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WAR AND
THE WORKERS

By V·I·LENIN



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AND THE WORKERS

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NOTE

This brochure is a reprint of a lecture delivered by Lenin in Petrograd on May 27, 1917, about one month after his return from exile. The manuscript was not discovered until twelve years afterward and was published for the first time in the Moscow Pravda, April 23, 1929. The lecture is now published for the first time in English.

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WAR AND THE WORKERS

THE question of war and revolution has been so often discussed lately in the entire press and at every public meeting that in all probability many of you are not only quite familiar with many sides of this question, but are bored with it. I have not had an opportunity of speaking, or even of being present, at any Party or public meeting in this district, and so I may repeat, or not deal in sufficient detail with, those sides of the question that greatly interest you.

It seems to me that the main thing that is usually forgotten in the question of the war, which receives inadequate attention; the main reason why there is so much controversy, and, I would say, futile, hopeless and aimless controversy, is that people forget the fundamental question of the class character of the war; why the war broke out; the classes that are waging it; the historical and historico-economic conditions that gave rise to it. From what I have observed of the manner in which the question of the war is presented at public and Party meetings, I am convinced that the numerous misunderstandings which have arisen in connection with it are due to the fact that in discussing the war we very often speak in totally different languages.

From the point of view of Marxism, that is, of modern Scientific Socialism, the fundamental question for Socialists in discussing how this war should be appraised, and what our attitude towards it should be, is the objects of the war and the classes which prepared for it and directed it. We Marxists are not among

those who are absolutely opposed to all war. We say: our object is to achieve the socialist system of society, which, by abolishing the division of mankind into classes, by abolishing all exploitation of man by man, and of one nation by other nations, will inevitably abolish all possibility of war. In the war for this socialist system of society, however, we will inevitably meet a situation in which the class struggle in each nation may collide with a war, caused by this very class struggle, between different nations. For this reason we cannot deny the possibility of revolutionary wars, that is, of wars arising out of the class struggle, conducted by revolutionary classes, and having direct, immediate, revolutionary significance. We cannot deny this particularly because the history of European revolutions during the past century, the past one hundred and twenty-five to one hundred and thirty-five years, shows that in addition to the majority of wars, which were reactionary, there have been revolutionary wars; for example, the war waged by the revolutionary masses of the people of France against united, monarchist, backward, feudal and semi-feudal Europe.

Even at the present time there is no more widespread deception of the masses in Western Europe, and lately here in Russia, than references to revolutionary wars. There are wars and wars. We must examine the historical conditions which gave rise to each particular war, the classes which conducted it, and for what objects. Unless we do this, all our arguments about war will be reduced to futility; to a wordy and barren controversy. That is why I will take the liberty—since you have taken the question of the relation between war and revolution for your subject—of dealing with this side of the question in detail.

We know of the aphorism uttered by one of the most celebrated writers on the philosophy and history of war—Clause-

witz—which reads as follows: “War is a continuation of politics by other means.” This was uttered by a writer who reviewed the history of war and drew philosophical lessons from it soon after the epoch of the Napoleonic wars. This writer, whose fundamental ideas have now become an undoubted acquisition for all thinking people, eighty years ago combated the philistine and ignorant prejudice that war can be separated from the politics of the respective governments, the respective classes; that war can at any time be regarded simply as aggression, which disturbs peace, followed by the restoration of this peace. As much as to say: People quarrelled, and then made up! This is a crude and ignorant opinion, refuted scores of years ago, and refuted now by a more or less careful analysis of any historical epoch of war.

War is a continuation of politics by other means. Every war is inseparably connected with the political system which gave rise to it. The politics which a certain country, a certain class in that country, pursued for a long period before the war, are inevitably pursued by that very same class during the war; it merely changes its form of action.

War is a continuation of politics by other means. When the French revolutionary citizens and revolutionary peasants, at the end of the eighteenth century, after overthrowing the monarchy by revolutionary means, established a democratic republic, and having settled accounts with their monarch also settled accounts in a revolutionary manner with their landlords—these revolutionary class politics could not but shake the rest of autocratic, tsarist, monarchist, semi-feudal Europe to its foundations. And the inevitable continuation of these politics of the victorious revolutionary class in France was war, in which, pitted against the revolutionary class, were all the monarchist countries of Europe, which formed their notorious coalition, and waged a counter-

revolutionary war against France. Just as within the country the French revolutionary people displayed a revolutionary energy witnessed for the first time in centuries, so in this war at the end of the eighteenth century they displayed enormous revolutionary genius; they remoulded the whole system of strategy, they broke all the old laws and customs of war; and in place of the old army they created a new revolutionary people's army and introduced new methods of warfare.

I think that this example is particularly worthy of attention, because it demonstrates what bourgeois newspaper writers now constantly forget when playing on the prejudices and philistine ignorance of an absolutely uneducated people, who do not see this inseparable economic and historical connection between every war and the preceding politics of every country, of every class which ruled before the war and achieved its objects by so-called "peaceful" means. So-called—because the methods employed for ensuring "peaceful" rule over the colonies can hardly be described as peaceful.

