

sons in authority. We have to work from beneath, and this corresponds to the mass character of our revolution which aims at the foundation and base of the social constitution; it corresponds to the character of the present proletarian revolution that the conquest of political power must come not from above but from below. The 9th of November was an attempt, a weak, half-hearted, half-conscious, and chaotic attempt to overthrow the existing public power and to put an end to class rule. What now must be done is that with full consciousness all the forces of the proletariat should be concentrated in an attack on the very foundations of capitalist society. There, at the base, where the individual employer confronts his wage slaves; at the base, where all the executive organs of political class rule confront the object of this rule, the masses; there, step by step, we must seize the means of power from the rulers and take them into our own hands. In the form that I depict it, the process may seem rather more tedious than one had imagined it at first. It is healthy, I think, that we should be perfectly clear as to all the difficulties and complications of this revolution. For I hope that, as in my own case, so in yours also, the description of the difficulties of the accumulating tasks will paralyze neither your zeal nor your energy. On the contrary, the greater the task, the more will we gather all of our forces. And we must not forget that the revolution is able to do its work with extraordinary speed. I make no attempt to prophesy how much time will be needed for this process. Who among us cares about the time; who worries, so, long only as our lives suffice to bring it to pass. It is only important that we know clearly and precisely what is to be done; and I hope that my feeble powers have shown you to some extent the broad outlines of that which is to be done.

#### 14E. ORDER REIGNS IN BERLIN

“Order reigns in Warsaw,” Minister Sebastiani informed the Paris Chamber of Deputies in 1831, when, after fearfully storming the suburb Praga, Paskiewitsch’s rabble troops had marched into the Polish capital and begun their hangman’s work on the rebels.<sup>28</sup>

“Order reigns in Berlin” is the triumphant announcement of the bourgeois press, of Ebert and Noske, and of the officers of the “victorious troops,” who are being cheered by the petty-bourgeois mob in the streets, waving their handkerchiefs and shouting hurrahs. The glory and the honor of the German Army has been saved in the eyes of history. Those who were miserably routed in Flanders and the Argonne have restored their reputation by

this shining victory—over the three hundred “Spartacists” in the *Vorwärts*.<sup>29</sup> The days of the first glorious penetration of German troops into Belgium, the days of General von Emmich, the conqueror of Liège, pale before the deeds of this Reinhardt and Company in the streets of Berlin.<sup>30</sup> The massacred mediators, who wanted to negotiate the surrender of the *Vorwärts* and were beaten beyond recognition by rifle butts, so that their bodies could not even be identified; captives who were put up against the wall and murdered in a way that spattered their skulls and brains all over: in the face of such glorious acts, who is still thinking of the ignominious defeats suffered at the hand of the French, the English, or the Americans? “Spartacus” is the name of the enemy; and Berlin, the place where our officers know how to win. Noske, the “worker,”<sup>31</sup> is the name of the general who knows how to organize victories where Ludendorff failed.

Who does not recall here the drunken ecstasy of that pack of “law-and-order” hounds in Paris, the bacchanal of the bourgeoisie on the bodies of the Communards—the very same bourgeoisie who had only just capitulated pitifully to the Prussians and surrendered the nation’s capital to the foreign enemy, only to take to their heels themselves like the ultimate coward! But against the badly armed and starving Parisian proletarians, against their defenseless wives and children—how the manly courage of the little sons of the bourgeoisie, of the “golden youth,” and of the officers flamed up again! How the courage of these sons of Mars who had broken down before the foreign enemy spent itself in bestial cruelties against the defenseless, against prisoners, and the fallen!

“Order reigns in Warsaw!”—“Order reigns in Paris!”—“Order reigns in Berlin!” And so run the reports of the guardians of “order” every half-century, from one center of the world-historical struggle to another. And the rejoicing “victors” do not notice that an “order” which must be periodically maintained by bloody butchery is steadily approaching its historical destiny, its doom.

What was this recent “Spartacus Week” in Berlin? What has it brought? What does it teach us? Still in the midst of the struggle and the victory cries of the counterrevolution, the revolutionary proletarians have to give an account of what has happened; they must measure the events and their results on the great scale of history. The revolution has no time to lose, it storms onward—past still open graves, past “victories” and “defeats”—toward its great goals. To follow lucidly its principles and its paths is the first task of the fighters for international socialism.

Was an ultimate victory of the revolutionary proletariat to be expected in this conflict, or the overthrow of the Ebert-Scheidemann [government] and establishment of a socialist dictatorship? Definitely not, if all the decisive factors in this issue are taken into careful consideration. The sore spot in the revolutionary cause at this moment—the political immaturity of the masses of soldiers who, even now, are still letting themselves be misused by their officers for hostile, counterrevolutionary purposes—is alone already proof that a lasting victory of the revolution was not possible in this encounter. On the other hand, this immaturity of the military is itself but a symptom of the general immaturity of the German revolution.

The open country, from which a large percentage of the common soldiers come, is still hardly touched by the revolution, the same as always. So far, Berlin is as good as isolated from the rest of the country. Of course, there are revolutionary centers in the provinces—in the Rhineland, on the northern seaboard, in Brunswick, Saxony, and Württemberg—that are heart and soul on the side of the Berlin proletariat. Still what is lacking first of all is the immediate coordination of the march forward, the direct community of action, which would make the thrust and the willingness to fight of the Berlin working class incomparably more effective. Furthermore—and this is but the deeper cause of that political immaturity of the revolution—the economic struggles, the actual volcanic fountain which is continually feeding the revolutionary class struggle, are only in their infancy.

