

# A BATTLE FOR THE REPUBLIC

BY ROBERT BREUER

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'In the Ruhr the fight is only for democracy and for the sovereignty of the German Republic.'

— HEINRICH LÖFFLER

WHEN the Imperial Minister of the Treasury brought his speech on the budget to a close he received the approval of the large majority of the deputies; but there was no applause from the German-Nationalists who, up to this time, had praised the apologists for the Cuno Government. Hermes, who represented the Right in the Wirth Cabinet, was frank and clever enough to declare the policy of the new Government, or the Ruhr Conflict Government, a programme of completion, and the logical continuation of that of Wirth.

It is to be hoped — indeed, it may be regarded as certain — that this frankness was intentional. It was a clever ruse, the object of which was to isolate once again the ambitious and alliance-seeking Nationalists, and to split them off from the bourgeois bloc, thus diminishing the danger from this latter element.

The Nationalist press reacted at once. The *Deutsche Tageszeitung* spoke of unimportant inconsistencies, like the commendation of the previous programme. The *Kreuzzeitung*, ruffled by a ministerial announcement based on the explanations of Minister Hermes, had, the day before, used very strong language in attacking the idea of a willingness to negotiate: 'What good will it do for Germany to talk of negotiations? . . . Action alone is the duty of the moment. . . . Success is possible . . .

but the very last hour has struck in which the fate of the World War can be averted!'

The Nationalists do not care to be eliminated; they wish to be in the game, in fact to be leaders in the Ruhr battle. Their tactics are clear: if the object of the French attack is defeated, the Nationalists, as those who shouted loudest in the battle, will be credited with the victory, and a breach is made for the monarchy. If the battle goes against Germany, then you have another dagger-thrust legend ready to hand.

The Nationalist press makes its programme clear enough: to exploit foreign policies to the advantage of its own domestic schemes. The *Kreuzzeitung* writes: 'We lost the war because we weakened. . . . We shall lose this fight also if we stand aside supinely and watch the disintegration of our power of resistance.' The *Deutsche Tageszeitung* speaks of 'the mighty national flood that, breaking elementally from the heart of the people, rushes to-day over the German land, sweeping along in its tide groups of our countrymen who have hitherto held themselves apart from such movements.' In another place it speaks of the 'feeble elements for whose fall French propaganda is once more digging a pit.' The *Kreuzzeitung* says: 'National politics and class jealousies have eliminated themselves. The workman — one sees that clearly — is now absolutely national in character. The thing to do now is to make an end of the class hatred which

the leaders are preaching.' And in another place, in its edition of January 27: 'It is no accident that the greatness of the German Empire has gone down with the monarchy.'

It cannot be stated too emphatically that the opinion of the German-Nationalists — that is, of the Monarchists — is of absolutely no significance whatever in this battle for the Republic. Indeed, it is a matter of no importance at all whether they take part in it or not.

What would the Ruhr conflict lose in its probability of success if the gentlemen gathered around Helfferich should refrain from participation? The answer is easy, bitterly so — success would be more probable, and for the following reason: that every manifestation of the Nationalists has a prejudicial effect upon the great body of workingmen, that is to say, the backbone and the head of our resistance to the enemy. Helfferich and Hergt can be of no possible assistance in this contingency. Neither in London nor in Washington will their voices be considered as worth listening to. On the contrary, the efforts of these guardians of the crown are very apt to cause the heroes whose immediate task it is to fight the Ruhr battle only opposition and paralysis.

The fight for the Ruhr district is becoming every day more and more a fight of the miners and railway laborers. Its only objects are the freedom of the German Republic, the democratization of German life, and the security of labor.

That the atmosphere which sweeps over the Ruhr from the German hinterland has its effect is self-evident. And it is just as self-evident that this atmosphere must be the more helpful in proportion as it is free from the seeds of monarchy, revenge, and utopianism. It is, of course, a matter of satisfaction

that Herr Helfferich is willing, at least for the moment, to forgo his opposition to the Republic; but in the first place, he is not doing this, and secondly, he arrives too late in any case. He and his colleagues are fruits of which the proletariat will not and cannot eat. The other bourgeois parties should withdraw from the infected circle as soon as possible, and, according to circumstances, ally themselves more closely with the workingman. Hermes's efforts must be continued.

The Ruhr conflict will be decided by the working classes, morally as well as technically. Poincaré can, to be sure, use his rights in the Ruhr; but he cannot obtain coal without the aid of the local miners. But, again, the local miners are not to be coerced, nor can they be replaced. It would be futile to order either French miners or Chinese or Anamese coolies into the Ruhr shafts, because the machinery of the mines is far too complicated, mining is altogether too individualistic an industry, and the Ruhr district, notoriously liable to fire-damp, too dangerous a region for experiments. In any case, any such change in the personnel of the pitmen would take years to carry through. This is the opinion of experts and of the foremen.

It follows that sooner or later Poincaré will seek to negotiate. And it is the right of the workmen, who will have forced this necessity, to demand that Germany shall also be ready to negotiate. Here again the policy of the Ruhr campaign will be dictated solely by those who are the chief actors in it, namely the workmen.

There remains one possibility to consider. What would happen if the Premier of glorious France attempted to bring the working classes of the Ruhr to their knees by starvation? Up till now he has repudiated any such idea;

but how shall a man be trusted who has proclaimed the legality of the march into the Ruhr? If it came to that sinister pass, and a million proletarians were starved to death, would then the proletarian Internationale shift from pronunciamientos to deeds? Would then the League of Nations make its first serious attempt to justify its existence? Would England and the United States, nations that are still boasting of their battles for the abolition of slavery, finally stay the hand of frenzied France? Who shall say?

One thing, however, can be asserted to-day: if Monsieur Poincaré should attempt to starve out the real heroes of the Ruhr conflict, — namely, the workmen, — he would have no cause to complain if black giants swarmed from the pits and throttled their persecutors, and if France from that moment should stand revealed to all the world as a shameless example of political vampirism.

The Communists, whose confusion

has now reached its height, are doing their best to prejudice the working classes against the idea of an understanding, and particularly if this understanding should be brought about less by the Governmental agency than by the two embattled capitalist groups — that of the German coal district and that of the German iron region. *Vorwärts* very rightly says, however, that an understanding of this kind is not only likely but certain. When the pourparlers of the iron and the coal capitalists begin to appear, it will be indispensable to prevent the entire German proletariat from shouting: 'Treason!' The Internationale of capitalism will be able to secure acceptable terms for Germany only if the patriotic bloc of Ruhr workmen lends its fundamental aid. But this powerful mass of proletarian energy must not imitate the burlesque Muscovite Nationalism in placing impediments in the way of the inevitable development of international capitalism.

## SPURIOUS HEROES

BY JANUS

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It is impossible to discuss the Ruhr controversy in the German language so long as foreign troops ignore the weakly safeguarded Treaty conditions and establish themselves on German soil as a belligerent enemy, and so long as military psychology repeats the process of regarding a treaty as a scrap of paper. Poincaré plays good German politics when he establishes peace and harmony

at home. But we must have learned at least some small lesson from the days of August, 1914, and to discover the exact nature of this lesson is an absolute necessity at the present time, if the German nation is to be saved from the grip of French militarism.

The sacred rights of the German nation need advocates who can be taken seriously and whose words command