

The Technique Of Revolution

by

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FOREWORD

In 1931, Italian journalist and political writer, Curzio Malaparte, published a book in Italy entitled *TECHNIQUE DU COUP D'ÉTAT*. This work was based on his own personal observation of the activities in Russia at the time of the Revolution, Poland at the time of the Bolshevik invasion of 1920 and Berlin during the Kapp putsch. Malaparte was an early supporter of Mussolini and had first-hand knowledge of the means by which *Il Duce* had come to power in 1922.

His observations into the means by which power is acquired are acute and accurate but it is interesting to note that in 1931, he dismisses Adolf Hitler as a "fat Austrian" and little more than a second-hand imitator of Benito Mussolini.

Malaparte's work studied the successful, and unsuccessful, *coups d'Etat* or seizure of power and his work was both seminal and topical for a European audience of the 1930s. However, when this book was translated into English and released in America in 1932, it appeared at the most serious time of the world-wide depression when millions of angry Americans had been thrown out of work; seen their life savings vanish, reduced to humiliating poverty and unable to provide for their families. Herbert Hoover was president and he had made no visible public efforts to address the growing and bitter frustrations in the United States.

Malaparte's book, showing the relative ease with which a modern nation could be conquered by a handful of determined men, was not well received in the corridors of power in America and the book was soon viewed as dangerous and in essence, banned. In a democracy, books are never banned; only officially ignored which amounts to the same thing.

This is a very important work that should prove to be of interest to any student of both politics and history.

What is past is prologue to the future.

PREFACE

Although it is my plan to demonstrate how a modern State is captured and defended, which was, more or less, the subject treated by Machiavelli, this book is in no sense an imitation of *The Prince*-not even a modern imitation, which would be something necessarily remote from Machiavelli. In the age from which Machiavelli drew his arguments, his examples and the matter for his reflections, public and private liberties, civic dignity, and the self-respect of men had fallen so low, that I should fear to be insulting my readers in applying any of the teachings of the famous book to the urgent problems of modern Europe.

At first sight the whole political history of the last ten years may seem to be the tale of the operation of the Treaty of Versailles, of the economic consequences of the war, and of the attempts of Governments to ensure the peace of Europe. The true explanation is, however, different, and is to be found in the struggle between the defenders of liberty and democracy, and of the parliamentary State, against the adversaries of those principles. The attitudes of the various parties are political aspects of this struggle. To understand many events of recent years, and to foresee the future of politics within various European States the behavior of political parties must be considered from this point of view and this alone. In nearly every country there are on the one hand parties out to defend the parliamentary State and to apply the Liberal and democratic method of preserving an internal balance of power. Among these I count every kind of Conservative, from Right Wing Liberals to Left Wing Socialists. And on the other hand there are the parties whose view of the State is revolutionary, parties of the extreme Left and the Extreme Right, Fascists and Communists, modern Catilines. The Catilines of the Right are concerned with the preservation of order. They accuse the Governments of weakness, incapacity and irresponsibility. They proclaim the necessity of a strongly organized State, with a severe control of political, social, economic life. They are the worshippers of the State, the advocates of an absolute State. They see the only guarantee of order and liberty against the peril of Communism in a State which shall take control from the center, and shall be authoritative, anti-liberal, and anti-democratic. Mussolini's doctrine is "Everything within the State, nothing outside the State, nothing against the State." The Catilines of the Left seek to capture the State to install dictatorship of the workers and the peasants. "Where there is liberty there is no State" is Lenin's doctrine.

The examples of Mussolini and Lenin are of great importance in the development of the struggle between the Catilines of the Right and the Left and the defenders of the Liberal and Democratic State.

Of course Fascist tactics are one thing and Communist tactics another. As yet, however, neither the Catilines nor the defenders of the State appear to have recognized what those tactics are, or to define them in such a way as to show up their differences or their similarities, if any. The tactics of Bela Kun are utterly unlike those of Bolsheviks. The attempts of Kapp, Primo de Rivera and Pilsudski seemed to have been planned in accordance with rules quite different from those of Fascist tactics. Perhaps Bela Kun displayed the most modern tactics, and, being more expert than the other three at the job, was a more dangerous person.

Yet he too in setting out to capture the State proved his ignorance not only of modern tactics of insurrection but also of a modern method of capturing the State.

Bela Kun fancied he was imitating Trotsky. He did not notice that he had got no further than the rules laid down by Karl Marx as a result of the Commune in Paris. Kapp planned to finish off the Parliament of Weimar on the lines of the eighteenth Brumaire. Primo de Rivera and Pilsudski supposed that to overcome the modern State you have only to depose constitutional government with a show of violence.

Neither the Governments nor the Catilines – this much is clear – have ever seriously studied whether there is a modern science of *coup d'Etat* or what its general rules are. While the Catilines pursue their revolutionary tactics, the Governments continue to oppose them by defensive police measures, thus showing their absolute ignorance of the elementary principles of conquering and defending the modern State. Such ignorance is dangerous, as I intend to show by reciting events of which I have been a witness, in which indeed I have played a certain part myself, the events of the revolutionary season which began in February 1917 in Russia and seems not yet to have ended in Europe.

The Author

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Chapter One

THE BOLSHEVIK COUP D'ETAT AND TROTSKY'S TACTICS

While the strategy of the Bolshevik revolution was due to Lenin, the tactician of the October *coup d'Etat* in 1917 was Trotsky.

When I was in Russia early in 1929, I had the opportunity of talking to a large number of people, from every walk of life, about the part played by Trotsky in the Revolution. There is an official theory on the subject which is held by Stalin. But everywhere, and especially in Moscow and Leningrad where Trotsky's party was stronger than elsewhere, I heard judgments passed on Trotsky which differed altogether from those enunciated by Stalin. The only refusal to answer my questions came from Lunacharski, and Madame Kamenev alone, gave me an objective justification of Stalin's theory, which ought not to be surprising, considering that Madame Kamenev is Trotsky's sister.

We cannot enter here into the Stalin - Lenin controversy on the subject of the "permanent revolution" and of the part played by Trotsky in the *coup d'Etat* of October 1917. Stalin denies that Trotsky organized it: he claims that merit for the Commission on which Sverdlov, Stalin, Boubrov, Ouritzki, and Dzerjinski sat. The Commission, to which neither Lenin nor Trotsky belonged, was an integral part of the Revolutionary Military Committee presided over by Trotsky. But Stalin's controversy with the upholder of the theory of the "permanent revolution" cannot alter the history of the October insurrection, which, according to Lenin's statement, was organized and directed by Trotsky. Lenin was the "strategus," idealist, inspirer, the *deus ex machina* of the revolution, but the man who invented the technique of the Bolshevik *coup d'Etat* was Trotsky.

The Communist peril against which governments in modern Europe have to defend themselves lies, not in Lenin's strategy, but in Trotsky's tactics. It would be difficult to conceive of Lenin's strategy apart from the general situation in Russia in 1917. Trotsky's tactics, on the contrary, were independent of the general condition of the country; their practical application was not conditioned by any of the circumstances which were indispensable to Lenin's strategy. In Trotsky's tactics is to be found the explanation why a Communist *coup d'Etat* always will be a danger in any European country. In other words, Lenin's strategy cannot find its application in any Western European country unless the ground is favorably prepared and the circumstances identical with those of Russia in 1917. In his *Infantile Disease of Communism*, Lenin himself noted that the novelty in the Russian political situation in 1917 "lay in four specific circumstances, which do not at present obtain in Western Europe, and doubtless never will develop either on exactly the same, or even analogous, lines." An explanation of these four conditions would be irrelevant here. Everyone knows

what constituted the novelty of the Russian political situation in 1917. Lenin's *strategy* does not, therefore, present an immediate danger to the Governments of Europe. The menace for them, now and always, is from Trotsky's *tactics*.

In his remarks on *The October Revolution and the Tactics of Russian Communists*, Stalin wrote that whoever wished to form an estimate of what happened in Germany in the Autumn of 1923, must not forget the peculiar situation in Russia in 1917. He added: "Comrade Trotsky ought to remember it, since he finds a complete analogy between the October Revolution and the German Revolution and chastises the German Communist party for its real or supposed blunders." For Stalin, the failure of the German attempt at revolution during the Autumn of 1923 was due to the absence of those specific circumstances which are indispensable to the practical application of Lenin's strategy. He was astonished to find Trotsky blaming the German Communists. But for Trotsky the success of an attempt at revolution does not depend on circumstances analogous to those obtaining in Russia in 1917. The reason why the German revolution in the Autumn of 1923 failed was not because it was impossible at that time to put Lenin's strategy into operation. The unpardonable mistake on the part of the German Communists lay in their neglect of the insurrectional tactics of Bolshevism. The absence of favorable circumstances and the general condition of the country do not affect the practical application of Trotsky's tactics. In fact, there is no justification of the German Communists' failure to reach their goal.

Since the death of Lenin, Trotsky's great heresy has threatened the doctrinal unity of Leninism. Trotsky is a Reformer who has the odds against him. He is now a Luther in exile, and those of his adherents who were not so rash as to repent too late, have hastened to repent- officially-too early. Nevertheless, one still frequently meets with heretics in Russia who have not lost the taste for criticism and who go on drawing the most unexpected conclusions from Stalin's argument. This argument leads to the conclusion that without Kerenski there could be no Lenin, since Kerenski formed one of the chief elements in the peculiar condition of Russia in 1917. But Trotsky does not recognize that there is any need for Kerenski; any more than for Stresemann, Poincaré, Lloyd George, Giolitti, or MacDonald, whose presence, like that of Kerenski, has no influence, favorable or unfavorable, on the practical application of Trotsky's tactics. Put Poincaré in the place of Kerenski and the Bolshevik *coup d'Etat* of 1917 would prove to be equally successful. In Moscow, as in Leningrad, I have sometimes come across adherents of the heretical theory of the "permanent revolution" who virtually held that Trotsky could do without Lenin, that Trotsky could exist without Lenin; which is equivalent to saying that Trotsky might have risen to power in October 1917 if Lenin had stayed in Switzerland and taken no part whatever in the Russian revolution.

The assertion is a risky one but only those who magnify the importance of strategy in a revolution will deem it arbitrary. What matters most are insurrectional tactics, the technique of the *coup d'Etat*. In a Communist revolution Lenin's strategy is not an indispensable preparation for the use of insurrectional tactics. It cannot, of itself, lead to the capture of the State. In Italy, in 1919 and 1920, Lenin's strategy had been put into complete operation and Italy at that time was, indeed, of all European countries, the ripest for a Communist revolution. Everything was ready for a *coup d'Etat*. But Italian Communists believed that the revolutionary state of the country, the fever of sedition among the proletarian masses, the epidemic of general strikes, the paralyzed state of economic and political life, the occupation of factories by the workers, and of lands by the peasants, the disorganization of the army, the police and the civil service, the feebleness of the magistrature, the submission of the middle classes, and the impotence of the government were conditions sufficient to allow for a transference of authority to the workers. Parliament was under the control of the parties of the Left and was actually backing the revolutionary activities of the trade unions. There was no lack of determination to seize power, only of knowledge of the tactics of insurrection. The revolution wore itself out in strategy. This strategy was the preparation for a decisive attack, but no one knew how to lead the attack. The Monarchy (which used then to be called a Socialist Monarchy) was actually talked of as a serious obstacle to an insurrectional attack. The parliamentary majority of the Left was very much concerned with the activities of the trade unions, which gave it reason to fear a bid for power outside the sphere of Parliament and even directed against it. The trade unions suspected Parliament of trying to convert the proletarian revolution into a change of ministry for the benefit of the lower middle classes. How could the *coup d'Etat* be organized? Such was the problem during the whole of 1919 and 1920; and not only in Italy, but in almost every Western European country. Trotsky said that the Communists did not know how to benefit by the lesson of October 1917, which was not a lesson in revolutionary strategy but in the tactics of an insurrection.

This remark of Trotsky's is very important for an understanding of the tactics used in the *coup d'Etat* of October 1917, that is, of the technique of the Communist *coup d'Etat*.

It might be maintained that the tactics of insurrection are a part of revolutionary strategy, and indeed its aim and object. Trotsky's ideas on this point are very definite. We have already seen that he considers the tactics of insurrection as independent of the general condition of the country or of a revolutionary state of affairs favorable to insurrection. The Russia of Kerenski offers no more of a problem than Holland or Switzerland for the practical application of the October tactics of 1917. The four specific circumstances as

defined by Lenin in *The Infantile Disease of Communism* (i.e., the possibility of combining the Bolshevik revolution with the conclusion of an imperialist war; the chance of benefiting for a short while, by a war between two groups of nations who, except for that war, would have united to fight the Bolshevik revolution; the ability to sustain a civil war in Russia lasting long enough in relation to the immense size of the country and its poor means of communications; the presence of a democratic middle-class revolutionary movement among the peasant masses) are characteristic of the Russian situation in 1917, but they are not indispensable to the successful outcome of a Communist *coup d'Etat*. If the tactics of a Bolshevik revolution were dependent upon the same circumstances as Lenin's strategy, there would not be a Communist peril just now in all the states of Europe.

Lenin, in his strategic idea, lacked a sense of reality; he lacked precision and proportion. He thought of strategy in terms of Clausewitz, more as a philosophy than as an art or science. After his death, among his bedside books, a copy of Clausewitz's *Concerning War* was found, annotated in his own writing; and his marginal notes to Marx's *Civil War in France* show how well-founded was Trotsky's challenge of his rival's strategic genius. It is difficult to see why such importance is officially given to Lenin's revolutionary strategy in Russia unless it is for the purpose of belittling Trotsky. The historical part played by Lenin in the Revolution makes it unnecessary for him to be considered as a great strategist.

On the eve of the October insurrection Lenin was hopeful and impatient. Trotsky's election to the Presidency of the Petrograd Soviet and to the Revolutionary Military Committee, and the winning over of the Moscow Soviet majority, had finally set his mind at rest about the question of a majority in the Soviets, which had been his constant thought since July. All the same, he was still anxious about the second Soviet Congress which was due in the last days of October. "We need not get a majority," Trotsky said, "it will not be the majority that will have to get into power." And Trotsky was not mistaken. "It would be simply childish," Lenin agreed, "to wait for a definite majority." He would have liked to rouse the masses against Kerenski's government; he wanted to bury Russia under the proletariat; to give the signal for insurrection to the entire Russian People; to appear at the Soviet Congress and override Dan and Skobelov, the two leaders of the Menshevik minority; and to proclaim the fall of Kerenski's government and the advent of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. Insurrectional tactics did not enter into his mind, he thought only in terms of revolutionary strategy. "All right," said Trotsky, "but first of all, you must take possession of the town, seize the strategic positions and turn out the Government. In order to do that, an insurrection must be organized and

storming parties trained. Few people are wanted; the masses are of no use; a small company is sufficient."

But, according to Lenin, the Bolshevik insurrection must never be accused of being a speculation. "The insurrection," he said, "must not rest on a plot nor on a party, but on the advanced section of the community." That was the first point. The insurrection must be sustained by the revolutionary impulse of the whole people. That was the second point. The insurrection must break out on the high-water mark of the revolutionary tide: and that was the third point. These three points marked the distinction between Marxism and mere speculation. "Very well," said Trotsky, "but the whole populace is too cumbersome for an insurrection. There need only be a small company, cold-blooded and violent, well-trained in the tactics of insurrection."

Lenin admitted: "We must hurl all our units into the factories and barracks. There they must stand firm, for there is the crucial spot, the anchor of the Revolution. It is there that our program must be explained and developed in fiery, ardent speech, with the challenge: Complete acceptance of this program, or insurrection!"

"Very good," said Trotsky, "but when our program has been accepted by the masses, the insurrection still remains to be organized. We must draw on the factories and barracks for reliable and intrepid adherents. What we need is not the bulk of workers, deserters and fugitives, but shock troops."

"If we want to carry out the revolution as Marxists, that is to say as an art," Lenin agreed, "we must also, and without a moment's delay, organize the General Staff of the insurrectional troops, distribute our forces, launch our loyal regiments against the most salient positions, surround the Alexandra theatre, occupy the Fortress of Peter and Paul, arrest the General Staff and the members of the Government, attack the Cadets and Cossacks with detachments ready to die to the last man, rather than allow the enemy to penetrate into the center of the town, We must mobilize the armed workers, call them to the supreme encounter, take over the telephone and telegraph exchanges at the same time, quarter our insurrectional General Staff in the telephone exchange and connect it up by telephone with all the factories, regiments, and points at which the armed struggle is being waged."

"Very good," Trotsky said, "but . . ."

"All that is only approximate," Lenin recognized, "but I am anxious to prove that at this stage we could not remain loyal to Marx without considering revolution as an art. You know the chief rules of this art as Marx laid them down. When applied to the present situation in Russia, these rules imply: as swift and

sudden a general offensive on Petrograd as possible; attacking both from inside and out, from the workers' districts in Finland, from Reval and from Kronstadt; an offensive with the whole fleet; the concentration of troops greatly superior to the Government's forces which will be 20,000 strong (Cadets and Cossacks). We must rally our three chief forces, the fleet, the workers, and the military units to take over the telephone and telegraph offices, the stations and the bridges and to hold them at any cost. We must recruit the most tenacious among our storming parties for detachments whose duty it will be to occupy all the important bridges and to take part in every decisive engagement. We must also form gangs of workers armed with rifles and hand grenades who will march on enemy positions, on the officers' training schools and on the telephone and telegraph exchanges, and surround them. , The triumph of both the Russian and the world-revolution depends on a two or three days' struggle."

"That is all quite reasonable," said Trotsky, "but it is too complicated. The plan is too vast and it is a strategy which includes too much territory and too many people. It is not an insurrection any longer, it is a war. In order to take possession of Petrograd it is needless to take the train in Finland. Those who start from too great a distance often have to stop halfway. An offensive of 20,000 men from Reval or Kronstadt for the purpose of seizing the Alexandra theatre is rather more than is required; it is more than an assault. As far as strategy is concerned, Marx himself could be outdone by Kornilov. One must concentrate on tactics, move in a small space with few men, concentrate all efforts on principal objectives, strike hard and straight. I don't think it is so complicated. Dangerous things are always extremely simple. In order to be successful, one must not challenge an unfavorable circumstance nor trust to a favorable one. Hit your adversary in the stomach and the blow, will be noiseless. Insurrection is a piece of noiseless machinery. Your strategy demands too many favorable circumstances. Insurrection needs nothing. It is self-sufficient."

"Your tactics are extremely simple," said Lenin: "There is only one rule: succeed, You prefer Napoleon to Kerenski, don't you?"

The words which I attribute to Lenin are not invented. They are to be found, word for word, in the letters he wrote to the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party in October 1917.

Those who are acquainted with all Lenin's writings, and especially with his notes on the insurrectional technique of the December Days in Moscow during the Revolution of 1905, must be rather surprised to find how ingenuous his ideas about the tactics and technique of an insurrection are on the eve of October 1917. And yet it must not be forgotten that he and Trotsky alone, after the failure of the July attempt, did not lose sight of the chief aim of revolutionary strategy, which was the *coup d'Etat*. After some vacillation (in July the Bolshevik

Party had only one aim and it was of a parliamentary nature: to gain the majority in the Soviets), the idea of insurrection, as Lunacharski said, had become the driving power of all Lenin's activities. But during his stay in Finland where he had taken shelter after the July Days to avoid falling into the hands of Kerenski, all his activity was concentrated on the preparation of the revolution in theory. There seems to be no other explanation for the ingenuousness of his plan to make a military offensive on Petrograd that was to be backed up by the Red Guards within the town. The offensive would have ended in disaster. With Lenin's strategy checkmated, the tactics of an insurrection would have failed and the Red Guards have been massacred in the streets of Petrograd. Because he was compelled to follow the course of events from a distance, Lenin could not grasp the situation in all its details. Nonetheless, he visualized the main trend of the revolution far more clearly than certain members of the Central Committee of the party who objected to an immediate insurrection. "It is a crime to wait," he wrote to the Bolshevik Committees in Petrograd and Moscow.

And although the Central Committee in its meeting on October 10, at which Lenin, just returned from Finland, was present, voted almost unanimously for an insurrection (only Kamenev and Zinoviev dissenting), yet there was still a secret opposition among certain members of the Committee. Kamenev and Zinoviev were the only members who had publicly protested against an immediate insurrection, but their objections were the very same as those fostered by many others in secret. Those who disagreed, in secret, with Lenin's decision brought all their hatred to bear on Trotsky, "the unattractive Trotsky," a new recruit to the ranks of Bolshevism whose pride was beginning to arouse a good deal of jealousy and attention among Lenin's old life guards.

During those days Lenin hid away in a suburb of Petrograd and, without losing touch with the situation as a whole, he carefully watched the machinations of Trotsky's adversaries. At a moment like this, indecision in any form would have been fatal to the revolution. In a letter to the Central Committee, dated October 17, Lenin resisted most energetically the criticisms of Kamenev and Zinoviev whose arguments were intended to expose Trotsky's mistakes. They said that "without the collaboration of the masses and without the support of a general strike, the insurrection will only be a leap in the dark and doomed to failure. Trotsky's tactics are a pure gamble. A Marxist party cannot associate the question of an insurrection with that of a military conspiracy."

In his letter of October 17, Lenin defended Trotsky's tactics: "Trotsky is not playing with the ideas of Blanqui," he said. "A military conspiracy is a game of that sort only if it is not organized by the political party of a definite class of people and if the organizers disregard the general political situation and the international situation in particular. There is a great difference between a military conspiracy, which is deplorable from every point of view, and the art of

armed insurrection." Kamenev and Zinoviev might answer: "Has Trotsky not constantly been repeating that an insurrection must disregard the political and economic situation of the country? Has he not constantly been stating that a general strike is one of the chief factors in a communist *coup d'Etat*? How can the co-operation of the trade unions and the proclamation of a general strike be relied upon if the trade unions are not with us, but in the enemy's camp? They will strike against us. We do not even negotiate directly with the railway men. In their Executive Committee there are only two Bolsheviki to forty members. How can we win without the help of the trade unions and without the support of a general strike?"

These objections were serious: Lenin could only meet them with his unshakable decision. But Trotsky smiled: he was calm. "Insurrection," he said, "is not an art, it is an engine. Technical experts are required to start it and they alone could stop it."

Trotsky's storming party consisted of a thousand workmen, soldiers and sailors. The pick of this company had been recruited from workmen of the Putilov and Wiborg factories, from sailors of the Baltic fleet and soldiers of the Latvian regiments. Under the orders of Antonov-Ovseienko, these Red Guards devoted themselves for ten days to a whole series of "invisible maneuvers" in the very center of the town. Among the crowd of deserters that thronged the streets, in the midst of the chaos that reigned in the government buildings and offices, in the General Headquarters, in the Post Offices, telephone and telegraph exchanges, in the stations, barracks, and the head offices of the city's technical services, they practiced insurrectional tactics, unarmed and in broad daylight. And their little groups of three or four men passed unnoticed.

The tactics of "invisible maneuvers" and the practice of insurrectional action which Trotsky demonstrated for the first time during the *coup d'Etat* of October 1917 is now a part of the revolutionary strategy of the Third International. The principles which Trotsky applied are all stated and developed in the handbooks of the Comintern. In the Chinese University in Moscow, among the subjects taught, there is "the tactics of invisible maneuvers," which Karakan, with Trotsky's experience for guidance, applied so successfully in Shanghai. In the Sun-Yat-Sen University in Moscow, the Chinese students learn the same principles which German Communist organizations put into practice every Sunday in order to get into training for the tactics of insurrection; and they do it in broad daylight, under the very nose of the police and of the sober citizens of Berlin, Dresden, and Hamburg.

In October 1917, during the days prior to the *coup d'Etat*, the Reactionary, Liberal, Menshevik and Socialist revolutionary press never ceased to enlighten public opinion as to the activities of the Bolsheviki Party, which was openly

preparing an insurrection. It accused Lenin and Trotsky of seeking to overthrow the democratic republic in order to set up a dictatorship of the proletariat. They were not trying to disguise their criminal intentions, said the middle-class press, the proletarian revolution was being organized in broad daylight. When Bolshevik leaders made speeches to the masses of workers and soldiers gathered in the factories and barracks they loudly proclaimed that everything was ready and that the day for revolution was drawing nearer. What was the Government doing? Why had Lenin, Trotsky and the other member: of the Central Committee not been arrested? What measures were being taken to protect Russia from the Bolshevik danger?

It is incorrect to say that Kerenski's Government did not take the measures needed for the defense of the State. Kerenski must be given due credit for having done everything in his power to prevent a *coup d'Etat*. If Poincaré, Lloyd George, MacDonald, Giolitti, or Stresemann had stood in his place, they would not have acted otherwise.

Kerenski's system of defense consisted in using the police methods which have always been relied upon and are still relied upon today by absolute as well as by liberal governments. But these police methods can no longer adequately defend the State from the modern technique of insurrection. Kerenski's mistake was the mistake of all governments that regard the problem of the defense of the State as a police problem.

Those who accuse Kerenski of a lack of foresight and of incompetence forget the skill and courage he showed in the July Days against the workers' and deserters' revolt, and again in August against Kornilov's reactionary venture. In August he did not hesitate to call in the Bolsheviks themselves in order to prevent Kornilov's Cossacks from sweeping the democratic victories of the February revolution overboard. On this occasion he astonished Lenin: "We must beware of Kerenski," he said, "he is no fool." Kerenski must have his due: it was impossible for him, in October, to act differently from the way he did. Trotsky had said that the defense of the State was a matter of method. Moreover, in October 1917 only one method was known, only one could be applied whether by Kerenski, Lloyd George, Poincaré, or Noske: the classical method of relying on the police.

In order to meet the danger, Kerenski took care to garrison the Winter Palace, the Tauride Palace, the Government offices, the telephone and telegraph exchanges, and the General Headquarters with military Cadets and loyal Cossacks. The 20,000 men on whom he could count inside the capital were thus mobilized to protect the strategic points in the political and bureaucratic organization of the State. (This was the mistake by which Trotsky would benefit.) Other reliable regiments were massed in the neighborhood at Tsarkoié Selo,

Kolpino, Gatchina, Oboukhovo, and Pulkovo-an iron ring which the Bolshevik insurrection must sever if it was not to be stifled. All the measures which might safeguard the Government had been taken, and detachments of Cadets patrolled the town day and night. There were clusters of machine-guns at the crossroads, on the roofs, all along the Nevski Prospect, and at each end of the main streets, to prevent access to the squares. Military patrols passed back and forth among the crowds: armored cars moved slowly by, opening up a passage with the long howl of their hooters. The chaos was terrible. "There's my general strike," said Trotsky to Antovov Ovseienko, pointing to the swirling crowds in the Nevski Prospect.

Meanwhile, Kerenski was not content with mere police measures; he set the whole political machine in motion. He not only wanted to rally the Right but to make assurance doubly sure by agreement with the Left. He was most concerned about the trade unions. He knew that their leaders were not in agreement with the Bolsheviks. That fact accounted for the Kamenev-Zinoviev criticism of Trotsky's idea of insurrection. A general strike was an indispensable factor for the insurrection. Without it the Bolsheviks could not feel safe and their attempt was bound to fail. Trotsky described the revolution as "hitting a paralyzed man." If the insurrection was to succeed, life in Petrograd must be paralyzed by a general strike. The trade union leaders were out of sympathy with the Bolsheviks, but their organized rank and file inclined towards Lenin. If the masses could not be won over, then Kerenski would like to have the leaders on his side: he entered into negotiations with them and finally, but not without a struggle, was successful in obtaining their neutrality. When Lenin heard of it he said to Trotsky: "Kamenev was right. Without a general strike to support you, your tactics can but fail." "I have disorganization on my side," Trotsky answered, "and that is better than a general strike."

In order to grasp Trotsky's plan one must appreciate the condition of Petrograd at that time. There were enormous crowds of deserters who had left the trenches at the beginning of the February revolution and had poured into the capital and thrown themselves on it as though they would destroy the new temple of liberty. During the last six months they had been camping in the middle of the streets and squares, ragged as they were, dirty, miserable, drunk or famished, timid or fierce, equally ready to revolt or to flee, their hearts burning with a thirst for vengeance and peace. They sat there in a never-ending row, on the pavement of the Nevski Prospect, beside a stream of humanity that flowed on slowly and turbulently. They sold weapons, propaganda leaflets and sunflower seeds, There was chaos beyond description in the Zramenskaia Square in front of the railway station of Moscow: the crowd dashed against the wall, surged back, then forward again with renewed vigor until it broke like a foaming wave on a heap of carts, vans, and tramcars piled up in front of the statue of

Alexander III, and with a deafening din which, from afar, sounded like the outcry of a massacre.

Over the Fontanka bridge at the crossroads between the Nevski and Liteyni Prospects, newsboys sold their papers: they shouted the news at the top of their voices, about the precautions taken by Kerenski, the proclamations of the Military Revolutionary Committee, of the Soviet and of the Municipal Duma, the decrees of Colonel Polkovnikov, who was in command of the square and who threatened to imprison all deserters and forbade manifestations and meetings and brawls. Workers, soldiers, students, clerks, and sailors at the street corners debated at the top of their voices and with sweeping gestures. In the cafés and *stalovaie* everywhere, people laughed at Colonel Polkovnikov's proclamations which pretended that the 200,000 deserters in Petrograd could be arrested and that brawls could be forbidden. In front of the Winter Palace there were two 75 cm. guns, and behind them the Cadets in their long greatcoats, were nervously pacing up and down. In front of the General Staff building two rows of military motorcars were drawn up. Near the Admiralty, in the Alexander Gardens, a battalion of women sat on the ground around their stacked rifles.

