democracy. The petty bourgeois democracy, accordingly, adopted a policy of "watchful waiting" and "neutrality," which under the circumstances assisted the counter-revolution — democracy did not defend itself against the Right, with whom it could merge; while preparing to maintain itself against the Left, with whom there could be neither compromise nor merger. It might be unpleasant for the military reaction to conquer, but a satisfactory agreement could be arranged.

This, then, was the consequence of the Socialism of the Social Democratic Party — that, in affirming democracy as the means to Socialism, it developed means for the ascendancy of Junker - Capitalism, thereby directly promoting the coming of military counter-revolution.

And after 15 months of murdering the proletariat and Socialism, the Government and the Social Democratic Party were compelled to call upon the proletariat to act against its own creation, the military counter-revolution.

2—Developments of the Crisis.

In choosing the alternative of a General Strike the Government and the Social-Democratic Party were fully aware of the fact that the Strike might develop beyond the limits imposed upon it as a strike in defense of democracy and the Government. But the Government was equally aware that it might depend upon the military in the event of the strike assuming revolutionary proportions, and, moreover, the Government, simultaneously with the call for a General Strike — issued in the name of Ebert, Bauer, Noske, Muller and David (Noske afterwards denied subscribing to the

call) — prepared measures to prevent the General Strike becoming revolutionary. In the Ruhr District, for example, revolutionary and under a state of martial law, the Strike was consciously limited, and it did not become a General Strike until March 17, when the struggle was no longer against the military coup but against the Socialist-bourgeois Government.

In accepting the alternative of a General Strike the Government, moreover, simply "legalized" and accomplished fact, since the masses acted independently of the Government.

On Saturday March 13 the General Strike was proclaimed in Berlin by the trade unions, the Social Democratic Party and the Independent Socialist Party. All three proclamations agreed in fundamentals — strike against the coup, in defense of democracy; the Independents juggled with revolutionary phrases in characteristic style, but proposed no definite revolutionary measures; while the trades unions spoke of the "legal" Government being menaced by the coup, of the danger of reaction being restored in state and shops, of the Republic being in danger. There was no clear call to revolutionary action, not even from the Communist Party which, on Saturday, declared against the General Strike on the assumption that the military coup and the Government were identical.

The response of the proletariat to the General Strike was immediate and complete; in Berlin, the struggle immediately and completely assumed the character of a proletarian struggle against the military-bourgeois reaction.

The situation in Berlin was most characteristic of the general situation in Germany. The collapse of the Government was complete; there was not a trace of this authority or its resistance... Herr Kapp occupied the Chancellery; while General von Luttwitz installed himself in the Ministry of war from whence Comrade Noske had issued orders of death against the Communist proletariat. This Government district, now a fortress of barbed wire entanglements, machine guns and artillery, opens on the Tier-garten where, fifteen months ago, Karl Liebknecht urged the proletariat to Revolution; while three streets beyond is the turgid canal into which the assassins of the Socialist Government cast the mutilated body of Rosa Luxemburg... The National Army either retired to its barracks or fraternized with the counter-revolutionary troops. The Noske Guards, insolently active in all the streets of Berlin the day before, now scurried to cover, and did not appear again until the struggle against the revolutionary masses started. The Einwohnerwehr (literally, Guards of the Inhabitants, civilian White Guards) issued a declaration of neutrality (neutrality under the circumstances meaning assistance to the counter-revolution) while emphasizing its readiness to march against "plunderers," that is to say, against the

proletariat; and it did march to action when the General Strike began to threaten "law and order" and the struggle developed against the Government.

As against these open and masked forces of counter-revolution, the proletariat on General Strike was alone. It was clearly, emphatically the working class against all. The paralysis of industry, of most public activity, was complete; it was as if a giant mass of ice pressed down upon the city. The Kapp-Luttwitz Government was isolated; its troops occupied the streets, but the proletariat closed the factories, halted railway and street car traffic, and kept the city unlighted at night. The Kapp-Luttwitz dictatorship issued innumerable proclamations about right and the constitution, bread and liberty, — but the iron answer of the proletariat mocked it all; the Kapp-Luttwitz dictatorship styled itself the "Government of labor," — but there was no labor; the Kapp-Luttwitz dictatorship issued threats against the profiteers, — but this did not worry the profiteers, while the General Strike did; the Kapp-Luttwitz dictatorship issued a decree providing death for strikers and strike directors, — but the General Strike implacably persisted. All Government authority, "legal" and "illegal", was now a myth in comparison with the reality and the might of the General Strike.

The struggle of the proletariat in Berlin was, objectively, a revolutionary struggle. But, unfortunately, only in an objective sense. The proletariat was unarmed, while its representatives manifested neither revolutionary initiative nor political capacity. The fundamental task was to issue the call and develop measures for the arming of the proletariat; no such call was issued or measures adopted during the first four days of the General Strike — the decisive period, during which the basis had to be laid for all subsequent action.

But elsewhere the revolutionary struggle flared up. Where the workers were armed they initiated a struggle for power, and usurped power; in other places they disarmed the troops as a preliminary to the struggle for power. In city after city Soviet Republics were proclaimed; while in the Ruhr a giant revolutionary struggle loomed threateningly. Among these workers the military coup was a call to action, the opportunity to conquer power. It was the elemental action of the masses breaking loose, in spite of the dangers, in spite of the Party moderates and compromisers. These vital developments indicated that both the reaction and the Revolution had completely under-estimated the German proletariat; the Reaction, — its capacity to resist a military dictatorship; the Revolution, — its will to engage in the struggle for power.

The menace of Bolshevism, which the Kapp-Luttwitz dictatorship in its