Like many other protagonists of the German Revolution, Müller later wrote about the events. However, most of the others wrote as memoirists, Müller wrote as a historian. His record would have a lasting impact: apart from Emil Barth, Müller was also the only one to write from the Stewards’ perspective and his accuracy, as he changed roles from protagonist to historian, far exceeded that of Barth.

This chapter will both reconstruct how Müller turned historian and explain the historiographical approach of his writings, published in 1924 and 1925. These books, which ended up being three volumes of a single work with the title *Vom Kaiserreich zur Republik* (From Empire to Republic), were the first systematic reflection on the German Revolution from a Marxist perspective. They became a standard source on the events, although their interpretations were often ignored by later historians because of their Marxist provenance. While the following pages will deal with the new role of Müller as historian, his reception in later historiography will be the focus of the next chapter.

After he had lost his position as head of the Communist Union Centre in 1921, Müller appears to have been dormant for quite some time. Finally *Vorwärts* reported in April 1923 that the ‘nearly forgotten’ Richard Müller was going to publish a book on the German Revolution and revealed that he had kept the Executive Council’s only remaining records in his private collection. That he certainly had. And more: whether because he was interested in keeping records for their own sake early on or because he wished to keep ammunition for future political offensives or defences or, indeed, because he had an early inkling of his future vocation as a historian who wanted to ‘properly assess the past’, beginning with the onset of the Revolution, Müller had assiduously collected and archived documents. His historical works derive much of their value because he possessed an extensive archive of leaflets, minutes of meetings, appeals, and other documents of the German Revolution, some of which were reproduced in the appendices to his three books. Much of this material, above all the more than 3,000 pages of Executive Council meeting

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notes, would have been permanently lost to historical research had Müller not saved his private copy of the minutes.3

With the news of Müller’s possession of the only remaining copy of the Executive Council records, the SPD, which saw itself as the lawful owner of those documents, demanded, in another Vorwärts article, that the Executive Council records be returned, referring to agreements dating from 1918 that had awarded copies to the USPD and the SPD.4

In his response to Vorwärts, Richard Müller confirmed that the agreements had established that neither party could publish the materials without the consent of the other. But, he clarified, the records in his possession were his private copies, not the ones assigned to the parties. Those had been destroyed by Gustav Noske in August 1919 when he violently broke up the Executive Council. The Social Democrats had, therefore, ‘no moral right’ to the records. Moreover,

If, back then, some comrades had managed to safeguard the most important documents from Noske’s destructive rage, they would have rendered valuable service to history. Why did Noske want to destroy all the Executive Council’s files? Why are you concerned about their continued existence? Are you afraid of history’s judgment?5

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3 According to a list compiled by Richard Müller in 1923, the archive contained the following materials:
I: 102 stenographic transcripts of meetings of the Executive Council of the Workers’ and Soldiers’ Councils from 11 November 1918 to August 1919 comprising 1,847 typed folio pages with 109 appendices;
II: 23 stenographic transcripts of meetings of the general assembly of the Workers’ and Soldiers’ Councils from November 1918 to August 1919 comprising 842 typed folio pages with 49 appendices;
III: 7 stenographic transcripts of local workers’ council assemblies comprising 157 pages and 19 appendices;
IV: 37 Executive Council orders, decisions, and resolutions published through public notice between 10 and 16 November 1918.

The list did not include leaflets and other documents unrelated to the proceedings of the Executive Council, although the documentary appendices of his books show that Müller collected those documents too. See Richard Müller’s 19 September 1923 letter to the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI), SAPMO-BArch, RY 5/ I 6/3/117, Bl. 45.

Special thanks to Prof. Gerhard Engel for providing me with this document.