The Marinskaia Square overflowed with ragged and haggard workers, sailors, deserters. The entrance of the Maria Palace, where the Republican Council sat, was guarded by a detachment of Cossacks, their tall black *chapkas* tilted over one ear. They talked in loud voices, smoking and laughing. A spectator from the top of the Isaac Cathedral could have seen heavy smoke clouds over Putilov's factories where the men worked with loaded rifles slung round their shoulders; beyond that, the Gulf of Finland; and, behind the island of Rothine, Kronstadt, "the red fortress," where the blue-eyed sailors were waiting for Dybenko's signal to march to the aid of Trotsky and slaughter the Cadets. On the other side of the town, a reddish cloud brooded over the countless chimneys of the Wiborg suburb where Lenin was in hiding, rather pale and feverish, wearing that wig which made him look like a little provincial actor. No one could have taken this man, without his beard and with his false hair well glued on to his forehead, for the terrible Lenin who could make Russia tremble. It was there, in the Wiborg factories, that Trotsky's Red Guard's expected Antonov Ovseienko's signal. The women in the suburbs had sad faces and their eyes had become hard. Towards evening, as soon as darkness had swept the streets, parties of armed women moved towards the center of the town. These were days of proletarian migration: enormous masses passed from one end of Petrograd to the other, then came back to their quarters after hours and hours of walking to and from meetings, demonstrations and riots. There was meeting after meeting in barrack and factory. "*All power to the Soviets!*" The hoarse voices of the orators were smothered in the folds of red flags. Kerenski's soldiers, manning the machine-guns on the housetops, listened to the hoarse voices below as they

chewed their sunflower seeds and threw the shells on to the crowds thronging the streets.

Darkness descended on the city like a black cloud, In the huge Nevski Prospect the stream of deserters flowed towards the Admiralty. There were hundreds of soldiers, women, and workmen camping in front of the Kazan Cathedral, lying full length on the ground. The whole town was in the throes of fear, disorder, and frenzy. And all of a sudden, out of this crowd, men would spring up, armed with knives and mad with sleeplessness, and throw themselves on the Cadet patrols and the female battalions defending the Winter Palace. Others would break into the houses to fetch the bourgeois out of his own dwelling, catching him in bed and wide awake. The city was sleepless with the fever of insurrection. Like Lady Macbeth, Petrograd could no longer sleep. Its nights were haunted with the smell of blood.

Trotsky's Red Guards had been rehearsing in the very center of the town during the past ten days. Antonov Ovseienko it was, who organized these tactical exercises, this sort of dress rehearsal of the *coup d'Etat*, in broad daylight, wherever the streets were thronging with movement, and round buildings which were of the greatest strategic importance in the governmental and political strongholds. The police and military authorities were so obsessed by the idea of a sudden revolt by the proletarian masses, and so concerned with meeting the danger, that they failed to notice Antonov Ovseienko's gangs at work. Amid such widespread disorder, who should notice the little groups of unarmed workers; the soldiers and the sailors who wandered about in the corridors of the telephone and telegraph exchanges, in the Central Post Office, in the Government offices and General Headquarters, taking note of the arrangement of the offices and seeing how the telephones and lights were fitted? They visualized and remembered the plan of these buildings and studied the means of getting into them suddenly and at a moment's notice. They reckoned with their chances of success, estimating the opposition, and looking for the places of least resistance, the weakest and most vulnerable places in the defensive organization of the technical, military, and secretarial services of the State. In the general confusion, who should notice some three or four sailors, a couple of soldiers, or a stray workman wandering round some buildings, going in and climbing the stairs; people who did not even look at each other when they met? No one even suspected these people of obeying precise and detailed orders, of carrying out a plan or of undergoing exercises directed against the strategic points in the State's defense. Later the Red Guards would strike effectively because they had conducted their invisible maneuvers on the very ground where the battle would shortly begin.

Trotsky succeeded in getting hold of the plan of the town's technical services. Dybenko's sailors, aided by two engineers and engine-room artificers,

mastered the underground gas and water piping, the electric power cables and the telephone and telegraph system. Two of them explored the drains under the Headquarters of the General Staff. The isolation of a whole district or even of a mere group of houses had to be made practicable within a few minutes; so Trotsky divided the town into sections, determined which were the strategic points, and allotted the work, section by section, to gangs of soldiers and skilled workers.

Technical experts were necessary as well as soldiers. The capture of the railway station in Moscow was allotted to two squads consisting of 25 Latvian soldiers, 2 sailors, and 10 railway men. Three gangs of sailors, workmen, and railway officials, 160 men in all, were ordered to take over the station in Warsaw. For the capture of other stations Dybenko assigned a number of squads of 20 men each. A telegraphist attached to every squad controlled movements on the railway lines. On October 21, acting under orders from Antonov Ovseienko, who was in close touch with the maneuvers, all the gangs rehearsed the capture of the railway stations, and the general rehearsal was perfectly well-ordered and precise in every detail. On that day, three sailors went to the Main Electricity Plant near the port: the Plant, run by the city's technical services, was not even guarded. The manager asked the sailors whether they were the men whom he had asked the Commander of the Square to send him. He had been wanting a guard for the last five days. The three sailors took over the defense of the Electric Plant, in case of insurrection, they said. In the same way, a few gangs of engineroom artificers took over the other three municipal plants.

Kerenski's police and the military authorities were especially concerned with the defense of the State's official and political organizations: the Government offices, the Maria Palace where the Republican council sat, the Tauride Palace, seat of the Duma, the Winter Palace, and General Headquarters. When Trotsky discovered this mistake he decided to attack only the technical branches of the national and municipal Government. Insurrection for him was only a question of technique. "In order to overthrow the modern State," he said, "you need a storming party, technical experts and gangs of armed men led by engineers."

While Trotsky was organizing the *coup d'Etat* on a rational basis, the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party was busy organizing the proletarian revolution. Stalin, Sverdlov, Boubrov, Ouritzki, and Dzerjinski, the members of this committee who were developing the plan of the general revolt were nearly all openly hostile to Trotsky. These men felt no confidence in the insurrection as Trotsky planned it, and ten years later Stalin gave them all the credit for the October *coup D'Etat*.

What use were Trotsky's thousand men? The Cadets could so easily deal with them. The task surely was to rouse the proletarian masses, the thousands upon thousands of employees from the works of Putilov and Wiborg, the huge crowd of deserters and the Bolshevik sympathizers inside the garrison of Petrograd, it was these who ought to be stirred up against the Government. A great rebellion must be started. Trotsky, with his storming parties, seemed both a useless and a dangerous ally.

The Commission considered the revolution much in the same way as Kerenski, as a matter chiefly concerning the police. And, strangely enough, the man who later on created the Bolshevik police (afterwards known as the G. P.U.) belonged to this Commission. Dzerjinski, pale and anxious, studied the defense of Kerenski's government and decided on the plan of attack. He was the most formidable and the most treacherous of all Trotsky's critics, and he was as bashful as a woman in his fanaticism. He even denied himself a glance at his hands to see whether they were stained with his deeds. Dzerjinski died at the Bench during his prosecution of Trotsky in 1926.

On the eve of the *coup d'Etat*, Trotsky told Dzerjinski that Kerenski's government must be completely ignored by the Red Guards; that the chief thing was to capture the State and not to fight the Government with machine-guns; that the Republican Council, the Ministries and the Duma played an unimportant part in the tactics of insurrection and should not be the objectives of an armed rebellion; that the key to the State lay, not in its political and secretarial organizations nor yet in the Tauride, Maria or Winter Palaces, but in its technical services, such as the electric stations, the telephone and telegraph offices, the port, gasworks and water mains. Dzerjinski answered that the insurrection must be planned to anticipate the enemy's movements and that the latter must be attacked in his strongholds. "We must attack the Government and beat it on the very ground where it is defending the State. If the enemy withdraws to the Government offices, to the Maria, Tauride, or Winter Palaces, he must be hounded out of them. In order to get possession of the State," said Dzerjinski, "we must hurl the masses against the Government."

All important in the Commission's plan for the Insurrection was the neutrality of the Trade Unions. Could the State really be overthrown without the assistance of General Strike? "No," said both the Central Committee and the Commission, "the strike must be started by getting the masses to take part in the insurrection itself. The tactics of a general insurrection and not those of isolated revolts are going to make it possible for us to hurl the masses against the Government and to promote a General Strike. "A General Strike is unnecessary," Trotsky replied. "Chaos in Petrograd is more useful for our purpose than a General Strike. The Government cannot cope with an insurrection when a

general disorganization paralyzes the State. Since we cannot rely on the Strike, we will rely on the chaos.”

The Commission is said to have objected to Trotsky’s tactics on the ground that his view of the situation was too optimistic. Trotsky, as a matter of fact, was inclined to be pessimistic; he judged the situation to be more serious than most people thought. He did not trust the masses and knew very well that the insurrection would have to be made by a minority. The promotion of a General Strike with the idea of enlisting the masses in a real battle against the Government was an illusion. The insurrection could only be made by a minority. Trotsky was convinced that if a General Strike broke out it would be directed against the Bolsheviks and that in order to prevent such a General Strike, power must immediately be seized. Subsequent events have proved that Trotsky was right. By the time the railway men, the postal, telegraph, and telephone clerks, the secretariats in the Government offices and the employees in public services had left their work, it was too late. Lenin was already in power: Trotsky had broken the back of the general strike.

The Central Committees’ objections to Trotsky’s tactics was a paradox which might have jeopardized the success of the insurrection. On the eve of the *coup d’Etat* there were two Headquarters, two plans of action, and two different aims. The Commission, relying on the mass of workers and deserters, wanted to capture the Government in order to seize the State. Trotsky, who relied on about a thousand men, wanted to capture the State in order to overthrow the Government. Marx himself would have considered the circumstances more favorable to the Commission’s plan than to Trotsky’s. But Trotsky had said: “An insurrection does not require favorable circumstances.”

On October 24th, in full daylight, Trotsky launched the attack. The plan of operations had been drawn up by a former officer of the Imperial army, Antonov Ovseienko, who was also known as a mathematician, a chess player, a revolutionary, and an exile. Lenin, referring to Trotsky’s tactics, once said of Antonov Ovseienko that only a chess player like him could organize the insurrection.

Antonov Ovseienko had a melancholy and unhealthy expression. He looked rather like Napoleon before the 18th of Brumaire, with his long hair falling on his shoulders: but his eyes were lifeless and his thin pale face was that of a sad and unhealthy man.

Antonov Ovseienko was playing chess on a topographical map of Petrograd in a small room on the top floor of the Smolny Institute, the General Headquarters of the Bolshevik Party. Below him, on the next floor, the Commission was met to fix the day for the general insurrection. Little the

Commission imagined that Trotsky had already launched the attack. Lenin alone had been informed, at the last minute, of Trotsky's sudden decision. The Commission stood by Lenin's word. Had he not said that both the 21st and the 24th would be too early and the 26th too late? No sooner had the Commission met to decide definitely on the date, than Podvoisky came in with unexpected news. Trotsky's Red Guards had already seized the main telegraph office and the Neva bridges. These bridges had to be held in order to insure the lines of communication between the center of the city and the workmen's district of Wiborg. Dybenko's sailors already held the municipal electricity stations, gasworks, and railway stations. Things had happened with unimagined speed and orderliness. The main telegraph office was being defended by some fifty police and soldiers, lined up in front of the building. The insufficiency of police measures was evidenced by those tactics of defense called "service of order and protection," which may give good results when directed against a crowd in revolt but not against a handful of determined fighters. Police measures are useless in the face of a surprise attack. Three of Dybenko's sailors, who had taken part in the "invisible maneuvers" and knew the ground already, got in among those who were defending, right into the offices; and by throwing a few hand grenades from the window on to the street, they succeeded in creating chaos among the police and the soldiers. Two squads of sailors took up their positions with machine-guns in the main telegraph office. A third squad, posted in the house opposite, was ready to meet a possible counter-attack by shooting in the rear of the assailants. Communications between the Smolny Institute and the various groups working in different districts of the town were assured by armoured cars. Machine-guns were concealed in the houses at the chief crossroads: flying squads watched the barracks of those regiments which had remained loyal to Kerenski.

About six o'clock that evening Antonov Ovseienko, paler than usual but smiling, went into Lenin's room at the Smolny Institute. "It is over," he said. The members of the Government, taken unawares by these events, sought refuge in the Winter Palace, defended by a few Cadet companies and a battalion of women. Kerenski had fled. They said he was at the Front to collect troops and march on Petrograd. The entire population poured into the streets, anxious for news. Shops, cafés, restaurants, cinemas, and theatres were all open; the trams were filled with armed soldiers and workers and a huge crowd in the Nevski Prospect flowed on like a great river. Everyone was talking, discussing and cursing either the Government or the Bolsheviki. The wildest rumors spread from group to group: Kerenski dead, the heads of the Menshevik minority shot in front of the Tauride Palace; Lenin sitting in the Tsar's room in the Winter Palace.

A great crowd surged continuously towards the Alexander Gardens from the Nevski Prospect, the Gorokovskaia and Vosnessenski Streets (those three great roads that meet at the Admiralty), to see whether the Red Flag was already flying on the Winter Palace. When the crowd saw the Cadets defending the Palace, it drew back. The machineguns, the lighted windows, the deserted square, and the motors drawn up in front of the General Headquarters were a disturbing sight. The crowd watched from a distance without grasping the situation. And Lenin? Where was he? Where were the Bolsheviks ?

Meanwhile none of their opponents, whether Liberal, Reactionary, Menshevik, or Socialist Revolutionary, could grasp the situation. They refused to believe that the Bolsheviks had captured the State. These rumors they argued had probably been circulated by paid agents of the Smolny Institute: in point of fact the Government offices had only been moved into the Winter Palace as a precautionary measure; if the day's news was correct, then there had not been a *coup d'Etat*, but rather, a series of more or less successful armed attacks (nothing definite was yet known) on the organization of the State's and the town's public services. The legislative, political, and administrative bodies were still in Kerenski's hands. The Tauride and Maria Palaces, and the Ministries had not even been attacked. The situation was certainly paradoxical : never before had an insurrection claimed to have captured the State without even attacking the Government. It looked as though the Bolsheviks did not care about the Government. Why were the Government offices not taken over? Could one master the State and govern Russia without even controlling the State's administration? The Bolsheviks had, of course, captured all the public services, but Kerenski had not resigned. He was still the head of the Government, even if, for the present, the public services, the railways, electric plants, telephone, telegraph, and Post Offices, the State Bank, and the coal, petroleum and grain depots were not under his control. If in actual fact, the Ministers in the Winter Palace were unable to govern ; Government offices were not working, the Government had been cut off from the rest of Russia and every means of communication was in the hands of the Bolsheviks. All the roads in the suburbs were barricaded; no one might leave the town. General Headquarters were cut off. The Bolsheviks had taken over the main wireless telegraphy station ; Red Guards were quartered in the fortress of Peter and Paul and a number of regiments belonging to the garrison of Petrograd were already acting under orders from the Revolutionary Military Committee. Action must be taken at once. Why was the General Staff idle? It was said to be waiting for Krasnov's troops which were marching on the capital. All measures necessary for the defense of the Government had been taken. If the Bolsheviks had not yet decided to attack the Government it must mean that they did not yet feel their position to be powerful enough to do so. All was not yet lost.

The next day, on October 25th, during the opening of the second Pan-Russian Soviet Congress in the Smolny Institute, Trotsky ordered Antonov Ovseienko to attack the Winter Palace where Kerenski's ministers had taken refuge, and now the question was, would the Bolsheviki win a majority in the Congress?

The Soviets of all Russia would not believe that the insurrection has been successful on the mere announcement that the Bolsheviki had captured the State. They must be told that the Red Guards had captured the Members of the Government. Trotsky said to Lenin: "That is the only way of convincing the Central Committee and the Commission that the *coup d'Etat* has not been a failure."

"You have made up your mind rather late," answered Lenin.

"I could not attack the Government before I was convinced that the garrison would not come to its rescue," Trotsky answered, "I had to give the soldiers time to come over to our side. Only the Cadets have remained loyal."

Then Lenin, in his wig, beardless and disguised as a workman, left his hiding-place for the Smolny Institute to take part in the Soviet Congress. It was the saddest moment in his life for he thought the insurrection had failed. Like the Central Committee, the Commission, and the greater part of the delegates at the Congress, Lenin needed proof of the Government's fall and of the capture of Kerenski's Ministers by the Red Guards. He distrusted Trotsky's pride, his self-assurance and his reckless wiles. Trotsky was no member of the Old Guard, he was not an absolutely reliable Bolshevik but a new recruit who joined the Party after the July Days. "I am not one of the Twelve," said Trotsky, "but I am more like St. Paul who was the first to preach to the Gentiles."

Lenin was never greatly attracted by Trotsky. Trotsky was generally unpopular. His eloquence was suspect. He had that dangerous gift of swaying the masses and unleashing a revolt. He could split a Party, invent a heresy - but, however formidable, he was a man they needed. Lenin had long ago noticed that Trotsky relished historical comparisons. When he spoke at meetings or assemblies or took part in one of the Party's debates, he constantly referred to Cromwell's Puritan Revolt or to the French Revolution. One must beware of a man who judges and estimates the men and the events of the Bolshevik Revolution by the standard of the men and events of the French Revolution. Lenin could never forget how Trotsky, as soon as he came out of the Kresty prison where he had been shut up after the July Days, went into the Soviet in Petrograd and, in the course of a violent speech, advocated the need for a Jacobine reign of terror. "The guillotine leads to a Napoleon," the Mensheviks shouted at him. "I prefer Napoleon to Kerenski," Trotsky answered back. Lenin

was never going to forget that answer. Dzerjinsky later on used to say of Trotsky: "He likes Napoleon better than Lenin."

The second Pan-Russian Soviet Congress was meeting in the main hall of the Smolny Institute, and in the room adjoining it, Lenin and Trotsky sat at a table heaped with papers and journals.

A curl of Lenin's wig dangled on his forehead. Trotsky could not help smiling at the sight of such an absurd disguise. He thought the moment had come for Lenin to take off his wig, since there was no longer any danger. The insurrection had triumphed and Lenin was virtually the ruler of Russia. Now at least, he could let his beard grow, take his wig off, and make an appearance in public. Dan and Skobelov, the two leaders of the Menshevik majority, passed in front of Lenin on their way to the Congress Hall. They exchanged a look and grew paler at the sight of the little provincial actor in his wig, whom they seemed to recognize as the man who could utterly annihilate Holy Russia.

"It is all over," Dan said softly to Skobelov. "Why are you still disguised?" Trotsky asked Lenin. "Those who have won do not usually conceal themselves." Lenin scrutinized him, his eyes half-closed, with an ironic smile just playing on his lips. Who had won? That was the question. From time to time the rumble of artillery and the rat-tat-tat of machine-guns could be heard in the distance. The cruiser *Aurora*, anchored in the Neva, had just opened fire on the Winter Palace to support the Red Guards who were attacking it.

They were now joined by Dybenko, very tall, blue-eyed, his face framed in soft fair hair: both the Kronstadt sailors and Madame Kollontai loved him for his transparent eyes and for his cruelty. Dybenko brought the news that Antonov-Ovseieniko's Red Guards had broken into the Winter Palace, that Kerenski's Ministers were the prisoners of the Bolsheviks, and that the Government had fallen. "At last!" cried Lenin. "You are 1 twenty-four hours late," answered Trotsky. Lenin took his wig off and passed his hand across his forehead. (H. G. Wells once said of Lenin that his skull was the same shape as that of Lord Balfour.) "Come on," said Lenin, walking into the Congress Hall. Trotsky followed in silence. He looked tired and a kind of drowsiness dimmed his steely eyes. Lunacharski declares that Trotsky, during the insurrection, reminded him of a Leyden Jar. But now the Government had fallen, Lenin took his wig off, as one lays down a mask. The *coup d'Etat* was Trotsky's feat. The man who profited by it, the Chief and the Dictator, was Lenin.

Trotsky followed him in silence, with a doubtful smile that never grew to gentleness until Lenin died.

CHAPTER TWO

A COUP D'ETAT THAT FAILED: TROTSKY vs. STALIN

Stalin was the only European statesman who knew how to benefit by the lesson of October 1917. If all European Communists must turn to Trotsky for their knowledge of the art of capturing the State, then liberal and democratic governments should look to Stalin if they want to learn the art of successfully defending it against the communist tactics of insurrection, i.e., against Trotsky's tactics.

The struggle between Stalin and Trotsky is by far the most edifying incident in the political history of Europe, these last ten years. Officially, the struggle originated many years before the October Revolution of 1917. It was after the Congress of London in 1903 when the split occurred between Lenin and Martoff, between Bolsheviki and Mensheviki, that Trotsky openly disagreed with Lenin's ideas. Though he did not then join Martoff's party, he found the Menshevik program much more attractive than that of the Bolsheviks. But in reality, all these personal and doctrinal origins, and the fact that the danger of Trotskyism (i.e., of deviations, deformations, and heresy) in the interpretation of Lenin's thought had to be suppressed, were only official pretexts and justifications for a hostility whose origin lay deep in the Bolshevik mentality itself, in the feelings and aims of the peasant and working-class masses and in the political, economic and social situation in Soviet Russia after Lenin's death.

The history of that struggle between Stalin and Trotsky is the story of Trotsky's attempt to capture the State and of the kind of defense of the State which was used by Stalin and the old Bolshevik Guard. It is the story of an unsuccessful *coup d'Etat*. Stalin countered Trotsky's theory of the "permanent revolution" with Lenin's ideas on the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. Both factions fought each other in the name of Lenin.

But events of far graver import than mere essays on the interpretation of Leninism lay concealed beneath these intrigues, discussions and sophisms.

Supreme power was at stake. The question of a successor to Lenin arose long before his death when the first symptoms of his illness appeared, and it was not merely a theoretical question. Personal ambitions lay concealed behind doctrinal problems: we must not be misled by the official pretexts of the discussion. Trotsky's chief concern in this controversy was to appear as a disinterested defender of Lenin's moral and intellectual legacy, as the guardian of the principles which guided the October revolution, and as an intransigent Communist struggling against the degeneration of the party into a bureaucracy and against the growth of a bourgeois spirit in the Soviet State. But Stalin, in the

controversy, chiefly wanted to keep both the Communists of other countries and the capitalists, liberals, and democrats in Europe, in ignorance of the real reason why the disciples of Lenin, genuine representatives of Soviet Russia, were fighting amongst themselves. In point of fact, Trotsky struggled to capture the State, Stalin to defend it. Stalin has no trace of the Russian's apathy about him, none of his effortless submission to good and evil alike, his vague rebellions and perverse self-sacrifice or his cruel and childish kindness. Stalin is not Russian but Georgian. His cleverness lies in patience, willpower, and good sense. He is confident and obstinate. His enemies accuse him of lacking knowledge and intelligence; they are mistaken. He is not a cultured man in the European sense of the word, not overfed with sophistry and psychological fanaticism. Stalin is a barbarian, in Lenin's sense of the word, an enemy of Western culture, psychology and ethics. His intellect is entirely physical and instinctive, in a natural state, and without the prejudices or the moral sense of a cultured man. It has been said that men reveal their character in their bearing. I saw Stalin in May 1929 at the Pan-Russian Soviet Congress, walking up on to the stage in the Grand Theatre of Moscow. I was just below the footlights in the orchestra stalls when he appeared from behind a double row of the People's Commissaries, the delegates from Tzic and the members of the Party's Central Committee, lined up on the stage. He was quite simply dressed in a gray jacket of military cut and dark cloth trousers gathered into his high boots. Square-shouldered, short, thick-set, his massive head covered with black curly hair, and narrow eyes accentuated by very black eyebrows; his face was darkened by shaggy black moustaches; he walked slowly and heavily, striking the ground with his heels as he went; his head thrust forward and his arms swinging made him look like a peasant, but a peasant from the highlands-hard, patient, and obstinate. Ignoring the thunder of applause which greeted him, he walked on slowly, took his place behind Rykoff and Kalinin, raised his head, looked at the huge crowd which acclaimed him, and stood motionless and stooping slightly-his eyes fixed straight in front of him. About twenty Tartar deputies, representing the autonomous Soviet Republics of the Bakirs, the Bouriat-Mongols, Iakouts, and Daghestan alone observed a rigid silence in their stage-box. They were dressed in yellow and green silk kaftans, with silver-embroidered tartar caps on their long black shiny hair and they stared at Stalin with little narrow slit eyes: at Stalin the dictator, the iron fist of the Revolution, mortal enemy of the West and of civilized and bourgeois Europe. When the delirious shouts of the crowd began to die down, Stalin slowly turned his head toward the Tartar deputies: the Mongols' eyes met those of the dictator. A great shout filled the theatre: it was the greeting of Proletarian Russia to Red Asia, to the people of the plains, the deserts, and the great Asiatic rivers. Again Stalin turned coolly to the crowd. He remained bent and motionless, his unseeing eyes fixed straight in front of him.

Stalin's strength lay in his serenity and patience. He watched Trotsky's actions, studied his movements and followed in his quick, irresolute, nervous steps at his own pace, which was that of a peasant, heavy and slow. Stalin was reticent, cold, and obstinate; Trotsky proud, violent, egoistic, impatient, governed by his ambition and his imagination. He was passionate, bold, and aggressive by nature. "A wretched Jew," says Stalin, speaking of him. "A miserable Christian," says Trotsky of Stalin. Stalin stood aside during the October insurrection when Trotsky, unknown to the Central Committee or the Commission, suddenly set his Red Guards on to the capture of the State. Stalin alone understood the failings and mistakes of Trotsky and foresaw the remote consequences they would have. When Lenin died and Trotsky abruptly brought up the problem of the succession as a political, economic, and doctrinal question, Stalin had already taken over the Party machinery and stood at the helm of the State. Then Trotsky accused Stalin of having tried to solve the problem of the succession to his own advantage long before Lenin's death, he made an accusation which no one can refute. And yet, it was Lenin himself who, during his illness, gave Stalin a position of authority within the Party. Stalin, confronted with his adversary's accusations, played a strong card when he said that he had to take timely precautions against the dangers which Lenin's death would inevitably produce.

"You took advantage of his illness," Trotsky accused him. "To prevent you from taking advantage of his death," answered Stalin.

Trotsky describes his struggle against Stalin with great skill. In his memoirs nothing transpires of the real nature of that controversy. He is chiefly and constantly intent on proving both to the international Proletariat and especially to the Russian Proletariat that he is not the man he is accused of being, the man whom they would like to make him out to be : a Bolshevik Catiline ready for any adventure or intrigue. According to Trotsky, that which people have called his heresy is only the attempt to interpret Lenin's doctrine according to Lenin's own dictates. His theory of "permanent revolution" could not be a danger either to the doctrinal unity of the Party or to the security of the State. He was not trying to be either a Luther or a Bonaparte.

As an historian, his interest is entirely of a controversial order. Both Trotsky and Stalin seem to be bound by tacit agreement when they endeavor to represent what is in reality a fight for power as a conflict of ideas. Moreover, Trotsky has never officially been accused of Bonapartism. Such an accusation would have shown the international Proletariat only too clearly that the Russian revolution was heading for that bourgeois degeneration of which Bonapartism one of the most obvious characteristics. In his preface to the pamphlet entitled *Towards October*, Stalin writes: "The theory of permanent revolution is another version of Menshevism." Such was the official accusation: Trotsky is held guilty

of having fallen into the Menshevik heresy. But if the international Proletariat could be easily misled as to the real nature of the conflict between Stalin and Trotsky, the real situation could not long be concealed from the Russian people. Everyone understood that, in Trotsky, Stalin was not fighting a kind of doctrinary Menshevik who had lost his way in a maze of interpretations of Lenin, but a red Bonaparte, the only man capable of transforming Lenin's death into a *coup d'Etat* and of placing the problem of the succession on an insurrectional basis.

From 1924 to the end of 1926 the struggle continued to be a controversy between the partisans of the "permanent revolution" theory and the official guardians of Leninism, those whom Trotsky called the guardians of Lenin's embalmed corpse. As War Commissary, Trotsky could count on the army and the trade unions led by Tomski who was hostile to Stalin because the latter sought to subject the trade unions to Party interests. Tomski vindicates the autonomous action of the trade unions in their relations with the State. Ever since 1920, Lenin envisaged the possibility of an alliance between the Red Army and the trade unions with some anxiety. After his death the personal agreement between Trotsky and Tomski bore its fruit, and soldiers and workers joined in a united front against the decadent influence on the Revolution of the peasants and lower middle classes and against the Thermidor of Stalin, as Trotsky called it.

Stalin had the G.P.U. and the officials both of the Party and of the Government on his side and he foresaw the danger of an 18th of Brumaire. The tremendous popularity which surrounded the name of Trotsky; the glory which he brought back from his victorious campaigns against Yudenitch, Kolchak, Denikin, and Wrangel; and his overweening and cynical pride turned him into a kind of Red Bonaparte backed by the army, the working masses, and the young communists' spirit of revolt against Lenin's Old Guard and against the hierarchy of the Party.

The famous trio, Stalin, Zinoviev, and Kamenev employed the most subtle kinds of simulation, intrigue, and deceit in order to compromise Trotsky in the eyes of the masses, to provoke discord among allies, spread doubt and discontent in the ranks of his partisans, throw discredit and suspicion upon his words, his actions and his intentions.