Peace reigned in Europe; but this peace was maintained because the rule of the European nations over hundreds of millions of inhabitants of colonies was exercised only by constant, uninterrupted and ceaseless wars, which we Europeans do not regard as wars, because often they resembled, not wars, but the brutal massacre, extermination, of unarmed people. And the whole point is that to understand modern war we must first of all glance over the politics of the European Powers as a whole. We must not take individual examples, individual cases, which can easily be torn from the general context of social phenomena, and which are valueless, because it is just as easy to quote opposite examples. No, we must take the whole of the politics of the whole system of European states in their economic and political

concatenation, so as to understand how the present war steadily and inevitably arose out of this system.

We constantly see attempts being made, particularly by capitalist newspapers—monarchist or republican, it makes no difference—to ascribe a false historical content to the present war. For example, nothing is more common in the French Republic than attempts to depict the war which France is now waging as a continuation and an image of the wars of the Great French Revolution of 1792. There is no more widespread method of deceiving the French people, the French workers, and the workers of all countries, than that of introducing into our epoch the "jargon," some of the slogans, of that epoch, and trying to make it appear that even today republican France is defending its freedom against monarchy. They forget the "slight" circumstance that at that time, in 1792, the war in France was waged by a revolutionary class, which had made an unprecedented revolution, had destroyed the French monarchy to its foundations with the aid of the incredible heroism of the masses, and had risen against united, monarchist Europe for no other object than that of continuing its revolutionary struggle.

The war in France was a continuation of the politics of the revolutionary class which had made a revolution, gained a republic, settled accounts with the French capitalists and landlords with hitherto unprecedented energy, and for the sake of these politics, in continuation of them, was waging a revolutionary war against united, monarchist Europe.

Today, however, we are confronted, first of all, by two groups of capitalist Powers. We have before us all the great world capitalist Powers—England, France, America, Germany—the politics of which for a number of decades consisted of unceasing economic rivalry for world supremacy, to strangle small nation-

alities, to secure threefold and tenfold profits for bank capital, which has enmeshed the whole world in the chains of its influence. These are the real politics of England and of Germany. I emphasise this. We must never tire of emphasising this, because if we forget it we shall never understand anything about modern war, and we shall be helplessly in the power of any bourgeois writer who palms off fraudulent phrases.

The real politics of both groups of great capitalist giants—England and Germany, who with their allies are contending against each other—the politics pursued for decades before the war—must be studied and understood as a whole. If we fail to do that we shall not only be forgetting the fundamental demand of Scientific Socialism, and of social science in general, but we shall be preventing ourselves from understanding anything about modern war. We would place ourselves in the power of that fraud Milyukov,* who is inciting chauvinism and hatred of one nation for another by methods that are employed everywhere without exception, and which Clausewitz, whom I mentioned in the beginning, described eighty years ago, when, already at that time, he ridiculed the opinion that, so to speak, people were living peacefully, and suddenly they quarrelled! As if that were true! Can war be explained if it is not connected with the preceding politics of the given state, the given system of states, the given classes? I repeat: this is the fundamental question which is constantly forgotten; and the failure to understand it transforms nine-tenths of the arguments about war into useless wrangling and the bandying of words. We say: if you have not

* P. N. Milyukov—Founder and leader of the Constitutional-Democratic Party, ideologist of the Russian liberal bourgeoisie. Minister of Foreign Affairs in the first Provisional Government formed after the February Revolution in 1917. Actively supported the counter-revolutionary movements after the establishment of the Soviet Government and still a leading exponent among the emigrés of the policy of foreign intervention against the Soviet Union.—*Ed.*

studied the politics that both groups of belligerent Powers have pursued for decades—not taking facts at random, not picking out individual examples—if you cannot show the connection between this war and the politics preceding it, then you understand nothing about this war!

And these politics show us only one thing: ceaseless economic rivalry between two great world giants, two capitalist systems. On the one hand there is England, a state which owns a great part of the globe; the wealthiest state in the world; which created this wealth not so much by the labour of its workers as by the exploitation of vast colonies, by the vast power of the English banks which, constituting a numerically insignificant group of three, four or five giant banks, stand at the head of all the other banks, controlling hundreds of billions of rubles, and controlling in such a way that we can say without exaggeration: there is not a spot on the whole globe that this capital has not laid its heavy hand on; there is not a patch of land that is not enmeshed by a thousand threads in the net of British capital. By the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries this capital had grown to such enormous proportions that its activities extended far beyond the frontiers of a single state and created a group of giant banks possessing incredible wealth. Pushing this insignificant number of banks to the front, it enmeshed the whole world in this net of hundreds of billions of rubles. This is the main thing in the economic policy of England and the economic policy of France, concerning which the French writers themselves, for example, the contributors to *l'Humanité*,* the newspaper now directed by ex-Socialists (for

* During the first imperialist war, *l'Humanité* was the official organ of the French Socialist Party which supported the war. After the formation of the Communist Party, as a result of the split at the Tours Congress in 1921, *l'Humanité*, as the organ of the Communist Party, became the consistent revolutionary and anti-imperialist spokesman of the French working class.—*Ed.*

example, none other than the well-known writer on financial questions, Lysis), wrote several years before the war: "France is a financial monarchy; France is a financial oligarchy; France is the usurer of the whole world."