From all this it follows that at this moment a conclusive and lasting victory could not be expected. Was the struggle of the last week therefore a “mistake”? Yes, if it were in fact a matter of a deliberate “attack” or a so-called “putsch”! But what was the starting point for the last week of fighting? The same as in all previous cases, the same as on December 6 and December 24: a brutal provocation by the government! Just as before, in the case of the blood bath involving defenseless demonstrators on the Chausseestrasse, or in the butchery of the sailors, likewise this time the cause of all subsequent events was the assault on the Berlin police headquarters. The revolution does not operate voluntaristically, in an open field, according to a cunning plan laid out by “strategists.” Its opponents too have initiative; in fact, as a rule, they exercise it much more than the revolution itself.

Faced with the shameless provocation of the Ebert-Scheidemanns, the revolutionary working class was forced to take up arms. Yes, it was a matter of honor for the revolution to repel the attack immediately and with all due energy, lest the counterrevolution be encouraged to advance further, and lest

the revolutionary ranks of the proletariat and the moral credit of the German revolution in the International be shaken.

Immediate resistance came forth spontaneously from the masses of Berlin with such an obvious energy that from the very beginning the moral victory was on the side of the "street."

Now it is an internal law of life of the revolution never to stand still in inaction, in passivity, once a step has been taken. The best parry is a forceful blow. Now more than ever this elementary rule of all struggles governs each step of the revolution. It goes without saying, and it testifies to the sound instinct and fresh internal strength of the Berlin proletariat, that it was not appeased by the reinstatement of Eichhorn, that it spontaneously proceeded to occupy other outposts of the counterrevolution's power: the bourgeois press, the semi-official news agencies, the *Vorwärts*. All these measures resulted from the people's instinctive recognition that, for its part, the counterrevolution would not rest with the defeat it had suffered, but rather would be bent on a general test of strength.

Here, too, we stand before one of the great historical laws of revolution—against which are dashed to pieces all the sophistries and the pseudo-science of those little "revolutionaries" of the USPD brand who, in every fight, look only for pretexts for retreating. As soon as the fundamental problem of the revolution has been clearly posed—and in this revolution it is to overthrow the Ebert-Scheidemann regime, the first obstacle to the triumph of socialism—then this problem will recur repeatedly as a pressing need of the moment, and each individual episode of the struggle will broach the problem in its entirety with the fatality of a natural law, however unprepared the revolution may be for its solution, however unripe the situation may still be. "Down with Ebert and Scheidemann!"—this slogan is inevitably heard in every revolutionary crisis as the single formula summing up all partial conflicts, thereby automatically, by its own internal, objective logic, propelling each episode of the struggle to the extreme, whether one wants it or not.

From this contradiction between the increasing gravity of the task and the lack of the preconditions for its solution it follows, in an initial phase of the revolutionary development, that the individual fights of the revolution formally end with a defeat. But revolution is the only form of "war"—this, too, is its particular life principle—in which the final victory can be prepared only by a series of "defeats"!

What does the whole history of modern revolutions and of socialism show us? The first flare-up of the class struggle in Europe—the revolt of the

silk weavers of Lyons in 1831—ended with a severe defeat. The Chartist movement in England—with a defeat. The rebellion of the Parisian proletariat in the June days of 1848 ended with a crushing defeat. The Paris Commune ended with a dreadful defeat. The whole path of socialism, as far as revolutionary struggles are concerned, is paved with sheer defeats.

And yet, this same history leads step by step, irresistibly, to the ultimate victory! Where would we be today without those “defeats” from which we have drawn historical experience, knowledge, power, idealism! Today, where we stand directly before the final battle of the proletarian class struggle, we are standing on precisely those defeats, not a one of which we could do without, and each of which is a part of our strength and clarity of purpose.

In this respect, revolutionary struggles are the direct opposite of parliamentary struggles. In the course of four decades we have had nothing but parliamentary “victories” in Germany, we have advanced directly from victory to victory. And with the great test of history on August 4, 1914, the result was: a devastating political and moral defeat, an unprecedented debacle, an unparalleled bankruptcy. Revolutions have brought us nothing but defeat till now, but these unavoidable defeats are only heaping guarantee upon guarantee of the coming final triumph.

On one condition, of course! The question arises, under which circumstances each respective defeat was suffered: whether it resulted from the forward-storming energy of the masses being dashed against the barrier of the lack of maturity of the historical presuppositions, or, on the other hand, whether it resulted from the revolutionary action itself being paralyzed by incompleteness, vacillation, and inner frailties.

Classic examples for both cases are, on the one hand, the French February Revolution, and the German March Revolution on the other. The courageous action of the Parisian proletariat in 1848 has become the living source of class energy for the entire international proletariat. The deplorable facts of the German March Revolution [1848] have clung to the whole development of modern Germany like a ball and chain. In the particular history of official German Social Democracy, they have produced after-effects well into the most recent incidents of the German revolution—and into the dramatic crisis we just experienced.

How does the defeat in this so-called Spartacus Week appear in light of the above historical question? Was it a defeat due to raging revolutionary energy and a situation that was insufficiently ripe, or rather due to frailties and halfway undertakings?

Both! The divided character of this crisis, the contradiction between the vigorous, resolute, aggressive showing of the people of Berlin and the indecision, timidity, and inadequacy of the Berlin leadership is the particular characteristic of this latest episode.

The leadership failed. But the leadership can and must be created anew by the masses and out of the masses. The masses are the crucial factor; they are the rock on which the ultimate victory of the revolution will be built. The masses were up to the task. They fashioned this “defeat” into a part of those historical defeats which constitute the pride and power of international socialism. And that is why this “defeat” is the seed of the future triumph.

“Order reigns in Berlin!” You stupid lackeys! Your “order” is built on sand. The revolution will “raise itself up again clashing,” and to your horror it will proclaim to the sound of trumpets: *I was, I am, I shall be.*<sup>32</sup>