

MARX ENGELS LENIN INSTITUTE • MOSCOW

# MARX AND ENGELS ON REACTIONARY PRUSSIANISM



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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The present pamphlet, *Marx and Engels on Reactionary Prussianism*, is a translation from the Russian [State Publishing House for Political Literature, Moscow 1942], which was written by E. P. KANDEL and I. I. PREIS, scientific collaborators of the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute and edited by M. B. MITIN, Director of the Institute.

Of the numerous Marx and Engels quotations cited, the vast bulk are taken from standard English translations, while the rest are translated from German publications and from MSS. not published hitherto in any language and kept in the Archives of the Institute. These MSS. include: By Marx—*Polen, Preussen und Russland [Poland, Prussia and Russia]*, *Preussen (Die Kanailen) [The Prussians (That Canaille)]* and others. By Engels—*Varia über Deutschland [Miscellaneous Notes on Germany]*. Other materials by these authors, also unpublished heretofore in English, are from the *Deutsche Brüsseler Zeitung* and the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, and also excerpts from the *New York Daily Tribune*, now difficult of access to many.

German fascism is the most brutal, most terroristic dictatorship of the most reactionary imperialist elements of finance capital, is the foulest creature of German imperialism.

“Hitler, Goebbels, Ribbentrop, Himmler and the other rulers of present-day Germany,” said Stalin, “are the watchdogs of the German bankers, and place the interests of the latter far above all others.”\*

Hitlerism has resurrected all that was most execrable and vile in the history of Germany. It has adopted and magnified to the highest degree all the most reactionary features of Prussianism: the cult of unbridled brute force, the exaction of servile obedience, the implantation of Prussian drill-sergeant methods and rod discipline in the army, and perfidy and provocation in domestic and foreign affairs. The Hitler camarilla is the embodiment of all these features of Prussianism distended to their most abhorrent forms. Hitlerism has unleashed the most bestial, most misanthropic instincts of the German militarists.

Marx and Engels in their day mercilessly exposed all the specific traits of Prussianism, and the aggressive, predatory ambitions of the Prussian Junkers and barons. Throughout the period of their activity they fought against reactionary Prussianism, which had shackled and enslaved the German people and had made it the obedient tool of reaction.

Today, when the peoples of our country are engaged in fierce, relentless combat with the hordes of German fascist invaders, the searing denunciation of German reaction by Marx and Engels sounds like a trumpet call to encompass the utter defeat of this reaction, now embodied in fascism.

#### DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF GERMANY

Why have the forces of reaction always been so strong in Germany, and the German people so often powerless to combat them? Why at crucial moments in German history has it come under the influence and rule of reaction? Why have Germany’s fundamental national problems been settled so frequently, not by the progressive, but by the reactionary forces among the German people, to the detriment of this people?

The answer to this question is given by Marx and Engels, who shed much light on Germany’s peculiar and contradictory course of development.

Already at the commencement of his political activity, Marx put his finger on the peculiar circumstance in Germany’s history which determined its complex and intricate character. To quote him: “We have shared in the restorations of the modern peoples without sharing in their revolutions....

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\* J. Stalin, *On the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union*, 2nd Eng. Ed., p. 39. Moscow 1943.

Headed by our shepherds, we were always only once in the company of liberty, and that was on the *day it was buried*."<sup>\*</sup>

Already at that early date Marx grasped the essence of the national misfortune of the German people: at all decisive moments in its development, when confronted by vital, fundamental problems, it would, after a transient revolutionary outburst, come again under the influence of reaction, which led to a restoration of the former, conservative order.

This distinctive feature, discovered by Marx, was very pronounced in the course of development, and in the outcomes of the greatest movements in German history—the Reformation and the Peasant War, the events of the period of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, the Revolution of 1848 and the movement for the national unification of Germany. In all these major events the scales turned, in the long run, in favour of the reactionary classes.

What were the causes of this peculiar development of German history? For a long time after other West-European countries had embarked upon the road of capitalist development and had begun to lay the foundations of modern bourgeois states, Germany remained a nationally disunited and economical backward country. In his notes on the history of Germany during the period of 1500-1789, Engels wrote:

“Germany cut up into more and more fragments and the Centre weakened. End of 15th century when France and England were already more or less centralized and forming into nations.”<sup>†</sup>

The advanced classes, which played such a progressive part in the history of England and France, for instance, could not develop and exert any considerable influence on the course of social life in decentralized and economically backward Germany. Economically dependent on the feudal nobility, the German bourgeoisie was politically weak. It was not in a position to offer serious resistance to the domination of the feudal landowners. “While in England and France,” said Engels, “feudalism was entirely destroyed, or at least reduced, as in the former country, to a few insignificant forms, by a powerful and wealthy middle class, concentrated in large towns, and particularly in the capital, the feudal nobility in Germany had retained a great portion of their ancient privileges. The feudal system of tenure was prevalent almost everywhere.”<sup>‡</sup> Thus, the helm of state remained in the hands of the reactionary classes, the exponents of the feudal mode of production.

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\* Marx-Engels, *Gesamtausgabe*. 1st Part, Vol. I, 1st Half-Volume, pp. 608-09

† Engels, *Miscellaneous Notes on Germany*.

‡ Karl Marx. *Selected Works*, Vol. II, Germany: Revolution and Counter-Revolution, p. 42, Eng. Ed., Moscow-Leningrad, 1935.

The dispersion of economic interests, the absence of large economic centres and the political weakness of the bourgeoisie had their counterpart in Germany's political dispersion—the existence of a multitude of petty states and principalities, linked up into an empire by only external ties. “Where,” asked Marx, “was *political* concentration to come from in a country which lacked all *economic* conditions for the same?”\*

The economic and political division of the country hindered the development and prevented the success of the mass social movements of the progressive classes.

The rule of reaction in the German states was intensified by the peculiar form which absolutism assumed there. While in England and France the absolute monarchy was a centralizing factor, which facilitated the formation of a single national state and served the cause of bourgeois progress, in Germany absolutism degenerated into sheer despotism. Here, the bearers of absolute power were the German princes, the rulers of small and even tiny states, whose policies were shaped to meet the interests of the reactionary classes. Compressed within the narrow framework of petty states and lacking progressive national tasks, absolutism in Germany became tyranny, crushing every sign of initiative or activity on the part of the masses, and developing into petty, captious tutelage, which shackled all virile forces of the people. This absolutism begat an inordinately overgrown bureaucracy, the rule of officialdom, which acquired steadily increasing influence over the course of the ship of state. The bureaucratic system left such a marked imprint upon the development of Germany that it gave birth to a specifically German bureaucratic spirit, with its worship of the letter of the law and its slavish submission to those in power. The whole weight of this bureaucratic machine bore down on the progressive and revolutionary elements of the German people, and augmented the forces of reaction.

Marx characterized this order in the following trenchant words: “... together with this *lousy sovereignty*” there arose a “special German ‘*subjectship*,’ which made peasant and burgher alike ‘serfs’ of the sovereign; externally, however,... in the eyes of foreign countries, Germany cut a ridiculous figure.”†

Arisen under these conditions and robed in religious garb—the reform of the church—the first national movement of the German people, the Reformation, did not lead in this country to the results that were obtained in other countries, as, for instance, England and Holland.

The chief actors in this movement were the petty knights, disaffected by

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\* Marx-Engels, *Gesamtausgabe*, 1st Part, Vol. V, p. 176.

† Marx, *Chronological Extracts*, Notebook III.

the overbearance of the church and the princes, and the peasants, crushed by the burden of feudal duties.

The peasantry came out resolutely against feudalism. It was the first champion of the national cause of the German people, the cause of founding a free and united Germany. The peasants rose in a revolt which, according to Engels, marks “the peak of the whole revolutionary struggle....” But while in England the movement was headed by the bourgeoisie, in Germany the bourgeoisie “was neither powerful enough nor sufficiently developed to be able to unite under its banner the rest of the rebellious estates—the plebeians of the towns, the lower nobility and the peasants on the land.” \* By failing to support the peasants in their struggle, the burghers actually betrayed the national cause. “The peasants rise, but the burghers *take direct action against them*. At the same time the bourgeois-theological revolution is so castrated that it really benefits the *princes*” to whom it assigned the leading role.†

The princes, who enjoyed the support of the burghers, quelled the peasant uprising with barbarous cruelty. Their victory exacted a heavy toll from the country: the peasants were exterminated in masses, entire regions laid waste, the country completely impoverished and the populace reduced to hopeless despair.

The first big revolutionary battle of the German people ended in its defeat. The princes emerged victorious. They were able to derive profit also from the Peasant War—they appropriated the richest lands and possessions of the church. From now on the German peasantry, which had suffered defeat in this glorious battle, had to bear a double yoke. The strength of the reactionary classes in Germany was increased while the revolutionary strength of the German people was sapped and even exhausted for a long time to come.

The ruin and desolation which prevailed in Germany and the weakening of her progressive forces were greatly aggravated as a result of the Thirty Years’ War. The protracted conflict between the central imperial power of Germany and the individual German princelings reduced the country to a state of prostration, converted its towns and villages into heaps of ash and ruin. The armies of the warring states consisted of *landsknechts*—mercenary troops to whom the waging of war in its barbarous mediaeval forms had become a profession. As Engels said: “A class of men had been formed who lived upon war and by war.... Central Europe was overrun by *condottieri* of all kinds, who took religious and political quarrels for their pretext to plunder

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\* Marx, *Selected Works*, Vol. I, “Ludwig Feuerbach,” p. 467, Eng. Ed., Leningrad, 1935.

† Engels, *Miscellaneous Notes on Germany*.

and devastate the whole country.”\* The sacking of towns, the robbing of individuals and other forms of violence against the peaceful population were the habitual and legitimate methods by which the *landsknechts* received additional emoluments. A contemporary of that war depicted the “exploits” of those hirelings in the regions they had seized in the following words: “Where the master of the house and his wife and children have been driven out, bad times arrive for chickens, geese, fat cows, oxen, hogs and sheep. Then money is divided up by the hatful, velvet, silk and linen measured with the pike; cows are slaughtered for their hides; all chests and trunks are smashed to pieces and when there is nothing left to loot they set the house on fire. It is great fun for the *landsknechts* to see fifty villages and hamlets go up in smoke. After enjoying this spectacle they move on to new quarters and start all over again.”† These misdeeds of the *landsknechts* were encouraged by the German princes, who saw in them a means of realizing their plans of conquest and of replenishing their money chests. The German princes gained wide notoriety as traders in the bodies of their subjects. They eagerly supplied their *landsknechts* to the state that put in the highest bid.

The system of robbery and violence practised by the unbridled *landsknechts* proved very tenacious of life in Germany. It became part and parcel of the rule of the German militarists who earned unenviable notoriety for the unprecedented cruelties they practised in every region they conquered. The vandalism of Hitler’s army is not only a recrudescence of the worst and most revolting traits of the mediaeval *landsknechts*. It even surpasses the latter in the scale and ferocity of their atrocities.

The defeat of the German people in the Peasant War and the devastation of the country wrought by the Thirty Years’ War bled the German people white and for centuries bereaved it of revolutionary energy. The Thirty Years’ War “ended by blotting out Germany, for two hundred years, from the politically active nations of Europe. (Engels.)”‡

The German burghers lost confidence in their strength, and became imbued with a philistine, lower middle-class spirit. “In Germany,” wrote Engels, “the lower middle class is the fruit of an unsuccessful revolution, of an interrupted, repressed development. It acquired its typical, sharply accentuated traits of cowardice, narrow-mindedness, helplessness and utter lack of initiative from the Thirty Years’ War and the period following it, just at the time when almost all other Great peoples registered rapid progress. It retained this character also at a later period when Germany was again drawn

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\* Engels, “Infantry,” *New American Cyclopaedia*, Vol. IX, 1860, p- 518.

† Franz Mehring, *Sketches on the History of Wars, Die Neue Zeit*, 1914-1915, Vol. I, p. 464.

‡ Marx, *Selected Works*, Vol. I, pp. 403-04, Eng. Ed., Moscow-Leningrad, 1935.



into the current of historical development....”\*

.The defeat of the German people in its first revolt in behalf of its national cause for long extinguished its revolutionary spirit and strengthened the hand of reaction. This in considerable measure determined the character of Germany’s subsequent development.

The reaction which triumphed in Germany after the Thirty Years’ War had as its mainstay one of the most reactionary of German states—Prussia. The history of Prussia from this point on is the history of the strengthening of the reactionary classes in Germany. Prussia—Prussianism—became the incarnation of German reaction. The history of Prussia supplies the answer to the question of why the reactionary classes kept the upper hand during the subsequent historical development of Germany.

### THE RISE OF PRUSSIA A TALE OF PERFIDY AND VIOLENCE

The Thirty Years’ War loosened the already weak ties that had held the numerous German principalities within the hounds of the empire. Germany was now a motley conglomeration of states that were actually independent of each other and ruled by petty despotic princes. “Each one of these 1,000 princes absolute,” wrote Engels, “coarse, ignorant scamps, of whom no cooperation ever to be expected. Moods galore at all times.... But their most heinous offence was their *very existence*.”†

This state of chaos and ruin greatly favoured the rise of the Prussian-Brandenburgian kingdom. The Prussian rulers—the Hohenzollerns—proved to be the most fortunate of the German princes. The increasingly important role they played in Germany was not at all due to having introduced unity and order into the chaos prevailing in Germany, as the apologists of Prussian reaction claim. On the contrary, the Hohenzollerns took every advantage of this chaos, and of the impotence of the other German states, to promote their dynastic interests. They strengthened and enlarged their domain at the expense of German territory. “This extra-German state—for such was Prussia now in the hands of the Hohenzollerns—henceforth served simultaneously as a point of support for their usurpations in Germany.”‡

Prussia, which was not a German region, had long before been a scene of activity of the Knights of the Teutonic Order. For a hundred years these “cur-knights,” as Marx called them, waged a war of extermination against the native population, the Prussians. “By the end of the *13th century*,” said Marx, “this flourishing country had been transformed into a wilderness; in place of

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\* Letter from Engels to Faul Ernst, June 5, 1890.