On the other hand, opposed to this group, mainly Anglo-French, stands another group of capitalists, even more predatory and more piratical—a group which came to the capitalist feasting board when all the places had been taken, but which introduced into the struggle new methods of developing capitalist production, better technique, incomparable organization, which transformed the old capitalism, the capitalism of the epoch of free competition, into the capitalism of gigantic trusts, syndicates and cartels. This group introduced the principle of state capitalist production, uniting the gigantic forces of capitalism with the gigantic forces of the states into one mechanism, and amalgamating tens of millions of people in a single organization of state capitalism. This is the economic history, this is the diplomatic history of a number of past decades which no one can get away from. It alone provides the correct solution to the problem of war and leads us to the conclusion that the present war is also the product of the politics of the classes which are now at grips in this war; the politics of the two great giants who long before the war had enmeshed the whole world, all countries, in their nets of financial exploitation, and who before the war had economically divided the world among themselves. They had to come into collision because, from the point of view of capitalism, the redivision of this rule became inevitable.

The old division was based on the fact that for several hundreds of years England had crushed her competitors. Her former competitor was Holland, which had ruled over the whole world; her former competitor was France, who waged a war for su-

premacv for about a hundred years. By means of prolonged wars England, on the basis of her economic power, of her merchant capital, established her unchallenged rule over the whole world. A new robber appeared. In 1871 a new capitalist Power arose, which developed ever so much faster than England. This is a fundamental fact. You will not find a single book on economic history that does not admit this indisputable fact—Germany's more rapid development. This rapid development of German capitalism was the development of a young and strong robber, who came before the league of European Powers and said: "You ruined Holland, you defeated France, you have taken half the world—please give us our share." What is "our share"? How can it be determined in the capitalist world, in the world of banks? In that world, strength is determined by the number of banks; there, strength is determined in the way it was defined in an organ of the American billionaires with purely American frankness and purely American cynicism. It was put this way: "In Europe a war is going on for world supremacy. For world supremacy two things are needed: dollars and banks. We have the dollars; we will create the banks and rule the world." This is what a leading newspaper of the American billionaires said. I must say that this cynical American phrase, uttered by a swelled-headed and arrogant billionaire, contains a thousand times more truth than the thousands of articles written by bourgeois liars who claim that this war is a war for some sort of national interests, national problems, and other obvious lies of the same sort, which throw all history overboard and take a single example, for instance, the fact that the German robber attacked Belgium. The latter is undoubtedly true. Yes, that group of predatory powers did indeed attack Belgium with incredible ferocity; but it only

did what the other group of robbers did yesterday by other means, and is doing today against other nations.

When we argue about annexations—and this is part of the question that I have tried briefly to explain to you as the history of the economic and diplomatic relations, which gave rise to the present war—when we argue about annexations, we always forget that this is precisely what the war is being waged for: the division of conquests; or to put it more simply, the sharing of the loot between two gangs of robbers. And when we argue about annexations we constantly see tricks employed which from the scientific standpoint are beneath criticism and from the social-publicist standpoint are such as cannot be otherwise described than crude deception. Ask a Russian chauvinist or social-chauvinist to explain what German annexations are—he will do that excellently. But he will never give you a general definition of annexations that will apply to Germany, to England and to Russia. He will never do that.

When the newspaper *Ryech* * (to pass from theory to practice), jeering at our newspaper *Pravda*,** said: “These *Pravda*-ites regard Courland as an annexation! What is the use of arguing with such people?”—our reply was: “Please give us a definition of annexations that will apply to the Germans, to the English and to the Russians. We say that you will either decline to do this, or we will immediately expose you.” *Ryech* was silent. We assert that not a single newspaper—neither that of the ordinary chauvinists who simply say that we must defend the country, nor that of the social-chauvinists—has ever given a definition of annexations that would apply to Germany and to Russia, that could be applied to either side. And it cannot give such definition,

* *Ryech* (Speech)—Organ of the Constitutional-Democratic Party.—*Ed.*

** *Pravda* (Truth)—Founded in 1912 and continues to the present as the official organ of the Bolshevik Party.—*Ed.*

because this war is the continuation of the politics of annexations, that is, conquest, capitalist robbery, on both sides, on the part of both groups engaged in the war. Hence, it is clear that the question as to which of these two robbers first drew the knife has no significance for us whatever. Take the history of the naval and military expenditure of both sides for the past few decades; take the history of the little wars they waged before this big one—“little” because few Europeans were killed in them; but of the people who belonged to the nations that were being crushed hundreds of thousands were killed. They were not even regarded as nations (Asiatics, Africans—can you call these nations?). Against these nations war was carried on in this way: they were unarmed; but they were shot down with machine-guns. Can you call that war? Properly speaking, they were not wars, and one can forget about them. This is their attitude towards this wholesale deception of the masses of the people.

This war is a continuation of the politics of conquest, of shooting down whole nationalities, of incredible atrocities perpetrated by the Germans and the English in Africa, by the English and Russians in Persia—I don't know who did most—for which the German capitalists regarded them as enemies. They said in effect: You are strong because you are rich? But we are stronger than you, therefore we have the same “sacred” right to rob as you have. This is what the real history of British and German finance capital for decades preceding the war amounts to. This is what the history of Russo-German, Russo-English and Anglo-German relations amount to. This provides the key to an understanding of what the war is about. This is why the story that is being circulated about the causes of the war is a fraud and deception. Forgetting the history of finance capital, the history of how this war for redivision matured, they try to make it appear as if two

nations had lived in peace, and suddenly one attacked and the other defended itself. All science is forgotten, the banks are forgotten; the nations are called to arms, the peasants who know nothing about politics are called to arms. You must defend—that is all there is to it! If we are going to argue in this way it would be more logical to suppress all newspapers, burn all books, and prohibit all discussion about annexations in the press—in this way justification of such an attitude towards annexations could be obtained. They cannot tell the truth about annexations because the whole history of Russia, of England and of Germany is an unbroken record of ruthless bloody war for annexations. In Persia and in Africa war was waged by the Liberals, who flogged political offenders in India for demanding what we fought for in Russia. French colonial troops have also oppressed nations. Such is the preceding history. Such is the real history of unprecedented plunder! These are the politics that these classes are continuing in the present war. That is why they cannot give the reply to the question of annexations that we give when we say: every nation that is joined to another nation, not by the voluntary desire of the majority of the population, but by the order of a tsar, or government, is an annexed nation, a usurped nation. The repudiation of annexations means granting every nation the right to form a separate state, or to live in alliance with any other nation it pleases. Such a reply is quite clear to every worker who is at all class-conscious.

