Volume 6. Weimar Germany, 1918/19–1933
Adolf Hitler on the November Revolution (Retrospective Account, 1925)

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In midsummer of 1918, oppressive sultriness lay over the front. At home there was fighting. For what? In the different detachments of the field army all sorts of things were being said: that the war was now hopeless and only fools could believe in victory. That not the people but only capital and the monarchy had an interest in holding out any longer — all this came from the homeland and was discussed even at the front.

At first the front reacted very little. What did we care about universal suffrage? Had we fought four years for that? It was vile banditry to steal the war aim of the dead heroes from their very graves. The young regiments had not gone to their death in Flanders crying: 'Long live universal suffrage and the secret ballot,' but crying: 'Deutschland über Alles in der Welt.' A small, yet not entirely insignificant, difference. But most of those who cried out for suffrage hadn't ever been in the place where they now wanted to fight for it. The front was unknown to the whole political party rabble. Only a small fraction of the Parliamentarian gentlemen could be seen where all decent Germans with sound limbs left were sojourning at that time.

And so the old personnel at the front was not very receptive to this new war aim of Messrs. Ebert, Scheidemann, Barth, Liebnitz, etc. They couldn't for the life of them see why suddenly the slackers should have the right to arrogate to themselves control of the state over the heads of the army.

My personal attitude was established from the very start. I hated the whole gang of miserable party scoundrels and betrayers of the people in the extreme. It had long been clear to me that this whole gang was not really concerned with the welfare of the nation, but with filling empty pockets. For this they were ready to sacrifice the whole nation, and if necessary to let Germany be destroyed; and in my eyes this made them ripe for hanging. To take consideration of their wishes was to sacrifice the interests of the working people for the benefit of a few pickpockets; these wishes could only be fulfilled by giving up Germany.

And the great majority of the embattled army still thought the same. Only the reinforcements coming from home rapidly grew worse and worse, so that their arrival meant, not a

reinforcement but a weakening of our fighting strength. Especially the young reinforcements were mostly worthless. It was often hard to believe that these were sons of the same nation which had once sent its youth out to the battle for Ypres.

In August and September, the symptoms of disorganization increased more and more rapidly, although the effect of the enemy attack was not to be compared with the terror of our former defensive battles. The past Battle of Flanders and the Battle of the Somme had been awesome by comparison.

At the end of September, my division arrived for the third time at the positions which as young volunteer regiments we had once stormed.

What a memory!

In October and November of 1914, we had there received our baptism of fire. Fatherland love in our heart and songs on our lips, our young regiments had gone into the battle as to a dance. The most precious blood there sacrificed itself joyfully, in the faith that it was preserving the independence and freedom of the fatherland.

In July, 1917, we set foot for the second time on the ground that was sacred to all of us. For in it the best comrades slumbered, still almost children, who had run to their death with gleaming eyes for the one true fatherland.

We old soldiers, who had then marched out with the regiment, stood in respectful emotion at this shrine of ‘loyalty and obedience to the death.’

Now in a hard defensive battle the regiment was to defend this soil which it had stormed three years earlier.

With three weeks of drumfire the Englishman prepared the great Flanders offensive. The spirits of the dead seemed to quicken; the regiment clawed its way into the filthy mud, bit into the various holes and craters, and neither gave ground nor wavered. As once before in this place, it grew steadily smaller and thinner, until the British attack finally broke loose on July 13, 1917.

In the first days of August we were relieved.

The regiment had turned into a few companies: crusted with mud they tottered back, more like ghosts than men. But aside from a few hundred meters of shell holes, the Englishman had found nothing but death.

Now, in the fall of 1918, we stood for the third time on the storm site of 1914. The little city of Comines where we then rested had now become our battlefield. Yet, though the battlefield was the same, the men had changed: for now ‘political discussions’ went on even among the troops.

As everywhere, the poison of the hinterland began, here too, to be effective. And the younger recruit fell down completely — for he came from home.

In the night of October 13, the English gas attack on the southern front before Ypres burst loose; they used yellow-cross gas, whose effects were still unknown to us as far as personal experience was concerned. In this same night I myself was to become acquainted with it. On a hill south of Wervick, we came on the evening of October 13 into several hours of drumfire with gas shells which continued all night more or less violently. As early as midnight, a number of us passed out, a few of our comrades forever. Toward morning I, too, was seized with pain which grew worse with every quarter hour, and at seven in the morning I stumbled and tottered back with burning eyes; taking with me my last report of the War.

A few hours later, my eyes had turned into glowing coals; it had grown dark around me.

Thus I came to the hospital at Pasewalk in Pomerania, and there I was fated to experience — the greatest villainy of the century.

For a long time there had been something indefinite but repulsive in the air. People were telling each other that in the next few weeks it would ‘start in’ — but I was unable to imagine what was meant by this. First I thought of a strike like that of the spring. Unfavorable rumors were constantly coming from the navy, which was said to be in a state of ferment. But this too, seemed to me more the product of the imagination of individual scoundrels than an affair involving real masses. Even in the hospital, people were discussing the end of the War which they hoped would come soon, but no one counted on anything immediate. I was unable to read the papers.

In November the general tension increased.

And then one day, suddenly and unexpectedly, the calamity descended. Sailors arrived in trucks and proclaimed the revolution; a few Jewish youths were the ‘leaders’ in this struggle for the ‘freedom, beauty, and dignity’ of our national existence. None of them had been at the front. By way of a so-called ‘gonorrhea hospital,’ the three Orientals had been sent back home from their second-line base. Now they raised the red rag in the homeland.