The Chief of the G. P. U., the fanatical Dzerjinski, surrounded Trotsky with a net of spies and paid agents. The mysterious and terrible machinery of the G. P.U. was set in motion to cut the adversary's tendons one by one. Dzerjinski worked in the dark, while Trotsky worked in broad daylight. In fact, while the trio impaired his prestige, tarnished his reputation, made a great effort to present him as a disappointed climber, a profiteer of the revolution and a traitor to

Lenin's memory, Trotsky pounced on Stalin, Zinoviev, and Kamenev, on the Central Committee, on Lenin's Old Guard, on the bureaucrats of the Party. He denounced the danger of a "Thermidor" reaction by the shopkeeping and peasant class; and he called Communist youth to his aid against the tyranny of the revolutionary hierarchy. The trio's answer took the form of a campaign of fierce libel. The whole press had its orders from Stalin. Little by little, Trotsky found himself isolated. Many of those concerned were timid, undecided, or withdrew from the struggle altogether; but the more obstinate, radical, and courageous fought strenuously, though each on his own account and entirely out of touch with one another. They fought blindly against the coalition, getting caught up in a network of intrigues, plot and treachery, and ending by mistrusting each other. Soldiers and workers looked on Trotsky as the man who created the Red Army, as the man who overthrew Kolchak and Wrangel, as the upholder of free trade unions and of the dictatorship of the workers versus the reaction which was threatening from the N. E. P. and the peasants: the workers and soldiers remained loyal to the hero of the October insurrection and to his ideas. Their loyalty however was quite passive: it became inactive through long waiting, and was a dead weight in Trotsky's violent and aggressive game.

During the first phases of the controversy, Trotsky actually believed that he could cause a Party split, overthrow the "troika" with the help of the army and the trade unions and forestall Stalin's Thermidor with an eighteenth Brumaire of his own. The Party and the State would be captured and he could then translate his program of integral Communism into actual fact. But speeches, pamphlets, and discussions on the interpretation of Lenin's thought were not strong enough to cause a split in the Party. Action was necessary. It only remained for Trotsky to choose his time. Circumstances favored his plans. Stalin, Zinoviev, and Kamenev were already beginning to disagree. Why did Trotsky not take some action? While he might have come into action and deserted the field of argument for insurrection, he was losing time in the study of the social and political situation in Great Britain, teaching English communists how they should set about the capture of the State, and trying to draw comparisons between Cromwell's Ironsides and the Red Army, between Lenin, Cromwell, Robespierre, Napoleon, and Mussolini. "Lenin," wrote Trotsky, "cannot be compared either to Bonaparte or to Mussolini, but to Cromwell and Robespierre. Lenin is a Proletarian Cromwell of the Twentieth Century. To define him thus is to make the finest possible defense of the little *bourgeois* of the Seventeenth Century that Cromwell was."

Meanwhile Trotsky, instead of applying his tactics of October 1917 against Stalin, was busy advising the crews of British ships, the seamen, stokers, engine-room switchboard staffs how they should cooperate with the working classes to bring about the capture of the State. He was analyzing the psychology of British

sailors and soldiers so that he might gauge their behavior once they had received orders to shoot on the working man: he was busy dissecting the mechanism of mutiny in order to see, as though in slow motion, each gesture of the soldier who refuses to shoot, the soldier who hesitates, and the soldier who is ready to shoot his comrade if the latter refuses to shoot. These were three essential moves in the whole mechanism: which one was going to decide the outcome of the mutiny? In those days Trotsky was thinking only of England: he was far more concerned about MacDonald than about Stalin. "Cromwell did not form an army but a Party: his army was an armed Party : and therein lay his power." In battle Cromwell's soldiers had been nicknamed Ironsides. Trotsky remarks, "Ironsides are always useful to a Revolution. In that respect the British workman has a great deal to learn from Cromwell." If that was so, why did Trotsky not decide to act? Why did he not hurl his "Ironsides," the soldiers of the Red Army, at Stalin's supporters?

Trotsky's adversaries benefited by his delay. They dismissed him from his post of People's Commissary of War, and deprived him of the control of the Red Army. Soon after, Tomski lost his leading position in the trade unions. The great heretic and formidable Catiline had been disarmed, and the two chief accessories of this Bolshevik Bonaparte's plan for an eighteenth Brumaire were now hostile to him. The G.P.U. gradually undermined his popularity and the majority of his supporters, disillusioned by his ambiguous behavior and unaccountable weakness, discreetly faded away. Trotsky's health failed him and he left Moscow. In May 1926 he was to be found in a Berlin nursing home: the news of the General Strike in England and Pilsudski's *coup d'Etat* made his temperature rise. He had to go back to Russia and keep up the struggle. "So long as everything is not lost, nothing is lost." Dzerjinski, the cruel and fanatical man who created the G.P.U., died in July 1926 while engaged in making a violent speech against Trotsky before the Central Committee. But the alliance of Kamenev and Zinoviev against Stalin suddenly revealed the discord that had long been simmering among the three members of the "troika." The battle between the three defenders of Lenin's corpse began. Stalin called Menjinski (Dzerjinski's successor as Director of the G.P.U.) to his aid: Kamenev and Zinoviev went over to Trotsky. The moment for action had come. The tide of sedition rose around the Kremlin.

Early in the struggle against Stalin, Trotsky noted in connection with England that revolutions are not arbitrary occurrences. "If they could be made to develop logically, they would probably be avoided." But, in point of fact, it was Trotsky himself who established a logical sequence in the preparation of a revolution, by his principles and rules for the modern tactics of insurrection. It was Stalin who reaped the benefit of this teaching in 1927 and thus showed the

Governments of Europe that it was possible to protect the bourgeois State against the danger of a Communist insurrection.

In two of the most fully policed and best organized countries in Europe, i.e., Holland and Switzerland, where law and order are not merely the products of bureaucratic and political machinery but a natural characteristic of the people, the difficulty of applying the Communist tactics of insurrection would be no greater than it was in the Russia of Kerenski. On what grounds can such a paradox be stated? It is because the problem of the modern *coup d'Etat* is a technical problem. "Insurrection is an engine," said Trotsky: "technical experts are needed to start it and they alone can turn it off." The starting of the engine is independent of the country's political, social or economic situation. Not the masses make a revolution, but a mere handful of men, prepared for any emergency, well drilled in the tactics of insurrection, trained to strike hard and quickly at the vital organs, of the State's technical services. These shock troops should be recruited from among specialized workmen: mechanics, electricians, telegraph and radio operators acting under orders of *technical* engineers who understand the *technical* working of the State.

At one of the Comintern meetings in 1923, Radek suggested that in every European country a special corps should be trained in the art of capturing the State. He held that a thousand men, well drilled and trained, would be able to seize power in any European country, be it France, England, Germany, Switzerland, or Spain. Radek suspected the revolutionary quality of Communists in other countries. In his criticism of the men and methods of the Third International, he does not even spare the memory of Rosa Luxemburg or of Liebknecht. Radek was the only one who fought the widespread optimism that reigned in 1920, while Trotsky was engaged in his offensive against Poland. The Red Army was getting nearer the Vistula and the news of the fall of Warsaw was expected in the Kremlin at any moment. Trotsky's success largely depended on the support of Polish Communists. Lenin blindly and confidently expected a proletarian revolution to break out in Warsaw as soon as the Red soldiers had reached the Vistula. Radek said, "The Polish Communists cannot be relied upon. They are Communists but not revolutionaries." Shortly afterwards Lenin said to Clara Zetkin, "Radek foresaw what would happen. He warned us. I was very angry with him and treated him as a defeatist. But he was right, not I. He knows the situation outside of Russia, and especially in the West, better than we do."

Radek's proposal roused the opposition of Lenin and all the members of the Comintern. Lenin said: "If we want to help foreign Communists to seize power in their countries, we must try to create a situation in Europe that bears comparison with the condition of Russia in 1917." Lenin was remaining true to his idea of strategy and forgot the lesson taught by Polish events. Trotsky alone approved of Radek's proposal. He even went so far as to show the need for a

Technical Instruction school in Moscow for Communists who would afterwards form the core of a special corps in each country to seize power. Hitler has recently revived this idea and is at present organizing a similar school in Munich for his shock troops. "If I can have a troop of men, a thousand strong, recruited among Berlin workmen and fortified by Russian Communists," said Trotsky, "I will undertake to get control of Berlin within twenty-four hours." He never relied on the enthusiasm of the people or on the participation of the masses in an insurrection. "The intervention of the masses may be useful," he said, "but only in the second instance when the counter-offensive of the counter-revolutionaries has to be repulsed." He also said that Communists in Germany would always be defeated by the *Schutzpolizei* (State police) and by the *Reichwehr* (army) if they postponed the application of the tactics of October 1917. Trotsky and Radek had actually decided on a plan for the Berlin *coup d'Etat*. And, when Trotsky was in the German capital in May 1926 for an operation on his throat, he was accused of coming to Berlin for the purpose of organizing a Communist rebellion. But by 1926 he had already lost interest in European revolutions. The news of the General Strike in England and of Pilsudski's *coup d'Etat* in Poland made him feverish and hastened his return to Moscow. It was the same fever that possessed him in those great October days, when he was turned into a "live wire," as Lunacharski put it. Meanwhile, Trotsky returned to Moscow, pale and feverish, to organize the shock troops for the overthrow of Stalin and for the capture of the State.

Stalin however knew how to turn the lesson of October 1917 to good account. With the help of Menjinski, the new Chief of the G.P.U., he organized a special corps for the defense of the State. The headquarters of this special corps were in the Lubianka Palace, the home of the G.P.U. Menjinski personally supervised the choice of his Communist recruits from the workers in the State's Public Services, among railwaymen, mechanics, electricians, and telegraphists. Their only weapons were hand grenades and revolvers so that they might move about quickly. The special Corps consisted of a hundred squads of ten men each, reinforced by twenty armored cars. Each detachment was provided with a half-company of machine-guns: communications between the various squads and the Lubianka headquarters were kept open by dispatch riders. Menjinski took complete charge of the whole organization and divided Moscow into ten sectors. A network of secret telephone lines connected up the sectors with each other and with the Lubianka. Apart from Menjinski, it was only the men who had laid the secret wires, who knew of their existence. Thus all the vital centers in the technical organization of Moscow were telephonically connected with the Lubianka. At strategic points in each sector some houses were occupied by a number of "cells" or centers of observation, for control and resistance, and these provided links in the chain of the whole system.

The squad was the fighting unit in this special corps: each squad had to keep in training with a view to coming into action independently of its fellow-squads, on the piece of ground allotted to it. Each man had to be thoroughly acquainted with the work of his own squad and with that of the other nine in his sector. The organization, according to Menjinski, was "secret and invisible." Its members wore no uniform and could not be recognized by any badge. Even their membership of the organization was pledged to secrecy. They underwent both technical, military and political instruction; and they were bred to hatred of their adversaries known and unknown, whether Jews or followers of Trotsky. No Jews could belong to the Organization. The school in which the members of the special corps learned the art of defending the State against Trotsky's insurrectional tactics was definitely anti-Semitic. The origin of Stalin's anti-Semitism has been widely discussed in Europe and some have attributed it to a concession to peasant prejudices and a necessity of political opportunism. Others have considered it as a part of Stalin's struggle against Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev, all of whom were Jews. Stalin has been accused of violating the law (since anti-Semitism was declared a counter-revolutionary crime severely punishable by law), but such an accusation does not consider Stalin's anti-Semitism in relation to the urgent need for defending the State, and as a part of his tactics against Trotsky's attempt at insurrection.

Stalin's hatred of the three Jews, Trotsky, Zinoviev, and Kamenev, did not of itself justify the reappearance, ten years after the revolution of October 1917, of a national anti-Semitism reminiscent of the days of Stolypine. Nor can the origin of Stalin's struggle against the Jews be reasonably attributed to religious fanaticism or traditional prejudice, but rather to the struggle which had to be waged against Trotsky's dangerous confederates. Menjinski had said that nearly all the chief supporters of Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev were Israelites; and indeed all the Jews in the Red Army, the trade unions, and factories were on Trotsky's side. In the Moscow Soviet where Kamenev enjoyed a majority and in the Leningrad Soviet which was heart and soul for Zinoviev, the pith of the opposition to Stalin was Jewish. All that was required in order to draw the army, trade unions and working-class masses in Moscow and Leningrad away from Trotsky, from Kamenev and Zinoviev was to kindle all the old anti-Semitic prejudices and instinctive hatred of the Russian people for the Jews. In his struggle against the permanent revolution," Stalin relied on the common selfishness of the "kulaks" and on the ignorance of the peasant masses, neither of whom had relinquished any of their age-long hatred of the Jews.

By kindling this anti-Semitism, Stalin was able to form a united front of soldiers, workers, and peasants, against the dangers of Trotskyism. Menjinski was successfully hunting down the members of a secret society organized by Trotsky for the purpose of getting into power. In every Jew, Menjinski suspected

and persecuted a Catiline. Thus, the struggle against Trotsky's party soon came to possess all the characteristics of a policy of anti-Semitism, definitely sponsored by the State. Jews were systematically removed from the Army, from trade unions, Government and Party offices, and from industrial and commercial Trust administrations. Trotsky's party, which had crept into all the political, economic and administrative bodies of the State, was gradually broken up. Many of the Jews persecuted by the G.P.U., deprived of their living, their work and salaries, imprisoned, exiled, scattered or compelled to live beyond the pale of Soviet society, had nothing to do with Trotsky's plot: "They must suffer for the others and the others suffer for everyone," said Menjinski. Trotsky was nonplussed by Stalin's tactics: he was impotent against the people's instinctive hatred of him. All the prejudices of old Russia were turning against this Catiline who was "as courageous as a Tartar and as mean as a Jew." What could Trotsky do in the face of this unexpected renewal of the instinct and prejudices of the Russian people? All his followers deserted him, from the poorest and most faithful, the workers who had acknowledged him as their leader in October 1917 to the soldiers whom he had led to victory against the Cossacks of Kolchak and Wrangel. In the eyes of the masses, Trotsky had become a mere Jew.

Meanwhile Zinoviev and Kamenev were beginning to lose faith in Trotsky and his violent fearlessness, his will power, his pride, his hatred of anyone who betrayed him, and in his contempt of anyone who opposed him. Kamenev was the weaker of the two, more lacking in decision and more of a coward than Zinoviev, but he did not betray Trotsky: he deserted him. On the eve of the insurrection against Stalin, Kamenev treated Trotsky as he had treated Lenin on the eve of the October insurrection in 1917. Later, to justify himself, he would say, "I did not believe in insurrectional methods." "He did not even believe in treason," was Trotsky's reply, for he never forgave Kamenev the lack of courage in not openly betraying him. Zinoviev, however, did not desert Trotsky. He betrayed him at the last moment when he knew that the sudden attack on Stalin had already failed. "Zinoviev is no coward; he only runs away when there is danger."

Trotsky had told Zinoviev to go to Leningrad and organize the capture of the town by workers' squads as soon as he should hear that the insurrection in Moscow had met with success. Thus Trotsky had avoided Zinoviev's proximity at the crucial moment. But Zinoviev was no longer the idol of the masses in Leningrad. When demonstrations were organized in the former capital in honor of the Party's Central Committee which met there in October 1927, the demonstrators suddenly turned the whole thing into a display of loyalty to Trotsky. Had Zinoviev still enjoyed a measure of influence among the Leningrad workers, that incident alone would have given rise to a revolt. Later on, he claimed to have been responsible for the seditious demonstration, but in point of

fact, neither he nor Menjinski had foreseen it. Even Trotsky had been taken by surprise, but he was wise enough not to take advantage of it. The working masses of Leningrad were no longer those of ten years ago. And what had become of the Red Guards of October 1917?

Stalin realized the weakness of Trotsky's secret organization as he watched the procession of workers and soldiers who marched, whistling, past the Tauride Palace under the stand of the Central Committee and flocked over to the stand where Trotsky was, cheering the hero of the October insurrection, founder of the Red Army, and defender of freedom in the trade unions. That day a mere handful of determined men might have captured the city without a shot being fired. But there was no longer an Antonov Ovseienko to take command of the workers squads and of the shock troops of insurrection. Zinoviev's Red Guards were afraid lest their leader should betray them. If Trotsky's faction should prove no stronger in Moscow than in Leningrad, Menjinski believed that the fight was already as good as won. The ground was slipping under Trotsky's feet. For a considerable time he had watched his followers being persecuted, arrested, reduced to inactivity and exiled, and to many of those whose courage and reliability had hitherto been unquestionable were now daily deserting him. He threw himself into the fight with desperate courage, with all the unconquerable pride of the persecuted Jew in his blood, and with that cruel and vindictive will power of his which sometimes gave his voice a kind of Biblical accent of despair and revolt. The speaker who addressed the meetings in those days, in factory and barrack yard, and faced the crowds of mistrustful and recreant soldiers and workers, was pale, shortsighted, his eyes dilated by fever and sleeplessness. It was no longer the Trotsky of 1922, 1923, and 1924 so amusing, clever, and ironical, who stood before them now, but the Trotsky of 1917, 1918, 1919, 1920, and 1921, of the October Revolution and the Civil War, the Bolshevik Catiline Trotsky of the Smolny and the battlefields, the Great Mutineer. The working masses of Moscow recognized him by his pallor and violence as the Trotsky of Lenin's reddest days. The flame of rebellion was already lit in factory and barracks, but Trotsky stood by his tactics. Not the crowds but the secretly organized shock troops were to be sent out to capture the State. He sought the road to power not by means of an insurrection or rebellion of the working masses, but by a scientific organization of the *coup d'Etat*.

The tenth anniversary of the Revolution was to be celebrated in a few weeks' time. Representatives from every country in Europe, the members of different sections of the Third International, were due to arrive in Moscow. But Trotsky was preparing a celebration of the tenth anniversary of his victory over Kerenski by a victory over Stalin. The workers' delegations should witness a violent revival of the proletarian revolution against the Thermidor of the narrow-

minded *bourgeois* inside the Kremlin. "Trotsky is cheating," smiled Stalin. He was closely watching each one of his adversary's moves.

About a thousand workers and soldiers, former partisans of Trotsky, loyal still to the revolutionary idea of Bolshevism, were standing by in readiness for the great day. Squads of technical experts and specialized workmen had long been engaged in "invisible maneuvers." Menjinski's men in their special corps heard the throb of Trotsky's insurrectional machine wherever they listened for it; and a hundred small portents suggested there was danger ahead. Menjinski tried to embarrass his adversaries' movements by every means in his power, but the sabotage on the railways, in electric power stations and in post and telegraph offices increased from day to day. Trotsky's agents had gained an entry everywhere; they tested every spoke in the wheel of the State's public services and from time to time they prevented it from spinning altogether. These were mere skirmishes leading up to the insurrection itself. Meanwhile Menjinski's technical experts were permanently mobilized and kept watch over the machinery of the State. They too were constantly testing its efficiency, its reactions and its power of resistance. Menjinski would have wished for the immediate arrest of Trotsky and of his most dangerous confederates, but Stalin denied his request. The arrest of Trotsky on the eve of the tenth birthday of the October Revolution would produce an unfavorable impression on the masses and on the workers' delegations which had arrived in Moscow from every corner of Europe to take part in the official ceremonies. Trotsky could hardly have chosen a more suitable moment for his attempt on the State. His tactical wisdom had shown him how to cover his position. Stalin would never dare to arrest him for fear of tyrannical appearances. If and when he should dare to do so, it would surely be too late, said Trotsky. By then the bonfires of the tenth anniversary of the Revolution would have burnt out and Stalin would no longer stand at the helm of the State.

The insurrection proper was to begin by capturing the head offices of the State's public services, after which the People's Commissaries and the members of the Central Committee and of the Commission for Party Control were to be arrested. But Menjinski was well prepared for this: when Trotsky's Red Guards came, the houses were empty. All the heads of the Stalin party had taken refuge inside the Kremlin where Stalin was patiently and quietly awaiting the result of the struggle between the shock troops of the insurrection and Menjinski's special corps. The date was November 7, 1927. Moscow seemed to be arrayed in scarlet. Processions of delegates from the Federal Republics of the U.S.S.R. from every part of Russia and from remotest districts of Asia were marching past the Savoy and Metropole Hotels where the European delegates were staying. Thousands upon thousands of crimson flags waved over Lenin's mausoleum under the walls of the Kremlin in the Red Square. At the end of the Square, near the Vassili

Blayenni Church, Budyonni's cavalry was drawn up and beside it Tukachevski's infantry and the veterans of 1918, 1919, 1920, and 1921, all of them soldiers whom Trotsky had once led to victory on the various fronts of the Civil War. While Voroshilov, the People's War Commissary, was reviewing the military forces of the U.S.S.R., Trotsky attempted to capture the State with a thousand men.

Menjinski took his precautions. His defensive tactics lay, not in the protection of threatened buildings by a great display of troops but rather in their defense with a mere handful of men stationed inside the walls. He parried Trotsky's invisible attack by an invisible defense. No attempt was made to scatter his troops around the Kremlin, the People's Commissariats, the head offices of industrial and commercial trusts, or round the syndicates and government administrations. He concentrated his special corps in the defense of public services, while detachments of the G.P.U. police watched over the political and administrative organization of the State. Trotsky had not foreseen Menjinski's tactics and it was already too late when he discovered that his adversaries had learnt their lesson in October 1917. When told that his sudden attacks on telegraph, telephone, and railway stations were a failure and that things unexpected and unexplained were happening, he at once realized that his insurrection had met with an organized defense far more complicated than mere police measures. But as yet he was unaware of the real situation. When news of his failure to seize the main electric power station finally reached him, he suddenly changed his mind and decided to seize the political and administrative organization of the State. Seeing that his shock troops had been routed and scattered in every direction by their opponents' sudden and violent attack, he abandoned his tactics and concentrated all his efforts on a supreme attempt at a popular insurrection.

Trotsky's appeal to the proletarian masses in Moscow that day was on heard by a few thousand students and workers. While a huge crowd filled the Red Square in front of Lenin's tomb and thronged round Stalin, round the Party and Government chiefs and round the foreign representatives of the Third International, Trotsky's adherents rushed to the University hall, warded off an attack by the police and set out for the Red Square at the head of a column of students and workers.

Trotsky's conduct was easily open to criticism. The appeal to the populace, the street corner tactics amounting to a kind of unarmed riot, were tactics amounting to a kind of unarmed riot, were all a mad adventure. But, it so happened that with the failure of the insurrection, Trotsky lost control. In the past, and especially at the turning points in his life, his cool intelligence had tempered his vivid imagination with foresight and his great passions with a certain cynicism; but now he seemed drunk with despair. Having let the

situation get out of hand, he gave way to his passionate nature and it spurred him on to that hopeless attempt to overthrow Stalin by means of a riot. Perhaps he knew that the game was up, that the masses had lost faith in him and that only very few friends were still loyal to him. He must have felt that now he could rely only on himself, although the game is not lost while there is yet a card to be played.

Trotsky was even accused of a rash design to seize Lenin's embalmed body from its glass coffin in the gloomy mausoleum at the foot of the Kremlin. Then he would call the people round the fetish of the Revolution and use it as a battering ram against Stalin's tyranny. The idea, if gruesome, had elements of grandeur in it. Possibly the idea of seizing Lenin's body did cross Trotsky's feverish mind as he heard the yells of the crowd and watched his little army of students and workers singing the International as they marched into the Red Square filled with soldiers and people, bristling with bayonets and flaming with flags.

At the first encounter, the little procession was repulsed and scattered. Trotsky looked round him. Where were his loyal friends, the heads of his faction, the generals of that small army which was supposed to capture the State? Jews are not suited for real battles, for hand-to-hand fights or insurrection. The only Jew who stood his ground in that affray was Trotsky, the Great Mutineer and Catiline of the Bolshevik Revolution. "A soldier fired at my car as though to warn me," writes Trotsky. "Someone else was aiming his rifle. Those who had eyes to see on that seventh day of November witnessed an attempt at another Thermidor in the streets of Moscow."

In his weary exile, Trotsky believes that proletarian Europe may learn its lesson from these events. He forgets that middle-class Europe might equally well profit by them.

CHAPTER THREE

1920 POLAND'S EXPERIENCE: ORDER REIGNS IN WARSAW

After having spent a few months with the Supreme War Council in Versailles, I had been appointed in October 1919 to the Italian Legation in Warsaw as Diplomatic Attaché. It was thus that I had several opportunities of getting to know Pilsudski. I gradually discovered him to be guided far more by his imagination and his passions than by logic; presumptuous rather than ambitious; and gifted at bottom with more will power than intelligence. Like all Poles who come from Lithuania, he was not afraid of calling himself obstinate and even mad.

The mere story of his life would not have won him the friendship of Plutarch or Machiavelli. To me his personality as a revolutionary seemed of considerably less interest than that of such great anti-revolutionaries as Wilson, Clemenceau, Lloyd George, or Foch, whom I had met and closely followed at the Peace Conference. As a mere revolutionary, Pilsudski did not seem to compare with Stambuliski, who gave me the impression of a man lacking any moral sense whatever, a very fiery and cynical Catiline who dared to speak about peace and justice among nations in the Europe of 1919.

I was taken by surprise at my first meeting with Pilsudski in the Belvedere at Warsaw where he lived. His appearance and his manner were unexpected. Here was a genuine bourgeois Catiline, absorbed in the conception and execution of the boldest schemes so long as they agreed with the civilized and historical ideas of his age and people and conformed to the laws, which he nevertheless intended to break without putting himself outside their pale. In point of fact, Pilsudski's conduct both before and after the *coup d'Etat* of 1926 hardly differed from Maria Theresa's watchword in her Polish policy: "Do as Prussians would do, but always keep up an appearance of honesty."

That Pilsudski should have taken Maria Theresa's maxim to heart and been so persistently anxious to keep up an appearance of legality was not, of course, to be wondered at. This constant obsession, peculiar to a good many revolutionaries, proved his incapacity, for example, in 1926 to plan and execute a *coup d'Etat* according to the rules of an art which is not merely political. Every art has its own technique and not all great revolutionaries have mastered the technique of the *coup d'Etat*. Catiline, Cromwell, Robespierre, and Napoleon, and even Lenin, to quote only a few of the most famous, knew all there was to know about a *coup d'Etat* except its technique. Between the Bonaparte of the 18th Brumaire and General Boulanger, there is only a Lucien Bonaparte. The Polish people, at the end of Autumn 1919, recognized Pilsudski as the only man who could be trusted with the destiny of the Republic. At that time he was head of the

State, but his power was only provisional pending the Constitution which was to be drawn by the Diet in January. The authority of the Head of the State was further hampered by party intrigues and personal ambitions. As he faced the Constituent Diet, Pilsudski was in much the same position as Cromwell facing the Parliament on September 3, 1654.

Public opinion vainly expected him to dissolve the Diet and to take over the responsibility of Government. The Dictator, being both violent and bourgeois, factious but careful of appearances of legality and impartiality in the eyes of the people, a kind of Socialist general, a revolutionary above the waist-line and a reactionary below it, could not decide between civil war and war against Soviet Russia. He would threaten a *coup d'Etat* every week and yet keenly desire to stabilize his position by the terms of a future Constitution. The man did rouse some astonishment and not a little anxiety in public opinion.

It was not only the Socialists but also the men of the Right who were very anxious to know what would become of this Theseus who had been toying with the thread of Ariadne for more than a year without finally deciding to use it either to get out of the political and financial Labyrinth in which the State had gone astray, or else to strangle the Republic. He seemed to like wasting the time he managed to spend at Belvedere, the summer residence of the Kings of Poland, in matching his intrigue and cunning with the Prime Minister Paderewski. Paderewski, living in the Royal Palace, the winter residence of the Kings in the heart of Warsaw, answered back with melodies on his harpsichord accompanied by the bugles of Pilsudski's Uhlans.

The authority of the Head of the State was decreasing every day in the eyes of the people. It was being wasted in parliamentary controversy and party intrigue. Pilsudski's inexplicable inaction in face of dangers threatening from inside and outside put a heavy strain on the Socialists' faith in their former comrade in exile and in conspiracy. The nobility had abandoned the idea of suddenly seizing power after the useless attempt of Prince Sapieha, the hero of the abortive *coup d'Etat* against Pilsudski in January 1919. But when their ambitions suddenly revived they were convinced that Pilsudski could now no longer protect public liberty against an attack from the Right and that henceforth he would not be an obstacle to their freedom of action.

Pilsudski bore no grudge against Prince Sapieha who was a Lithuanian like himself but a great gentleman, winning, courteous, and elegant to the point of a frivolous hypocrisy. His elegance was easy and careless, rather like that English carefreeness which foreigners who have been educated in England acquire with such ease that it becomes their second nature. Prince Sapieha was not the man to rouse Pilsudski's suspicion or jealousy : his revolt had obviously been so amateurish and inexperienced an affair that it could not cause anxiety.

Pilsudski was careful though quarrelsome, and being also disdainful of Polish aristocracy to the point of indifference, he wreaked his vengeance on Sapieha by appointing him ambassador to the court of St. James's: this Sulla brought up at Cambridge came back to England to finish his education.

It was not only among the reactionaries (who feared the danger which Parliamentary disorder threatened to Poland) that a plan to seize power by violent means was conceived. Joseph Haller, the General, came back from the war after having fought on the French front, and stood by, at the head of an army of volunteers who were devoted to him. He was an enemy of Pilsudski and he was ready at any moment to claim the succession. General Carton de Wiart, the head of the British Military Mission, who reminded the Poles of Nelson because he had lost an eye and an arm in the War, used to say that Pilsudski should beware of Haller. Haller limped like Talleyrand.

Meanwhile the internal situation grew steadily worse. When Paderewski fell, the party struggle grew fiercer again and the new President of the Council, Skulski, was not fitted to tackle either the political or administrative disorders, the claims of each faction or the plots which were being secretly hatched. At the end of March, at a meeting of the War Council in Warsaw, General Haller definitely opposed Pilsudski's military plans. When the decision to capture Kiev had been taken, Haller withdrew to the country and held aloof in an attitude of reserve that hardly seemed justified in relation to the strategic importance of the decision.