In every resolution that is passed—and scores of them are passed and published in, say, the newspaper *Zemlya i Volya*—you will find the badly expressed reply: We do not want war for supremacy over other nations; we are fighting for our freedom—this is what all the workers and peasants say, and by this they express the workers' opinion, the workingman's conception

of the war. Thus, they say in effect: If the war were in the interests of the working people and against the exploiters, we would be in favour of it. We, too, would be in favour of it; and no revolutionary party could oppose such a war. But the authors of these numerous resolutions are wrong, because they imagine that they are conducting the war. We soldiers, we workers, we peasants, are fighting for our freedom. I will never forget the question that one of them put to me after a meeting: "Why do you talk about capitalists all the time? Am I a capitalist? We workers are defending our freedom." It is not true—you are fighting because you are obeying your capitalist government; the war is not being conducted by the people, but by the governments. I am not surprised when a worker, or a peasant who has not studied politics, who has not had the good fortune, or misfortune, to study secret diplomacy, to see this picture of financial plunder (this oppression of Persia by Russia and England for example) forgets this history and naively asks: what have capitalists got to do with it? I am fighting. He does not see the connection between the war and the government; he does not see that the government is conducting the war, and that he is a tool in the hands of the government. He can call his a revolutionary people, write eloquent resolutions—this is a lot for a Russian because this has only recently come into vogue here. Recently, for example, the Provisional Government published a "revolutionary" declaration.

But this makes no difference; other nations, more experienced in the capitalist art of fooling the masses and in writing "revolutionary" manifestoes, have beaten all records in this field. If you take the parliamentary history of the French Republic since it began to support tsarism you will find scores of examples, in the course of decades of this history, of manifestoes written

in the most eloquent language, serving to cover up the policy of most sordid colonial and financial plunder. The whole history of the Third French Republic is the history of this plunder. This is the source of the present war. It is not the product of the evil designs of the capitalists, or the result of the mistaken policy of monarchs. It would be wrong to regard it that way. No, this war was inevitably called forth by the development of gigantic, large-scale capitalism, particularly bank capitalism, which led to a matter of four banks in Berlin, and five or six in London, ruling the whole world, cornering all wealth and backing their financial policies with all the armed forces. Finally, they clashed, and came to grips in an unprecedentedly fierce struggle, because the old method of seizing territory could no longer be pursued; one or the other side must give up its colonial possessions. In the capitalist world such questions are not settled voluntarily. They can be settled only by war. That is why it is ridiculous to blame this or that crowned robber. They are all alike, these crowned robbers. That is why it is also absurd to blame the capitalists of this or that country. They are only to blame for introducing such a system. It is done in accordance with all the laws, which are protected by all the forces of the civilised states. "I am acting fully within my rights; I buy shares. All the courts, the whole police force, the whole standing army and all the navies in the world protect my sacred right to shares." If banks are established which manipulate hundreds of millions of rubles, if they have enmeshed the whole world in this net of bank robbery, if these banks have come to grips in a life and death struggle—who is to blame? Where will you find the culprit! The whole development of capitalism during the past half century is to blame; and there is no way out except by overthrowing the rule of the capitalists, except by a workers' revolution. This is the reply our

Party arrived at after analyzing the war; that is why we say: this simple question of annexations has been so confused, the representatives of the bourgeois parties have lied to such an extent, that they make it appear as if Courland does not represent annexation by Russia. These three crowned robbers divided up Courland and Poland between them. They shared them for a hundred years, tore the living flesh from them; and the Russian robber tore off most, because at that time he was the strongest. And when the young robber who participated in the loot at that time grew up and became a strong capitalist power—Germany—he said: Let us have a new division! You want to stick to what you've got? You think you are stronger? Let us match our strength!

This is what this war amounts to. Of course, this challenge—"let us match our strength!"—is only the expression of decades of the politics of plunder, the politics of the big banks. That is why nobody can tell the plain truth about annexations, so that every worker and peasant can understand, as we do. That is why the question of treaties, such a simple one, is so shamelessly confused by the whole press. You say that we have a revolutionary government, that in this revolutionary government there are Ministers who are nearly Socialists—Narodniks and Mensheviks.* But when they talk about peace without annexations on the condition that peace without annexations is not defined (which means: we will take the German annexations and keep our own)—we say: what is the good of your "revolutionary" Ministry,

* Narodniks, from the Russian word *narod*, meaning people, representing a populist movement with utopian socialist tendencies. For a full appraisal of their role, see *The History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, pp. 8-16.

