

is, it is absolutely necessary to recognize that in an age of thermonuclear weapons sovereign states based on different ideologies should not try to settle their ideological differences by means of military conflict. The effort to prevent World War III is of supreme value; the very possibility of a human future depends upon its success. Under these conditions the widespread tendency, during discussions of the peaceful coexistence concept, to suggest that the Soviets, because of their attitude toward nonmilitary forms of ideological struggle, are renegeing on their commitment to this concept, is unwarranted and harmful. The terms of reference which we must recognize and accept are that every ideology wants to continue its struggle, and every sovereign state must decide for itself the form it will take.

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*The German Revolution of 1918: A Study of German Socialism in War and Revolt*, by A. J. Ryder. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967. 63s. Pp. 304.

Waste-production, a characteristic of present-day capitalism, displays itself in intellectual as well as material forms. Ryder's book falls in this category by telling once more the dreary story of the German Revolution of 1918. Its extensive yet selective bibliography names its numerous predecessors and, due to the strange proceedings of the academic world, it will undoubtedly find just as many successors. This is not to say that the book is not worthwhile; on the contrary, it is a serious and well-written study of German socialism which, however, adds nothing essential to the large library on hand.

While in Germany with the education branch of the British Control Commission, Ryder began to wonder about the "failure of German democracy," which led him to this "investigation of the unsuccessful revolution which gave the Republic its unpromising start." The failed German revolution was, of course, a failure of German socialism and not a failure of German "democracy." In fact, it was political democracy that destroyed the revolution. Ryder feels, however, that somehow a more successful revolution would have led to a better democracy, and therewith to the possible avoidance of fascism. But he does not go into the matter, for his book ends with the year 1920.

It starts with the familiar story of the evolution of German Social Democracy from an oppositional to a class-collaborationist movement.

From its very beginning there existed a noticeable discrepancy between its ideology and its reformist practice which, in the course of time and with growing opportunities, widened into open support of bourgeois society. This was not peculiar to German socialism, for the socialist parties of other nations experienced a similar development. The war of 1914 merely revealed the transformation in a dramatic way. But the war also revived revolutionary attitudes in both the working classes and the socialist movements.

The revival was foreshadowed in the discussions around the questions of reform and revolution which divided Social Democracy ideologically long before its actual split into three factions—an extreme right and left and a center—was brought on by the war and the opposition to it. This split led to the formation of the Independent Socialist Party and of the Spartacist League which constituted its left wing and which became in 1918 the Communist Party.

After 1916 opposition to the war expressed itself in anti-war propaganda and in industrial strikes which, due to the patriotism of the Trade Unions, had to be organized by way of workers' councils. The events of the Russian Revolution led to increased revolutionary activities in Germany. It was following the experiences of the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917, as well as by the force of its own circumstances, that the revolution in Germany found its organizational expression in clandestine workers' and soldiers' councils and their seizure of political control.

However, the bourgeoisie was only temporarily stunned. With the aid of the Social Democrats it was soon able to restore the capitalist order. The mass of the working population mistook the political for a social revolution. With the monarchy gone and the war ended, it expected a socialist government to socialize production. The Social Democratic ideology had left its mark on the working class. Despite the party's class collaboration and social patriotism—to which the masses themselves had only too readily succumbed—the illusion prevailed that there was a non-revolutionary way to socialism. The revolutionaries were a minority, even though they had large masses on their side during various spontaneous reactions to counter-revolutionary provocations. With the aid of empty promises and the help of mercenaries the Social Democrats managed to suppress the revolutionary forces.

The goal of the revolutionaries was "all power to the workers' councils," that of the bourgeoisie and its Social Democratic allies, the rule of the national constituent assembly. The realization of the revolutionary goal implied the disfranchisement of all nonworking layers of

society—the dictatorship of the proletariat. Universal suffrage meant the reinstatement of bourgeois power—the dictatorship of capital. Although the workers' and soldiers' councils were a reality, they were composed of people of all political persuasions. The actual content of the revolution was not equal to its revolutionary form, and by opting for the national assembly the councils voted themselves out of existence. All that was left for the Social Democrats to do was to destroy the isolated revolutionaries by military means.

This is all there is to the story of the German revolution, the details of which fill Ryder's book. Although the revolution, such as it was, was destroyed by the German socialists, the latter were themselves eliminated by the fascist regime through which German capitalism tried to find an imperialist solution for its economic problems. In Ryder's view, however, democracy in Germany came to its sorry end not because it no longer served capitalist needs, but because social democracy had not been consistent enough in its revisionism. "What can reasonably be argued," he writes, "is that had the S.P.D. adopted revisionism in theory as well as in practice and shed its revolutionary objectives it might never have provoked the reaction from the right which proved its ultimate undoing." But the socialists had no revolutionary objectives to shed and in 1918 its revisionism did embrace both theory and practice. It was replaced together with political democracy because its services to capitalism had become inadequate.

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