† Engels, *Miscellaneous Notes on Germany*.

‡ Marx, *Poland, Prussia and Russia*.

villages and cultivated fields—forests and quagmires; part of the inhabitants killed, part carried off, part forced to emigrate to Lithuania." "Where inhabitants not exterminated, *enslaved*."\* The sacking of the towns and the ravaging of the countryside were the means of accomplishing the Germanization of Prussia, which was converted into a German military colony.

The arrogant cur-knights began to apply their expansionist policy also to the contiguous Russian lands. But in the historic Battle of Lake Peipus, Alexander Nevsky, in 1242, routed the cohorts of the Teutonic Order which had invaded Russian territory, "as a result of which these reprobates were driven beyond the Russian frontier."† When, at the beginning of the 15th century, the Teutonic Knights began to seize Polish and Lithuanian territory, the Slavonic peoples—the Poles, Russians, Ukrainians and Byelorussians—together with the Lithuanians—utterly discomfited these piratical hordes in the Battle of Tannenberg (Grünwald).

The repeated blows which the Russian, Polish and Lithuanian troops inflicted on the Order completely sapped its strength and in the 15th century Prussia became a fief of Poland.

The Hohenzollern dynasty, which had become the ruler of the "Germanized" principality of Brandenburg, next extended its annexationist policy to neighbouring Prussia. In order to accomplish their secret design of usurping control of that country, the margraves of Brandenburg declared themselves the vassals of the Polish kings and took the oath of allegiance to them. While cringing and fawning before the Polish monarchs, they treacherously prepared to wrest Prussia away from them and annex her to the Hohenzollern domain. Marx wrote the following anent the Brandenburg princes in his manuscript "Poland, Prussia and Russia": "Only by bribing Polish traitors and by the grace of Polish kings, and *only as vassals of the Republic of Poland*, to which they had sworn allegiance, did they sneak into possession of the Duchy of Prussia. Thus began the Brandenburg-Prussian domain." In another manuscript, "The Prussians (That Canaille),"‡ Marx exposed the vile cobweb of intrigues, stratagems and perfidies by the aid of which the Hohenzollerns tried to gain their end. In 1648, when a new incumbent of the Polish throne was being elected, Frederick William of Brandenburg supported the candidacy of John Casimir, for which the latter, on becoming king, released Prussia of her fealty to Poland and surrendered her to the Brandenburg prince without the knowledge or consent of the Polish Diet. This, however, did not prevent Frederick William, who now became

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\* Marx, *Chronological Extracts*, Notebook I.

† *Ibid.*

‡ (Unpublished MS kept in Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute.)

Electors of Brandenburg-Prussia, from reaching an agreement with Sweden to divide up Poland. Was this not ample reason for styling Frederick William the “Great Elector?”

“Everyone knows how the so-called ‘Great Elector’ (as if an ‘elector’ could ever be ‘great’!) committed his first act of treason against Poland, by suddenly, while in alliance with Poland against Sweden, switching over to the Swedes so as to be able to plunder Poland the better....”\*

As a result of these “exploits” the elector’s successor, Frederick III, proclaimed himself king, assuming the name of Frederick I, King in Prussia. This he was able to do solely because of the weakness of the German imperial government which this Hohenzollern had adroitly made use of to its advantage. He purchased his royal crown with the blood of his subjects. Frederick offered his soldiers to the Austrian Emperor, who needed troops to fight his dynastic wars. In reward the latter, who nominally was Emperor of Germany, gave his consent to Frederick’s coronation.

Thus, servility, deceit, bribery of traitors and base breach of faith were the means employed to bring into being the Kingdom of Prussia, that foe of the German people, which became the embodiment of reaction and militarism. In speaking of the history of Prussia, Marx wrote: “Indeed and indeed, the history of the world has never produced anything more lousy. The long history of how the nominal kings of France became real kings is also full of petty squabbles, treachery and intrigues. But it is the history of the origin of a nation... Nothing of this sort in Prussia.”†

One single principle lay at the bottom of the whole policy pursued by the Kingdom of Brandenburg-Prussia, that private domain of the Hohenzollerns: to promote the interests of the Hohenzollerns and the Prussian noblemen. Neither the former nor the latter were protagonists of national unity. The history of Prussia is not a history of the genesis of a nation.

Having arisen originally as a military colony of the Teutonic Order, Prussia retained her militaristic character also in the subsequent course of her history. The military organization of the state left an indelible imprint upon her whole life. The nobility—the military estate—was in the ascendant. Vast landed property was concentrated in its hands.

The Prussian nobility, the ruling class of the state of Brandenburg-Prussia, claimed that it alone was the zealous defender of the Proud and overbearing, it plumed itself on its “meritorious services” and ancient lineage: “every inch a baron, every drop of blood the fruit of sixty-four nuptials, whose partners were of equal birth,” every look a challenge! (Engels.) These “zealous

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\* *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, No. 294, May 10, 1849.

† Letter from Marx to Engels dated Dec. 2, 1850. Marx-Engels, Vol. II, p. 198.

defenders of *the Vaterland*" secured the exemption of their estates from the taxes which the state was levying for its military needs, and shifted the entire burden of government duties and imposts, the entire cost of the war machine, upon the shoulders of the peasants. Only members of the Prussian nobility could become army officers, which privilege they used extensively for sordid gain. This "high-horn" military caste—the Prussian noblemen—which captained mercenary troops, appropriated unto itself the lion's share of the funds allotted for the maintenance of the troops. Instead of recruiting volunteers, these "patriots" simply pressed their own peasants into military service, continuing at the same time to utilize their labour on their feudal estates. And to this class of rapacious exploiters the state granted unlimited authority over the peasantry. The expansion and enlargement of the Prussian army, which served the annexationist plans of the Hohenzollerns, brought with them an increase in the power wielded by the Prussian nobility, the Junkers.

For the realization of her aggressive policy directed against other German states, Prussia stood in need of troops that had been trained in the school of harsh, barrack-room discipline. In order to establish an army of submissive, spiritless soldiers that would blindly carry out any command of their superiors, the rule of the rod was introduced which often drove the men to suicide.

The vast *Lumpenproletariat*, the product of the devastating Thirty Years' War, the masses of morally depraved people, of beggars and tramps, accustomed to easy pickings—such was the reservoir from which the Prussian army recruited its soldiers. And the Prussian Junkers, these scions of the nobility, furnished the corps of officers that befitted this soldier material. Only such an army could serve the Hohenzollerns as the obedient tool they needed for the usurpatory plans they were putting into execution, to the detriment of Germany.

With a firmly timbered military establishment to rely on and with Prussia converted into a specifically military state, the Hohenzollerns were now in a position to carry into life their policy of aggression, which was directed mainly against Germany. "The puny margrave," wrote Marx of Frederick William I, "who sought to enlarge and consolidate his power independently of and against the German Reich, could not, of course, act like a dynasty which stood at the head of a nation, as, for instance, a king of France or of England. He had to engage in all kinds of sharp practices and exert great effort to carry his point, and even when Brandenburgian interests coincided with those of Germany, they always had to be safeguarded as the special interests of Brandenburg and not of Germany, with means derived from Brandenburg and not from Germany, and, therefore, in a way which, whatever local

advantage they might yield, did harm to the general and permanent interests of Germany.... This became apparent with the very first of the Frederick Williams. At one time he ran along with the Poles against the Swedes, at another with the Swedes against the Poles, but always in someone's train like a small jackal, hoping to snatch a bit of the loot.”\*

The militarism and aggressive foreign policy practised by Frederick William I were zealously continued by the Prussian King Frederick II. In the prosecution of his policy of seizing German territories and annexing them to Prussia, Frederick II drew largely on the support of foreign powers, at the same time being a tool in their hands. To quote Marx: “As Frederick's fight was directed against the *German* Power, and at the same time against the titular head of the empire, he alternately and with the same indifference calls in, first the French, and then the Russians as his allies!”†

The policy of perfidy towards her allies and treachery towards Germany was most strikingly manifested in the wars for Silesia in which Prussia crossed swords with Austria and other German states. “Frederick II,” said Marx in the same manuscript, “realized quite rightly that in order to play a big role in Germany, Prussia must break the Austrian hegemony and thereby administer the final kick to the Holy Roman German Empire whose representative the Emperor of Austria was.”‡ In the war for Silesia, Frederick II first concluded an alliance with France against Austria, then entered into a secret compact with Austria, betraying France, only to inflict, in the end, with French support, defeat upon Austria, and to snatch the prize from her hands.

Frederick II's perfidious and annexationist policy, which had turned the foreign states against him, permitted Austria to form a coalition against Prussia and commence the Seven Years' War (1756-1763) for Silesia. In characterizing this war, Marx wrote: “Austria, France, Russia, German Empire, Sweden against Frederick. So, then, he waged the Seven Years' War *against* the Empire. Only such a civil war could make Prussia's domain secure.”§ Despite his generalship, Frederick II suffered his greatest defeats in this war and at the hands of the Russians, *viz.*, at Gross-Jägersdorf (1757) and Kunersdorf (1759). In 1760 Russian troops occupied East Prussia and Prussia's capital, Berlin. The situation became critical for Frederick II. He stood to lose not only Silesia but also a considerable part of Prussia. “He was again to become Margrave of Brandenburg. Russia was to receive East

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\* Marx, *The Prussians (That Canaille)*

† *Ibid.*

‡ *Ibid.*

§ *Ibid.*

Prussia; Sweden, Pomerania.”\*

Frederick, this reckless adventurer and wily trickster, was now on the brink of disaster. “If, despite our expectations,” he wrote to his brother, Prince Henry, “no one helps us, I tell you frankly I see no possibility of postponing or averting our doom.” But help did come. It arrived in the person of Peter III, Tsar of Russia, an ardent admirer of Frederick II and a worshipper of the drill-sergeant methods Frederick had introduced in Prussia. After the death of Empress Eliza in January 1762, Peter III “immediately concludes an armistice with him, on *May 5 the Peace of St. Petersburg*, gives him back East Prussia without indemnity, sends him *Chernishoff* with 20,000 Russian auxiliaries.”† Peter III, wrote Marx, was Frederick II’s “saviour.”

As a result of these two wars, which abounded in treachery, Frederick annexed to Prussia the German territory of Silesia.

Such was the specifically Prussian policy of Frederick II, whom the obsequious and chauvinist German history writers have surrounded with an aureole of glory and misnamed “the Great.” “World history,” Marx, “knows no other sovereign whose aims were so diminutive! But what could there be ‘great’ about the plans of an Elector of Brandenburg, king by courtesy, who acts, not in the name, of the nation, but in the interests of his patrimony, who seeks to round out and expand his domain on the territory of this nation!... To renovate the Empire and place himself at its head was far beyond his ambition.”‡

Frederick's entire domestic policy was designed to promote his plans of usurpation. Of the 16,000,000 thaler constituting his regular annual budget, 13,000,000 were expended on the army. The full burden of this budget, inordinately large for so small a country as Prussia, fell on the toiling classes. Vast sums, wrung from the people, he spent on buying mercenaries who, according to Scharnhorst, one of Germany’s greatest military men, were recruited from “tramps, drunkards, thieves, miscreants and, in general, criminals from every part of Germany.” The remainder of the troops was composed of peasant serfs and poor burghers who were forcibly compelled to enlist. Recruiting frequently degenerated into sheer manhunts which led to bloody clashes. The whole system of military training was of a piece with these acts of cruelty and violence. “A soldier should fear his officer more than his enemy.” Such was the principle laid down by Frederick II. The most fatiguing discipline, corporal punishment and stupid drilling were all practised as extensively as possible in the Prussian army. In this connection

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\* *Ibid.*

† *Ibid.*

‡ *Ibid.*

Engels said: "...Frederick, besides laying the foundation for that pedantry and martinetism which have since distinguished the Prussians, actually prepared them for the unparalleled disgrace of Jena and Auerstädt."\*

With, such an army of goose-stepped, blindly obedient soldiers at his beck and call, Frederick pursued his policy of unconcealed perfidy and insolent usurpation. This policy was particularly pronounced in his attitude towards Poland. In alliance with the Russian Tsar, Frederick shamelessly robbed that country and had a share in its partition. The Prussian Junkers lorded it in the Polish regions they occupied as only the forbears of the present-day Hitlerite bandits could. "After he had occupied the Polish border provinces in the midst of peace with the republic," wrote Marx, "he allows 'my magnificent army' to develop that 'system of peaceful conduct of war'.... 'The Only One' practised the systematic theft of horses, money, meat cattle and human beings on the largest scale, not to speak of the excesses of the half-starved Prussian mercenaries."†

The manuscript "The Prussians (That Canaille)" contains a similarly vivid description of the ravages committed in Poland by the Prussian beasts of prey. "Des le commencement de 1771," he said, "entire cantons of Prussian Poland were swamped with Prussian mercenary troops which committed incredible acts of pillage and cruelty, outrages and brutalities of every description. Not only did the famished rabble steal on their own account and by official order, but the villages were even instructed to deliver *quotas of women* according to prescribed lists, and these women, impressed in these villages, were condemned that filthy canaille, those Prussian military...."‡ And Marx goes on to say that it was in these infamous deeds, committed against unarmed Poles, that Frederick II exhibited his Hohenzollern "greatness."