Mensheviks, reformist Socialists, first an organized faction in opposition to the program and policies of the Bolsheviks in the Russian socialist movement; after the October Revolution, engaged in counter-revolutionary activities against the Soviet Government both in the U.S.S.R. and abroad.—Ed.

your declarations, your statements that you do not want a war of conquest—when at the same time you are calling upon the army to launch an offensive? Do you not know that you have treaties which were concluded by Nicholas the Bloody in the most piratical manner? You do not know that? One can forgive a worker or a peasant, who has not robbed, who has not read wise books, for not knowing this; but when educated Cadets preach this, they know perfectly well what the treaties contain. These treaties are “secret,” but the whole diplomatic press of all countries is talking about them: “You will get the Straits; you—Armenia; you—Galicia; you—Alsace-Lorraine; you—Trieste, and we will definitely divide up Persia.” And the German capitalist says: “And I will seize Egypt; I will crush the European nations if you do not return my colonies, and with interest.” Shares are the sort of thing, you know, that cannot exist without interest. This is why the question of the treaties, such a simple and clear question, has given rise to the mass of outrageous, incredible, insolent lies that pours from the pages of all capitalist newspapers.

Take today's *Dyen*. In it Vodovozov, a man who cannot possibly be suspected of Bolshevism, but who is an honest democrat, says: I am opposed to secret treaties; I would like to say something about the treaty with Rumania. We have a secret treaty with Rumania and it provides that Rumania shall receive power over a number of foreign nations if she fights on the side of the Allies. All the treaties of the other Allies are exactly like this one. They would not have started out to throttle everyone without treaties. There is no need to delve into special magazines to find out what is in these treaties. It is sufficient to recall the main facts of economic and diplomatic history. Yes, for decades Austria fought in the Balkans to strangle nations there. . . . And if they

have come to grips in war, it is because they could not help it. This is why, in reply to the demand of the masses of the people to publish the treaties, demands which are becoming more and more persistent, the Cabinet Ministers, ex-Minister Milyukov and the present Minister Tereshchenko * (one in the government without Socialist Ministers and the other in the government with a number of near-Socialist Ministers), say: publication of the treaties means a rupture with the Allies.

That is so; the treaties must not be published because all of you belong to the same gang of robbers. We agree with Milyukov and Tereshchenko that the treaties cannot be published. From this, two different conclusions may be drawn. What follows from the fact that we agree with Milyukov and Tereshchenko that the treaties must not be published? If the treaties must not be published then we must help the capitalist Ministers to continue the war. The other conclusion is: as the capitalists dare not publish the treaties, we must overthrow the capitalists. I will leave it to you to decide which of these conclusions is the correct one; but I strongly urge you to consider the consequences. If we were to argue as the Narodnik and Menshevik Ministers do it would work out like this: since the government says that the treaties must not be published, then we must issue another manifesto. Paper has not become so dear that new manifestoes cannot be written. Let us write a new manifesto and launch an offensive. What for? With what object? Who will determine the object? The soldiers are being called upon to enforce the predatory treaties with Rumania and France. Send Vodovozov's article, which I mentioned, to the soldiers at the front and then complain: It's all the fault of the Bolsheviks; no doubt the Bolsheviks

* M. I. Tereshchenko—Wealthy industrialist, first, Minister of Finance in the Provisional Government, later succeeded Milyukov as Minister for Foreign Affairs.—*Ed.*

invented this treaty with Rumania. But then you will not only have to suppress *Pravda*, but also deport Vodovozov for having studied history; you will have to burn all Milyukov's books, extremely dangerous books. Open any one of the books of the leader of the "people's freedom" party, the ex-Minister for Foreign Affairs. They are good books. What do they say? They say that Russia has a "right" to the Straits, to Armenia, to Galicia and to East Prussia. He shared out everything, and even appended a map. It will not only be necessary to exile the Bolsheviks and Vodovozov to Siberia for writing such revolutionary articles, but also to burn Milyukov's books, because if we now collected simple excerpts from these books and sent them to the soldiers at the front they would have more inflammatory effect than even the most inflammatory leaflets.

It remains for me now, in accordance with the short plan that I drew up for today's lecture, to touch on the question of "revolutionary national defence." I think that after what I have had the honour of relating to you I can be brief in dealing with this question.

"Revolutionary national defence" is the name given to the justification of the war by means of arguments such as: We have made a revolution, we are a revolutionary people, we are a revolutionary democracy. What is our reply to this? What sort of a revolution have we made? We have overthrown Nicholas. This revolution was not so difficult, if we compare it with a revolution that would completely overthrow the landlord and capitalist classes. Who came into power after our revolution? The landlords and the capitalists—the very classes that have long been in power in Europe. There, revolutions like this took place a hundred years ago; there, the Tereshchenkos, Milyukovs and

Konovalovs* have long been in power; and whether they have a Civil List for their kings, or do without this article of luxury, makes no difference. A bank remains a bank, capital is invested in concessions, profits remain profits, whether in a republic or in a monarchy. If any savage country dares to disobey our civilised capital, which establishes such fine banks in the colonies, in Africa and Persia; if any savage nation disobeys our civilised banks we send troops there and they introduce culture, order and civilisation, as Lyakhov** did in Persia and as the French "republican" troops, with equal savagery, exterminated the people of Africa. What difference does it make: it is also "revolutionary" national defence, only it is displayed by broad unconscious masses of the people who do not see the connection between the war and the government, who do not know that this policy is backed by treaties. The treaties have remained, the banks have remained, the concessions have remained. In Russia the best men of their class are at the head of the administration; but this has not changed the character of the world war in the least. The new "revolutionary" national defence is merely the use of the lofty concept revolution to cover up the sordid and bloody war for the sordid and disgusting treaties.