On April 26, 1920, the Polish Army crossed the Ukrainian frontier and occupied Kiev on May 8th. Pilsudski's easy victories roused an immense amount of enthusiasm throughout Poland. On May 18th, the conquering hero was received by the inhabitants of Warsaw with a triumphal welcome which the most ingenuous of his fanatical followers were pleased to compare to the reception of the hero of Marengo. Meanwhile, early in June, the Bolshevik Army under Trotsky began the offensive. By June 10th, Budyonni's cavalry had reoccupied Kiev. When the news suddenly reached Warsaw, the ensuing fear and disorganization roused all the parties to action and whetted the pretensions of everyone who had any ambitions. Skulski, President of the Council, handed over his office to Grabski, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Patek, was replaced by Prince Sapieha, the ambassador in London, who came back peacefully imbued with English Liberalism. The entire people rose up in arms against the Red invasion: Haller himself, though at enmity with Pilsudski, rushed to the rescue of his humiliated rival and brought his volunteers with him. But the noise of party factions still seemed to predominate. So loud was it that the neighing of Budyonni's horses could hardly be heard.

Early in August Trotsky's army stood at the gates of Warsaw. Among the silent anxious crowds in the town seeking for news at every street corner there were bands of deserters, refugees, and fleeing peasants : the thundering noise of battle came nearer every day. The new President of the Council, Grabski, fell and Witos, his successor, who enjoyed no confidence from the Right, made a hopeless effort to bury party differences and organize civil resistance. In the working class districts and in the Nalevki quarter, Warsaw's ghetto where 300,000 Jews were eagerly watching for every echo of the battle, there were already signs of revolt. The strangest rumors were to be heard in the lobby of the Diet, in the waiting-rooms of the Ministries, in banks and newspaper offices, in cafés and barracks. There was talk of German military intervention which Witos was said to have asked for in order to check the Bolshevik offensive. Later on we heard that the negotiations with Berlin had indeed been undertaken but by Witos in complete agreement with Pilsudski. General Weygand's arrival seemed somehow to be connected with these conversations and his coming was surely a frustration of Witos' plan and cast discredit on Pilsudski. The men of the Right who had always stood for co-operation with French policy accused Witos of inefficiency and double-dealing and clamored for a strong Government. Witos involuntarily increased the general confusion by being utterly unable to quell the tumult of party factions and by attributing all the responsibility for the disaster first to the Right and then to the Left.

The enemy was at the gates of the town. Hunger and sedition had already taken hold of Warsaw. Processions marched up and down the streets of the suburbs, and on the pavements of the Krakowskie Przedmiescie, bands of hollowfaced weary-eyed deserters wandered about in front of the banks, the palaces, and the houses of the rich.

On August 6th, Monsignor Ratti, the Papal Nuncio (now Pope Pius XI), called on the President of the Council and as Doyen to the Diplomatic Corps he went with the Ministers of Great Britain, Italy and Roumania to ask Witos to name the town forthwith to which the Government would be transferred in case the capital had to be evacuated. The decision to take this step had been reached the day before, after a lengthy discussion among all the members of the Diplomatic Corps in the office of the Nuncio. Most of those present followed the example of the British and German ministers, Sir Horace Rumbold and Count Oberndorff, in advocating the immediate transfer of the Diplomatic Corps to a safer place such as Posen or Czenstochowa. Sir Horace Rumbold had even suggested that the Polish Government should be pressed to choose Posen as a provisional capital. The only two who were in favor of staying in Warsaw to the very last moment were the Nuncio, Monsignor Ratti, and the Italian Minister, Tommasini. Their attitude at the meeting had been keenly criticized and it was not favorably received by the Polish Government: if the Papal Nuncio and the

Italian Minister were anxious to stay in Warsaw it was surely because they secretly hoped that an exit at the last moment would be impossible and that they would then stay on under a Bolshevik occupation. Thus the Papal Nuncio would have an opportunity for opening negotiations between the Vatican and the Soviet Government on religious questions of interest to the Church. The Church had long been an observer of Russian events and was only waiting for an opportunity to enlarge her sphere of influence in Eastern Europe. So much was clear not only from the appointment of Monsignor Genocchi as Apostolic Visitor in the Ukraine, but also from the frank protection extended by the Pope to the Uniate Metropolitan Archbishop of Heopolis, Monsignor André Szeptychi. The Holy See has always considered the Galician Uniate Church as a natural intermediary in the Catholic conquest of Russia.

As for the Italian Minister, Tommasini, he was thought to be carrying out the orders of his Foreign Minister, Count Sforza, who was also inclined to get into friendly relations with Russia for reasons of internal policy chiefly dictated by the exacting demands of Italian Socialists. If Warsaw should be occupied by the Bolsheviks, the presence of the Italian Minister Tommasini would provide Count Sforza with a suitable opportunity in which to open up diplomatic relations with the Government in Moscow.

Witos, the President of the Council, greeted Monsignor Ratti's move with great coolness. Yet it was agreed that the Polish Government would move to Posen and would see to the transference of the Diplomatic Corps ~ in case of danger. Next day, on August 8th, very many Legation secretaries left Warsaw.

The vanguard of the Bolshevik army had already reached the gates of the town. In the workers' suburbs the first shots were heard. Now was the moment for a *coup d'Etat*.

Warsaw these days looked like a town waiting to be pillaged. The great heat seemed to suffocate all voices and noises. The crowds in the streets were perfectly noiseless. Now and then an endless convoy of trams carrying the wounded would slowly steer through these crowds. The wounded sometimes looked out of the windows shook their fists and swore. A ceaseless hum spread from pavement to pavement, from street to street. A group of Bolshevik prisoners, battered, bent, and limping, with red stars on the front of their uniforms, marched between hedges of mounted Uhlans. The crowd opened in silence to let them pass and immediately closed again, Fights broke out here and there only to be squashed at once by the surging crowds. Sometimes a small procession of thin, feverish soldiers would march by, carrying black crosses high over the sea of heads: The populace moved forward slowly in waves and then a current would follow the crosses, eddy round them, flow back, and lose itself in the troubled sea of human beings. On the Vistula bridge another crowd was

listening intently for the distant thunder of battle, Heavy clouds charged with heat and dust darkened the horizon which vibrated and thundered as though a battering ram had charged it.

The main railway stations were besieged day and night by bands of famished deserters, refugees of every race and condition. The Jews alone seemed to feel at home during these chaotic days. The Nalevski quarter, Warsaw's ghetto, was rejoicing. Here the hatred for the Polish persecutors of the children of Israel was fierce and consequently there was pleasure in witnessing the wretched end of Catholic and intolerant Poland. The Jews of Nalevski, generally so silent and passive both from prudence and by tradition, betrayed their feelings by very exceptional acts of courage and violence. The Jews were becoming seditious: a bad omen for the Poles.

The news which was brought by refugees from the occupied areas rekindled the spirit of sedition: they said that in every village and town occupied by the Bolsheviks a Soviet mainly consisting of local Jews had been set up. Were the persecuted Jews really becoming persecutors? Liberty, vengeance, and power were fruits so luscious that the wretched inhabitants of Nalevski longed for a taste of them. The Red Army only a few miles out of Warsaw found a natural ally in the enormous Jewish population of the city which grew daily more numerous and more excited. At the beginning of August there were at least 500,000 of them in Warsaw. I often used to wonder what kept this great seditious mass of people from trying to revolt, filled as they were with a fanatical hatred and hungry for freedom.

What with a dismembered State, a government on its deathbed, a great part of the country invaded and the capital besieged and in disorder, only a thousand men who were determined and ready for anything, could have taken possession of the town without firing a single shot. But my experience of those days taught me that though a Catiline may be Jewish, the instruments of the *coup d'Etat* should not be recruited from among the children of Israel. In Petrograd in October 1917 the Catiline of the Bolshevik insurrection was the Jew Trotsky and not the Russian Lenin: but the executors, the Catilines, were practically all Russian sailors, workers, and soldiers. In his struggle with Stalin in 1927, Trotsky learnt to his cost how dangerous it was to rely on a chiefly Jewish following for carrying out his *coup d'Etat*.

The Diplomatic Corps met almost every day in the Nuncio's office to discuss the situation. I frequently accompanied the Italian Minister Tommasini, who was none too pleased with the attitude of all his colleagues, who supported Sir Horace Rumbold and Count Oberndorff. Only the French Minister, M. de Panafieu, thought the situation most critical, did not conceal his fear that the departure of the Diplomatic Corps for Posen would give the impression of flight

and arouse public indignation. Together with Monsignor Ratti and the Italian Minister he believed that Warsaw was not to be abandoned until the last moment and that the advice of Sir Horace Rumbold and Count Oberndorf to leave the capital at once, should not be followed, unless the internal situation collapsed and the military defense of the town was thereby jeopardized.

M. de Panafieu's view was in reality closer to that of the British and German Ministers than to that of the Papal Nuncio and the Italian Minister. The latter, of course, wanted to stay in Warsaw even if the Bolsheviks came into the city, but they were frankly hopeful about the military and internal situation. They saw no danger for the Diplomatic Corps in delaying its departure for Posen to the very last minute.

But for M. de Panafieu it was only the military situation that seemed hopeful. He could not very well mistrust Weygand. Since a French general had now been entrusted with the defense of the town, the French Minister pretended to agree with Sir Horace Rumbold and Count Oberndorff not because he was doubtful about the military situation, but solely because of the dangers inherent in the internal situation. The French and German Ministers were especially afraid lest Warsaw should fall into the hands of the Bolshevik army. Only a Jewish or Communist revolt could officially concern M. de Panafieu. "What I fear," said the French Minister, "is that Pilsudski and Weygand may be stabbed in the back."

According to Monsignor Pellegrinetti, Secretary at the Nunciature, the Papal Nuncio did not believe in a *coup d'Etat*. "The Nuncio," said General Carton de Wiart, head of the British Military Mission, "cannot envisage this miserable mob from the ghetto and the suburbs of Warsaw daring to try to seize hold of power." But Poland is not like the Church in which only Popes and Cardinals make *coups d'Etat*.

Monsignor Ratti was convinced of the failure of rebellion, although he was not impressed by the precautions against new and more serious dangers taken by the Government, the military leaders, and the governing classes: that is to say, by those who were responsible for events. But M. de Panafieu's arguments were of a nature too serious not to rouse some doubts in the mind of the Nuncio. Hence, Monsignor Pellegrinetti's visit to the Minister Tommasini one morning did not come as a surprise to me. The prelate came to assure him that the Government had taken every precautionary measure to cope with any future attempt at rebellion. The Italian Minister immediately sent for me, and in Monsignor Pellegrinetti's presence, explained the Nuncio's doubts and told me to find out what precautions the Government had taken to prevent disorders and to suppress a revolt. General Romei, the head of the Italian Military Mission, had just brought news confirming the continual advance of the Bolshevik offensive,

which left him not the slightest doubt about the fate of Warsaw. It was August 12th. That night Trotsky's army was within some twenty miles of the town. "If the Polish troops can hold out for another day or two," said the Minister, "General Weygand's move may yet be successful. But we must not expect too much." He told me to go down to the working class districts and to the Nalevski quarter where I they feared disorders ; to discover on the spot the most critical centers in the city, and to find out whether Weygand and Pilsudski had been adequately protected and the Government sufficiently guaranteed against a possible *coup de main*. "It would be better," he ended, "if you did not go alone." And he advised me to go with Captain Rollin, an attaché at the French Legation.

Captain Rollin, a Cavalry Officer, was in the "second bureau" of the staff. He was one of the most able and gifted collaborators of M. de Panafien and of General Henrys, the head of the French Military Mission. He frequently called at the Italian Legation and was on excellent terms with the Italian Minister, indeed they were cordial friends. I met him again in Rome during the Fascist Revolution in 1921 and 1922, when he was attached to the French Embassy in the Farnese Palace. Mussolini's revolutionary tactics had completely won his admiration.

After the Bolshevik army had laid siege to Warsaw, I used to go with him every day to the Polish outposts in order to follow more closely the vicissitudes of the battle. But the Bolshevik soldiers did not look very formidable except for those red Cossacks who were terrible cavalymen and worthy of a nobler cause. The others went into battle slowly and pitifully. They looked like a famished and ragged crowd that is moved by fear and hunger alone. With all my experience of war on the French and Italian fronts I could not understand how the Poles could retreat in front of such soldiers.

Captain Rollin seemed to think that the Polish Government had no notion of the art of defending a modern State. The same criticism might be applied to Pilsudski in another sense. Polish soldiers are said to be fearless. But what is the use of fearless soldiers if their leaders do not know that the art of defense lies in a knowledge of their own weak spots? The precautionary measures which the Government took in order, to meet any attempt at rebellion proved that it was unaware of the weakest spots in a modern State.

The technique of the *coup d'Etat* has advanced considerably since the days of Sulla : obviously then the means which Kerenski used to prevent Lenin from capturing power should be very different from those employed by Cicero in protecting the Republic against the Catiline conspiracy. Formerly it was a matter for the police to settle: today it has become a technical problem. When in Berlin, in March 1920, both police and technical measures were put to the test, the contrast was obvious.

The Polish Government followed Kerenski's example: indeed it acted according to Cicero's experience. But the art of capturing and defending the State has changed with the centuries, side by side with changes that have taken place in the nature of the State. If Catiline's sedition could be successfully suppressed by certain police measures, similar measures were useless against Lenin. Kerenski's mistake lay in his attempt to protect the vulnerable places in a modern town: its banks, railway stations, telephone and telegraph exchanges, by methods which Cicero used to defend the Forum and the Suburbs in the Rome of his day.

In March 1920, von Kapp had forgotten that, besides the Reichstag and the Ministries in the Wilhelmstrasse, Berlin also had its electric and radio stations, factories and railways. The Communists took advantage of his mistake and paralyzed the life of Berlin, causing the collapse of the provisional Government which had come into power by a coup de force of military police methods. In the night of December 2nd, Louis Napoleon began his *coup d'Etat* by taking possession of all the printing presses and clock towers. But the Polish people never remember their own experiences, much less those of other peoples. Polish history is full of events which the Poles consider as peculiar to themselves. They do not believe that a single event in their national life could be found in the history of another people: they experience it for the first time; it has never occurred elsewhere.

The precautions taken by the Witos Government were the usual police measures. Only four soldiers were stationed at each end of the bridges across the Vistula, the railway bridge and the Prague bridge. The main electric station was unguarded: we found no trace of a watchman or sentry anywhere. The Manager told us that the Military Governor of the City had just telephoned to say that if any of the machines were sabotaged or the current interrupted, the Manager himself would be held responsible. The Citadel beyond the Nalevski quarter on the outer edge of Warsaw was full of Uhlans and horses. We passed in and out freely: the sentries never asked for our passes. Incidentally, there was a store of arms and gunpowder in the Citadel. Utter confusion reigned at the railway station: whole parties of fugitives stormed the trains, an unruly crowd thronged the platforms and the line, and groups of drunken soldiers lay in a deep sleep, stretched on the ground. "*Somno vinoque sepulti,*" said Captain Rollin who knew Latin. It would have needed only ten men armed with hand grenades. . . .

As usual, four sentries guarded the Army Headquarters in the chief square of Warsaw under the shadow of a Russian church that has since been demolished. The door and the hall were blocked by the continual coming and going of officers and orderlies covered in dust from head to foot. We took advantage of the confusion to climb the stairs and go down a corridor through a room hung with topographical maps where an officer, sitting at a table in the

corner, raised his head and greeted us with a bored look on his face. We went down another corridor and came to a kind of waitingroom where a few officers, gray with dust, stood waiting by a half-open door, and then we went down again to the hall. As we once more passed the two sentries in the square, Captain Rollin turned to me and smiled. The Hotel des Postes was guarded by a lieutenant with a picket of soldiers. This officer told us that he had orders to keep the crowd out of the Hotel, in case it broke loose. I suggested that such a picket of orderly soldiers would doubtless succeed in pushing back a rebellious crowd, but could hardly cope with a sudden attack made by ten determined men. The lieutenant smiled and pointing to the crowd going quietly in and out of the building, he answered that those ten men had perhaps gone in separately or were in the process of doing so under our very eyes: "My job is to suppress a rising, not to prevent a *coup de main*."

Soldiers collected here and there in front of the Ministries and closely watched the general public and the clerks as they passed back and forth. The Diet was surrounded by mounted police and Uhlans: deputies arrived and left, talking to each other in muffled voices. In the Lobby we came across Trompczinski, the Marshal of the Diet, who greeted us absentmindedly. He was surrounded by a few Posnanian deputies, alert and cool. Trompczinski was a Posnanian of the Right, and frankly hostile to Pilsudski's policy. His secret maneuvering to overthrow the Witos Government was being much discussed at the time.

That night at the Hunt Club, the Marshal of the Diet said to Cavendish Bentinck of the British Legation, "Pilsudski does not know how to defend Poland, and Witos does not know how to defend the Republic." For Trompczinski, the Republic meant the Diet. Like all fat men Trompczinski never really felt safe.

All that day we tramped the town in every direction, going out to the farthest suburbs. At ten in the evening, as we passed in front of the Savoy Hotel, Captain Rollin heard his name called. It was General Bulach Balachowitch, standing in the doorway, who beckoned us to come in. He was a "partisan" of Pilsudski, but in the Russian and Polish sense of that word: the Russian General Balachowitch led the famous Black Cossack troops who fought for Poland against Budyonni's Red Cossacks.

Bold and unscrupulous, skilled in banditry, schooled in all the tricks of partisan guerilla warfare, Balach Balachowitch was Pilsudski's trump card. Pilsudski used him and the Hetman Petlura to foster risings against the Bolsheviks and Denikin in White Russia and the Ukraine. Balachowitch's Headquarters were at the Savoy Hotel where he sometimes put in a hurried appearance, between two skirmishes, in order to watch political developments. A

crisis in the Government would have seriously affected him, whether favorably or unfavorably. Internal affairs focused his attention more closely than the movements of Budyonni's Cossacks. The Poles mistrusted him and Pilsudski himself only used him with extreme caution, as though he were a dangerous ally.

Balachowitch at once began to discuss the situation. He did not conceal his belief in the need for a *coup d'Etat* from the Right if Warsaw were to be saved from the enemy and Poland kept from devastation. "Witos is not fit to deal with the situation," he concluded, "nor can he protect the rearguard of Pilsudski's army. If no one decides to seize power and put an end to the disorder, to organize civilian resistance and defend the Republic against the dangers which threaten it, we shall have a Communist *coup d'Etat* in a day or two." Captain Rollin thought it was too late to prevent a Communist rising and that there were no men fit for such a great responsibility among the parties of the Right.

Given the condition of Poland, Balachowitch, unlike Rollin, did not consider the responsibility of a *coup d'Etat* as being so very serious, since the safety of the Republic was at stake. As for the difficulties of the venture, any fool might seize power. "But," he added, "Haller is at the front, Sapiieha has no trustworthy friends, and Trornpczinski is afraid." Here I suggested that the Parties of the Left were also lacking in men fit to deal with the situation: what was keeping the Communists from trying their *coup d'Etat*? "You are right," said Balachowitch, "I would not have waited so long if I had been in their shoes. If I were not a Russian, a foreigner, and a guest in this country which I defend, I would have made the coup by now." Rollin smiled: "If you were a Pole, you would have done nothing as yet. In Poland, when it is not too late it is always too early."

Balachowitch was the very man to overthrow the Witos Government in a few hours. A thousand of his Cossacks could have stormed the vital centers of the town and kept order for some time. And after that? Balachowitch was a Russian and his men, moreover, were Cossacks. Such a sudden attack would not have encountered any serious difficulties then, but insuperable difficulties would have arisen later. Having once seized power, Balachowitch would quickly have handed it over to men of the Right, but not one Polish patriot would have accepted the gift from a Cossack. Communists alone would have taken advantage of the situation. "It would, in fact, have taught the Right a good lesson," concluded Balachowitch.

Among the noblemen and great landowners in the Hunt club that night, besides Sapiieha and Trompczinski, we found some of the most representative members of the Opposition to Pilsudski and Witos. The only foreign Diplomats were Count Oberndorff, the German Minister, the British General Carton de Wiart and the Secretary of the French Legation. Everybody seemed at ease except

Sapieha and Oberndorff. Sapieha pretended not to hear the proposals that were being made beside him and occasionally leaned across to say a few words to General Carton de Wiart who was discussing the military position with Count Potocki. That day the Bolshevik troops had advanced considerably in the Radzymin sector, a village about twenty kilometres from Warsaw.

“We will fight to the end,” General Potocki was saying.

“You mean, till tomorrow,” said the British General, smiling.

Count Potocki had left Paris only a few days before but he was already planning to go back as soon as possible, as soon as fortune smiled on Poland again.

“You are all like your famous Dombrovski who led the Polish legion in Italy in Napoleon’s day,” said Carton de Wiart, “Dombrovski used to say I shall always be ready to die for my country but not to live in it.”

Such were the men and such their ideas. You could hear the rumble of guns in the distance. Before leaving us that morning, the Italian Minister had told us to wait for him at the Hunt Club. It was getting very late: I was about to go when Tommasini came in. Our notes on the unpreparedness of the Witos Government impressed him as being serious enough, but they did not take him unawares. Only a few hours earlier Witos had confessed to him that he no longer felt himself to be master of the situation. Tommasini was none the less convinced that among the enemies of Pilsudski and Witos there was no one fit to attempt a *coup d’Etat*. The Communists alone could cause some uneasiness. But they were afraid of compromising the situation by some unwary move and so they held aloof from an adventure which might have proved perilous, if not useless. Obviously, the game was won and they were only waiting for Trotsky’s arrival. “Even Monsignor Ratti,” added the Minister, “has decided not to abandon the view we have so far held by common consent. The Papal Nuncio and I will stay in Warsaw to the end: whatever happens.”

“What a pity,” commented Captain Rollin a few minutes later and not without irony, “what a pity if nothing happens.”

When the news came on the following evening that the Bolshevik Army had occupied the village of Radzymin and was attacking the other end of the Warsaw bridge, the Diplomatic Corps hurried away from the capital and took shelter in Posen. Only the Papal Nuncio, the Italian Minister, and the Chargés d’Affaires of the U. S.A. and Denmark stayed in Warsaw.

All that night the town was in a panic. The next day, which was August 15th and St. Mary's day, the entire populace marched in procession behind the statue of the Virgin, beseeching her to save Poland from invasion.

Everything seemed to be lost. The huge procession, chanting its litanies, expected to see a party of Red Cossacks appear around the next corner. Then came the news of General Weygand's first victories. It spread like wild fire. Trotsky's army was beating a retreat at every point along the line.

Trotsky's indispensable ally, Catiline, had failed him.

CHAPTER FOUR

KAPP OR MARS vs. MARX

“We reckoned on a revolution in Poland “ and the revolution never came,” said Trotsky to Clara Zetkin in the autumn of 1920. How can the behavior of the Polish Catilines be reasonably explained by those who believe, with Sir Horace Rumbold, that of all the circumstances attendant on a *coup d’Etat*, disorder is by far the most useful?

Trotsky’s army at the gates of Warsaw, the great weakness of the Witos Government, and the popular spirit of sedition were surely all of them most favorable circumstances for an attempt at revolution. Balachowitch had said, “Any fool can seize power.” Moreover, not only Poland, but the whole of Europe was full of these fools in 1920. Given the circumstances, why did no one in Warsaw, not even the Communists, make a single attempt at a *coup d’Etat*? The only person who had no illusions about the possibility of a revolution in Poland was Radek. Lenin himself said so to Clara Zetkin. Radek knew what the Polish Catilines lacked, and he believed that a Polish revolution would have to be artificially brought about from the outside. Neither did Radek have any false hopes about conspirators in other countries. The story of events in Poland during the summer of 1920 revealed not only the inadequacy of Polish Catilines hut of all European Catilines. Whoever is able to take an unprejudiced view of events in Europe in 1919 and 1920, cannot help wondering how Europe managed to get over such a serious revolutionary crisis. In almost all countries the liberal middle classes were incapable of defending the State. Its defensive methods lay and still lie in a simple application of those police systems which, from all time and even now, are relied upon by both absolute and liberal Governments. But if the bourgeoisie was unable to defend the State, it was compensated by the inadequacy of the revolutionary parties : they could not meet the old-fashioned defensive methods of Governments with modern offensive tactics. They could not parry police measures with a revolutionary technique.

It is significant that the Catilines both of the Right and of the Left were unable, at the most critical stage in Europe’s revolutionary crisis in 1919 and 1920, to use the experience of the Bolshevik revolution. They were ignorant of the method, the tactics, and modern technique of the *coup d’Etat* of which Trotsky had given a new and classic example. Their idea of capturing the State was out-of-date and so they were doomed to find themselves on the adversary’s ground, and, using means and methods which all Governments, however weak and shortsighted, can successfully counteract by the traditional means and methods of State defense.

Europe was ripe for revolution, but the revolutionary parties were clearly unable to make good use of these favorable circumstances or of Trotsky's experience. They held that the success of the Bolshevik insurrection in October 1917 was due to the peculiar condition of Russia in those days and to Kerenski's blunders. But at that time almost every European nation had a Kerenski at the head of the Government: they forgot that when Trotsky formed his plan for a *coup d'Etat* and put it into execution he took not the slightest notice of Russia's special situation. The novelty in Trotsky's insurrectional tactics lay in this complete disregard for the general situation of the country. Kerenski's blunders could influence only the plan and execution of the Bolshevik *coup d'Etat*; Trotsky's tactics would have been the same even if the Russian situation had been different.

Kerenski's mistakes were, and still are, typical of the entire liberal bourgeoisie in Europe. Governments were extremely feeble and their survival was a matter for police organization. Meanwhile, liberal Governments were fortunate in that the Catilines also considered revolution as a question of police organization.

The Kapp Putsch is a lesson to all those who think of revolutionary tactics in terms of politics and not of technique.

In the night of March 12-13, 1920, several divisions of Baltic regiments commanded by General von Luttwitz had collected near Berlin. They sent an ultimatum to Bauer's Government threatening to occupy the capital unless the Government resigned in favor of Kapp. Even if Kapp prided himself on the parliamentary nature of his *coup d'Etat* and on being von Luttwitz's Siéyès, yet his attempt at revolution was a purely classic and military *coup d'Etat* from the start, both in conception and execution. Bauer's Government turned down the request, and took the necessary police measures for the defense of the State and the maintenance of order. As always happens in such cases, the Government counteracted the military plan with a police plan. The two are alike and that is why military sedition is not revolutionary at all. The police defends the State as though it were a town: the soldiers attack the State as if it were a fortress.

Bauer told the police to barricade the squares and main streets and to occupy all public buildings. In order to carry out his *coup d'Etat*, Von Luttwitz substituted the policemen at the crossroads in the main streets, at the entrance of a square, in front of the *Reichstag* and the Ministries in the Wilhelmstrasse, by his own troops. A few hours after his entry into the town, he was master of the situation. The town had been taken over without bloodshed, as regularly as any changing of the guard. But if von Luttwitz was a soldier, Kapp, the former Director of Agriculture, was a high functionary and a bureaucrat. Von Luttwitz thought he had captured the State merely by substituting his own men for the

police in the maintenance of public order , while Kapp, the new Chancellor, was convinced that the occupation of the Ministries would sufficiently guarantee the normal working of the machinery of State and confirm the lawfulness of the Revolutionary Government.

Bauer was an average man but gifted with common sense, well acquainted with the generals and leading officials in the Reich. He saw at once how useless it would be to meet von Luttwitz's *coup d'Etat* with an armed counterattack. The occupation of Berlin by the Baltic : troops could not be avoided. Policemen would not have a chance against these hardened soldiers ;. They were a useful weapon against riots and conspiracies but hopeless where veterans were concerned. When the first steel helmets appeared in front of the barricade that blocked the entrance to the Wilhelmstrasse, the police squad there surrendered to the rebels. Noske himself, an energetic man and determined to hold out to the end, decided to support Bauer and the other Ministers when he heard of the first defections. Bauer thought quite rightly that the Revolutionary Government was weakest in its control of the machinery of the State. If the machine could somehow be stopped, or at least prevented from going, then the Kapp Government would be mortally wounded. If the pulse of the State could only be interrupted, then the whole of public life would necessarily be paralyzed.

Bauer's attitude was that of a small bourgeois educated in the school of Marx. He was the only man bold enough to attempt a thorough and violent upheaval of public life in order to keep Kapp from asserting his power with the help of constituted law and order: and such a man could only be a middle-class bourgeois, a man of order, full of Socialist ideas, accustomed to judge men and events quite foreign to his mentality, his education, or his interests, with an impartiality and a skepticism worthy of a Government official.

Before leaving Berlin to take shelter in Dresden, Bauer's Government had launched an appeal to the proletariat, inviting the workers to proclaim a general strike. Bauer's decision spelt ~ danger for Kapp. A fresh offensive by the forces that were still loyal to the Bauer Government ~ would have been much less dangerous for Kapp than a general strike, because von Luttwitz's troops could then have easily carried the day. But how could a huge crowd of workers be persuaded to go back to work? Surely not by the use of violence. At midday Kapp thought he had the situation well in hand, but that same night, on March 13th, he found himself hemmed in by an unforeseen enemy. The life of Berlin had been paralyzed in a few moments. The strike was spreading all over Prussia. Darkness reigned in the capital, the streets in the center were deserted although everything was perfectly quiet in the workers' suburbs. A general paralysis had struck the technical services like lightning: even the nurses had left their hospitals. Communications with Prussia and the rest of Germany had ceased early in the afternoon: Berlin would be starving in a few hours' time. There was

no sign of violence or rebellion in the crowds and the workers had left their factories with the greatest coolness. The general disorder was perfect.