In the last few days I had been getting along better. The piercing pain in my eye sockets was diminishing; slowly I succeeded in distinguishing the broad outlines of the things about me. I was given grounds for hoping that I should recover my eyesight at least well enough to be able to pursue some profession later. To be sure, I could no longer hope that I would ever be able to draw again. In any case, I was on the road to improvement when the monstrous thing happened.

My first hope was still that this high treason might still be a more or less local affair. I also tried to bolster up a few comrades in this view. Particularly my Bavarian friends in the hospital were

more than accessible to this. The mood there was anything but ‘revolutionary.’ I could not imagine that the madness would break out in Munich, too. Loyalty to the venerable House of Wittelsbach seemed to me stronger, after all, than the will of a few Jews. Thus I could not help but believe that this was merely a Putsch on the part of the navy and would be crushed in the next few days.

The next few days came and with them the most terrible certainty of my life. The rumors became more and more oppressive. What I had taken for a local affair was now said to be a general revolution. To this was added the disgraceful news from the front. They wanted to capitulate. Was such a thing really possible?

On November 10, the pastor came to the hospital for a short address: now we learned everything.

In extreme agitation, I, too, was present at the short speech. The dignified old gentleman seemed all a-tremble as he informed us that the House of Hollenzollern should no longer bear the German imperial crown; that the fatherland had become a ‘republic;’ that we must pray to the Almighty not to refuse His blessing to this change and not to abandon our people in the times to come. He could not help himself, he had to speak a few words in memory of the royal house. He began to praise its services in Pomerania, in Prussia, nay, to the German fatherland, and — here he began to sob gently to himself — in the little hall the deepest dejection settled on all hearts, and I believe that not an eye was able to restrain its tears. But when the old gentleman tried to go on, and began to tell us that we must now end the long War, yes, that now that it was lost and we were throwing ourselves upon the mercy of the victors, our fatherland would for the future be exposed to dire oppression, that the armistice should be accepted with confidence in the magnanimity of our previous enemies — I could stand it no longer. It became impossible for me to sit still one minute more. Again everything went black before my eyes; I tottered and groped my way back to the dormitory, threw myself on my bunk, and dug my burning head into my blanket and pillow.

Since the day when I had stood at my mother’s grave, I had not wept. When in my youth Fate seized me with merciless hardness, my defiance mounted. When in the long war years Death snatched so many a dear comrade and friend from our ranks, it would have seemed to me almost a sin to complain — after all, were they not dying for Germany? And when at length the creeping gas — in the last days of the dreadful struggle — attacked me, too, and began to gnaw at my eyes, and beneath the fear of going blind forever, I nearly lost heart for a moment, the voice of my conscience thundered at me: Miserable wretch, are you going to cry when thousands are a hundred times worse off than you! And so I bore my lot in dull silence. But now I could not help it. Only now did I see how all personal suffering vanishes in comparison with the misfortune of the fatherland.

And so it had all been in vain. In vain all the sacrifices and privations; in vain the hunger and thirst of months which were often endless; in vain the hours in which, with mortal fear clutching

at our hearts, we nevertheless did our duty; and in vain the death of two millions who died. Would not the graves of all the hundreds of thousands open, the graves of those who with faith in the fatherland had marched forth never to return? Would they not open and send the silent mud- and blood-covered heroes back as spirits of vengeance to the homeland which had cheated them with such mockery of the highest sacrifice which a man can make to his people in this world? Had they died for this, the soldiers of August and September, 1914? Was it for this that in the autumn of the same year the volunteer regiments marched after their old comrades? Was it for this that these boys of seventeen sank into the earth of Flanders? Was this the meaning of the sacrifice which the German mother made to the fatherland when with sore heart she let her best-loved boys march off, never to see them again? Did all this happen only so that a gang of wretched criminals could lay hands on the fatherland?

Was it for this that the German soldier had stood fast in the sun's heat and in snowstorms, hungry, thirsty, and freezing, weary from sleepless nights and endless marches? Was it for this that he had lain in the hell of the drumfire and in the fever of gas attacks without wavering, always thoughtful of his one duty to preserve the fatherland from the enemy peril?

Verily these heroes deserved a headstone: 'Thou Wanderer who comest to Germany, tell those at home that we lie here, true to the fatherland and obedient to duty.'

And what about those at home —?

And yet, was it only our own sacrifice that we had to weigh in the balance? Was the Germany of the past less precious? Was there no obligation toward our own history? Were we still worthy to relate the glory of the past to ourselves? And how could this deed be justified to future generations?

Miserable and degenerate criminals!

The more I tried to achieve clarity on the monstrous event in this hour, the more the shame of indignation and disgrace burned my brow. What was all the pain in my eyes compared to this misery?

There followed terrible days and even worse nights — I knew that all was lost. Only fools, liars, and criminals could hope in the mercy of the enemy. In these nights hatred grew in me, hatred for those responsible for this deed.

In the days that followed, my own fate became known to me.

I could not help but laugh at the thought of my own future which only a short time before had given me such bitter concern. Was it not ridiculous to expect to build houses on such ground? At last it became clear to me that what had happened was what I had so often feared but had never been able to believe with my emotions.

Kaiser William II was the first German Emperor to hold out a conciliatory hand to the leaders of Marxism, without suspecting that scoundrels have no honor. While they still held the imperial hand in theirs, their other hand was reaching for the dagger.

There is no making pacts with Jews; there can only be the hard: either — or.

I, for my part, decided to go into politics.

Source of English translation: Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (1925), translated by Ralph Manheim. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1943, pp. 199-206.

Source of original German text: Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (1925). Two volumes in one. Unabridged edition. Central Press of the NSDAP. Munich: Frz. Eher Nachf., G.m.b.H., 1943, pp. 218-25.