The Russian revolution has not changed the character of the war, but it has created organisations the like of which exist in no other country, and did not exist during the majority of revolutions in the West. In the majority of revolutions a new government came forward consisting of men of the type of our Tereshchenkos and Konovalovs, while the country remained in

* A. I. Konovalov—Wealthy textile manufacturer, Minister for Trade and Industry in the first Provisional Government and later vice Prime Minister in the Kerensky Government.—*Ed.*

** Colonel V. P. Lyakhov—Helped to suppress the revolutionary national movement in the Caucasus after the Revolution of 1905. Participated also in the crushing of the revolution in Tabriz, Persia, in 1906.—*Ed.*

a state of passivity and disorganisation. The Russian revolution went further. This fact contains the embryo of the possibility that it will conquer the war. The fact is that in addition to the government of "near-Socialist" Ministers, the imperialist war government, the government which started the offensive, the government which is connected with Anglo-French capital, in addition to it, and independently of it, we have all over Russia a network of Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies. This is the revolution which has not yet said its last word. This is the revolution that Western Europe did not have under such conditions. These are the organisations of the classes who really need no annexations, who have no millions deposited in the banks, and who, perhaps, are not interested in whether the Russian Colonel Lyakhov and the British, Liberal Ambassador divided up Persia properly. This is the guarantee that this revolution can go still further. It lies in the fact that the classes who are really not interested in annexation, notwithstanding their extreme faith in the capitalist government; notwithstanding the terrible confusion, the terrible deception that is contained in the very term "revolutionary" national defence, notwithstanding the fact that they are supporting the loan, supporting the imperialist war government—notwithstanding all this, they have succeeded in creating organisations in which the masses of the oppressed classes are represented. These are the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, which in many places in Russia went much further than the Petrograd Soviet in their revolutionary work. This is quite natural, because in Petrograd we have the central organ of the capitalists.

Yesterday Skobelev * said in his speech: We will take all

* M. D. Skobelev—Menshevik, member of the bourgeois Provisional Government.—*Ed.*

the profits, we will take a hundred per cent. But this was a wide gesture, a wide, Ministerial gesture. If you take today's *Ryech* you will see what their opinion is about this passage in Skobelev's speech. That paper writes: "Why, that means starvation, death; hundred per cent—why that is—everything!" Minister Skobelev goes further than the most extreme Bolshevik. It is not true to say that the Bolsheviks are on the extreme Left. Minister Skobelev is much more to the "Left." They hurled most awful abuse at me because, they alleged, I proposed to take the clothes off the backs of the capitalists. At all events, Shulgin * said: "Let them take the clothes off our backs!" Picture a Bolshevik going up to citizen Shulgin to take his clothes away. He would have more reason to accuse Minister Skobelev of this. We have never gone so far. We have never proposed that profits be taken one hundred per cent. The promise, however, is valuable. If you take our Party's resolution you will find that in it we propose exactly what I proposed, except that the grounds for the proposal are more fully formulated: Control of the banks, and a fair income tax. That is all Skobelev proposes to take a hundred kopeks in the ruble. We have not proposed and do not propose anything of the kind. And even Skobelev only made a gesture. He does not seriously intend to carry it out; and if he does intend to do so he will not be able to, for the simple reason that to promise all this after having made friends with Tereshchenko and Konovalov is somewhat ridiculous. It is possible to take eighty or ninety per cent of the millionaires' incomes; but not by walking arm in arm with such Ministers. If the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies were in power they would really take it; but even then they would not take all, because

* V. V. Shulgin—Monarchist, former member of the State Duma. Member of the counter-revolutionary government headed by General Denikin.—*Ed.*

they do not need it. They would take a large part of the incomes. No other form of government can do this. Minister Skobelev may be prompted by the best intentions in the world. I have seen these parties in the course of several decades; I belong to the revolutionary movement for thirty years. That is why I am least of all inclined to doubt their good intentions. But that is not the point; it is not a matter of good intentions. The road to hell is paved with good intentions. All the chancelleries are filled with documents signed by Citizens the Ministers, but this has altered nothing. Start introducing control if you like, just start! Our program is such that reading Skobelev's speech we can say: We do not demand more. We are far more moderate than Minister Skobelev. He proposes both control and one hundred per cent. We do not want to take one hundred per cent; we say: "We will not believe you until you have begun to do something." This is the difference between us; we do not believe words and promises, and do not advise others to believe them. The experience of parliamentary republics teaches us that we must not believe in paper declarations. If you want control, then start introducing it. One day is sufficient to pass a law on control. The Employees' Council in every bank, the Workers' Council in every factory, every Party must receive the right to control. We will be told that this is impossible, that there are commercial secrets, the sacred right of property. Well, do as you like; but choose! If you want to save all these books, accounts and the operations of the trusts, then do not chatter about control; do not say that the country is on the verge of ruin.

