

Morgan Philips Price on the Enemies of the Republic (April 5, 1923)

Abstract

Morgan Philips Price, a member of the British Labour Party, was the London *Daily Herald* correspondent in Germany between 1919 and 1923. Price noted that anti-Weimar sentiment was especially potent in Bavaria. In April 1923, he traveled to Munich and wrote about the growing presence of armed *Reichswehr* troops marching in the streets, in addition to fascist and extreme-right groups. The extreme right in Bavaria was intensely hostile to the Republic, which it blamed for the Ruhr Crisis and hyperinflation, the Treaty of Versailles, and Jewish influence in culture, politics, and economics. Though Hitler was still a relatively marginal figure at the time, Price recognized his personal magnetism and the potential of his appeal to the masses.

Source

Munich, April 5

Iron crosses. Armed Reichswehr troops wearing steel helmets and with a hint of the goose-step in their marching gait. A cluster of young *Hakenkreuzler* (Swastika-wearers) roaring 'To Hell with the French beasts!', 'Down with the Jews!', 'Deutschland über Alles!' Flaming placards on every street corner announcing another Fascist meeting at which Hitler, Mussolini's mimic, will speak on Germany's Hour of Revenge. Police, troops, civilian White Guards and more police. These are a few of the random sights that greet the visitor in Munich. I was walking across one of this city's magnificent parks and paused before a lavish brown mansion. 'Is this the ex-king's palace?' I asked a passer-by. 'That', he corrected me, 'is the next king's residence.'

There is little in Munich to indicate that Bavaria belongs to the republic. Flags of the old monarchy are more frequent than the republican colours. To be a republican in Munich is to be indiscreet if not foolhardy. There is, indeed, nothing to suggest that anyone except the Bavarian worker has paid the price of stubborn militarism. The war has left plentiful traces in the topsy-turvy of Bavaria's economic life. But the fanatical chauvinism, the hatred of democracy and the martial tunes to which Munich's tired feet are shuffling along – all imply that Bavaria is dominated by men who have learnt nothing and forgotten nothing since 1914.

Bavaria is seething with hatred – hatred of Protestant North Germany, of the French, Jews, Republicans, Liberals and, above all, Socialists. All are anathema. All will get short shrift when the hour of reckoning strikes. At least, so they say. Adolf Hitler, a native Austrian and a locksmith by trade [sic] has pushed his way to the leadership of the Bavarian counter-revolutionary movement. A skillful demagogue, who wins converts to Fascism by drinking beer with the common people, he has mastered the routine of whipping up popular passions.

'How can we help the Fatherland?' I heard Hitler ask his audience. 'I'll tell you how. By hanging the criminals of November 1918!' (These criminals are, of course, the republican workers of Germany.) 'By punishing the worthies of the Republic we shall gain the respect of foreign nations', cried Hitler. 'If we had resorted to arms two years ago, we would never have lost Silesia and there would have been no Ruhr problem.' At this point in his harangue a company of Hitler's 'shock troops' paraded across the platform beneath the banner of monarchist Germany. Such scenes are daily occurrences in Munich.

The reaction in Bavaria is intricate. It consists of numerous groups, all united in their determination to overthrow the republic and trample upon Labour, and yet divergent in the means which they propose to employ. One speaker will shout loudest when denouncing the French, another when excoriating the Jews and a third when damning the German constitution. But all are openly agreed that their common purpose is to fight organised Labour.

Three groups dominate the rising Bavarian reaction. First, there is the separatist movement led by ex-Crown Prince Rupprecht, the former Bavarian Premier von Kahr and the clerical-farmer deputy, Dr. Heim. Briefly summarized, their policy demands greater autonomy for Bavaria within the Reich, restoration of the Wittelsbach dynasty in Munich, union with Austria (except Vienna) and a reinforcement of clerical (Roman Catholic) influence in the Government. Second, there are the Fascists, guided by Hitler, for whom the Roman church and the monarchy are minor details, and who are mainly concerned with the forcible subjugation of Labour, suppression or expulsion of Jews, and a Fascist dictatorship with its roots in Bavaria but extending throughout Germany. Third, there is the Ludendorff element, anti-clerical and anti-separatist, relying upon the ex-officers and the Prussian Junkers for a revival of Pan-German militarism. All three factions are busily preparing civil war, storing up arms and munitions and building illicit White Guards armies. A steady stream of funds pours into their treasury from German industrial magnates. Well-informed citizens forecast a counter-revolutionary uprising in Bavaria within a few weeks. They say this will be the signal for a 'White' offensive in all Germany.

Source: Morgan Philips Price, *Dispatches from the Weimar Republic, Versailles and German Fascism*. London and Sterling, Virginia: Pluto Press, 1999, pp. 155–56.

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