As early as the end of the 18th century, the Polish people experienced the absolutely inhuman Prussian system of plunder and violence, the system by the aid of which the heirs of the Teutonic Order carried out the Germanization of conquered territories. The Prussian Junkers handsomely rewarded themselves for their "brave deeds" with treasure stolen from the Polish people.

Frederick II's regime in Poland clearly demonstrated the predatory character of Hohenzollern policy. He acted in alliance with reactionary Russian tsarism. To quote Marx: "In the treachery which Frederick II committed against Germany and Europe by the partition of Poland, he acted strictly according to the law of development of his domain, which was

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\* Engels, "Infantry," *Neue American Cyclopaedia*, Vol. IX, 1860, p. 520.

† Marx, Synopsis of an article on Poland (1863).

‡ Marx, *The Prussians (That Canaille)*.

destined to be a jackal trailing behind Russia.”\*

But the jackal was not satisfied with the share of the booty that had fallen to his lot. At the first partition of Poland (1772) Prussia failed to receive Thorn and Danzig. Hence, disgruntled Prussia sought an alliance with Poland behind Russia’s back. True to their traditional policy, the Hohenzollerns broke all their pledges upon the first opportunity.

Frederick II’s successor, Frederick William II, that dyed-in-the-wool Tory, inclined Poland to league herself with Prussia by promising to support the new liberal Polish constitution. He further promised come to Poland’s aid with armed forces should tsarist Russia intervene.

At the same time Prussia concluded an alliance with Russia against revolutionary France and demanded as her “remuneration” a second partition of Poland.

With typical Hohenzollern faithlessness, Frederick William broke the promise he had made to lend his support to the new constitution of Poland, and actively assisted Catherine II in her conflict with that country. For thus acting the gendarme—a part which, as Marx said, the Hohenzollerns were continually playing for the Romanoffs—Frederick William II received Thorn, Danzig and Poznan at this partition of Poland (1793).

The Germanization of these regions was carried out by the same means as had already then become traditional with the Prussian kings. In the words of Marx: “The first thing wherein the Hohenzollern Father of his country revealed his Prussian graciousness to the Poland he had despoiled was the confiscation of the former Polish crown and church estates.... A host of knights of adventure, favourites of royal mistresses, creatures of ministers of state, and coadjutors to whom hush *money* had to be paid were presented with the biggest and richest estates of the sacked country and thus ‘German interests’ and ‘predominant German land ownership’ were implanted among the Poles.”†

The third partition of Poland (1795), which put an end to the existence of that state, secured to Prussia a new slice of Polish territory.

In describing the interrelations between Prussia and Poland—that whole concatenation of betrayals, villainies and acts of violence that constituted the policy of the Hohenzollerns with regard to their Polish neighbour—Marx wrote: “The state of Prussia owes its existence, therefore, to the decay of Poland, to the betrayal of Poland by the Hohenzollerns, and to this very day and hour the Hohenzollerns nurse the inextinguishable rancour of recreants.”‡ And in his “The Prussians (That Canaille)” Marx said: “Prussia’s

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\* *Ibid.*

† *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, No. 285, April 29, 1949.

‡ Marx, Synopsis of an Article on Poland.



particular meanness toward Poland has its origin in the fact that she is a servant become monster, and can shake off the memory of her servanthip only by being mean.”\*

At the same time Marx stated most emphatically that Germany's true interests with regard to Poland could in no measure be identified with the predatory interests of the Hohenzollerns: “Germany is not Prussia and Prussia is not Germany. Prussia is only another name for the dominion of the *House of Hohenzollern* over a medley of German and Polish provinces, and it will readily be understood that the conditions under which the House of Hohenzollern keeps *subject* part of Germany and Poland are by no means conditions that make for an independent and powerful Germany.”†

“Germany is not Prussia and Prussia is not Germany.” These words of Marx could serve as the epigraph of any history of Prussia. Differing from the history of France and England, for example, the rise of Prussia was not a process of the genesis of a national state, not a process of the consolidation of a people for the settlement of national problems. Prussia's rise is the history of the consolidation of the Hohenzollern dynasty and of the Junkers, who spurned no means to enlarge the Prussian domain, to the detriment of the interests of the German people.

The rapid expansion of the Prussian state and its increase in power cannot conceal the petty, particularist, pettifogging character of Prussian politics. “Petty pilfering, bribery, direct purchases, legacy hunting, etc.—such is the knavery that the history of Prussia comes down to. Whatever else is interesting in feudal history—conflict between the sovereign and his vassals, crooked business with the cities, etc.—is all caricatured here in dwarfish form, while the cities are pettily tedious and the feudal lords inconsequent boors and the sovereign himself a minus quantity.... Moreover, in the list of rulers there will be found only three characters—which succeed each other as night follows day, with irregularities which apply only to the order in which they succeed each other but never imply the introduction of a new character—pietist, non-com and buffoon. What, with all this, has kept the state on its legs is mediocrity—*aurea mediocritus*—accurate bookkeeping, avoidance of extremes, punctiliousness in drill regulations, a certain home-baked lowness of character, and the ‘Statutes of the Church.’ *C'est dégoûtant!* [It's disgusting!]<sup>‡</sup>

Tory to the bone, the Prussian state, naturally, was a reactionary force not only within Germany but also in relation to all progressive movements of Europe. During the French Revolution this reactionary nature of the

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\* Marx, *The Prussians (That Canaille)*

† Marx, *Poland, Prussia and Russia*.

‡ Marx-Engels, *Gesamtausgabe*, Letters, Part III, Vol. II, p. 158.

Prussian state revealed itself in all its nakedness.

## THE FIGHT OF THE PRUSSIAN REACTIONARIES AGAINST THE FRENCH REVOLUTION AND PROGRESS

The French Revolution of the end of the 18th century, which made a clean sweep of feudal customs and institutions, encountered the furious hatred and fierce resistance of Prussian Junkerdom. The Tory classes of Germany were alarmed at the reaction caused also in Germany by the French Revolution, which had stirred up all the forces of progress in Europe. As Engels said: "All at once, like a thunderbolt, the French Revolution struck into this chaos, called Germany. The effect was tremendous."\*

The sleepy kingdom, as the Germany of that day might well have been called, was roused by the powerful blows which the French Revolution was dealing the feudal system and its reactionary world outlook. The most progressive people of Germany, her greatest philosophers and poets, enthusiastically welcomed the revolution, the great ideas of which were reflected in the works of Kant and Hegel, Goethe and Schiller, and of other representatives of advanced German thought. Yet the German people did not rise for a decisive struggle. Long years of oppression and economic and political backwardness had rendered the popular masses of Germany unfit for revolutionary action on a large scale. Economically dependent upon the privileged classes of the country, the German burghers wallowed in the mud of provincial philistinism—they "continued to engage in their petty traffic," to quote the words of Marx. They were imbued with the spirit of small shopkeepers. Nor was the peasantry of that time capable of great revolutionary actions, as it was crushed by the burden of serf relations and destitute of revolutionary leadership. The bourgeoisie of Germany could not supply that leadership and the proletariat was still in its nascent state.

The inspiring effect of the French Revolution upon the foremost people of Germany failed, therefore, to stimulate them to practical revolutionary activity. "But this enthusiasm," wrote Engels, "was of the German sort, it was merely metaphysical, it was only meant to apply to the theories of the French revolutionists."†

While in France the people were destroying, in courageous struggle, the very foundations of the reactionary monarchist system, in Germany reaction reigned supreme, as heretofore. Germany not only made no use of the fruits of this revolution, but, on the contrary, supported the counter-revolutionary detachments formed on her territory and consisting of French noblemen and other reactionaries who had fled from France. This counter-revolutionary

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\* *Ibid.*, Part I, Vol. IV, p. 483.

† *Ibid.*

pack purchased arms with German money and prepared to invade France.

Instigated by the reactionary powers of Europe, Prussia once more performed her part of gendarme, this time against revolutionary France “...When the first French Revolution broke out,” wrote Marx, “it was again the Germans who allowed themselves to be incited, like a pack of mad dogs, against the French, who in that brutal manifesto of the Duke of Brunswick threatened to raze all Paris, down to the last stone, who conspired with the émigré nobles against the new order in France...”\*

Two armies clashed on the field of battle. One of these consisted of peasant serfs, the browbeaten products of rod discipline; the other, of peasants who were defending the freedom and national independence of France. Soon the army that had been raised and trained in the spirit of Frederick II, and had served all reactionary governments of Europe as their model, was put to rout by the army of free Frenchmen.

Now that he was beaten, the overweening Prussian king, who had recklessly plunged Prussia into war with the French people, hastened to forsake his allies and make a separate peace with France at Basel in 1795.

To quote Marx on Frederick William II: “Everybody knows how in 1792 he formed, together with Austria and England, a coalition to suppress the glorious French Revolution, and invaded France; everybody likewise knows how his ‘magnificent army,’ was ignominiously driven out of France. Everybody knows how he then left his allies in the lurch and hastened to conclude peace with the French republic.”† But this did not prevent his successor, Frederick William. III, from involving Prussia in a new war with France. He was a member of the anti-French coalition against Napoleon and thus helped in the restoration of the feudal-absolutist system in France.

This war, in which “Napoleon fought against the forces of reaction and relied on progressive forces” (Stalin), and Prussia espoused the cause of reaction, ended in the victory of France and the complete defeat of the Prussian army. The disastrous rout of the Prussian army at Jena (1806) revealed the utter rottenness of the Prussian state system and the German people’s absolute indifference to the fate of this system. The Battle of Jena became symbolic of the national humiliation of Germany, which had paid dearly for the maladroit, despicable policy of its rulers.

“Even now it will be necessary,” wrote Engels in 1887, “to recall again and again that period of arrogance and defeat, of royal incapacity, of the stupid slyness of Prussian diplomacy caught by its own duplicity, of the loud-mouthedness of the aristocratic officers manifested in their cowardly

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\* *Ibid.*, Vol. VII, p. 136.

† *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, No. 294, May 10, 1849.

betrayals, and of the general collapse of a political entity that had become alienated from the people and was built up on falsity and imposture.\*

Duplicity, boastfulness and treachery—all these traits, in their most *repulsive* form, are typical of the present-day fascist rulers of Germany. And Hitler Germany, which embarked upon an adventurist war against the Soviet Union, is heading towards another Jena, towards complete and final catastrophe.

The Prussian defeat at Jena led to the Peace of Tilsit, the harsh and humiliating terms of which weighed heavily upon the German people. Prussia was shorn of a considerable part of her possessions and the foreign conqueror held sway within her realm. Such was the upshot of the ill-starred policy of Frederick William III.

Had the relation of social forces in Germany been different, had the German people possessed more revolutionary energy and initiative, they might have utilized the defeat of Jena as the starting point of a nationwide revolutionary movement for the foundation of a united and free Germany. But the German people did not take that road, and the Prussian government learnt nothing and forgot nothing. It remained true to its dynastic Junker policy. It preserved the main privileges of Junkerdom and the bureaucracy while mollifying the people with false promises and minor concessions. Frederick William III pledged his word that the people would be given a constitution, formally proclaimed the abolition of serfdom and agreed to introduce a reform in the army and in municipal administration. The king and the Junkers *hoped* that these promises and concessions would give the people a stake in *the* Prussian system of state and convince it of the necessity of preserving it.

The Peace of Tilsit, which Napoleon forced on Prussia, called forth among the German people profound indignation at the usurpatory policy it punned and gave impetus in Germany to the movement for national liberation.

The Russian people's victorious War of 1812 in defence of the country stirred to action, to open warfare against Napoleon, all the peoples he had subdued. "The destruction of the great armies of Napoleon, on the retreat from Moscow, gave the signal for a universal uprising against the French supremacy in the West," said Engels. "In Prussia the whole nation rose, and forced coward Frederick William III into war with Napoleon."†

The people which rose to fight Napoleon received a fresh promise of a constitution from Frederick William III; but this promise, too, he perfidiously broke after victory was achieved, just as he had broken all his other promises.

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\* Engels, Introduction to Borkheim's brochure *In Memory of the German Arch-Patriots of 1806-07*.

† Engels, *The Foreign Policy of Russian Tsardom*, *Die Neue Zeit* 1890, 8th Year, p. 154.

He made use of the German people's passion for emancipation to achieve his own reactionary purpose, the restoration of the reactionary regime in France. This was all that Frederick William III, that crowned specimen of Prussian Junkerdom, was capable of.