In Germany the situation is still worse. In Russia we can obtain bread; in Germany they cannot. In Russia much can be done with organisation. In Germany nothing more can be done. There is no bread, and all the people must perish. People are

now writing that Russia is on the verge of doom. If that is the case, then it is a crime to protect "sacred" private property. What does the word control mean? Have you forgotten that Nicholas Romanov also wrote a great deal about control? He repeated a thousand times the words: state control, public control, appointment of senators. During the two months that have elapsed since the revolution the manufacturers have plundered the whole of Russia. Capital has made hundreds per cent profit; every report shows this. And when the workers had the "impudence" to say two months after the revolution that they want to live like human beings, the whole capitalist press of the country raised a howl. In every issue *Ryech* raises a savage howl about the workers robbing the country. And yet we only promise control over the capitalists. Cannot we have fewer promises and more deeds? If you want control by officials, control by bodies such as existed in the past, then our Party expresses the profound conviction that you must not receive any assistance in this even if you had in the government not a half a dozen, but a dozen Narodnik and Menshevik Ministers. Control can be exercised only by the people. You must organise control by the Bank Employees' Councils, Engineers' Councils and Workers' Councils, and start this control tomorrow. Every official must be held responsible and liable to criminal prosecution if he gives false information in any of these institutions. The fate of the country is at stake. We want to know how much grain, how much raw material, and how many workers are available, and how they should be employed.

Now I come to the last question. This is the question of how to end the war. We are credited with the absurd idea that we want a separate peace. The German capitalist robbers are taking steps towards peace and are saying: We will give you a piece

of Turkey and Armenia if you give us ore-bearing territory. This is what the diplomats are talking about in every neutral city! Everybody knows it. It is only covered up by conventional diplomatic phrases. They would not be diplomats if they did not speak in diplomatic language. What nonsense it is to say that we want to end the war by a separate peace! The idea that a war that is being waged by the capitalists of all the richest countries, a war called forth by decades of economic development can be brought to an end by one side ceasing hostilities is so stupid that we think it is ridiculous to repudiate it. The reason why we repudiated it in a special resolution is that we are dealing with broad masses in whose ranks slander is being spread about us; but this idea is not worth talking about seriously. The war now being waged by the capitalists of all countries cannot be brought to an end without a workers' revolution against these capitalists. Until control has passed from the sphere of phrases to the sphere of action, until a government of the revolutionary proletariat has taken the place of the capitalist government, the government will be condemned to do nothing more than moan: we are doomed, doomed, doomed! Today, in "free" England, Socialists are being imprisoned for saying what I am saying. In Germany, Liebknecht is in jail for saying what I am saying; and in Austria, Friedrich Adler* is in jail for saying the same thing, only with the aid of a revolver (perhaps he has been executed by now). The sympathy of the masses of the workers in all countries is on the side of these Socialists, and not on the side of those who have deserted to the side of their capitalists. The workers' revolution is growing all over the world. In other countries, of course, it is more dif-

* Friedrich Adler—One of the leaders of the Social-Democratic Party of Austria and Secretary of the Second International. Social-pacifist during the first imperialist war.—*Ed.*

ficult. There they have no half-wits like Nicholas and Rasputin. There, the best people of their class are at the head of the administration. There, the conditions are not for a revolution against autocracy; there they already have a capitalist-class government. The most gifted representatives of this class have been administering the country for a long time. That is why, although it has not come yet, the revolution is inevitable there, no matter how many revolutionaries may suffer, as Friedrich Adler and Karl Liebknecht are suffering. The future is with them, and the workers of all countries are with them. And the workers of all countries must be victorious.

As regards America's entry into the war I will say the following. It is argued that in America there is democracy, that there is a "White House" there. I say: slavery was abolished half a century ago. The war over slavery ended in 1865. Since then billionaires have sprung up. They hold the whole of America in their financial grip, are preparing to strangle Mexico, and will inevitably go to war with Japan over the partition of the Pacific. Preparations for this war have been going on for several decades already. A heap of books has been written on the subject. And America's real object in entering this war is to prepare for war against Japan. The American people enjoy considerable freedom, and it is difficult to believe that they will tolerate conscription, the creation of an army for aims of conquest, for a struggle against Japan, for example. The Americans can see from the example of Europe what this leads to. And so the American capitalists were obliged to intervene in this war in order to find a pretext to create a powerful standing army under cover of the lofty ideal of fighting for the rights of small nationalities.

The peasants are refusing to sell their grain for money and

are demanding implements, boots and clothes. This decision contains a large share of extremely profound truth. Indeed, the country has been reduced to such a state of ruin that we see here, although in a smaller degree, what has existed in other countries for a long time: money has lost its power. The rule of capitalism is being so thoroughly undermined by the progress of events that the peasants, for example, refuse to take money. They say: "What is the use of money to us?" And they are right. The rule of capitalism is not being undermined because somebody wants to usurp power. It would be absurd to "usurp" power. The rule of capitalism could not be brought to an end if the whole economic development of capitalist countries were not leading to this. The war has accelerated this process, and this has made capitalism impossible. No power on earth could destroy capitalism if it were not being washed away and undermined by history.

