

**THREE YEARS OF  
WORLD-  
REVOLUTION**

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Three years of world-revolution by Paul Lensch

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# THREE YEARS OF WORLD-REVOLUTION

BY  
PAUL LENSCH  
MEMBER OF THE RESOURCÉ

*“Wer die Welt vernünftig ansieht, den sieht sie  
auch vernünftig an, beides ist in Wechselbeziehung.”*

HEGEL.

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1918

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AND  
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CP.

## PREFACE

As had been foreseen by all serious students of German affairs, the German Socialist party offered no serious opposition to the German Government at the outbreak of war. The subsequent identification of the Socialists with enthusiasm for the war and its aims was inevitable, and was accentuated by German military triumphs. After one and a half years of war the process had gone so far that Haase, Kautsky, Bernstein, Ledebour, and their little knot of adherents were forced to break away. A year later they were able to form the "Independent Social Democratic party of Germany," but even then the "Minority" movement, as it is called, proved to be at least premature, as an effective influence—for pacifism and internationalism—upon the main currents of opinion and action. The "Majority" continued to dominate German Socialism, seizing the whole party machine and Press, and co-operating—whether by open support or by a sometimes still more serviceable appearance of opposition—with the German Government.

Now, it is evident that the policy of the German



Socialist party, under the leadership of Herr Scheidemann and Herr Ebert, imposed a considerable strain upon their followers. Many of them hoped that, after a short struggle and an ample victory, they would be able to assume their place in the international camp, none the worse and perhaps much the better for their bout of war. Hence the official Socialist view has been, in effect, that the war is an episode, an interruption, which some day must end in "agreement" and resumption of the old international relations. Meanwhile there was nothing to be done but to encourage pacifism in enemy countries, and, under cover of military success, to prepare for a peace which would not look too carefully at the origins of the war. But though all German Socialists are willing enough to reap the fruits of such opportunist tactics, the ablest minds in the party have long ceased to be content with what Lensch calls "a 'policy' without political thought." They desire to have done with outworn shams and hypocrisies, to face the facts as they see them, not only to admit but to justify their enthusiasm for the war and a German victory, and to lay afresh the foundations of German Socialist thought.

The first signs of the new movement came from the Trade Unions, whose spokesmen openly adopted purely materialist views of war and peace. For example, a *Trade Union War Book*, on "Labour Interests and the Result of the War," was com-

piled during the year 1915, in which practically all the Trade Union leaders took the view that extreme antagonism of Labour towards Capital has proved a mistake, and that Labour and Capital must join hands in the conviction that the more Germany gets the more there will be to divide. The general doctrine was thus summed up by Herr Wilhelm Jansson, the editor of the official organ of the Trade Unions: "Because in this war, by whatever circumstances or by whomsoever it may have been provoked, the political and cultural existence of Germany and the future of the German people are at stake, organised Labour can approve only a policy which guards German interests in this fight for existence." And Herr Jansson's collaborators proceeded in all detail to discuss war and peace policy in terms of the markets to be desired for German chemicals, German furniture, German pianos, or German toys.

But this candid materialism was not enough, and during the past three years a growing body of the ablest and most influential Socialist writers and thinkers has been examining the very foundations of Marxism, and endeavouring to construct, in the light of present events and their visible causes, a new and positive creed. Chiefly by means of the weekly Socialist paper, *Die Glocke*, they have compelled the attention of all political parties in Germany; and while the official Socialist leaders, for the most part, watch the new movement in

embarrassed but not unfriendly silence, it benefits alike by the open sympathy of Conservative and National Liberal Pan-Germans and the shocked resentment of so-called Radicals who desire nothing so little as the revision of the Socialist programme on positive lines. Lensch's book, *Three Years of World-Revolution*, which is now made available to the English-speaking world, is an admirable summary of the new German Socialist doctrine.

Dr. Paul Lensch is a typical representative of "educated" German Socialism. Born at Potsdam in 1873, he had a public school and university training. After his one year's military service in a Prussian Foot Guard Regiment he took to journalism at Strassburg, and subsequently travelled in England and elsewhere. In 1902 he joined the staff of the Leipzig Socialist *Volkszeitung*, and he was its chief editor from 1908 until 1913. Since 1912 he has been a member of the Reichstag. Although only forty-one years of age at the outbreak of war, he has not rejoined his regiment in the field. Since its foundation in 1915 he has been, together with the Trade Union leaders Wilhelm Jansson and August Winnig, a permanent member of the staff of *Die Glocke*, under the editorship of Konrad Haensch. Readers of the present volume may easily conceive the great influence of his vigorous analysis and passionate journalism. He has, indeed, few equals among German Socialist writers of the present time.