Engels' "Conditions in Germany," one of his early works, contains an excellent pen-portrait of this king, "The Kingdom of Prussia... was then governed by Frederick William III, nicknamed 'The Just,' one of the greatest blockheads that ever graced a throne. Born to be a corporal and to inspect the buttons of an army; dissolute, without passion, and a morality-monger at the same time, unable to speak otherwise but in the infinite tense, surpassed only by his son as a writer of proclamations; he knew only two feelings—fear and corporal-like imperiousness."\*

### PRUSSIA, THE BULWARK OF REACTION IN GERMANY

If before the victory over Napoleon Frederick William III's predominant emotion, as Engels pointed out, was fear, then after the defeat of France his governing trait in politics was a corporal-like imperiousness. While in the Holy Alliance, that union of the reactionary states of Europe to combat every progressive movement, Frederick William III played the part of lackey to Russian tsarism, within Germany he assumed, alongside of Austria, the role of the haughty Prussian Junker performing the functions of a gendarme. He openly repudiated all his promises, declaring outright that he had no intention of granting any constitution. Those bobtailed reforms which he was no longer in a position to repeal were hedged in by such reservations and provisos that the result was the direct opposite of their purport, and once more the reactionary classes were the gainers. A particularly clear illustration of this was the policy of the Prussian government on the peasant question. In 1807 a law was promulgated abolishing serfdom. However, the orders and "explanations" subsequently issued by the government (1811 and 1816) whittled away more and more the import of this reform, as they left untouched the main privileges of the Junkers. Instead of releasing the peasants wholly and unconditionally from their feudal obligations, as had been done by the French Revolution, the Prussian peasants were merely granted the right to purchase the redemption of these obligations, and even that right was contingent upon the consent of the landlord. The redemption of feudal obligations, said Engels, was now no longer the rule but the exception. Finally came the law of June 7, 1821, "under which the restriction of the right of redemption to the bigger peasant households... was once more emphasised, and the perpetuation of the feudal services and other feudal

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\* Marx-Engels, *Gesamtausgabe*, Part I, Vol. IV, p. 487.

burdens of proprietors of the smaller farming establishments... was expressly provided for. In brief, the much-vaunted enlightened agrarian legislation of the 'intellectual state' pursued only one purpose: to salvage from feudalism whatever could still be salvaged.”\*

This “reform” lent impetus to that peculiar process of development of capitalist relations in agriculture in which Lenin gave the classical denomination of the Prussian way of development. This Prussian way was predicated upon the formation of a numerous stratum of rural labourers as a result of the mass dispossession of the peasants of their land, and the accumulation of large sums of money capital in the hands of the landlords, who had grown rich from the redemption of feudal obligations and from every kind of speculation, in which the “high-born” Junkers indulged quite without scruple. The serf economy was gradually transformed into Junker-bourgeois economy. Capitalism in agriculture coalesced with the feudal relations, conserving and perpetuating them.

The Prussian way of development of capitalism in agriculture subjected the peasants to a double yoke: capitalist and feudal; it doomed them to protracted and most burdensome expropriation and bondage, giving rise in the process to a small minority of big-peasant farming establishments. In strengthening the economic position of the Junkers, the Prussian way assured to them the leading, dominating role in the state. The Prussian state, as Mehring justly pointed out, was the political organization of the economically ruling class of the Junkers. “The latifundia,” wrote Lenin, “are preserved and gradually become the basis of capitalist economy on the land—the Prussian type of agrarian capitalism; the Junker is master of the situation. His political predominance and the downtroddenness, degradation, poverty and ignorance of the peasantry persist for entire decades.”†

The Prussian way of development made it possible for the Junkers to assert themselves as the ruling class not only in Prussia but in Germany, when the latter was later united under the leadership of these same Junkers.

With the progressive movements in Europe wrecked, the economically and politically dominant Junker class intensified political oppression in Prussia, muzzled the press and crushed all political activity among the people. The Prussian Junkers and bureaucracy, with Frederick William III at their head, attempted to throw Germany back to the period preceding the French Revolution, to the days of the old *regime*. “...The German *status quo*,” wrote Marx in his youth, “is the *frank consummation of the ancient regime*, and the *ancient regime is the secret vice of the modern state*. The struggle against the

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\* Engels, *On the History of the Prussian Peasants*; Introduction to Wilhelm Wolff's brochure *The Silesian Billion*.

† Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. XII, p. 278, *Russ. Ed.*

German political present is the struggle against the past of the modern peoples....”\*

Marx, then a young man, described with great force the Germany of that day, in which “there resulted a new edition of the old ban on all desires and thoughts of the people about human rights and duties, that is, a return to the old ossified servant state, in which the slave serves in silence and the owner of the land and of the people rules as silently as may be solely through the agency of a well-trained, quietly obedient set of servants.”† “This ideal” of the Prussian feudal lords is highly cherished by the fascist rulers of present-day Germany, who have firmly established the domination of their clique in order to enslave the German people, and whose purpose it is to establish slavery and serfdom everywhere on earth.

The Prussian Junkers in league with reactionary Austria instituted their rule in Germany with the aim of converting the whole country into a barracks whose inmates would obey implicitly the orders of the drill-sergeant. Prussianism, the embodiment of all forces of reaction and militarism in Germany, crushed under its heel the German people, its finest and most advanced representatives. To break the stranglehold of this force of darkness and stupidity, to demolish the citadel of the nation-wide Germanic reaction, the Prussia of the monarchist Junkers, it was essential to raise in opposition to it a mighty revolutionary force, the determined and courageous struggle of the progressive classes.

#### PROGRESS AND REACTION IN GERMAN IDEOLOGY

The Germany of the twenties and thirties of the 19th century did not bring forth a revolutionary force capable of waging a determined struggle with Prussian reaction. With its economic position still insecure, its ranks still poorly cemented, and its political activity still inadequate, the German bourgeoisie ventured no further in its struggle than timid liberal demonstrations. Handicapped by the multiplicity of petty German states, the liberal movement of the German bourgeoisie remained puny and barren.

The proletariat, still in its embryonic state, and the peasantry, weighed down by the economic and political yoke it bore and not drawn into the political arena by the bourgeoisie, were still unable to take the field as a decisive revolutionary force against Prussianism.

Hence, encountering no serious resistance, reactionary Prussia, in alliance with other reactionary states, shackled all the forces of the German people, extended her oppressive rule to every facet of German life.

The only domain in which progressive thought could register considerable

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\* Marx-Engels, *Gesamtausgabe*. Part I, Vol. I, 1st Half-Volume, p. 610.

† *Ibid.*, p. 565.

gains was that of ideology, primarily philosophy and literature. In this field, and this alone, the German people was creating great cultural values ever since the period of the French Revolution. The doctrine of dialectics, of progressive motion in nature, history and thought, was one of the greatest achievements of German classical philosophy, from Kant to Hegel.

But the utterly contradictory course of German history left its imprint also in the sphere of ideology. It was inevitable that an *ideology* divorced from vital revolutionary practice and devoid of active influence upon politics should become abstract and detached from life. Powerless to stir the masses to great revolutionary deeds, it confined itself to “a revolution in thought”; but being revolutionary only in the sphere of “pure thought,” it rapidly became reconciled to the wretched, backward realities of German life. This reconciliation to reality was characteristic also of Kant and Hegel. In his philosophy, his doctrine of “practical reason,” Kant extolled, not practical revolutionary struggle, but “the good will,” the good intentions of the German bourgeois.

Marx and Engels probed deep into the causes of this characteristic feature of German ideology, its impotence and divorcement from life.

“The state of Germany at the end of the last century is completely mirrored in Kant's ‘Critique of Practical Reason,’ they wrote in 1845. “While the French bourgeoisie leapt into the saddle through the most colossal revolution known to history and conquered the European continent, while the politically already emancipated English bourgeoisie revolutionized industry and subjugated India politically and all the rest of the world commercially, the impotent German burghers got no further than expressing ‘good will.’ Kant was content with sheer ‘good will,’ even if it brings no results at all.... This good will of Kant’s corresponds perfectly to the impotence, depression and misère of the German burghers, whose petty interests were never capable of developing into the common, national interests of a class....”\*

This pettiness of interests and philistine narrow-mindedness were due to the lack of national aspirations, to the dissection of Germany into fragmentary states and the minute and parochial scale of her life.

Limited by the narrow frame of provincial life within which they were compressed and placed under the tutelage of this or that dwarf sovereign, the German ideologists not only became reconciled in this execrable reality but at times even surrounded it with a philosophic halo. “And so we find at the conclusion of his ‘Philosophy of Law,’ wrote Engels of Hegel in his “Ludwig Feuerbach,” “that the absolute idea is to be realized in that monarchy based on estates which Frederick William III so persistently but vainly promised to

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\* *Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 175.



his subjects....”<sup>\*</sup> Explaining the contradiction in Hegel’s system between his revolutionary method of thinking and his conservative political conclusions, Engels wrote: “...Hegel was a German, and like his contemporary Goethe had a bit of the philistine’s queue dangling behind. Each of them was an Olympian Zeus in his own sphere, yet neither of them ever quite freed himself from German philistinism.”<sup>†</sup>

The dissonance between theory and practice and the philistine resignation to reactionary reality were very detrimental to German theory and German social development as well. The Prussian Junkers continued to rule the country.

In contrast with the advanced ideas of classical German philosophy, the reflationary Prussian Junkers began to propagate a frenzied nationalism, enmity toward everything French, negation of the progressive ideas of the French Revolution, began to implant the cult of medieval barbarism. “Their whole world outlook,” wrote Engels, was philosophically untenable, because, according to it, the whole world was created for the sake of the Germans and the Germans had long passed the highest stage of development. This Germanomania... created abstract Germans by shedding everything that was not-the offspring of sixty-four pure German ancestors and of autochthonous stock,... it wanted to push the nation back into the German Middle Ages or even into the pristine purity of aboriginal Germanism from the Teutoburg Forest....” This iconoclastic fury burst forth primarily “against the French.... The great, eternal results of the revolution were abhorred as ‘French gewgaws’ or even ‘French lies and frauds’.... Hatred for the French became obligatory; every philosophy which was able to achieve a loftier world outlook fell under the curse of being un-German.”<sup>‡</sup>

Thus we see how little there is new in these “modern” fascist theories which assert that the German people are superior to all other peoples in the world, in the fascist vilification of the principles of the French Revolution and their glorification of medievalism.

## THE REVOLUTIONARY STRUGGLE AGAINST PRUSSIAN REACTION. MARX AND ENGELS

Despite all the barriers which were erected by the political reaction, new social forces began to awaken in Germany. By the forties of the past century, these forces introduced into the somber setting of German reality progressive and revolutionary ideas that challenged Prussian despotism and reaction.

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<sup>\*</sup> Karl Marx, *Selected Works*, Vol. I, “Ludwig Feuerbach,” p. 423, *Eng. ed.*, Moscow-Leningrad 1935.

<sup>†</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 424.

<sup>‡</sup> Marx-Engels, *Gesamtausgabe*, Part I, Vol. II. Pp. 99 and 100.

The trenchant articles by the publicist Börne, the biting political satires of Heine and the radical utterances of the left Hegelians betokened the political growth of the German bourgeoisie and the passage of the radical intellectuals to active political struggle. The entrance of a new social class, the German proletariat, upon the battleground of history was marked by the dissemination of socialist ideas throughout the land.

In Germany, the bourgeois-democratic revolution—the revolution that was to have freed the country from the survivals of feudalism, to have shattered the reactionary rule of Prussia and Austria, and to have united Germany into a single national state—was reaching maturity.

Germany was at that time a seat of concentrated oppression of every description—feudal and bourgeois, national and political. She was at the crossroads of European contradictions. Hence, the revolution in Germany should have been the most profound and most radical of revolutions, and had it achieved victory, it would have gained international importance.

During this portentous pre-revolutionary period in Germany there appeared in the political arena two giants of revolutionary thought and revolutionary action—Marx and Engels, the founders of proletarian Communism. The German people may well take pride in having given birth to these two supreme masters of revolutionary theory which is transforming the world, in the circumstance that Germany was the cradle of scientific Communism, of Marxism.

Marx and Engels severely criticized the abstractness of German ideology, its detachment from life. They summoned the German people to revolutionary struggle against the reactionaries, to the realization in practice of progressive ideas. Revolutionary theory served Marx and Engels as a weapon of struggle. “The weapon of criticism,” wrote Marx in one of his earliest works, “cannot of course replace the criticism of weapons, material force must be overthrown by material force, but theory, too, becomes a material force as soon as it takes hold of the masses.” \*

From the very inception of his political activity, Marx denounced the “Prussian... system and its simple nature...” denounced Prussian “despotism” which “stands in all its nakedness before the eyes of the whole world.” Marx clearly saw that Germany was “the absolute peon. of Prussia and Austria, of the *Krautjunkers* [country squires] and philistines.” But Marx did not lose faith in the revolutionary potentialities of the German people, in the inevitability of revolution. In speaking of the dull-witted, short-sighted policy of the ruling classes, he wrote: “A ship full of fools could perhaps be allowed to drift along, driven by the wind, but it would be driving towards its destiny

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\* Ibid., Vol. I, 1st Half-Volume, p. 614.

for the very reason that these fools would not believe it. This destiny is the revolution we are about to face.” \*

Marx and Engels called upon the German people to smash the state of the Prussian Junkers, that stronghold of reaction in the whole of Germany. They constantly emphasized that only a thoroughgoing, radical revolution could liberate Germany from the reactionary fetters that held her shackled and pulled her back. Revolution is necessary for the. Further reason, said Marx and Engels, that only in the course of revolution will the people be able to rid itself of the old abominations and overcome philistine narrowness and slavish submission.