Berlin seemed to be plunged into a heavy sleep on the night of March 13-14, except in the Adlon Hotel where the Allied Missions had their quarters and where everyone stayed up all night awaiting more serious developments. At dawn the capital was quiet, though deprived of bread, water, and newspapers. In the most populated districts the markets were deserted: the railway strike had cut off the town's food supplies and the general strike had spread like a plague among all the government and private employees. Telephone and telegraph operators never appeared at their offices. Banks, shops, and cafés were closed. Numbers of clerks in the Government offices refused to recognize the Revolutionary Government. Bauer had foreseen how infectious the strike would be. Kapp asked his own engineers and skilled workers to try to repair the delicate mechanism of the technical services, but it was too late. The machine of the State itself had already been struck with paralysis.

The working class population in the suburbs was no longer so quiet as in the first days : small signs of impatience, unrest, and revolt were beginning to be noticeable everywhere. The news coming in from all the Southern States compelled Kapp to choose one of two alternatives: either to surrender to Germany, which besieged Berlin, or to surrender to Berlin which held the illegal Government as its prisoner. Should he hand over the power to Bauer or to Workers' Councils which had already obtained a majority in the suburbs? Only the Reichstag and the Ministries had been won over in the *coup d'Etat*. Kapp's position was getting more serious from hour to hour: his Government was slowly being deprived of the very possibilities and chances of a political move. Negotiations with the parties of the Left or agreement with those of the Right seemed to be out of the question. A violent move might have led to unforeseen consequences. When von Luttwitz's troops made an attempt to compel the workers to go back to work, the only result was useless bloodshed. The first victims were lying dead on the pavement here and there as a proof of the fatal mistake of a Revolutionary Government that had forgotten to seize the main electric plants and railway stations.

These first drops of blood produced an indelible rust on the wheelwork of the State, and by the third day the lack of discipline had evidently eaten its way into the bureaucracy to judge by the arrest of several high functionaries in the Foreign Office. On March 15th, the National Assembly was convened in Stuttgart and Bauer said to President Ebert, when speaking of the bloody incidents in Berlin: "Kapp made his mistake when he interfered with the disorder."

The master of the situation was Bauer, the moderate Bauer, with his respect for order. He alone knew that Kapp's attempt at revolution could be

decisively quelled by widespread disorder. Neither a conservative full of authoritative principles, nor a liberal with a respect for law, nor yet a democrat loyal to Parliament as a channel for political struggles, would ever have dared as he did to rouse the illegal intervention of the proletarian masses and defend the State by trusting to a general strike.

Machiavelli's Prince would have boldly summoned the people to fight against either a sudden attack or a Government conspiracy, and Machiavelli's Prince was surely more Conservative than a Tory of Queen Victoria's day, even though the State was not responsible for his moral prejudices or his political education. But then he was schooled in those common historical examples of the tyrannies of Asia, Greece, and the Italian Signories of the Renaissance.

On the other hand, the tradition in conservative or liberal European Governments forbids any appeal to illegal action by the proletarian masses, whatever the peril that has to be faced. Later on people in Germany wondered what Stresemann would have done had he stood in Bauer's shoes. We may be sure that Stresemann would have considered Bauer's appeal to the proletariat as a most incorrect procedure.

Bauer's upbringing, it must be remembered, was Marxist, so that he naturally had no misgivings as to the choice of means with which to fight a revolution. The idea of using a General Strike as a legal method of defending a democratic State against a sudden attack from military or Communist quarters could not be alien to a man brought up in Marx's teaching. Bauer, however, was the first to apply one of the Marx's fundamental principles in the defense of the State. His example is of the greatest importance in the history of modern revolutions.

The faith of the German people in Bauer during the five days of illegal Government began to waver and gave place to unrest and fear when Kapp proclaimed on March 17th that he was relinquishing power because "Germany's extremely critical condition demanded the union of all parties and citizens in order to face the danger of a Communist Revolution." The Socialist Party had lost control over the General Strike, and the real masters of the situation were the Communists. The Red Republic had been proclaimed in some of the suburbs of Berlin. Workers' councils were springing up here and there all over Germany. In Saxony and in the Ruhr, the General Strike had ushered in revolt and the *Reichswehr* came up against a perfectly good Communist army, provided with cannon and machine-guns. What would Bauer do? Kapp had been turned out by the General Strike—was Bauer to disappear in a civil war?

Faced with the need of suppressing a workers' revolt, Bauer's Marxist education revealed its weakness. Marx said that "Insurrection is a fine art." But

his art is the capture of power, not the defense of it. Marx's revolutionary strategy aims at the capture of the State; his method is class warfare. Lenin had to upset some of the basic principles of Marxism in order to stay in power, as Zinoviev observed when he wrote: "Henceforth true Marxism is impossible without Lenin." The General Strike had been Bauer's weapon in defending the Reich against Kapp: if the Reich was to be spared a proletarian insurrection, the Reichswehr must be called in. Von Luttwitz's troops were nonplussed by the general strike but they could easily have overcome a Communist revolution. Kapp, however, had relinquished power at the very moment when the proletariat gave him an opportunity to fight on his own ground. Such a blunder on the part of a reactionary like Kapp is incomprehensible and unjustifiable. But a Marxist like Bauer could not see that the *Reichswehr* at that moment was the only possible weapon with which to meet a proletarian insurrection, and his mistake is easily explained. Meanwhile, after several useless attempts to agree with the leaders of the Communist revolt, Bauer handed over to Muller. It was a wretched end for a man of such fearless honest and moderate ideas. Both European conspirators and liberals still have a great deal to learn from Lenin and Bauer.

CHAPTER FIVE

BONAPARTE-OR THE FIRST MODERN COUP D'ETAT

What would have happened if Bonaparte, on the eighteenth Brumaire, had found a man like Bauer pitted against him? Such a relationship between Bonaparte and the honest chancellor of the Reich offers some interesting possibilities. Bauer was not one of Plutarch's heroes but a good middle-class German, whose sentimentality had been entirely suppressed by a Marxist education. Such a moderate man could be infinitely resourceful. But it was a sad fate which decreed that a man of such common virtues should be confronted with an ordinary and unfortunate hero like Kapp ! Bauer was the very rival for Bonaparte, the very man who could have faced the victor of Arcole nicely on the eighteenth Brumaire. In him, Bonaparte would at last have found a worthy opponent.

It may well be said that Bauer was a German of Versailles and Weimar, and a modern European, while Bonaparte was a European of the Eighteenth Century and a twenty-year-old Frenchman in 1789. How can one possibly imagine what Bauer would have done to prevent the *coup d'Etat* on the eighteenth Brumaire? Bonaparte was not Kapp, and the situation of Paris in 1799 differed greatly from that of Berlin in 1920. Bauer could not have used his General Strike tactics against Bonaparte, since the social and technical organizations essential to the success of a strike intended to prevent a *coup d'Etat* were lacking at that time. Bauer's probable technique on the eighteenth Brumaire and a comparison between the German Chancellor and Napoleon are more interesting studies than would at first appear.

Bonaparte was a Frenchman of the Eighteenth Century and yet essentially a man of today, and far more modern than Kapp. His mentality and that of Bauer are in the same category as the ideas of men of order like de Rivera and Pilsudski (i. e., of any modern general), who want to capture power from any ordinary Minister of State today who wants to defend the State by every possible means. If this comparison is not to appear arbitrary, it must be understood that the difference between the modern and the classic conception of capturing power occurs for the first time with Bonaparte, and that the eighteenth Brumaire is the first *coup d'Etat* in which the problems of modern revolutionary tactics arise. Bonaparte's mistakes, his obstinacy and his indecision are all characteristic of an Eighteenth Century character who has to solve new and delicate questions concerning the complicated nature of the modern State: questions which present themselves for the first time in this particular form.

Bonaparte's most serious mistake was that of founding his plan of the eighteenth Brumaire on a respect for law and on the mechanism of Parliamentary

procedure. This “mistake” proves that Bonaparte had such a keen insight into certain contemporary State problems and such an intelligent concern about the dangers inherent in the many and delicate relationships between the citizen and the State, as to be an essentially modern man and a European of our times. Despite the failings in plan and execution, the eighteenth Brumaire is still the model of a Parliamentary *coup d’Etat*. Its salient characteristic lies in the very fact that no Parliamentary *coup d’Etat* in modern Europe can take place without the same failings in plan and execution. This brings us to Bauer, Primo de Rivera, and Pilsudski.

In the plains of Lombardy, studying the classical examples of Sulla, Catiline and Caesar, Bonaparte prepared his attempt on the State. They were famous but to him useless examples. Catiline’s conspiracy could have no practical interest for Bonaparte. Catiline just missed being a hero and he was a seditious politician far too scrupulous and lacking in boldness. Yet Cicero was a wonderful Prefect of Police. Catiline and his fellow conspirators were carefully drawn into his net and his powerful cynicism attacked them like a modern newspaper campaign. Cicero certainly knew how to reap the benefit of all his opponents’ mistakes, of all the red tape procedure, the snares, the weakness, the ambitions and the lower instincts of the nobles and the plebs. In those days, Bonaparte willingly and freely gave vent to his scorn of police systems. He considered Catiline as a mere schemer, very unwary, obstinate and undecided, full of good resolutions and evil intentions, as a revolutionary who never could choose the hour, the place, or the means; who was unable to face the people at the right moment, a rebel wavering between barricades and conspiracy, losing precious moments while he listened to Cicero’s “*quo usque tandem,*” or organized the electoral campaign against the National Bloc. Catiline had the manner of a much slandered Hamlet, and seemed to be a prey both to the intrigues of a famous lawyer and to police traps. And Cicero was useless and at the same time necessary. One might say of him what Voltaire once said of the Jesuits: “If the Jesuits are to be of any use, they must be prevented from becoming necessary.” Although Bonaparte despised police methods, and the idea of a sudden police rising revolted him as strongly as a rough barracks revolution, he was fascinated by Cicero’s cleverness. Such a man might have proved useful one day. One could never tell. The god of Chance, like Janus, faces two ways: one the way of Cicero and one the way of Catiline.

Like all men who prepare to seize power by violent means, Bonaparte was afraid of cutting, in the eyes of France, the figure of Catiline who favored any means useful to his seditious plans, who was a dark horse in a darker conspiracy, ambitious, bold, capable of any excesses, a criminal ready to sack, to massacre and to burn but determined to win at any price even if he should be smothered together with his enemies beneath the ruins of his country. Bonaparte was aware

of the fact that Catiline's reputation was made by legend and calumny. He knew that Cicero's judgment lacked any foundation and that the Ciceronian theory was a tissue of lies. He also knew that the case against Catiline was legally a crime and that the "criminal," or the "sinister conspirator," was none other than a very average politician, unskilled in political play and so unreliably obstinate that the police could easily get rid of him with the help of a few spies and agents provocateurs. Bonaparte recognized Catiline's great mistake in the latter's failure to win after letting the whole world know that he was preparing a *coup d'Etat* in great secrecy, which he never carried out. If he had only tried his luck! There was certainly no lack of opportunity: the situation at home was such that the Government could not possibly have coped with an attempt at revolution. Cicero cannot enjoy all the credit for the fact that the Republic, by means of a few speeches and police measures, was spared such a serious menace. But since Catiline died on the field of battle, his end was really that of the great patrician and courageous soldier that he was. Bonaparte, however, was none the less correct in his surmise that so much uproar was needless and that it was unnecessary for Catiline to involve himself to such an extent and cause so many misfortunes if, in the end, he was only going to fly to the mountains and there die a death worthy of a Roman. Napoleon thought that Catiline might have enjoyed a better end to his life.

The careers of Sulla and Julius Caesar were subjects of far the greatest speculation for Bonaparte when he thought about his own destiny. They shared his genius and they also shared the spirit of his time. The ideas which inspired Bonaparte to prepare and execute the *coup d'Etat* of the eighteenth Brumaire were not yet fully developed. The art of capturing power seemed to him an essentially military art in which the tactics of warfare were applied to a political struggle, and in which military maneuvers turned into a civilian contest.

The strategy used in the conquest of Rome was not a proof of the political but of the military genius common to Sulla and Julius Caesar. The obstacles they had to overcome in order to capture Rome were exclusively military. They had to fight armies and not political assemblies. The landing at Brindisi and the crossing of the Rubicon did not usher in the *coup d'Etat*: both were pure strategy and of no political importance. Sulla and Caesar, Hannibal and Belisair, all had the same strategic objective: the capture of a town. Those men were like great captains for whom the art of warfare held no secret. Sulla's military genius, like that of Caesar, was much greater than his political sense. Whether they landed at Brindisi or crossed the Rubicon, their campaigns were not, of course, entirely limited by a strategic plan, and there was an underlying policy in every movement of their legions. The art of warfare includes a hundred minor policies and far-reaching plans. Turenne, Charles XII, Foch, indeed every captain is the instrument of his country's policy and his strategy must conform to the political

interests of the State. Wars have always been fought for political ends and they are only one aspect of the nation's politics. History offers no example of a captain who practiced the art of war for its own sake and yet there are no amateurs among these captains, great or small, not even among the Italian Condottiere. It was Giovanni Acuto (John Hawkwood), the English Condottiere engaged by the Florentine Republic, who said "One goes to war to live and not to die," which was neither the wit of a dilettante nor the motto of a mercenary. His saying contains the whole spirit and justification of war. Caesar, Frederick the Great, Nelson, or Bonaparte could well have chosen it for a motto.

When Sulla and Caesar set out to conquer Rome, they naturally had a political end in view, but we must give unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's and unto Sulla his due. Neither ever made a *coup d'Etat*. The famous campaigns by which these two great captains captured the Republic were further removed from a *coup d'Etat* than any common seditious conspiracy. It took Sulla a year to fight his way along the road from Brindisi to Rome, or in other words, to crown his revolutionary attempt with final success after its beginnings in Brindisi. That space of time was too lengthy for a *coup d'Etat*. Everyone knows that the art of warfare has its rules and the exceptions to its rule: the latter only were obeyed by Sulla. As for the rules and exceptions of politics, both Sulla and Caesar only began to follow them, after entering Rome. Even then, they obeyed the exceptions rather than the rules, since that is customary and characteristic of all captains once they begin to make new laws and a new order in the towns they have captured.

In the plains of Lombardy in 1797, a year full of promise for an unscrupulous General who would be bold rather than ambitious, Napoleon must have begun to feel that the examples of Sulla and Caesar might prove disastrous to him. He saw that Hoche's mistakes in carelessly offering to make the *coup d'Etat* for the Directorate, when compared with those of Sulla and Caesar, were much less serious. On July 14th, in a proclamation to the Italian soldiers, Bonaparte warned the Clichy Club that he was getting ready to cross the Alps and march on Paris in order to protect the Constitution, liberty, Government, and the Republicans. His words seem to spell his own anxiety lest he should be anticipated by Hoche's impatience rather than his secret passion to vie with Caesar. The chief point was to keep on friendly terms with the Directorate and not to sympathize too openly with its opponents.

As early as 1797 Napoleon began to see that the proper instrument for capturing the State must be the army. In appearance this instrument must be subject to the laws, and in the use of it legality must not be violated. It is in this attention to legality that we find Bonaparte arriving at a notion of the capture of the State widely different from his antique models—those illustrious but dangerous examples.

Amid the many actors in the affair of Brumaire, Bonaparte is the one who appears least at his ease.

Since his return from Egypt he has been continually pushing himself forward and exciting turn by turn admiration, hatred, ridicule and suspicion. He has compromised himself needlessly. Siéyès and Talleyrand are disturbed at his mistakes. What can he be after? Why does he not let the others do anything? Siéyès and Lucien Bonaparte have their attention steady upon the whole plan, which is fixed down to the minutest details. Siéyès, scrupulous and careful, considers that the State cannot be captured in a single day and that Bonaparte's impatience is a great danger; and his taste for rhetoric is another, adds Talleyrand. Why drag in Caesar and Cromwell in this manner? It is Bonaparte alone who is in the case. If legal appearances are to be respected, if the State is to be captured not by way of a mere camp revolution or a police plot, but by parliamentary methods with the complicity of the Ancients and of the Five Hundred, and along the lines of delicate and complex procedure, then Bonaparte simply must not persist in certain of his attitudes. A victorious general about to seize the power in the State should not go begging for applause, nor lose his time in intrigues.

Siéyès had foreseen all possible difficulties and taken advance measures against them, even learning to ride a horse for the purposes of triumph or of disaster as the case might be. elected President of the Council of the Five Hundred proposed the names of four of his own intimates for the post of Inspector's of the Assembly House. For in a parliamentary revolution even such attendants may be of importance. The attendants of the Assembly House of the Ancients meanwhile had been got hold of by Siéyès. A pretext was now needed for convoking both Houses for a meeting outside Paris at St. Cloud - some plot, some Jacobin conspiracy, some public danger. Siéyès set the police on producing such a pretext: the result was the "terrible Jacobin conspiracy" by which the Republic was officially declared to be endangered. So the Assemblies would quietly meet at St. Cloud, the plan would be realized in all its details.

Bonaparte fell in with the views of his friends. His manner henceforth was more reserved, his intrigues more prudently conducted and his self-confidence more restrained. He had gradually come to the conclusion that he was the *deus et machina* of the scene, and was thus convinced that all would happen precisely as he desired. Nonetheless it was the others who led him through the complexities of the moment; Séyès held his hand and showed him the way. For after all Bonaparte was nothing but a soldier as yet; his political genius was to be revealed only after the eighteenth Brumaire. All the great captains Sulla, Caesar; and Bonaparte no less than them, were no more than soldiers during the preparation of executing the *coup d'Etat*. They may make great efforts to retain forms of legality and to show a loyal respect for the State: but that is only on e

sign the more of the illegality of their proceedings and of their contempt for the State. They dismounted from horseback to take part in the political struggle, but they forgot to remove their spurs. Lucien Bonaparte meanwhile was watching his brother with a close attention for every gesture, nay for the most secret of his thoughts. And he smiled, with a touch of bitterness already, feeling more certain of his brother than of himself. All was now ready. What more could happen to change the course of events and to frustrate the *coup d'Etat*?

Bonaparte's plan had one fundamental error, the respect for legality. From the beginning Siéyès had objected to the notion that the plot could be kept within the limits of the law. In his view much allowance must be made for unforeseen eventualities, which are always the occasion for the finest displays of revolutionary violence. It is always dangerous to be forced down a narrow passage. Besides, to this philosopher of law the notion of a legal *coup d'Etat* seemed absurd. But Bonaparte was not to be shaken. He would take risks sooner than infringe legal forms. In the night of Brumaire, the seventeenth and eighteenth, Siéyès warned him there was trouble in the suburbs and that he would be well advised to arrest a couple of dozen Deputies; Bonaparte refused to countenance the illegal act. His plan was for a parliamentary rebellion. He would capture the Civil power without breaking the law or using violence, and when Fouché offered him his services he answered that he had no need for the police; his prestige, the glory of his name would suffice. So in all simplicity he believed.

In fact however the impetuous General, the rhetorical warrior had no notion how to carry on within the bounds of strict legality. As soon as he appeared on the morning of the eighteenth Brumaire before the Council of the Ancients he quite forgot that his part was to offer his victorious sword for the service of the representatives of the people. He quite forgot that he must present himself to the Ancients not as a second Caesar but as a defender of the Constitution against Jacobin plotters. He must be no more than a General charged by the Council of the Ancients with ensuring the peaceful transfer of the Assembly to St. Cloud, and he must patiently play this minor part in a parliamentary comedy in which the Assembly instead would be the principal actor. But the speech he made to the Assembly of spectacled middle-class citizens, as he stood among his officers gay with gold and silver braid seemed to have been put in his mouth by some unfriendly deity.

He could speak nothing but mock heroic sentiment derived from his own hasty studies of the enterprises of Alexander and Caesar: "What we want is a republic founded upon true liberty, civil liberty, representation of the people-and I swear we shall have it." The officers around him echoed the oath. The Ancients meanwhile looked on in silent astonishment. There was nothing to prevent any member of this tame assembly, no matter how insignificant, from rising to attack Bonaparte in the name of Liberty, the Republic, the Constitution, those grand

words, so empty, by that time, of meaning, but still so dangerous for the purposes of rhetoric. Siéyès had foreseen this danger also. During the night the attendants of the Assembly had destroyed the summons to the meeting addressed to Deputies of doubtful views. But still Bonaparte was in peril from insignificant individuals who had escaped Siéyès' notice. In fact Deputy Garat arose to speak. "None of these soldiers," he declared, "has taken the oath to the Constitution." Bonaparte turned pale beneath the reproof. But the President intervened in time and the meeting was suspended amid shouts of "Long live the Republic."

Bonaparte revealed himself yet more fully in the course of reviewing his troops in the Park of Tuileries. In a high-pitched voice he had spoken frankly to Bottot as he left the Assembly of the Ancients, and now his speech to his troops was defiant and menacing. He felt sure of himself. When however Fouché insisted that the most turbulent Deputies must be arrested, Bonaparte refused to give the order, saying it needless now that everything was going so well. A few more formalities, and the capture of the State would be completed. Believing this, Bonaparte was obviously out of his depth amid the dangerous currents of the moment. On the next day the nineteenth Brumaire at St. Cloud Siéyès himself began to be aware of all the mistakes that had been made, and to show alarm for the future, but Bonaparte continued to show such confidence in his prestige and in the prospects of the plan and such contempt for the lawyers of the Assembly, as he called them, that Talleyrand wondered whether to call him simple or stupid.

Siéyès had conceived the whole plan in terms of legal forms and the rules of parliamentary procedure; yet he had left out of account certain practical details. Why was the Assembly convoked at St. Cloud on the nineteenth Brumaire and not on the eighteenth? Why were these twenty-four hours left to the opponents to study the situation and to organize resistance? And why if the St. Cloud meeting was to be delayed to the nineteenth were the two houses convoked for so late an hour as two o'clock instead of midday? The Deputies had two hours in which to exchange their impressions, their views and their projects and to agree upon joint action against attempted fraud or violence. The Five Hundred determined to put up a fight. They were exasperated at the sight of the soldiers massed all round them. They rushed up and down the passages and courtyards asking one another why they had agreed to leave Paris, and demanding names and details of the alleged Jacobin conspiracy. Siéyès had forgotten to forge proofs of the plot. He perceived some of the Deputies smiling, some of them pale with excitement. He saw that the situation was far from clear, that all might turn upon a single word or gesture. If he had only listened to Fouché but now it was too late, they must trust to chance, for there was nothing else to trust. These were novel tactics for bringing off a revolution.

At two o'clock the Council of the Ancients assembled. Siéyès' plans were checked at the very outset. The respectable citizens were in a frenzy; fortunately the tumult was such that there could be no speeches. At the Orangery the Five Hundred received their President, Lucien Bonaparte, with a storm of oaths, accusations and menaces. All was lost, thought Siéyès, and with a pale face made for the door to escape the tumult. He had arranged for a carriage to await him at the edge of the Park in case he should need to escape. A carriage was more comfortable and safer than a horse. The prudent Siéyès was not likely to neglect such a detail in drawing up his plans for capturing the State. Nor was he the only uncomfortable person during those minutes while Bonaparte and his friends, in the apartment on the first floor, impatiently awaited the votes of the Assemblies. If the Ancients rejected the decree of dissolution, if they nominated three temporary Consuls and determined to reform the Constitution, what was to become of the revolutionary plan so minutely designed by Siéyès in all its details? Siéyès for that eventuality had planned nothing more than escape in a carriage.

Up to that moment Bonaparte concerned above all to keep to the form of legality and to act within the limits of parliamentary procedure had behaved like a modern Liberal. And in this he has been the originator of a tradition. All the soldiers who subsequently have sought to capture civil power have been faithful to this rule up to the last moment, that is to say, up to the moment when violence becomes necessary. The Liberalism of military men is always dangerous, today more than ever.

As soon as he saw that Siéyès' plans were checked beyond hope by the opposition of the Ancients and the Five Hundred, Bonaparte determined to put Parliament to the test by appearing in person. This was still, in a manner, a Liberal method of procedure, though reinforced by violence-Liberalism as interpreted by a soldier. At the sight of Bonaparte the Ancients calmed down. But the disciple of Caesar and Cromwell was once more betrayed by his eloquence. His speech, listened to at first in respectful silence, was punctuated later by murmurs of disapproval. When he pronounced the words, "If I am a traitor you may each of you play the part of Brutus," there was laughter in the recesses of the Hall. The orator was put out, hesitated, muttered and then resumed in a loud voice, "Remember that I am backed by the God War, the God of Fortune." The Deputies arose and surrounded the platform: they were laughing. "General, you don't know what you're saying," murmured the faithful Bourienni and seized him by the arm. Bonaparte allowed himself to be led away from the Hall.

A few moments later he crossed the threshold of the Orangery escorted by four grenadiers and several officers. The Five Hundred received him with yells: "Outlaw, tyrant, down with him." They stormed him with insults and even

blows. The four grenadiers closed round him to protect him while the officers made a way for him through the tumult. It was Gardanne who succeeded in carrying him out of the Hall. The only thing now, thought Siéyès, was flight : the only hope now, said Bonaparte to his friends, was force. In the Hall of the Five Hundred a decree of outlawry was put to the vote. In a few minutes the successor of Caesar and Cromwell would be outlawed and done for.

Bonaparte mounted his horse and confronted his troops. "To arms," he shouted. The soldiers replied with cheers but no more. This was the most typical scene of the famous two days. Distraught and trembling with rage Bonaparte looked around him. The hero of Arcole had not succeeded in carrying with him a single battalion. Had Lucien not arrived at that moment all would have been lost. It was Lucien who got the soldiers moving and saved the situation, while Murat unsheathing his sword led the Grenadiers to the assault of the Five Hundred.

Caesar and Cromwell at that moment Montron was to protest that the General had misplayed his part. Montron ("A Talleyrand on horseback," he was called by Roedeor) was all his life convinced that the hero of the pages of Plutarch had at St. Cloud for a moment trembled with fear, and that any little obscure citizen, any one of the lawyers of the Parliament, might without danger to himself during those two famous days have frustrated the destiny of Bonaparte and saved the Republic.

CHAPTER SIX

PRIMO DE RIVERA AND PILSUDSKI: A COURTIER AND A SOCIALIST GENERAL

Bonaparte solved the problem of capturing the State by using his army as though it were a legal weapon in the field of parliamentary procedure. He set an example which still exercises much influence on all those who, like Kapp, Primo de Rivera, and Pilsudski, pretend to conciliate the use of violence with respect for the law and seek to make a parliamentary revolution by force of arms. The tactics of the eighteenth Brumaire were not those of military sedition. Their main concern was to keep within the law; therein lay Napoleon's innovation in the technique of the *coup d'Etat*. This contemporary problem is in evidence in the operations of Kapp, of Primo de Rivera, and of Pilsudski, and its presence accounts for the importance, even today, of the eighteenth Brumaire. Bonapartist tactics are still an imminent danger to parliamentary States. What was Kapp's illusion? That of being a Siéyès to von Luttwitz and thus making the *coup d'Etat*. Similarly, Ludendorff's tactics, when in 1923, he joined forces with Hitler and Kahr to march on Berlin, were those of the eighteenth Brumaire. What was his objective? The same as Kapp's: the Reichstag, the Constitution of Weimar. And so with Primo de Rivera and Pilsudski: the one aimed to strike at the Cortes, the other at the Diet. Even Lenin himself, in the first stages, in the summer of 1917, began to adopt Bonapartist tactics. The main reason for the failure of the insurrectional tactics of July 1917 was that the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party and Lenin himself were opposed to an insurrection after the first Soviet Congress. Their sole objective was a parliamentary one, namely, to win a majority in the Soviets. Until the eve of the *coup d'Etat*, Lenin, then hiding in Finland after the July Days, thought only of securing a majority in the second Soviet Congress which was to meet in October. A mediocre tactician, he sought parliamentary security before giving the signal for insurrection. "Like Danton and like Cromwell," observes Lunacharski, "Lenin is a born opportunist."

The method of Bonaparte was to observe all forms, not for their own sake, but for the exigencies of the moment. The fundamental rule of Bonapartist tactics is to choose Parliament as the best ground on which to combine the use of violence with respect for the law. Such was the essence of the eighteenth Brumaire. Kapp, Primo de Rivera, Pilsudski and, in certain respects, even Hitler, were men of law and order, reactionary men whose aim in seizing the power was to increase their prestige, their power and authority; bent on justifying their seditious motive by claiming to be not the enemy but the servant of the State. What they feared most was to be outlawed. When making their plan, they could never forget how Bonaparte paled when he heard that he had been outlawed.

Parliament was the goal of their tactics; through Parliament they wished to overthrow the State. Legislative power alone, so favorable to the game of compromise and intrigue, could help them to include a *fait accompli* in the constitutional order. Then revolutionary despotism

Parliament, either accepts the *fait accompli* and makes it constitutional by transforming the *coup d'Etat* into a change of Ministry, or the conspirators dissolve Parliament and give a new Assembly the task of legalizing revolutionary action. But a Parliament that undertakes to legalize a *coup d'Etat* is merely signing its own death warrant. In the history of revolution there is no exception to the rule that an assembly which has once legalized revolutionary action is the first victim of that action. The aim being to increase the State's prestige, power and authority, the Bonapartist method of achieving it is merely Constitutional reform and curtailment of Parliamentary prerogatives. For a Bonapartist *coup d'Etat*, the only guarantee of legality lies in a constitutional reform which limits public and parliamentary rights. Liberty is its chief enemy.

Bonapartist tactics must at all costs remain within the field of the law. They rely on the use of violence only to hold their position on this field or to fight their way back on to it if they have been forced to retreat. What action did Bonaparte take, the constitutional Bonaparte of the eighteenth Brumaire, when he learned that the Five Hundred had "outlawed" him? He had to resort to violence: he ordered his soldiers to evacuate the "Orangery"; he hunted down and dispersed the representatives of the Nation. But a few hours later, Lucien Bonaparte, President of the Council of the Five Hundred, hastily re-called a number of deputies, held another meeting of the Council, and with that so-called Assembly, set to work legalizing the *coup d'Etat*. The tactics of the eighteenth Brumaire can only be applied within constitutional limits. The existence of Parliament is an indispensable condition of a Bonapartist *coup d'Etat*. An absolute Monarchy would allow of nothing more serious than a cabal or military sedition.