Here is a striking example. The peasant says what everybody sees: the power of money has been undermined. Here there is only one way out: the Soviets of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies must agree to the peasants' being given implements, boots and clothes in exchange for their grain. This is what things are coming to; this is the reply that life is suggesting. If this is not granted, tens of millions of people will go hungry, unshod and without clothes. Tens of millions of people are faced with death, and we have no time to bother about protecting the interests of the capitalists. The only way out is to transfer all power to the soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, which represent the majority of the people. Perhaps mistakes will be made in the course of this. Nobody argues that this difficult task can be accomplished at one stroke. We do not say anything of the kind. We are told: "We want the Soviets to take power,

but they do not want to take it." We say that experience will suggest to them, and the whole people will see, that there is no other way out. We do not want to "usurp" power, for the whole experience of revolution teaches that only a power that is backed by the majority of the people can be durable. Consequently, the "usurpation" of power would be merely an adventure; and our Party would not agree to anything of the kind. The government that will be a government of the majority may pursue a policy which may prove to be a mistaken one at first, but there is no other way out. If that happens, there will be a peaceful change of policy inside *these* organisations. No other organisations can be devised. That is why we say that we cannot imagine any other solution of the problem.

How can the war be brought to an end? What would we do if the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies took power and the Germans continued the war? Those who are interested in our Party's views may have read in our newspaper *Pravda* the other day an exact quotation from what we said abroad as far back as 1915: if the revolutionary class of Russia, the working class, comes into power, it must offer to conclude peace. And if our terms are rejected by the German capitalists, or by the capitalists of any other country, the working class will be entirely in favour of war. We do not propose to end the war at one stroke. We do not promise this. We do not advocate such an impossible task as ending the war by the desire of only one side. It is easy to make promises of this kind, but it is impossible to carry them out. There is no easy way out of this terrible war. Fighting has been going on for three years. You will either go on fighting for ten years or agree to make a difficult and severe revolution. There is no other way out. We say: the war

which was started by the capitalist government can be brought to an end only by a workers' revolution.

Let those who are interested in the Socialist movement read the Basle Manifesto of 1912, which was adopted unanimously by the Socialist Parties all over the world; a manifesto which we published in our *Pravda*, a manifesto which cannot be published now in any other belligerent country, neither in "free" England, nor in Republican France, because it told the truth about the war even before the war broke out. It stated: war would break out between England and Germany because of capitalist rivalry. It stated: so much powder has been accumulated that the guns will go off of themselves. It stated what the objects of the war would be and said that it would lead to proletarian revolution. That is why we tell the Socialists who signed this manifesto and then deserted to the side of their capitalist governments that they have betrayed Socialism. All over the world a split has occurred in the Socialist ranks. Some are Cabinet Ministers; others are in jail. All over the world, one section of the Socialists advocated preparation for war, while another section like the American Bebel—Eugene Debs—who is extremely popular among the American workers says: "If I were in Congress, I would be shot before I would vote a dollar for such a war. . . . I am opposed to every war but one; I am for that war with heart and soul, and that is the world-wide war of the social revolution." * This is how the ranks of the Socialists are split all over the world. The social-patriots in all countries think that they are defending their country. They are mistaken; they are defending the interests of one capitalist clique against another. We advocate proletarian revolution—the only true cause

* *Speeches of Eugene Victor Debs*, edited by Alexander Trachtenberg, International Publishers, 1927, pp. 64-65.—Ed.

for which scores have gone to the scaffold, and hundreds and thousands are in jail. These Socialists in jail are a minority; but behind them is the working class, behind them is economic development. All this tells us that there is no other way out. This war can be brought to an end only by means of a workers' revolution in several countries. Meanwhile, we must prepare for this revolution, help it along. As long as the tsar conducted the war the Russian people, in spite of their hatred of war and their determination to secure peace, could do nothing against it except prepare for the revolution against the tsar, and overthrow the tsar. And it was so. History confirmed this for you yesterday, and it will confirm it for you tomorrow. Long ago we said: We must help the growing Russian revolution. We said it at the end of 1914. For saying this our deputies in the Duma were exiled to Siberia. We were told: "You do not answer. You talk about revolution when strikes have ceased, when the deputies are in exile and when not a single newspaper is published!" We were accused of declining to answer. Comrades, we heard this accusation for a number of years. We replied: You may be as angry as you like, but nothing can be done against the war until the tsar is overthrown. Our forecast proved to be correct. It is not yet fully confirmed, but it is beginning to be confirmed. The revolution is beginning to change the war from the Russian side. The capitalists are still continuing the war; and we say: the war cannot stop until the advent of a workers' revolution in several countries, because the people who want this war are in power. We are told: "Things seem to be asleep in a number of countries. In Germany all the Socialists are unanimously in favour of the war; only Liebknecht is opposed to it." To this I reply: This one Liebknecht represents the working class; in him alone, in his adherents, in the German proletariat, lie the

hopes of all. You do not believe it? Continue the war! There is no other road. If you do not believe in Liebknecht, if you do not believe in the workers' revolution, in the revolution that is maturing, if you do not believe this, then believe the capitalists!

Nobody will be victorious in this war except the workers' revolution in several countries. War is not a game; war is a terrible thing; war entails millions of victims, and it cannot be brought to an end so easily.

The soldiers at the front cannot tear the front away from the state and decide things in their own way. The soldiers at the front are part of the country. As long as the state is fighting the front will suffer. There is nothing to be done about it. The war was called forth by the ruling classes; it can be brought to an end only by a working class revolution. The question as to whether you will get a speedy peace will be determined solely by the process of development of the revolution. No matter what sentimental things may be said, no matter how much you may be told: let us put an end to the war immediately, it cannot be done without the development of the revolution. When power passes to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies the capitalists will oppose us: Japan—opposed, France—opposed, England—opposed; the governments of all countries will oppose us. The capitalists will oppose us; but the workers will support us. Then—the war which the capitalists started will come to an end. This is the reply to the question of how to end the war.

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