Marx and Engels flayed the passivity of the German people which, like other peoples, had not yet risen to engage in revolutionary struggle. “All peoples,” wrote Engels in February 1848, “make progress; the smallest, weakest nations always find in the complicated European situation the moment to snatch, despite their big, reactionary neighbours, one modern institution after another. Only the forty million Germans do not budge. Therefore, the Germans must first be thoroughly compromised before all other nations, they must become, even more than they already are, the laughing stock of all Europe, they must be *compelled* to make a revolution. Bui then they will rise, not the cowardly German burghers, to be sure, but the German workers; they will rise, put an end to that whole unclean, muddle-headed official German crew, and restore German honour by a radical revolution.”†

Marx and Engels opposed the policy, pursued by the Prussian government, of oppressing other nations. They advocated the union of German and Polish democrats for the purpose of joint struggle against the common foe, Prussian reaction, and appealed to the German democrats to come to Poland’s aid. “For we German democrats,” said Engels, “are particularly interested in the liberation of Poland. It was German princes who profited by the partition of Poland, it is German soldiers who are still oppressing Galicia and Posen. It must be of moment to us Germans, primarily to us German democrats, to wipe this stain from our nation. A nation cannot become free and at the same time continue to oppress other nations. The liberation of Germany cannot therefore be accomplished without accomplishing the liberation of Poland from oppression by Germans. Hence Poland and Germany have a common interest, and hence Polish and German democrats can cooperate to bring about the liberation of both nations.”‡

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\* Ibid., p. 557.

† Engels, “Three New Constitutions,” *Deutsche Brüsseler Zeitung*, No. 15, February 20, 1848, Marx-Engels, *Gesamtausgabe*, 1st Part, Vol. VI, p. 587.

‡ Engels, “Speech on Poland,” delivered in London on November 29, 1847, *Neue Brüsseler*

## THE REVOLUTION OF 1848 AND THE FATE OF GERMANY

The forecast of Marx and Engels that a revolution was impending in Germany proved correct. The revolution, which began in 1848 in France and Italy, spread to Germany, involving not only the minor German states but also Austria and Prussia, that bulwark of reaction in Germany. The reactionary governments of these countries were powerless to stem the rising tide of the popular movement. Germany entered a period of bourgeois-democratic revolution. Before the German people lay the inspiring prospect of breaking once and for all with its sorrowful reactionary past, which condemned it to stagnation and backwardness.

Marx and Engels fully realized that to be successful in the revolution necessitated the active participation of the proletariat, resolute action by which would exert enormous influence over the issue of the struggle. They armed the proletariat with a clear and strictly scientific program of action. When subsequently elucidating the demands set up in their program, Engels wrote: "The interests of the proletariat forbade equally the Prussianization of Germany and the perpetuation of the policy of petty states. These interests made imperative the definitive unification of Germany into a *nation*, which alone could provide the battlefield, cleared of all traditional petty obstacles, on which proletariat and bourgeoisie could match their strength. But they equally forbade the establishment of a Prussian head: the Prussian state with its whole establishment, its tradition and its dynasty was precisely the sole serious internal adversary which the revolution in Germany had to overthrow.... Dissolution of the Prussian and break-up of the Austrian state, real unification of Germany as a republic—we could not have any other revolutionary immediate program." \*

Marx and Engels always fought with all the passion that was in them against the ambition of the royal Prussian government to thrust Prussianism upon the whole of Germany. "They want us to become Prussians at any price," wrote the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, "Prussians after the heart of His Most Gracious Majesty, with a civil code, an insolent nobility, tyrannous officials, rule of the sabre, caning...."† Considering Prussianism the worst enemy of the German people, Marx and Engels maintained that a united and free Germany could be brought about only by a consistent and resolute struggle with Prussianism and by its final defeat... that German unity could arise *out of the disintegration* of the so-called German big powers. We have

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*Zeitung*, No. 98, December 9, 1847, Marx-Engels, *Gesamtausgabe*, 1st Part, Vol. VI, pp. 360-61.

\* Karl Marx, *Selected Works*, Vol. II, p. 33, Moscow-Leningrad 1935.

† *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, No. 244, March 13, 1849, "Three New Bills."

never made a secret of our views on this subject.”\*

Marx and Engels demanded that the German bourgeoisie should engage in courageous and determined combat with reaction, with Prussianism. They sharply criticized every sign of indecision and cowardice on the part of the bourgeoisie, explaining how the policy of compromise was leading it step by step toward a betrayal of the people, a betrayal of the revolution.

The further course of the revolution completely confirmed the criticism of Marx and Engels. At the crucial moment of the revolution the craven Prussian bourgeoisie with its philistine narrow-mindedness proved politically powerless, incapable of captaincy in the struggle of the German people against the reactionaries. And its upper stratum, the big bourgeoisie, unhesitatingly resolved to strike a bargain with the reactionaries. “Counter-revolutionary ever since, the big bourgeoisie entered into an offensive and defensive alliance with reaction out of fear of the people, i.e., of the workers and the democratic bourgeoisie.”†

The cowardice and treachery of the counter-revolutionary big bourgeoisie strengthened the hand of the reactionaries. The monarchy and nobility, which had been struck with consternation during the first days of the revolution, took courage and began to muster their forces to restore the regime of “law and order”—the pre-revolutionary Prussian system which the government deemed the embodiment of the “peaceful development of liberal institutions.” “Is there any need,” asked Marx, characterizing this system, “to recall that royal Prussian development of ‘liberal institutions,’ the most liberal development of the squandering of money, the ‘peaceful’ expansion of bigotry and royal Prussian Jesuitism, the peaceful development of the police and barracks regime, of the spy system, of imposture, hypocrisy, wantonness, and finally, of the loathsome brutalization of the people alongside of the most shameless corruption among the so-called upper classes?”‡

Conscious of its own strength, the royal government, in alliance with the Prussian Junkers, proceeded to exact cruel vengeance of the revolutionary and democratic elements among the German people. “The Quixotes from Further Pomerania,” wrote Marx and Engels on the Prussian nobility in September 1848, “the old warriors, the debt-laden landlords, will at last have the opportunity to steep their rusty blades in the blood of the agitators.”§

Instead of the long awaited and long promised constitution, a regime of

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\* The *Zeitunshalle* on the Rhenische Province, *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, No. 87, August 1840, Marx-Engels, *Gesamtausgabe*, 1st Part, Vol. VII, p. 322.

† Marx-Engels, *Gesamtausgabe*, 1st Part, Vol. II, p. 51.

‡ *Neue Rheinische-Zeitung*, No. 190, January 9, 1849.

§ “The Ministry of the Counter-Revolution,” *Neue Rheinische-Zeitung*, No. 110, September 23, 1848, Marx-Engels, *Gesamtausgabe*, 1st Part, Vol. VII, p. 378.

martial law was bestowed upon the German people: “Prussia’s *real* constitution is the *state of siege*.” (Marx.)

The Revolution of 1848 was left uncompleted in Germany. It did not lead Germany onto the broad highway of social development, did not settle the deep-rooted problems of German history, did not create a united and free Germany. The German Revolution of 1848, judged by results, was far behind the French Revolution of 1789. In comparing these two revolutions, Lenin wrote: “Wherein lies the difference between the two ways? In the fact that the bourgeois-democratic revolution, accomplished by France in 1789 and by Germany in 1848, was, in the first instance, carried to its conclusion, and in the second instance not; in the first instance it went as far as a republic and complete liberty, but in the second instance it came to a halt before it had smashed the monarchy and reaction... it quickly led to the ‘pacification’ of the country, i.e., to the suppression of the revolutionary people and the triumph of the ‘village constable and the police sergeant.’” \*

The big bourgeoisie, which had betrayed the revolution, was now itself to experience the delights of the Junker-ridden royal regime of Prussia. Though becoming economically more and more powerful, the bourgeoisie was reduced almost to a cipher politically. “Moreover, \*” wrote Marx, “the *Krautjunktors* [country squires] delight in every day finding fresh occasions to make them [the bourgeoisie] feel their humiliation, even to setting aside the common laws of etiquette.... Proud of his philosophical enlightenment, the Prussian citizen has the mortification of seeing the first scientific men driven from the universities, education handed over to a gang of obscurants.”†

The Prussian Junkers now restored their administrative and judicial authority over the peasants, drove the bourgeoisie into the guilds and corporations, and abolished the irremovability and independence of the judiciary. All this was done with the blessing of their king, Frederick William IV.

The king conducted his “glorious” reign while mentally unbalanced, which fact was long kept secret from the people. Though his mind was deranged, the king continued to occupy the Prussian throne, but his condition could not forever be concealed from the people. “It was more especially said,” wrote Marx, “that he fancied he was a non-commissioned officer, who had still to pass through the trial of what, in the technical language of the Prussian drill-sergeant, is called *Übungsmarsche*. Thence he used to run ill-omened races by himself in his parks at Sans-Souci and Charlottenburg.”‡

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\* Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. VIII, p. 190, 3rd *Russ. ed.*

† “Prussia,” *New York Daily Tribune*, No. 4694, May 5, 1856.

‡ Marx, “The King of Prussia’s Insanity,” *New York Daily Tribune*, No. 5462, October 23, 1858.

A fine Prussian non-com, a perfect devotee of goose-stepping—such was Frederick William IV's ideal during his declining days. This tragicomedy is today being enacted in Germany in somewhat inverted form: The German government is now headed by a non-com who has proclaimed himself the commander-in-chief of the German army and dreams of undivided dominion over all nations of the world.

#### THE PRUSSIAN JUNKERS AND GERMANY'S NATIONAL TASKS THE PRUSSIAN WAY OF UNITING GERMANY

The victorious reaction, the reign of the “village constable and police sergeant,” of the Prussian bureaucrat and Junker, could not, of course, eliminate the vital tasks which the development of social relations in Germany imperatively pushed to the fore: destruction of the feudal survivals and national unification. Life inexorably set these tasks again and again and demanded their fulfilment. The spontaneously growing productive forces cramped in the strait-jacket of feudal-bureaucratic tutelage, into which the reactionary governments of Germany sought to jam them. Even the cowardly German bourgeoisie, impelled by the course of events—the growth of its economic power—advanced its class demands. During the ‘sixties it entered upon its “constitutional conflict” with the new Prussian king, William I. But even now it did not transcend the limits of “law and order,” remaining essentially as irresolute and cowardly as in 1848. And the counter-revolutionary big bourgeoisie continued its alliance with Junkerdom. "The counter-revolutionary mindedness of the big bourgeoisie," wrote Lenin, “did not prevent it from ‘going left,’ for instance, in the period of the constitutional conflict in the ‘sixties, but inasmuch as the proletariat did not act independently and determinedly, this ‘going left’ did not result in a revolution but only in a timid opposition, which impelled the monarchy to become more and more bourgeois and did not destroy the alliance between the bourgeoisie and the Junkers, i.e., the reactionary landlords.”\*

The tasks which the bourgeoisie failed to accomplish the Prussian Junkers now sought to realize. They were aware of the danger that threatened their caste and the reactionary Prussian state, should the unification of Germany be brought about by revolutionary means. By such means the task of national unification would have been accomplished more completely than in any other way, and accomplished in the interests of the entire German people. The reactionary classes would have been ousted from the arena of history and Germany's further development would have run through democratic channels. And this the Junkers feared more than anything else.

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\* Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. XIV, p. 63, 3rd *Rus. ed.*

So now it was the Junkers themselves, acting through Bismarck, the leader of the Prussian government, that took the unification of Germany in hand. Of course, they championed, first and foremost, the interests of the nobility and the Hohenzollern dynasty.

The Junkers accomplished the unification of Germany by *recourse* to diplomatic intrigue and the basest of perfidy, by means of dynastic wars, not only with foreign but also with German states. The German Junkers shrank from no villainy to secure the support of foreign states in furtherance of their plans of conquest within Germany. *True*, to the traditions of Frederick II, they invariably acted the part of gendarme of Russian tsarism. They helped the Russian government drown the Polish insurrection of 1863 in blood. At this price Prussia purchased the tsar's support in her conflict with Austria for hegemony in Germany.

"The Prussians are behaving as basely as ever," wrote Engels to Marx in February 1863. "M. Bismarck knows he will get it in the neck when Poland and Russia are being revolutionized." A revolution in Russia and Poland would have put an end to the reactionary Prussian state. To quote Marx: "...The 'State' of Prussia (a creature quite different from Germany) cannot exist *without* the hitherto Russia nor *with* an independent Poland. All Prussian history leads to this conclusion, which Messrs. the Hohenzollerns (Frederick II included) have drawn long ago."\*

Having assured herself of the support of Russian tsarism, Prussia, conjointly with Austria, went to war with Denmark for Slesvig and Holstein. After defeating Denmark, Prussia despatched her troops against her former ally, Austria, and the petty German states allied with that country. Only in this fashion were the Prussian Junkers able to materialize their plan of subjugating all Germany to Prussian hegemony, a plan to create a Great Prussia. "In order to place Prussia at the head of Germany," wrote Engels, "it was necessary, not only to drive Austria forcibly out of the German Confederation, but also to subjugate the minor states. Such a jolly little war of Germans against Germans has indeed from ancient times been the principal means applied in Prussian policy for territorial expansion; no gallant Prussian was afraid of such a thing. Nor could the second principal means give rise to any doubt; the alliance with foreign countries against Germans."†

Prussia's victory over the Austrians in the Baltic of Sadowa (1866) signified that the unification of Germany was a matter that had now definitely been taken in hand by the Prussian Junkers, and it was thereafter

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\* *Ibid.*, p. 132.

† Engels, "Force and Economy in the Establishment of the New German Empire," *Neue Zeit*, 1895-96, 14th Year, Vol. I, p. 716.



brought to its conclusion by the methods usually practised by them.