A dictator's adherents usually turn him into a Plutarchian hero. It is the fate of all dictators. Though this was the lot of Primo de Rivera and of Pilsudski, they would doubtless have met with difficulties far more serious if the Cortes and the Diet had been the House of Commons or the Palais-Bourbon.

But their success did not depend upon the fact that the Cortes and the Diet were not the House of Commons or the Palais-Bourbon, and that in Spain in 1923 and in Poland in 1926 there was no Parliamentary democracy strong enough to defend public rights. One of the gravest dangers which confronts a modern State is the vulnerability of Parliament. All Parliaments, without exception, are more or less vulnerable. Parliamentary democracies make the mistake of placing too much faith in the triumphs of liberty, while in reality nothing is more fragile than the modern European State. It is a dangerous illusion to believe that Parliament

is the best defense of the State against a Bonapartist venture, and that liberty can be protected by liberty itself and by police measures. This is what the deputies of the Cortes and the Diet believed until the eve of the *coups d'Etat* of Primo de Rivera and Pilsudski.

Among the heroes of Plutarch's *Illustrious Lives*, there is scarcely a single gentleman. Perhaps this is why Primo de Rivera, gentleman and general, will not go down to history as one of Plutarch's heroes.

Nothing in the unfortunate story of this dictator is so tragic as his loyalty and his sincerity. He cannot be accused of having served his country with mediocre intelligence, rather should he be accused of having placed his high character at the disposal of the King. Dictators should beware of constitutional kings, even as Metternich did. The complicity of the King is the most interesting—perhaps the only interesting element in the Spanish dictatorship. But for the collusion of Alphonso XIII, Primo de Rivera would not have seized the power, dissolved the Cortes, suppressed public rights, and yet governed within the limits of the Constitution. The real *deus ex machina* of the *coup d'Etat*, responsible for the dictatorship, was not Primo de Rivera, but the King. It is said that de Rivera was a Bonaparte despite himself, in that parody of the eighteenth Brumaire; but throughout the hopeless comedy of a *coup d'Etat* and a dictatorship “in the name of the King,” Primo de Rivera merely played the role of a “Mussolini despite himself” in the political service of a seditious King. In a Constitutional Monarchy there is no room for dictator: only courtiers might, out of a spirit of flattery, try their hand at a *coup d'Etat*. The collusion of the King and Primo de Rivera was not so much a compromise between the Constitution and the Dictatorship as an equivocal pact between a courtier and his King. Primo de Rivera was not a dictator; he was merely a courtier. This plot whose stakes were constitutional safeguards, the rights of Parliament, and political freedom, could only end in treason. It was a poor story in which a King added treason to complicity in a venture for which he alone could be held responsible before the Constitution and the people.

The lesson to be learned from Spain is unfavorable to dictatorships “by order of the King.” To justify the attitude of Alphonso XIII towards his accomplice and to explain the advent of the Republic, it has been said that instead of giving the State an “autocratic democracy,” he merely gave it a dictatorship. Are we to believe that Primo de Rivera did not serve his King faithfully? Was it not the aim of his dictatorship to attack the rights of Parliament and constitutional liberty and indeed to create an “autocratic democracy”? That Primo de Rivera, as a faithful servant of the crown, obeyed only the will of the King was proved by the course of events. He cannot be blamed for this logical outcome of dictatorship, but a constitutional Monarch

should not have forgotten it. This logical sequence of events gave birth to the Spanish Republic.

Of all the *coups d'Etat* which bear comparison with the eighteenth Brumaire, that of Pilsudski in May 1926 is perhaps the most interesting. In 1920, Lloyd George called Pilsudski a Socialist Bonaparte (he never liked Socialist Generals). And Pilsudski showed that he knew how to enlist Karl Marx in the service of a bourgeois dictatorship. The new element in Pilsudski's *coup d'Etat* was the complicity of the working masses. Those who carried out his insurrectional tactics were not workers, but soldiers of regiments which had mutinied. It was those soldiers who occupied the bridges, the depots of provisions and ammunitions, the crossroads, railway stations, telephone and telegraph offices, and the banks. The masses took no part in the attack on Warsaw's strategic points which were defended by troops faithful to the Witos government, nor in the siege of the Belvedere where the President of the Republic and his Ministers had taken refuge. Once more, soldiers played their classic role in Bonapartist tactics. The novel element in this insurrection was a general strike proclaimed by the Socialist Party to help Pilsudski fight the coalition of the Right and thus cut the ground from under Witos' feet. This original factor in the game gave a new social justification to the violent act of military sedition. Since the workers were involved, Pilsudski's soldiers seemed to be defending the liberty of the people. Thanks to a participation of the working masses in the tactics of revolution, a general strike quickly turned the military revolt into a popular insurrection backed up by a part of the army. Thus Pilsudski, nothing more than a rebel general at the beginning of the *coup d'Etat*, became a sort of captain of the people, a proletarian hero, as Lloyd George had said: a Socialist Bonaparte.

But a General Strike alone could not bring Pilsudski within the pale of the law. He too was afraid of being outlawed. At bottom, this Socialist general was only a bourgeois Catiline engaged in planning and carrying out the most audacious schemes within the civic and historic traditions of his time and of his people. He was a rebel who undertook to overthrow the State without being outlawed. Such was his hatred of Witos that he denied him the right to defend the State. When the troops which remained faithful to the Government resisted attack, Pilsudski, like a true Lithuanian Pole, "wild and stubborn," was thoroughly roused. He countered machine-gun with machine-gun. It was the Lithuanian Pole who kept the Socialist General from becoming a legal instrument of Government, from taking advantage of subsequent events to undo the mistakes made at the beginning. A Parliamentary *coup d'Etat* is not started by an active military expedition. As Montron would say: "It isn't done."

Pilsudski found a conspirator in the Socialist Party, and tactical strength in a general strike; but he had to win the Marshal of the Diet as an ally. Pilsudski

was going to overthrow the State by means of the Constitution. While the battle was being fought in the suburbs of Warsaw and General Haller got ready to come from Posnania to rescue the Government, inside the besieged Belvedere, Woitciekowski, President of the Republic, and Witos, President of the Council, decided to place the power in the hands of the Marshal of the Diet, according to constitutional custom. From then on, the guarantor of the Constitution was no longer the President of the Republic, but the Marshal of the Diet. This was merely the beginning of the Parliamentary *coup d'Etat*: until then it was no more than a military revolt, strengthened by a general strike. Pilsudski afterwards said that if Woitciekowski and Witos had waited until the arrival of their loyal troops, the revolutionary attack would probably have failed. A too hasty decision on the part of the President of the Republic and of Witos transformed the insurrection into a Parliamentary *coup d'Etat*. Now it was up to the Marshal of the Diet to let Pilsudski take his stand on legal ground. "I do not wish to establish a dictatorship," announced Pilsudski, as soon as he felt his feet on Parliamentary ground. "I intend to act only according to the Constitution, to increase the prestige, the power, and the authority of the State." Like all reactionary conspirators who seize power by force, his one ambition was to pass for a faithful servant of the State.

And Pilsudski made his entry into Warsaw like a true servant of the State, his carriage drawn by four horses and escorted by smiling Uhlans. The crowds lining the pavements of the Krakowski Przedmiescie welcomed him with cries of "Long live Pilsudski! Long live the Republic!" The Marshal of the Diet would not find it difficult to come to terms with him about the Constitution. He thought: "Now that the Revolution is over, we shall be able to understand each other."

But the Parliamentary *coup d'Etat* had only just begun. And even today, when the Constitution has gradually become an instrument of dictatorship, and when democratic and proletarian Poland is a willing supporter of insurrection, and still an enemy of the Socialist General, after so many conspiracies and so many lost illusions, Pilsudski has not yet found a way of reconciling violence with legality.

In 1926 Pilsudski's Parliamentary *coup d'Etat* was just beginning. Today it is a *coup d'Etat* which is still unsuccessful

CHAPTER SEVEN

MUSSOLINI

In October 1922, at the very moment, that is, of the Fascist seizure of power, I chanced to fall in with Israel Zangwill, an English author who had never been able to throw off liberal and democratic preconceptions either in his life or in his art.

On arriving in Florence, at the exit of the railway station, he had been arrested by one or two Black Shirts to whom he had refused to show his papers. A sworn foe of violence and of illegal methods, he belonged to the English Union of Democratic Control. The armed men occupying the railway station of Florence were neither carabinieri nor soldiers nor policemen. They were simply Black Shirts, individuals, who in Zangwill's view had no right whatever to occupy the station or to demand to see his papers. He was taken to Fascist Headquarters in the Piazza Mentana, near the Arno. There, in the building formerly occupied by the Engineers Trade Union, a Socialist organization which the Fascists had broken up with violence, the English writer was brought before Consul Tamburini, then in supreme command of the Black Shirts in Florence. Tamburini called me in to act as interpreter. I was greatly surprised on arrival to find that the prisoner was Israel Zangwill, who was magnificently cast for the role of a member of the Union of Democratic Control outraged by a revolution which was neither English nor liberal or democratic.

In fact he was furious. In the most polished English he expressed thoroughly impolite opinions about revolutions in general and Fascism in particular. Flushed with anger he glared savagely at the unfortunate Tamburini who knew no English but would hardly have understood more of the stranger's liberal and democratic sentiments even had they been expressed in Italian. I did my best to render into polite Italian, observations which could not be pleasing to the ears of a Fascist. I think I did so in Zangwill's best interest, because at that time Consul Tamburini's behavior was not that of an idyllic character from Theocritus or of a member of the Fabian Society. Moreover he had never heard of Israel Zangwill and was not easily convinced that a celebrated English author was before him. "I don't understand a word of English," he said, "and I doubt very much whether you've accurately translated what he said. English is a counter-revolutionary language. Even its grammatical construction is liberal, it seems. Anyway you clear off with this gentleman and I try to make him forget the unfortunate incident." So I went off with Zangwill to his hotel and spent some hours with him discussing Mussolini, the political situation, and the struggle for power in the State which had just begun.

It was the first day of the insurrection. Events seemed to follow a pattern which was not that designed by the Government. Israel Zangwill could hardly believe we were already in the midst of a revolution. "At Paris in 1789," he objected, "there was revolution not only in the minds of the Parisians but in the streets." Truth to tell, Florence at that moment looked nothing like Paris in 1789. The people in the streets appeared calm and indifferent; they smiled with polite irony as Florentines have done throughout the ages. I recalled that at Petrograd in 1917, on the very day when Trotsky set the insurrection in motion, nobody could have perceived any external sign of what was happening. The theatres, cinemas, restaurants, and cafés had remained open. "For," said I, "the technique of revolution has evolved greatly in modern times."

"This revolution of Mussolini's is not a revolution," retorted Zangwill, "it's a comedy." Like many Italian liberals and democrats, Zangwill supposed that there was an understanding between the King and Mussolini, and that the insurrection was no more than a diversion to cloak the designs of the Monarchy. Zangwill's opinion was mistaken, but like all English opinions it was too serious to be lightly dismissed. Zangwill started from the supposition that the events of those days were the result of a political maneuver in which cunning and calculation counted for much more than violence and revolutionary enthusiasm. In his view Mussolini derived from Machiavelli rather than from Catiline. And this was a view then widely held throughout Europe, as it still is. Since the beginning of the Nineteenth Century Europe has been used to judging men and events in Italy as the products of a very ancient philosophy and style of life. To a great extent the history of modern Italy is interpreted in this manner by reason of the natural disposition of the Italians towards rhetoric, towards an eloquent and literary manner of expression. Not all Italians have this failing, but many of them have it beyond hope of recovery. Peoples are generally judged by their failings rather than their merits. But even so I cannot believe that the views of foreigners on modern Italy are in any way justified, even if the excess of rhetoric eloquence and literature is such that the history of the country sometimes appears a comedy in which her heroes are the principal actors and everybody else chorus and spectators.

To understand contemporary Italy you must view her objectively, forgetting that there ever were ancient Romans and Renaissance Italians. "If you do that," said I to Israel Zangwill, "you will realize that there is nothing antique about Mussolini. He is always a man of the present age even when he would like to appear something different. His politics have nothing to do with those of Caesar Borgia. What he has learned from Machiavelli is not much different from what Gladstone or Lloyd George learned. His notion of a revolution is utterly remote from that of Sulla or of Julius Caesar. In the next few days you will hear much talk of Caesar and of the Rubicon. That will be just honest rhetoric, and

Mussolini will in no way fail to draw up or to apply a plan of insurrection which will be completely modern. Against it the Government will have nothing to oppose but police measures."

Hereupon Israel Zangwill observed somewhat ironically that Count Oxenstierna in his celebrated Memoirs traces the derivation of the name "Caesar" to a Carthaginian word meaning elephant. "I hope," he said, "that Mussolini will be less clumsy than an elephant and more modern than Caesar in his revolutionary tactics."

Meanwhile Zangwill greatly desired to see at close quarters what I termed the mechanism of the Fascist insurrection. He could not imagine a revolution without barricades, street fighting and corpses on the pavement. "But here everything is completely orderly," he complained. "It's a comedy and nothing but a comedy." From time to time in the middle of Florence lorries loaded with Black Shirts whizzed by. These young Fascists wore steel helmets and carried rifles, bayonets, and hand grenades. They sang lustily and waved black flags on which were embroidered death's heads in silver thread. Zangwill refused to believe that these youths, hardly more than lads, were Mussolini's celebrated shock troops, renowned for their swift and violent methods of assault. "The use of violence by Fascism is unpardonable," he stated.

But Mussolini's revolutionary army was not the Salvation Army. The Black Shirts were equipped with bayonets and bombs not for philanthropic purposes but to make civil war. Those who tried to eliminate the violent element from Fascism and to pass off the Black Shirts as disciples of Rousseau and Tolstoy are the same people who live in a mist of rhetorical eloquence and literature. They are the same people who would like to disguise Mussolini as an ancient Roman, a buccaneer of the Fifteenth Century or a lord of the Renaissance with soft white hands, skilled in poison and in Platonism. With disciples of Rousseau or Tolstoy you cannot engineer revolutions but at most something like comedies. With such troops one could not even snatch control of a State from a liberal Government. "Well, you are no hypocrite," said Zangwill, "but could you kindly show me any signs by which I can be sure that this revolution is not a comedy?"

I offered to conduct him that very evening for a close view of what I called the Fascist mechanism of insurrection. That night Tamberlini had to leave for Rome at the head of his Legion. I had been chosen together with Nenciolini, to take his place at the head of the Black Shirts of the province of Florence. At headquarters where I went to take orders I found General Balbo, one of the four members of the Revolutionary Military Committee. General Balbo was not well satisfied with the situation in Florence. The Black Shirts had indeed pulled off a surprise capture of all the strategic points in the town and province, that is to say

the vital centers of technical organization-gas and electricity works, general Post Offices, telephone and telegraph exchanges, bridges, railway stations. The political and military authorities had been caught quite unprepared. After some vain attempts to expel the Fascists from the railway station, the Post Office, and the telephone and telegraph exchanges, the police had retired to Palazzo Riccardi, formerly the residence of Lorenzo the Magnificent, and now the office of the Royal Prefect. The Palazzo Riccardi was defended by some squads of carabinieri and Royal Guards supported by two armored cars. The Prefect himself, Signor Pericoli, was beleaguered inside, cut off from communication with the Government in Rome and with the authorities in the city and the province. The telephone lines had been cut: machine-guns mounted in the surrounding houses covered every access to the Palace. The garrison troops, infantry, artillery, cavalry, carabinieri and Royal Guards had been confined to barracks. For the moment the military authorities were observing benevolent neutrality. But it was well not to rely too much on that neutrality, for if the situation was not cleared within twenty-four hours it must be expected that Prince Gonzaga, the Army Corps commander, would take steps to restore order by all means in his power. A conflict with the army would be a terrible test for the cause of the revolution. Florence, together with Pisa and Bologna, is the key to communications between the north and the south of Italy. To ensure the transport of the Fascist troops from the north to the province of Rome it was of the greatest importance to keep control of the strategic center of Italy till the moment when the Fascist army marching on the capital should oblige the Government to hand over the power to Mussolini. There was only one means of holding on to Florence and that was by gaining time.

Violence and cunning are not mutually exclusive. At the orders of General Balbo I took a Fascist squad to the offices of the *Nazione*, the chief daily paper of Tuscany. I approached the editor, Signor Borelli, now editor of the *Corriera della Sera*, and asked him immediately to publish a special edition announcing that General Cittadini, the King's aide-de-camp, had gone to Milan to confer with Mussolini, and that thereupon Mussolini had agreed to form a new Ministry. The news was false, but had a semblance of truth. It was generally known that the King had been in residence at San Rossore near Pisa, but was not known that he had left that very evening for Rome accompanied by General Cittadini. Two hours later hundreds of Fascist lorries disseminated throughout Tuscany copies of this special edition of the *Nazione*. Processions were formed: soldiers and carabinieri fraternized with Black Shirts gladly celebrating a solution so creditable to the prudence and patriotism both of Mussolini and the King. Prince Gonzaga himself came to Fascist headquarters to get confirmation of the good news which released him from conflict of mind and from a grave responsibility. He had demanded confirmation of the news of the agreement between the King and Mussolini in a wireless message to Rome but he said that the Ministry of

War would make no definite statement. They had answered that the name of the King must not be involved in party conflicts and that the news was probably premature. "I know by experience," Prince Gonzaga added with a smile, "that true news is always termed premature at the Ministry of War."

During the evening General Balbo had left for Perugia, the headquarters of the revolution. Consul Tamburini had taken the train with his Legion for the Roman Campagna where he was to join on with the main body of the Black Shirt army. I left Fascist headquarters at two in the morning and went along to Zangwill's hotel where he was waiting for me. I was about to undertake an inspection in the countryside and I wanted him to accompany me so that I could show him the certain signs that the Fascist revolution was not a comedy. Zangwill received me with a satisfied smile. In his hand was a copy of the special edition of the *Nazione*. "Are you yet convinced," he asked, "that the King was in agreement with Mussolini? You must allow that a constitutional revolution cannot be anything but a theatrical performance." I explained to him the origin of the false information, at which he appeared greatly embarrassed. "What about the liberty of the Press?" he asked. Obviously a constitutional monarch could not agree with revolutionaries to trample on the liberty of the Press. The comedy was becoming serious. The liberty of the Press however has never prevented newspapers from publishing false information. To my remarks Zangwill could only retort that in a free country like England it is not the false news which expresses the liberty of the Press.

The city was deserted. At the street corners patrols of Fascists stood immobile in the rain, their black fezzes perched slantwise on their heads. In the Via de' Pecori a lorry was stationed in front of the entrance of the telephone exchange: it was one of those armored lorries equipped with machine-guns which the Fascists called their tanks. The telephone exchange had been occupied by the shock troops of the "Red Lily" Squadron who bore that badge on their breast. The "Red Lily" Squadron and the "Desperate" Squadron were among the most violent of the Florentine troops. Near the railway station of Campo di Marte we met five lorries loaded with rifles and machine-guns which the Fascist "cells" in the barracks of San Giorgio had handed over to the Commander-in-Chief of the Legions. For everywhere in the factories, the regiments, the banks and the public offices there had been Fascist cells which were the secret nucleus of the revolutionary organization. The rifles and machine-guns were destined for a thousand or so Black Shirts from Romagna who were armed only with bayonets and revolvers. Their arrival from Faenza was awaited any moment. The Military Commander at the station told me he believed that at Bologna and Cremona there had been conflicts with the carabinieri in which the Fascist losses had been considerable. The Black Shirts had attacked the barracks of the carabinieri and these had defended themselves with great energy. At Pisa,

Lucca, Livorno, Siena, Arezzo and Grosseto the news was better. All the technical organization of the towns and the province was in the hands of the Fascists.

“How many dead?” asked Israel Zangwill. He was astonished to learn that there had been no bloodshed anywhere in Tuscany. “Apparently then,” he said, “your revolution is much more serious at Bologna and Cremona than here.” In October 1917 the Bolshevik insurrection had occurred almost without losses. The only deaths recorded were on the occasion of the counterrevolution some days after the Bolshevik capture of the State, when the Red Guards of Trotsky had the task of downing the movement of the officers, repelling Kerenski’s Cossacks and dealing with General Krasnoff. So I remarked, “By the bloodshed in Bologna and Cremona it demonstrated that there was some fault there in the Fascist mechanism of insurrection. When the machine runs perfectly, as in Tuscany, accidents are very rare.” Israel Zangwill could not but smile ironically. “Your King,” he said, “is a sound mechanic. It is due to him that your machine can run without faults.”

At that moment a train arrived in a cloud of smoke and a din of shouts, songs and drumbeats “Those are the Fascists from Romagna,” remarked a railway employee who was pacing the station with rifle in hand. In a few minutes we were in the midst of a crowd of Black Shirts, a picturesque but uncomfortable-looking set of fellows, with their death’s heads embroidered on their shirt fronts, their steel helmets painted red and their bayonets stuck in large leather belts. Sunburnt faces they had with the hard features common among the peasants of the Romagna and with little pointed beards. They appeared adventurous, fierce, even menacing, and Zangwill was obviously disquieted. He smiled pleasantly however and tried to make his way through the middle of this noisy throng with polite gestures, at which the armed youths showed much astonishment. “They look a pretty rough lot” he complained to me. “Well, you’d hardly expect smoothness in the shock troops of a revolution, would you?” I replied. “Mussolini’s political battle in the last four years has not been fought with gentleness or cunning, but with violence, the hardest, the most inexorable scientific violence.”

Israel Zangwill was really having an extraordinary adventure. Arrested by a patrol of Black-Shirted Jacobins, and then released, now he was being transported by automobile in the middle of the night to see for himself the signs that the revolution of the Fascists was not a comedy. “I must not look like Candide among the Jesuits,” he remarked smilingly. He looked indeed somewhat like Candide in the middle of these warriors, if it is conceivable that an Englishman with the name of Israel should be like Candide. These Herculean peasants with their hard eyes, stout jaws, and big rough hands, surveyed him from head to feet, staring and contemptuous, and furthermore astonished and

rather vexed to find perched among them a gentleman in a white collar with shy polite manners who did not even look like a police official or a bourgeois member of Parliament.

We mounted our conveyance again and as we dashed through the empty streets I remarked to Israel Zangwill, "Your contempt for the Fascist revolution which you call a comedy is surely in contradiction with you] - hatred of the Black Shirts whom English Liberals every day denounce for their use of violence. If the revolutionaries are men of violence how can the revolution be mere play-acting? But I tell you the Black Shirts are not only violent, they are pitiless. It is true that sometimes their newspapers protest against what their opponents say about their violence. But that is hypocrisy for the consolation of the lower middle classes. After all Mussolini himself is not a vegetarian, a Christian Scientist or a Social Democrat. He was brought up as a Marxist and is thus quite free of Tolstoyan scruples : he never learned at Oxford to behave like a gentleman in politics, and any tastes for romance or philanthropy have been expelled by his acquaintance with Nietzsche. If Mussolini were a mild-eyed little gentleman with a quiet voice his followers would certainly leave him for some ' other leader. Why, a year ago when Mussolini did propose making a truce with the Socialists there were actually rebellions and disputes within the Fascist Party. The great majority of the Black Shirts stood out for continuing the civil war. You must remember that the Black Shirts originate mostly from the parties of the extreme Left. Many of them were ex-soldiers with hearts hardened by four years of war. Many again are young men with strong emotions. And don't forget that the God of armed men must be a God of violence."

"I shall not forget it," Zangwill replied.

When we returned to Florence at dawn Israel Zangwill had had a close view, in epitome, of the events throughout Italy during those days. I had driven him swiftly across the Florentine countryside from Empoli to Mugello, from Pistoia to San Giovanni Valdarno. Bridges, stations, crossroads, viaducts, canal-locks, granaries, munition depots, gas and electricity works, all these strategic positions were occupied by Fascist squads. Suddenly out of the darkness patrols would put the question to us, "Who goes there?" At intervals of two hundred yards all along the railway lines Black Shirt sentinels were posted. At the stations of Pistoia, Empoli, and San Giovanni Valdarno gangs of railway men, fully equipped, were ready to interrupt traffic in case of extreme necessity. In fact every measure to ensure or to prevent the passage of traffic had been taken. The one danger was that reinforcements of carabinieri and soldiers should be sent to Umbria and Latium to attack the legions of Black Shirts in the rear as they marched on the capital. One train full of carabinieri proceeding from Bologna had been stopped near Pistoia some hundreds of metres away from famous bride of Vaioni. Rifle shots had been exchanged, after which the train had shunted

backwards, the driver not daring to risk the bridge. There had been skirmishes also at Serravalle on the way to Lucca. Lorries loaded with Royal Guards had been fired at by the machine-gunners who guarded the access to the plain of Pistoia.

“No doubt you have read in Machiavelli’s life of Castracane the story of the battle of Serravalle,” I remarked to my companion. “I do not read Machiavelli,” replied Zangwill. It was already daylight when we passed through Prato, a small town in the neighborhood of Florence, an important center of the textile industry with twenty-five thousand workmen in two hundred factories. It is known as the Manchester of Italy. Francesco di Marco Datini was born there, said to have been the inventor of the Bill of Exchange. Politically, Prato has a bad reputation. It is a town notorious for strikes and labour troubles, and is the birthplace of Bresci, who killed Humbert, the second King of Italy, in 1900. The people of Prato are good-hearted, but apt to see red.

All the roads were full of workmen on their way to their occupations. They appeared indifferent to events, and paced along in silence, not even glancing at the proclamations of the Military Revolutionary Committee posted up on the walls during the night. “Perhaps you’re interested to know that D’Annunzio received his classical education at the Cicognini College here in Prato?” I asked. “At the present moment,” Israel Zangwill replied, “what I’m interested to know is what your workmen are doing about the revolution. The danger for you, is not anything the Government can do, but a strike.”

At the end of 1922 the problem which Fascism had to solve was not how to overcome the Liberal Government or a Socialist Party which had become more and more parliamentary, and at the same time increasingly an element of trouble in the constitutional life of the country. Fascist’s problem was how to overcome the trade unions, the only revolutionary force capable of defending the bourgeois State against the Communists and Fascists.

Giolitti had understood the part which the workers’ organizations had played when they were used by Bauer in March 1920 against the insurrectional attempt of Kapp. He had learned that lesson, though cautiously. The political parties were powerless to oppose Fascism, which was fighting by non-political methods, justified as a retort to the violence of the Communist Red Guards. The program of the political parties was to outlaw all the revolutionary forces which refused to submit to the process of “parliamentarization” or (as was said) to “return to legality.” This was no way of forcing Fascists or Communists to renounce methods of violence. What could the Government do to oppose the revolutionary activities of the Black Shirts and the Red Guards? The only use to which the parties of the masses, Socialist and Catholic, could be put, once they had been reduced to the role of constitutional parties, was to support and in a

manner to justify as constitutional any repressive action undertaken by the Government. But something more was needed than police measures to reduce the disorder in which Italy was tormented.

Instead of sending out the armed forces to withstand the revolutionary drive of the Fascists and Communists, Giolitti had prudently decided to neutralize it by confronting it with the action of organized labor. This was Bauer's method, applied as a preventive measure against revolution. But the method which Bauer had applied as a Marxist Giolitti applied as a Liberal. Thus the Trade Unions became an instrument in the service of the Government for combating, by illegal methods, the illegal action of the Black Shirts and Red Guards. In Giolitti's hands the strike became a weapon as dangerous for the Fascists and the Communists as it had been hitherto for the Government. The epidemic of strikes by which the years 1920 and 1921 were marked, appeared to the bourgeois and even to the working class as a malady of the State, an advance signal of the proletarian revolution, a necessary crisis of which the outcome must be the seizure of power by the masses. In reality it was only a symptom of a profound change in the situation. These strikes were not, as in 1919, directed against the State, but against the revolutionary forces which proposed to seize the power independently of the workers' trade unions, and perhaps in the teeth of their opposition. The origin of the long-existing cleft between workers' trade unions and the Socialist Party was the question of the independence of the unions. But the working classes now had to defend against the designs of the revolutionary forces not only the independence but the very existence of their organizations. The workers were defending the liberty of their class against the Fascists. The attitude of the trade unions towards the Communists was just like that of the Russian Unions against the Bolsheviks on the eve of the seizure of power of October 1917.

But Giolitti's notion of applying, on liberal lines, Bauer's Marxist method, only aggravated the situation. Giolitti's liberalism was simply unscrupulous optimism. Giolitti was cynical and distrustful: he is best described as a parliamentary dictator, too clever for belief in any ideas, too prejudiced to respect any men. Somehow he had succeeded in conciliating in his own mind cynicism and distrust with optimism. Thus he would concoct situations without appearing to take any interest in them, and would complicate them with numberless small intrigues, while apparently waiting for them to mature. He had not the smallest belief in the State: on the contrary the secret of his policy was precisely his contempt for the State. His Liberal interpretation of Bauer's Marxist method consisted in substituting the revolutionary force of the trade unions for the repressive force of the State. To the trade unions he committed the defense of the bourgeois State against Fascists and Communists so that he could have his

own hands free for the task of parliamentarizing, that is corrupting the Proletariat.