The victorious Prussian Junkers eliminated Austria from German affairs and forced the petty German states that had suffered defeat *at* the hands of Prussia in this war to join the North German Confederation she had established. This Confederation was nothing but an enlarged Prussia. The Prussian regime was in the ascendant in the entire territory of the Confederation. Marx described this regime as a peculiar mixture of Prussian reaction and the methods of the Bonapartist Second Empire: "While carefully preserving all the native beauties of her old system, she superadded all the tricks of the Second Empire, its real despotism and its mock democracy, its political shams and its financial jobbery, its high-flown talk and its low *legerdemains*."\*

In her war with Austria, Prussia entered into an alliance with Italy and had besides made sure of the support of Napoleon III.

Bismarck had promised to reward the latter for his benevolent neutrality in Prussia's war on the German states with German territory. But after gaining her ends, Prussia, posing as the defender of German interests, once more broke her pledge. By pursuing this policy of diplomatic intrigue and false promises, the Prussian Junkers made war between France and Germany inevitable, and it was on their provocation that Napoleon III commenced hostilities against Germany. To Germany this war was objectively defensive in character, as victory of Napoleon III would have hampered the national unification of the country. But to the Prussian Junkers the war they were prosecuting was far from defensive. Their war aims were to rivet the rule of the Hohenzollern dynasty upon the whole of Germany and to wrest from France part of her territory, *viz.*, Alsace and Lorraine. "On the part of Germany," wrote Marx, "the war is a war of defence. But who was it that made it imperative for Germany to defend herself? Who made it possible for Louis Bonaparte to wage war against Germany? Prussia! It was Bismarck who conspired with the self-same Louis Bonaparte in order to crush the native opposition at home and annex Germany to the Hohenzollern dynasty."†

The Prussian Junkers endeavoured to becloud the minds of the people with chauvinistic agitation, and concealed their dynastic annexationist interests behind the battle cries of national and defensive war.

Both Marx and Engels spoke out against the turbid wave of jingoism which at that time swept over Germany. They revealed the true nature of the Franco-Prussian War, in which the defensive military campaign of the

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\* Karl Marx, *Selected Works*, Vol. II, "The Civil War in France," p. 461, *Eng. ed.*, Moscow-Leningrad 1935.

† Marx, *Selected Works*, Vol. II, p. 476, *German ed.*

German people was intertwined with the annexationist policy of Prussian Junkerdom. They made an appeal:

“1) to join the national movement... in so far and as long as it confines itself to the defence of Germany...;

“2) at the same time to emphasize the difference between the German national interests and the dynastic-Prussian interests;

“3) to counter-act any annexation of Alsace and Lorraine...;

“4) as soon as a republican, not chauvinist, government is at the helm in Paris, to work for an honourable peace with it;

“5) constantly to lay stress on the unity of interests of the German and French workers, who did not sanction the war and who are also not fighting each other....”\*

These tactical propositions lay at the basis of the activities of the German socialists during the period of the Franco-Prussian War.

### THE SPECIFICALLY PRUSSIAN METHODS OF WARFARE

The Prussian government vowed that it was at war, not with the French people, but only with Napoleon III. But the falsity of those assurances was glaringly exposed when the emperor was defeated and a republic set up in France. For Germany the war now lost its defensive character. But the Prussian government, despite its solemn declarations, continued the now reactionary war of annexation against the French people. It was supported in this by the big bourgeoisie which played “the roaring lion of German patriotism.” (Marx.)

This war of the Prussian Junkers against France was a counter-revolutionary war, as in their eyes the French people was the incarnation of that revolution that was so odious to them. In the words of Engels: “Nobody in the world hates the Frenchmen as much as the Prussian Junkers do.... The godless French have... turned people’s heads by their impious revolution to such an extent that the ancient and glorious reign of the Junkers has for the most part been buried even in old Prussia.... This required that vengeance be exacted of France, and the Junker officers in the army under Bismarck’s leadership saw to that. Lists of the French war indemnities had been drawn up in Prussia and the contributions to be levied from the separate cities and departments in France assessed accordingly—naturally taking into consideration France’s much greater wealth. Foodstuffs, fodder, clothes, footwear, etc., were requisitioned with studied ruthlessness. The stories about the pendulum clocks are also true: the *Kölnische Zeitung* itself carried accounts about them. However, the pendulum clocks, according to Prussian

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\* Marx-Engels, *Gesamtausgabe*, 3rd Part, Vol. IV, p. 366.

ideas, were not stolen but had been found as abandoned property in the abandoned country villas in the environs of Paris, and had been annexed for the dear folks at home. Thus, the Junkers, under Bismarck's leadership, saw to it that in spite of the irreproachable conduct of the men and a large part of the officers, the specifically Prussian nature of the war... was preserved." \*

However, the "prowess" displayed by the Prussian military in the Franco-Prussian War pales into insignificance alongside the systematic pillage and the reign of violence that distinguishes Hitler's army of marauders. The fascist thugs do not even attempt to justify their robberies. On the contrary. Theft, looting and bestial cruelty do "honour" to the fascist uniform.

The specifically Prussian methods of warfare aroused the wrath and indignation of the French people, who in retaliation had recourse to guerilla warfare "...The manner of prosecuting the war—the system of requisitions, the burning down of villages, the shooting of *franc-tireurs*, the seizure of hostages and similar recapitulations from the Thirty Years' War—has evoked general indignation here," wrote Marx.†

And to put down this popular resistance, said Engels, the Prussian Junkers "are having recourse to a code of warfare as antiquated as it is barbarous. They are acting upon the rule that every town or village where one or more of the inhabitants take part in the defence, fire upon their troops, or generally assist the French, is to be burned down; that every man taken in arms who is not, according to their notion, a regular soldier, is to be shot at once.... And all these outrages "pass... as simple proceedings of military justice. There is no disorder of any kind, no promiscuous plunder, no violation of women, no irregularity. Nothing of the kind. It is all done systematically and by order..."‡

In his castigation of these barbarous methods of fighting the guerillas, Engels convincingly demonstrates that under modern conditions a guerilla movement is part and parcel of very people's war. To quote Engels once more: "Wherever a people allowed itself to be subdued merely because its armies had become incapable of resistance it has been held up to universal contempt as a nation of cowards; and wherever a people did energetically carry out this irregular resistance, the invaders very soon found it impossible to carry out the old-fashioned code of blood and fire."§

The Prussian Junkers celebrated their victory over France by annexing

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\* Engels, "Violence and Economy in the Establishment of the New German Empire," *Neue Zeit*, 1895-96, 14th Year, Vol. I, pp. 745-46.

† Marx, Letters to Kugelmann, Letter of December 13, 1870, Moscow, 1940, pp. 101-02, *German ed.*

‡ Engels, "The Fighting in France," *Pall Mall Gazette*, No. 1793, 11-XI-1870.

§ *Ibid.*

Alsace and Lorraine and imposing an indemnity of 5,000,000,000 francs upon their vanquished foe. German industry blossomed forth when hostilities were over, but this prosperity was purchased with the robbery of the French people.

Prussia's annexation of Alsace and Lorraine was severely condemned by Marx. He argued that the seizure of French territory would make war a constant menace, would perpetuate the military despotism in Germany and be the surest means of "...ruining Germany and France by mutual extermination."<sup>\*</sup>

Again and again Marx excoriated the annexationist ambitions of the Junkers and the bourgeoisie, these "defenders of Teutonic patriotism," who never ceased to avow their "love of peace." "The Germans," Marx sarcastically remarked, "are an essentially peaceful people.... Of course, it was not Germans that invaded France in 1792 for the sublime purpose of bayonetting the revolution of the 18th century. It was not Germans that befouled their hands by the subjugation of Italy, the oppression of Hungary, and the dismemberment of Poland. Their present military system, which divides the whole able-bodied male population into two parts—one standing army on service, and another standing army on furlough, both equally bound in passive obedience to rulers by divine right—such a military system is, of course, 'a material guarantee,' for keeping the peace and the ultimate goal of civilizing tendencies!"<sup>†</sup>

Prussia climaxed her predatory war on France by her intervention in the Paris Commune. True once more to her role of gendarme, she came to the aid of Thiers, that butcher of the Commune, when he crushed underfoot the revolutionary capital. "Whenever before has history exhibited the spectacle of a conqueror crowning his victory by turning into, not only the gendarme, but the hired bravo of the conquered government?" inquired Marx with indignation. "And thus, at last, came out the true character of the war..."<sup>‡</sup>

Triumphant over the French as well as their own people, the Prussian bankers now consummated the unification of Germany under the overlordship of reactionary-monarchical Prussia. In the German Empire created by the Junkers it was the Prussian system that really held sway. The Prussian Junkers retained their power even under the imperial regime. What they lost as sovereign lords of their semi-feudal domains they now gained as a class, while "...the helots of Germany, the farm labourers," wrote Engels,

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<sup>\*</sup> Marx and Engels, Letters to Bebel, Liebknecht, Kautsky and others, Moscow-Leningrad, 1933, p. 490, *German ed.*

<sup>†</sup> Karl Marx, *Selected Works*, Vol. II, "The Civil War in France," p. 470, Eng. Ed., Moscow-Leningrad 1935.

<sup>‡</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 523.

“...practically remained in their former condition of serfdom, being admitted to only two public functions; to become soldiers and to serve the Junkers as voting cattle on Reichstag elections.”\*

Though kept, as heretofore, from direct participation in the governance of the state, the German bourgeoisie, by virtue of its economic power, exerted considerable influence over the policy of the German state. But that made it necessary for the bourgeoisie to trim its sails to suit the interests of the Junker caste. "A capitalist society," wrote Engels, "which has not yet formally subjected the state to its rule, which must leave the real governance to a hereditary monarchist-bureaucratic Junker caste, and rest content with the knowledge that by and large its own interests will in the long run decide anyhow...."†

### PRUSSIANISM, THE INCARNATION OF REACTION AND MILITARISM

External parliamentary forms were unable to conceal the real substance the Prusso-German Empire was made of, the tyrannical rule of a military-and-police-ridden state. From the moment the Prusso-German Empire came into existence, Marx and Engels vigorously assailed this system. referring to it as "...a state which is nothing but a police-guarded military despotism, embellished with parliamentary forms, alloyed with a feudal admixture, bureaucratically constructed and already influenced by the bourgeoisie..."

The advanced elements among the German people—the revolutionary workers—typified by August Rebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht, disciples of Marx and Engels, openly and fearlessly unmasked the policy of the Prusso-German Empire. With the Reichstag as their tribune they exposed the true essence of this new empire, demonstrated to the whole German people that it -was nothing more or less than a "Great Prussia" surrounded on all sides by vassal states, and that, the rulers of these states were nothing but Governors-General of the Prussian Crown. Bebel declared in his outspoken way that the German Empire was just one big barracks.

But the German working class was still too feeble to offer serious resistance to triumphant Prussianism. It had only just begun to form its class organizations, and wide sections of the people had succumbed, for the time being, to the influence of chauvinistic and militaristic ideas! *That she finds at first her unity in the Prussian barracks is a punishment she has well deserved,*" said Marx, speaking of Germany.‡

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\* Engels, "Force and Economy in the Establishment of the New German Empire," *Neue Zeit*, 1886-96, 14th Year, Vol. I. p. 814.

† Engels, Letter to Bebel February 19, 1892.

‡ Marx and Engels, Letter to Bebel Liebknecht, Kautsky and others, Part I, 1876-1886, p. 492, *German ed.*

The German bourgeoisie, which had always been bowing and seraphic before the Junkers and had always preferred to ally itself with them rather than with the people, now that their fundamental economic interests had been gratified, became the footman of the Prusso-German Empire. Comparing the heroic defenders of the Paris Commune with the German bourgeoisie, Marx wrote: “Compare these Parisians, storming heaven, with the slaves to heaven of the German-Prussian Holy Roman Empire, with its posthumous masquerades, reeking of the barracks, the Church, cabbage-Junkerdom and, above all, of the philistine.”\*

Marx and Engels saw clearly that this barrack-room atmosphere, this spirit of Junkerdom and philistinism, would now pervade all Germany, that she would “inevitably become submerged in Prussianism.”

Prussianism with all its revolting traits was the product of Prussia’s past history, which was punctuated with wars of conquest and noted for its militaristic rule, the absolute despotism of an obtuse and haughty Junker class, petty tutelage, oppressive police and bureaucratic officials, and the servile assiduity of the Prussian burgher. All these features of Prussianism found full development in the Prusso-German Empire, calling forth the hatred and contempt of other nations. In his article “Socialism in Germany,” Engels had this to say about the empire: “Its petty domestic policy, dominated by the policeman’s club and amounting to chicanery unworthy of a great nation, has earned it the contempt of all bourgeois-liberal countries; its foreign policy, the distrust and even the hatred of the neighbouring nations.”†

Victorious in its annexationist wars, the Prussian militarists cultivated in Germany the spirit of chauvinism, implanted brutal anti-Semitism and antediluvian Teutonic patriotism. All other nations were regarded by the swaggering Prussian military as objects of conquest, only fit to pay tribute, and were treated accordingly.

Nonsensical, jingoistic theories were current in Prussia, and also in other German states, long before the Prusso-German Empire was founded, far back as 1859 Marx, envenomed, heaped ridicule upon the theory of creating a so-called “Middle-European great power,” according to which “...every race in Europe, except the German, is breaking down. France is decaying; Italy must feel exceedingly blessed at being converted into a German barrack; the Slavic races lack the ethical qualities necessary to govern themselves; and England is corrupted by commerce. So there remains only solid Germany....”‡

Equally sarcastic are Engels’ remarks on this theory: “This ‘Middle-

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\* Marx and Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, p. 309, Vol. I, p. 584.

† Engels, *Neue Zeit*, “Socialism in Germany,” 1891-92, 10th Year, Vol. I, p. 584.

‡ Marx, *New York Daily Tribune*, “The War Prospect in Prussia,” 31-III-1859, No. 5598.

European great power' is to be a sort of rebirth of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation and seems to pursue the purpose, *inter alia*, of incorporating the quondam Austrian Low Countries as well as Holland as vassal states. The German *Vaterland* will cover almost twice the area over which today the German language is heard, and when all this has become reality, Germany will be the arbiter and lord of Europe... German ethical sober-mindedness and the young Middle-European great power lack nothing to enable the latter within a short time to capture world domination on land and sea, and inaugurate a new historical era, in which Germany will finally once more, as in the past, play first fiddle while the other nations will dance to her tune.”\*

While in the eighteen-fifties the number of those obsessed by such harebrained ideas was still rather small, under the Prusso-German Empire this “theory” became the symbol of faith of the Prussian militarists and their literary hacks. But it took the fascist regime of Hitler—who seeks to translate this balderdash into reality with the frenetic obstinacy of a maniac—to make a “program of action” out of this theory, to trot it out as the “principle” underlying his most ruthless and unbridled war against all nations of the world.

The Prusso-German Empire became the most militaristic country in Europe, a source of constant war danger. Armed to the teeth, it compelled the other nations to follow suit—feverishly to arm and augment their military establishments. “Anyone can see that not France but the German Empire of the Prussian Nation is the true representative of militarism,”† wrote Engels in refutation of the false accusation preferred by the Prussian militarists against the French republic.

For the realization of its plans of conquest, the Prusso-German Empire stood in need of a great and ever increasing army. The entire able-bodied male population was to serve in the hands of the Prussian militarists as material to make docile soldiers of. Though of the people, this army fought in a cause that was repugnant to the interests of the people. In his still unpublished “Miscellaneous Notes on Germany,” Engels revealed this profound contradiction in the German army and foresaw the defeat of the German militarists as the inevitable consequence of this contradiction. Engels wrote: “Tragicomic conflict: the state must wage political wars for remote interests which never arouse national enthusiasm, and for this purpose needs an army fit only for national defence and the offensive directly following from it. (1814 and 1870.) In this conflict the Prussian state and the

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\* Engels, *Po and Rhine, Savoy, Nice and the Rhine*, Stuttgart, 1915, p. 5.

† Engels, *Semi-official Clamour for War*, *Der Volkstaat*, No. 46, April 23, 1875.

Prussian army will go to smash—most likely in a war with Russia, which can last four years and where the only get is sickness and shattered bones.”\* Thus the brilliant *mind* of Engels could foresee that the swashbuckling Prussian war lords would precipitate Germany into war, and that in this war the Prussian army and the Prussian reactionary state would come to grief. The World War of 1914-18 completely bore out Engels’ prediction. And brazen German fascism, which has not learnt this lesson of history, experiences in the war begun against the Soviet Union all the fatal consequences of its crime.

Most officers of the German army stemmed from the Prussian Junker class. These Junker officers placed a specifically Prussian imprint upon the entire army system. They imported into the army their feudal habits and customs, their pettiness and pedantically bureaucratic psychology. “...the name of a ‘Prussian lieutenant’,” wrote Engels, “is a by-word all over Germany...; nowhere are there so many old, stiff-necked martinets among the field-officers and generals as in Prussia...”†

The specifically Prussian spirit cultivated in the German army spread to the subalterns and sergeants; they would “treat their subordinates with a roughness and brutality doubly repulsive from the spirit of pedantry with which it is coupled...”‡ With further reference to the brutal handling of the soldiers that was prevalent in the Prussian army with its rod discipline and endless parade drills, Engels wrote: “It is an heirloom from the genuine ‘old Prussian’ times when the soldier was either a recruited raggamuffin or the son of a peasant serf, and therefore had to swallow uncomplainingly all mistreatment and humiliation at the hands of his Junker officer. And precisely the declassed, famished and parasitic nobles, who are not at all poorly represented East of the Elbe, even today supply their contingent of the worst torturers of soldiers, and in this regard are equalled only by the puffed-up scions of the bourgeoisie, who like to ape the Junkers.” §

By these methods there came into being an army of soldiers impregnated with the atmosphere of the barracks, blindly obedient to their superiors and submissive tools in the hands of the German militarists.

Government officials, too, were largely recruited from the Junker caste. This sphere they like wise permeated with the spirit of Prussianism, introduced into it their stiff, repellent haughtiness and complete disregard of the interests of the people. These officials of Junker extraction wove these particular traits into a special “brand” of bureaucracy, the dominant feature

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\* “Miscellaneous Notes on Germany,”

† Engels, *Putnam’s Monthly*, Vol. VI, “The Armies of Europe,” No. XXXIII, p. 309.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 308.

‘ Engels, “Can Europe Disarm?” 1893, p. 24.



of which was petty pedantry. The term “Prussian bureaucrat” has acquired the connotation of an official of repulsive mentality, who spells the doom of every living cause. It implies a soulless automaton, which functions “in strict conformity with existing legal enactments.”

The Prusso-German state has surrounded these soulless officials with an aureole of unimpeachable authority and has demanded of its subjects absolute obedience to the ordinances and instructions of its bureaucracy, “Prussian despotism depicts the official as a higher, sanctified being.... For the Prussian layman, i.e., non-official, the Prussian official remains always a priest.”\*

The Prussian gendarme, the Prussian police, which shadows a German at every step he takes in life, which accompanies his every act and thought, stands guard over this bureaucratic order: “Police when you think, police when you speak, police when you walk or ride....”†

This constant tutelage and omnipotence of the policeman manacles the German burgher to such an extent that even in his solitary hours he does not cease to feel his all-seeing eye fixed upon him. With corrosive irony Engels quotes the words of a certain Prussian minister of state who said that a model Prussian “carries his gendarme in his breast.”‡

“A gendarme in his breast”—such is the height of morality in the eyes of the German philistine who views obedience to his superiors as the supreme virtue. In the opinion of the cowardly philistine, the Prusso-German Empire is the embodiment of legality, of order under law. “The German philistine,” wrote Engels, “is cowardice personified; he respects only him who inspires him with fear. But him who wants to ingratiate himself with him he considers his equal and respects him no more than his equal, *viz.*, not in the least.”§

This unrestricted, arbitrary, military-and-police-ridden regime of the ruling classes and the omnipotence of their bureaucratic machine found its true complement in the philistine meekness and lick-spittle loyalty of the German petty bourgeoisie. They were the two sides of the medal, two aspects of the same social system. “We have always strenuously combated the petty-bourgeois and philistine spirit within the Party,” said Engels, “because ever since it developed, after the Thirty Years’ War, it has taken possession of all classes in Germany and has become the Germans’ hereditary disease, the

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\* *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, No. 221, February 14, 1849.

† Marx-Engels, *Gesamtausgabe* 1st Part, Vol. II, p. 94.

‡ Engels, *Herr Eugen Dühring’s Revolution in Science* [Anti-Dühring], p. 352, *Eng. Ed.*, Moscow-Leningrad 1934.

§ Marx and Engels, *Letters to Bebel, Liebknecht, Kautsky and others*, Part I (1870-1886), 1933, p. 211.

sister of obsequiousness and the humility of the subject, and of all hereditary German vices. It is this spirit that has made us ridiculous and despised abroad.”\* With the zeal of a flunkey, the German philistine extolled the victories of the military junto and allowed himself to be used by it as a pliant tool for the accomplishment of its plans of conquest. The workers were the only class in Germany that Engels found almost wholly free from the contamination of philistinism.

The philistine spirit also influenced German ideology and left its mark on the German press. “The German daily press is, after all, really the flabbiest, sleepest and most cowardly institution in creation!” said Engels. “The greatest infamies may go on before its eyes, even against it itself, yet it maintains silence, keeps everything a dark secret....”†

As Engels pointed out in his “Ludwig Feuerbach,” the influence of the philistine spirit in the German Empire found further expression in the loss of that great interest in theory which was the *sometime* glory of the country even when its political decline touched bottom. “Empty eclecticism and an anxious concern for career and income, descending to the most vulgar place-hunting, occupies its place....”‡

The dominance of the reactionary Junkers and militarists engendered, in the domain of ideology, reactionary, unscientific theories exalting chauvinism, engendered crude violence, animal instincts that perpetuated inequality of persons, and the slavish subordination of the broad, popular masses to the “elect upper set,” the caste of the “lords by birth.” These views found undisguised expression in the philosophy of Nietzsche, the most outspoken ideologue of the Junker-bourgeois reaction in Germany at the end of the 19th century. The preachment of two moralities—“the morality of the masters” and “the morality of the slaves,” the denial of any moral limitations to the urge of the “superman” for power, the recognition of the will to power as the main principle underlying the “morality of the masters,” the proclamation of the omnipotence of the “blond beast”— these Nietzschean views have now been seized upon by German fascism which hails Nietzsche as one of its “prophets.”

As early as 1843, when this misanthropic theory was still in its embryonic state, it was subjected to scorching criticism by Marx, who disclosed the connection between such an ideology and the reactionary Prussian order, Prussian despotism and philistinism. Said Marx: “The society of these masters, therefore, needs nothing more than a number of slaves and the

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\* Letters by Engels to Eduard Bernstein, Berlin, 1925, p. 115.

† *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, No. 246, March 15, 1849.

‡ Karl Marx, *Selected Works*, Vol. I, “Ludwig Feuerbach,” p. 469, *Eng. Ed.*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1935.

owners of the slaves need not be free. If by reason of their ownership of land and people they are called masters in the eminent sense, they are not for that reason less philistine than then menials.... The lords by birth are the purpose for which this whole society exists.”\*

Marx emphasized “that brutality was essential for despotism and that the latter was incompatible with humanity.... A brutal relationship can be maintained only by brutality.”†

Marx and Engels pilloried also other features of reactionary Prussianism. They denounced anti-Semitism in the strongest terms. “Anti-Semitism,” said Engels in a letter written in 1890, “is a symptom of backward culture.... In Prussia it is the lower nobility, Junkerdom, which peddles anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism in, therefore, nothing but a reaction of mediaeval, moribund strata of society against modern society....” ‡

Throughout their period of activity, Marx and Engels unceasingly sounded the warning that Prussianism would lead Germany to national humiliation and catastrophe. “The German Empire is placed in mortal danger because of its Prussian foundation.” (Engels.)§ Just as Prussian Junkerdom led the Prussian state, in 1806, to its first Jena, to complete defeat and disaster, so Prussianism, as Engels showed in 1887, will lead the whole German Empire to a second Jena, a similar discomfiture. “The German philistines (who comprise also nobility and princes) are today even more boastful and chauvinistic, if that were possible, than at that time; diplomatic action has become considerably more impertinent but it still possesses its old duplicity: the number of noble officers has abundantly increased by artificial as well as natural means and again exercises in the army about the same domination, while the state becomes more and more divorced from the interests of the large popular masses, converting itself into a consortium of landed proprietors, slock jobbers and industrial magnates for the purpose of exploiting the people.”\*\* The only way out of this dilemma is for “specific Prussianism to cease being a burden upon Germany.”††

This task of liberating Germany from the domination of specific Prussianism can be accomplished, according to Marx and Engels, only by the working class, the one class in Germany which, in spite of the oppressive rule

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\* Marx-Engels, *Gesamtausgabe*, 1st Part, Vol. I, p. 561.

† *Ibid.*, p. 565.

‡ Engels, On Anti-Semitism, *Arbeiterzeitung*, Vienna, No. 19, May 9, 18190.

§ Marx and Engels, Letters to Bebel, Liebknecht, Kautsky and others, Part I (1870-1886), 1933, p. 463.

\*\* Engels, Introduction to Borkheim’s brochure “In Memory of the German Arch-Patriots of 1896-97,” Hottingen-Zürich, 1888.

†† *Neue Zeit*, 20th Year, 1901-02, Vol. I, p. 11.

of reaction, preserved its will power, its revolutionary energy. Through the Socialist Party, the party of Bebel and Liebknecht, the working class of Germany fought courageously and stubbornly against reactionary Prussianism and against the philistine policy of compromise with it. August Bebel, this outstanding organizer and leader of the German proletariat, indefatigably exposed the reactionary machinations of the Junkers and the policy of the imperial government, calling upon the German people to battle against the Prusso-German Empire.

Engels considered the working class of Germany the representative of all the forces of progress of the German people, the inheritor of all its cultural achievements. In the struggle of the working class against Prussianism he saw the guarantee of victory of the Germany that would put an end to her militarism and chauvinism. "But now," wrote Engels in 1891, "there stands behind official Germany a Socialist Germany, the Party to which belongs the future.... When this party comes to power it can neither exercise nor retain it without righting the acts of injustice of its predecessors in office against other nations."\* Engels enthusiastically noted the progress of the socialist movement in Germany, which had attracted millions to the struggle. "I am proud," wrote Engels, "of the position which our German workers have won ahead of all others."†

The advanced positions won by the working class of Germany during the last years of Engels' life were not, however, maintained by the German Social-Democratic Party in the period of imperialism, under the new conditions of the class struggle.