Towards the end of 1920 a situation had developed in Italy which was unparalleled in the political history of modern Europe. D'Annunzio having captured Fiume threatened at any moment to march into Italy at the head of his legionaries with the aim of getting control of the Government. Even among the organized workers he had friends. Relations were notoriously cordial between the Seamen's Union and the Government of Fiume. The chiefs of the trade union movement considered D'Annunzio not as an enemy but as a dangerous fellow who might entangle the country in international troubles. In any case however he was not seriously taken into account as a possible ally in the struggle against Fascism despite his known jealousy of Mussolini and of the part played by his revolutionary organization in Italian internal politics. But this rivalry between D'Annunzio and Mussolini was no mean card in the hands of Giolitti, who always played his bad cards properly though he could never play his good cards honestly. The Communists meanwhile caught between the assaults of the Fascists on one side and of the Government on the other had lost all influence over the mass of the workers. They had come to be a mere secondary element in the struggle for power in the State by reason of the criminal foolishness of their terrorist methods. Totally misunderstanding the revolutionary problem in Italy they were quite unable to abandon the tactics of isolated assaults and assassinations and sporadic revolts in the barracks and the factories leading to a useless series of street skirmishes in the suburbs. At most their part was that of bold and savage protagonists in an obviously lost cause. Over and over again opportunities were lost or utterly mismanaged during the Red Year of 1919 when any little Trotsky, any little provincial Catiline with a little spirit, a handful of men and few rifle shots could have captured the State without greatly upsetting either the King or the Government or the history of Italy. In the Kremlin the romantic helplessness of the Italian Communists was a regular topic of light conversation. The wise and cheery Lenin used to roar with laughter over the news from Italy: "The Italian Communists, ha, ha, ha." He took a childish delight in the messages which D'Annunzio used to send him from Fiume.

Meanwhile the problem of Fiume was becoming more and more a problem of foreign policy. Since D'Annunzio in September 1919 had created a State of Fiume, the clock of history in the place had been put back centuries in the course of a few months. D'Annunzio's notion was that the State of Fiume should be a first nucleus of a powerful revolutionary organization, and that from Fiume an army of insurrection should go forth to conquer Rome. By the end of 1920 the State of Fiume was an Italian despotism of the Renaissance, rent with internal struggles, distraught by the ambition, the luxury, and the rhetoric of a Prince too fond of words to follow the advice of Machiavelli. Besides the defect of its

anachronism the State of Fiume was afflicted in that its existence was a problem of foreign policy rather than of home policy. The State of Fiume had not been captured by way of revolution nor had its creation modified the internal situation of Italy.

The only effect of that creation had been that an international settlement for Fiume contrary to the principle of the self-determination of peoples had been frustrated. That was D'Annunzio's great achievement, but it was also the cause of his weakness in the internal revolutionary struggle in Italy. Through the creation of the State of Fiume he had come to be a basic element in the foreign policy of Italy, but he had dropped out of internal politics, at all events as a direct influence. The role assigned by D'Annunzio through his legionary army fell naturally to the Black Shirts. While D'Annunzio kept State at Fiume as Prince of an independent realm with its constitutional government, army, finances and ambassadors, Mussolini spread his revolutionary organization ever wider throughout Italy. People used to say that D'Annunzio was "The Prince" and Mussolini his Machiavelli. But for the youth of Italy D'Annunzio was only a symbol, a kind of national Jupiter and the Fiume question was simply a pretext for Mussolini to attack the Government's foreign policy.

Mussolini might profit by the position in Fiume through the elimination of a dangerous rival from the revolutionary struggle, yet he had also reason to be disturbed by it. The effect of his rivalry with D'Annunzio was considerable upon the rank and file of his followers. Those who had originated in the parties of the Right were disturbingly attached to D'Annunzio. Those who came from the party of the Left, Republicans, Socialists, and Communists, in fact the better part of the Fascisti : shock-troops were undisguisably hostile towards ; the resuscitator of the Fifteenth Century.

In Giolitti's hands this rivalry was a card with which repeatedly but unsuccessfully he tried to falsify the game. He thought at first that he could provoke an open struggle between D'Annunzio and Mussolini, but soon realized that he was losing his time on such a project. But the question of Fiume had to be settled quickly, and he made up his mind to capture D'Annunzio's State by force of arms. On Christmas Eve 1920 he profited by a coincidence of favorable circumstances to send several regiments to attack Fiume.

The pained protests of D'Annunzio's legionaries were echoed in an indignant chorus throughout Italy. The Fascists were not yet ready for a general insurrection. The struggle was to be severe. In the countryside and at the outskirts of the cities Black flags and Red flags were already waving, emblems of civil war, in the cold wind of that anxious winter of forebodings. Mussolini's task was not simply to avenge the dead legionaries of Fiume. He had to defend himself against the reactionaries who would have stifled Fascism amid the ruins

of D'Annunzio's state. The Government and the workers' organizations were already in the field with police persecutions on the one side and provocation to bloodshed on the other side: for the workers had now become the aggressors. Giolitti planned to seize the opportunity afforded by the internal struggle within the Fascist Party after the tragic Christmastide of Fiume, and to outlaw Mussolini. The trade union leaders opened their campaign with a series of strikes. Whole towns, provinces and even great regions would be suddenly put out of action through some disturbance in any little village. As soon as the first shot was fired the workers came out on strike. At the alarm signal of the factory hooters the men would troop out of the works, house doors and windows would be bolted, traffic stopped, and the deserted road took on the grim appearance of a man-of-war cleared for action.

In the factories the workers were getting ready for the struggle. Arms were being piled up on every side, behind the chimneys, among the looms, the dynamos and the boilers. In among heaped-up coal could be espied masses of rifles and cartridges. In among the arrested machinery, amid the pistons, the presses, the anvils, the cranes, men passed with oil-smearred faces, calmly intent. They climbed the iron steps of factory chimneys, the swinging bridges, the peaked glass roofs. Their task was to convert every factory into a fortress. High on the chimneys were perched red flags. In the areas the workmen thronged together, organized companies, sections and squads. Chosen leaders marked out by red arm-badges gave orders, and patrols were sent out to spy the land. On their return the workmen would leave the factory and move silently under the cover of the walls towards the strategic points of the town. Squads specially trained for street warfare were drafted to the labor exchanges, 1 to defend the headquarters of the trade unions against Black Shirt assaults. Machine-guns were posted at every exit, at the angle of the stairways, at the end of passages and on the roofs. Hand grenades were heaped up in the offices near the windows. Engine drivers disconnected their engines, dropped the trains in the middle of the country and steamed at high speed into the stations. In the villages farmers' wagons were piled up across the roads to prevent transport of Black Shirts from one town to another. The peasants of the Red Guard were in ambush behind the hedges armed with sporting guns, pitchforks, spades and sickles to spy out the passage of the Fascist lorries. Along the roads of the railways from village to village shots rang out at intervals, right up to the suburbs of the cities, with their profusion of red bunting. As soon as the strike was announced by the hoot of factory whistle, carabinieri, royal guards and police retired to their barracks. Giolitti was too much of a Liberal to interfere in the struggle which the workers were conducting so admirably all by themselves against the enemies of the State.

Thus dangerously isolated by the strike, the Fascist squads specially trained for street warfare were posted at the crossroads, while those assigned to

the task of attacking and defending houses were held in readiness to reinforce weak points, to defend threatened positions or to deliver short, sharp attacks at the heart of the enemy organization. The shock-troops composed of Black Shirts trained to percolate amid crowds, to carry off sudden maneuvers sometimes in isolation, armed with bayonets, bombs and firebrands, stood by near the lorries destined to transport them to the field of struggle. They were specially designed to inflict reprisals. Reprisals were a very important part of Black Shirt tactics. As soon as the death of a Fascist was reported from an outlying quarter or a village the shock-troops went off to inflict reprisals. The Labor Exchanges, the Workmen's Clubs, the houses of the Socialist leaders were attacked, sacked and burned. At the beginning when reprisals were still a novelty the Red Guards fired upon their assailants, and a bloody struggle would be opened around the Labor Exchanges and the Workmen's Clubs, and in the streets of the quarter or village. But soon the terrible weapon of reprisals proved successful. The fighting spirit of the Red Guards was sapped. They lost the courage to defend themselves, the resistance of the workers' organizations was broken at the very heart. On the approach of the Black Shirts, Red Guards, Socialist leaders, trade union secretaries, strike agitators would make off for the country and hide in the woods. Thither they would be hunted-the terrible chase without horns or halloing was often prolonged throughout the night. Sometimes the entire population of a village where a Fascist had been killed took to its heels. The shocktroops arrived to find empty houses, deserted roads, and a single Black Shirt corpse extended on the pavement.

The leaders of the trade unions did more however to oppose the rapid, violent, pitiless tactics of the Fascist than merely to offer what they called unarmed resistance. Officially indeed they took responsibility for nothing but strikes, yet they were at pains to rouse the fighting spirit of the workers in every possible way. They pretended not to know that in the Labor Exchanges and the Workers' Clubs there were stocks of guns and bombs, but they never intended the strike to be a peaceful demonstration. It was to be an act of war, the necessary background for the street war tactics of the workers. " - The strike is our way of reprisal," they declared. "Unarmed resistance is what we oppose to the bludgeons and daggers of the Fascists." But they knew very well that the workers went to arm themselves at the Labor Exchanges. In the hot, heavy atmosphere of the strike the worker was led on to armed struggle. The attitude of the Socialists as innocent unarmed victims of Fascist violence, red lambs bled by black wolves, was as ridiculous as the Tolstoyan scruples of certain Fascists of liberal origin who refused to allow that Mussolini's followers had either fired a bullet, wielded a bludgeon or forced a single drop of castor oil down an opponent's throat.

For all the hypocrisy of the Trade Union leaders, there were casualties among the Black Shirts too. It is altogether false to suppose that the Fascists suffered no serious reverses. Suburbs, villages, whole regions sometimes rose in arms against them, signal being given by the general strike. The Black Shirts were attacked in their homes, barricades were raised in the streets, while bands of workers and peasants armed with guns and grenades occupied the villages, invaded the towns and hunted the Fascists. That the workers were less hypocritical than their leaders is proved by the massacre of Sarzana. In this town in July 1921, fifty Black Shirts were massacred, those merely wounded having their throats cut as they lay in litters in front of the hospital. A hundred others who had sought safety in flight in the countryside were chased to the woods by women armed with pitchforks and sickles. The story of the Civil War in Italy in 1920 and 1921, the preface of the Fascist capture of power, is made up of episodes of such ferocious violence.

To put an end to revolutionary strikes and insurrections of the workers and peasants which were becoming more frequent, more widely organized, and more serious, putting a stop to the activity of whole regions : it a time, the Fascists adopted the tactics of systematically occupying the threatened regions. From one day to another Black Shirts would be concentrated according to a mobilization plan at the points indicated. Thousands upon thousands of armed men, sometimes not less than fifteen or twenty thousand, would be massed on a single town, country or village area, being rapidly transported in lorries from one province to another. In a few hours the whole occupied region was in a state of siege. All that remained of the Socialist, Communist organizations, Labor Exchanges, Trade Unions, Workers' Clubs, newspapers and co-operatives would be methodically dissolved or smashed up. The Red Guards who had not had time to clear out were dosed, drubbed, turned inside out. In two or three days the bludgeons would be at work over hundreds of square miles. By the end of 1921 these tactics ever more widely and systematically applied had been successful : political and syndicalist organization of the proletariat had received a knockout blow.

The danger of a Red revolution had now been averted forever: Citizen Mussolini had "deserved well of his country." So now, thought respectable citizens of every class, the Black Shirts will go home to their beds. But soon they discovered that Fascism had delivered a knockout blow at the State as well as the working classes.

The tactics by which Mussolini conquered power in the State could only have been thought out by a Marxist: never forget that Mussolini was brought up to be a Marxist. The astonishing thing about the revolutionary situation in Italy in the view of Lenin and Trotsky was that the Communists were unable to take advantage of any exceptional coincidence of favorable circumstances. In the

general insurrectional strikes of 1919 and 1920 the factories of the north of Italy had, as a culmination, been occupied by the workers, but not one man had emerged capable of leading a handful of followers to capture the State. With the support of a general strike, any 'little provincial Trotsky could have obtained control without asking leave of the King.

Mussolini judged the situation as a Marxist: he could not believe in the success of insurrection directed simultaneously against the power of the Government and the power of the working classes. While he despised the Socialist and Communist leaders, he also despised all those who like D'Annunzio planned to overthrow the Government without at least making sure of the support or neutrality of the working class organizations. Mussolini was not indeed to be knocked out by a general strike. Nor like that national Jupiter, D'Annunzio, did he underestimate the importance of the working class in a revolution. He was far too modern in feeling; he had absorbed the Marxist view of modern political and social problems far too thoroughly to be deluded into copying in the year 1920 the nationalist theories of Blanqui.

It was not with reactionary tactics that the Fascists set out to conquer the State. Mussolini was very different from D'Annunzio or from Kapp, Primo de Rivera or Hitler. He summed up the strength of the proletariat and their part in the revolution; the situation of 1920 from the Marxist standpoint; and from that standpoint he concluded that the first task was to smash the workers' unions in which the Government would rely for the defence of the State. Taught by the history of Kapp and Bauer he feared the general strike. The official historians of Fascism support their argument that Mussolini was no reactionary by recalling his program of the year 1919. And in truth that program in which the Black Shirts sincerely believed, fruit of the same spirit to which the Fascist veterans are still faithful, was a republican and democratic program. But Mussolini's Marxist upbringing was not shown in the program of 1919 but in the tactics with which Fascism set out to capture the State and in the consistent method with which he applies those principles. It will be shown later how Marxist tactics are deformed when attempted by a reactionary like Hitler.

Those who were eager to consider Fascism simply as a bulwark of the State against the Communist peril, a mere reaction against the political and social conquests of the proletariat considered that by the middle of 1921 Mussolini had accomplished his task and played his part. Giolitti reached the same conclusion in March 1921, though on quite different grounds, immediately after the general strikes in which the dangerous power of Fascism had been so plainly revealed. The civil war was now at a high pitch of violence with heavy losses recorded on both sides, but the conclusion of these savage struggles, the end of all the astounding episodes of the Red years was the defeat of the proletarian forces. Giolitti having used the trade unions as a card against Fascism suddenly found

his bluff called, and the workers' organizations had crumbled to pieces. The Fascists issued from the fray in an aggressive mood and with unconcealed intentions. Moreover they were formidably equipped to take the field against the State. What had Giolitti to oppose to Fascism? The defense constituted by the trade unions was done for. The political parties forming a parliamentary majority were powerless against a strongly armed organization which was ready to give the assault both within the constitution and in terms of physical force.

Giolitti had one further possibility: it was to try and parliamentarize the Fascists. This was the familiar plan of a Liberal Minister who during the preceding thirty years had played the part in Italy of a parliamentary dictator serving a Monarchy without over-scrupulous concern for the constitution. Mussolini whose political program in no way interfered with his revolutionary tactics, responded to these overtures only with the utmost caution. In the course of the elections of May 1921 the Fascists consented to enter the National bloc by which Giolitti hoped to compromise and corrupt the Black Shirt army. The movement was to be dissolved by universal suffrage.

He had great difficulty in forming the National bloc. The constitutional parties objected strongly to taking their place in it on the same basis as an armed organization with a frankly republican program. But Giolitti was not thinking about the program, with its republican and democratic tinge, of 1919: he was thinking about the objective of the Fascist tactics. For the objective of Mussolini was to capture the State. Evidently the Fascist program must be accepted for the purposes of the election if Fascism was to be diverted from its revolutionary objective. Giolitti could play his bad cards in a masterly manner, but not his good cards. Once again he was no more successful than when he had tried to muddle the issue by fomenting D'Annunzio's jealousy of Mussolini. Far from submitting to being parliamentarized Fascism held firmly to its objective. While a score or so of Fascists, elected to the Chamber, were actively breaking up the unity of the National bloc, the Black Shirts were turning upon the Republican and Catholic Unions, in order to smash them with the same violence that had lately been so successfully used against the Socialist trade unions.

In preparation for the capture of the State the ground had to be cleared of all other organized forces, whether of the Left or the Right or the Centre. None must be left in a condition to support the Government or to hinder Fascism at the crucial moment of the insurrection with a disabling blow. Precautions must be taken not only against the general strike but against united action by the Government, Parliament, Proletariat. The Fascists could not but strive to clear the whole ground around them, eliminating every rival organized force, were it political or syndicalist, of the working class or the middle class. Trade Unions, Co-operatives, Workers' Clubs, Labor Exchanges, newspapers, political parties - the whole lot must be swept away. Great was the surprise of the reactionary and

Liberal middle classes. They had supposed that the task of Fascism was completed, when, to the delight of the workers and peasants the Black Shirts having already disbanded the Republican and Catholic organizations, now made a set at the Liberals, the Democrats, Freemasons, the Conservatives, and every kind of respectable section of the middle classes.

The Fascists on their side undertook the downing of the middle classes with much more enthusiasm than when their enemies had been the proletariat. The Fascists' shock-troops were largely composed of workmen, small artisans and peasants. The struggle against the middle class was moreover really directed against the Government, and the State itself. The Liberals, Democrats, Conservatives when they had brought the Fascists into the national bloc had conferred upon Mussolini, as upon so many before him, the unofficial title "Savior of his country." For the last fifty years Italy has swarmed with "Saviors to the country." It has degenerated into a kind of official profession—a great peril, for no country can safely be "saved" too frequently. And now these same respectable people were not at all disposed to recognize that Mussolini had any other aim beyond "saving" Italy in the traditional manner. They could not grasp that he was out to capture the State, a much more sincerely cherished ambition than anything in the program of 1919. The violence of the Fascists which had been so warmly applauded so long as it was used against the working class organizations now appeared painfully illegal and disagreeable to the liberal middle classes. Who could have believed that Mussolini, the excellent patriot who had fought the Communists, the Socialists, the Republicans would suddenly become a dangerous fellow free of bourgeois scruples determined to capture power against the wishes of the King and Parliament?

But if Fascism had become a danger to the State Giolitti was to blame. The movement should have been suppressed and outlawed long before when there was still time, crushed by arms as D'Annunzio had been. But now "Nationalist Bolshevism" had become much more dangerous than that Bolshevism of the Russian type from fear of which the middle classes were now released. The question was whether a new Government under Bonomi could repair the errors of the Giolitti Government.

Bonomi had been a Socialist: the only means he knew of dealing with Fascism was by police measures. Towards the end of 1921 the fiercest struggle was engaged between Bonomi, the Marxist who was out to suppress Fascism by police measures before it was ready to capture the State and Mussolini was out to gain time; a pitiless struggle in terms of persecution, violence and bloodshed. Bonomi succeeded in consolidating the middle classes and working classes against the Black Shirts. With the support of the Government the workers did much to reconstitute their class organizations. But Mussolini systematically developed his plans. A truce at arms between Socialists and Fascists was

attempted in vain. The workers were demoralized by the spineless and shortsighted conduct of the middle-class party and by the utter selfishness of those whose retort to Black Shirt violence was nothing better than crude intrigue veiled with loquacious patriotism.

In the opening months of 1922 the following vague and unhappy state of affairs prevailed. With methodical violence the Fascists were gradually getting : control of all the vital centers of the country; the political, military and syndical organization of Fascism was spread over the whole of Italy. Mussolini held in his hand the whole map of Italy, replete with cities, townships and their ardent quarrelsome populations. That map was as it were tattooed upon Mussolini ' s right hand. Bonomi had been overwhelmed in the dust and ruins of political parties and trade unions, The State was at the mercy of the Black Shirts who besieged Rome and occupied the whole country. The authority of the State was maintained wholly in a few hundred isolated positions, where Prefects, Mayors at id police officials were beleaguered in their quarters while in between the force of the revolution ruled daily. The King and the Government drifted apart, both fearing to take responsibility. They resorted to an old constitutional dodge ; the King relied on the Army and Senate, the Government upon the police and the Lower House. The Liberal middle classes and the workers were both deeply disquieted.

In August 1922 Mussolini informed the country that Fascism was ready to take power. With a great final effort the Government sought to anticipate the insurrection, stimulating a revolt of the workers and peasants in order to break through the siege lines of the Fascists. On the order of a kind of Committee of Public Safety in which the Democratic, Socialist and Republican parties were associated with the Trade Union Congress, a general strike was proclaimed in August. This was called the legal or constitutional strike; it was the last struggle put up by the defenders of liberty, democracy, legality and the State against the Black Shirt army. At last Mussolini was going to face his most dangerous adversary, the only serious obstacle to the Fascist capture of the State. He was going to face and overcome the general strike which had been threatened for three years as a knockout blow to the revolution, the general strike against the revolution which it had been the aim of his three years' struggle against the working class organizations to disable. The Government and the Liberal and reactionary middle classes let loose the workers' counter-revolution, counting upon sapping the enthusiasm of the Black Shirts for the insurrection and removing from the State for a time at least the overhanging threat of a sudden assault. But the Fascists sent from their own ranks relays of experts and of specialist workmen to take the place of the strikers in the public services, while at the same time with a terrible display of violence the Black Shirts in twenty-four hours smashed the army of the defenders of the State ranged under the Red Flag

of the Trade Union Congress. The decisive victory for the conquest of the State was won by Fascism not in October but in August. After the fiasco of the "constitutional strike" Facta, a weak but honorable politician, retained office solely to give countenance to the King.

Meanwhile however the King had no further need for that kind of loyalty. The Fascist program of 1919 still revered the Fascist old guard, was republican, but on the eve of the insurrection Mussolini gave the signal "Long Live the King."

Certain official chroniclers, drunk with rhetoric and literature, have given theatrical accounts of the Fascist insurrection. These are false. There were no great sayings or brilliant poses, no gestures recalling Julius Caesar, Cromwell or Bonaparte. The Legions which marched on Rome were not, mercifully enough, Caesar's veterans returning from Gaul, nor was Mussolini attired in Roman costume. Newspaper illustrations and official paintings are both bad guides to the writing of history. When one observes David's portrait of Napoleon it is hard to conceive that Napoleon was the clear precise modern genius we know him to have been. The historical Napoleon was as different from the painting by David and sculpture by Canova as Mussolini is different from Julius Caesar or from Bartolomeo Colleoni. In certain color prints the Black Shirts are shown advancing in October 1922 across an Italy crowded with imperial arches, tombs, mausoleums, columns, porticos and statues, while the sky is thick with eagles; as though the Fascist insurrection had been staged in the Italy of Ovid and Horace, with Roman legionaries for its heroes, and Jupiter himself managing the scene in such a manner as to save the constitutional appearances of classical tradition. In other illustrations, Mussolini, the man of 1922, is shown with eyes like a hero of 1830. A romantic figure discovered wandering through a neo-classic countryside, now on foot, now on horseback he heads his legions, a pale and smiling personage perfectly harmonious with history as recorded in colored plates. Against a background of ruined aqueducts in the severe and baleful landscape of the Roman Campagna Mussolini appears like a figure from a picture of Poussin, an elegy of Goethe, a drama of Pietroccosa, a poem of Carducci or D'Annunzio: the pockets of his breeches seemed to be stuffed with volumes of Nietzsche. But these colored plates are the summit of bad taste in the culture and literature of Italy of the last fifty years. In the face of these illustrations of the insurrection it is hard to believe that Mussolini could overthrow Facta's Government and capture power. But the true Mussolini of October 1922 is not shown in the color plates. The true Mussolini was a modern man cold, audacious, violent and calculating. On the eve of the insurrection all the opponents of Fascism, the Workers' Trade Unions, Communists, the political parties: Socialist, Republican, Catholic, Democratic and Liberal were out of action. The general strike had been downed in August, the insurrection was never again to be disabled by that means, for the

workers would no longer dare leave their work and come out in the streets. The bloody reprisals against the "Constitutional strikers" had finally broken the combative spirit of the workers.

When Mussolini raised the black flag of insurrection in Milan the Fascist relays of technicians and expert workers rapidly captured the strategic points of the technical organization of the State. Within twenty-four hours all Italy was in the military occupation of 200,000 Black Shirts. The police, the carabinieri and the Royal Guards were incapable of restoring order. Wherever the police tried to dispel Black Shirts from their positions they were repulsed by machine-gun fire. The four members of the Military Committee of the Revolution, Bianchi, Balbo, de Vecchi and de Sano supervised the workings of the insurrection on a plan which had been fixed by Mussolini in every detail. Perugia was the headquarters of the revolution and it was thence that the Four issued their orders. Fifty thousand men were massed in the Roman Campagna, ready to march on the capital. The army of Black Shirts besieged Rome shouting "Long Live the King" and Rome is the seat not only of the Government but also of the King. Mussolini's loyalty to the King, as he marched at the head of his revolutionary army, was of very recent date, but from the point of view of the constitutional King it was more valuable than that of a disarmed Government. When the Cabinet decided to submit an order establishing a state of siege throughout Italy for the King's signature, the King is said to have refused to sign. Exactly what happened is not known, but it is certain that the state of siege was proclaimed and then withdrawn after half a day. This was all too short if the King signed the decree, but all too long if he truly did not sign it.

In reality Fascism had captured the State long before the entry of the Black Shirts into Rome, during the whole course of three years systematic revolutionary tactics. The insurrection only overturned the Government. In 1922 the capture of the State by Fascism could not have been averted by a state of siege nor yet by outlawing Mussolini nor by any kind of armed resistance. Giolitti remarked, "Mussolini taught me the lesson that a State has to be defended not against the program of a revolution but against its tactics." He confessed with a smile that he had not been able to profit by the lesson,

CHAPTER EIGHT

A WOULD-BE DICTATOR HITLER

Those who refuse to believe in the danger of Hitlerism say ironically that Germany is not Italy, It would be more exact to say that Hitler's tactics are not those of Mussolini. Recently, when I was in Germany to investigate at first hand what is called the Hitler peril, I was asked on several occasions if Hitler could be considered the Mussolini of Germany. I remember having answered Mr. Simon, Director of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, who asked me this question, that Italy, from 1919 to 1922 and even afterwards, would not have tolerated a Hitler. My answer seemed to astonish Mr. Simon, who let the conversation drop.

Actually, Hitler is merely a caricature of Mussolini. Like certain Italian Plutarchs who are soaked in eloquence, rhetoric and literature, and like the nationalists of almost every country in Europe, Hitler sees in Mussolini merely a sort of Julius Caesar in a frock coat and top hat, gorged with the writings of Nietzsche and Barrès, keen about Ford's ideas and Taylor's theory and a partisan of industrial, political and moral standardization. This vain fat Austrian with hard, suspicious eyes, with his relentless ambition, and his cynical schemes, may, like all Austrians, have a certain weakness for the heroes of ancient Rome and the Italian civilization of Renaissance, but he has sufficient sense of the ridiculous to realize that the Germany of Weimar could never be dominated by a little Upper-Austrian bourgeois disguised as a Sulla, a Julius Caesar or a condottiere. Although he, too, is tainted with this aesthetic sensibility typical of men who dream of dictatorship-one cannot believe that he takes a delight, as some of his enemies suggest, in embracing the busts of Renaissance condottieri in the museums of Munich. Let us be fair to him. He would like to imitate Mussolini but in the manner of a northerner, a German, who believes he can simulate a southerner, a Latin. He believes that Mussolini can be modernized by transposing him into German terms (which would be unpermissible even if intended as irony). His ideal hero is Julius Caesar in Tyrolese dress. Strange, that the climate of the Germany of Weimar should be so propitious to a kind of Mussolinian caricature that would amuse even the Italians.

There is no likeness between him and the bust of Il Duce by Wildt-a sort of Roman Emperor, his forehead bound by the sacred fillet of the Pontifex Maximus-nor the equestrian statue of Mussolini by Graziosi, which dominates the stadium of Bologna (a cavalier of the Fifteenth Century too heavy in the saddle for a well-bred hero), nor does Hitler, who is an Austrian of Braunau, resemble the portrait drawn of him by certain of his enemies.

"Hitler," writes Frederick Hirth, a very great admirer of Stresemann and therefore not altogether fair to the National-Socialist leader, "Hitler has the

physique of the average Bavarian or Upper-Austrian. He is typical of the men of this part of the world. You have only to go into any shop or café in Braunau or Linz in Austria, in Passau or Landshut in Bavaria, to see that all the shop-assistants and all the waiters look like Hitler."

His enemies claim that although he does not deserve to be taken for any shop-assistant or café waiter of Braunau or Landshut, yet the secret of his personal success-that of a man who has all the physical traits of German bourgeois mediocrity of intellect-is none other than his eloquence : his noble, ardent, and vivacious eloquence.

Hitler should not be criticized for having succeeded, by sheer eloquence, in imposing an iron discipline on hundreds of thousands of rational men who were recruited from among ex-soldiers, hardened by four years of warfare. It would be unjust to blame him for having successfully persuaded millions of voters to support a political, social and economic program which in itself is a part of his eloquence. We are not concerned with finding out whether the secret of his personal success lies in his words or in his program. Catilines are judged, not by their eloquence nor by their schemes, but by their revolutionary tactics. The question is whether the Germany of Weimar is really threatened with a Hitlerian *coup d'Etat*: and what are the revolutionary tactics of this extremely eloquent Catiline, who hopes to capture the Reich and impose his personal dictatorship on the German people.