### PIRATICAL GERMAN IMPERIALISM

The association of the agrarian Junkers, bankers and big industrialists became particularly close in the period of imperialism. The coalescence of interests of these social groups gave to German imperialism a special character which Lenin defined as Junker-bourgeois imperialism.

In contrast with those countries in which imperialism developed on soil already cleared of feudal survivals, German imperialism took shape and reached maturity in a country in which the Prussian Junkers held sway. Developing under conditions in which it became intertwined with remnants of feudal relations, German imperialism entered the lists as an extremely reactionary and aggressive force.

Having embarked upon a policy of predatory imperialism later than other countries—at a time when the world was already partitioned among the principal imperialist powers—the Prusso-German state strove to make good

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\* *Ibid.*, 10th Year, 1891-92, Vol. I, p. 584.

† *Ibid.*, p. 581.

its loss in the shortest time possible. It aimed to seize the largest slice it could, pouncing upon its prey with the avid ferocity of a wild beast. The Prussian militarists entered the service of German imperialism to put into execution its plans of conquest, thereby enhancing its aggressiveness. From its very inception it was the most piratical of imperialisms, was, as Lenin said, the ringleader of world imperialism.

All the special characteristics of Prussianism that developed in the Prusso-German state assumed their most repellent form under imperialism. Junker-bourgeois imperialism meant more intense exploitation of the working people, the growth of militarism, and in connection with that an inordinate increase in the tax burden of the German people. German imperialism also meant intensified national oppression of the subjugated peoples: the Poles, Danes, Alsatians, etc. Describing the regime instituted by the Prusso-German state in Alsace, Lenin wrote in 1913. "For more than forty years they have been 'Germanizing' the French population of Alsace, and 'hammering into their heads,' by all kinds of coercion, that royal Prussian, non-com and bureaucratic discipline which goes by the name of 'German culture'."\*

The policy of the Prusso-German Empire was actually laid down by the reactionary magnates of big monopoly capital and the big landowners. Krupp, Stumm, Thiessen and other imperialists, who worked hand in glove with the Junkers, actually ruled the country. The captains of German imperialism established all sorts of militaristic associations—Navy Leagues, Pan-German Unions, and the like.

Under imperialism the German government became noted, even more than before, for its perfidy in diplomacy, its participation in the most reactionary coalitions designed to rob and subjugate other peoples, and for its preparations for new wars aiming at the establishment of world domination.

In William II, an extremely badly balanced person obsessed by a mania for power, German imperialism found an incumbent of the throne who belliciously championed its cause, found a man who stopped at no adventure and was ready to hurl millions of people into war for the promotion of his aims of aggrandizement.

William II speeded the catastrophe that became inevitable for Germany in consequence of the adventurous aggressive policy of German imperialism. The whole policy of the Prusso-German state, beginning with the Franco-Prussian war, was bound, as Marx and Engels had predicted, to lead the German people to a new war, the first World War. As early as 1887 Engels wrote: "And, finally, no other war is now possible for Prussia-Germany than a

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\* Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. XVII, p. 99, 3rd Russ. ed

-world war, and, at that, a world war of proportions and of a ferocity never yet dreamed of. From eight to ten million soldiers will kill each other off and at the same time eat all Europe more bare than any swarm of locusts ever did. The devastations of the Thirty Years' War, compressed into three or four years and spread over the whole continent; famine, epidemics, general brutalization of the armies and of the popular masses, called forth by acute distress; derangement beyond redemption of our artificial mechanism of commerce, industry and credit, ending in general bankruptcy.”\*

The war Engels had so perspicaciously foretold broke out in 1914. It was a war between two groups of imperialist states fighting for a redivision of the world. The German imperialists made every endeavour to cover up the piratical, imperialist character of this war by launching battle cries against Russian tsarism and insisting on Germany's right to free cultural and national development. Lenin exposed the utter falsity of these “grounds” on which the imperialist war was ostensibly waged. “When the German bourgeoisie,” he wrote, “refers, in justification, to the national defence, the struggle with tsarism, the safeguarding of the freedom of cultural and national development, it lies, for the Prussian Junkers, with William at their head, and the big bourgeoisie of Germany had always been prosecuting a policy of defence of the tsarist monarchy, and will not fail, no matter what the outcome of the war, to exert its efforts in its support; it lies, for, in fact, the Austrian bourgeoisie launched a predatory campaign against Serbia, while the German bourgeoisie oppresses Danes, Poles, and the French in Alsace-Lorraine, and in carrying on a war of aggression against Belgium and France for the sake of plundering richer and freer countries, having timed its offensive for the *moment* that seemed to it most opportune for putting to use its perfected military equipment, and making it coincide with the eve of the inauguration of Russia's so-called big military program.”†

A wave of chauvinism stirred up by the reactionary classes of Germany—the Prussian Junkers, the military junto and the imperialist bourgeoisie—swept over Germany and caught up also the leaders of the German Social-Democratic Party.

Marx and Engels had for many years actively opposed all attempts to introduce elements of philistinism into the working class. “And should not fight against every attempt once more artificially to inoculate this sound, and in Germany only sound, class with that old hereditary virus of philistine bigotry and philistine flabbiness?”‡

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\* Engels, Introduction to Berkheim's brochure “In Memory of the German Arch-Patriots of 1806-07,” Hottingen-Zürich, 1888.

† Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. XVIII. p. 45, 3rd *Russ. ed.*

‡ Letter by Engels to Eduard Bernstein, *op. cit.*

After their death, opportunist, philistine elements began to multiply in the German Social-Democratic Party. At the beginning of the first World War these elements, who stood at the head of this party, joined the camp of the imperialist bourgeoisie and Junkers. Only a small number of German, socialists, including Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, Clara Zetkin, Franz Mehring and Wilhelm Pieck, remained loyal to the banner of revolutionary proletarian internationalism, and fought, though not with complete consistency, against the chauvinist leadership of the German Social-Democratic Party. This group subsequently organized the Spartacus League, of which Lenin wrote as follows in 1918: "The work of the German Spartacus Group, which carried on systematic revolutionary propaganda under the most difficult conditions, resolutely saved the honour of German socialism and of the German proletariat."\* This group of socialists swam against the current, locked horns with the chauvinistically inclined leaders of the German Social-Democratic Party, who joined the German imperialists in falsely asserting that the war was defensive on Germany's part.

This chauvinist lie was *soon* nailed by actual events, and these false leaders stood exposed before all the nations of the world. When tsarism was overthrown and the young Soviet Republic declared its readiness to conclude a just and democratic peace with all belligerent countries, German imperialism nevertheless commenced its intervention against the Soviet Republic, against the peoples of the U.S.S.R., *and* occupied Soviet territory.

In characterizing the occupation of Soviet territory by German and Austrian troops, Stalin wrote:

"The imperialists of Austria and Germany bear on their bayonets a new disgraceful yoke in no wise better than the old Tatar yoke—such is the significance of the invasion in the West."†

The Russian, Ukrainian and Byelorussian workers and peasants rose to give battle to the invaders and, inflicting powerful blows on their armed forces, hastened the defeat of German imperialism.

Stalin foresaw that sooner or later the German people would become aware of the imperialist aims of Germany's rulers and would rise to squelch the enemies within the country. To quote his words:

"And what if the German workers and soldiers should finally realize, in the course of this war, that Germany's rulers do not pursue the aim of defending the German *Vaterland*, but are governed simply by the insatiability of gorged imperialist beasts, and should, upon such realization, draw the necessary practical conclusions?"‡

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\* Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. XXIX, p. 514, 3rd *Russ. Ed.*

† J. Stalin, "Articles and Speeches on the Ukraine," p. 40, *Russ. ed.*

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

The defeat of German imperialism in the first World War and the radicalizing effect of the Russian Revolution upon the German people led to the November Revolution of 1918 in Germany.

In this revolution the German people should have utterly uprooted the entire Prusso-German military and bureaucratic system with its reaction and despotism, should have shattered the economic and political foundations of the rule of the Prussian Junkers and of German imperialism. But owing to the opportunist leadership of the German Social-Democratic Party", the November Revolution did not accomplish these great national tasks incumbent upon the German people. True, this revolution inflicted a heavy blow upon the Junkers and the militarists, abolished the monarchy and proclaimed a republic, but it did not touch the economic foundations of the domination of the German imperialists, the power of the financial plutocracy, left intact the basis upon which the rule of the Junkers rested—the private ownership of large tracts of land, and retained the former bureaucratic apparatus. Threading lights of German imperialism—Krupp, Thiessen and the other fomenters and protagonists of the first World War—preserved their strength in the German republic. Dislodged from their positions by Germany's defeat and the establishment of a republic, the military coterie began to form secret military and semi-military counter-revolutionary organizations, which aimed at the complete restoration of their lost power. It became the centre of attraction of all morally decayed and declassed elements, which composed the first nuclei of the fascist party. The government of the republic not only made no decided effort to combat these reactionary organizations but itself employed counter-revolutionary, fascist bands to quell the revolutionary workers. Krupp, Thiessen, Stinnes and others who headed the German imperialists financed these fascist bands which they intended to make use of to eliminate the democratic republic and set up the unrestricted dictatorship of finance capital.

The crisis of 1929 doomed millions of people to a life of destitution and semi-starvation. It jerked them out of their accustomed walks of life deprived them of nil perspective and of hope for a better future. Grown desperate, the people who had lost their jobs and been deprived of even a minimum livelihood, who had lost their faith in the republic which did not save them from unemployment and poverty, now lent a ready ear to any demagogue, any political mountebank who held out promises of future bliss. This role of false espousers of the "interests of the people" was played by the fascists. They poisoned the minds of the people with chauvinism, hoodwinked them with their mendacious phrase-mongering about fighting capitalism, national oppression, etc.

The policy pursued by the German Social-Democratic Party, which had



split the working class and repelled considerable sections of the petty bourgeoisie, created favourable soil for the blossoming forth of fascist propaganda. Hence, the accession to power of Hitler and his clique, which had assumed the name of National-Socialist Party.

In his historic speech on the occasion of the twenty-fourth anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution, Stalin revealed the true nature of the Nazi party.

*“The Hitlerite party” he said, “is a party of imperialists, and of the most rapacious and predatory imperialists in the world at that.*

*“The Hitlerite party is a party of enemies of democratic liberties, a party of mediaeval reaction and Black-Hundred pogroms.*

“And if these brazen imperialists and arrant reactionaries still continue to don the toga of ‘nationalists’ and ‘socialists,’ they do so for the purpose of deceiving the people, of hoodwinking the credulous and of using the flag of ‘nationalism’ and ‘socialism’ to cover up their predatory imperialist nature.”\*

Hitler’s clique of arrant Tories restored the Junkers as a force, left the princes and nobles in possession of their vast landed estates, covering hundreds of thousands of hectares. It resuscitated and immeasurably increased the Prussian military junto, and again placed it at the service of predatory, aggressive German imperialism. It has infused into its regime the foul atmosphere of the Prussian barracks and the arbitrary rule of police and bureaucracy directed against the German people. It has supplemented this Prussian system with unprecedentedly bloody terrorism, during the course of which it has executed approximately a million people and incarcerated in its dungeons and concentration camps another million and a half. It has catered to the lowest animal instincts— has been the instigator of brutal anti-Semitism and savage hatred of all other nations. It has swung into play all forces of war and given all the leeway they want to the fascist militarists, who are despoiling and enslaving the peoples with specifically Prussian cruelty and inhumanity.

All the horrors of the Middle Ages, of the time of the Inquisition, of the devastating aftermath of the Thirty Years’ War, are as nothing in comparison with the misdeeds of the fascist soldiery, which has made a system of cannibalism and brutal violence, of robbery and pillage.

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Having lost all reason, obsessed with the idiotic idea of world domination. the fascist beast has embarked on a war with the Soviet Union. Hitler's gang tried to stave off its inevitable doom, seeks to intimidate, demoralize the

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\* J. Stalin, *On the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union*, 2nd Eng. ed., pp- 21-2, Moscow 1943.

Soviet people by the bloody terror and atrocities it has been committing against the population of the occupied countries and the Soviet districts temporarily held by it. But these systematic brutalities and heinous offences only call forth implacable hatred of Germany governed by Hitler, and intensifies the resistance which the nations offer to the fascist aggressors. The peoples of the Soviet Union keep account of every dastardly crime perpetrated by Hitler's executioners, and have drawn up a formidable and just indictment of fascist Germany.

The peoples of the Soviet Union, in association with all the freedom-loving nations of the world as their companions-in-arms, are waging a war of liberation against the German fascist invaders.

Our aims in this war, as set forth by Stalin in his report on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution, are to destroy the Hitlerite state and its guiding spirits, destroy the Hitlerite army and its leaders, destroy the odious "New Order in Europe" and punish those who have been erecting it.

The struggle of the heroic Red Army brings near the day when the peoples will sit in inexorable judgment over German fascism. Foreboding the inevitability of retribution, Hitler and his gang attempt to make the whole German people their accomplices, the accessory to their hideous crimes. They are pushing Germany, the whole German people, over the precipice, into the abyss.

The wrathful words uttered by Marx and Engels against the Prussian regime of reaction and militarism, and their impassioned summons to struggle against that system of serfdom sound like the verdict of history pronouncing the guilt of the Hitlerite regime. The defeat of the hordes of German fascist invaders will also be the defeat of German reaction.