The militant organization of the National Socialist party is modeled on the revolutionary organization of Fascism between 1919 and 1922, before the *coup d'Etat*. A network of Hitlerian nerve centers, whose headquarters are in Munich, have spread from town to town all over Germany. The National-Socialist shock-troops, recruited from among ex-soldiers and organized on military lines, form the revolutionary skeleton of the party. In the hands of a leader who knew how to use them they might well constitute a serious menace to the Reich. Staffed with former Imperial officers, armed with revolvers, hand-grenades and bludgeons (depots of munitions, rifles, machine-guns and trench mortars are scattered all over Bavaria, the Rhineland and the Eastern Frontier) they constitute a military unit fully armed and thoroughly trained for revolutionary action. Subjected to an iron discipline, oppressed by the tyrannical will of their chief who vaunts himself as infallible and who exercises, in the heart of his party, an inexorable dictatorship, the Nazi shock-troops are not the army of a German people rebellious as a whole but the blind instrument of Hitler's ambitions

These veterans of the great war who dreamed of marching to conquer the Reich and fighting under the banner of the Iron Cross for the liberty of the Fatherland now find themselves reduced to serving the ambitious designs and private interests of a cynical and eloquent politician whose only conception of

Revolution takes the form of an ordinary suburban skirmish with red Communist guards, of an endless series of inglorious conflicts with workmen in their Sunday best, or with starving unemployed, or of an electoral conquest of the Reich supported by a few revolver shots in the outlying suburbs of the big cities

At Königsburg, Stuttgart, Frankfurt, Cologne, Düsseldorf, Essen, officers of Hitler's shock-troops have confessed to me that they feel degraded to the level of the Praetorian guard of a revolutionary leader - a leader manoeuvring against his own followers, with the police methods which, one day, he will use to establish his personal dictatorship over the German people. In the heart of the National-Socialist party, free will, personal dignity, intelligence and culture are persecuted with that stupid and brutal hatred typical of third-rate dictators. Though an Austrian, Hitler is not intelligent enough to understand that certain formulae of Jesuit discipline are nowadays quite obsolete even in the company of Jesus, and that it is dangerous to attempt their application to a party whose program is a struggle for the national liberty of the German people. Battles fought in the name of liberty are not won by soldiers whose eyes never leave the ground.

Not only does Hitler debase his followers by police methods, by habitual secret threats and hypocrisy but also by his revolutionary tactics. Since Stresemann's death Hitler's eloquence has become more and more histrionic and menacing, but his revolutionary tactics have slowly evolved towards a Parliamentary solution of the problem of the capture of the State. The first symptoms of this evolution date from 1923. After the abortive *coup d'Etat* made by Hitler, Kahr and Ludendorff in Munich in 1923, all Hitler's revolutionary violence took the form of rhetoric. The Nazi shock-troops have been transformed little by little into a kind of Camelots of King Hitler.¹ They are armed but docile Camelots. Their leader is less and less given to violence. He shrinks from the noise of gunfire. But it is since Stresemann's death that Hitler's party has suffered its real crisis. This great opponent alone could force Hitler to lay his cards on the table, and prevent him cheating at the game of revolution. Stresemann was not afraid of Hitler ; he was a peace-loving man, though not altogether opposed to violent measures. In a speech delivered at a meeting of industrialists on August 23, 1923, Stresemann declared that he would not hesitate to resort to dictatorial measures if circumstances required them. In 1923 Hitler's shock-troops had not yet become King-Hitler's Camelots or a Pretorian body in the service of a silver-tongued opportunist ; these troops were still a revolutionary army who believed that they were fighting for the liberty of their country. Stresemann's death gave

¹ The "Camelots du Roi" in France were the organised youth of the "Action Française" movement.-

Hitler the opportunity of abandoning violent tactics with the result that his shock-troops lost a great deal of influence in the party.

Shock-troops are the real enemy. It is the extremists in his own party that Hitler most fears. Their power lies in the use of violence. Woe to Hitler if his battle forces become too strong: there might well be a *coup d'Etat*, but not with Hitler as dictator.

What the Nazi revolution needs is not an army but a leader. The shock-troops who, even yesterday, believed that they were fighting to subdue the Reich are now beginning to see that an exchange of truncheon blows and revolver shots with Communist workers is not a means of capturing the State. Hitler claims the mutinies which have recently occurred among the National-Socialists are due to the frustrated ambition of a few subordinates; but they really arose from a deep-seated discontent among the troops with Hitler's incapacity. From day to day he is less and less able to push the problem of capturing the power into the realm of active insurrection.

The extremists of his party are not wrong in judging Hitler as a false rebel, an opportunist, a "man-of-law" who thinks he can make a revolution with speeches, military parades and parliamentary threats and blackmail. Since his brilliant political victory when about a hundred members of his party were elected to the Reichstag, an opposition has developed in the very core of the party which rejects Hitler's opportunist tactics, and is more and more definitely in favor of active insurrection as a solution to the problem of conquering the State. Hitler is accused of being insufficiently courageous to face the consequences of revolutionary tactics and of being afraid of revolution. A captain of shock-troops told me in Berlin that Hitler was a Julius Caesar who could not swim, and stood on the shores of a Rubicon that was too deep to ford. The only way to explain his ill-treatment of his own followers is his fear lest they force his own hand, lest the extremists, the shock-troops, the hotheads should drive him along the road to insurrection. He seems haunted by an anxiety to protect himself against the Left Wing of his party, to subdue his shock-troops and to make them an instrument of his own plans. Like all conspirators who waver between compromise and active insurrection, Hitler is obliged now and then to throw a sop to the extremists: such was the withdrawal from the Reichstag of all National Socialist members. But his concessions never make him lose sight of the main objective of his revolutionary opportunism that is, the legal conquest of power. There is no doubt that in renouncing violence, rebellious activity and an armed aggression against the State, he moves always further away from the revolutionary spirit of his partisans; there is no doubt that every victory won by the National Socialists on the Parliamentary field is lost by Hitler on the revolutionary field. At the same time Hitler feels all the more certain of support from an ever-increasing mass of the electorate, and of winning to his political

platform the adherence of a great majority in the lower middle classes. By this means he hopes to give up the dangerous part of a Catiline so that he can play the safer part of a demagogue.

Indeed, the crisis which confronts National Socialism might well be called a process of "social-democratisation." It is a slow evolution towards legality, towards the legal forms and methods of a political struggle. The National Socialist party is a revolutionary army in the process of becoming a formidable electoral organization, a sort of "National Bloc" looking back on exploits with the bludgeon as a mistaken outburst of youthful inexperience, which might saddle the party with a bad reputation but would not prevent a profitable marriage. Hitler's men are the "Salvation Army" of German patriotism. They could not have a more worthy leader than Hitler. Since the Germans cannot take Mussolini seriously, her patriots accept this caricature of him. It is notorious that the patriot in Germany is merely a parody of the good German citizen.

Among the concessions promised recently by Hitler to the extremists of his party is the Foundation of a school in Munich for the training of shock-troops in revolutionary tactics. But what are Hitler's tactics? The National-Socialist leader does not consider the problem of the capture of the State in the same light as a Marxist would. Obviously he underestimates the importance of the trade unions in the defense of the State. He judges their role not as a Marxist or a mere rebel, but as a reactionary. Instead of attacking the proletarian trade unions he strikes at the workers themselves. When he pursues Communism he is only pursuing the worker. The brutal tactics which Mussolini's Black Shirts used against labor organizations were justified by the need to demolish all organized force, whether political, trade union, proletarian or bourgeois, whether in the form of a trade union, a co-operative society, a newspaper, a workmen's club, a labor exchange or a political party. General strikes had somehow to be prevented and the united front of the Government, Parliament and proletariat had to be breached. But nothing can justify the stupid and criminal hatred of the Hitlerites for workmen as workmen. A reactionary party that attempts the capture of a democratic State never yet advanced one foot along the road to insurrection by persecuting the workman. In order to free his party from the dead weight of organized masses, Hitler should fight the trade unions systematically and thoroughly. The defense of the State has not been entrusted to the *Reichswehr* and the police alone, since the Reich's policy is to confront Hitler's shock-troops with armed bodies of Communist Red Guards and with the trade unions.

The Reich's best weapons of defense against the dangers of Hitlerism are strikes. Hitler's opportunism is at the mercy of a general strike which would paralyze the whole economic life of a town or region, and which would deal a fatal blow to the interest of those same middle classes who vote for Hitler. The German proletariat has gone on strike and hit the National Socialist shock-troops

in the back, thus forcing Hitler to abandon Fascist tactics of fighting the trades unions. Today he uses his revolutionary army, a splendid weapon for the conquest of the State, as a kind of volunteer police force in suburban skirmishes against Communists. In reality, this warfare in the suburbs is, more often than not, an attack on workmen as workmen. This is all that remains of Mussolini's revolutionary methods in the hands of a reactionary.

Hitler is in earnest about nothing except what happens to threaten his opportunist policy. After several abortive attempts, he decided to abandon Mussolinian tactics against the trade unions, because he was afraid of weakening the influence enjoyed by his shock-troops inside the party and thus of reducing the political prestige of their revolutionary role. Also he knew quite well that the proletariat must inevitably react by declaring a general strike, and that this would be a most telling blow to the interests of the electorate. Above all, the support of the bourgeoisie is an indispensable factor in his electoral strategy. His sole aim is to conquer the State by overthrowing the Reichstag. He shrinks from an encounter with the formidable power of the proletarian labor organizations which might bar the road of insurrection for him. It is in the electorate and on the field of legality that he wants to challenge the Reich government and the proletariat to the decisive battle for power. Every Sunday, on the outskirts of the larger German towns, Hitler's shock-troops (forever prisoners of a mass of millions of National-Socialist voters), come to blows with armed bands of Communist Red Guards. This useless guerilla warfare in the suburbs is to the advantage not only of the big trades unions and Parliamentary social-democracy, but also for the Reich government, the electoral body of National-Socialists, and for the right-wing parties. Someone has to teach the Communists a little caution and modesty.

But can Hitler be sure that his battle troops will always agree to give up their true revolutionary role? For their real purpose is not to fight Red Guards in the workmen's suburbs, but to seize control of the State. It is not only for the purpose of marching against Communist squads, in the interest of all those who fear the danger of Bolshevism-that is, for the benefit of the patriotic bourgeoisie as well as the Social Democrats-it is not for this alone that they submit to the yoke of Hitler's violent and cynical dictatorship. They want to march against the Reich Government, against Parliament, against Social-Democracy, against the Unions, against every obstruction that bars the road to insurrection. And if Hitler himself does not. . . .

In spite of his sweeping successes at the polls, Hitler is still far from controlling the Germany of Weimar. The strength of the proletariat is still intact; its formidable army of workers, the only powerful enemy of a National-Socialist revolution, is stronger than ever. It stands firm, unimpaired, and ready to defend

the liberty of the German people to the bitter end. Machineguns alone can still open the breach for a Hitlerite assault. Tomorrow, it may already be too late.

What would induce Hitler to give up his dangerous opportunism? Is he waiting for Parliament to get the National-Socialist revolution under its control? He is afraid of being outlawed. Hitler, a poor imitation of Mussolini, is not posing as a Sulla, a Caesar, a Cromwell, a Bonaparte or a Lenin when he claims to be the liberator of the Fatherland; but he poses as a defender of the law, a restorer of, national tradition, and servant of the State. One should always beware of a dictator's patriotism. The future of this sort of civic hero does not lend any brilliance to his revolutionary past. As Giolitti would say, "Hitler is a man with a great future behind him." He has lost so many opportunities. He could have overthrown the State numberless times had he known how to take advantage of favorable circumstances. In spite of his eloquence, his electoral successes, his insurrectional army, in spite of the undeniable prestige of his name, and the legends which have been woven about him as an agitator, a man who sways crowds, a violent and unscrupulous conspirator ; in spite of the passions he inspires in those who surround him and of his dangerous sway over the imagination and the spirit of adventure in German youth, Hitler is only a would-be leader. In Moscow I heard a Bolshevik, who was one of the most active instruments of Trotsky's revolutionary tactics during the *coup d'Etat* of October 1917 pass this singular judgment upon Hitler: "He has all Kerenski's good and bad qualities and like Kerenski, he too is only a woman."

Hitler's intelligence is in point of fact profoundly feminine: his mind, his ambitions, even his will are not in the least virile. He is a weak man who takes shelter in violence, so that he may conceal his lack of energy, his unexpected failings, his morbid egoism, and his clumsy pride. A quality common to nearly all dictators and one which is characteristic of their manner of judging men in relation to events, is their jealousy. Dictatorship is not only a form of government, it is also the most complete form of jealousy in all its aspects : political, moral and intellectual. Like all dictators, Hitler is guided much more by his passions than by his mind. His attitude towards his oldest partisans, the shock-troops who followed him from the very beginning, who stood by him in adversity, who shared his humiliation, dangers and imprisonment, who have been his glory and his power, can only be explained by jealousy. This will astonish only those who are unaware of the true nature of dictators, i. e., their violent and timid psychology. Hitler is jealous of those who have helped him to become one of the foremost figures in German political life. He is afraid of their pride, their energy, and their fighting spirit-that fearless, disinterested enthusiasm which turns Hitler's shock-troops into a dangerous weapon of power. He exercises all his brutality to humble their pride, to crush their freedom of will, to obscure their individual merits and to transform his partisans into

flunkies stripped of all dignity. Like all dictators, Hitler loves only those whom he can despise. His ambition is to be able one day to debase and humble the whole German nation and to reduce it to a state of servitude, in the name of German liberty, glory and power.

There is something confused, equivocal, something morbidly sexual in Hitler's opportunist tactics, in his aversion from revolutionary violence, and in his hatred of every form of individual freedom and dignity. In the history of nations, at moments of great misfortune, after wars, invasions, or famines, there is always one man who rises above the masses and enforces his will, his ambition and his bitterness; who "wreaks a woman-like revenge" upon the whole people, for all the freedom, power and happiness that has been lost. In the history of European countries it is Germany's turn now: Hitler is the dictator, the "woman" Germany deserves. The feminine side of him explains Hitler's success, his domination of the crowd and the enthusiasm he rouses in the youth of Germany. In the eyes of the common people Hitler is untainted, ascetic, a mystical interpreter of action, a kind of saint, it is not as a Catiline that he wins approval. "No story of a woman is coupled with his name," say his biographers. One ought rather to say of dictators, in general, that no story of a man is coupled with their name.

In every dictator's life there are moments which reveal the cloudy, unhealthy and sexual depths of his power; these are the crises which reveal the wholly feminine side of his character. In the relations between a leader and his followers these crises most frequently take the form of revolts. When he is menaced with domination by those he once humiliated and enslaved, the dictator defends himself with flaming energy against the rebellion of his partisans: it is the woman in him that defends herself. Cromwell, Lenin and Mussolini have all known these moments. Cromwell did not hesitate to use fire and the sword to crush the revolt of the "levellers," who stood for a kind of Seventeenth Century Communism in England. Lenin had no pity for the mutinous sailors at Kronstadt, Mussolini was harsh with the Florentine Black Shirts whose revolt lasted a year, up to the eve of the *coup d'Etat*. It is surprising that Hitler has not yet had to face widespread sedition among his shock-troops. The partial mutinies which have sprung up all over Germany in the ranks of Hitler's battle squadrons are perhaps only the first symptoms of an inevitable clash. Opportunism in the course of a revolution is a crime that entails its own punishment. Unhappy the dictator who heads a revolutionary army but shrinks from the responsibility of a *coup d'Etat*. He may, thanks to tricks and compromise, be able to seize power by legal means, but dictatorships which arise out of a compromise are only semi-dictatorships. They do not last. It is revolutionary violence which legitimizes a dictatorship: the *coup d'Etat* itself is its soundest foundation. It is perhaps Hitler's plan to arrive at power by

parliamentary compromise. All he can do, if he wants to forestall a revolt among his fighting squads, is to distract their attention from the capture of the State, and rivet their revolutionary zeal not on internal politics but on foreign affairs. Has not the problem of the eastern frontiers been, for some time, the main theme of Hitler's eloquence? It is significant that Germany's future may depend on a parliamentary compromise rather than on a *coup d'Etat*. A dictator who will not dare to seize power by revolutionary action never could intimidate Western Europe, which is ready to defend its freedom whatever the cost.

EPILOGUE

The present state of affairs in Germany must seem strange to those who know how great a sense of civic dignity the German people have always had. One would have to admit that the Germany of Weimar is seriously ill, that her ruling classes, her bourgeoisie and her intelligentsia are utterly demoralized or corrupted, if one thought them willing to submit without a struggle to a dictatorship which Hitler himself dares not impose by force. Dictatorships are not accepted; they have to be borne. Even when imposed by a revolution they are only submitted to, after desperate resistance. It is absurd to say that the Russian bourgeoisie did not resist the Bolsheviks.

As for the events of October 1917, I have never ceased to defend Kerenski against the accusation of incapacity to protect the State against the rebellion of the Red Guards. As in the case of all Liberal and Democratic Governments, police measures were the only weapon Kerenski's Government had for a defense of the State. But this Liberal technique for State defense was and is powerless against the technique of a Communist *coup d'Etat*. It is also powerless against that of a Fascist *coup d'Etat*. Moreover it would be ridiculous to state that the Liberal Government, the labor unions, and the Constitutional parties in Italy did not attempt to defend themselves against Mussolini's revolutionary tactics. In Italy the battle for power was waged for four years, with far more bloodshed than in Germany. Neither Lenin nor Mussolini could impose their dictatorships without a bitter struggle. What power, what dire necessity could induce Germany's ruling classes, her bourgeoisie and her intelligentsia to accept a dictatorship to which no revolutionary action forces their submission? Neither their spirit of revolt against the peace of Versailles nor their will to rise above the political and economic aftermath of the war can sufficiently justify their attitude towards the possibility of a Hitlerian dictatorship. Among all the calamities of defeat, among all the consequences of the Peace of Versailles, the greatest disaster which could befall the German people would be the loss of their civil liberty. A Germany which accepted Hitler's dictatorship without resistance, a Germany enslaved by such a second-rate Mussolini, could never hold its own among the free nations of Western Europe. Here, indeed, lies the nadir of the German *bourgeoisie*.

In Germany the general attitude toward the problem of the State cannot be attributed, as it is by some people, to a decadence of liberal thought in modern Europe. The moral and intellectual conditions of the bourgeoisie are not the same in Germany as elsewhere. One would have to admit a very serious decadence in order to believe that the bourgeoisie of Europe can no longer defend its liberty, and that the future of Europe lies in civil slavery. But if it is true that the moral and intellectual character of the German bourgeoisie is not the same as in other countries, if it is true that all European peoples do not have the same degree of

devotion to liberty, it is no less true that Germany is faced with the same problem of government as are other European countries. The problem of government is not only one of authority; it is also a problem of liberty. If police forces prove incompetent to defend the State against the possibility of a Communist or Fascist attack, what measures can and should a government adopt without endangering the liberty of the people? It is in these terms that we must envisage the question of State-defense in almost every country.

The situation today offers great chances of success to the ambitions of conspirators of either the Right or the Left Wing. So inadequate are the measures proposed or adopted by governments to break down any possible revolutionary attempt, that the danger of a *coup d'Etat* should be most seriously examined in many European countries. The peculiar nature of the modern State with its complex and delicate functions, and the gravity of the political, economic and social problems which it is called upon to solve, make it the barometric index of the people's hopes and fears, which increases the obstacles that stand in the way of its defense. The modern State is more exposed to the danger of revolution than is generally recognized. It is useless to object that even liberal methods of defending the State are obsolete, the conspirators for their part frequently show their ignorance of the very essentials of the modern technique of a *coup d'Etat*. Even if it be true today that conspirators in many cases have not known how to take advantage of circumstances favorable to their attempts to seize control, it is no less true that the danger of revolution exists.

In countries where order is based on liberty, public opinion ought to bear in mind the possibility of a *coup d'Etat*. In its present state Europe is everywhere faced with this possibility, as well in a free well-organized country-"policed" state, to use an Eighteenth Century expression, still appropriate in our day-as in a country infested with disorder.

In Warsaw in 1920, I attended one of those meetings which the Diplomatic Corps held almost every day at the Residence of the Papal Nuncio, to review the situation of Poland, then overrun by Trotsky's Red Army and torn by internal factions. There was a very lively and a most unorthodox discussion upon the nature and the danger of revolutions between the British Minister, Sir Horace Rumbold, and Monseigneur Ratti, now Pope Pius XI, and then Papal Nuncio in Warsaw.

An unusual piece of luck to hear a future Pope defending Trotsky's theory of modern revolution against the theories of a British Minister, and in the presence of Diplomatic representatives of the leading nations of the world. Sir Horace Rumbold declared that Poland was in a state of extreme disorder, that a revolution must inevitably break out at any moment and that, consequently, the Diplomatic Corps should abandon Warsaw without delay. Monseigneur Ratti

replied that there was indeed great disorder throughout the country but in his opinion it would not necessarily lead to revolution, and that he therefore thought it would be a mistake to evacuate the capital, especially since the danger of revolution was no more imminent in Poland than in any other European country. He concluded that he, for one, would not leave Warsaw. The British minister replied, that in a civilized country where a government is strong, the danger of revolution does not exist ; that revolutions are born only out of disorder. Monseigneur Ratti, unwittingly defending Trotsky's theory, persisted that revolution was just as possible in a civilized country strongly organized and policed, like England, as in a country overrun with anarchists, shaken by opposing political factions and invaded by a hostile army, as Poland was at that time. "Oh, Never!" cried Sir Horace Rumbold. He seemed just as vexed, just as scandalized, by this calumny that revolution was possible in England, as Queen Victoria was when Lord Melbourne revealed to her for the first time that a change of Ministry was a possibility.

The object of this book is not to shock those who share Sir Horace Rumbold's opinions. Nor is it to discuss the political, economic and social programs of conspirators, but to show that the problem of the conquest and defense of the State is not a political one, that it is a technical problem, that the art of State-defense is guided by the same principles that guide the art of its conquest, and that circumstances favorable to a *coup d'Etat* are not necessarily of a political and social order and do not depend on the general condition of the country. No doubt this will not fail to create some anxiety amongst the Liberals of the most stable and best-policed countries of Western Europe. It is this anxiety, so natural in a lover of freedom, which gave birth to my desire to show how a modern State can be overthrown and how it can be defended. Shakespeare's Bolingbroke, Duke of Hereford, who said, "They love not poison, that do poison need," was perhaps a lover of freedom also.

Biography

Curzio Malaparte (1898-1957) *pseudonym of Kurt Erich Suckert*

One of the most independent and influential Italian writers of the mid-20th century. Like many young Italians in the 1920s, Malaparte converted to fascism. He also manifested his political views in his own magazine *Prospettive* (1937) and other publications. Malaparte's early fiction was pro-fascist, but toward the end of his life he showed understanding of Maoism. Malaparte's best book, *KAPUTT* (1944), partly written in Finland during World War II, contrasted with grotesque humor the elegant pessimism of its cosmopolitan characters and the suffering the war caused to masses of people.

Curzio Malaparte was born Erich Suckert in Prato, near Florence. His mother was an Italian, and his father, Erwin Suckert, a German Protestant. Malaparte attended Ciognini College, Prato. At the age of sixteen he enlisted in the Garibaldian League and served on the French front until May 1915. He transferred to the Italian army and fought with the Alpine troops. In 1918 he was exposed to the mustard gassed on the French front. This most likely caused his cancer and untimely death.

After the war Malaparte started his career as a journalist. From 1922 until the fall of Mussolini in 1943 Malaparte was an active member of the Fascist Party. In 1924 he founded the Roman periodical *La Conquista dello stato*, and two years later he founded with Massimo Bontempelli (1878-1960) the literary quarterly '900, which championed progress, technology, and the urban environment. In the late 1920s he became a coeditor of *Fiera Letteraria* (1928-31), and in Turin an editor of the daily *La Stampa*, turning it into a fascist publication. Malaparte's individual writings earned him enemies in the Fascist party and in 1931 he was dismissed from *La Stampa*.

Malaparte published his first books in the early 1920s. His confessional war novel, *LA RIVOLTA DEI SANTI MALEDETTI* (1921), was an interpretation of the Italian defeat at Caporetto and criticized the corrupt Rome as the real enemy. When it suited him, Malaparte didn't hesitate to take controversial, even contradictory stands. He advocated cosmopolitan views with Bontempelli and defended parochialism and rural values. In *TECHNIQUE DU COUP D'ETAT* (1931) Malaparte attacked Mussolini. This led to his 'internal exile' on the island of Lipari. By order of Mussolini he was moved from Lipari, "horrible under the

semi-African sun and an unimaginable wind", to Ischia - "this tenderly green Ischia, gossipy, pretentious, for holidays and *dopolavoro* outings," as he wrote.

There he bought himself a small stone house. "I've started working again," Malaparte wrote to one of his friends, "I am burning up with desire to work, I have got a new taste for life and struggle (literary struggle, let it be clear...)". Eventually Malaparte was freed on the personal intervention of Mussolini's son-in-law Galeazzo Ciano. He founded the cultural and literary journal *Prospettive*, which was viewed with suspicion by the authorities. In December 1937 Malaparte returned to Capri to celebrate Christmas. In the same year appeared his collection of short stories, SANGUE.

Malaparte's house in Capri, sited on a promontory overlooking the Mediterranean Sea, and designed by the author himself, has been called the most beautiful house in the world. Casa Malaparte, 28 meters long and 6.6 meters wide, was built on the windy and barren cliff of Massulto. As a manifestation of modern architecture, it rejected the popular "Capri style." Malaparte worked busily with his house project between 1938 and 1942, and in November 1942 he announced that "the house is about finished..." Actually, it was not. One of his friends later told that Malaparte was always broke, because there was always a wall, or a bathroom, or a window to redo.

During the World War II Malaparte worked as a correspondent for *Corriere della Sera*. His reports angered the Fascist and Nazi authorities, but he was granted exclusive rights to follow the advancing German troops in the Soviet Union in daily articles. Malaparte's correspondence from France in 1940-41 was collected in *IL SOLE È CIECO* (1947) and from the USSR in 1941-42 in *IL VOLGA NASCE IN EUROPE* (1943). Malaparte was in Finland when he heard the news of Mussolini's fall. He returned immediately to Italy, and in July he was taken to the Regina Coeli prison, where he asked the same cell he had occupied in 1933. Malaparte was released in August and he settled in Capri. After the allied landed on the island, he was arrested again - before the end of the war he experienced it several times. In 1944 he hosted in his house Palmiro Togliatti, who drafted his speech for the meeting of the Communist party officials in Naples. During the last months of the war Malaparte worked as the Italian Army Contingent liaison officer with the Allied Command. Under the pseudonym of Gianni Strozzi he published in the leftist magazine *L'Unita* a series of articles on the liberation of Florence.

After the war he gained international fame with two war novels: *Kaputt*, and *LA PELLE* (1949), its sequel, which was placed on the index of books forbidden to Roman Catholics. Episodic *Kaputt* was based on his own experiences as a journalist in the uniform of a Captain of the Italian army.

La pelle was a surrealistic tale of the degradation of moral and social values in Naples, where everything is for sale after the city's liberation by the allied forces. The book caused a scandal because it was mistaken for a realistic work. Its title referred to Malaparte's comment that once flags have lost their meaning, people are only willing to fight for the flag that is their own skin.

In 1947 Malaparte settled in Paris and wrote dramas without much success. His play *DU CÔTÉ DE CHEZ PROUST* was based on the life of Marcel Proust, and *DAS KAPITAL* was a portrait of Karl Marx. *Cristo Proibito* (Forbidden Christ) was Malaparte's moderately successful film. In the story a war veteran returns to his village to revenge the death of his brother, shot by the Germans. It was released in the United States in 1953 as *Strange Deception* and voted among the five best foreign films by National Board Of Review. He also produced the variety show *Sexophone* and planned to cross the United States on bicycle. Just before his death Malaparte completed the treatment of another film, *Il Compagno P.* After the establishment of The People's Republic of China in 1949 Malaparte became interested in the Maoist version of Communism, but his journey to China was cut short by illness, and he was flown back to Rome. *IO IN RUSSIA E IN CHINA*, his journal from the journey, was published posthumously in 1958.

Malaparte's final book, *MALEDETTI TOSCANI*, his attack on bourgeois culture, appeared in 1956. Malaparte died of lung cancer in Rome on July 19, 1957. On his deathbed Malaparte converted to Catholicism - his last act of rebelliousness or final succumbing to conformism.

SELECTED WORKS:

- LA RIVOLTA DEI SANTI MALEDETTI, 1921
- LE NOZZE DEGLI EUNUCHI, 1921
- L'EUROPA VIVENTE, 1923
- ITALIA BARBARA, 1926
- AVVENTURE DI UN CAPITANO DI SVENTURA, 1927
- L'ARCITALIANO, 1928
- INTELLIGENZA DI LENIN, 1930
- TECHNIQUE DU COUP D'ÉTAT, 1931 - The Technique of Revolution
- SODOMA E GOMORRA, 1931
- I CUSTODI DEL DISORDINE, 1931
- FUGHE IN PRIGIONE, 1936
- SANGUE, 1937
- VIAGGIO IN INFERNO, 1938
- DONNA COME ME, 1940

- IL VOLGA NASCE IN EUROPA, 1943 - Volga Rises in Europe - Edessä palaa Leningrad
- KAPUTT, 1944
- DON CAMALEÒ, 1946
- IL SOLE È CIECO, 1947
- LA PEAU, 1948
- DU CÔTÉ DE CHEZ PROUST (play), performed 1948
- IL BATTIBECCO, 1949
- LA STORIA DI DOMANI, 1949
- LA PELLE, 1949 - The Skin – I
- DAS KAPITAL (play), performed 1949
- CRISTO PROIBITO, 1950 (film, dir. and written by Malaparte, starring Anna Maria Ferrero, Rina Morelli, Raf Vallone, Elena Varzi)
- ANCHE LE DONNE HANNO PERSO LA GUERRA (play), performed 1954 - The Women Lost the War Too
- MALEDETTI TOSCANI, 1956 - Those Cursed Tuscans
- RACCONTI ITALIANI, 1957 - Italian Tales
- IO IN RUSSIA E IN CHINA, 1958
- MAMMA MARCIA, 1959
- OPERE COMPLETE, 1959
- BENEDETTI ITALIANI, 1961
- DIARIO DI UNO STRANIERO A PARIGI, 1966